

**Picturing Women**  
**in *Urania* by Mary Wroth and *Clélie* by Madeleine de Scudéry**

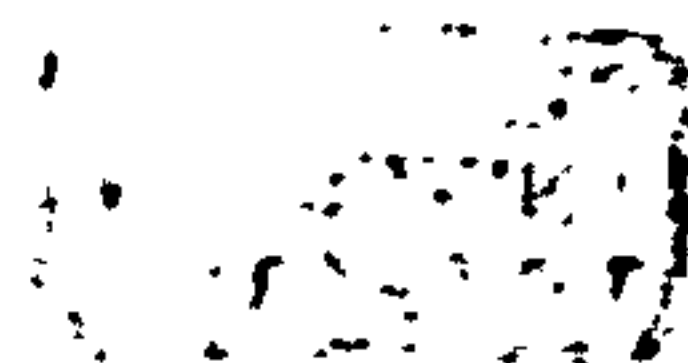
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## Abstract

My parallel reading of two seventeenth-century romances by two women, one English, one French, aims to illumine the early modern mapping of womanhood from a female perspective.

Part one examines the discourse of virtuous women in the patriarchal societies of *Urania* and *Clélie*. Adopting an approach based on close stylistic analysis, I explore, on the one hand, the extent to which the marriage *topos* endows or does not endow these women with speech and power, and on the other the extent to which the marriage *topos* enables the utterance of a protofeminist discourse. While the marriage *topos* initially allows us to visualise these women as daughters, sisters, mothers and wives, it gradually unveils women not only as the apologists of true love, but also as androgynous heroines in the male-authored domain of politics.

Having discussed the discourse (mostly oral) of Uranian and Scudarian heroines in the context of a society functioning on the basis of political alliances, I move on to analyse 'The *loci* of the feminine', *i.e.* the configuration of female spaces in the two texts. This analysis is developed in parts two and three of the thesis. The first part begins by examining the cultural milieux of Mary Wroth and Madeleine de Scudéry, and explores some of the evidence regarding the possible existence of an early modern English equivalent of French 'salons'. This chapter measures the extent to which *Urania* and *Clélie* might be construed as illustrations of the highly intense activities of Wroth's and Scudéry's literary circles. The next chapter focusses on the Uranian and Scudarian fictionalisation of a predominantly female community. Part three assesses the ways in which these texts seem to inscribe themselves within a

protofeminist project of re-evaluating female legacy and authorship in the realm of letters, and proceeds to explore more specifically the representation of literary creativity in *Urania*'s and *Clélie*'s female retreats.

My final part examines the subject of the thesis in its literal sense, by analysing Wroth's and Scudéry's representations of the female body, and relates — where appropriate — images of women in *Urania* and *Clélie* to those found in the visual arts of the early modern period, such as emblems, engravings, paintings and masques. It first considers Wroth's and Scudéry's handling of negative images of womanhood. Early modern discourse on women is fraught with ambiguities, and oscillates from one extreme to another, depending on whether it addresses female vice or virtue. What is unacceptable for an anti-heroine may on the contrary be perfectly becoming in a heroine. The next chapter goes on to illustrate this paradox by focussing on Wroth's and Scudéry's pictorial representations of female exemplarity. In this last section, I draw particular attention to the relationship between these images of female exemplarity and those by two early seventeenth-century female painters, Lavinia Fontana and Artemisia Gentileschi.

Although limited to Wroth's *Urania* and Scudéry's *Clélie*, this study seeks to envision these works not merely as the masked autobiographies of their authors, but as a literary corpus of *topoi*, themes and techniques that are in some sense characteristic of aristocratic women's writing in early modern Europe.



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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continuous support.

### Abbreviations

- BC* Castiglione, Baldesar, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), trans. Thomas Hoby (1561), London: Dent, 1974.
- C* Scudéry, Madeleine de, *Clélie, Histoire romaine*, 10 vols, Paris: Augustin Courbé, 1654-1660; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1973.
- CWMSH* *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke*, ed. Margaret Patterson Hannay, 2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- DCM* *Cassell Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, ed. Jenny March, London: Cassell, 1998.
- GC* Scudéry, Madeleine de, *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus*, 10 vols, (Paris: Augustin Courbé, 1649-1653; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1973).
- Hypn.* Colonna, Francesco, *Hypnerotomachia: The Strife of Love in a Dream, Translated into English by Sir R[obert] D[allington]*, London: Printed for Simon Waterson, 1592; New York and London: Garland, 1976.
- LD* *A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrew's Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary, Revised, Enlarged, and in Great Part Rewritten by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.
- NA* Sidney, Philip, *The Countess of Pembroke's New Arcadia* (1590), ed. Victor Skretkowicz, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- OED* *The Oxford English Dictionary*, eds. J. A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, 20 vols, 2nd edn., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.
- PSCFL* *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature*.
- SDRJ* Lanyer, Aemilia, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), in Diana Purkiss (ed.), *Renaissance Women: The Plays of Elizabeth Cary and the Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, London: William Pickering, 1994.



- U1* Wroth, Mary, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), ed. Josephine A. Roberts, Binghamton, NY: Renaissance English Text Society, 1995.
- U2* Wroth, Mary, *The Second Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, eds. Josephine A. Roberts, Suzanne Gosset and Janel Mueller, Tempe, Arizona: Renaissance English Text Society, 1999.

Citations from *Clélie* and *Urania* indicate the volume (eg. *C1*, *C2*, *C3*, etc. / *U1* or *U2*) and the page numbers, as follows: *C1*, 300 and *U1*, 423, ll. 24-8 (with line numbers).

Citations from *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus* take the form *GC*, volume number and page number (e.g. *GC*, vol. 1, 241).

The quotations (including the spelling of characters' names) from early modern printed books are as they stand in the cited edition. However, in the main body of text, the orthography of characters' names in early printed French texts is standardised (eg. 'Clelie' becomes *Clélie*; 'Lucrece': *Lucrèce*; 'Sapho': *Sappho*, etc.).

All emphases (in bold characters) in quotations are mine unless otherwise stated.

The format of early printed books is indicated as follows: fol. (for folio), 4<sup>0</sup> (for quarto), 8<sup>0</sup> (for octavo), etc.

**General Introduction**

The fact that Lady Mary Wroth (1587?-1653?) was ‘one of the most distinguished women writers in the English Renaissance’,<sup>1</sup> and that Madeleine de Scudéry (1607-1701) was the most renowned and celebrated female author in seventeenth-century France, has determined my choice for a comparison between their works. Although this choice may seem odd, since to this date no connection has been established between the two women, the existence of an article by James Gaines and Josephine Roberts on Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania* and Mademoiselle de Scudéry’s *Clélie* has helped to erase my doubts as to the congruity of my proposal.<sup>2</sup> Their joint article juxtaposes two distinct mini-essays, one on the ‘inaccessible Throne of Love’ in *Urania*, the other on the *Carte de Tendre* in *Clélie*. I aim to demonstrate further the ways in which a study focussing on representations of women in *Urania* illumines the text of *Clélie*, and vice versa.

Such a comparison raises one question in particular: did the two women know each other, directly or indirectly? It is worth noting that Scudéry started her literary ‘career’ when Wroth seems to have ended hers. Given the European popularity of Wroth’s uncle, Philip Sidney, as soldier, poet and writer of prose fiction, it is natural to think that Scudéry may have heard about and perhaps read the *Arcadia* in translation.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Scudéry had certainly heard about Sidney’s sister, Mary Herbert, also known as the Countess of Pembroke, who had become famous on the Continent during her various stays in the Low Countries. This is confirmed by a play entitled *La Folle gageure ou les*

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<sup>1</sup> Josephine A. Roberts, ‘Preface’ to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> James F. Gaines and Josephine A. Roberts, ‘The Geography of Love in Seventeenth-Century Women’s Fiction’, in James Grantham Turner (ed.), *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 289-309.

<sup>3</sup> It was translated by Jean Baudoin as *L’Arcadie de la Comtesse de Pembroke, mise en nostre langue, de l’anglois de Messire Philippes Sidney*, 3 vols (Paris: Toussaint du Bray, 1624), 8<sup>0</sup>. There was also a play adapted from the *Arcadia*



*divertissemens de la Comtesse de Pembroc* (1653) by François Le Metel de Boisrobert, who was a friend of Madeleine de Scudéry's brother Georges.

Although the possibility of Scudéry's acquaintance with what happened in the literary sphere of the Elizabethan and Jacobean court can only remain purely speculative, I shall nevertheless give a brief summary of Wroth's and Scudéry's backgrounds, in order to point out some of the parallels between them, before sketching the shared influence of early modern works on their texts.

### *I. The careers of Wroth and Scudéry*

Wroth was the niece of the two most notable figures of the Wilton circle. Philip Sidney had not only written romances (the *Old Arcadia* [c.1580] and the *New Arcadia* [1590]), but also *An Apology for Poetry* (1595) and an influential sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella* (1591). Moreover, he was regarded as the paragon of Elizabethan courtliness and had composed many courtly entertainments for Queen Elizabeth. Mary Sidney Herbert too was a celebrated writer, translator and patroness. And Wroth's father, Robert Sidney, has become known posthumously for his untitled sonnet sequence. Wroth grew up, then, in a privileged literary milieu; and at an early age she was introduced to the culture of the court. She was to become part of Queen Anne's intimate circle of friends during the reign of James I, and performed beside Queen Anne in at least two masques, the *Masque of Blackness* (1605) and the *Masque of Beauty* (1608) by Ben Jonson.

In 1604 she married Robert Wroth, and was widowed in 1614 not long after the death of their only child. She began an affair with William

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by Antoine Mareschal: *La Cour bergère, ou l'Arcadie de Messire Philippes Sidney, tragi-comédie* (Paris: Toussaint Quinet, 1640), 4<sup>o</sup>.

Herbert, Mary Herbert's son, and bore two illegitimate children. These biographical details have been extensively brooded upon by those of Wroth's critics who see her widowhood and unhappy liaison as the starting point of her short 'career' as a writer. This period of her life corresponds to the years during which she wrote her two-part prose romance *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), her sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (1621), and a pastoral play, *Love's Victorie* (1615-1618).<sup>4</sup>

Scudéry's biography is far better documented. Like Wroth she was a noblewoman, although of a lower status. Yet her origins are embellished by her admirers:

Elle naquit au Havre de Grace, d'une maison très noble & très ancienne, originaire du royaume de Naples, établie depuis longtemps en Provence.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike Wroth, Scudéry never married, which according to Nathalie Grande accounts for her prolific literary career whose beginning is often associated with her entrance into Mme de Rambouillet's salon:<sup>6</sup>

On s'empessa d'y recevoir Mademoiselle de Scudéry, qui ne tarda pas à s'y faire connaître avec applaudissement.<sup>7</sup>

Scudéry is often described as one of the most remarkable professional women writers in the seventeenth century. Critics have acknowledged the

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<sup>4</sup> On the date of its composition, see Marion Wynne-Davies, "'Here is a Sport Will Well Befit this Time and Place': Allusion and Delusion in Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*", *Women's Writing*, 6, 1 (1999), pp. 47-64.

<sup>5</sup> Anon., *Esprit de Mademoiselle de Scudéry* (Amsterdam: Chez Vincent, 1766), 12<sup>0</sup>, p. vii.

<sup>6</sup> See Nathalie Grande, *Stratégies de romancières: de Clélie à La Princesse de Clèves 1654-1678* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), pp. 232-47.

<sup>7</sup> Anon., *Esprit de Mlle de Scudéry*, p. vii.



fact that, having been reduced to poverty, she set out to write for economic reasons:

Peu favorisée des biens de la fortune, elle se vit contrainte de lui consacrer ses talens, et s'ouvrit bientôt par là le chemin de la gloire. Ses sermons furent reçus avec avidité: l'agrément les fit lire.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of his biographical preface to *Esprit de Mlle de Scudéry*, the anonymous author adds a list of her works:

Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus, Ibrahim ou l'Illustre Bassa, Clélie, Histoire Romaine, Almahide, ou l'Esclave-Reine, Mathilde d'Aguilar, Célinte, La Promenade de Versailles, Les Femmes Illustres, Entretien sur différentes matières, Conversations morales, Conversations nouvelles sur divers sujets, Nouvelles Conversations Morales. Nouvelles Fables en Vers. Discours de la Gloire. (pp. xi-xii)

Although a great number of these works had been published under the name of her brother Georges, who kept the proceeds, Madeleine de Scudéry, like Wroth after the death of her husband,<sup>9</sup> benefited from the help of important figures:

L'illustre Christine de Suède lui fit une pension, l'honora de son portrait, & lui écrivit des lettres. Elle avoit aussi reçu une pension du cardinal Mazarin. Le Chancelier Boucherat lui en

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Roberts, 'Introduction' to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, p. 13.

assigna une sur le sceau. Le roi lui-mesme la gratifia d'une de 2000 livres en 1683.<sup>10</sup>

Scudéry had also become internationally famous, as testified by her correspondence with the Queen of Sweden and Anna Maria van Schurman, for example. She was nominated for a prize at the 'Academie des Ricovrati de Padoue' and 'remporta le prix de l'éloquence à l'Académie pour un discours sur la gloire, qui fut très estimé'.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, her work was translated into several different languages. We find, for instance, English translations of *Les Femmes Illustres, ou les harangues héroïques*,<sup>12</sup> of *Ibrahim, ou l'illustre Bassa*,<sup>13</sup> of *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus*,<sup>14</sup> of *Clélie*<sup>15</sup> and of her 'Conversations'; and there are seventeenth- and eighteenth-century copies of the works in many foreign libraries. One would need to retrace a history of these acquisitions in order to determine the extent of Scudéry's readership abroad. This brief survey nevertheless shows that her career as a writer contrasts sharply with Wroth's. While Wroth seems to have been 'forced by members of King James's court to withdraw *Urania* only months after its publication and to

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<sup>10</sup> Anon., *Esprit de Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, pp. x-xj.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>12</sup> Translated as *Les Femmes Illustres, or the Heroick Harangues of the Illustrious Women, Written in French by the Exquisit Pen of Monsieur de Scudéry, Translated by James Innes* (Edinburgh: n.p., 1681), 12<sup>0</sup>. There is also another translation, *The Illustrious Ladies of Antiquity, Translated from the French of the Celebrated Mr de Scudéry* (Dublin: n.p., 1744), 8<sup>0</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Translated as *Ibrahim, or the Illustrious Bassa, the Whole Work in Four Parts, Written in French by Monsieur de Scudéry, and now Englished by Henry Cogan* (London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley et al., 1652), fol. The attribution is still debated by scholars. See below, footnote 18.

<sup>14</sup> Translated as *Artamenes, or the Grand Cyrus, that Excellent New Romance Englished by F[rancis] G[ifford]*, 2 vols (London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley et al., 1653-1655), fol.

<sup>15</sup> Translated as *Clelia, an Excellent New Romance, the Whole Work in Five Parts, Dedicated to Mademoiselle de Longueville, Parts 1-3 Translated by John Davies and Parts 4-5 by Georges Havers* (London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley et al., 1656-1661), fol.



leave the court herself in disgrace',<sup>16</sup> because her prose romance 'caused scandal', Scudéry benefited from royal favours all her life. Germaine Greer argues that Wroth's disgrace was 'partly because, unlike the work of other respectable poets of noble birth, hers was printed in her lifetime'<sup>17</sup> and perhaps, one should add, under her own name. Scudéry, on the contrary, published most of her works under the name of her brother — which has led to an unsolved problem of attribution concerning *Ibrahim, ou l'Illustre Bassa*.<sup>18</sup> Scudéry's decision to publish under her brother's name is usually attributed to her awareness of the stigma underpinning printed novels or romances by a woman author: not only was it seen as a vile act on the part of a male author, but on a noblewoman's part, it was considered even more demeaning — a major breach of decorum. This attitude was to persist into the nineteenth century: Victor Cousin, a nineteenth-century critic who showed an interest in the role women played in seventeenth-century intellectual life in France, praises specifically

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<sup>16</sup> Naomi J. Miller, *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), p. 1. Helen Hackett points out that 'although Wroth promised the Duke of Buckingham after the Denny scandal that she would attempt to recall copies, there is no evidence of whether this happened [...]. Twenty-nine copies are known to survive today, which is not a bad number; only around twenty surviving copies are known of each of the 1590 and 1593 *Arcadias*, for instance.' (*Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], p. 183).

<sup>17</sup> Germaine Greer, *Slip-Shod Sibyls: Recognition, Rejection and the Woman Poet* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> In *Stratégies de romancières* (pp. 217-8), Nathalie Grande comments on the role of Georges de Scudéry as his sister's mentor: 'A ce rôle de Georges, dont la réputation donna accès à sa soeur aux salons les plus cultivés, s'ajoute sans aucun doute une initiation à l'écriture romanesque'. She goes on to quote Tallemant's statement in *Historiettes* that 'elle a fait une partie des harangues des *Femmes Illustres* et tout *l'Illustre Bassa*' (Paris: NRF/Gallimard, 1961), vol. 2, p. 688; and a letter from Georges to the Abbess Malnoue, in which he wrote this famous sentence: 'Personne ne sait mieux que moi ce qu'elle vaut, car je l'ai faite ce qu'elle est' (quoted from Rathery et Boutron, *Mademoiselle de Scudéry, sa vie et sa correspondance* [Paris: Léon Techener, 1873; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971], pp. 503-4). See also Barbara Krajewska, *Du Coeur à l'esprit: Mademoiselle de Scudéry et ses Samedis* (Paris: Kimé, 1993), p. 127.

ces femmes éminentes qui ont montré une intelligence ou une âme d'élite sans avoir rien écrit, ou du moins avoir écrit pour le public.<sup>19</sup>

Cousin's remark is characteristic of the enduringly denigrating attitude towards women who publish writings: the practice goes against 'la vraie destinée et le plus haut usage du génie de la femme'.<sup>20</sup>

## II. *Urania and Clélie: reception and plot*

To understand the readers' reactions (both contemporary and modern) which *Urania* and *Clélie* provoked, it is important to replace these two works within their literary context. *Urania* and *Clélie* form part of a common tradition, that of the romance whether in verse or prose, and thus owe a debt to their immediate predecessors (*Amadis de Gaule*, Ariosto, Tasso, Montemayor, Sidney, D'Urfé) who in turn are indebted to the Greek romance. The term 'romance' refers here to a literary phenomenon in the Renaissance and throughout the seventeenth century, that is, to the recycling of a range of *topoi* (love, enchantment, shipwrecks, lost children, abduction, family feuds, postponed marriages), of plots, characters and 'episodic matter' ('glittering disputations; [...] descriptions of paintings [...], gardens [...]; narratives of local mythology, tales of marvellous beasts [...]'), all of which already lie at the heart of Heliodorus's, Achilles Tatius's and Longus's works.<sup>21</sup> Any study of early modern romance has to acknowledge the influence of and the renewed interest in both Greek and

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<sup>19</sup> Cited in Myriam Maître, *Les Précieuses: naissance des femmes de lettres en France au dix-septième siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion; Genève: Slatkine, 1999), p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Lee Wolff, *The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction*, 2nd edn. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1961), p. 6.



Latin poets (e.g. Anacreon, Sappho, Ovid and Virgil) in the Renaissance. Furthermore, by the time *Urania* and *Clélie* were written, the romance tradition incorporated a wide variety of narratives that evolved through the Middle Ages up to the seventeenth century — as Antoine Furetière remarked in his *Dictionnaire Universel* (1690) under the entry ‘roman’:

Maintenant il ne signifie que les Livres fabuleux qui contiennent des Histoires d’amour & de Chevaleries, inventées pour divertir & occuper des faineants. Heliodore a fait autrefois le *Roman* de Theagene & Cariclée. Depuis on fait divers *Romans* de Chevalerie, comme Amadis de Gaule en xxiv volumes [...]. Nos Modernes ont fait des *Romans* polis & instructifs, comme l’Astrée de d’Urfé, le Cyrus & Clelie de Mademoiselle de Scuderi, le Polexandre de Gomberville, la Cassandre, la Cleopatre de la Calprenede, &c.

Les Poèmes fabuleux se mettent aussi au rang des *Romans*, comme l’Eneïde et L’Iliade. Le *Roman* de la Rose est un *Roman* en vers. Le *Roland* de l’Arioste est un *Roman*. Et en un mot toutes les Histoires fabuleuses ou peu vraisemblables passent pour des *Romans*.<sup>22</sup>

If romances may be individually labelled as either epic, chivalric, courtly, allegorical, pastoral, political, ‘galant’ or heroic, it is also true that these epithets do not necessarily exclude each other in Renaissance and seventeenth-century literary theory and practice, hence the variety of styles and themes in these works. Although Furetière distinguishes the ‘romans polis’ of the seventeenth century from ‘poemes fabuleux’, both types of

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<sup>22</sup> *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots français, tant vieux que modernes, et les termes des sciences et des arts, corrigé et augmenté par M. Basnage de Beauval et M. Brutel de la Rivière*, 4 vols (La Haye: Pierre Husson et al., 1727), fol.



romance were written with the same aesthetic and didactic purposes; but the means to achieve both delight and instruction differ; and it all comes down to what reality entails in the author's eyes. While writers of the Renaissance would construe the concept of reality in moral and/or psychological terms, regardless of the irrational use of magic in their narratives, there was amongst romance writers in the seventeenth century a growing concern for rational truth and historical fact which nevertheless differed from our modern conception of historicity. But the simple fact that literature is often read as a mirror of society is confirmed by the rising number in the Renaissance and thereafter of romances and shorter writings (novellas and tales) which include fictional characters easily identifiable with real people and are therefore construed as *romans à clef*. This is the case with *Urania* and *Clélie* which, although fitting into the topical and narrative criteria of the romance tradition, are read by both their contemporaries and critics as *romans à clef*, despite the two authors' failure to include keys to the identities of their characters.<sup>23</sup>

So what are *Urania* and *Clélie*? Romances or *romans à clef*? The two terms are not equivalent, but 'the creative mingling of fact and fiction'<sup>24</sup> in both works complicates the issue. In her recent chapter on Wroth's *Urania*, Helen Hackett affirms: 'As is by now widely known, the *Urania* is a *roman à clef* in which many characters shadow Wroth herself and members of her circle'.<sup>25</sup> Another critic, Maureen Quilligan, defines *Urania* as 'a text that fully reveals romance to be grounded in family

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<sup>23</sup> See Roberts, 'Introduction' to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, pp. 28-37; and also Jean Mesnard, 'Pour une clef de *Clélie*', in Alain Niderst (ed.), *Actes du colloque du Havre 1-5 Octobre 1991: les trois Scudéry* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993), pp. 371-408.

<sup>24</sup> Helen Hackett, "'Yet Tell Me Some Such Fiction": Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the "Femininity" of Romance', in Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (eds.), *Women, Texts and Histories 1575-1760* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> In *Women and Romance Fiction*, p. 159.

connections'.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, to mention just a few examples, the protagonists (Pamphilia and Amphilanthus) have been identified with the author and her cousin William Herbert; the Queen of Naples with Mary Sidney (Wroth's aunt); and Urania with the book's dedicatee, Susan de Vere Herbert. As remarked by critics, in some cases, one real figure may have inspired several fictional characters: thus Limena, Bellamira and Lindamira have been construed as the transmutations of Wroth's self into fiction.<sup>27</sup> As for Robert Sidney, he is identifiable according to Josephine Roberts in five different characters. The list of such interpretations is long;<sup>28</sup> and as remarked by Helen Hackett:

In Mary Wroth's *Urania* the relations between truth and fiction became especially complex, like a hall of mirrors in which life and art endlessly and multiply reflected back upon one another.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, *Urania* does not limit itself to family allusions. 'Composed at the height of the Jacobean debates concerning the nature and status of women', it was perceived as 'burlesquing the private lives of [Wroth's] peers'. Indeed, one of her subnarratives, the story of Sirelius, was identified by Edward Denny as the masked tale of his own family affairs.<sup>30</sup> Also attacked for her exposure of court scandals and her adulterous

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<sup>26</sup> 'Lady Mary Wroth: Female Authority and the Family Romance', in George M. Logan and Gordon Teskey (eds.), *Unfolded Tales: Essays on Renaissance Romance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 258.

<sup>27</sup> See Helen Hackett 'The Torture of Limena: Sex and Violence in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*', in Kate Chedgzoy, Melanie Hansen and Suzanne Trill (eds.), *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 103.

<sup>28</sup> See Roberts's introduction to *U1*, where she establishes links between characters and familial referents, pp. lxxi-xciii, c-ci.

<sup>29</sup> In *Women and Romance Fiction*, p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> See Roberts, 'Introduction' to *U1*, p. xv; Greer, *Slip-Shod Sybils*, p. 15; and Roberts, 'Introduction' to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, pp. 31-5.



passion for William Herbert, Wroth fell in disgrace.<sup>31</sup> Exiled from court, she nevertheless started the second part of *Urania* which was not published until recently. It is thought that the second part was written between 1620 and 1630; to this date little is known about who read it or owned it.

The first part of *Urania* has been interpreted as a response to Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*.<sup>32</sup> Its overall structure is similar to that of the *New Arcadia*: it opens with a complaint and finishes in the middle of a sentence. But, whereas in the *New Arcadia* the complaint is uttered by shepherds mourning the absence of their semi-divine, unattainable love Urania, in *Urania* the eponymous character is not a demigoddess but a romance heroine, who opens the narrative with a doleful soliloquy. Unlike in the *New Arcadia*, priority is given, from the outset, to the female voice and to heroinism. The second part of *Urania* begins similarly with a male character's complaint and also ends unfinished, although the abrupt interruption of the narrative cannot be given too much weight, since substantial blanks in the manuscript suggest that the second part is a work in progress.

*Urania* is composed of a series of chivalric adventures and enchantment scenes. The characters are constantly seen on the move, going in search of enchanted princes and princesses. Throughout the romance, as in its Italian and Iberian counterparts, characters get married and become mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles. The second part of *Urania*

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<sup>31</sup> On the Overbury scandal, see Roberts's 'Introduction' to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, pp. 35-6. See also Jennifer Lee Carrell, 'A Pack of Lies in a Looking Glass: Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the Magic Mirror of Romance', *Studies in English Literature*, 34, 1994: 'At some point, Lady Mary Wroth lost her place among the bevy of Queen Anne's favorite ladies, and it may well be that the illegitimate children were a major reason for this fall from favor', p. 92.

<sup>32</sup> See Carrell, 'A Pack of Lies', p. 95. See also Quilligan, 'Lady Mary Wroth: Female Authority and the Family Romance', pp. 259-61; and Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, pp. 108-9.

is mostly about the second generation (the children of Urania and Steriamus, of Veralinda and Leonius) and about the maturity of the first. Some characters present in the first narrative completely disappear in the second part; others only appear once in an inset story.<sup>33</sup>

*Urania* is the love story of Pamphilia, Queen of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, King of Naples and Holy Roman Emperor. Pamphilia's name not only epitomises her constancy in love but resonates with the legendary gifts of the ancient Roman author as well as with the perfection of the Sidneian heroines in the *Arcadia*, Philoclea and Pamela.<sup>34</sup> Pamphilia is betrayed by her lover Amphilanthus, whose name too is charged with strong symbolism since it means 'the lover of two'. Thus Pamphilia comes to embody female constancy, and Amphilanthus male inconstancy. In the second part of *Urania*, they undergo a clandestine wedding. Yet resuming his chivalric conquests, Amphilanthus is lured by the Queen of Candia into breaking his vow to Pamphilia and marrying the Princess of Slavonia. Wroth's narrative reaches a tremendous climax when

Pamphilia subsequently agrees to a public marriage with Rodomandro, the King of Tartaria, although the original contract between herself and Amphilanthus is recalled by scattered references throughout the narrative, such as Urania's

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<sup>33</sup> See Quilligan, 'Lady Mary Wroth: Female Authority and the Family Romance', pp. 257-89; and Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, p. 165.

<sup>34</sup> Pamphilia is praised by Christine de Pisan as a 'rare génie'; see Eric Hicks and Thérèse Moreau (eds.), *La Cité des dames* (Paris: Stock/Moyen Age, 1986), p. 111. Josephine Roberts in her introduction to *UI* reminds us that 'her name is associated with that of the classical historian Pamphila, who lived during the reign of Nero (54-68AD) and wrote down the conversations of her learned guests [...] in the form of an extensive commentary' (p. xxxv). As remarked by Elaine V. Beilin in 'Heroic Virtue: Mary Wroth's *Urania* and *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*', Pamphilia is a conflation of Philoclea and Pamela (in *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987], p. 215).



description of Pamphilia as Amphilanthus's 'truest wife' (II: fol. 51).<sup>35</sup>

*Urania* is in the end not only a collection of interwoven sentimental tales and chivalric adventures, but also the imaginative theatre for

one of the most powerful political fantasies of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe — the revival of the Holy Roman empire in the West.<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus's love for each other symbolises the mythic rallying of the Eastern and Western Empires. Thus in Wroth's romance the affairs of the heart coincide with the affairs of geopolitics.

*Clélie*, which had better fortune than *Urania* and did not fall into complete oblivion, has always been read as a *roman à clef*. Written between 1654 and 1660, and composed of ten volumes in the 1973 edition, it has been seen by its contemporary and modern critics as a 'roman-feuilleton' (along the lines of a novel published in serial form in the nineteenth century) or as a 'chronicle' of salon life and court culture in the 1650s.<sup>37</sup>

Scudéry's insertion of the *Carte de Tendre* (see illustration 1) into her romance is a perfect illustration of the relationship between Scudéry's fiction and the literary activities of her circle.<sup>38</sup> The *Carte de Tendre*

<sup>35</sup> Miller, *Changing the Subject*, p. 61.

<sup>36</sup> Roberts, 'Introduction' to *UI*, p. xxxix.

<sup>37</sup> See Marc Fumaroli, 'L'Astrée à Paris: la *Clélie*', in *Le Poète et le roi: Jean de La Fontaine en son siècle* (Paris: Fallois, 1997), p. 220; Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 55; and Chantal Morlet-Chantalat's introduction to the recent edition of *Clélie, Histoire romaine, première partie 1654* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), pp. 1-42.

<sup>38</sup> See James S. Munro, *Mademoiselle de Scudéry and the 'Carte de Tendre'* (Durham: University of Durham, 1986).



provides an allegorical key to the Scudarian anatomy of the human heart; it takes the form of a map composed of 'delightful paths [...] for the excursion of [Madeleine de Scudéry's] friends in the pastimes of love-making'.<sup>39</sup> Yet not all paths are delightful: while the happy few may stroll down to 'Amitié-tendre', others will be sentenced to stay in the 'Lac d'indifférence' or the 'Mer d'inimité'. The *Carte de Tendre* is more specifically interpreted as the product of a circle of friends for whom 'love was an intellectual occupation',<sup>40</sup> and as 'provid[ing] an insight into lived experience, thus demonstrating yet another of the seventeenth century's characteristic blurring of the dividing line between reality and fiction, the continuing dialectic between literature and life'.<sup>41</sup>

It is this 'continuing dialectic between literature and life' that critics have often aimed to illustrate through their analyses of Scudéry's works.<sup>42</sup> They have sought, for instance, to identify real names behind the fictional characters in *Le Grand Cyrus*, and view *Clélie* as a 'dialogue entre l'écrivain et ses contemporains ou ses amis'.<sup>43</sup> While some 'clefs' to *Clélie* are widely accepted, others are more problematic, for Scudéry herself did not provide a 'clef' as she did for *Le Grand Cyrus*.<sup>44</sup> This urge for identifying characters with specific historical figures may lead to 'speculations vaines sinon absurdes', according to Marlies Mueller who, commenting on Scudéry's transposition of contemporary political tensions into *Clélie*, writes:

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<sup>39</sup> Dorothy MacDougall, *Madeleine de Scudéry, Her Romantic Life and Death* (London: Methuen, 1938), p. 73; cited in Munro, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> See Nicole Aronson, *Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, trans. Stuart R. Aronson (Boston: Twayne, 1978), p. 42; cited in Munro, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> Munro, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> See Alain Niderst, *Madeleine de Scudéry, Paul Pellisson et leur monde* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352.

<sup>44</sup> See Mesnard, 'Pour une clef de *Clélie*', pp. 371-408.

Si Mlle de Scudéry offre à ses contemporains une chronique de la Fronde, ce n'est certainement pas par une transposition directe des faits. Quelle serait la distribution hypothétique des rôles? Tarquin représenterait Mazarin, Brutus Condé?<sup>45</sup>

Other critics have suggested that Tarquin was Cardinal de Retz. Debatable as some of these 'clefs' might be, what a compilation of keys teaches us is that Scudéry's choice of a Roman setting, which takes us back to the fall of Tarquin and to the glorious days of the Roman Republic, is to be read with caution and should not be taken at face value. Marlies Mueller's enlightening chapter on *Clélie* demonstrates that Scudéry's concept of republicanism differs utterly from the Roman ideal. On the contrary, Scudéry associates republicanism with political chaos as well as with Tarquin's tyranny; it is the tyranny not of one man only, but of the *vox populi* itself.<sup>46</sup> Her use of the Roman Republic in *Clélie* is in fact twofold. On the one hand, her portrayal of what Marlies Mueller calls 'héroïsme populaire' is a veiled allusion to the blatant failure of the Fronde, a series of civil wars in France (1648-1653) led by French nobles against the power of monarchy.<sup>47</sup> On the other, the triumph of the Roman Republic in *Clélie* conveys Scudéry's commitment to political justice and harmony as defined in Plato's *Republic*, yet stripped of any egalitarian implications. Scudéry is a monarchist, but committed to a monarchy that does not feed

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<sup>45</sup> 'La production romanesque de la post-Fronde: *Clélie* (1654-1661)', in *Les Idées politiques dans le roman héroïque de 1630 à 1670* (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum, 1984), p. 164.

<sup>46</sup> Commenting on the episode where Brutus, in *Clélie*, has become first consul in the Roman senate after the deposal of Tarquin, and is forced to kill his two sons for conspiring against the new government, Marlies Mueller writes: 'Le règne de la populace sous le contrôle faible et divisé de la noblesse est donc marqué par la cruauté, par la tyrannie, par la souffrance, autant que l'était celui de Tarquin'. She goes on to say: 'notre auteur abaisse et dégrade l'héroïsme populaire pour faire ressortir le rôle marquant que jouent les hommes de "grand esprit qui s'efforcent d'amuser le peuple" (*Clélie*, vol. 5, p. 20)', *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>47</sup> On the Fronde, see DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, pp. 36-42.



on despotism and corruption.<sup>48</sup> Her choice of a Roman setting is, in a sense, purely aesthetic, reflecting the early modern humanists' enthusiasm for the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus, which they saw as a golden age of moral values.

The main action in *Clélie* is more unified and less complex than the action in *Uranie*. The two protagonists are Clélie and Aronce. Like Pamphilia, Clélie is no ordinary heroine. She has a legendary past which holds an honourable rank in the 'galleries' of triumphant women. Christine de Pisan, in *La Cité des dames*, characterises her as a paragon of female courage. As for Aronce, unlike Amphilanthus, he epitomises male constancy; but like Amphilanthus, apart from a few instances, he is more often represented as a lover than as a chivalric hero.

Partly based on Livy's account of Clélius's exile and struggle against the tyrant Tarquin, *Clélie* opens on the blessing of the two protagonists' union which is suddenly interrupted by an earthquake, during which Clélie is saved by one of her unwanted suitors, who is favoured by Clélius and will vainly persuade her to marry him. The earthquake therefore marks the beginning of a series of obstacles to the union of Clélie and Aronce, among them the suspicious collaboration of Aronce's father (Porsenna) with Tarquin and Tullie, the chief enemies of the Roman Republic. By association, Aronce is unavoidably regarded by Clélius as unworthy of his daughter as compared with Horace, a Roman citizen. The main narrative is thus as much the political story of the restoration of the Roman Republic as the sentimental tale of Aronce and Clélie who will eventually be reunited — a sentimental tale, which like the many other

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<sup>48</sup> 'Il est certain que Mlle de Scudéry a toujours souhaité la réconciliation nationale et particulièrement aspiré à une union entre Condé et Mazarin autour de la personne royale.' (Maître, *Les Précieuses*, p. 204.)



inset stories in the romance, lays emphasis on heroicism in both the private and public spheres.<sup>49</sup>

### *III. Urania and Clélie: storytelling and the romance traditions*

Wroth adopts the same method of presentation as Sidney in the manuscripts of the *Old Arcadia*; she divides her romance into books, but does not include, as in the *Heptaméron*, *L'Astrée* or *Clélie*, titles for her inset stories, letters or songs.<sup>50</sup> The narrative in *Clélie* is more tightly structured, and shares more characteristics with the *Heptaméron* and *L'Astrée* than *Urania* does. Indeed, the predominance of 'conversations' (seventy against fifteen inset stories) demonstrates its debt to the works of Marguerite de Navarre and Honoré d'Urfé, where the inset stories turn into philosophical debates on human values (love, constancy, jealousy, tyranny, etc.). The main difference between Wroth's characters and those from the *Heptaméron*, *L'Astrée* and *Clélie* is that the former are storytellers only, not 'devisants' like the latter. Nevertheless, Nathalie Grande's remark that in *Clélie* secondary stories are *exempla*<sup>51</sup> applies equally to Wroth's inset tales (stories within stories),<sup>52</sup> whose anecdotes may often remind the reader of the *Heptaméron*. Josephine Roberts remarks that Wroth might have had access to either the French version or the incomplete anonymous translation: *The Queen of Navarre's Tales: Containing Verie Pleasant*

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<sup>49</sup> See James F. Gaines, 'Lucrece, Junie and Clélie: Burdens of Female Exemplarity', *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History*, 17 (1990), pp. 518-9.

<sup>50</sup> There is, however, one exception: 'Lindamira's Complaint', (U1, 502-5). Commenting on the overall structure of *Urania*, Josephine Roberts suggests that Wroth's 'two-part romance had a number of precedents, ranging from the early Elizabethan black-letter chivalric tales to *Don Quixote*' (U1, p. xxx).

<sup>51</sup> In *Stratégies de romancières*, p. 347.

<sup>52</sup> In 'A Pack of Lies' (p. 83), Jennifer Lee Carrell describes *Urania* as 'a many-layered Chinese Box of tales; sometimes the narration shows two, even three levels of story (within story [within story]) within the primary narrator's tale'.

*Discourses of Fortunate Lovers* (1597).<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the fact that Geoffrey Fenton had dedicated his translation of Belleforest's *Discours tragiques* (1567) to Wroth's grandmother makes it likely that she was acquainted with the love-tale tradition on the Continent.<sup>54</sup>

While we know with certainty that *L'Astrée* was the favourite work of Georges and Madeleine de Scudéry and constituted a major source for the disquisitions on *questioni d'amori* in both *Le Grand Cyrus* and *Clélie*, we can only grope for clues in the case of Wroth.<sup>55</sup> Dedications represent a goldmine of information. Josephine Roberts's mention that Wroth's dedicatee, Susan Herbert de Vere, had 'a strong interest in prose fiction, especially continental romances' and that 'she and her husband were the dedicatees of a number of works, including the translations of *Amadis* (1618-19) and Honoré d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* (1620)',<sup>56</sup> has induced critics to think Wroth was familiar with the French pastoral romance. Naomi Miller argues that Wroth borrowed from *L'Astrée* the famous scene where D'Urfé elaborates the theme of romantic love between the goddess Astrée and her lover Céladon disguised as a nymph. A similar scenario can be found in Sidney's much earlier work *Arcadia*, where Philoclea and Pyrocles (disguised as an Amazon) have become best friends; but the name of the transvestite hero, Leonia, in *Urania* closely recalls the name

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<sup>53</sup> See Roberts, 'Introduction' to *UI*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>54</sup> See Hackett, *Women and Renaissance Fiction*, p. 40.

<sup>55</sup> D'Urfé is praised by Georges de Scudéry as 'le grand & incomparable D'Urfé [...] admirable en tout: il est second en inventions, & en inventions raisonnables: tout y est merveilleux, tout y est beau: & ce qui est le plus important, tout y est naturel et vraysemblable: Mais entre tant de rares choses, celle que j'estime le plus est qu'il sçait toucher si délicatement les passions, qu'on peut l'appeller le Peintre de l'ame', in *Ibrahim, ou l'illustre Bassa dédié à Mademoiselle de Rohan, première partie* (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, 1641), 8<sup>o</sup>, pp. I2<sup>v</sup>-I3<sup>v</sup>. And to the reader of *Almahide, ou l'esclave Reine* (attributed to Madeleine de Scudéry, although contested by some scholars), the author writes: 'il ne me reste plus qu'à vous advertir, qu'aussi bien que dans la merveilleuse *Astrée*, dont je feray toujours mon Modele, vous trouverez assez de Vers dans cet Ouvrage [...]' (Paris: Augustin Courbé, 1660), vol. 1, 8<sup>o</sup>, not paginated.

<sup>56</sup> Roberts, 'Introduction' to *UI*, p. xviii.



of the Astrean nymph Leonide. Parallels can also be drawn between the inconstancy of Amphilanthus and that of Hylas in *L'Astrée*. Yet another clue may be found in the name of a Uranian heroine in one inset story: Lindamira. Although the tale of Lindamira has automatically been construed as an autobiographical allegory, and the name Lindamira as a near-anagram of Lady Mary (*i.e.* Wroth herself), we may also argue that Lindamira is the female counterpart of *L'Astrée's* constant lover Lindamor, who is betrayed by the disloyal nymph Galatea.<sup>57</sup>

Wroth and Scudéry had both read *Amadis de Gaule*, *Orlando Furioso* and Montemayor's *Diana*.<sup>58</sup> And like Scudéry, it is possible that Wroth had heard of the Italian work, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* by Francesco Colonna, written in the 1460s although only published in 1499.<sup>59</sup> There is not much evidence that Wroth had read this work;<sup>60</sup> yet what is of interest is that Colonna's work is mainly known for being 'one of the first literary works, richly illustrated, to deal fairly systematically

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<sup>57</sup> For Lindamira as Mary Wroth, see Carrell, 'A pack of Lies', pp. 92-3.

<sup>58</sup> Ariosto's epic is mentioned in the preface to *Ibrahim*, and we also know that Sidney owned a copy of Sir John Harington's translation. Wroth's female magician is named after Melyssea in *Orlando Furioso*, although the manuscript shows that she had first thought of calling her Felicia, the name of the enchantress in *Amadis de Gaule* (see Roberts, 'Introduction' to *U1*, p. xxvi).

<sup>59</sup> Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 2nd edn. (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 23.

<sup>60</sup> On the influence of the sixteenth-century translations of *Hypnerotomachia* into French, see Anthony Blunt, 'The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* in Seventeenth-Century France', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* [1937-1938], p. 118-9). The existence of an English translation (1592) suggests that Colonna's work must have aroused some interest in England. The opening of the translator's dedicatory preface is interesting: it is addressed 'to the Right Honourable Robert Devorax, Earle of Essex and Ewe, Viscount of Hereford [...]': 'When I had determined (right Honourable) to dedicate this book, to the everlyving vertues of that matchless knight Syr Philip Sidney; me thought that I could not finde out a more Noble personage than yourselfe' (sig. A2<sup>r</sup>).



with the hieroglyph'.<sup>61</sup> As a result it is rarely treated as a romance, but rather as a source for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, with its many scenes of enchantment, Wroth's romance is undeniably closer to certain continental models, such as *Amadis de Gaule* and Montemayor's *Diana*, than is *Clélie*.<sup>63</sup> *Clélie*, by contrast, belongs to a new type of fiction whose principles are defined in the text itself (C8, 120-148), reformulating those dictated in the preface to *Ibrahim*. The preface dismisses romances like *Orlando Furioso* as examples of 'fauceté grossière' which 'nous esloignent de la vray-semblance', because they 'produisent des monstres, en pensant nous faire voir des miracles'. At the end of the preface, the principles of an acceptable narrative style are given as follows:

Je vous conjure encor de n'oublier point que le style narratif ne doit pas estre trop enflé, non plus que celui des conversations ordinaires: que plus il est facile plus il est beau; qu'il doit couler comme des fleuves, & non bondir comme des torrens; & que moins il a de contrainte, plus il a de perfection. J'ay donc tasché d'observer une juste mediocrité, entre l'eslevation vicieuse, & la bassesse rampante; je me suis retenu dans la narration; & me suis laissé libre dans les harangues, & dans les

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<sup>61</sup> Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 23.

<sup>62</sup> 'The title means something like Poliphilo's dream-fight with Eros. The complicated novel tells the story of Poliphilo's pursuit of his divine Polia in a dream. She herself is an allegorical personification of antiquity. The scene is set in pastoral landscapes of fauns and nymphs, gardens and forests dotted with monuments and picturesque ruins.' (Daly, *op. cit.*, p. 23). In that respect, it is highly probable that Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones were influenced by Colonna's minute descriptions of architecture. Here we are thinking in particular of the minutely detailed setting of *The Masque of Beauty* (1608) by Jonson and of *Tethys' Festival* (1610) by Samuel Daniel. It is possible that Wroth saw the latter; as for the former, she had performed in it.

<sup>63</sup> See Carrell, 'A Pack of Lies', p. 90.

passions; & sans parler comme les extravagans, ny comme les peuples, j'ay essayé de parler, comme les honnestes gens.<sup>64</sup>

These precepts are in keeping with those of contemporary theoreticians of the French tongue, such as Malherbe, Vaugelas and Bouhours. In terms of content, however, *Clélie* does not totally exclude 'le merveilleux'. There are no giants or scenes of enchantment as in *Urania*, but there are shipwrecks, oracles and plots with conventional denouements that pertain to the romance tradition.

Yet by associating themselves with the romance tradition, *Urania* and *Clélie* put themselves at a disadvantage of sorts. Both Wroth and Scudéry were, in Helen Hackett's words,

writing within a genre whose conventions had hitherto been shaped by male writers — yet one of those conventions was a concept of romance as 'feminine'. What happens, then, when a woman writer enters this 'feminine' genre, stepping into an already feminized authorial role? Does it produce a text which evinces a strongly feminine point of view? — perhaps, even, an early feminist text?<sup>65</sup>

Ironically, Wroth and Scudéry chose a genre which by and large was discarded as unethical according to early modern criteria of what one ought to read, and was to be dismissed by modern critics as stylistically unbearable and therefore unreadable, still more so when these works are regarded as *romans à clef*. It is only in recent years that they have begun to emerge from the low esteem to which they consigned themselves as much by association as by their actual narrative techniques.

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<sup>64</sup> Not paginated.

<sup>65</sup> 'Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the "Femininity" of Romance', p. 50.



#### IV. Modern studies of Urania and Clélie

Because there has been more work done on Scudéry than on Wroth, I shall first start with *Clélie*.

Critical approaches to Scudéry's work have changed considerably over the years.<sup>66</sup> I shall briefly recapitulate the most recent studies of *Clélie*, among them *La Clélie de Mademoiselle de Scudéry; de l'épopée à la gazette: un discours féminin de la gloire* (1994) by Chantal Morlet-Chantalat, bringing together the many chapters and articles that have been written on *Clélie* throughout the twentieth century. To begin with, Morlet-Chantalat develops René Godenne's brief comments, in his study of Madeleine de Scudéry's romances,<sup>67</sup> on *Clélie*'s central themes (*i.e.* 'amour', 'amitié', 'condition féminine', 'l'art romanesque', 'la morale' and 'la vie sociale') and on its non-narrative elements (*i.e.* conversations, letters, descriptions of châteaux, gardens, portraits and paintings), and analyses *Clélie*'s narrative complexity in the light of seventeenth-century theories of 'vraisemblance' in prose fiction. Her reading of *Clélie* offers a thorough re-examination of Godenne's conclusion that *Clélie* constitutes a radical shift from the traditional 'roman d'aventures' to 'une oeuvre galante', a shift which is similar to that between the epic and pastoral genres, between the great exploits of chivalry on the battlefield and the great exploits of wit at court, between the glorification of male heroism and that of the courtier or 'honneste homme'. Rather than claiming, like Godenne, that *Clélie* marks 'la mort du roman', she draws our attention to 'la place qu'occupe la femme' (*op. cit.*, 167), in other words to the birth of the heroine. In the wake of Morlet-Chantalat, Nathalie Grande (in *Stratégies de romancières: de Clélie à La Princesse de Clèves 1654-1678*,

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<sup>66</sup> See Chantal Morlet-Chantalat, *Bibliographie des écrivains de la France: Madeleine de Scudéry* (Rome: Memini, 1997).

<sup>67</sup> *Les Romans de Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, Genève: Droz, 1983.



1999) and Myriam Maître (in *Les Précieuses: naissance des femmes de lettres en France au dix-septième siècle*, 1999) blaze the trail for a study of the rise of the novelistic heroine — which, as we shall see, can be extended to a reading of Wroth's fiction.

Over the last two decades, Wroth's work has been the subject of many articles — many of which are compiled in *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England* (1991) — as well as Naomi Miller's major book *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (1996), and very recently a chapter on *Urania* in Helen Hackett's *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (2000).

Naomi Miller seeks to 'locate her reading of Wroth's texts among a variety of cultural as well as theoretical discourses' (p. 3). While she engages in an Irigarayan reading of Wroth's works, she also analyses them in the light of literary works by early modern English and continental authors, and of non-literary writings, such as 'female-authored diaries, letters, and mothers' advice books, as well as [...] polemical pamphlets, and political correspondence' (p. 2). Meanwhile, Helen Hackett places her study of *Urania* within the Iberian and English traditions of the Renaissance romance, both redefining the concept of femininity in the texts under scrutiny and presenting these fictions as feminocentric.

I have chosen to restrict my discussion of Wroth and Scudéry to the study of one genre practised by both, which in the case of *Urania* and *Clélie*, as we have seen, may be referred to either as *roman à clef* or 'romance'. Because I do not intend to read *Urania* and *Clélie* merely as the masked autobiographies of their authors, I will use the word 'romance' more often than '*roman à clef*'. By means of a detailed analysis of the language, imagery and tropes used by Wroth and Scudéry, I aim to discover whether these texts are in some sense characteristic of aristocratic women's writing in Europe, in other words to present their works within

the context of cross-cultural exchanges, the best expression of which, as we shall see throughout the thesis, are the ongoing debates that lie at the core of the *Querelle des Femmes*.

## VI. The 'Querelle des Femmes'

The origins of the *Querelle des Femmes*, sparked off by the first response to misogynous literature, began with the Quarrel of the Roses, an attack initiated by Christine de Pisan in a letter to 'Jean de Montreuil [who] felt compelled to circulate a little treatise praising the *Romance of the Rose*'.<sup>68</sup> Christine de Pisan continues her defence of women in *La Cité des dames*, which contains a catalogue of illustrious women, where she rewrites Boccaccio's characterisation of female virtue as 'exceptional' in his *De Claris Mulieribus* by portraying the moral excellence of women as 'universal'.<sup>69</sup> The list of apologies for the female sex written under the aegis of Boccaccio is endless. As Ian Maclean puts it,

There is much repetition and mimetism in the *Querelle des Femmes* not only in form, but also in content: the same historical facts and personages are examined in different lights, the same verses of the Bible are glossed, traditional proofs of excellence and inferiority are reversed.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See Moira Ferguson (ed.), 'Introduction' to *First Feminists: British Women Writers 1578-1799* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1985), p. 1; and Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski (ed.), 'Introduction' to Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee (trans.), *Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan* (London and New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. xiii.

<sup>69</sup> Alcuin Blamires, C. W. Marx and Karen Pratt (eds.), 'Introduction' to *Women Defamed and Women Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. xvii.

<sup>70</sup> *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature 1610-1652* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 62.



It is both interesting and important to note that Christine de Pisan's response to *The Romance of the Rose* is not an anomaly in the Western history of women. Whether or not her female successors from the early modern period were aware of her writings, there is a significant number of panegyrics of women written by women, some of which are direct responses to specific misogynous writings. For example, in Italy, Lucrezia Marinella's *La nobilità et l'eccellenza delle donne, co' diffetti et mancamenti degli uomini* (1600) is a response to Giuseppe Passi's *Dei donneschi diffetti* (1599); and in England, one of the most notable examples is Ester Sowernam's answer to Joseph Swetnam's attack against the female sex.<sup>71</sup> While male apologists often start off their defences of women with a catalogue of female exemplars, women authors often begin with deconstructing the commonly held view that woman is inferior to man by reversing the misogynistic interpretation of the creation of man and woman in the Bible.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, women authors' prefaces, such as Margaret Tyler's 'Epistle to the Reader' in her translation of Diego Ortuñez de Calahorra's Spanish romance, *Espejo de Principes y Cavalleros* (1562),<sup>73</sup> or Louise Labé's letter written in 1555 to 'Mademoiselle Clémence de Bourges Lionnoize',<sup>74</sup> serve as 'an opportunity to protest the view that women were intellectually unfit'<sup>75</sup> for

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<sup>71</sup> See Joseph Swetnam, *The Arraignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women*, London: Edward Allde, 1615; London: J. Smeeton, 1807, 4<sup>0</sup>; and Ester Sowernam, *Esther Hath Hang'd Haman*, London: Nicholas Bourne, 1617; London: J. Smeeton, 1807, 4<sup>0</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> 'Aquinas is an important source for the formulation and resolution of questions about the theological status of women; it seems that he is also used by some Reformers, whose discussion of this topic does not differ markedly from that of Catholic writers' (Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*, p. 2).

<sup>73</sup> Translated as *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood*, (London: Thomas East, 1578), 4<sup>0</sup>. Margaret Tyler's preface and epistles are anthologised in *First Feminists*, pp. 51-7.

<sup>74</sup> See Enzo Guidici (ed.), *Oeuvres complètes de Louise Labé*, Genève: Droz, 1981, pp. 17-20.

<sup>75</sup> See Ferguson, 'Introduction' to *First Feminists*, p. 9.



works of the mind, and prefigure Scudéry's 'Harangue' by Sappho to Erinne in *Les Femmes Illustres* (1642).

These defences of women, whether by men or women, constitute significant sources for the understanding of the early modern construction of feminine identity in both Protestant and Catholic Europe. A parallel reading of these defences shows that on many points Protestant and Catholic authors agree — a congruence which is certainly inherited from their common reading of the influential works of Juan Luis Vives and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim.<sup>76</sup> On the subject of marriage, they all advocate 'conjugal love and respect, [...], and, above all else, fidelity'.<sup>77</sup> On the subject of women's apparel, they advocate sobriety and modesty, and consistently define one 'dominant virtue' for each sex. Chastity is attributed to woman, and courage to man:

Chastity and courage are seen, therefore, in some sense as opposite virtues, when placed on a sexual spectrum [...]. Men may be virtuous in practising eloquence, liberality, courage, magnificence; women by being very silent [...], economical, chaste and modest.<sup>78</sup>

What Ian Maclean formulates as a 'kind of sexual ethics' (*op. cit.*, p. 19) is what I will term throughout my dissertation 'bienséance' or decorum.

One of the important aspects of the *Querelle des Femmes* is the acknowledgment by apologists of the fair sex of women's great ability

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<sup>76</sup> *A Very Fruteful and Pleasante Booke Called the Instruction of a Christen Woman, Made Fyrst in Latyne by the Right Famous Clerke Master Lewes Vives, and Tourned out of Latyne into Englishe by Rycharde Hyrde* (London: n.p., 1557), 4<sup>o</sup>, first published in Latin in 1523; and *A Treatise of the Nobilitie and Excellencye of Womankynde, Translated out of Latine into Englysshe by David Clapman* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1542), 8<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*, p. 108.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

(even greater than men's) to govern states as well as their right to occupy the realm of arts and sciences. This point was exemplified in particular by women in Wroth's and Scudéry's lifetimes. Both writers witnessed 'the most glorious officially authorized exercise of political influence by a woman',<sup>79</sup> in the figure of Elizabeth I in the case of Wroth, and in the figure of Anne of Austria in the case of Scudéry;<sup>80</sup> and thus these women, in the wake of their medieval and Renaissance female predecessors,<sup>81</sup> formed part of the emergence of the woman of letters.

Within the historico-cultural parameters I have traced in this introduction, my thesis aims to examine the extent to which the discourse underpinning the *Querelle des femmes* permeates Wroth's and Scudéry's representations of women in *Urania* and *Clélie*. It proposes to analyse the ways in which Wroth and Scudéry exploit a discourse on women that was available to them through the literary and the visual arts. As we shall see in

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<sup>79</sup> DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, p. 26.

<sup>80</sup> After the death of Queen Elizabeth, the role of Anne of Denmark was an important one: as wife of King James, she 'was not, as in the last four decades, the monarch but the royal female person whose role merely established her as the principal member of the female gender in England. Nevertheless this position held some significance for ambitious noblewomen, for Anne of Denmark, as royal consort, required the formation of a new and second court, the court of the queen.' (Leeds Barroll, 'The Court of the First Stuart Queen', in Linda Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, [Cambridge University Press, 1991], p. 191). And her court was to have a 'potential influence upon English culture' (*ibid.*, p. 192). To the French tableau of the 'femme forte', one must add of course the Frondeuses, among whom Madame de Longueville, the stepmother of *Clélie*'s dedicatee. Although *Clélie* is a 'post-Fronde' work, the title and Scudéry's dedication to the descendant of a Frondeuse clearly inscribe the work in a new type of fiction, that of female heroism.

<sup>81</sup> A few of their predecessors were, for example, Marie de France, the Comtesse de Dié (a troubadour), Christine de Pisan, Anne de France, Anne de Graville, Marie Stuart, Elizabeth I, Marguerite de Navarre, Catherine des Roches, Gabrielle Coignard, Louise Labé, Pernelle de Guillet, Mary Sidney Herbert and Georgette de Montenay. Unfortunately, Madeleine de Scudéry does not mention any of these authors in her 'Story of Hésiode' (C8). She names both male and female ancient authors but only male modern authors such as Ronsard, Du Bellay and Belleau. The only contemporary female writer she mentions is the Comtesse de La Suze (See Chapter Six, pp. 207-12).



the following chapters, *Urania* and *Clélie* bring to life the female exemplars extolled not only in defences of the fair sex but also in Petrarchan literature. Not all female characters in *Urania* and *Clélie* are heroines (Chapter VIII). Nevertheless, Wroth's and Scudéry's focus is clearly on the delineation of a female literary and political haven where their heroines are given a more important part than their heroes, and where the former appear in a variety of roles. Some of these roles are in keeping with the romance tradition, and others are subversive of it, being roles that were often denied to women in fiction as well as in real life. Thus, from paragons of eloquence in the context of a patriarchal society (Chapter I), Uranian and Scudarian heroines successively metamorphose into apologists for true love (Chapter II); into rulers in the realm of the human heart and of politics (Chapter III); into enchantresses — in both literal and figurative senses (Chapter IV); into confidantes for their female friends (Chapter V); into poetesses (Chapters VI and VII); and finally into effigies of beauty and of martyrdom (IX).



## **Part One**

**The expression of female virtue  
in the fictive societies of *Urania* and *Clélie***

It becometh not a mayde to talke, where hyr father and mother be in communication about hyr maryage: but to leave all that care, and charge wholly unto them [...]. And lette her thynke that hyr father and mother will provide not lesse diligently for hyr, then she wolde for hyr selfe: but much better, by the reason they have more experience and wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

If a maiden's silence concerning her matrimonial future is a signifier of her virtue, then the Uranian and Scudarian heroine cannot be called virtuous. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter One, she fails altogether to obey the precepts outlined in the above quotation. Yet despite this apparent breach of decorum, she embodies, as Wroth and Scudéry keep reminding us, moral excellence. This tension between traditional and less traditional codes of virtue is confirmed in the heroine's apology for true love (Chapter Two). But more significantly, her apology for true love endows her with androgynous qualities that link her to a certain extent with the figure of the Amazon (Chapter Three).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, sig. P2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of early modern views on Amazons, see Simon Shepherd in *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (Brighton: Harvester, 1981). While Simon Shepherd distinguishes between Amazons and warrior women who respectively represent evil and good in, for instance, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, I am here using the term as an alternative to 'androgynous', of which I give a definition at the beginning of Chapter Three, pp. 111-5.



## Chapter One

### *Urania and Clélie* as mirrors of family bonds

*Urania* and *Clélie* introduce us into a world of heroines who are not solely the protagonists of happy or tragic love tales, but active participants in the marriage debate. Love and marriage are a conventional feature that accounts for the narrative complexity of early modern prose fiction. Wroth and Scudéry reinforce this complexity by presenting *Urania* and *Clélie* as mirrors of family bonds (section I). Their focus on family bonds unveils a thoroughly institutionalised society, as we shall see next through an analysis of the representation of heroines as daughters and lovers in the two texts (section II). Lastly, the treatment of virtuous women as daughters and lovers raises another issue which I have called the paradox of the Uranian and Scudarian heroine. In other words, section III aims to measure the extent to which heroinism is possible in the context of the early modern marriage debate.

#### I. The marriage *topos* in the two works

The intricacy of the Uranian and Scudarian cobweb of family bonds reflects that of the two narratives themselves. Their numerous inset stories are not only tales of chivalric heroism as in the *New Arcadia*, or reflections on Neoplatonic love as in *L'Astrée*, but also discursive illustrations of the marriage issue as debated in the early modern period. The marriage *topos* has thus a significant part to play in the unfolding of the Uranian and Scudarian narratives which, like the Iberian and Italian romances, 'use the

family as a structure which offers both continuity and variety, as children grow to adulthood and lost relatives are rediscovered'.<sup>3</sup>

In her edition of *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, Josephine Roberts has provided the reader with genealogical tables representing 'the major characters' in the whole fiction, namely the children and grandchildren of the King of Morea, Naples, and Romania. Throughout the text, the reader is made to behold the different stages of the main heroines' lives: from daughters they become mothers in the course of the narrative. Already in the first part of *Urania*, we are told of Dalinea's pregnancy. In the second, we learn that Urania and Steriamus now have a family, and that Pamphilia and Rodomandro, the Tartarian King, have also had a son who died very young. *Urania* lays emphasis on what might be termed family spirit — in a way which, as I have briefly discussed in the General Introduction (pp. 20-1), Wroth's biographers have found significant, since the romance resounds with autobiographical references, particularly in its depiction of 'the brave and discreet Queene of Naples' (*U2*, 22, l. 15).

In the romance the Queen is referred to as a figure of authority in the education of the young princes and princesses (*U2*, 22, ll. 12-7). She is, as the text repeatedly asserts in clusters of grammatical superlatives, 'the most learned, most excellent, and incomparable Queene of Naples, [Amphilanthus's] most renowned and all-excelling mother' (*U2*, 187, ll. 11-3). When the children and the niece of the Queen of Naples are assembled at last at her court, we are offered an idyllic family picture which may remind the reader of the pastoral gatherings in *Arcadia* or *L'Astrée*:

The matchles Queenes remaind att home and kept their pretty delights: Urania and Pamphilia sporting with the youngest princes

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<sup>3</sup> Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, p. 56.



and waulking abroud into the sweet; and more and more with de[li]casies intising them into them, relating their passed adventures, and all thier hapinesses and misfortunes. (*U2*, 384, ll. 38-42).

Thus to return to the genealogical tables, it might be said that they synoptically show how characters are bound to each other by either consanguineous or marital law.

A similar table could be drawn to demonstrate the idea that the marriage *topos* also contributes to the narrative complexity in *Clélie*. Its family trees spread out their intricate pattern as the narrative unfolds and reveals the main characters' familial relationships to each other in an often theatrical way — unexpected revelations of identity abruptly putting an end to Love's rivalries or ongoing jealousies and antagonisms. After the first half of *Clélie*, we discover in Volume Six that one of Clélie's wooers, the Prince of Numidie, is in fact her brother who was lost during a tempest when still a child. From Volume Six onwards, he will bear his Roman name, Octave. Very early in the romance, we learn that Horace is also, although indirectly, connected to Clélie's father Clélius: he is the son of the woman whom Clélius once loved. The news whets the jealousy of Clélius's present wife Sulpicie, and thus reinforces her coldness towards Horace, who is a prospective husband for Clélie. Finally, in the ultimate volume, both Plotine and her audience get to know Plotine's real identity; she turns out to be the sister of Horace and Clélie, being the daughter of Horace's mother and Clélie's father. Horace mistakenly interprets these news as a sight of fortune's favour, and comes to think that his newly found sister may help him in convincing Clélie to marry him. As expected, such genealogical intricacy contributes significantly to Scudéry's portrait of a female

community, in which Sulpicie and Plotine, for instance, act not just as mothers or sisters but chiefly as ‘confidantes’<sup>4</sup> and notable interlocutors in the marriage debate.<sup>5</sup>

Yet if the marriage *topos* lies at the heart of our two romances in conformity with the romance tradition, it also, in both texts, hinders the unfolding of the main narrative at the very beginning of both *Urania* and *Clélie* — a hindrance marked by their conventional *in medias res* opening. Although it is a well-known fact that the opening pages of Wroth’s fiction pay homage to those of Sidney’s *Arcadia*, the reader is soon made to hear a love tale narrated by Perissus to Urania: it is the story of Limena, his beloved, married against her will to a violent man. The two lovers have therefore been severed from each other and their love impeded by the common seventeenth-century practice of marriages of convenience:

The Duke (father to the best, and truest beauty) would yet bestow that upon a great Lord in the Country, truly for powerfull command and meanes, a fit match for any, but the wonder of women, since none could without much flatterie to himselfe, thinke he might aspire to the blessing of being accounted worthie to be her servant, much lesse her husband. (*U1*, 5, ll. 29-33 )

This first inset story, the outcome of which the reader learns some sixty pages later when Perissus and Limena are reunited, marks the main themes underpinning the whole of *Urania*, such as women’s obedience to fathers

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter Five, section IX, pp. 198-201.

<sup>5</sup> The role of Plotine in the marriage debate is analysed in Chapter Two, section VII, pp. 99-105.



(and to brothers when the father is absent), patriarchal power, women's martyrdom and lastly women's glory.<sup>6</sup>

In *Clélie*, too, the marriage of the protagonists, Clélie and Aronce, is postponed, not by the first interwoven story but by an earthquake. This provides a theatrical *in medias res* opening, which separates the two lovers and sets in motion a series of adventures narrated as stories within stories mainly concerned with the themes of love and marriage. The earthquake has caused a great turmoil, which is reinforced by the fact that Scudéry uses a commonplace metaphor that associates the imagery of natural chaos with the depiction of 'the stormy passions of man' and, by extension, of political disorder.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, this natural event not only separates Clélie and Aronce from each other, but anticipates the subsequent hindrances which will prevent them from being together again until political order reigns anew in the Republic of Rome. In other words, it forestalls Clélius's resolution not to marry Clélie to Aronce, since he considers him unworthy of her:

*Ha! Clelie, s'escria t'il, ce n'est pas de cette sorte que les Filles de vostre qualité vivent à Rome! mais afin de vous eslever le coeur, & de vous donner plus de confusion de vostre foiblesse, souvenez vous que vous estes du plus illustre Sang de la Terre: souvenez vous, dis-je, que la Noblesse de la Race dont vous estes, est plus vieille que Rome; & que si la fameuse Ville d'Albe subsistoit encore, la Couronne vous en apartiendrait. Mais sans aller chercher des marques de Grandeur dans les Tombeaux des Rois dont je suis descendu [...], il suffit que vous*

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<sup>6</sup> On the role of brothers in *Urania*, see Quilligan, 'Lady Mary Wroth: Female Authority and the Family Romance', pp. 267-9. On female martyrdom, see the case of Limena, which I discuss in Chapter Nine, section XII, pp. 386-9.

<sup>7</sup> See E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, 2nd edn. (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 113.

soyez ma Fille, pour trouver fort estrange que vous soyez capable de foiblesse que je vous reproche. (*Cl*, 440-1)

The exclamatory opening of this paragraph, emphasised by the anaphoric 'souvenez vous', itself introducing the lexicons of hyperbole and of patriotism, sets the tone of fatherly indignation which dominates most of *Clélie*'s dialogues between male rulers and their daughters. Indeed, Clélius's Roman pride makes him associate female decorum with patriotism:

Cependant j'ay à vous dire, que quoy qu'Aronce ait du merite, je vous *deffends* de le regarder jamais, que comme *un ingrat*. (443)

[Horace] est le seul homme du monde que je puis consentir que vous espousiez. Ce qui me le fait souhaiter, c'est qu'il est admirablement *honneste homme*; qu'il est *Romain*; qu'il est Fils d'un Amy que j'ay fort aimé; & qu'il est *ennemy de Tarquin*. Pour Aronce, je sçay qu'il a mille Grandes qualitez; *mais* puis qu'il est *inconnu*, & ingrat, je ne veux pas non seulement qu'il tourne les yeux vers vous, mais je vous *deffends* mesme de luy parler, jusques à ce que vous soyez Femme d'Horace. (444)

The two verbal interdictions reinforce this interweaving of patriarchal and patriotic discourses in the marriage controversy. Marriages of convenience, as we know, were, in high circles, defined as political unions or at least as decorous alliances. As the above quotation suggests, when 'two households [are] both alike in dignity', but 'from an ancient grudge, break to new



mutiny',<sup>8</sup> the love of a Capulet's daughter and a Montagu's son will inevitably be endangered by the parental feud, that is by their own name and birth. Unlike Aronce, who does not know his origins at this stage of the narrative, Horace has, in Clélius's eyes, all the required virtues to be Clélie's husband, those of being an 'honneste homme', a Roman and an enemy of Tarquin, and later 'Liberateur de Rome':

Quoy (luy dit-il à demy bas, avec beaucoup de chagrin) vous osez paroistre triste, lors que je vous amene le Liberateur de Rome, & vous avez l'audace de me faire voir dans vos yeux des marques de l'opiniastre & injuste passion que vous avez dans l'ame. Clelie entendant parler son Pere de cette sorte, rougit, & baissa les yeux.  
(C9, 4)

An identical discourse can be found in *Urania*, as we are told about Perselina who was not married to the man she loved because he was 'a stranger', 'Achayan' and not 'Macedonian' (*U1*, 527, ll. 13-7). Aronce closely resembles this 'stranger', since when his real identity is made known to Clélius, his case becomes worse: his name and birth apparel him with the cloak of treason, as his rival Horace points out, when he is begging for Clélie's love:

Sa propre naissance est un obstacle invincible à sa felicité, puis que le Roy son Pere ne luy permettra jamais de vo[u]s espouser, & que selon toutes les aparences, Porsenna allant devenir ennemy

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<sup>8</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, in Horace Howard Furness (ed.), *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1873), vol. 1, 'Prologue', lines 1 and 3.

de Rome, Clelius ne voudra plus luy mesme que vous pensiez à Aronce. (C6, 714-5)

In his statement Horace clearly reasserts the father's role in the marriage debate, as Horace thinks in gendered terms: authority comes from the patriarchal voice embodying the will and law that shape the seventeenth-century woman's matrimonial future.

Thus, while fictive marriages appear as the *sine qua non* that generates the inner dynamics of both *Urania* and *Clélie*, as though these marriages themselves begot the narrative labyrinth of stories within stories, the above remarks also pave the way for a discussion of the father-daughter relationship within these narratives. This relationship emerges as central whenever the marriage issue arises, since a daughter needs to seek her father's (or brother's) agreement if she wishes to marry the man she loves. This invariably triggers climactic scenes, in which heroines are silenced by the patriarchal voice, and transforms both romances into meditations on the nature of patriarchy itself.

## II. Women as daughters

*Urania* teems with examples of female characters 'urged' into marriage by their fathers, and consequently often 'cast away by fortune':

'I am,' saide she, 'Wife to a Knight married against my will unto him by my brothers command, whom I obeyed having no father; he was a man of great estate, but no way handsome.' (U1, 408, ll. 22-4)



We learn of daughters ‘shut up’ in towers by their fathers or brothers,<sup>9</sup> and come to understand ‘the calculations of scheming parents’,<sup>10</sup> who have ‘a cruel and tyrannical power over their children’ (*UI*, 43, ll. 22-3).

Similarly, in *Clélie*, a daughter’s obedience to her father or brother is expected by society. When Clélius resolves not to give Clélie to Aronce, Aronce requests him never to marry Clélie to his rival, Horace. To this her father replies with the utmost vehemence, as he exclaims that ‘[sa] Fille est sous [sa] puissance’, thereby reasserting his patriarchal power over his daughter (*CI*, 454). Horace too thinks that Clélie cannot but obey since her condition as a woman requires obedience, according to the patriarchal law whose subtext we can infer from the following lines:

Horace estoit fort amoureux, & il *estoit persuadé* que quoy que Clelie luy dist, elle obeïroit à Clelius, qu’il *croyoit* la luy vouloir bien donner, *bien qu’il* ne la luy eust pas promise, & *en effet quoy que* cette aimable Personne employast toute son adresse, & toute son eloquence, pour obliger Horace à ne penser plus à elle, il luy fut *impossible de le persuader*. (*CI*, 525)

Horace’s thoughts, reported in indirect discourse, are clearly the product of his own imagination, as conveyed by the verbal phrases ‘estoit persuadé’, ‘croyoit’. These suggest that Horace’s thoughts are the product of his loss of rational thinking. His passion for Clélie erases his sense of reality as the same time as it erases the grammatical logic of his inward discourse. Indeed, the concessive locutions ‘bien que’ and ‘quoy que’ introduce two

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<sup>9</sup> See *UI*, 43, ll. 22-31; 516, l. 4: ‘Her father was against it vehemently, and shut her up’.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Stone, *Uncertain Unions: Marriage in England 1660-1753* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 8.

clauses which tell us two irrevocable facts: absence of any promise on Clélius's part to marry his daughter to Horace, and Clélie's determination not to marry him in any case. To the reader, who knows *Clélie's* denouement, this passage is therefore fraught with the utmost irony. Furthermore, it introduces one key notion, that of matrimonial promise. In effect, it not only triggers heated debates between Horace, Aronce, Clélie and Clélius, but also calls into question the integrity of the patriarchal voice, as we shall see next in a close analysis of the father-daughter relationship in *Clélie*.

Clélius has 'toute l'autorité d'un pere, & d'un Romain dont la vertu estoit austere' (C8, 685), and thus embodies a double figure of authority, that of a father and that of ruler of the Roman Republic.<sup>11</sup> If construed as a political *persona*, he incarnates justice, freedom and equity; yet he is also an individual prone to human passions. We learn that, despite his opposition to his daughter's marriage to Aronce, he married secretly when he was young, and therefore transgressed the law which condemned clandestine marriages. Clélie and Aronce thus have to go through what their respective parents went through in their youth: early in the romance, we are told the tale of Porsenna and Galérite (Aronce's father and mother). Porsenna is a political prisoner of Galérite's father. During his imprisonment, Porsenna falls in love with Galérite. Nicétale, Galérite's mother, is pleased at their mutual love, as she sees it as a way of restoring peace in her husband's principality. At Nicétale's death, a few intrigues hinder the marriage of Porsenna and Galérite. In the meantime, Aronce is born; and to evade her father's cruelty, Galérite entrusts the brother and wife of her confidante with the newly born

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<sup>11</sup> In the early modern period, the Roman Republic is thought to be the embodiment of moral integrity. See General Introduction (p. 26), where I discuss Scudéry's twofold use of the Roman Republic, which reflects her ethical more than her political affinities.



Aronce who will be found missing during a sea tempest. Dramatic irony is at work, for these echoing fates prefigure, in a sense, *Clélie*'s happy ending, and suggest that the authoritarian patriarchal voice is being discredited by the mere telling of both Clélius's and Porsenna's own lives when they were still under the aegis of patriarchal tyranny. Furthermore, from the opening, the father-figure is a radically unstable authority whose power may be subdued by rival forces.

One such force is that of the mother-figure, here Sulpicie. As mentioned earlier, Sulpicie is not only Clélie's mother but acts as her confidante and accomplice. In the following quotation, it is the matriarchal voice which resists Clélius's impassioned wrath against Clélie and Aronce's love:

Cependant Sulpicie ne perdant pas une occasion si favorable, dit tant de choses à Clelius pour l' obliger à reconnoistre la vertu d' Aronce, qu' il luy dit enfin qu' il estoit resolu de laisser Clelie Maistresse d' elle mesme, puis qu' il estoit vray qu' il ne l' avoit pas encore promise à Horace, & qu' il n' avoit fait que luy donner lieu d' esperer de l' obtenir [...] il avoit encore quelque peine à donner sa Fille à un Inconnu; il esvita avec adresse de voir Horace. (C1, 546-7)

Although Clélius tries at first to avoid Horace, a few pages later a transformed Clélius goes still further in obedience to his wife, when he tells Horace:

Je sçay bien (luy dit Clelius, apres que cét Amant luy eut exageré toutes ses raisons assez brusquement) que je vous ay donné sujet d'esperer que je vous donneroies ma Fille, mais je sçay bien aussi que je vous [ne] l' ay pas promise: de sorte que le moins que je

puisse faire, apres la derniere obligation que j' ay à vostre Rival,  
 c'est de *ne forcer plus Clelie à vous espouser: & de luy laisser  
 la liberté de choisir* entre Aronce & vous; & *de cesser enfin  
 d'estre injuste envers elle*, pour vous estre trop favorable.  
 (C1, 588)

The language he uses not only symbolises the Republican values he stands for (evoked by the words 'liberté' and 'choisir'), but discards the institution of forced marriages which he now associates with 'injustice' and tyranny — a rather subversive stance which recalls certain early modern moralists' advocacy for mutual love in marriage.<sup>12</sup> Yet from the next volume onwards, Clélius is once more overruled by national pride and redefines marriage in political terms, in keeping with both sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christian treatises on the marriage controversy. In Volume Eight, he directly contradicts the above quotation, employing a different discourse, that of patriarchal tyranny: instead of invoking free choice and liberty as his daughter's full rights, he resorts to the discourse of coercion:

Je veux que vous espousiez [Horace] à la fin de la guerre. Je vous le *ferois* mesme espouser dès demain, adjousta-t'il, si ce n'estoit que Valerius par son exemple m'apprend qu'il ne faut point s'amuser à faire des nopces, pendant que la Patrie est en guerre, puis qu'il a remis celle de Valerie par cette seule raison.  
 (C8, 688)

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter Two, p. 81, footnote 10.



This sudden change in Clélius's attitude clearly demonstrates that in the marriage issue there is a political as well as a patriarchal agenda. As seen above, Aronce who is the son of Tarquin's ally, Porsenna, represents what Tarquin and Porsenna stand for: the overthrow of Republican values.

If we now compare Pamphilia's father to Clélie's, the former appears as a stock character from the Sidneian gallery of rulers who embody, like Euarchus, justice and wisdom not merely in the political but also the domestic sphere. This is suggested by the narrator's laudatory characterisation of the king as a father:

After dinner the King call'd his daughter Pamphilia to him, telling her what an earnest suiter Leandrus was to him for his consent to have her in marriage, which he liked very well of, considering his worth, and the fitnessse of his estate, *alleaging all the reasons that a wise and carefull father* could make unto himselfe, or perswade with, to a beloved daughter. (*U1*, 262, ll. 24-8)

Conflict does not arise between Pamphilia and her father, as it does between Clélie and hers who, as we have seen, are affected by the political disarray that has upset the Republic of Rome. Pamphilia's father, on the other hand,

knew she had reason for what she said, and so assuring her, that he would not force her to any thing against her mind, though he should be glad of the match. (*U1*, 263, ll. 1-3)

In the second part of *Urania*, her father, unlike Clélius, proves consistent with his initial stance: 'fatherly' love rather than authority is stressed (*U2*, 23, ll. 20-24). This harmonious relationship is emphasised by her constant

show of respect and obedience to him, as illustrated during a conversation on constancy with Amphilanthus, Urania and Steriamus. At this stage of the story, Amphilanthus is already renowned for his inconstancy. As he seeks Pamphilia's opinion of him and 'hope[s] [she] [has] a better conceipt of [him], [her] servant, then [her] father hath' (*U2*, 27, ll. 36-7), she replies:

Truly, my Lord, [...], I have the honor nott to degenerate much from my father, and many have favoured mee above my meritt to say I was much of his minde in most things. (ll. 38-40)

In the second book of the second part, the reader can find a further example of this harmonious relationship. Amphilanthus and Pamphilia, after a series of adventures, have arrived at the court of Morea. At this stage, Amphilanthus has broken his secret vow to Pamphilia, and has been lured into marrying the Queen of Slavonia, after hearing the false rumours of Pamphilia's consent to marry the Tartarian King. Noticing Pamphilia's sadness, her father enquires about her journey (*U2*, 257, ll. 25-31). Unlike in *Clélie*, where scenes between the eponymous heroine and her father are often conflictual until matrimonial matters are settled, here expressions of fatherly and filial love prevail (257[ll. 25-42]-261[ll. 1-4]), as conveyed, throughout the whole passage, by the recurring use of the same phraseology ('in a most dutifull manner' [260, l. 3], 'a most loving and dutifull respect' [257, l. 29]), of the same lexicon ('dearest hart' [259, l. 24], 'Dearest child to mee' [260, l. 13] and also the father's kiss [261, l. 1] at the end of the scene — all of which are marks of fatherly tenderness).

On the other hand, the second part of the scene (*U2*, 260, ll. 3-23) reads as a 'silent' dialogue between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus. Both addressing the King, they cast stones at each other. Provoked by Pamphilia herself (259, ll. 35-7), the jealous Amphilanthus utters a gratuitous remark on the lewd inclinations of women (ll. 39-42). Knowing that Amphilanthus



only seeks to hurt her feelings, Pamphilia carries on feigning to speak to her father, while directing in fact her reply to her inconstant lover (260, ll. 3-23). Pamphilia's answer to her father's question becomes a real invective against Amphilanthus's offensive accusations as well as a speech on the early modern issue of women and marriage (U2, 260, ll. 23-37), a speech which clearly complies with early modern decorum that dictates women's obedience to the patriarchal law:

noe child, especiall the female, ought to marry without the fathers  
consent first demaunded. (U2, 260, ll. 30-1)

In reproducing the patriarchal discourse of female virtue and stating further that 'modestie' is her 'guide' (l. 38), she not only reminds the audience of the exemplarity of her conduct, but also derides Amphilanthus's hypocrisy (since so far he has only excelled in the art of inconstancy) and gullibility (since the false rumours of her consent to marry Rodomandro have made him believe she was disloyal to him):

That were a strange forwardnes in mee that have refused soe  
many, should runn soe fondly on a stranger. Surely itt hath nott  
binn my manner, nor now shall itt beeginn in my riper judgment.  
That grace of modestie, which hath yett guided mee with all duty,  
shall still protect mee from doing any fond ore unlawfull thing.  
(ll. 35-40)

Despite Pamphilia's apparent concern with filial duty in patriarchal terms, the relationship between Pamphilia and her father emerges as idealistic: it appears to be based on equality, and not, as in *Clélie*, to be ruled by the laws of the hierarchy that exist between old and young, parents

and children, and lie at the heart of the marriage issue. Pamphilia's consent matters above all. A few weeks after the scene I have analysed above, Rodomandro 'asked the Kings consent for his daughter Pamphilia' (*U2*, 270, l. 32):

The King [...] gave his consent, butt thus, if she liked; other ways his consent (beeing butt to her owne content) must stand fruictles [...], since force can never bee companionated with love. (ll. 32-40)

This concluding aphoristic sentence contrasts with the tyrannical and coercive lexicon which Clélie's father (or even her suitor Horace) uses. Given the filial love relationship between Pamphilia and her father, we may conclude that it is not so much against the tenets of patriarchy that Pamphilia needs to rebel, but against Amphilanthus's unfaithfulness to her.

Nevertheless, in order to get an overall picture of the marriage debate in *Urania*, we have to revert to the inset stories whose female protagonists protest against patriarchal tyranny in an often tacit manner.<sup>13</sup> Amongst these, one singles herself out in the second part of *Urania*:

For she, O matchles she, did soe much scorne the strict hand held over her which though by her father, yett her rarest wisdom and judgment she doubted must needs bee eclipsed by the manner, as if she weare nott able of her self to governe her self, butt must bee like an infant held in for fear she showld take a husband, and soe one nott worthy of her. (*U2*, 247, ll. 9-14 )

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<sup>13</sup> There is another exception besides Pamphilia: the Lady of Robollo whose father 'wowld never constraine [her]' (*U2*, 150, ll. 39-42).



A study of the woman question, including the marriage issue, should therefore encompass the story of each female character, as they each constitute an essential aspect of this debate. One feature that recurs is these women's awareness of their own destinies and their assertive although muted rebellion against marriages of convenience.

In the two texts women as daughters share a common language, that of 'feminine glory', when actively breaking silence. An analysis of 'feminine glory' helps to delineate what could be named the paradox of the Uranian and Scudarian heroines.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, as seen above, they epitomise the triptych of traditional female qualities, 'obedience, silence and chastity'. On the other, they stand for themselves, utilising a discourse which proves subversive, as I shall go on to demonstrate.

### III. The paradox of the Uranian and Scudarian heroine

In Wroth's and Scudéry's texts, the two female protagonists, Pamphilia and Clélie, object to their father's desire to marry them respectively to Leandrus and to Horace. This gives rise to two questions: to what extent may the female stance against the patriarchal voice be construed as in conformity with decorum? And to what extent are daughters endowed or not endowed with speech?

If we look at Pamphilia's answer, in the first part of *Urania*, to the king who '[told] her what an earnest suiter Leandrus was to him for his consent to have her in marriage' (*U1*, 262, ll. 24-6), we may conclude that

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<sup>14</sup> The word 'gloire' is one that recurs constantly in *Clélie* and is often used by women. On Scudéry's treatment of 'gloire féminine', see Morlet-Chantalat, *La Clélie de Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, pp. 292-319.

she objects to such a match in a decidedly decorous way through which she 'displays skills in argument'.<sup>15</sup> At this stage of the narrative, Pamphilia is already in love with Amphilanthus. Yet she does not refuse Leandrus's proposal on account of her passion for Amphilanthus but of her political commitment to the state:

To which she humbly made this answer; That all those things his Majesty had said, she confessed to be true, and that he was worthy of the greatest fortune the world had in a wife: but his Majestie had once married her before, which was to the Kingdome of Pamphilia, from which Husband shee could not bee divorced, nor ever would have other, if it might please him to give her leave to enjoy that happinesse; and besides, besought his permission, 'for my Lord,' said shee, 'my people looke for me, and I must needs be with them.' (*UI*, 262, ll. 28-36)

However, Pamphilia is duplicitous: she evades the fate of her female counterparts as the daughters of authoritarian fathers, but only because she is endowed with both the title and rhetorical skills of a Queen. In a manner that recalls Queen Elizabeth's 'Tilbury Speech' (1588) in which she defines herself as a compound of two bodies (one private and one political, and in her own words, that of 'a weak woman' and that of 'a prince'), Pamphilia uses a discourse that befits her queenly status.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, she displaces the

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<sup>15</sup> Olga Kenyon (ed.), *Eight Hundred Years of Women's Letters* (Stroud: Allan Sutton, 1997), p. 250.

<sup>16</sup> See Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977). When Elizabeth I became Queen in 1558 after the death of her father, Henry VIII, jurists were faced with a dilemma: the incompatibility between being a woman and governing. Marie Axton writes that 'for the purpose of law it was found necessary by 1561 to endow the Queen with two bodies: a *body natural* and a *body politic* (This body should



private meaning of the word 'marriage' and its associated lexical field ('husband', 'divorced', 'permission') into the realm of politics.<sup>17</sup> This rhetorical displacement is further reinforced by Amphilanthus reporting Pamphilia's words to Leandrus. The latter sees Amphilanthus as a potential mediator between her and himself:

Yet it was his misfortune in this, that [Amphilanthus] could not doe [Leandrus] that service he desired to doe, to make manifest his love unto him, for he had now lighted on one of the excepted things, since but this last night, said he, 'Speaking of marriage, [Pamphilia] said, shee was already bestowed upon her people, and had married her selfe to them'. (*U1*, 264, ll. 23-7)

Pamphilia therefore uses a discourse that cannot be rebuked as indecorous; on the contrary, she knows that it will be received as a token of her virtue in the fullest sense, a token of her 'androgynous' excellency which Urania calls her 'Masculine spirit' (*U1*, 468, l. 13).<sup>18</sup> Had she not given such a legitimate and strategic answer, we might think that her father would have threatened her with the loss of her inheritance, as is the case with most female characters in *Urania*.

Returning to *Clélie*, we will notice a similar, although far more dramatised attitude towards both the heroine's father and her unrequited

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not be confused with the old metaphor of the realm as a great body composed of many men with the king as head. The ideas are related but distinct). The body politic was supposed to be *contained within the natural body of the Queen*' (p. 12, her emphases). For Elizabeth I's 'Tilbury Speech', see M. H. Abrams (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6th edn. (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1993), vol. 1, p. 999.

<sup>17</sup> Josephine Roberts notes that it is 'perhaps an echo of Elizabeth I's speech before the House of Commons, 1559, as recorded by William Camden' (see *U1*, 747). For Camden's full quotation, see *U1*, 747-8.

<sup>18</sup> The theme of androgyny is analysed at greater length in Chapter Three.

suitors. The two texts chiefly differ from each other in that *Clélie* treats the father-daughter relationship as invariably confrontational. The relationship occupies a significant place in the narrative's dynamics, since the story might be described as a dialogue staging the conflict between patriarchal and female voices. In the following quotation, Clélie reminds her father of his promises before the earthquake at the beginning of the romance:

Ainsi je vous avoüe, si je le puis sans perdre le respect que je vous dois, que je ne pense pas qu'après m'avoir commandé tant de fois de regarder Aronce comme un homme que je devois espouser [...] je puisse aussi facilement oublier Aronce que vous le voulez, car il n'est pas en mon pouvoir de ne me souvenir point de toutes les obligations que je luy ay. (C8, 686-7)

Like Pamphilia, she displays 'skills in argument': her use of the litotes 'si je le puis' shows she is aware that her speech carries the seeds of resistance against the patriarchal voice, and that decorum restricts this resistance to the language of conventional tropes and corporeal expressions that are available to her and to all noblewomen of her time. Indeed, as this scene unfolds, she seems powerless in the face of her father's wrath; yet she verbally discloses to him his own inconsistency:

Mais Seigneur, reprit *modestement* Clelie, que deviendront les promesses que vous avez faites au mal heureux Aronce; *j'ay promis toutes choses à l'inconnu Aronce, repliqua t'il, mais je n'ay rien promis au fils de Porsenna, & au protecteur de Tarquin*; & puis, adjousta *fierement* Clelius, à vous dire ce que je pense, il ne faut pas que vous vous imaginiez qu'Aronce soit à Clusium, ce que vous l'avez veu autrefois à Carthage, & ce que



vous l'avez encore veu à Rome [...]: resolvez vous y donc, car aussi bien vous seroit-il inutile de me resister, & je vay de telle sorte publier la resolution où je suis. (C8, 688-9)

Clélius is an excellent orator too, as he plays with the word 'promise': he stipulates that Aronce after the earthquake is not the same Aronce as before, and thereby regards the revelation of his birth origins as a logical and irrefutable argument against their marriage. Yet his daughter's modesty overcomes the seeming logic of his claim: it is the adverb 'fièrement' which characterises his reply. While Clélius's proud answer carries with it the image of a man who has no control over his feelings, the adverb 'modestement' which characterises Clélie's speech suggests that, unlike her father, she thinks rationally. Indeed, in the ethical world of Scudarian fiction pride and irrational thinking cannot triumph, as reinforced by Clélie's counter-attack:

Vous pouvez sans doute, reprit Clelie, dire vostre resolution à tout le monde, mais, Seigneur, vous ne *changerez* jamais celle que j'ay faite de n'estre jamais à personne si je ne puis estre à Aronce. Clelius s'emporta avec beaucoup de violence & laissa Clelie avec une douleur incroyable. (C8, 689-90)

The future tense here indicates the immutability of Clélie's own will, and if Clélius 'declare qu' [il] revoque tous les commandemens qu' [il lui a] faits en faveur d'Aronce' (C8, 687) she smartly demonstrates that she is the master of her own mind, by employing the contrastive conjunction 'mais', which carries with it the essence of her resistance to the patriarchal law.

This 'mais' or 'but' often appears in both *Urania* and *Clélie* as a rhetorical device marking the physical contrast between body and mind, in

the sense that if a woman's self might become a man's property in the legal terms of early seventeenth-century treatises, 'over her will', society 'has no power'.<sup>19</sup> It is in identical terms that woman's destiny is pictured in a play that Wroth is likely to have read, *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613) by Elisabeth Cary:

When to their husbands they themselves do bind,  
Do they not wholly give themselves away?  
Or give they but their body, not their mind ? (III. 3. 233-5)<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, in *Urania* we are told of Lady Pastora who 'was married to a Knight, but her affections were wedded to her owne choyce' (*UI*, 416, ll. 27-8), and of Bellamira who 'but contrary to [her] soule gave [her] selfe to him, [her] heart to [her] first love' (*UI*, 388, ll. 15-6). Although almost none of the Uranian female characters seem to oppose themselves against 'the law of the land' that 'has made men their masters' (*Indiana*) in as assertive and conflictual a way as Scudarian women protagonists do, there emerges the subtext of a feminine discourse, encoded within the language of constancy, which enables them to withstand the rules formulated by a society that thinks in gendered terms and has decreed female inferiority to the opposite sex.

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<sup>19</sup> See Georges Sand, *Indiana* (1832), ed. Pierre Salomon (Paris: Garnier, 1983), Chap. 21, p. 225: 'Je sais que je suis l'esclave et vous le seigneur. La loi de ce pays vous a fait mon maître. Vous pouvez lier mon corps, garroter mes mains, gouverner mes actions. Vous avez le droit du plus fort, et la société vous le confirme; mais sur ma volonté, monsieur, vous ne pouvez rien, Dieu seul peut la courber et la réduire. Cherchez donc une loi, un cachot, un instrument de supplice qui vous donne prise sur elle! c'est comme si vous vouliez manier l'air et saisir le vide'. For the English modern version, see translation by Sylvia Raphaël (Oxford: Oxford Paperback, 1994), p. 176.

<sup>20</sup> In Diana Purkiss (ed.), *Renaissance Women: The Plays of Elizabeth Cary and the Poems of Amilia Lanyer* (London: William Pickering, 1994)



Indeed, if the discourse of female constancy is one of the virtues required by decorum, it also emerges as subversive — a paradox which will be illustrated in the following analysis of Clélie's assertiveness of speech when addressing her suitors. In the next passage, Octave who is not yet known as Clélie's brother, but only as the Prince of Numidie, hopes, like Horace, to win Clélie's heart and the consent of Clélius, who, as we have seen earlier, insists on having a Roman son-in-law. Clélie's self-command is here emphasised once again in her deft reply to Octave's proposal:

Seigneur, luy repondit Clelie, ce n'est pas à moy à examiner si mon Pere a raison de refuser l'honneur que vous luy faites; & il suffit que je sçache que j'aurois tort de ne luy obeïr pas, pour m'obliger à suivre aveuglément toutes ses volontez. Mais afin qu'il ne soit pas chargé de toute vostre haine, je vous avoüeray ingenuement, que je luy obeïrois avec une douleur extreme, s'il me commandoit d'espouser un Africain, & de perdre l'esperance de voir Rome; car il est constamment vray, qu'il y a dans mon coeur une amour si forte pour la Patrie de mes Peres, que ce seroit me rendre tres-malheureuse, que de m'oster l'esperance d'y mourir. (*C1*, 241-2)

This recalls the speech in which Pamphilia describes herself as a Queen, and as 'married' to the state which she dubs 'her husband'. Clélie, however, speaks as a Roman citizen, a woman bound by 'une amour forte' to her nation, 'la Patrie de [ses] Peres', describing it as the place where she ought to die. And she goes on to demonstrate that she does not fear death (*C1*, 244-5). By articulating her love for her nation and for Republican values, she proves herself faithful to the ethical values her father stands for (*i.e.* those of the Roman Republic), and constantly reiterates her assertion that

she would die for her convictions if she had to (C6, 716-7). In the last volume, her determination remains unaltered. Clélie is by now the Roman heroine who has saved the Republic of Rome from Tarquin's tyranny, and Horace has become a hero through his defence of the 'Pont du Janicule'. Horace interprets this political denouement as an omen favourable to the union of their two Roman hearts; but Clélie continues to object that this union would be contrary to the laws of love, since her heart remains bound to that of Aronce:

Ce qui est juste une fois l'est tousjours, je ne cesse jamais d'aimer ce que j'aime, & Aronce infidele & mort, ne fera jamais changer mon coeur. Je dis bien davantage, adjousta-t'elle, car supposé ce qui est absolument impossible, que je pusse cesser d'aimer Aronce, & que je pusse mesme avoir de l'affection pour vous de la maniere que vous le desirez, vous n'en seriez pas mesme plus heureux, car par un pur sentiment de gloire, je n'en tesmoignerois rien, & je mou[r]rois mille fois plustost que de faire rien qui me pust faire reprocher que j'aurois aimé deux fois en ma vie. (C10, 926-7)

Her use of the future tense (as in the phrases 'mais je sçauray bien luy dire, que si ma vie fait obstacle à la tranquillité de la sienne, je suis preste d'avoir recours à la mort' [C1, 245], 'je mou[r]rois mille fois plustost que de me rengager jamais à rien aimer' [C6, 717]) is not only the expression of a Roman Republican sentiment and an exemplary mark of stoicism, but suggests that she is ready and willing to break silence if she needs to do so. This 'vouloir féminin' underpins the whole oeuvre of Scudéry, as Constant



Venesoen has shown.<sup>21</sup> In the works of her predecessors, feminine will finds its ultimate expression in scenes which deal with heroines of romances who, like Parthenia in the *New Arcadia* or Parthénie in *Le Grand Cyrus*, are icons of female heroism, for they heroically brave death in the interests of true love. In *Clélie*, feminine will is not merely conveyed by an act of heroism, but by the language the female protagonists use. Clélie's language sounds subversive, because it springs from the will to 'resist' patriarchal tyranny. In the following scene, Clélie not only expresses her determination to oppose her father's decision but also insists that her father is himself bound by the rules of decorum:

Plus Aronce sera malheureux, plus je seray obligé[e] de luy estre fidele; & que plus mon pere me persecutera, plus j'auray de fermeté à luy *resister*. Car enfin il m'a donnée à Aronce, & je m'y suis donnée moy-mesme; ainsi il n'y a plus que la mort qui puisse m'empescher d'estre à luy. (C9, 6-7)

Clélie's use of the words 'fermeté' and 'resister' identifies the Scudarian female stance as one which is 'assertive', an assertiveness which, as I have argued, is contained within the future tense, and may also be found in the grammatical imperatives of Clélie's replies to Horace:

*Promettez moy* que vous ne tirerez point avantage de l'amitié que mon pere a pour vous. [...] *Ne me parlez donc jamais*, reprit Clelie, si ce n'est en la presence de Clelius, & *preparez vous* à

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<sup>21</sup> In 'Madeleine de Scudéry et la "défense du sexe"', *PSCFL*, 13, 25 (1986), pp. 125-39; see also *Etudes sur la littérature féminine au dix-septième siècle: Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Madame de Villedieu, Madame de Lafayette* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1990), pp. 44-65.

estre aussi haï de moy que vous l'estiez autrefois sur le lac de Thrasimene. (C8, 626-7).

This whole passage recalls one dialogue in particular between Clélie and Horace in Volume One, showing that from the outset Clélie is armed with the power of rhetoric:

Vous avez bien fait Horace, interrompit Clelie en rougissant de despit, de me faire souvenir que mon Pere vous aime; car si ce n'estoit cette consideration, je vous traiterois d'une telle sorte, qu'il vous seroit en effet aisé de connoistre que vous n'arriverez jamais à *Tendre*. Mais le respect que je luy porte me donnant quelque retenuë, je me contente de vous dire deux choses; la premiere est que je vous deffends absolument de me parler jamais en particulier; & la seconde est que cét Inconnu dont vous voulez parler, n'est point aux *Terres inconnuës*, parce que personne n' y est, & n' y peut jamais estre. Mais afin que vous ne vous imaginiez pas que je vous desguise la verité, je vous declare qu'il est à *Tendre*, & qu'il y sera tousjours, & par *estime*, & par *reconnoissance*, car il a tout le merite qu' on peut avoir; & il m' a sauvé la vie aussi bien qu' à vous, mais la difference qu'il y a entre vous & moy, c'est que je suis fort reconnaissante, & que vous estes fort ingrat. (C1, 412-3)

Clélie silences Horace by syntactically reversing her father's praise of Horace as 'honneste' and 'Romain', and his dismissal of Aronce, as an 'inconnu et ingrat'. She does so, too, by using a specific lexicon (see my emphases) which she put in fashion herself by means of an 'invention galante': the *Carte de Tendre* (see Illustration 1). The originality of this map



lies in the allegorical names of its places: ‘Tendre’, ‘reconnaissance’, ‘esteem’, ‘Terres inconnuës’, which the Scudarian heroines’ suitors appropriate as their favourite words. Yet while suitors use the map as part of their rhetoric to conquer their lady’s heart, the *Carte de Tendre* also contributes to the emergence of a new voice: that of assertive female speech, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter Two.

Similarly, throughout *Urania* there runs a whole lexicon of decorous phrases which occur in the depiction not only of the female protagonist, but of other women who emerge as a paradigm of virtue. For example, at one point the female character Limena says to her lover:

Let not my freedome make you dispose otherwise then virtuously  
of me. (*UI*, 8, ll. 6-7)

Later, like Clélie who replied to her proud father with her usual modesty, Limena ‘made [...] answer’ to her violent husband ‘with modest constancy, and constant determination’ (*UI*, 13, ll. 1-2).

The foregoing analysis of the paradox of the Uranian and Scudarian heroine shows that Wroth and Scudéry depict female resistance to patriarchy in very much the same way. Both Pamphilia and Clélie, for instance, at some point use patriotic imagery, recalling, as I have discussed in this section, the notion of the Queen’s two bodies, through which they can justify their refusal to marry whoever has been chosen by their father, without being condemned or regarded as transgressing the boundaries of their own sex. On the contrary, in these instances they choose a rhetoric that enables them to act as befits their social rank, *i.e.* as queen in the case of

Pamphilia and as the daughter of a Roman citizen of the elite class in the case of Clélie.

But Wroth's and Scudéry's treatment of female resistance in the marriage debate goes further than this, in that it lays emphasis on the empowerment of the female mind. This is suggested by the examination of the heroines' rhetoric, which clearly states that they possess strength within themselves, although their body is, by law, their father's or brother's or husband's property.

Female subversion is thus enacted in various ways, either through politicised speech, or silent resistance; but in each case, the heroine's transgression is counterbalanced by her deportment, that is her modesty which is often portrayed in sharp contrast to the uncontrolled speech of men.

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To conclude this first chapter: in both works women's speech is restrained within the bounds of decorum, whose importance Scudarian heroines constantly reassert, always reminding their suitors of that which 'la bien-seance ne [leur] permet pas d'escouter' (C3, 380). The Uranian and Scudarian heroines' discourse constitutes an extended apology for both female virtue and feminine glory. These qualities of virtue and glory may take their place among the requisite 'qualifications' that should adorn a lady as described in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century panegyrics of the Fair Sex.<sup>22</sup> Myriam Maître notes an interesting example of the rhetorical association between female virtue and feminine glory:

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<sup>22</sup> A term which can be found among those which are defined in *The Ladies Dictionary Being a General Entertainment for the Fair Sex: A Work Never Attempted Before in English* (London: Printed for John Dunton, 1694), 8<sup>o</sup>. Although it is a late example, this dictionary provides its female readership with a



En 1644, un ballet de Lorest donne la parole aux *Femmes Illustres*:

‘Vous qui cherchez un rang parmi les immortelles,  
Il ne suffit pas d’estre belles,  
Il faut pour triompher avoir bien combattu:  
Aprenez, donc par nostre histoire,  
Qu’on ne sçauroit entrer au Temple de la Gloire  
Que par celui de la Vertu.’ (*op. cit.*, 138)

We find a similar discourse in *The Ladies’ Dictionary*, where the anonymous author observes:

So long as a Lady governs herself by the exact rules of Prudence and Modesty, her Lustre appears like the Meridian Sun in its unclouded brightness, which though less approachable, and more dazzling to the eye is accounted nevertheless more glorious [...]. And besides these collateral advantages, it is evident that Modesty and Chastity (for these are twin Sisters not to be separated, and indeed are in degree properly the same) give an immediate direct improvement to beauty. (429)<sup>23</sup>

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list of practical advice (rather than definitions) as well as moral precepts which reiterate the discourse on chastity elaborated in earlier moral works already cited. This *Dictionary* may be therefore seen as a compilation of concepts that belong to a whole trend of thought concerning female virtue.

<sup>23</sup> The idea that ‘Modesty and Chastity are twin sisters’ is a commonplace that we find in one of the most widely read conduct books, Juan Luis Vives’s *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, in which the author writes: ‘Nowe shamefastnes and sobrenes be the inseparable companions of Chastitie [...]’ (sig. K<sup>r</sup>). Vives repeats this statement later, almost word for word: ‘Now I suppose it be shewed plainly enough that Chastitie is the Queene of vertues in a woman, and that two inseparable companions ever folowe it, and that of shamefastnes commeth

Modesty, Chastity, Constancy and Glory are the qualities that empower our heroines, whether as daughters or lovers, with expressions of self-assertiveness. They not only function as the ornamental characteristics becoming an early modern woman of high rank, but enable them, as we have seen throughout this chapter, to find the strength to stand up for themselves, and to speak with a voice of their own, a voice through which they defy and deride their male interlocutors.

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Sobrenes.' (sig. K2<sup>r</sup>). See also Jean de Marconville, *De la bonté et mauvaieseté des femmes* (1564), ed. Françoise Koelher (Paris: Côté-Femmes, 1991), p. 62.



## Chapter Two

### Female discourse as the apology for true love

The chapter begins by comparing the ways in which Wroth and Scudéry elaborate, at the outset of their romances and from a gendered perspective, an allegorical definition of true love, whose postulates and imagery are to dominate the whole of their narratives (section IV). This examination feeds into the next section: an analysis of the female voice in Uranian and Scuderian meditations on man's inconstancy (section V) and a study of the poetic imagery that surrounds the defence of true love (section VI). It ends with a discussion of women's stance regarding matrimony, and whether or not *Urania* and *Clélie* are protofeminist texts (section VII).

#### IV. The heart's pilgrimage in *Urania* and *Clélie*: a female design

One liminal difference between the two romances is the proliferation of extraordinary or supernatural events in *Urania* as against the proliferation of philosophical debates in *Clélie*. On the other hand, one of the links between these two narratives is the combined use of text and image — that is of written and visual discourses — in their definition of true love.

In both works, male and female characters are seen progressing through the labyrinth of love, as though embarked on a sentimental, often chaotic journey, whose course the reader's imagination is allowed to predict from the openings of *Urania* and *Clélie*. These openings provide us respectively with a frontispiece and a map, both of which are cartographical allegories of the human heart.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Both Wroth and Scudéry were aware that the fictional quest for amorous discovery was inseparable from the fundamental reassessment of physical space

James Gaines and Josephine Roberts remark that the elaborate frontispiece in *Urania* tells us a good deal about the narrative.<sup>2</sup> The frontispiece functions as a prophecy of the 'truly-felt' trials that are to fall upon characters, and emblematises the labyrinthine nature of their progress, which is articulated forty-seven pages after the beginning of the romance.

Thus, on they went (but as in a Labyrinth without a thrid) till  
they came within sight of a rare and admirable Pallace. (*U1*, 47,  
ll. 31-3)

There follows a baroque description of the theatre of enchantment.<sup>3</sup> Its architecture seems to be simple, as it is composed of three towers, but their intricate structure is revealed to us by an old Priest (*U1*, 48[ll. 36-42]-49[ll. 1-3]). On entering the towers, the Uranian characters go through various inner metamorphoses; as illustrated by the eponymous heroine's desperation when severed from Parselius (*U1*, 49, ll. 37-42). Later, we learn that Urania has washed herself in the waters of 'forgetfulness'.<sup>4</sup> In *Urania*,

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that was sweeping through Europe, led by the cartographers Mercator, Ortelius, and Plancius, who developed the art of map-making' (Gaines and Roberts, 'The Geography of Love', p. 289).

<sup>2</sup> 'The importance of the Throne of Love in *The Countesse of Mountgomerie's Urania* is visually evident, since the episode furnishes the material for the frontispiece, engraved by the Dutch artist Simon van de Passe, for the first, printed half of the work [...]. This edifice contains three towers, which, as [*Urania's* protagonists] learn from an old priest whom they interrogate, are also prisons, and belong to Cupid (Desire), Love, and Constancy. After refreshing themselves with water from the stream, the group falls prey to a plague of emotional derangement, with the result that some members are trapped in the first two towers, others stray off into the countryside, and only three are left with sufficient reasonable control to consider saving themselves and their comrades.' (*ibid.*, pp. 290-2).

<sup>3</sup> See Susan Donahue, "'My Desires... Lie... Wrapt Up Now in Folds of Losse": Lady Mary Wroth's Baroque Visions of Female Community in the Enchantment Episodes of *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* 1621', in Rebecca D'Monté and Nicole Pohl (eds.), *Female Communities 1600-1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 28-52.

<sup>4</sup> An entity with the same name ('oubli') figures in the *Carte de Tendre*. The mention of a village called 'oubli' and of 'the waters of forgetfulness' suggests the



the waters of forgetfulness are a remedy to cure the characters' passions and lead them back to the path of reason, as though these enchantment scenes carried with them the Aristotelian essence of catharsis, to which Wroth's *personae dramatis* are inexorably drawn. To be enchanted is even, at one point, seen as fashionable, as a ritual one has to experience. In the third book of the first part, we encounter the Queen of Bulgaria, also dubbed the Queen of Pride.<sup>5</sup> The idea of fashionable enchantment is here reported in indirect discourse:

At the Kings going away, she got leave of him to goe into Morea, to visit an excellent Lady there, being her Cosen-german, and married to the Prince of Elis, there shee hath been, till within a short time, and now is returning with all speed to meete her Lord, and if shee can perswade him to goe with her, to trie the Inchantment of the Rockie Island, where all the beauties of this part of the World (except her selfe) are said to be enchanted.  
(*UI*, 399, ll. 36-42)

In the second part of *Urania*, enchantments occupy a great space in the narrative. Characters are in constant motion. Knights are in search of lost princes and princesses, amongst them the female Sophy of Persia, Lindafillia, whose release is necessary to the restoration of peace in the Eastern part of the Christian world. Enchantments, in the second part, give way to theatrical effects that satisfy the Jacobean audience's appetite for sensationalism rather than the implicit analysis of human conduct which pervades the rest of the romance. Nevertheless in its restricted ethical sense,

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authors' debt to classical sources. Indeed, the 'waters of forgetfulness' are often referred to under the Greek name 'Lethe', one of the rivers of hell, whose waters 'the souls of the dead drank to forget their earthly lives' (*DCM*, p. 234).

<sup>5</sup> On this character, see Chapter Eight, section IV, pp. 318-21.

the theatre of enchantment occasionally becomes the theatre of the mind: characters trapped in enchantments are made to view their own faults; and from enchanted bodies they become redeeming subjects at the sight of their sins, as illustrated in the first part of *Urania* by the example of Amphilanthus and in the second part by the example of Antissia.<sup>6</sup> In the third book of the first part, the audience, already acquainted with Amphilanthus's inconstancy, witnesses the trial of unfaithful lovers. There is no way out of the 'great stone' (*U1*, 583, l. 28), 'like a Hell of flames' (l. 29), in which Amphilanthus and his new lover Musalina are made prisoners, like the characters from the enchantment scene in *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>7</sup> This intertextual parallel is suggested by the imagery of the scene where Amphilanthus is enchanted (583[ll. 37-42]-584[ll. 1-7]). To a certain extent, this scene may be construed in emblematic terms. It has a tripartite structure, consisting of an opening paragraph (583, ll. 11-6) in which we are made to '[trust] it was but some Inchantment' (ll. 20-1), an appropriate title for the whole passage; then a central paragraph which is a vivid picture of this very enchantment, and finally a third paragraph (584, ll. 4-8) consisting of a quatrain which reads like a verdict on the trial that has been undergone. It also reproduces the unfaithful lovers' moral descent. In a nutshell, to use *Clélie*'s map terminology, the readers are here presented with a living picture of a village named 'Infidelity'.

Nevertheless, with *Clélie* we turn away from the extraordinary, enchanting events that punctuate Wroth's romance. Instead, a rationalised perception of the heart's anatomy opens Scudéry's narrative. Very early in

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<sup>6</sup> See my analysis of the character Antissia in Chapter Eight, Section IV, pp. 316-7.

<sup>7</sup> The imagery is specifically reminiscent of the enchantment scene in Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (1590-1609), ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: Longman, 2001), III. 2. 42-5. See also Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, pp. 159-82.



*Clélie*, we are visually acquainted with the *Carte de Tendre*. During a conversation on love and friendship Herminius, who has newly arrived at Capoue and become one of Clélie's close friends, asks her whether she will give him the *Carte de Tendre* she has drawn with the intention, as Célère narrates, of showing

qu'elle n'avoit jamais eu d'amour, & qu'elle n'auroit jamais dans le coeur que de la tendresse, fait que la Riviere d'Inclination se jette dans une Mer qu'on appelle la Mer dangereuse; parce qu'il est assez dangereux à une Femme, d'aller un peu au delà des dernières Bornes de l'amitié; & elle fait en suite qu'au delà de cette Mer, c'est ce que nous apellons *Terres inconnuës*. (C1, 405)

One notices that, in both the *Carte de Tendre* (see Illustration 1) and its oral description (395-405), one specific word, love or 'amour' has no village or town, or river or sea of its own, yet is present as shadows are cast out by both its positive and negative derivatives: on the one hand, 'Reconnaissance', 'Amitié Constante', 'Obeissance', 'Tendresse', 'Sensibilité', 'Sincérité' (etc.), and on the other 'Perfidie', 'Indiscretion', 'Orgueil', 'Oubli', 'Negligence' (etc.). Thus, love as such is muted in Clélie's mapping of the anatomy of the human heart — a silencing which is reinforced by the lexicon which the virtuous female *personae* (Clélie's doppelgängers) decree their wooers should exclusively use.

The examples of Valérie and Herminius's epistolary activity in Volume Five, and of Lysimène and Zénocrate's climactic *tête-à-tête* in Volume Nine, illustrate how these women have internalised the terminology of Clélie's allegorical invention, and impose it upon their male lovers. The manipulation of the male suitors' speech by the 'fair sex' thus engenders a

great number of scenes that may be read as 'jeux d'esprit', fraught with epistolary wordplays which are 'galimathias' (or 'conundrums') to the curious and malignant, but expressions of mutual understanding between secret lovers.

In Volume Five, Amilcar tells us the story of Valérie. We learn that Herminius is in Valérie's favour. Yet as on a stage fit for a love comedy, the configuration is quadrapartite: Herminius and Valérie love each other, but a third character Spurius, who is loved by a fourth character Salonine, overtly declares himself as Herminius's rival. Salonine, who is jealous of Spurius's affections for Valérie, starts plotting against her. Discovering Salonine's mischievous intentions, Valérie decides to make her believe that she loves Spurius, and shows him unusual kindness, while hiding her tender inclination for Herminius. In the following scene, Spurius mentions a love song which Herminius wrote. Herminius is asked to sing it. But because Herminius has chosen a pastoral name to designate his cruel mistress Valérie, Spurius does not know it is addressed to her, as he is unaware of Herminius's well-concealed love for her. Spurius thinks he is Valérie's sole suitor.

Having heard Valérie's request to Herminius to send her a copy of the song, Spurius begs his unknown rival to let him send the song. Herminius is aware that, in the complex laws of Scudarian love, a true lover is not allowed to fail in his duty. Trapped, Herminius reluctantly accepts to let Spurius send the song, and instead writes a letter incorporating a hidden message, which does not catch Valérie's attention. In return, Herminius receives a rather bitter note from Valérie who accuses him of carelessness and starts playing the cruel mistress by casting scowling looks upon him in the presence of Spurius. Nevertheless, a few pages later, Valérie and Herminius are reconciled, a reconciliation that takes on the accents of a passionate confession scene, in which Herminius's rhetoric is paradoxically



bridled by the requirements of decorum encompassed within the *Carte de Tendre*. The dialectic of the *Carte de Tendre* implies that *amitié tendre* should be the livery that clothes a lover's heart. And as though under the aegis of a female decree, the male lover must not fail to obey his mistress: Valérie 'recommandoit toujours tant à Herminius de faire un grand secret de sa passion, aussi estoit-il si soigneux de la contenter' (C5, 281-2). Hence the witty character of Herminius's love-letters:

Si vous sçaviez quelle est ma joye, Madame, de connoistre avec certitude, que ce que je sens pour vous est une veritable amitié [...], mais afin qu'il ne manque rien à mon bonheur, permettez moy d'esperer que quand je vous auray fait connoistre que ce que je sens pour vous, est de l'amitié, & de l'amitié la plus tendre & la plus respectueuse, vous me rendrez amitié pour amitié, car si vous ne le faites pas, je vous proteste que je seray plus malheureux, que vous ne vous le pouvez imaginer. (C5, 278-9)

The narrator of the story of Valérie unveils to his listeners the secret of their mutual understanding, for 'amitié' should be read as 'amour', and shows that a single sleight transforms the 'billet de bonne amitié' into a 'billet amoureux'. These subtleties that Scuderian lovers quickly learn in order to evade public scrutiny, produce comical scenes in which malevolent characters are seen struggling with the lovers' conundrums.<sup>8</sup> In the following passage, Spurius has found Herminius's letter to Valérie, lying on a table in her closet, which runs as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> Subtleties were all the more essential to keep secrecy, since in those days letters were often unsealed before they reached their addressees. A whole conversation in *Clélie* is devoted to the theme of people's malignant curiosity when they see or receive letters that are not theirs (see C2, 685-718).

Je l'avoue madame, mon Amitié a précédé mon amitié, & l'amitié & l'Amitié se ressemblent quelquesfois. Mais croyez moi Madame, quand cela arrive, il faut ou que l'Amitié soit fort tendre, ou que l'amitié ne soit pas trop forte, & si vous voulez que je vous parle sans desguisement, vostre Amitié est aussi esloignée de ressembler à l'amitié, que mon amitié de ressembler à l'Amitié. (344-5)

The rhetoric of courtship can thus turn into a game, setting up codes that are enigmatic to those like Spurius who are unaccustomed to such artifice. Yet he eventually shows the letter to the shrewd Salonine. It is only after recounting the comic scene in which Salonine is seen in the process of trying to decipher the amorous riddle that the narrator gives its solution:

Comme Herminius est fertile en inventions, il luy avoit dit que lors que le mot d'amitié ne voudroit point dire amour, il faudroit l'crire avec une grande lettre au commencement; et que lors qu'il voudroit dire amour, il faudroit l'crire avec une petite seulement. (350-1)

The cunning letter, seemingly enigmatic to inquisitive eyes, shows that the use of the word 'amitié' has a part to play in the architectonics of the entire fiction. It is a versatile noun that takes on different meanings depending on whether it binds men or women or both. Scudéry regularly substitutes the word 'amitié' for 'love', when women seem to have crossed beyond the boundaries of friendship. But here we need to ask ourselves what sort of friendship this is — since, as we learn in the course of the narrative, there are several sorts (C5, 58-83). The notion may sound complex, unclear, yet if we venture to trace back the linguistic rather than conceptual associations of



‘amour’ and ‘amitié’, one clue may be found in the trilingual 1588 version of *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) by Baldesar Castiglione.<sup>9</sup>

This version offers a unique opportunity for a comparative linguistic analysis of the text, since it provides the reader with not just Thomas Hoby’s translation but also the French and Italian texts. In the third book, dedicated to gentlewomen, the French translator seems to show a preference for the word ‘amitié’ rather than ‘amour’ as a direct translation of ‘amor’. Although Hoby suggests at one point that his translation was based on the French one, he uses the word ‘love’ when referring to ‘amor’; except once, when Lord Julian tells the story of a gentlewoman whom he will not name and whose happy love has been destroyed by a marriage of convenience. The result is her tragic death: ‘And’, the narrator tells us, ‘to this she was not driven for feare or any other respect, but only for the *zeale of true vertue*’, which the Italian and French counterparts respectively express as follows: ‘che per le solo *amore della vera virtu*’, and ‘que par la seule *amitié de la vraye vertu*’ (sig. Cc4<sup>r</sup>). This is interesting, because it highlights the displacement of meaning that may occur with regard to the French ‘amitié’. Furthermore, the distinction is reinforced as we are told of the difference between ‘l’amour du courtisan’ and ‘l’amitié de cette Dame’, and of ‘la fin de cette amitié’ which must be virtuous.

We find a similar use of the words ‘amitié’ and ‘amour’ in Lord Julian’s tale of female obstinacy as he relates the tragic fate of Synattus, whom the tyrant Sinoris decides to kill in order to marry his wife Camma.

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<sup>9</sup> *The Courtier of Count Baldesar Castilio, Devided into Foure Bookes, Verie Necessarie and Profitable for Young Gentlemen and Gentlewomen Abiding in Court, Pallace, or Place, Done into English by Thomas Hobby* (London: John Wolfe, 1588), 8<sup>o</sup>.

Quand vous avez veu ou leu oncques, qu'un mary ait monstré  
envers sa femme un signe d'amitié, tel que monstra celle Camma  
à l'endroit de son mary?

*When have you ever seene or read that a husband hath shewed  
such a token of love towarde his wife, as did Camma towarde  
her husband? (sig. Aa3<sup>r</sup>)*

Thus, 'amitié' is not just a requisite term in the rhetoric of French courtship but also seems to apply to descriptions of a wife's pure and devotional love to her husband in contrast with the word 'amour' which, on the contrary, denotes the baseness of an abusive man's unquenchable desires. Sinoris is not only a political tyrant but also the embodiment of lust and beastliness. As though animated by hellish forces,

Il se persuada que l'amitié qu'elle portoit à son mary estoit la  
seule cause qui empechoit ses desirs: & pourtant il fit tuer ce  
Sinatto.

*Bethinking him selfe that the love [Camma] bore her husband,  
was the onely cause that withstood his desires, hee caused  
Synattus to be slaine. (ibid.)*

This brief analysis of the use of the word amitié in a sixteenth-century translation of the *Book of the Courtier* suggests that *Clélie* draws upon an existing rhetoric widely employed in the marriage debate in particular.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Juan Luis Vives, for example, writes in his *Instruction of a Christen Woman*: 'They that wolde kepe the nature of thynges, holly and pure, neyther corrupte them with wronge understandinge, shulde reken that wedlocke is a bande and couplyng of love, benevolence, friendshyppe and charytie, comprehendynge with in it all names of goodness, sweetness and amitie' (sig. Q4<sup>r</sup>). See also Jacques Du Bosc's 'Réflexions morales; le respect doit estre mutuel des deux costez dans le mariage'



The anonymous translator's use of the word 'amour' has its equivalent in Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre*, an equivalent which we may define as that which lies 'au delà des dernières Bornes de l'amitié' (C1, 405), in the territory Clélie has called 'Mer dangereuse'.

While 'amitié' in the 1588 translation is only of one sort, in *Clélie* it is of many sorts, the highest of which is 'amitié tendre'. In *Urania*, on the other hand, there is no such distinction (apart from one instance that I discuss below) between friendship and love. The sentiment existing between the heroines and the heroes in *Urania* is more often called love than friendship, whereas in *Clélie* it is called 'amitié tendre'. The equivalent of the Scudarian 'Mer dangereuse' in *Urania* is the lexicon of lust — lust which causes characters to be enchanted and plunged into the waters of forgetfulness. The characteristics of Uranian love are similar to those of 'amitié tendre': both are ungendered and can be felt by two friends of the same or opposite sex.<sup>11</sup> But although Scudéry's 'amitié tendre' does not exclude 'violence' or 'ardeur', male lovers in *Clélie* are not satisfied with naming their love 'amitié' or 'amitié tendre'.<sup>12</sup> As a result, we shall see next that the word 'amour', originally banished from Clélie's map, does not completely disappear from the language of Scudarian heroes and heroines in the text itself.<sup>13</sup>

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(*Les Femmes héroïques comparées avec les héros* [Paris: Gabriel Quinet, 1669], 8°, vol. 1, pp. 268-80).

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter Five, section VII, pp. 183-4.

<sup>12</sup> 'La tendresse, au contraire, est ce qui fait la douceur de l'amitié et qui la rend constante et violente tout ensemble. Elle a encore cela de particulier, qu'elle lui donne même je ne sais quel caractère de galanterie qui la rend divertissante [...]. Mais pour bien définir la tendresse, on peut dire que c'est une certaine sensibilité de cœur, qui ne se trouve presque jamais souverainement que dans les personnes qui ont l'âme noble, l'esprit bien fait, et les inclinations vertueuses, et qui fait que lorsqu'elles ont de l'amitié, elles l'ont sincère et ardente, et qu'elles sentent vivement toutes les douleurs et toutes les joies de ceux qu'elles aiment' (cited in Anon., *Esprit de Mlle de Scudéry*, pp. 273-4).

<sup>13</sup> See Morlet-Chantalat, *La Clélie de Mademoiselle de Scudéry: de l'épopée à la gazette*, pp. 328-30; and also Roger Duchêne's chapter 'Une double substitution',

Clélie's epilogue to her map invites us to interpret it as a fair lady's guide to the human passions. But the Scudarian characters use it as something more than a reference work which they carry with them as they would a miniature painting; the map seems, in fact, to be the very clay out of which they are moulded. Their speech espouses its ethos and responds to its inner dialectic. The reader is therefore not surprised when the 'Princesse des Léontins' also called Lysimène, renowned for her virtue, invokes 'amitié' to describe her feelings towards Zénocrate. When Méléonte, one of her suitors, is rightly led to believe that Zénocrate is in love with Lysimène, the latter denies such rumors and replies as befits a faithful adherent of the *Carte de Tendre*:

Cependant pour ce qui regarde Zenocrate, je vous répons qu'il n'a que de l'amitié pour moy, & que tant qu'il agira comme mon Amy, je ne m'adviseray pas de le vouloir mal-traiter comme un Amant. (C9, 311)

This marks, in the story of Lysimène, the beginning of a climactic act in which dramatic irony is at work. The audience is made to infer the story's logical outcome while witnessing the mental process which, on the one hand, enables Zénocrate to discard the word 'amitié' and call love by its proper name; and which, on the other hand, permits Lysimène gradually to accept the nature of her 'tendre amitié' for Zénocrate. Thus if the use of the word 'amitié' is a strategy by which Valérie and Herminius keep their love secret, it may also be construed as a literary device to enable the staging of confession scenes, as it tends to trigger impassioned discourses from the male lover:

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in *Les Précieuses ou comment l'esprit vint aux femmes* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), pp. 28-38.



Mais Zenocrate, reprit Lysimene toute surprise, vous ne pensez pas à ce que vous dites, car si *vous me persuadez que vous avez de l'amour pour moy, vous vous exposez à perdre mon amitié* [...], mais *l'intérêt de ma gloire* veut que je ne fasse pas un éclat dans le monde qui pourroit estre à mon desavantage; c'est pourquoy Zenocrate, puis que vous voulez bien que *j'agisse encore en Amie, je vous conseille de vous guerir, de redevenir inconstant* [...]. Cependant *je vous deffends de me parler jamais de vostre amour*; si vous voulez que je vous laisse la liberté de me voir. (C9, 315-9)

In this final verdict, which she speaks in an authoritarian tone, the heroine refers, as seen in Chapter One, to a 'glory' whose mere utterance constitutes for a woman the shield against indecorous language and unbecoming commitments.

The more Lysimène utters the word 'amitié' and the firmer she is in her resolution, the more extreme Zénocrate's passionate outburst becomes. Yet after commanding him to turn inconstant as he used to be, on behalf of their 'amitié', his mistress abruptly succumbs to more violent emotions. Detecting her own amorous feelings, she begins to recognise the pangs of jealousy, and decides to confide in her friend Amiclée (C9, 333), which Zénocrate overhears. In a traditional theatrical turn, Zénocrate puts in an appearance, leaving no space for her to redeem her words. And the curtain falls on the stage of this happy revelation of their mutual love.

To recapitulate, an examination of the 'geography of love' in its literal sense, *i.e.* the examination of a discourse which is visually defined, shows that in both Wroth's theatre of enchantment and Scudéry's *Carte de*

*Tendre*, the discourse of love functions according to a strictly female design: it is women who dictate the terms on which this discourse operates. In addition, such an examination shows us that while in *Urania* characters progress physically through the theatre of enchantment, in *Clélie* the characters' progress reads as a sentimental journey that leads to witty reflections on the concepts of friendship and love. Thus Herminius's punning letter to Valérie and the above 'scène d'aveu', both put into motion by the utterance of the word 'amitié', not only demonstrate the dramatic tension such a word may generate, but also the constant intellectual activity of Scudarian characters who never seem to stop philosophising. In both texts, the geographical movement of characters corresponds to an intellectual process; but this process is different in each case. Nevertheless, the two texts have a number of intellectual themes in common, which I discuss in the next section.

## V. The female voice in the debate over man's inconstancy

The word 'amitié', as conceptualised by Clélie's friends, encompasses a set of concomitant conceits that constitutes a common borderline with the Uranian 'geography of love', as we are made to approach the Tower of Constancy in Melissea's domain. In *Urania*, as well as in *Clélie* we are told of female characters who are 'compounded of vertue' (*U1*, 11, l. 36) and are paragaons of constancy, and of male characters who, on the contrary, often have strong affinities with the Astrean hero Hylas. Both works, as we shall see next, can then be read as a universal debate on inconstancy, which is defined in *Clélie* as 'une certaine incertitude de coeur & d'esprit' (*C4*, 986).



In *Urania* which, as I have suggested, feeds on inset love-tales rather than on philosophical digressions as in *Clélie*, an exceptionally long conversation on in/constancy can be found in the second part of *Urania*. Amphilanthus, his uncle, Pamphilia, Urania and Steriamus are together discussing constancy, and particularly Amphilanthus's new resolutions to become constant. Amphilanthus, who is annoyed at being thought inconstant, answers that '[he] shall sett [his friends] such a patterne of Constancy, as the wourke will bee soe hard noe woeman can learne itt' (*U2*, 28, ll. 2-3). On hearing this, Pamphilia gives a sarcastic reply. Speaking on behalf of her sex, Pamphilia delineates woman's mission, as follows:

'I hope wee may in time,' sayd Pamphilia, 'and then growne cunning in that wourck, sett a new way to express our learning for men, who have nott the art to desifer the true Character of Constancy, which (beeleeve itt, my lord) would bee quickly learnte if you wOULD sett your minde to itt. Butt I feare yett you have nott that perfectnes, though in all things els, all parfections save in this dull thinge (as most men call) Constancye.' (*U2*, 28, ll. 4-9)

While Pamphilia states that men are inconstant by nature, Urania goes on to mock Amphilanthus's new resolution; in doing so she provokes a heated debate, in which every character present has a say. This conversation (*U2*, 28[ll. 10-43]- 29[ll. 1-9]) somewhat resembles *Clélie*'s more frequent debates. Here the tone is light and witty, almost Scudertian: on the one hand, it exposes man's disloyalty in love. On the other, this exposure is playfully counterbalanced by Urania (28, ll. 10-4) in a manner which very much echoes the argumentative rhetoric used in courtesy books. Urania demonstrates that all is a matter of words, since one may be constant to one's inconstancy. There follows Amphilanthus's 'self-justification'.

Amphilanthus's solemn, over-enthusiastic resolution is reinforced by the bombastic redundancy of the modal 'shall' (28, ll. 33, 35, 36) and 'will' (ll. 40, 41), and by the adverb 'willingly' (l. 41). His enthusiasm contrasts with his cousin's stoical charisma and controlled speech (29, ll. 1-6), warning him against such highflown determination. In this Uranian interlude, Pamphilia emerges as the epitome of temperance and moderation. This contrast, already contained within the juxtaposition of their two names, is further highlighted, when the same characters meet Fancy, a rustic woman, and hear her tale of misfortunes in love. Fancy is the female counterpart of Amphilanthus. In characterising 'constancy' as 'dull a peece as' her former lover (*U2*, 37, l. 32), Fancy's definition recalls and qualifies Pamphilia's gendered remark that 'Constancye' is a 'dull thinge (as most men call [it])' (28, l. 9). At the end of Fancy's relation, Amphilanthus is asked if he agrees with her. His negative answer leads to an open contradiction of his former vow to be constant. Like the misogynist Gasper in *The Book of the Courtier*, he sees in/constancy in gendered terms, *i.e.* in keeping with early modern 'sexual ethics':<sup>14</sup>

'Noe,' sayd Amphilanthus. 'I ame out of that humour, and my change now shall onely and ever bee to pure and matchles Constancy, and iff I should commend change, itt showld onely bee in men. In woemen itt is not onely ill butt unseemly, wher vertuous and chast Modesty ought wholly to rule and governe'.  
(*U2*, 37, ll. 36-40)

In a nutshell, what he commends in men, he condemns in women. At this point Pamphilia exclaims: 'what a blessed change is this, iff itt continue' (l. 41). To a certain extent, had Scudéry known about Wroth's prose work,

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<sup>14</sup> See Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*, p. 19.



she would have certainly found some similarity between Amphilanthus and Zénocrate, who is known as 'l'inconstant' before he falls in love with Lysimène.

Zénocrate belongs to the species of lovers whom Bérélise compares to butterflies which 'viennent par le monde [...] sur les Fleurs, sans qu'il [n'] en reste rien, & sans qu'ils [ne] laissent aucune marque de leur passage' (C4, 988-9).<sup>15</sup> The passage in which the above quotation occurs may indeed be read in association with the passage on inconstancy in *Urania*. The company, in this conversation, is composed of the Princess Philonice, the Prince of Messène, Bérélise, Lycorisis, Clidamire, Artémidore and Zénocrate, whom we hear debating on the differences between disloyalty and inconstancy, a debate that would almost excuse Amphilanthus's and the not-yet-converted Zénocrate's propensity for variety in love. To Zénocrate, who declares

que l'on peut quelquefois estre inconstant sans honte, & qu'on ne peut jamais estre infidelle sans lacheté. (C4, 983)

Lycorise replies:

qu' il y a une espece d'inconstance sans infidelité, & qu' il n'y a point d'infidelité sans inconstance. (984)

We have here another example of Scudarian wit which is almost exclusively uttered by the female voice, that same collective gendered voice that exposes 'le crime du monde le plus noir, & le plus lasche' (991), as expressed by Bérélise:

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<sup>15</sup> This simile recurs on p. 1010.

lors qu'une affection est liée entre deux personnes, & qu'elle vient à manquer de quelqu'un des deux costez: car en ce cas-là, ce n'est pas une simple inconstance, c'est une infidélité, où l'inconstance, la perfidie, & la lascheté se trouvent. (991)

What is here given as a maxim is, in the second part of *Urania*, enacted by Amphilanthus's disloyalty to Pamphilia: he violates his marriage vow by contracting with the Princess of Slavonia, who has no subsequent role to play in the narrative. Yet it is Amphilanthus's bondage to this shadowy figure that produces the grievous soliloquy scenes in which Amphilanthus condemns his treachery in terms similar to those uttered by Bérélise in the above quotation.<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, it is interesting to note that in these two conversations on constancy, women are the main speakers, and that untruthfulness and faultiness appear to be predominantly characteristic of men in both works.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, both contain a greater number of accounts of female than male constancy as well as more examples of male than female inconstancy. And these accounts of female constancy offer, as we shall see next, a number of images of eremitic women who choose reclusion as the most appropriate expression of true love.

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<sup>16</sup> For example, at one point Amphilanthus repents in the following terms: 'I ame the shameles creature, the monster of sacred Vowes. I ame that thing, which ought with greatest contempt to bee looked on, to bee beeheld, and like poyson shun'd. O unblest man, to undoe thine owne contents bacely, wickedly, and erroneously' (*U2*, 138, ll. 1-4).

<sup>17</sup> Bérélise is, to some extent, in agreement with Amphilanthus's conception of male constancy, for she argues that 'un homme quand il est jeune peut quelquefois estre inconstant sans se deshonoré' (*C4*, 985).



## VI. The defence of true love and its poetic imagery

In *Urania*, female constancy may be seen as both a spiritual and physical pilgrimage of the heart. This is especially the case in the story of Pelarina, ‘a faire Pilgrim’ who has been betrayed by an inconstant lover — a betrayal which has led her to ‘[take] this Pilgrimage upon [her], which now [she] ha[s] in a kind ended: [she] ha[s] seene Hiersalem, confest [her] sinnes, asked forgiveness, and remission’ (*UI*, 533, ll. 20-2) for her ‘credulity’ (l. 19). And thus she concludes her speech: ‘I pray for him, and truly without faigning I love him for all this, firmly, and shall doe’ (*UI*, 534, ll. 15-7). On hearing Pelarina’s words, Perselina ‘found in her selfe she should never come to that excellency of constancy; wherfore she admired, though scarce commended her richnes, in that plenty, and fulnesse’ (ll. 24-6). Other examples of female isolation may be found in both parts of *Urania*. Thus, Bellamira and Lady Pastora tell us the stories of how they each came to seclude themselves in a cave or on a rock.

Bellamira, to some extent, is a complex ‘compound of vertue’: she is constant and yet an ‘adulteress’, since she is not married to the man she loves, and betrays her husband (Treborius) by ‘continu[ing], firmly, and chastly loving’ (*UI*, 389, l. 14) her first lover. Nevertheless, shortly after she becomes a widow and loses her son, she is rejected by her lover, which drives her to confine herself into a cave where she leads a solitary and devotional life (ll. 22-6). Even more anchorite-like is Lady Pastora, who, like Bellamira, has been married against her will and has remained faithful to her first love, and tells her story to Steriamus. To her former lover who betrayed her, and whom she ‘tooke up halfe dead, tumbled with the Sea and wracke, [and] restored to life and health againe’ (*UI*, 420, ll. 6-8), she gives tokens of a rare love:

But with *true friendship* they parted, who could not in times  
pass'd have said farewell but in teares, and such end hath likely  
so hot and passionate beginnings to end in ashes, what began in  
flames; and therefore this last is *the surest love* which will hold  
while the truth of friendship is esteemed. (ll. 26-30)

It is the only instance where the phrase 'true friendship' is used in the whole text to refer to a relationship between a man and a woman.<sup>18</sup> Is this 'true friendship' the same as 'amitié tendre'? 'Amitié tendre' cannot come from 'the dangerous seas', which we know are the seas of disproportionate passions, *i.e.* lust. Furthermore, while in *Clélie* you can only become lovers if you have been 'tendres amis', the tale of Pastora tells us otherwise. Nevertheless, as in *Clélie* where the highest expression of love is to be found in 'tendre amitié', here the 'surest love' can only exist while 'the truth of friendship is esteemed'. Moreover, what draws our attention here is the devotional character of Lady Pastora's constancy. As suggested by her name, Lady Pastora epitomises the golden age of a now longed-for state of purity which reaches the utmost expression in the simile that concludes the whole episode. Indeed, the final image of the 'Rocke as hard as her fortune, and as white as her faith' (*U1*, 421, ll. 10-1) not only symbolises her constancy but also her devotion, since it is where 'she [has vowed] to live and die [...], concluding her dayes with her former resolution' (ll. 8-9).

Another 'patterne' of Constancy' (*U2*, 28, ll. 13-4) and true love can be found in the *persona* of the nymph Leutissia, who lives in the fountain and whom Pamphilia discovers when her friend, the Marquise of Gargadia, accidentally ensnares her while fishing. Pamphilia befriends the nymph, and

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<sup>18</sup> It is normally heroes who characterise the nature of their relationship in terms of friendship, and who — like Sidney's male protagonists in *Arcadia* — are bound by 'the flowers of friendship'. On how female friendship is defined in *Urania*, see Chapter Five, section IX, pp. 185-97.



the latter reveals herself as the true 'patterne of love' (*U2*, 313, l. 5) and as one 'who in chastetie of love might seeme sacred' (ll. 9-10). Leutissia relates the tragic deaths of her lover and his sister and mother, as he attempted to save his sister from the violent abuse of his father. Being a witness to so tragic an act, she ran away into the forest and was rescued by water nymphs, and since then has adopted their way of life. She concludes her relation, describing her 'dying self' (l. 2) in religious terms, as 'a living sepulcher to hold thos deerest reliques of purest love' (ll. 2-3).

This leads us to an examination of the poetic imagery that sustains the concomitant themes of *amor* and *mors*, two notions which, in the passages I have analysed above, overlap one another, and thereby place these eremitic women among the effigies of true love. In the second volume of *Urania*, true love is again personified in Melasinda, who after the death of her husband, Ollorandus, 'shutt her self up att Buda in the Monastery of the river: a most sweet and ever-renowned place for pleasure and Chastetie' (*U2*, 401, ll. 16-8), a passage which, as Josephine Roberts remarks, is a direct allusion to Briana's place of sequestration in *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood*.<sup>19</sup> In *Clélie* too, women retire into solitary abodes, like Lucrèce or like Lysimène who goes to 'les Vierges Voilées' (*C9*, 470), that is to 'un asile inviolable' (472). Although Lucrèce and Lysimène are epitomes of true love, they don't express such passionate and metaphorical speeches as the lovers in *Urania*: Lucrèce's self-expression mirrors the Roman austerity of her retreat while that of Lysimène reflects the monastic austerity of her situation as a recluse. If in *Urania* we are told of the Arcadian sweetness of Melissea's retreat, in *Clélie* nothing is said about these two heroines' physical surroundings. Here one may bear in mind how wary seventeenth-century French writers were, generally speaking, of

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<sup>19</sup> See 'Introduction' to *U1*, p. xxxviii.

highflown and ornate style. This wariness left its mark on Scudéry's style: as we have already noted, on the whole it is plainer than that of her English counterpart, metonymical rather than metaphorical. In that sense, both Lysimene's and Lucrece's retreats may be read as metonyms for their virtue.

Yet a closer examination of the *amor-mors* motifs in the two works tends to erase these intrinsically cultural differences, and to reinforce, on the contrary, the common classical and chivalric traditions to which they belong in their celebration of 'true love'. The phrase 'true love' lies at the core of the English romance's inset stories, in which a princess or gentlewoman searches for a knight who will defend her on behalf of love. The phrase is defined in Wroth's text as a specifically female-authored one, especially in the tale of the disdainful and bestial Lansaritano. Lansaritano arrives at the Morean court, 'leading by the hand as sweete a Ladie, as hee was ugly; shee as milde in countenance, as hee insolent; shee as fearefull, as hee bold' (*UI*, 97, ll. 28-30). Lansaritano then narrates their story, which could well be entitled the 'defence of true love', as suggested by the arrogant narrator himself:

Yet I (Master of worth) will not force her, but have compell'd my selfe to consent to satisfie a fond request she hath made to me, which is, to come into this Court with her, and this knight my Cosen whom she loves, and is the barre from my enjoying her: and here if she can find a Knight, who for her sake will enter into this quarrel (which she calls, The defence of true Love) he must observe this. (98, ll. 1-6)

The narrator's parenthesis dismisses 'The defence of true Love' as being a pure invention of female poetic fancies. Throughout *Urania*, there is a significant lexicon that associates heroines with the defenders of true love,



as illustrated in the tale of two lovers on the Island of Cephalonia: a story of parental tyranny. The female lover is to be married to a husband chosen by her father; but as the ceremonies are being held, she suddenly elopes with her lover. Significantly, the first sentences of these lovers' story are spoken in unison, as implied by the use of the pronouns 'they' and 'we' and 'us' (*U1*, 42, ll. 35-40). This tale, told by two narrators at the same time, creates a speaking picture of true love, which is further emphasised by the several occurrences of the epithets 'true' and 'vertuous' (43, ll. 33-40). Yet if the tale is about true love, its tragic outcome serves rather as a eulogy of the fair sex 'strong in truth of love' (43, l. 4). The two lovers will be defended by two passing knights, as befits the chivalric code when true love is endangered. The quarrel is concluded by the male lover's death; and at the sight of his slain body the woman proves extraordinarily 'magnanimous':<sup>20</sup>

You will say, she wept, tore her haire, rent her clothes, cri'd,  
sobd, groand; No, she did not thus, she onely imbraced him,  
kissed him, and with as deadly a palenesse, as death could with  
most cunning counterfeit, and not execute, she entreated me to  
conduct her to the next Religious house, where shee would  
remaine till she might follow him. [...] She fell ill, not sicke in  
body, but dead in heart, which appear'd; for within two dayes she  
dyed. (44, ll. 17-22; ll. 28-30)

This passage illustrates the function of the religious retreat in which virtuous women not only emerge as epitomes of constancy in love but also of female stoicism. Further examples of female stoicism will now take us back to *Clélie*, where two passages stage the play of true love, the

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<sup>20</sup> I am here using the adjective 'magnanimous' because it is one often employed in both English and French defences of the female sex.

articulation of which takes on the accents of a Parthenian tragedy, as we shall see now in an analysis of the literary treatment of the slave Téraminte.<sup>21</sup>

Tiberius and Titus are the sons of Brutus and are respectively in love with Téraminte and Ocrisie. The tyrannical couple Tarquin and Tullie seek to gain Tiberius's and Titus's trust in order to conspire against Brutus and recover their power in Rome. In order to do so, Tarquin and Tullie threaten Téraminte and Ocrisie with the death of their fiancés, if they do not persuade them to conspire against their father. Téraminte is asked to disguise herself as a man and to go and meet Tiberius and Titus in a garden.<sup>22</sup> There Téraminte discourses with Tiberius, feigning to obey the orders of the devilish couple who are eavesdropping as she speaks. But once out of their sight, Téraminte reveals their plot to her lover. Nevertheless, the cruelty and threats of Tarquin and Tullie lead the two brothers on the lethal path of the conspiracy against Brutus. On hearing the disheartening news of his sons' conspiracy against him, and against the Roman Republic, Brutus decides to set an example on behalf of justice and liberty and to sacrifice his two sons. He sentences them to death, as there is no way to deliver them from the authority of the '*vox populi*';<sup>23</sup> and a tragic scene ensues:

La malheureuse Teraminte voyant son cher Tiberius en un si funeste estat, & si prest de perdre la vie, s'advança pour aller à luy, sans sçavoir ce qu'elle vouloit faire [...]. A peine Teraminte vit-elle sa teste séparée de son corps, qu'elle tomba en faisant un grand cri, où l'on n'entendit autre chose que le nom de Tiberius

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<sup>21</sup> I am here thinking of the tragic death of Parthenia in the *New Arcadia*. See Chapter Nine, section V, pp. 328-9.

<sup>22</sup> This is one of the rare instances of cross-dressing in *Clélie*.

<sup>23</sup> See General Introduction, p. 26, footnote 46.



confusement prononcé. Herminius & Amilcar qui la virent tomber, furent pour la relever, & pour la consoler; car ils sçavoient la cause de sa douleur, mais ils trouverent qu'elle expiroit, & que le mesme coup qui avoit osté la vie à Tiberius, luy avoit donné la mort. (C6, 658-60)

Téraminte's physical fall on the stage of death is not the only tragic scene in *Clélie*. In Volume Eight, the two lovers, Hésiode and Clymène, resolve to elope in order to escape her evil brothers' determination to marry her to the Prince of Locres :

Ils songerent alors conjointement à ce qu'ils avoient à faire. Ils resolurent donc que pour ne donner aucun soupçon au Prince, Hesiode partiroit le lendemain de Locres [...]; que neantmoins il iroit se cacher dans une petite maison que Belinthe avoit au bord de la mer, au delà de Molycrie, assez pres du Temple de Neptune. (C8, 1090).

This topographical detail 'assez pres du Temple de Neptune' carries with it the seeds of the tragedy to come. Both Hésiode and the reader have been warned: the Temple of Neptune has been declared by an Oracle at Hésiode's birth to be an ill-omened place that he should never approach. The die is cast, and Hésiode is carried ashore by a dolphin, and found dead. The cause of his death is revealed, when Clymène's favourite dog identifies her brothers as his murderers (C8, 1106-7). Clymène is about to die; and once more we are made to behold the spectacle of 'true noblenesse, and vertue' (U1, 43, l. 29), as she utters these last few words:

Et en effet cette belle fille, [...], remarquant à la fin qu'elle estoit dans un chariot, & qu'elle ne voyoit plus son cher

Hesiode, [...] [fit] un grand cry, ha! non, non, dit-elle, il ne sera pas dit que je vive apres mon cher Hesiode, & que j'aïlle en un lieu où il ne peut plus estre. Et en effet comme si elle eust esté maistresse de sa vie, elle retomba en une si grande foiblesse, qu'il falut faire arrester le chariot. Ce fut pourtant en vain qu'on voulut la secourir, car elle expira entre les bras de sa Tante, & de son Amie. (C8, 1112-3)

These deaths are the consequences of a society whose laws of love are dictated by patriarchal tyranny, as illustrated in *Clélie* through the story of Clymène, whose two ill-inclined brothers see in her union with the prince a key to their own advancement. The story also introduces us to the offenders against the laws of love, offenders whose thirst for riches and political power remains unquenched, yet is triumphed over by the heroine's love that survives beyond death. Thus, through images of reclusive women and the magnanimous deaths of heroines, two of the most powerful available expressions of female constancy in love, it might be argued that there emerges a protofeminist criticism of the arbitrary laws of patriarchy, coupled, as we shall see next, with a reflection on marriage.

## VII. The female apology for true love: a protofeminist discourse?

In both texts, the violence of husbands is often denounced. In *Urania*, it is depicted with the utmost poignancy, a depiction that associates marriage with female martyrdom. This association is at its most vivid in the story of Limena, a wife who suffers under the yoke of a jealous husband. Thinking her unfaithful, Limena's husband resorts to wife-beating (*U1*, 84,



ll. 7-20) and subjects her to daily tortures (88, ll. 19-24).<sup>24</sup> Although male violence is portrayed differently in *Clélie* (where there is no mention of wife-beating), the message is the same. In each case, marriage is associated with male violence and male discourtesy, whether corporeal in the case of Limena, or both verbal and physical in the case of Lucrece. Indeed, contemporary readers of *Clélie* certainly bore in mind the many interpretations of Lucrece's suicide.<sup>25</sup> For the time being, we will retain only one of them: it is man's indiscretion that is the cause of violence in wedlock, as noted by Jacques Du Bosc in his 'Réflexions morales sur la comparaison de Lucrece avec Caton', where he condemns 'les maris inconsiderez qui affectent trop de louer leurs femmes':

A vostre avis, à qui faut-il attribuer cet adultere & la mort de Lucrece, qu'à l'imprudence de son mary qui la loua excessivement.<sup>26</sup>

It is not surprising then that the word 'marriage' should often be represented as feeding women's fears of living in miserable bondage. Many heroines in both texts express their ambivalence towards matrimony, as Clymène does to her confidante Bélinthe in Volume Eight. Before Clymène falls in love with Hésiode, she has a lover called Lysicrate. Clymène begins to complain of Lysicrate's growing indifference towards her: since he has become the prince's favourite, he has had an unquenchable thirst for social promotion in

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<sup>24</sup> A detailed analysis of the story of Limena, along with a comparison with Scudéry's treatment of Lucrece in *Clélie* will be undertaken in the third part of my thesis (Chapter Nine, section XII), dealing specifically with the interaction between painting and prose.

<sup>25</sup> See Stephanie H. Jed, 'Salutati's *Declamatio Lucretiae*: The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism', in Nancy Armstrong (ed.), *Literature as Women's History II, Genre*, 10, 2 (1987), pp. 209-25.

<sup>26</sup> In *Les Femmes héroïques*, p. 152.

the ranks of nobility at the expense of his love for Clymène. It has been a few days since she last saw him; and she confesses to Bélinthe:

Ha! Belinthe, s'escria Clymene, les hommes sont bien plus injustes que vous ne pensez, & l'amour est bien plus bizarre que je ne croyois. Car enfin, à vous decouvrir le fonds de mon coeur, *le mariage en general m'espouvente*, je trouve qu'il y a souvent bien de la folie, ou du moins de la hardiesse à s'y resoudre. (C8, 915-6)

If we look at depictions of marriage by women, their aversion may sometimes sound weakly expressed to a modern readership, but it can be coupled with aversion and a powerful cry for freedom, both seen by commentators as catchwords of the 'Précieuse'.<sup>27</sup> Clymène's fear of marriage, intensified by her knowledge of Lysicrate's disloyalty, is echoed in the last volume by Plotine who has had a lifelong 'aversion pour le mariage' (C10, 965). This is emphasised later when she is wooed by both Martius and Lycaste. She then defines her 'aversion' as a protective fortress for her heart:

En verité [...] je ne les crains guere ni l'un ni l'autre, car le mariage me fait tant de peur que j'espere que *ce sentiment là m'aidera à deffendre mon coeur*, contre le merite de ces deux Rivaux, & si je l'ose advoüer, contre quelque legere inclination que j'ay pour Martius. (988)

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<sup>27</sup> See Maclean, 'The Précieuses and Marriage', in *Woman Triumphant*, pp. 114-8; and also Duchêne, 'Des victimes sans illusions', in *Les Précieuses ou comment l'esprit vint aux femmes*, pp. 112-8.



Yet what she calls 'aversion' or 'peur' soon becomes in her own words hatred:

Si je voulois épouser quelqu'un, repliqua-t'elle, j'advouë que Martius m'y pourroit obliger; mais Cesonie je *hais* si fort le mariage, que je n'ay garde de le regarder comme devant estre mon mary. (1064)

In the same volume, we hear of Lysonice's unhappy marriage. Lysonice is an ambitious woman who has married Cloranisbe, not out of love for him but for his status as the prince's favourite. One day, the prince goes hunting near their country house. When Cloranisbe hears the news, he rides home to beg his wife to feign herself unwell as the prince is approaching. Lysonice has been secluded from the court at her husband's request since her marriage; enraged at this new frustration of her desire to advance herself, she asks him to explain his reasons for the request. He confesses that the prince, who has never seen her except in a picture, fell in love with her painted beauty before her marriage to Cloranisbe. Lest he should lose her love, Cloranisbe told the Prince that she was less beautiful in real life. Unfortunately, this story of Cloranisbe's fails to win his wife's sympathy or understanding. She gets everything ready to entertain her royal visitor. When the Prince sees her in the flesh, he concludes that Cloranisbe has betrayed him, and resolves to employ all his power to persuade her to divorce her husband and marry him. Nevertheless, for all the antipathy a reader may feel towards her, Lysonice remains constant to Cloranisbe.

But in her bitterness at what fate has done to her, Lysonice dismisses matrimony as a state of female servitude, like Sappho in *Le Grand Cyrus*, Tullie in *Clélie* or the anti-heroine Salome in *The Tragedy of Mariam*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See Venesoen, 'Madeleine de Scudéry et la "défense du sexe"', pp. 125-39; and 'Madeleine de Scudéry', in *Etudes sur la littérature féminine au dix-septième*

This conversation is triggered by the prince himself, who suggests to Cloranisbe that his wife should leave the solitude of her rural retreat. Cloranisbe replies that she may act on her own free will; and Lysonice seizes the opportunity to end the debate (*C10*, 795-7). The definition of marriage she gives — as synonymous with female ‘sujettion’ (797), a ‘malheur’ to which ‘les femmes en general, sont exposées’ (795) and a ‘sorte d’injustice d’estre eternellement asservies’ (797) — is to some extent reiterated later by Plotine. As the apologist for liberty, Plotine not only expresses, on several occasions, her opinion on marriage and the metamorphoses it inflicts upon the spouses, but also judges severely these wives who ‘sont negligées pour leurs maris, contredisantes, chagrines, & bien souvent coquettes, & mesme jalouses sans sujet’ (*C10*, 987). Plotine’s apology for liberty is, however, best expressed in her final verdict, *i.e.* her ‘declaration publique de ses sentimens’, in which she denounces man’s inconstancy, frivolity and malice:

je ne veux jamais m’exposer à trouver des Amants indiscrets,  
infideles, capricieux, tiedes, inesgaux, & fourbes; ny me mettre  
au hasard d’avoir un mary, ni jaloux, ni avare, ni prodigue, ni  
bizarre, ni imperieux, ni chagrin, ni coquet, ni peu honneste  
homme. (1066)

We have here an enumeration of masculine stock characters which may remind the reader of Molière’s plays where matrimony is derided. Plotine is endowed by her creator with an unparalleled boldness of speech, which has

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*siècle*, pp. 44-65, where he demonstrates that the anti-heroine Tullie is a strong advocate of feminist ideas concerning marital commitment which she equates, like Sappho, with thralldom. On the subject of marriage in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, see Jocelyn Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 153-81; and also Yvonne Day Merrill, *The Social Construction of Western Women’s Rhetoric Before 1750* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), pp. 72-86.



led critics to interpret her persona as a perfect model of the 'Précieuse'.<sup>29</sup> She claims fearlessly her full right to liberty as she concludes:

J'aime sans comparaison mieux passer toute ma vie avec la  
liberté d'avoir des Amies & des Amis tels qu'il me plaira. (1067)

This word 'liberté' sustains Plotine's resolution; earlier on, having discovered Martius's innocence and Lucie's artifice, she defines liberty as 'le party le plus seur' (1057). Nevertheless, Plotine's apology for liberty not only means freedom from matrimonial servitude to a husband's authority, but freedom from servitude to love, from all the negative sentiments to which one is prone when one is in love:

Mais je vous assure en mesme temps, que j'eus tant de honte de  
connoistre ma foiblesse, lors que je creus que vous en aimiez une  
autre, que je ne suis pas resoluë de me retrouver jamais en pareil  
estat [...]. Je vous assure aussi que je suis dans la resolution de  
deffendre mon coeur toute ma vie, & mesme de ne me marier  
jamais. (1057)

Her definition of marriage clearly differs from that expressed by Tullie and Lysonice. Unlike them, who have both married their husbands out of sheer ambition, Plotine declares that love is the necessary although rare foundation of a good marriage:

se marier sans aimer ceux qu'on espouse, c'est selon mon sens la  
plus folle, & la plus cruelle chose du monde, & s'assurer sur

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<sup>29</sup> See Nicole Aronson, 'Plotine ou la précieuse dans *Clélie*', *PSCFL*, 1-5 (1976), pp. 81-100.

l'affection de quelqu'un, est la plus grande temerité qui fut jamais. (*ibid.*)

At these words, we may be tempted to nod when bearing in mind 'the secound acte in the tragicall story of Amphilanthus' (*U2*, 351, ll. 4-5) who broke his vow of loyalty to his wife Pamphilia, and contracted a new bond with another princess. We will not here recall the circumstances which led Amphilanthus to this act of disloyalty, but stress the significance of the soliloquies uttered by Amphilanthus in the second part of *Urania*. His soliloquies reflect the authorial intention of demonstrating man's inconstancy in his very moment of atonement and redemption. It is because of what Amphilanthus stands for that some female characters, like Plotine in *Clélie*, emerge as the effigies of freedom. Here we may think of the shepherdess Alarina who has been betrayed by her fickle lover. As a result, she has chosen to change her identity: she decides to become a nymph, vowing herself to celibacy, and from then on calls herself Silviana. She encounters Pamphilia and explains to her how she came to 'live free' (*U1*, 224, ll. 1-19):

My whole condition alterd, I grew free, and free from love, to which I late was slave. Then finding this true vertue in my selfe, and my poore selfe returnd to me againe, I did embrace it in the same true sort that love held me, and so we did agree. I love my selfe, my selfe now loveth me. (ll. 3-7)

The self-love she confesses to having recovered recalls Plotine's assertion when she replies to Martius's plea for either her eternal affection or absolute hatred rather than her 'amitié':



Quoy, Madame, reprit-il brusquement, il y a une esgale impossibilité pour moy, à aquerir vostre haine ou vostre amour. Oüy, reprit Plotine, & *comme je m'aime trop pour vous aimer*, je vous estime trop pour vous haïr. (C10, 1058-9)

Do these two female *personae* remain 'constant in their resolution', faithful to their hymn for freedom? The answer for Plotine is yes, as she herself affirms:

Martius, reprit-elle d'un air fort serieux, vous ne me verrez jamais engagée en une affection de cette nature, j'aime la joye, le repos & la gloire, & je les veux conserver toute ma vie [...]. Et en effet elle demeura ferme dans sa resolution. (C10, 1059-60; 1067)

As for Alarina/Silviana, the answer is more complex, open to diverse interpretations. Two hundred pages after her encounter with Pamphilia, the nymph has broken her vow, yet not as Silviana but as Alarina, namely not as a nymph but as a shepherdess. It is as if Wroth wished her to change her name and identity in order to preserve intact the concept of female freedom which she had embodied in the *persona* of Silviana. Nevertheless, Alarina's wedding is pervaded with pastoral touches that convey 'bliss', which Plotine herself thinks can rarely be found in matrimony, when stressing her 'resolution de vivre libre' in the following quotation:

En effet je ne trouve rien de plus beau que de prendre *la resolution de vivre libre*; & quand je considere toutes les suites presque infaillibles du mariage, elles me font trembler. Ce n'est pas que je ne conçoive qu'il pourroit y en avoir quelqu'un d'heureux; mais Cesonie où trouvera-t'on deux personnes qui

ayent assez d'esprit, assez de constance, assez d'amitié l'une pour l'autre, assez d'égalité d'humeur pour vivre tousjours bien ensemble. *Il peut y en avoir, mais il y en a peu, & je ne croy pas estre assez heureuse pour trouver une si grande felicité. C'est pourquoy il m'est bien plus aisé de prendre la resolution de vivre en liberté.* (C10, 1064-5)

In this passage, Plotine forms a definition of 'romantic' marriage ruled by the equity that suffuses the solemnising of Alarina's, and Leonius and Veralinda's weddings, and more specifically the depiction of Parselius and Dalinea's conjugal love:

Parselius [has] binn long lulled in the sweetest armes of his most chaste and vertuous love and wife, Dalinea. (U2, 202, ll. 24-5)<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore Wroth's prose clearly recalls Sidneian syntax. Like Sidney, she renders the Arcadian state of a *locus amoenus*, by syntactically resorting to chiasmic structures, which has the effect of conveying conjugal harmony and mutual love:

Nothing appeered before them but content, he striving for nothing more then to please her, nor she ambitious of any thing more then his affection: both thus equally bent to love [...], his desire was her will, and her will desire to serve him. (U1, 518, ll. 17-9, ll. 22-3)

Throughout the whole romance, besides the aforementioned couples, Veralinda and Leonius, and Urania and Steriamus, Parselius and Dalinea's

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<sup>30</sup> See also U1, 518[ll. 11-23]; U2, 317[ll. 37-9, l. 42]-318[ll. 1-2; ll. 7-11].



marriage is the sole example of romantic conjugal life. Thus 'romantic love' is not 'always a delusion'.<sup>31</sup> These instances of romantic love illustrate what Carolyn Ruth Swift calls 'the contradiction between Wroth's images of marital torment and her praise of marriage as the "best and blessed estate"'.<sup>32</sup> In the text, there are indeed different instances, as seen earlier, of women's exposure of men's violence and inconstancy, a point which is 'generalised' as such by the author herself in the following terms:

Indeed, itt is most true. Poore Fate is made the couler when such fatall stormes fall, butt itt is a strange and rare thing in reason that all men showld bee borne under the fatall rule of unconstancy, for when did any one see a man Constant from his birthe to his end? Therfor woemen must thinke itt a desperate destinie for them to bee constant to innconstancy, butt alas this is woemens fortunes, and by that unfixed sex to bee blamed as if stained with ther guiltines. (*U2*, 23, ll. 33-40)

Although inconstancy is often characterised as a male attribute, the reader may be taken by surprise as he or she hears Veralinda comforting Pamphilia, who is afflicted at the news of Amphilanthus's disloyalty:

You say Amphilanthus is a man. Why, did you ever knowe any man, especially any brave man, continue constant to the end? If, then Amphilanthus might have binn such an one ore that man alone. Butt all men are faulty. I wOULD nott my self have my Lord Constant, for feare of a miracle. (*U2*, 110, ll. 35-9)

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<sup>31</sup> Carolyn Ruth Swift, 'Feminine Identity in Lady Mary Wroth's Romance *Urania*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 14, 3 (1984), p. 338.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

Is resignation, then, an intrinsic part of the lives of Uranian wives? Acceptance of man's unfaithfulness thus appears to be a normal attitude, as Veralinda adds:

Beesids you have seene Amphilanthus in severall slips allreddy,  
yett still hath com back wholly to you againe, and soe will now  
when hee beeholds you againe. Butt itt is this Vilanous absence  
that marrs all. For I ame confident hee in soule loves onely you.  
(110[ll. 39-41]-111[ll. 1-2])

She goes on to give rather down-to-earth advice to Pamphilia:

If hee bee faulce, lett faulshood Joye him. If hee marry, marry  
too. Lett nott him have a hapines beeyound you. Butt if hee bee  
just, accuse him nott wrongfully. Iff hee sue to you, receave him.  
If hee fly you, lett him goe. And cast your eyes thus on, and  
of[f], of him. Hee is a brave man; soe are more. Hee is a mighty  
man of commaund; others are as great. Hee did love you, soe did  
as good, as great as hee. Butt say hee hath left you: lett him goe  
in his owne pathe; tread nott in itt, an other is more strait. (112,  
ll. 13-20)

The construction of feminine identity in *Urania* oscillates between the idealistic voice of Pamphilia and the realistic voices of a Veralinda, or of a Urania, who '[offer] Pamphilia a remarkable interpretation of feminine virtue as free of martyred loyalty', and whose 'imagery stresses that virtuous women must be inconstant to inconstant men in order to "revive" in self-respect'.<sup>33</sup> The contentious tone of Urania's and Veralinda's argument conveys a sense of protofeminism, as it asserts women's right to freedom.

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<sup>33</sup> Swift, 'Feminine Identity in Lady Mary Wroth's Romance', p. 337.



Disloyalty should not be the man's privilege alone; and this idea is illustrated in the romance in numerous narrations of adulteries. In *Urania*, although 'to explain the hazards of love, Wroth generalises male infidelity',<sup>34</sup> there are examples of both male and female infidelity. The paramount example is to be found in the *persona* of Pamphilia — who, after being betrayed by Amphilanthus, goes to 'the most undesired wedding' (*U2*, 276, l. 12-3), her own, which unites her to the Tartarian King. Having consented of her own will and yet against it, she emerges as an equivocal martyr. Unlike most of her female counterparts, she may marry whom she wants: her liberty of choice is acknowledged by her father. We cannot but wonder, then, why she chooses to inflict upon herself a choice with which her heart does not agree. Such a turn in the narrative invites us to revise the assumption that the text carries with it the seeds of a protofeminist discourse. Marriage appears here as a formality that she ought to perform as she needs a successor to her throne. Pamphilia, like many of the unhappily wedded minor characters, is an 'adulteress' in soul, if looked at from the matrimonial perspective: she is unfaithful to her husband by remaining constant to her first love.

Nevertheless, if Uranian characters' tales of their lives and miseries in love and marriage mark the birth of feminine consciousness in the history of women's fiction, how are these inconstant women judged by the female eye that watches and studies them, as it does so frequently in *Clélie*? In the discussion of the subject in Volume Four, we are made to hear Bérélise's castigation of unfaithful women:

je soustiens aussi que l'infidélité & l'inconstance sont encore plus horribles aux femmes, qu'aux hommes. (*C4*, 985; see also 993-4)

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

Thus, if in *Urania* women's inconstancy will only be condemned when performed by evil *personae*, in *Clélie* characters are more critical of each other. One will even find that women are harsher on women's infidelity and disloyalty than they are on men's.

It appears, throughout this section, that Wroth's and Scudéry's emphasis is on their heroines' exposure of male inconstancy (although both texts provide us with examples of female inconstancy), and on the denunciation of marriage as subjecting woman to thralldom and male violence. But their protofeminism is most conclusively voiced through their heroines' self-assertive claim to a woman's right to freedom, as expressed through their practice of constancy, which in most cases can be construed as 'an act of willful self-definition'.<sup>35</sup>

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The elaborate allegories of the human heart in these two female-authored texts — the theatre of enchantment in *Urania* and the *Carte de Tendre* in *Clélie* — introduce the theme of constancy to one's lover (or, in the exceptional case of Plotine, to one's ideal), which, as seen throughout the whole chapter, renders possible the development of one sustaining and specifically feminine discourse: the apology for true love. Furthermore, the Uranian and Scudarian heroines' various ways of expressing their commitment to true love serve a protofeminist discourse that enlivens the marriage issue from a female point of view. It is curiously in the debates themselves that the treatment of women lovers differs between one text and

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<sup>35</sup> Maureen Quilligan, 'The Constant Subject: Instability and Authority in Wroth's *Urania* Poems', in Elizabeth Harvey and Katherine Eisaman Maus (eds.), *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 323.



the other. Whereas *Clélie* complies with the early modern criteria of female virtue, since the Scudarian heroine wholly condemns inconstancy when committed by a woman, *Urania* proposes in two cases — those of Urania and Veralinda — a more pragmatic view of amorous relationships, which construes constancy to an inconstant male lover as a self-inflicted condition. But in practice, even when betrayed by their lovers, Uranian heroines tend to remain stoically constant.

Wroth's and Scudéry's protofeminism does not exclude, for all their numerous accounts of extra-marital love, and for all their condemnation of marriage as a form of tyranny, the possibility of romantic marriages. It is just that the two authors take such marriages to be both rare and extraordinary.

## Chapter Three

### Women as rulers in *Urania* and *Clélie*

As apologists for true love, Uranian and Scudarian heroines manifest the qualities of the 'compleat woman', a phrase closely related to another, 'la femme généreuse'.<sup>1</sup> *La Femme généreuse* is also the title of a work published in 1643 by L.S.D.L.L., a female author who has been identified as Jacqueline Guillaume. The subtitle of this work offers an appropriate summary of the qualities of the Uranian and Scudarian heroine: 'qui monstre que son sexe est plus noble, meilleur politique. Plus vaillant. Plus sçavant. Plus vertueux et plus oeconome que celuy des hommes'.

While they are undoubtedly rulers in matters of love, as seen in the examples of *Clélie* and *Melissea*, Uranian and Scudarian heroines are also frequently rulers in matters of politics and knowledge. I shall therefore seek, throughout this chapter, to demonstrate the extent to which *Urania* and *Clélie* can be construed as conduct books for early modern women or 'treatise[s] of the Nobilitie and Excellencye of womankynde', written for women of the ruling classes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am here borrowing the phrase 'compleat woman' from the English translation by N. N. of Jacques Du Bosc's *L'Honneste femme* (London: Thomas Harper and Richard Hodgkinson, 1639), 4<sup>0</sup>. The phrase was popular, as suggested by the title of another similar work by Gervase Markham: *The English House-wife, Containing the Inward and Outward Vertues which Ought to Be in a Compleate Woman, the Fourth Time Augmented* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1631), 4<sup>0</sup>. Another phrase, 'femme forte', will occasionally be used in this chapter to designate women of moral strength; but it will not refer to the violent type of female heroism with which it is normally associated. The notion of 'femme forte' is often related to the celebrated, although controversial exemplars of female fortitude embodied by a Judith or a Deborah, who both resort to violence in order to eradicate male abuse. See Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*, pp. 64-87.

<sup>2</sup> I am here borrowing the phrase from David Clapam's translation (1534) of Agrippa von Nettesheim's treatise *De Nobilitate et Praecellentia Foemini Sexus* (1529); see General Introduction, p. 37, footnote 76.



A comparison of the two romances with these treatises (section VIII) allows us to note one recurring feature in the early modern representation of heroism. Heroines are often depicted as androgynous, *i.e.* as showing both male and female qualities. Adam Scaliger (known as Le Chevalier de L'Escaie) defines 'le surnom d'androgyné comme [voulant] dire une femme homme, ou une femme de courage'.<sup>3</sup> It is to the second part of this definition that we shall find ourselves returning throughout this discussion of women as rulers (indeed, as we have already noted, there is hardly any cross-dressing in either of the two romances). A glance at Furetière's definition of Amazons in his 1690 dictionary<sup>4</sup> will show that Uranian and Scudarian Amazons have little affinity with these 'femmes de Scythie qui habitoient sur les bords du Tanaïs, du Thermodon, [qui] vivoient sans hommes, et s'abandonnoient aux étrangers; mais [qui] faisoient périr tous les enfants mâles, et [qui] brûloient la mamelle gauche des filles pour les rendre plus propres au combat'. Nevertheless, as in Scaliger's distinction between 'femme homme ou femme de courage', Furetière mentions the metaphorical use of the word 'Amazon': he adds that the word 'se dit en general d'une femme courageuse et capable d'une entreprise hardie'. In his study, *Amazones, guerrières et gaillardes*, Pierre Samuel remarks that the word also has a Slavic etymology which means 'femme forte'.<sup>5</sup> It thus becomes clear that the phrases 'femme forte', 'femme généreuse', 'femme illustre', 'femme héroïque', or simply 'complete woman' belong to the same project, that of the construction of feminine identity in the early modern period. Thus, I shall show in the course of this chapter that Wroth's and Scudéry's treatment of the female ruler (sections X and XI) has little to do

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<sup>3</sup> *Alphabet de l'excellence et perfection des femmes contre l'infame alphabet de leur imperfection et malice* (Paris: Pierre Billaine et Nicolas de La Vigne), 1631, 12<sup>0</sup>, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> See General Introduction, p. 19, footnote 22.

<sup>5</sup> Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1975, p. 68.

with the physical representation of the Amazon, with a few notable exceptions (section IX).

### VIII. In the Uranian and Scuderian temple of female excellences

In both works, we occasionally hear of women who can be regarded as emblems of wisdom as they are instructed in all the arts and sciences. In *Urania*, there are Urania, Pamphilia (whom Amphilanthus characterises as ‘all-knowing’ (*U2*, 28, l. 23), and Lindafillia whose political title, ‘Sophy’ (emblematising her ‘wisdom’), is given substance by a brief description of her library:<sup>6</sup>

She strait retir’d with him into a most rich and sumptuous galery, butt most rich in her presence. Beesids, her librerarie was ther, and the most sumptuous in the world for a woeman to have, and the rarest, since non butt the rarest of bookes were permitted to bee ther (all chosen ones, and as choisely chosen and as truly used and imployed by ther owner), she beeing exactly and perfectly learned in all siences, and learning well beestowed on her, who honored learning for the truth of learnings sake, perfect knowledg. (*U2*, 171, ll. 11-8)

To complete this sketch of the Uranian gallery of female paradigms, we cannot omit the great enchantress, Melissea, whom female characters venerate as ‘the wounder of [their] sex’ (*U2*, 252, l. 18), as ‘[carrying] all things with that infinite wisdom’ (l. 19), as ‘that matchles lady in all

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<sup>6</sup> Lindafillia is often referred to as the true Sophia, as opposed to the usurping Sophy. The epithet ‘true’ reinforces the association between Lindafillia and wisdom.



artes' (ll. 29-30) who, 'looking over her bookes' (*U2*, 397, l. 7), controls the fate of the Uranian heroes and heroines.

In *Clélie* the author leads us, at one point, into a metaphorical temple of female excellences; and there the narrative has us pause at the portraits of Amiclée, Amalthée, Arricidie, Mélinthe and many others who, expressing themselves through their skills in designing gardens and other architectural marvels, are the epitomes of a 'grand esprit, grand coeur, grande vertu' (*C6*, 816).<sup>7</sup> They too, like Lindafilla, own private libraries whose books they have 'choisely chosen'. The reader is not given any clue to the titles of these books, either in *Urania* or in *Clélie*. The narrator merely suggests that they consist of the kind that is proper for a noble- and gentlewoman to read (see *C6*, 817; 818-9). These two works clearly entice their fair readers to emulate patterns of virtue and constancy, as we find them in courtesy books. This is corroborated by the presence of many portraits in *Clélie* of both male and female characters of great merit. A further illustrative example of Scudéry's conventional representation of heroism is to be found in the characterisation of Mélinthe, a minor figure in the romance, yet highly admired by her female beholders:

Melinthe est une femme d'une si rare vertu, qu'elle mérite d'estre proposée pour exemple à toutes les autres; & il y a dans son coeur je ne sçay quoy de si noble [...]. Car enfin il n'y a rien de plus difficile à trouver *qu'une femme qui ait tout à la fois toutes les vertus qui font un homme d'honneur, & toutes celles qui font une honneste femme* [...]. De sorte que Melinthe ayant effectivement dans le coeur toutes *les vertus d'un fort honneste homme, & toutes celles d'une très honneste femme*, mérite

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<sup>7</sup> On women as architects and garden designers, see Chapter Five, section VI, pp. 162-72.

toutes les loüanges qu'on peut donner, separément à tous les deux sexes. (C8, 1297-9)

She is depicted in androgynous terms, and thereby imbued with the true essence of 'virtue', which in *Urania* is likewise to be found in female *personae* endowed with 'a Masculine spirit' (U1, 468, l. 13).<sup>8</sup> A further reading of Mélinthe's portrait (C8, 1303-6) vividly recalls that of Théoxène in Du Bosc's conduct book *L'Honneste femme (The Compleat Woman)*<sup>9</sup> and those found in various contemporary panegyrics of ancient and modern examples of female excellence: both women are described as 'genereuses'; one as having performed 'generous and courageous actions', and the other 'actions genereuses'. Furthermore, Mélinthe, like Théoxène, is praised for her 'courage de mere & de mere genereuse'. Théoxène is nevertheless driven to a more tragic end; to save her children, she needs to kill them.<sup>10</sup>

To conclude, male writers' conventional characterisation of learned and courageous women, in defences of the female sex, as 'virile spirits cloathed with womanly habits'<sup>11</sup> constitutes a meaningful component in the picturing of women as rulers in both Scudéry's and Wroth's texts. I shall go on to demonstrate this point in the following analysis of their recurring figurative representations of women as Amazons.

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<sup>8</sup> The word virtue, as recorded in *LD*, comes from the Latin 'virtus', which is a feminine noun deriving from the word 'vir' which means 'manliness, manhood, i.e. the sum of all corporeal and mental excellences of man, strength, vigor, bravery, courage, aptness, capacity; worth, excellence'. Only the seventh definition may apply to both sexes, while the rest refers to the male sex.

<sup>9</sup> Not having had access to the French version, I am here referring to the seventeenth-century translation (see above, footnote 1).

<sup>10</sup> *The Compleat Woman*, Part Two, 'Of Courage', p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Brathwait, *A Ladies Love-Lecture* (London: John Dawson, 1641), fol., p. 428.



## IX. Women as Amazons

In these two romances, the term 'Amazon' is to be redefined and understood in a figurative way, in the sense that women emerge as leaders in the realm of politics, which is testified by the presence of a martial decor.<sup>12</sup> As in the frontispiece that opens Jacques Du Bosc's 'Deborah comparée à Joshué' in *Femmes héroïques*, women as rulers may be pictured in an Amazonian posture, namely on horseback.

In *Urania*, Pamphilia's accomplishments as a hunter and an expert rider associate her not with the legend of the forceful Amazons, but with the pastoral myth of Diana and the woodland retreats favoured by melancholy lovers. Pamphilia is rarely viewed as a direct agent in the restoration of order in the Empire threatened by the usurping Sophy of Persia. She is 'forced to lay her sorrow aside' (*U2*, 109, l. 22) before she involves herself in political affairs. We also have to wait until the first book of the second part of *Urania* to encounter Amazonian heroines. There is first Clarisbella, the Princess of Lycia who, with a 'troope of brave gentlemen', rescues Philarchos when he is attacked by 'untuterd theves and all unarmed' (*U2*, 119, l. 2). Clarisbella, who is dressed as a huntress, clearly emerges as leader in this scene: she is the one who does most of the talking, as she explains to Philarchos that the 'untuterd theves' are the subjects of her father. Furthermore, the presence of her gentlemen is, it might be argued, purely ornamental, as the focus of the scene is mainly on her apparel (ll. 7-16). Lastly, again in the second part of *Urania*, there is a particularly Amazonian description of Melissea. She enters the stage of a battlefield in a

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<sup>12</sup> For the figurative meaning of the word 'Amazon', see Furetière's definition at the beginning of this chapter. On the popularity of the Amazonian theme, in France and England, see Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women*; Michèle Cuenin, 'Mademoiselle, une amazone impure?', *PSCFL*, 22, 42 (1995), pp. 25-36; and Marlies Mueller, 'The Taming of the Amazon: The Changing Image of the Woman Warrior in Ancien Régime Fiction', *PSCFL*, 22, 42 (1995), pp. 199-232.

characteristically theatrical fashion (*U2*, 242, ll. 13-21).<sup>13</sup> In *Urania*, Melissea is the *dea ex machina* who restores the rights of dethroned sovereigns, and who watches the heroes' and heroines' progress through hostile regions inhabited by giants and monsters, and through the torturing labyrinth of love. Unlike her counterpart in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, the enchantress is omnipotent and omniscient, and controls her characters' actions, putting an end to their miseries when they get too extreme. Not a pervasive presence in the first part, in the second part she constantly takes the reader by surprise, as though directing the course of the narrative itself on the path of triumphant justice and wisdom.

In *Clélie*, the sole example of Amazonian heroism is that of the eponymous protagonist:

Clélie [...] se jetta *courageusement* dans l'eau, & se tournant vers elles, si vous aimez la gloire, vous me suivrez, leur dit-elle; [...] *leurs robes* leur servirent aussi beaucoup en cette occasion à les soustenir sur l'eau; mais ce qu'il y eut de remarquable, fut que Clélie qui de temps en temps tournoit la teste pour voir si ses compagnes la suivoient, trouva au milieu du fleuve, un cheval qui s'estoit eschappé comme on le menoit boire, si bien que *cette courageuse fille luy prenant la bride*, fit si bien qu'elle monta dessus. Ainsi s'eslevant au dessus de l'eau, & le jour estant augmenté, les Soldats qui les avoient escortées, [...] ne sceurent d'abord si ce n'estoi[e]nt point *des hommes desguisez en femmes*. (*C10*, 918-20)

We are made to watch Clélie in action and in command, as is implied by the metaphorical gerund 'prenant la bride' which can be read as 'prenant les

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter Nine, section VIII, pp. 352-3.



rênes', figuratively meaning 'to take control'. This heroic scene enacted by female agents is devoid of any decorative embellishments. The only indication we are given of their apparel is their dress, itemised not in aesthetic terms as in a painting by Rubens,<sup>14</sup> but as representing the feminine attributes that reinforce the magnanimity of a whole heroic enterprise performed solely by women against the tenets of tyranny. Nevertheless one epithet can be found, which is the adjective 'courageuse', carrying with it Amazonian connotations. The adjective recurs later, this time designating both Clélie and her companions. These 'courageuses filles', after reaching the opposite bank of the Tiber,

furent suivies d'une foule inconcevable de peuple, qui ayant desja sceu que Clelie estoit celle qui avoit entrepris cette hardie action pour conserver sa gloire, luy donnoit *mille loüanges*, & la mettoit au dessus de *tous les Heros de l'antiquité*. (922)

These 'mille loüanges' do not identify her as a heroine, but lift her 'au dessus de tous les Heros de l'antiquité', a phrase whose employment of the masculine rather than the feminine noun conveys the prevalence of her 'masculine fortitude'.<sup>15</sup>

Scudéry here employs the androgynous lexicon which is used in the contemporary defences of the female sex already cited. By 'androgynous

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<sup>14</sup> We are thinking in particular of the cycle of paintings Rubens made on the request of Marie de Medicis. See Simone Bertière, *Les Reines de France au Temps des Bourbons (1): les deux régentes* (Paris: Fallois, 1996), 'Le triomphe éphémère de Marie de Médicis', pp. 216-34: 'Et dans la somptuosité des formes et des couleurs, l'éclat des chairs nacrées, la sensualité qui anime jusqu'aux allégories, l'image de Marie de Medicis en majesté y rayonne' (p. 222).

<sup>15</sup> See Noemi Hepp, 'La notion d'héroïne', in W. Leiner (ed.), *Onze études sur l'image de la femme dans la littérature du dix-septième siècle* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1984), where the author defines the seventeenth-century heroine as 'une femme qui attire l'attention de tous [...] par la singularité de sa conduite' (p. 19).

lexicon', we mean a corpus of predicates which in misogynistic writings only apply to the glorification of the male sex (*i.e.* vaillant, magnanime, héroïque, etc.). The Scudarian heroine has the same qualities as those described in *La Femme généreuse* — qualities which are supposedly masculine, as indicated by the constant comparisons with men in this panegyric, or by the title of Jacques Du Bosc's book, *Les Femmes héroïques comparées aux héros*. In order to define the virtue and courage of a woman, writers often resort to comparisons with male heroism. Furetière, for example, defines the term 'héroïne' as follows: 'une fille ou une femme qui a des vertus de Heros, qui a fait quelque action heroïque'. He goes on to give some examples and then tells us to go back to the word 'Heros [pour] ses différentes significations' and concludes with a more general statement that may apply to both sexes, since a hero is 'plus généralement une personne illustre et extraordinaire'. The heroism of Clélie and her friends is treated similarly: although they are women, their dress (the only mark of their femininity) is thought to be a disguise by the soldiers 'qui ne sçeuvent d'abord si ce n'estoient point des hommes desguisez en femmes'. The soldiers' vision is therefore blurred, for they react in gendered terms, *i.e.* in conformity with 'sexual ethics': such a heroic act can only be performed by men. By describing what the soldiers think they are seeing, Scudéry therefore comically reproduces the patriarchal discourse of 'binary oppositions',<sup>16</sup> and at the same time introduces an anti-heroic image in the context of a pastoral epic. Indeed, the theme of cross-dressed men is normally one found in romances where a male character temporarily emasculates himself by taking the disguise, for example, of an Amazon, a priestess, or a shepherdess, in order to be *incognito* beside the lady he loves.

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<sup>16</sup> I am here borrowing the phrase from Toril Moi's chapter on Hélène Cixous (*Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* [London and New York: Routledge, 1985], p. 104).



Scudéry clearly plays with this anti-heroic image, which here becomes a device to reinforce the oddity of this heroical act, and possibly reverses the moral implication of the phrase: to a seventeenth-century Christian, ‘une femme desguisée en homme’ is contrary to the Law of Moses.<sup>17</sup> This is probably why Scudéry chose not to cross-dress her heroines. Thought to be ‘des hommes desguisez en femmes’, Clélie and her friend are therefore perceived first as being heroes. It is only later that their femininity is acknowledged.

To conclude, the highly pictorial descriptions of horsewomen in *Urania* provide a sharp contrast to the scarcity of colourful details that, on the whole, characterises Amazonian heroism in *Clélie*.<sup>18</sup> Yet the Uranian *dea ex machina* invariably recalls the regal *persona* of an Elizabethan or Jacobean masque and may therefore be a sort of homage to both Queen Elizabeth and Queen Anne; while the crossing of the Tiber in *Clélie* may be read too as an allusion to the mother-in-law of *Clélie*’s dedicatee, Mme de Longueville, or Mlle de Montpensier, both famous ‘frondeuses’. However, the fact that the figure of the Amazon in Elizabethan and Jacobean England was ambivalent,<sup>19</sup> and that the figure of the ‘frondeuse’ came to be ridiculed too, may explain the rarity (in both *Urania* and *Clélie*) of pictorial representations of chivalric heroines (whether on a horse or on a chariot). Instead, both Wroth and Scudéry lay more emphasis on the spiritual than on the physical qualities of their female rulers. They portray their heroines as legislators and mediators in the combined world of politics and love.

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<sup>17</sup> Jean de Marconville, *De la bonté et mauvaiseté des femmes*, p. 51.

<sup>18</sup> With a few exceptions; there is for instance one pictorial scene in *Clélie* (C9, 240) picturing women on horseback in their most glorious apparel, heading towards Porsenna’s camp where Clélie and her friends are held hostage. See Chapter Nine, section VIII, pp. 349-50.

<sup>19</sup> See Winfried Schleiner, “‘Divina Virago: Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon’”, *Studies in Philology*, 75 (1978), pp. 163-80.

## X. Women as legislators

The scene of the 'Traversée du Tibre' is preceded by another example of female heroism, which takes place in the story of Lindamire and Thémiste. Lindamire and Thémiste are in love with each other; but Périanthe, Lindamire's brother, sends Thémiste to the battlefield, and imprisons Lindamire in a tower, because she refuses to marry the Prince of Messène. On his return from war, Thémiste decides to besiege Syracuse and free his beloved. But Lindamire, like Clélie, is stirred by patriotic zeal, and condemns the means to which Thémiste resorts to deliver her. Lindamire becomes the 'chef de l'entreprise' against the invasion of her country which is led by her lover. 'Gloire' and 'patrie' become the catchwords of her resolution (C6, 1228-33). In the passage in question, the details are sober. No colour or filigree ornament adorns Lindamire's beauty which is mentioned only once in the suggestively Titianesque 'habit négligé' (1230). To a twentieth-century reader, such a detail may be construed as exhibiting her nudity in a rather ostentatious manner; but 'neglectiveness' in our two romances emerges, on the contrary, as a mark of female innocence, virtue and glory, and as a pastoral touch of both moral and physical beauty, which is illustrated in this six-page long negotiation between Lindamire and Thémiste.<sup>20</sup>

We have seen in Chapter One that Clélie is a skilled orator when she opposes her father's will and Horace's requests. Likewise, Lindamire demonstrates considerable rhetorical skills: she employs the verbal phrase 'je veux', the future tense and the imperative many times, and thereby expresses her determination not to fail in her duty as the Princess of

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<sup>20</sup> On 'neglectiveness' and female beauty, see Chapter Nine, section XI, pp. 380-3.



Syracuse, and urges Thémiste to cease war, for she will not marry a man who threatens to destroy her country. And like Clélie in the final scene, Lindamire is extolled by her subjects as the heroine of the peace process (1241-2). At this point, she embodies reason and wisdom, as she reminds Thémiste of the meaninglessness of war:

*Rendez vous Themiste, rendez vous, & ne refusez pas la gloire de vous surmonter vous-mesme. On est assez vangé quand on donne la paix à ses ennemis, lors qu'ils n'ont pas la force de faire la guerre, & vous le seriez beaucoup moins en détruisant Syracuse, qu'en obeïssant à son Prince legitime. (ibid.)*

Earlier an imprisoned woman, and now under the protection of her people, Lindamire is endowed with political powers, as she herself becomes a legislator. She draws up several articles for the maintenance of peace, articles which do not satisfy Thémiste as he must wait for another whole year before he may marry his beloved.<sup>21</sup> In this last stage of the restoration of peace, it is once more her 'skill in argument' that is lauded by the narrator:

Je ne m'arresteray point Madame, à vous dire precisement ce que dit Lindamire à Perianthe, car il me seroit impossible, estant certain qu'on n'a jamais parlé avec tant d'art qu'elle parla. Elle excusa Themiste avec beaucoup d'adresse: elle dit qu'elle l'avoit persuadé sans peine, & faisant adroitement elle-mesme les articles de la paix sans sembler les faire, elle amena la chose au point qu'on eust dit que Perianthe luy devoit avoir beaucoup d'obligation. (1247-8)

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<sup>21</sup> This situation reproduces a popular motif in romances, that of the lady imposing rigorous rules on her lover.

Similarly we find, in *Urania*, a couple of examples of heroines who play a decisive role in the conduct of political affairs. We are told, for example, that Pamphilia ‘ratif[ies]’ (*U2*, 109, l. 6) the important decision to send help to the true Sophy of Persia. She is praised for her ‘unmatched judgment’ and ‘better and sounder advise and absolute power’ (*U2*, 116, ll. 6-7) by the Tartarian King. Although she is very rarely seen on the stage of martial politics, we are now and then reminded of her role as a Queen. In the first part of *Urania*, it is only elliptically that her skills in the art of governing are alluded to. It is not until the second part that we hear her speak these words to the messenger sent by a despotic sultan:

Returne to the barberous fellow, your master. Tell him that when I marry, itt shalbee to such an one as shall bring mee to a safe and justly settled title of honor, nott to a tiraniske and userped one as his is. If I have soe great and opulent a Country as his letters speakes mee to have, say I will imploy that, and the meanes to restore the right and undoubted heire of Percia to her right, far sooner then to beestow itt on soe worthles and wicked wretch as him self. The rest our letters say. Soe bee gon, and lett him bee reddy as soone as hee will, ore wee shall send to teach him his duty to his rightfull soveraine. (*U2*, 109, ll. 7-16)

Like Lindamire and Clélie, she is the advocate of justice; again through the modals ‘will’ and ‘shall’, her speech conveys a sense of heroical determination and female pragmatism in political matters. Towards the end of the first book of the second part she expresses similar sentiments in a letter to Steriamus, asking for his aid against ‘that brutish beast, the Souldan of Percia’ (*U2*, 155, l. 6):



I ame resolutely resolved to dy rather then consent to that which will bee my continuall torment. And rather hasard my lyfe in warr, which will, I hope, bring mee a braver and more Christianlike conclusion. (ll. 8-12)

These are the only two instances in the romance where the female protagonist is depicted mediating with the enemy. Nevertheless, during his travels, Steriamus becomes acquainted with an unnamed Lady who rules the island of Robollo, and reads out Pamphilia's letter to her. On hearing Pamphilia's plea for help, the unnamed lady '[determines] to give all the assistance she cowlde, either by her power, allyance with neighbour Islands, ore her judiciall advise' (*U2*, 155, ll. 29-31) against 'the barberousnes of that wicked and unjust Soldaine' (l. 41). As we read on, she emerges as the one who takes command of the military operation, a role which is reinforced by the narrator's praise of her 'knowledg and judiciall counsell' (157, l. 19), and especially by his androgynous characterisation of her as a woman 'who ha[s] soe great a spiritt as might bee called Masculine' (156, l. 7).

Clearly, then, the Lady of Robollo in *Urania* and Lindamire in *Clélie* introduce a type of woman ruler who also has her say in the male-authored world of politics.

In both works, heroines form part of a discourse of power which was widely exploited in contemporary defences of the female sex. Agrippa von Nettesheim's praise of female monarchs is particularly interesting in that it enumerates precisely those roles which are performed by Uranian and Scudarian heroines: they 'judge, arbitrate and decyde matters [...], and mynyster Justice' (*op. cit.*, sig. F5<sup>v</sup>). But while defences of the female sex offer static portraits, as it were, of female heroism, the heroine in *Urania* and *Clélie* is not only the object of encomiastic portraiture but is also

endowed with power over men by virtue of their eloquence, as we shall see in the next section.

## XI. Women as mediators

In *Clélie* the rhetoric of the heroines, who are seen mediating with their nation's enemies, occupies a significant part in Scudéry's representation of female heroism. Their discourse on the political stage shows them triumphant. Very early in *Clélie*, women are seen as mediators in the political sphere. First we discover the 'grand esprit' of Galérite's mother:

Nicetale estoit une Princesse de grand esprit, elle s'aperceut plustost que la jeune Galerite, de la passion de Porsenna, mais elle s'en aperçeut aveque joye; car comme elle aimoit la paix, elle regarda cette amour naissante, comme l'unique moyen qui la pouvoit retablir entre le Roy de Clusium, & le Prince de Perouse son Mary. (*C1*, 93-4)

She will play a significant role in the initial union of the two young people, although after her death they will encounter successive obstacles. What is stressed, however, in the above quotation is her concern for political stability. From the very beginning of the romance, we are thus made familiar with an imagery that assumes working towards peace and justice to be one of the legitimate activities of 'the fair sex'.

Galérite inherits her mother's 'grand esprit', and will be one of the mothers who mediates between Aronce and Clélie. Aronce is suspected by Porsenna, who is Tarquin's ally, to be conspiring against him. Galérite, who reminds us that she is bound by the Salic law since Porsenna 'ne [la]



consulte pas sur la conduite de son estat' (C7, 26), is nevertheless convinced by the 'Princesse des Léontins' to act against her husband's will and on behalf of the two young lovers (30-1). Later we are told that they are involved in 'quelque negociation secrette' (C8, 1282-3):

Et en effet ces deux Princesses agirent avec *tant d'adresse*, que Porsenna consentit qu'on essayast de trouver quelque expedient d'accommoder les affaires, afin que la guerre qu'il vouloit faire à Rome, en parust juste, si on refusoit une proposition equitable. (1283)

We should note here the laudatory phrase, 'tant d'adresse', which is later reinforced: the 'Princesse des Léontins' is described as a person

qui estoit de qualité à se mesler de semblables choses, & qui avoit toute la capacitié necessaire aux grandes affaires. (1284)

Throughout the whole fiction, Galérite and the 'Princesse des Léontins' therefore appear as ideal women whose conduct in political affairs proves exemplary and surpasses that of men. They are, to a certain extent, the *deae ex machina* in a world of internecine turmoils and endless rivalries.

In *Urania*, too, women may be seen as mediators; a brief example may be found in the second part of *Urania*. A knight has been wounded at the court of the Queen of Naples. When Stervanus, Urania's son hears the news, he wishes to avenge the wounded knight, but the king refuses (U2, 363[ll. 34-42]-364[ll. 1-6]). Rather than consulting her husband, Urania chooses to take the initiative herself and thus resolves Stervanus's dilemma without causing familial friction.

Nevertheless, in *Urania* it seems to be essentially over psychologically weakened men that the heroine exerts her rhetorical power. For brevity's sake, I will limit myself to a discussion of the second part of *Urania*. As in the beginning of the first part, the second opens with the complaints of a male lover. Sellarinus, King of Ephirus, has been cast ashore on the island of Lesbos and mourns the loss of his lover Philistella. He is overheard by Saphalina, Melissea's niece.<sup>22</sup> Her familial status as the niece of the respectable and wise enchantress no doubt accounts for Saphalina's persuasiveness in the art of speaking:

‘[Philistella] is, and displeased, noe question (if she can looke downe on you) to see you repine att her hapines. She is blessedly above, and Joyes in everlasting Joye [...]. Therfor, my Lord, beeginn: Joy to beeleeve that, and lett butt that pretty trifle have any entrance into your hart. You shall see how daintily and nicely his sweetnes will creepe into you, and I hope possess you att last, for Joye you must; you are ordained for itt, and a secound must imbrace your choise thought, yett your first love and loyalty shall ever remaine in you, and your Philistella shall still live in your hart as her richest monument.’ (*U2*, 5, ll. 22-4; 26-32)

Here the female character epitomises reason, as against the extravagant passions of the Uranian male, a parody of the Arcadian feminised heroes. She also reminds him of the beauty of a Christian life. Both these attributes (reason and Christian virtue) recur in the portraits of virtuous women throughout the second part of *Urania*. The above passage is echoed in its structure and theme in another three scenes: in each case heroes are transformed into passive subjects, ‘putt to silence’ (*U2*, 5, l. 33), like

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter Five, p. 166, footnote 13.



Selarinus, by the sermonising tone of the female interlocutor who dismisses the ‘trifles’ (*U2*, 172, l. 34) and ‘bootles complaints’ (140, l. 6) they articulate. When Urania comes across Amphilanthus in a trance, she brings him back to reason by persuasion; and her final thoughts are stated in indirect discourse, as follows:

O matchles prince, how doth a gnawing consience justly infeeble thee! (*U2*, 141, ll. 14-5)

Throughout the second part of *Urania*, the image of the ‘infeebled’ hero is a recurring one. This emphasis on the male lover’s physical weakness reinforces the female characters’ fortitude in both the physical and the ethical senses. The opening of the second book of the second part depicts Amphilanthus once more in a feminised position as he faints in Pamphilia’s arms:

She parceaving noe motion, butt his face growing paler and more death-like, she stoopt to him, rubd his face, sent his company to fetch water, in the mean time washt his face with her teares, teares which were of that efficacie and power as hee beegann to stirr. (*U2*, 197[ll. 40-2]-198[ll. 1-2])

This physical contrast, which reverses the traditional pose of the knight stooping or kneeling before his lady, is intensified by the literary treatment of the suicidal impulses to which these men are often prone. Whereas heroes are often vexed and ‘infeebled’, women are rational and embody the voice of Christian wisdom, as suggested in three instances. In the first (*U2*, 172, ll. 32-6), we are still with Amphilanthus and Urania who scolds him for ‘attempt[ing]’ (her own word) to commit suicide; in the second (*U2*,

321, ll. 35-42), as Parselius is bewailing Dalinea's death, Melissea's nymph puts in an appearance and reminds him he '[is] a Christian, and ought soe to carry [himself]' (ll. 35-6); and in the last, a gentlewoman counsels patience to the lamenting Parselius (*U2*, 398[ll. 31-42]-399[ll. 1-16]). The discourse of these women in these passages, which in each case may be characterised, in Parselius's words, as a 'true, milde, and Vertuous reprove' (*U2*, 172, ll. 37-8), conveys the importance of religion in their education, which provides them with patterns of speech that are appropriate and becoming for them to use. Although women are not viewed performing their daily Christian rituals, they are represented as Christians. When the Christian faith is endangered by both the barbarity of uncivil giants and monsters and the extravagant passions of knights, these women's admonitory speeches offer, to some extent, expressions of a religious commitment that pervades the writings of their female contemporaries.

To conclude this last section on Uranian and Scudarian heroines as mediators, their discreet interventions whether in the realm of politics or human passions (although the two often overlap) participate, it might be argued, in a construction of feminine identity which comes to fruition in the representations of the effective power of the female voice over men.

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In Part One, I have attempted to show that the expression of female virtue in the fictive societies of *Urania* and *Clélie* is integral to the representation of heroinism in these two texts. In the first section, we saw that the eloquent heroine frequently articulates her resistance against patriarchal tyranny on the marriage issue, but that she does so in conformity with decorum through her skilled use of rhetoric. Nevertheless, not all heroines have the opportunity to give verbal expression to their resistance,



and some need to resort to other, non-verbal forms of self-assertion; forms that open a split between body and mind. Among these non-verbal forms, silence constitutes a powerful type of resistance. But above all, ready to suffer and even die on behalf of their constancy in love, these women enable us to view heroinism as stamped with stoicism.

In general, however, if the heroines of these narratives remind us of earlier examples of heroinism in romances or tales of female exemplarity, or even of the lady of the courtly love tradition, their apology for true love is invariably associated with the utterance of subversive views on matrimony and women's position in society.

Lawmakers in the realm of love, they are also frequently pictured as androgynous, not in the biological but spiritual sense, as I have demonstrated by considering the ways in which Wroth and Scudéry play with traditional representations of female rulers as Amazons. Indeed, the Uranian and Scuderian Amazon fights not with arms but with words: emerging as a powerful orator, she embodies the power of law and reason as well as moral precepts.

It appears, however, that Uranian heroines are less involved in politics than their Scuderian counterparts. In *Urania*, more attention is given to the feminisation of heroes; and it is in the treatment of the feminised hero that Wroth depicts her heroines as the exemplars of reason and wisdom. In the specific instances that I have analysed above, the Uranian heroine emerges through her speech as the product of Christian education. Christianity is not a theme as such in Scudéry's fiction, for the simple reason that the author chose a heathen subject for the matter of her book.<sup>23</sup> Instead, virtuous women in *Clélie* are eulogised as embodying 'la

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<sup>23</sup> In *Mlle de Scudéry, Paul Pellisson et leur monde*, Niderst writes: 'Dans sa représentation de Port Royal, Madeleine de Scudéry a tendance à humaniser, et même à laïciser, les solitaires. Elle n'évoque pas leur religion. [...] Cette petite société, laborieuse, démocratique, sans Dieu, ni roi, nous fait davantage songer,

morale vivante'. This phrase, used to describe a minor character called Arricidie (*CI*, 300), affords us a title which would be appropriate for all these fictive paradigms of female excellence, whose self-assertiveness (whether expressed through speech, self-isolation or more tragic means) predicts, as Nicole Boursier puts it, 'l'avènement de l'héroïne moderne'.<sup>24</sup>

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avec sa morale humaniste et teintée de stoïcisme, aux utopies du dix-huitième siècle, qu'à Port Royal, tel que l'hagiographie l'a d'ordinaire reflété [...]. Ce n'était pas tellement Dieu que l'on cherchait dans le désert; c'était la paix, l'évasion loin d'une société injuste et vicieuse. Il n'est donc aucune incohérence chez Madeleine de Scudéry [...]. [Elle adhère] à une sorte de naturalisme épicurien et [loue] en même temps la quiétude plus sévère de Port Royal. Ce qu'[elle] dénonce en tout cas, c'est le monde qui les entoure; l'évasion pastorale et la solitude des anachorètes [lui] semblent également séduisantes et également efficaces, pour oublier ou surmonter les imperfections de l'ordre social.' (pp. 348-9).

<sup>24</sup> 'Avatars de l'héroïne chez Madeleine de Scudéry', in Ian Richmond and Constant Venesoen (eds.), *Actes de London Canada, 1985: présences féminines, littérature et société au dix-septième siècle* (Tübingen: Romanisches Seminar, 1987), p. 287.



## **Part Two**

### **The *loci* of the feminine (1): society**

The main difficulty in defining the *loci* of the feminine is whether one should restrict the notion of femininity to that of gender. This difficulty is here complicated by the fact that the romance, as mentioned in the General Introduction (p. 32), is seen as a feminine genre partly because its supposed readership is mainly female, partly because the style it employs tends to resort to tropes taken from the domestic domain of womanhood (*i.e.* cloth and embroidery metaphors), or to anatomical imagery referring to the female body. We also know that 'Eloquence', characterised as the male-authored domain, is nevertheless represented as a woman and theorised in feminised terms.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore clear that in the context of seventeenth-century rhetoric and conduct books, the adjective 'feminine' refers rather to style and character than to the female sex.

In addition, romance is a genre in which male characters occasionally lapse into effeminate outbursts, as illustrated in the last section of Chapter Three (pp. 126-9). Besides, the analysis of female discourse as the apology for true love, as discussed in Chapter Two, needs to be placed in the context of a court culture whose influence on early modern noblemen is represented in fiction through the feminisation of the epic hero, who spends more time at court wooing his lady than braving dangers at war. As a result, both heroes and heroines from *Urania* and *Clélie*, in the wake of their Astrean counterparts, may be seen sitting, walking, conversing together and even isolating themselves in similar types of pastoral retreats. In that sense *Urania* and *Clélie* stage what Mary Ellen Lamb has called 'ungendering aesthetics' and Nathalie Grande 'un rapport dédramatisé entre les sexes'.<sup>2</sup> The femininity of these natural abodes is suggested by the

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<sup>1</sup> See Maître's chapter, 'Portrait de la langue en femme', in *Les Précieuses*, pp. 596-600.

<sup>2</sup> See Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), p. 174; and Grande, *Stratégies de romancières*, p. 326.



‘implied analogy of women to nature’, which, Ian Maclean writes, ‘is at least a sign of the dominant strain of femininity in the pastoral tradition’.<sup>3</sup> However, while the purpose of Chapter Five is to define the social role the Uranian and Scudarian heroines play in the many feminocentric spaces in *Urania* and *Clélie*, the opening chapter shows that the ‘femininity’ inherent in these two works also owes a debt to the feminocentric culture within which they were produced.

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<sup>3</sup> In *Woman Triumphant*, p. 157.

## Chapter Four

### The literary milieux of Mary Wroth and Madeleine de Scudéry

In the present chapter I examine the cultural backgrounds and literary milieux of Wroth and Scudéry with the aim of considering whether there was an early modern English equivalent of the French 'salon', an 'ungendered' and yet feminocentric space (sections I and II), and whether there existed the notion of a sisterhood of art which might have had a decisive influence on our two authors (sections III and IV).

#### I. Redefining the concept of 'salon' culture

In *Tender Geographies*, Joan DeJean devotes a whole chapter to 'woman's places, woman's spaces' in the literature and culture of seventeenth-century France (pp. 17-70). She comments on the emergence of a 'feminocentric golden age', which is more commonly known as the era of salon culture. Salon culture is seen as a unique and unprecedented French phenomenon in the fashioning of 'the language of polite, educated society';<sup>4</sup> and Joan DeJean briefly compares this with the state of affairs in England:

The absence of an equivalent salon tradition in England surely helps explain the relatively slow development of women's writing there. The English equivalent of the salon, the drawing room, did have certain connotations of a female space, but the drawing room was associated only with less sophisticated artistic

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<sup>4</sup> Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Régime* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 14.



and intellectual endeavors (embroidery, reading aloud, gossip as opposed to conversation), unlike the library, the male domain as the locus of serious intellectual activity.<sup>5</sup>

This statement offers a rather distorted view of what was happening in late Renaissance England. Recent studies have shown that late Elizabethan and Jacobean women did have an important part to play on the literary stage, either as patrons or authors, or both. Besides, she seems to define what she calls the 'equivalent' of the French salon as its direct opposite. By enumerating aspects of women's pastimes in an aristocratic household, she transforms the 'drawing-room' into a strictly gendered and specifically domestic space, which the seventeenth-century 'salon' is not. Even when the 'salon' does reflect the image of a prevailingly female space, male guests are clearly still welcome there. Moreover, her distinction between the drawing-room and 'the library, the male domain and the locus of serious intellectual activity' actually applies equally to the seventeenth-century 'salon'. Erica Harth explains that gender divisions gradually became more marked in French intellectual life:

Women were not admitted to the Parisian academies [...]. Inescapably tied to the history of the official academies, the salon as a center of intellectual life was soon overshadowed by its masculine counterpart. And whereas men frequented both the salon and the academy, women were confined to the salon.<sup>6</sup>

Lastly, it should be noted that the word 'salon' is an 'anachronism', when referring to seventeenth-century literary circles dominated by women:

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<sup>5</sup> DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, p. 228.

<sup>6</sup> In *Cartesian Women*, p. 3 and p. 5.

*Salon* was not applied to social gatherings until the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the salon was not the interior meeting place of the gatherings which it later came to designate. In the earlier period, fashionable people of both sexes met either in spaces within rooms — *alcôves*, *ruelles* — or in *cabinets* (studies or ‘closets’) and *chambres*. It was Madame de Rambouillet who in her *chambre bleue* (blue room) launched the fashion of welcoming guests from a *lit de repos*, or daybed, which was not for sleeping, but for receiving.<sup>7</sup>

‘Ruelle’, ‘alcôve’, ‘cabinet’, ‘chambre’, and we could also add the word ‘réduit’, suggest that the seventeenth-century ‘salon’ is a versatile space.

Alternative terms for the word ‘salon’ may help to identify similar practices or spaces in English culture. The term ‘cercle’ was used in seventeenth-century France, but the English equivalent ‘circle’ in the sense of ‘salon’ seems not to have appeared in England until the eighteenth century according to the *OED*.<sup>8</sup> In her article ‘The Myth of the Countess of Pembroke: The Dramatic Circle’, Mary Ellen Lamb explains that the English term ‘circle’

can refer to the barely recognized acquaintances of acquaintances, or to truly intimate friends [...]. The problem is compounded because the words ‘influence’ and ‘circle’ describe situations which it is usually impossible to know much about. Of

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> The term ‘cercle’ occurs, for example, in Chappuzeau’s play title: *Le Cercle des femmes* (1656), which was reprinted several times throughout the second half of the seventeenth century.



course, the alternative, not to speculate at all about personal and literary relationships which cannot be absolutely proved is equally unattractive; and we cannot totally dispense with these two words or the concepts which underlie them.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the nearest English equivalent of the seventeenth-century salon that comes to mind is the Sidney/Herbert/Wroth circle, as I shall demonstrate next through a preliminary comparison of our two female authors' cultural backgrounds and literary milieux.

## II. The cultural backgrounds of Mary Wroth and Madeleine de Scudéry

Wroth and Scudéry were two educated women who were introduced into the world of art and letters at an early age.

In her introduction to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, Josephine Roberts quotes Rowland Whyte writing on Wroth's education: 'God blesse her, she is forward in her learning, writing, and other exercises she is put to, as dawncing and the virginals' (*HMC*, De L'Isle II, 176). We also know that she was sent to spend time in the Hague 'where [she] shall learn the French tongue' (*HMC*, De L'Isle II, 268).<sup>10</sup> This is all we know for sure of her formal training.

In his *Mémoires* Valentin Conrart gives a more detailed account of Scudéry's education, but we can guess from this that it closely resembled Wroth's, as he tells us that her uncle Georges de Goutimesnil

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<sup>9</sup> In C. W. Hunter and C. J. Rawson (eds.), *Literature and its Audience II*, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 11 (1981), p. 202.

<sup>10</sup> See *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, p. 8 and p. 9.

lui fit apprendre les exercices convenables à une fille de son âge et de sa condition: l'écriture, l'orthographe, la danse, à dessiner, à peindre, à travailler en toutes sortes d'ouvrages. [...] Elle eut envie de savoir jouer du luth, et elle en prit quelques leçons avec assez de succès [...]. Entendant souvent parler des langues italienne et espagnole, et de plusieurs livres écrits en l'une et en l'autre qui étaient dans le cabinet de son oncle, elle désira de les savoir [...].<sup>11</sup>

Thus both women emerge as the products of court culture, having much in common with the court lady described by the Magnifico in *The Book of the Courtier* (BC, 191-2). Their courtly education was to have a significant influence on their writings. Thus, just as *Urania* teems with allusions to royal entertainments, so *Clélie* abounds in descriptions of 'fêtes galantes', concerts and masquerades. But another factor played an equally significant part in the fashioning of their work, and this was the presence of powerful women in their literary milieux.

As Nicole Aronson suggests, Scudéry's uncle instilled in her an awareness of a female legacy in the arts, of 'la brillante atmosphère de la Cour des Valois', as embodied in the persons of Marguerite de Navarre and Mme de Retz, whose 'salons' are respectively remembered as the 'Palais d'Alcine' and the 'Cabinet vert de Dycine'.<sup>12</sup> These two women were to influence one of the most renowned seventeenth-century French 'salonnières', Mme de Rambouillet — with whose circle Scudéry was well acquainted. The 'chambre bleue' and its pastimes were to provide our

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<sup>11</sup> Cited in Nicole Aronson, *Mademoiselle de Scudéry ou le voyage au pays de Tendre* (Paris: Fayard, 1986), pp. 86-7. However, Chantal Morlet-Chantalat in her introduction to the 2001 edition of *Clélie* points out that accounts of Scudéry's education often are 'romantic', pp. 12-3.

<sup>12</sup> See Aronson, *Mademoiselle de Scudéry [...] au pays de Tendre*, p. 85.



woman of letters with rich matter for her prose. Scudéry too created her own 'salon', known as the 'Samedis de Sapho', since Saturday was initially the day when she received her friends, and 'Sapho' was what she called herself during these meetings. The 'Samedis de Sapho' were particularly active from 1651 to 1659, more or less the period when *Clélie* was being written. Although her salon was much smaller and more modest than the theatrical world of Mme de Rambouillet, her fame as a woman author and as the catalyst for 'conversations galantes' amongst 'honnêtes hommes' and 'honnêtes femmes' was quickly established. 'Sapho' did not confine herself to her own circle, and like her contemporaries she cultivated a taste for 'les grandes réunions mondaines' in Parisian homes as well as in country houses.<sup>13</sup>

As for Wroth, she had her own model to identify with: her aunt, the Countess of Pembroke. In Margaret Hannay's words, Mary Sidney (1561-1621), 'hailed as "Pembrokiana" ruled over her little court at Wilton even as Queen Elizabeth, hailed as "Gloriana", ruled in London'.<sup>14</sup> One critic sees the Wilton circle as an 'Elizabethan prototype of the salon [which] was even closer to the Renaissance Courts than the French salons themselves'.<sup>15</sup> The Countess of Pembroke was a distinguished woman of letters. She is best known for her translations of pious writings from French into English (*The Psalms*, and Philippe Mornay's *Excellent discours de la vie et de la mort*) and of Robert Garnier's play, *Marc Antoine*.<sup>16</sup> Her interest

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<sup>13</sup> Nicole Aronson, *Mme de Rambouillet ou la magicienne de la chambre bleue* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), pp. 217-8.

<sup>14</sup> Philip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. ix.

<sup>15</sup> Chauncey Brewster Tinker, *The Salon and English Letters: Chapters on the Inter-Relations of Literature and Society in the Age of Johnson* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> Translated as *A Discourse of Life and Death, Written in French by Phillipe Mornay, Sieur du Plessis Marly* (1592) and *Antonius* (1595); see CWMSH, vol. 1, pp. 152-207 and pp. 229-54.

in romance found its chief expression in her controversial re-editing of the *Old and New Arcadias* by her brother, Philip Sidney. The following quotations show how much she was revered. Samuel Daniel worships her as 'the happie and judiciaall Patronesse of the Muses (a glory hereditary to [her] house)'. Nicholas Breton addresses her in these terms: 'But that rare *Phoenix* is the sweetest *Phoenix*, whom your wit, pen and art can but well shadow with all your Muses'. To Abraham Fraunce she is 'Illustrissimae, atque ornatissimae, Heroinae, piaae, formosae, eruditeae: Dominae Mariae, Comitissae Pembrokiensi'.<sup>17</sup> The eulogising tone of these dedicatory lines suggests that she was seen as one of the 'greatest of Elizabethan patrons'.<sup>18</sup> She was like a queen: her favour was sought and her name sung. On the subject of dedications to the Countess of Pembroke, Victor Skretkowicz writes:

The rhetoric is often coloured by an appeal for patronage, but even so, Pembroke seems to have had a considerable reputation as a writer, one who is often compared to Sappho. Thomas Heywood says, for example, that he will 'onely bestow upon her Muse', that character which Horace bequeathed to Sappho.<sup>19</sup>

Although the Countess did not name herself Sappho as Scudéry did, we may wonder whether she viewed herself in the same light. Her contribution to Elizabethan literature has recently been described as unprecedented. In

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<sup>17</sup> Here I am indebted to Hannay's *Philip's Phoenix*, from which I have taken these quotations. Samuel Daniel, *Delia. Contayning Certayne Sonnets* (London: Printed for Simon Waterson, 1592), 4<sup>0</sup>, sig. A2, p. 60; Nicholas Breton, *The Pilgrimage to Paradise, Joyned with the Countesse of Penbrookes Love* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1592), 4<sup>0</sup>, sig. A2, p. 82; and Abraham Fraunce, *The Third Part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Ivychurch, Entituled Amintas Dale* (London: Printed for Thomas Woodcocke, 1592), 4<sup>0</sup>, sig. A1, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> Tinker, *The Salon and English Letters*, p. 84.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in 'Introduction' to *CWMSH*, vol. 1, p. 26.



her introduction to Mary Herbert's works, Margaret Hannay stresses that 'her translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine* helped to naturalize Continental political drama in England and served both as a precursor and a source for Shakespeare's Roman history plays'.<sup>20</sup> She was 'at the forefront of reformers of English dramatic rhetoric and style; and indeed, of English literary style in a much broader sense'.<sup>21</sup> This may remind us of 'the attempt to purify the language'<sup>22</sup> in the Hôtel de Rambouillet, an attempt which was often taxed by satirists and modern critics with the title of 'préciosité'. Joan DeJean's assertion that 'the Marquise de Rambouillet's decision to turn the attention of her literary assembly to the creation of a new literary language would influence decisively the development of French literature'<sup>23</sup> invites us to draw a parallel with the Countess's 'campaign against literary barbarism'.<sup>24</sup>

The literary activities at Wilton (the Pembrokes' estate) and at Penshurst (the Sidneys' estate) may be compared to the pastimes in the

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> Victor Skretkowicz, 'Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius*, English Philhellenism and the Protestant Cause', *Women's Writing*, 6, 1 (1999), p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Tinker, *The Salon and English Letters*, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Patterson Hannay, 'Patronesse of the Muses', in S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds.), *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History and Performance 1594-1998* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 143. While Mary Ellen Lamb argues that the Countess of Pembroke's influence on the purification of language in the domain of drama is a myth ('The Myth of the Countess of Pembroke', pp. 194-202), Margaret Hannay in her more recent studies demonstrates on the contrary her possible influence on her contemporaries. For instance, as a response to her translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine*, Samuel Daniel wrote *Cleopatra*. It is also interesting to note that Elizabeth Cary, the first Englishwoman to have written plays, was 'indebted to that aristocratic experiment in Senecan closet drama', as discussed by Margaret W. Ferguson in 'The Spectre of Resistance: *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613)', *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama*, p. 182. Likewise, Tina Krontiris argues that 'Mary Herbert contributed to establishing a female literary heritage, leaving a useful legacy to women writers who came later' ('Mary Herbert, Englishing a purified Cleopatra', in *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama*, p. 164).

‘chambre bleue’ where ‘on écoutait des lectures, on écrivait et récitait des poèmes, on jouait des pièces de théâtre’ and where ‘la danse et la musique étaient à l’honneur’.<sup>25</sup> Closet drama seems to have been an appealing genre ‘eminently suitable for reading aloud’.<sup>26</sup> It would be tempting to imagine that the Countess of Pembroke’s ‘literary salon’ resembles that which is depicted in the opening scene of François Le Metel de Boisrobert’s play, *La Folle gageure ou les divertissemens de la Contesse de Pembroc* (1653). The play is set in the Continental context of salon culture, which the Countess had indeed experienced during her sojourn in Spa (Summer 1616). She is shown ‘recevant dans son salon des poètes qui lui lisent des pièces récemment composées’.<sup>27</sup> When Mary Sidney Herbert settled on the Continent, did she simply continue the literary life she had initiated at Wilton? It would seem likely: are we not told by Thomas Churchyard that ‘she sets to schoole our poets everywhere’?<sup>28</sup> If we compare Wilton to the ‘Palais d’Alcine’, and to the Hôtel de Rambouillet, we may be struck by the similarity in the terminology English and French contemporaries use to describe them. For instance, in *Brief Lives*, Aubrey writes:

In her time Wilton House was like a College, there were so many learned and ingeniose persons. She was the greatest patronesse of witt and learning of any lady in her time.<sup>29</sup>

In his preface dedicating *A Defence of Rhyme* to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, Samuel Daniel describes himself as follows:

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<sup>25</sup> Aronson, *Mme de Rambouillet*, p. 110.

<sup>26</sup> Hannay, *Philip’s Phoenix*, p. 120.

<sup>27</sup> Linda Timmermans, *L’Accès des femmes à la culture 1598-1715* (Genève: Slatkine; Paris: Honoré Champion, 1993), p. 161.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in ‘Introduction’ to *CWMSH*, vol. 1, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in ‘Introduction’ to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, p. 15.



Having beene first encourag'd or fram'd thereunto by your most Worthy and Honorable Mother, and receiving the first notion for the formall ordering of those compositions at *Wilton*, which I must ever acknowledge to have beene my beste Schoole, and thereof alwayes am to hold a feeling and gratefull Memory.<sup>30</sup>

Wilton was also characterised by Walter Sweeper as 'a little Universitie [...] and more excellent nurserie for learning and pietie then ever [Wilton] was in former times'.<sup>31</sup>

Let us now have a look at the praises given to the Palais d'Alcine in Richelieu's *Mémoires*:

[Marguerite de Valois] était le refuge des hommes de lettres, aimait à les entendre parler, sa table en était environnée, et elle apprit tout en leur conversation, qu'elle parlait mieux que femme de son temps, et écrivait plus éloquemment que la condition ordinaire de son sexe ne portait.<sup>32</sup>

As for l'Hôtel de Rambouillet, its praises vary from 'réduit non seulement de tous les beaux esprits, mais de tous les gens de la Cour',<sup>33</sup> to 'théâtre de tous les divertissements' and 'rendez-vous de ce qu'il y avait de plus galant

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<sup>30</sup> Samuel Daniel, *A Defence of Rhyme* (1603?), in G. Gregory Smith (ed.), *Elizabethan Essays*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), p. 358.

<sup>31</sup> Cited in *Philip's Phoenix*, p. 132.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in *Mme de Rambouillet*, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Cited in *Mme de Rambouillet*, p. 125.

à la cour et de tous les beaux esprits du siècle'.<sup>34</sup> It was also described by Bosquillon as a 'tribunal':

Tout l'hôtel de Rambouillet, ce tribunal où l'on décidait souverainement du mérite et de l'esprit et dont les jugements étaient si équitables et si respectés, se hâta de prononcer en la faveur [de Mlle de Scudéry]. On ne trouva rien à reprendre en elle, rien qui sentît la province; on la regarda comme si elle eût été née à la Cour ou qu'elle y eût passé toute sa vie.<sup>35</sup>

I have not found any quotation in which the Hôtel de Rambouillet is described as Wilton was, *i.e.* as a school or college. Nevertheless it is clear that it was seen as the school of good taste, in other words as the school of 'urbanité'. As recorded by Richelet in his *Dictionnaire françois* (1680), 'urbanité' 'est un mot qui est écorché du latin *urbanitas* qui signifie une raillerie ingénieuse, agréable et polie'. In the *Littre* (1862-1863) this definition comes last: its use dates back to the sixteenth century and, as Richelet suggests, it obviously survived throughout the seventeenth century. It then clearly became associated with 'la politesse des anciens Romains', a meaning which comes first in the *Littre*. The phrase 'urbanité' was popularised by Guez de Balzac in *De la conversation des Romains*, which he dedicated to Mme de Rambouillet, thereby suggesting that he saw her as the embodiment of 'urbanité'. The word seems to have been re-created especially for her, as though in homage to Castiglione's lady courtier. The character, Elisabeth Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, provides us with a valid explanation for such a neologism. The noun 'urbanité' is suggestive of the

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<sup>34</sup> See Roger Picard, *Les Salons littéraires 1610-1789* (New York: Brentano, 1943), p. 25.

<sup>35</sup> Cited in *Mme de Rambouillet*, p. 88.



‘air galant’ or ‘honourable and pleasant exercises, as well of the bodie, as of the minde’ (BC, 19) that reign in the presence of the fair company in the Palace of Urbino whose ornament is its Duchess. The passage in question (BC, 20-1) anticipates the atmosphere that was to prevail in the *Chambre bleue*. Thus if the neologism ‘urbanité’ might be a veiled reference to Castiglione’s utopian court, ‘an explicit comparison’ between the Countess of Pembroke and the Duchess of Urbino can be found in *The Pilgrimage to Paradise*:

Who hath redde of the Duchesse of Vrbina, may saie, the Italians wrote wel: but who knowes the Countesse of Penbrooke, I thinke hath cause to write better: and if she had many followers? haue not you mo servants? and if they were so mindfull of their fauours? shall we be forgetfull of our dueties? no, I am assured, that some are not ignorant of your worth, which will not be idle in your seruice [...] and if shee haue receiued her right in remembrance, you must not haue wrong in being forgotten.<sup>36</sup>

We may also infer that through this comparison he implicitly bears in mind the etymology of the word ‘Urbina’, coming from the Latin word ‘urbanus’ which is used not only to designate ‘city-dwellers’ but also to characterise elegant, sophisticated, polished people as well as their manners, social practices and language (see *LD*). Another interesting description of her house by Nicholas Breton in *Wits Trenchmour, In a Conference Had Betwixt a Scholler and an Angler* (1597) sustains the parallel between the

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<sup>36</sup> Cited in *Philip’s Phoenix*, p. 109.

Italian and French examples of the palace of Urbino and the Hôtel de Rambouillet:

her house [is] in a maner [sic] a kind of little Court, her Lorde in place of no meane commaund, her person no lesse worthily and honourable attended, as well with Gentlewomen of excellent spirits, as divers Gentlemen of fine carriage.<sup>37</sup>

The sharpest contrast with the Hotel de Rambouillet is 'the religious nature of the community at Wilton'.<sup>38</sup> While the *Recueil Conrart*, a collection of manuscripts, offers a concrete picture of the types of 'conversation galantes' being held at Scudéry's 'salon', we do not have historical accounts as such of 'conversations galantes' being held at Wilton House or other estates, apart, for instance, from the dedications and the asides to lady readers in, for example, the *Old Arcadia*.<sup>39</sup> But we have evidence of the eloquence and rhetorical skills of the Countess's admirers. Through their praises, they help us to draw parallels with the more worldly Hôtel de Rambouillet, and thus visualise the context from which Wroth emerged in turn as muse, patroness, poetess, playwright and writer of prose fiction.

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<sup>37</sup> Cited in *Philip's Phoenix*, p. 137.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> For a more detailed description of the *Recueil Conrart*, see below pp. 150-1, footnote 47; and for dedications to lady readers in English literature, see Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, pp. 102-3.



### III. A cultural sisterhood of art

Although Wroth and Scudéry belong to different countries and slightly different periods of history, these two women share a few points in common. If Scudéry was extolled as 'la Sapho de notre siècle', 'la merveille de notre siècle, la dixième Muse, la Calliope du Marais',<sup>40</sup> Wroth was seen by Ben Jonson as 'Nature's index' ('Epigramme' cv, l. 19),<sup>41</sup> as 'the epitome of all mythological women, a composite of Diana's virtue, Athena's wisdom and Juno's majesty'.<sup>42</sup> Numerous works are dedicated to both authors. Josephine Roberts makes an interesting statistical remark: 'Of the twenty-two women who received dedications in at least six books, all belonged to royalty or the highest aristocracy, with the two notable exceptions of Ladies Ann Bacon and Mary Wroth'.<sup>43</sup> As for Scudéry, we know that her fame went well beyond the geographical boundaries of France. In his translation of her *Conversations Morales*, Ferrand Spence, quoted by Charlanne in *L'Influence française en Angleterre au dix-septième siècle*, writes:

[Elle] fait les délices de la cour de France, cette personne de qualité, d'une éducation si parfaite, si célèbre par toute l'Europe par la chasteté de son style, l'innocence de sa conversation, la pureté de son imagination, la solidité de son jugement en ses écrits élégants qui, depuis bien des années, excitent l'envie des plus grands esprits du siècle.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Cited in Aronson, *Mademoiselle de Scudéry [...] au pays de Tendre*, p. 47.

<sup>41</sup> In C. H. Herford Percy and Evelyn Simpson (eds.), *Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), vol. 8, pp. 67-8.

<sup>42</sup> Roberts, 'Introduction' to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, p. 16.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>44</sup> Cited in Aronson, *Mademoiselle de Scudéry [...] au pays de Tendre*, p. 47.

As stated earlier, Scudéry had her own salon. Similarly, Wroth was part of a literary circle which had its centre, we assume, at her own home. Ben Jonson's laudatory poem 'Forest iii' (To Sir Robert Wroth') provides us with some evidence as to the evening entertainments that took place at her house:

Thus Pan, and Sylvane, having had their rites,  
 COMUS puts in, for new delights;  
 And fills thy open hall with mirth, and cheere,  
 As if in SATURNES raigne it were;  
 APOLLO's harpe, and HERMES' lyre resound,  
 Nor are the *Muses* strangers found:  
 The rout of rurall folke come thronging in,  
 (Their rudenesse then is thought no sinne)  
 Thy noblest spouse affords them welcome grace. (ll. 47-55)<sup>45</sup>

She was also certainly in contact with Lucy Harington, the Countess of Bedford, first cousin of her aunt. We may once more be tempted to compare the Countess of Bedford to one of the seventeenth-century 'salonnières'. In *The Salon and English Letters*, Chauncey Brewster Tinker devotes two pages to Lucy Harington, while he only gives scattered allusions to the Countess of Pembroke's 'school'. In a footnote he mentions the Countess of Bedford's "refining" influence on Donne's mind and judgment [...], and then adds:

Certain it is that at her house he enjoyed the very type of society which a century later made the fame of salons [...]. In

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<sup>45</sup> In C. H. Herford Percy and Evelyn Simpson (eds.), *Ben Jonson*, vol. 8, p. 98.



all respects, therefore, the Countess's coterie would seem to stand just half-way between court and salon — if it is necessary to distinguish the two terms at all. If it is urged that we have no evidence of the stimulus wrought by conversation in the group, it may be answered that even this lack is apparent only and is simply due to the meagreness of contemporary records. (p. 87)

It is indeed, as mentioned earlier, in contemporary writings such as country-house poems that we may find clues to the existence of gatherings and literary activities similar to those in France. It has also been suggested that closet drama was one of the favourite pastimes of the Wroths. Wroth's play *Love's Victory* (1615-1618) was meant for the private stage — for being read aloud in an intimate circle, as the nature of its stage directions indicates. The same is true of contemporary poems, lays and dialogues. It is worth noting that most writings, such as *Love's Victory* or even *Urania*, circulated in manuscript.<sup>46</sup> This constitutes a major parallel with the literary activities in the 'Samedis de Sapho' and other salons where the tradition of circulating manuscripts is well-grounded, as is testified by the *Recueil Conrart*. Valentin Conrart made a compilation of pastoral writings, from letters to odes, elegies etc., many of which were written by the habitués of Scudéry's salon.<sup>47</sup> They are sometimes anonymous, sometimes signed by

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<sup>46</sup> See Roberts, 'Introduction' to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> Valentin Conrart was not only the figurehead of the Académie française, but also a close friend of Madeleine de Scudéry. His eighteen-volume *Recueil* is composed of writings that circulated in manuscript in the salons of Mme de Rambouillet and of Madeleine de Scudéry, and in other literary circles. It contains writings by Conrart's famous contemporaries such as Vincent de Voiture, Paul Sarrazin, Guez de Balzac, Charles Perrault, and also by the so-called Précieuses, such as Mme Deshoulières, the Comtesse de Suze, Catherine Desjardins (also known as Mme de Villedieu) and Madeleine de Scudéry herself. Although we find

and addressed to fictitious characters whose names might have been borrowed from *Le Grand Cyrus* or *Clélie*. We also find numerous pastoral dialogues, one between Alcidon and Aminte by Chantreau Lefèvre, or one between Amaryllis and Doris by Catherine des Jardins.<sup>48</sup> The list is long, but these titles are enough to reveal the spirit of the social group that was involved in 'closet' writing. Through these 'galanteries', the salon world appears as a stage on which the habitués take delight in improvising and impersonating characters from romances — a taste for which the Hôtel de Rambouillet was renowned, as evinced by the 'central role [*L'Astrée* played] in the fantasy life of [this] salon'.<sup>49</sup> The habitués would often call themselves, or were named after heroes and heroines from *L'Astrée*, and later also from Scudéry's romances. It might of course be argued that Scudéry did not invent all the names, but took some from the fictive life she and her contemporaries created in the salons.

To a certain extent, *Love's Victory*, which was written in the pastoral mode and which only circulated in manuscript, may be read as a transcription of 'the fantasy life' of Wroth's circle. The names of the *personae* have an Astrean ring about them, and yet often are anagrams in which the performers and beholders could recognise themselves as well as their friends or relatives.<sup>50</sup> We have seen, then, that reading aloud, closet drama and manuscript circulation could well be common features between

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many anonymous pieces, this folio multi-volume *Recueil* reads as a testimony of literary activities in seventeenth-century France.

<sup>48</sup> See 'Extrait d'une lettre de Zénocrate à Octavie, May 1666', 'Lettre d'Herminius à Octavie', February 1666, 'Lettre d'Octavie à Zénocrate', February 1666 (*Recueil Conrart*, 18 vols, fol., MS 5420, vol. 11, p. 1247, p. 1249 and p. 1251); and also Chantreau Lefèvre, 'Dialogue d'Alcidon et d'Aminte, imitation d'Horace, stances' (MS 5418, vol. 9, p. 896), Catherine Desjardins, 'Eglogue' (*ibid.*, pp. 897-9).

<sup>49</sup> DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> See Marion Wynne-Davies, "'Here is a Sport Will Well Befit this Time and Place": Allusion and Delusion in Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*', *Women's Writing*, 6, 1 (1999), pp. 47-64.



the Sidney/Herbert/Wroth circle and the seventeenth-century French salons. But there is something else which may reinforce the idea that an early equivalent of 'salon' life existed in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England. Indeed, as Josephine Roberts suggested, the existence of 'collaborative composition by the Sidney women' (*U1*, 776), and the fact that the Countess of Pembroke had been praised for 'setting poets to schoole' and that Wilton was compared to a 'college', seem to confirm that, like the 'Samedis de Sapho' or Mlle de Montpensier's 'salon-in-exile', the Sidney/Herbert/Wroth circle was an 'atelier d'écriture'.<sup>51</sup> Indeed collaborative writing was famously practised by Mary Herbert: she co-translated the *Psalms* with her brother Philip Sidney. Another example is Wroth's insertion, for instance, of one of William Herbert's poems into the second part of *Urania*.<sup>52</sup> This example is all the more interesting as it tells us about literary practices that enable us to draw closer parallels between Wroth's circle and seventeenth-century French salons.

To conclude, although we only have scattered allusions to certain elements of 'salon life' in Wroth's time, it would be wrong to deny the likelihood that similar forms of literary pastimes existed — in which men and women alike could participate. Yet rather than the word 'salon', a concept which is often associated with the power of female eloquence, the emergence of women authors and the consistent practice of patronage, we may prefer the non-spatial and therefore unproblematic phrase 'sisterhood

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<sup>51</sup> On this subject, Margaret Hannay also mentions the 'Bright manuscript [which] includes anonymous poems possibly written by a woman in the Sidney circle, whether Lady Anne [Mary Sidney's daughter] or one of Pembroke's nieces' (*CWMSH*, vol. 1, p. 13). On the writing and reading practices of Mlle de Montpensier in her salon, see DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, p. 22.

<sup>52</sup> See Roberts, 'Introduction' to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, pp. 43-4; and Quilligan, 'Lady Mary Wroth: Female Authority and the Family Romance', p. 271.

of art'. Indeed, the existence of 'a sisterhood of art' in seventeenth-century England and France is suggested by the numerous dedications to the noblewomen who contributed to the world of art, through their patronage, 'verbal excellence' and diverse literary skills.

#### IV. Fictionalisation of a sisterhood of art in two contemporary texts: 'The Author's Dream to the Lady Mary, the Countess Dowager of Pembroke' and 'Les Dames à Mademoiselle de Scudéry, ode'

Within the encomiastic genre of dedicatory verse, perhaps the most notable example in early seventeenth-century England is by a woman author: Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611). It is introduced by a set of poems addressed to high-ranking ladies of fame, among whom is the Countess of Pembroke. And it ends with the 'Description of Cooke-ham', which belongs to the genre of the country-house poem. The closest example I have found on the French side is an ode in the *Recueil Conrart* entitled 'Les Dames à Mademoiselle de Scudéry'.<sup>53</sup>

Let us first take a look at 'The Author's Dream to the Lady Mary, the Countess Dowager of *Pembroke*'.<sup>54</sup> From the outset of the poem the image of the existence of a sisterhood of art emerges at once:

Methought I passed through th'Edalyan Groves,  
And asked the Graces, if they could direct  
Me to a Lady whom Minerva chose  
To live with her in height of all respect (ll. 1-5)

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<sup>53</sup> The author of the *Ode* has been identified as Anne de La Vigne. In *Madeleine de Scudéry, Paul Pellisson et leur monde* (p. 497), Alain Niderst indicates that it was also published in Louis de Vertron's *Nouvelle Pandore* in 1698.

<sup>54</sup> In *SDRJ*, pp. 251-9.



As suggested by the footnote in Suzanne Woods' edition of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, the epithet 'Edalyan' may be interpreted as either referring to 'Idalia, a mountain city in Cyprus, sacred to Venus' or 'Mount Ida, home of the Muses'.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, throughout this poem, these '*Edalyan* groves' appear as the *locus* of both female inspiration and literary creativity (see l. 195; ll. 201-2). In line two, we are introduced to the women who dwell there, the 'Graces', and further to 'the nine fair Virgins' (ll. 9-10) who entertain their 'most noble Lady' (l. 43). This 'community of feeling and mutual support between women'<sup>56</sup> is mostly conveyed by the presence of the 'Graces' who in Greek myth are 'minor goddesses, the personification of beauty, charm and grace, and also of favour and gratitude for favour [...]'. As a group they appear frequently in literature and art in contexts of joy and festivity, as the companions of the Muses, since they were fond of poetry, song and dance [...] (DCM, p. 173). Although 'they are often associated with Aphrodite and Eros as creators of the love bond between men and women' (*ibid.*), in 'The Author's Dream' they may be seen as the 'creators' of female friendship (ll. 1-2, ll. 41-4). The lady's 'imbrace' (l. 43) and friendly gesture of 'giv[ing] her hand' (l. 60) enhance the utopian atmosphere of this female community pervading 'the Description of Cooke-Ham'. In this laudatory epilogue, its dedicatee, Margaret Clifford, the Countess of Cumberland, who is celebrated for her patronage and her 'grace', has transfigured the landscape. At the departure of the Countess of Cumberland and her ladies, the trees (as rendered through the use of pathetic fallacy) have metamorphosed into male mourners (ll. 133-63); yet what prevails is the same image of the 'Edalyan groves' found at the

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<sup>55</sup> In *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 21-31.

<sup>56</sup> Definition of the term 'sisterhood' in Judy Pearsall and Bill Trumble (eds.), *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, 2nd edn. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

beginning of 'The Author's dream'. Indeed, it is similarly delineated as a pastoral place 'where many a learned book was read and scanned' (l. 161), where 'Taking [Aemilia Lanyer] by the hand, / [The Countess's daughter, that is Anne Clifford] did repeat the pleasures which had passed' (ll. 162-3). In other words, it is described as a woman's space akin to the 'salon' and its equivalents in early modern England and France. In that respect, the Countess of Pembroke and Countess of Cumberland share common features with the French Sappho depicted in the *Ode* which also evokes the pastoral festivities described in 'The Author's Dream':

Essayons à notre tour  
D'ajouter une couronne,

Venez, Filles de Mémoire  
C'est pour Sapho, doctes soeurs,  
Venez nous fournir des fleurs  
Pour honorer sa victoire.

[...]

Nymphe qu'un rare savoir  
a sur toute autre élevée  
Voy ces lauriers enlacez  
Que sous tes pasz ramassez  
Forment ta guirlande  
Moins verte l'ont nos guerriers  
Et mépriser cette offrande  
C'est mépriser tes lauriers.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> [Anne de la Vigne], 'Les Dames à Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Ode', in *Recueil Conrart*, MS 5420, fol., vol. 11, p. 795.



Like her two English counterparts, Scudéry emerges in the ninth stanza as the leading figure in a group of speaking and remembering subjects, the 'doctes soeurs'. The narrating poetess in 'The Author's Dream' and the 'doctes soeurs' or 'filles de Mémoire' respectively express their modesty in this honourable task of presenting their female patrons with the 'fruits of idle heures' (l. 194), and a 'couronne'. Thus like Aemilia Lanyer throughout her whole work, the 'Dames' 'apply [their] pen to write [Sappho's] never dying fame' (*SDRJ*, 271, ll. 9-10). Both Mary Sidney and Madeleine de Scudéry are metaphorically adorned with the conventional emblems of poetry. The former is explicitly endowed with goddess-like virtues, 'wisdom' and 'skills in art and learning', and associated with 'victory' and creativity. She is honoured by the presence of Minerva, Dictina, Aurora, the nine fair virgins, Bellona 'with myrtle bayes and olive branches drest' (symbols of victory), and Lady May (*i.e.* Flora). As for Sappho, she is crowned with the floral ornaments of the poet, 'couronne', 'lauriers' and 'guirlandes'. Although the *Ode* is less pictorial than 'The Author's dream', Sappho, the 'Nymphe qu'un rare savoir / a sur toute autre élevée', is almost metamorphosed into a goddess; as is implied by the use of the word 'offrande' (religious gift). The 'doctes soeurs' share features with 'Bellona' and 'Flora', as they are urged to 'provide flowers to honour [Sappho's] victory'.

These two texts seem to shed a good deal of light on the part women played in the circles of Lady Mary Wroth and Madeleine de Scudéry. In both Aemilia Lanyer's dedicatory verse and Anne de la Vigne's *Ode*, there is a sense of sisterhood and female friendship which also permeates *Urania* and *Clélie*. To some extent, the poems emerge not only from a long encomiastic tradition, but also from the two authors' culture; a

European culture that was witnessing the emergence of a female voice in literary circles, 'l'accès des femmes à la culture'.<sup>58</sup>

If much has therefore been written on early modern French salon culture, and yet little has been said about its possible equivalents in late Elizabethan and Jacobean England, it seems likely that *Urania* and *Clélie* might offer some vital clues as to the relationship between the two, as we shall see next.

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<sup>58</sup> I am borrowing this phrase from Linda Timmermans's book title. See above, p. 143, footnote 27.



## Chapter Five

### Feminocentric spaces and their inner dynamics in *Urania* and *Clélie*

This chapter aims to demonstrate how *Urania* and *Clélie* illustrate the conclusions drawn in Chapter Four, beginning with the analysis of the fictionalisation of a prevaillingly female community, which is indebted to a far-reaching literary tradition (sections V and VI). These two sections introduce the concept of ‘galanterie’, which shall be further discussed in the context of Wroth’s and Scudéry’s narratives (section VII). Both texts read, despite superficial differences, as theatres of a ‘société galante’ (section VIII). While section VIII focusses on the relationship between men and women in seemingly ungendered and open retreats, section IX lays its emphasis on the fictionalisation and discourse of specifically female friendship in confined spaces.

#### V. A far-reaching tradition

The fictionalisation of a female community inscribes itself within a literary tradition which can be traced as far back as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In the story of Actaeon, for instance, the poet delineates a female space, that is Diana’s woodland retreat where only female companions may be admitted.<sup>1</sup> Such a space became a favoured *topos* in the voluminous romances of the Renaissance and the early seventeenth century, such as *Amadis de Gaule*,

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Nine, section X, pp. 362–4.

Montemayor's *Diana*,<sup>2</sup> and *L'Astrée*; and it would be worth asking whether these were a major influence on both Wroth's and Scudéry's portrayals of female communities in their works. Given the length of these romances, the discussion will here limit itself to a much shorter text: Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia*, which also constitutes a case in point. This book seems to have exerted a far-reaching influence on French seventeenth-century aesthetics. Allusions to *Hypnerotomachia* can be found both in the episode of Hésiode's tale in Volume Eight Eight of *Clélie*, and even more explicitly in the *Songe de Vaux* by Jean de La Fontaine.<sup>3</sup> The influence of Colonna's text on English literature has not yet been much explored, although, as I have mentioned in my General Introduction (see p. 30, footnote 60), the dedicatory preface to the English translation of *Hypnerotomachia* suggests that it was perhaps known in the Sidney/Herbert/Wroth circle. All in all, it seems an appropriate choice for a short survey of this literary tradition, which will here include a brief comparison with Aemilia Lanyer's 'Author's Dream' (already discussed in Chapter Four) and La Fontaine's *Songe de Vaux*. Although these three texts differ in tone and topicality, parallels can be drawn between them and enable us to replace both *Urania* and *Clélie* within the European context of literary trends that exploit landscape as the *locus* of femininity.

Both *Hypnerotomachia* and Lanyer's 'Author's Dream' belong to another conventional discourse, since many poems of the period take place in a dream. Like the protagonist in *Hypnerotomachia*, the narrating poetess in Lanyer's 'Author's Dream' enters an exclusively female region which bears

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<sup>2</sup> See Françoise Lavocat, *Arcadies malheureuses: aux origines du roman moderne* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> This was possibly contemporaneous with, or written just after the last volume of *Clélie*, in which there are also references to the gardens of Vaux, the design of which had been undertaken by Nicolas Fouquet, a close friend of Madeleine de Scudéry and of Jean de La Fontaine.



comparison with *Hypnerotomachia* (*Hypn.*, 36<sup>v</sup>-7<sup>r</sup>).<sup>4</sup> Lanyer's 'nine faire virgins' resemble Colonna's 'singing company of gallant damoselles' (*Hypn.*, 36<sup>v</sup>). Both the poetess and Poliphilus progress into a pastoral world in which 'harmony' reigns, and which is wholly ruled by a woman exclusively attended by her maids. In these two texts, the 'damsells' are 'attendants uppon a renowned and most excellent Queene of large bountie and exceeding liberalitie' (*Hypn.*, 38<sup>v</sup>).

La Fontaine's poem, written in a fragmented form and divided, as the author puts it in his preface, into 'fragments', begins like *Hypnerotomachia* with a lengthy description of a dreamland noteworthy for its architecture.<sup>5</sup> Colonna's and La Fontaine's texts reassert the Petrarchan association between nature and art, through which the Renaissance poet fashions his Stella, Delia, Hélène or Cassandre.<sup>6</sup> We learn that the architectural marvels which Poliphilus beholds belong to the Queen Euterilyda. These marvels are further enhanced by the 'Pythagorean' beauty of their female owner: Pythagorean in the sense that the queen's beauty reflects the 'proportioned magnanimity' of her buildings. The intricacy of the 'rare jewel' she wears recalls the 'preciousness of the metall' of the architecture of her palace. In La Fontaine's second fragment, the narrator falls asleep and begins to dream and is told of Orante, the owner of Vaux. A box of great price has been brought to Orante.<sup>7</sup> Having closed it once, he cannot reopen it. On the lid a message is inscribed, as well as a stanza, both prophesying that only 'la plus savante des fées' will undo the enchantment.<sup>8</sup> Four fairies, called Palatiane, Apellanire, Hortésie and Calliopée are assembled

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<sup>4</sup> I am using here R[obert] D[allington]'s translation (1592); see abbreviations.

<sup>5</sup> I will be quoting from Pierre Clarac (ed.), *Oeuvres diverses* (Paris: NRF/Gallimard, 1958).

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Nine, section V, pp. 325-33.

<sup>7</sup> That is Nicolas Fouquet in salon terms.

<sup>8</sup> *Le Songe de Vaux*, 'Avertissement', pp. 79-80.

in a room where judges gather to determine which amongst them is the most learned in magic. As implied by the etymology of their names, Palatiane is an architect, Apellanire a painter, Hortésie, a garden designer, and Calliopée, a poetess. Each of them is asked to give an oration in defence of their own art. Then, since their orations prove equally persuasive, it is decided that they will show 'a sample of their work', and that Orante 'leur donne[rait] par ce moyen l'occasion d'embellir la maison de Vaux' (p. 80). Because of its fragmentary structure, the *Songe de Vaux* cannot be read as a continuous narrative; yet it is still interesting to note that La Fontaine has invented a gallery of female artists, whereas, in seventeenth-century France, the best known architects and garden designers, painters, and poets were male: Mansart, Le Vaux and Le Nôtre, Le Brun, Poussin and Rubens, La Fontaine himself and Jean Chapelain. Is La Fontaine simply reproducing the tradition of Antiquity, which celebrated Muses as the inventors of all arts and sciences, or is he drawing on his own experience? Is it possible that he was also thinking of Mme de Rambouillet, who designed her own Hôtel, and of Mlle de Montpensier, who was also skilled in architecture? As for the poetess 'Calliope', a footnote (p. 820) by the editor suggests that there is a veiled reference to the French Sappho, *i.e.* Scudéry who, as we have seen earlier, has been compared to the Greek muse.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, from Colonna's traditional representation of a female community to the more innovative representations in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and in the second fragment of the *Songe de Vaux*, women are shown in a variety of roles which Uranian and Scuderian female characters are depicted as performing at some point in their lives.

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<sup>9</sup> The editor's deduction is grounded on his reading of the last three books of *Clélie* unanimously construed by critics as encomiastic praises of Fouquet in the figure of Cléonime and of his famous estate Le Vaux (called Valterre in *Clélie*; C10, 1105).



## VI. Women as landowners, architects and garden designers in *Urania* and *Clélie*

The fact that both *Urania* and *Clélie* have often been characterised as *romans à clef* invites the reader to speculate as to whether or not the representation of women as owners, architects, garden designers and writers is the result of these two female authors' mimetic inclination to depict the world in which they live. But although our concern here is with the roles played by women in the two romances, it would of course be reductive to ignore the roles allocated to men. In both works, men and women may equally be landowners and excel in all the arts, and especially love poetry. Both sexes carve woeful laments on a piece of marble, on the bark of a tree, or in the most secret places in the architecture of Uranian and Scudarian gardens; and both sexes may also converse with each other in a courtly manner. But what is it that motivates this idealistic description of equality between women and men? Does it represent an attempt on the part of both writers to create a modern gallery of role models for their female readership?

In *Urania*, as in Lanyer's *Description of Cooke-Ham*, we find many instances in which the description of an estate is enhanced by the praise of the lady who dwells there. In the following scene (*U1*, 513, ll. 1-35), Antissius and Selarina have arrived in 'a sweet and dainty Iland' (l. 1) and in 'a delicate Pallace' (ll. 2-3), where they meet its owner, a widowed noblewoman, with her two young sons and her only daughter. The 'noble Lady' (l. 8), like the Queen Euterilyda in *Hypnerotomachia*, clearly emblemizes the beauty of the landscape as a whole. Before Wroth goes into a detailed description of the waterscape and surrounding countryside (ll. 12-22), she introduces her in most

panegyric terms (ll. 8-10), as the paragon of the 'compleat woman'.<sup>10</sup> The description soon comes to an end and shifts back to another praise of the family (ll. 22-5), and concludes with an encomiastic portrait of 'the excellent young Lady[']s' 'stature', 'skinne', 'eyes' and 'fashion' (ll. 23-35).<sup>11</sup> The two female characters therefore appear as the 'richest, and finest' (l. 22) ornaments of this place.

In *Clélie*, the link between the beauty of a place and that of its female dwellers is a recurring motif too — as is acknowledged by Amilcar in Volume Six:

Je m'esgare en peinture comme en amour, & que vous ne devez pas vous estonner si en faisant le portrait d'une Dame, je vous fais aussi, si la fantaisie m'en prend, le plan de sa maison, & la description de son jardin. (C6, 810)

Amilcar's statement is echoed in Volume Seven in the story of Elismonde. The narrator's use of the verbal phrase 'il faut' suggests that Amilcar's statement is not so much a personal opinion as a concession to a specific set of rules in the art of portraying a lady, which demands the description of her estate, and her place in it:

Il faut s'il vous plaist que je vous describe l'agrement de la maison où estoient les Princesses, & le merite de celle à qui elle

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<sup>10</sup> In her editorial commentary on the first part of *Urania*, Josephine Roberts suggests that the description is 'perhaps an allusion to Wilton House, home of the Pembroke family, near the River Nadder, about three miles west of Salisbury' (U1, 779).

<sup>11</sup> A more detailed discussion of women's portraits in *Urania* and *Clélie* is undertaken in Chapter Nine, pp. 333-48.



appartient; que je vous dépeigne mesme quelques-unes des Dames qui en faisoient l'ornement. (C7, 346)

In Volume Ten, when the main characters meet at Préneste to hear an oracle, Amilcar happens to meet Artéphile and asks her out of curiosity what brought her to this place. She begins her answer as follows:

Sçachez donc qu'estant un jour à la Vallée des Amours, chez la Princesse Elismonde. Non, non, reprit Amilcar en riant on ne me fait pas comme cela passer par la Vallée des Amours, sans m'y arrester. Dites moy donc je vous en conjure, si ce lieu-là merite un si beau nom, & pourquoy on le luy a donné. Il le merite sans doute, reprit-elle, mais il ne l'a pas tousjours porté, [...] mais un grand Prince ayant fait bastir la superbe maison [...], pour la donner à une Maistresse qu'il avoit, on l'a nommée depuis la Vallée des Amours. (C10, 1237)

As in the passage from *Urania* to which I have first referred, the narrator carries on with the description of the valley, of the architecture of the place, and of the waterscape that can be seen from the rooms, and concludes with a portrait of its female owner:

La Vallée des Amours a encore mille beautez que je ne vous descris pas, parce que j'ay dessein de vous dire que l'admirable personne qui habite ce beau desert, est devenuë encore infiniment plus belle & plus charmante qu'elle n'estoit lors qu'elle donna les

prix aux Jeux Olympiques, car elle a plus d'embonpoint,<sup>12</sup> elle a le teint encore plus beau, & son esprit mesme est encore embelly, de sorte qu'il n'est pas presentement possible de la voir sans l'aimer, quelque ennemy de l'amour que l'on puisse estre. (1245)

In addition to the emphasis on the 'beaux lieux' or 'delightfull places' and the 'merite' or 'perfections' of their female inhabitants, women are often represented as the sole owners of substantial estates. In the first passage to which I have referred at the beginning of the section, we are told that the estate is governed by a 'Widdow' (*U1*, 513, l. 22). In the second part of *Urania*, a female character known as the ruler of Robollo has inherited her father's land. Soon after his death, her beloved died too, and she made a vow 'never [to] marry for his sake, butt onely solemnise his memory in a strict and mayden state'; and 'intend[s] to end [her] solitairy days, beewailing his loss, living onely by the content of his deserved memory' (*U2*, 151, ll. 10-5). We also learn of Bellamira, who lives in a cave

of great bignesse, and large proportion, a Monument in the mid'st of it, of the most pretious stone of that time wherein shee lived, being the Tombe of her sweete, and last deere love, her sonne. Devided the Cave was into pretty roomes, finely furnished, but such as seemed rather to affect delicate cleanlines, then sumptuous ornament, yet were they rich enough. (*U1*, 382, ll. 10-5)

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<sup>12</sup> The beauty of Elismonde accords with baroque ideal of beauty, as indicated by her 'embonpoint', which in seventeenth-century aesthetics, as in a Rubens painting, is praised as a quality that all ladies should possess.



Another female character, Mirasilva, who, after being betrayed by her lover, made a vow of chastity and decided to become a nymph, lives in her own abode. Little is said about the house, but the reader is invited to trust the judgment of Pamphilia who has arrived there as her guest:

Pamphilia hearing her speak, and beholding her manner and fashion, besides the furniture of the roome being of delicate and rich silke, both hangings and bed, which till then she regarded not, did beleeeve she was of noble kinde. (*U1*, 576, ll. 20-3)

All these examples suggest that Uranian female owners have a specific status: those of widow- or maidenhood and celibacy. One of the most evocative descriptions of female ownership in *Urania* can be found in the second part, in the incident we have already mentioned where Selarinus encounters Saphalina, ‘niece to the famous, and beeloved for worthe, the wise Melissea’ (*U2*, 3, ll. 28-9).<sup>13</sup>

But before examining this episode any further, we need to examine the semantic lexicon of enchantment. In the *OED*, the word ‘enchanted’ is first defined as ‘invested with magical powers or properties’, then as ‘deluded, captivated as by magic’ and finally ‘delighted, charmed, enraptured’. The noun ‘enchantment’ designates the ‘action or process of enchanting, or of employing magic or sorcery’. It is also used figuratively in the positive sense of ‘alluring or overpowering charm, enraptured condition’, and in the negative sense of ‘(delusive) appearance of beauty’. The definitions found in Furetière’s

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<sup>13</sup> The name Saphalina seems to have been carefully considered: it is very elegantly inscribed in the manuscript and seems to have been added in a blank left by the author. Her name and the island (Lesbos) Saphalina inhabits may well be intended to indicate the aegis under which the book is being written, even though the character appears only once in the whole narrative.

*Dictionnaire* (1690) offer an interesting list of its figurative uses as well as a list of synonyms. First defined as ‘procedant d’une puissance magique’, it is then characterised as ‘un effet surprenant dont on ne connoist pas la cause, et qu’on rapporte à quelque chose d’extraordinaire; charme, plaisir, merveille’. The definition of the verb ‘enchanter’ gives a wider range of equivalents, when used figuratively in the sense of ‘charmer, engager, surprendre, ravir par des paroles douces ou artificieuses, ou par des attraits’. Furetière then gives a list of examples in which the past participle ‘enchanté’ may be used figuratively: he mentions the interesting example of ‘palais enchanté’, a phrase that occurs a few times throughout *Clélie*. Although in *Urania*, ‘enchanted palaces’ are to be understood as owned by a female magician, we can also read the words ‘enchantment’ and ‘enchanted’ in the figurative sense delineated by Furetière, as we shall see now.

The cave where Melissea’s sister lives (*U2*, 4, ll. 11-23) and the estate of the female ruler of Robollo offer a similar description (*U2*, 149-151). These two descriptions, which reflect the style of *Urania* as a whole, conform with Anthony Blunt’s remark on one characteristic of early modern romances that their authors ‘go into ecstatic details over the jewels and rare stones with which it is decorated’.<sup>14</sup> Selarinus’s and Steriamus’s respective progressions into the lady’s cave and the house of the female ruler of Robollo certainly bear comparison with Poliphilus’s progress into the Queen’s ‘sumptuous magnificent and statelie pallace’ (*Hypn.*, 48<sup>v</sup>). In the first passage in question, the description of the architecture and setting reads as the reflection of Melissea’s baroque theatricality as well as the reflection of her magic powers. Here, although it is not an enchantment scene as such, enchantment is at work: it is rendered by a hyperbolic enumeration of colours, stones and jewels and

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<sup>14</sup> ‘The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* in Seventeenth-Century France’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1937-1938), p. 121.



lighting effects ('sparcks', 'a little Sunn shine', 'triumphing fires' [U2, 4, ll. 19-2]). In the second description, the narrator's similar emphasis on lighting effects (from '[the sunn] showing him self in his full light' [U2, 150, ll. 6-7], '[...] shining fully on [the castle]' to its 'gliding [...] yett glimeringly' and its 'reverberation thorough thos dainty woods' [150, ll. 9-11]) conveys the idea that the house of the female ruler of Robollo is a 'palais enchanté'. The idea of 'palais enchanté' is also invoked, as in the description of Melissea's sister's cave, through the narrator's redundant use of the noun 'curiositie' as well as its semantic derivatives (curious and curiously). Finally we should note, in these two descriptions, the multiple occurrences of the adjectives 'rare', 'fair', 'dainty', 'fine', 'delicate', 'rich' and 'delectable' (as well as their superlative and adverbial forms).<sup>15</sup> Commonplace terms in Renaissance descriptions of buildings, gardens and country houses, and of nature as a whole (including its paradigm, women), they pertain to the lexical corpus of 'enchantment'.

In *Clélie*, the phrase 'palais enchanté' is used, for example, to characterise a country house which Anaxandre and Almathée own (C6, 823-4). The Scudarian treatment of female characters as owners is in some ways different from that found in *Urania*, in the sense that in *Clélie* equal emphasis is laid on the description of the place and the portrayal of its female owner. For example, after having described the 'desert' in which Elisante lives, the narrator carries on with a four-page portrait of her (C7, 355-8). Before commenting on this portrait, we will quote that of Amalthée who is married to Anaxandre. Her spouse is described as a good husband, but we only have a few lines of description for him, as against an eight-page portrait of Amalthée. This tells us a good deal about the role which women of a certain rank were

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<sup>15</sup> See U2: 'delicate waulkes' (150, l. 2), 'dainty bushes' (l. 3), 'delectable birds' (l. 5), 'dainty woods' (l. 11), 'thes rare, and rarest curiosities' (l. 19); 'soe fine, and most finely inricht' (151, l. 18), 'the rarest and most delectably curious of any' (ll. 31-2).

expected to play in early modern society. She too appears as the paragon of the ‘compleat woman’:

Elle conduit sa maison avec beaucoup d'ordre, elle songe elle-mesme à l'education de ses enfans, & elle sert les Dieux avec une exactitude admirable [...]. Si vous voulez sçavoir apres cela quels sont ses amusemens, elle aime à lire, elle a les mains adroites à toutes sortes d'ouvrages, elle dessine, elle peint des vases pour orner son Cabinet, elle fait des meslanges de fleurs pour en composer des parfums, & elle se divertit mesme à faire d'innocentes trompettes à ses Amies pour les surprendre agreablement [...]. Ainsi on voit dans sa maison, tout ce que la magnificence conduite par la vertu, peut faire voir de plus superbe.  
(C6, 820-1)

These two portraits cast light on what a high-ranking Frenchwoman's private life may have been like in the seventeenth century. Thus, we are told that Elisante is skilled in that ‘merveilleux art’, that is the art of gardening (C7, 357), and that Amalthée shows a real interest in architecture, painting and garden design. In Volume Ten, we find a concrete example of women's involvement in architectural innovation. In the following scene, the main characters are Plotine, Hermilie, Valérie, Amilcar, Télane, and Théomène. On Hermilie's request, Télane gives a description of Hersilie. He concludes it with the portrayal of Hersilie's friendship with Mélinthe. As he tells how ‘Hersilie [qui] n'a point le coeur sensible’ (C10, 876) teases Mélinthe for preferring the solitude of her ‘aimable retraite’ (877), he is interrupted and asked to describe Mélinthe's country house:



Je vous diray que la solitude que je dois descrire a quelque chose de *si charmant*, que tous les Palais luy doivent ceder. Mais ce que l'on peut dire de plus particulier en cette rencontre, c'est que l'admirable Melinthe a fait en ce lieu là un changement si considerable, qu'on peut presque dire qu'elle *l'a entierement metamorphosé* [...]. (878-80)

In using the verb 'metamorphoser', the narrator describes Mélinthe almost as a Circe or enchantress who has created a 'palais enchanté', as is implied by the use of the adjective 'charmant'. After describing the exterior, the narrator takes us to Mélinthe's 'aimable cabinet' — which, with its many paintings, is like an art gallery as well as an enchanted palace:

J'oublois de vous dire, qu'à la face où est la porte, qui est opposée à celle où est la croisée, est un miroir, qui recevant tous les objets du païsage, fait qu'on jouÿt de la belle veuë, lors mesme qu'on ne la regarde pas. (887)

The presence of the 'miroir', a baroque object par excellence, contributes to the enchanting power of Mélinthe's cabinet.<sup>16</sup> The description is not as intricate as those in *Urania*; yet the word 'miroir' is in itself strongly evocative of both lighting and perspective effects that made so many wonders in seventeenth-century European gardens — wonders which are illustrated through *Clélie*'s

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<sup>16</sup> We find similar effects in real houses, including Fouquet's château, Le Vaux (see La Fontaine's text that I have analysed above) or Charlotte d'Etampes-Vallençoy's château built by Mansart and celebrated by François Tristan L'Hermite in 'La maison d'Astrée'. This ode is of particular interest, because, as in *Clélie*, it associates the beauty of the place with that of its female dweller who appears as its architect (see Catherine Grisé [ed.], *Vers héroïques* [Genève: Droz, 1967], pp. 173-4, ll. 1-10 and ll. 31-40).

numerous descriptions of them, including Vaux. These descriptions of Elisante's, Amalthée's and Mélinthe's estates recall the contemporary examples of women who designed their own homes and gardens. In France, Mme de Rambouillet and Mlle de Montpensier are renowned for their genuine interest in architecture and garden design. Mlle de Montpensier's *Mémoires* are enlightening as to her involvement in the construction of buildings, and the restoration of interiors as well as gardens. The assertive 'I' of the female writer in the following quotation makes it clear that she considers these changes and innovations as her 'ouvrage' (IV, 437):

Après avoir été huit mois dans un grenier je me trouvai logée comme dans un palais enchanté. J'*ajustai* le cabinet avec force tableaux et miroirs; enfin j'étais ravie et croyais avoir fait la plus belle chose du monde. Je *montrais* mon appartement à tous ceux qui me venaient voir avec autant de complaisance pour *mon oeuvre* qu'aurait pu le faire la reine, ma grand'mère, lorsqu'elle montrait son Luxembourg. (*MM*, II, p.284, [ed.: Chérueil, J. Charpentier, Paris])

Ce bastiment [cette construction] a duré jusqu'à ce que j'en sois partie [...] il n'y a plus qu'à le peindre. Assurément je n'ai point perdu à cela mon temps, car ce bastiment m'a donné beaucoup de divertissement et ceux qui le verront le trouveront assez magnifique et *digne de moi*. (*ibid.*, 308)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Cited in Denise Mayer, 'Mademoiselle de Montpensier et l'architecture d'après ses *Mémoires*', *Dix-septième siècle* (1978), pp. 58-9 and pp. 59-60.



In *Urania*, there is only one explicit reference to a 'waulke' having been designed by a woman:

They went out of that paradise of garden pleasures into the Orchard, and soe into the prettiest, neglective, sweete, and pleasing, yett solitary waulke that nature cowld afforde, beeing made by the rare Queene Pamphilia in her youthe. (*U2*, 32, ll. 18-21)

Nevertheless, if we look back at the passages from *Urania* that I have analysed above, Bellamira's cave, Mirasilva's house as well as the abode of the female ruler of Robollo, all suggest that these single women are the designers of their own interiors. It is tempting to see in these single female owners the reflection of the author herself and of her aunt. As widows, they became the managers of their husbands' estates. We also know that the Countess was, like her French counterparts, involved in 'architectural innovations' at Houghton House.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, if *Urania* and *Clélie* both represent female ownership as closely related to the *topos* of enchantment found in earlier romances, these portraits of women as potential owners, architects or designers form part of tales which lead us to the 'ungendered' locus of storytelling and conversations, that is of 'a société galante' or 'delicate societie'. But before we are tempted to draw a simple parallel between the two phrases 'société galante' and 'delicate

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<sup>18</sup> See Hannay's introduction to *CWMSH* (p. 19), where she also mentions one article written on the subject by Alice T. Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority and the Female Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern House', *Assemblage: A Critical Journal of Architecture and Design Culture*, 18 (1992), pp. 41-57.

societie', we need to compare the meanings of the term 'galant' as it is used in *Clélie*, and of its English counterpart 'gallant' as it is used in *Urania*.

## VII. The concept of 'galanterie'

*Clélie* is often described as a 'roman galant', which is not surprising given the numerous occurrences of the adjective 'galant' in the romance itself.<sup>19</sup> *Clélie* is indeed illustrative of the notion of 'galanterie' which in seventeenth-century France came to signify 'un nouveau code de sociabilité'.<sup>20</sup> It was a 'courant à la fois littéraire et social, empirique observable dans la seconde moitié du dix-septième siècle, et historique définissable comme mode de socialisation par l'art du discours, donc analysable comme tel'.<sup>21</sup> Yet was this concept defined in similar terms by seventeenth-century critics? So it seems. In his *Dictionnaire* (1690) Furetière records one interesting definition of the predicate 'galant': it is 'un de ces termes tellement originaux et propres à la langue françoise, qu'aucun terme dans les autres langues n'y repond bien'. Chauvinism? An answer to this can be found in the *OED* which acknowledges the debt the English word 'gallant' owes to French. It took on most of the French meanings, although it primarily retained the Italian sense ('courteous, honourable') as well as the Spanish one ('gaily dressed, sprightly'). The claim for the Frenchness of the concept of 'galanterie' is thus legitimate. And it is clear that the growing use of the word 'gallant' in its French sense is contemporaneous with the popularity of French romances in mid-seventeenth-century England.

<sup>19</sup> See Godenne, *Les Romans de Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, pp. 261-91.

<sup>20</sup> Grande, *Stratégies de romancières*, p. 172.

<sup>21</sup> Alain Viala, 'D'une politique des formes: la galanterie', *Dix-septième siècle*, 182 (1994), p. 145; cited in *Stratégies de romancières*, p. 163.



Curiously, the adjective 'gallant' in *Urania* recurs in the many descriptions of knights and is explicitly linked to an older meaning of the word, the fifth definition recorded in the *OED*: 'chivalrously brave, full of noble daring'. In *Urania* there are often lexical analogies between 'gallantry', fight and bravery (*U1*, 33, ll. 17-25; *U2*, 84, ll. 19-20, ll. 33-4), 'gallantry' and knighthood (*U1*, 209, ll. 34-7; 422, ll. 11-5), gallantry and courtly chivalry (*U1*, 567, ll. 14-35; 571, ll. 1-12; 649, ll. 14-21). 'Gallantry' in *Urania*, unlike 'galanterie' in *Clélie*, is characterised as the complete opposite of rural mirth and pastoral entertainments, as illustrated by the following example.

Selarina, a minor character, happens to meet two men disguised as shepherds, Procatus and Sirelius. Procatus tells her about Sirelius's unhappy marriage to the unfaithful daughter of the Romanian Duke. For this reason, Sirelius has decided to retire in the countryside 'to lament his misfortune' (*U1*, 517, l. 17); but he is now about to return to his former life as a courtier (ll. 21-9). Although Procatus explicitly opposes courtly life to rural life (ll. 21-7), his impatience to be 'gallant once more' (ll. 26-7) not only informs us about his taste for horsemanship (an art in which we know a courtier ought to excel), but also, more specifically, about the chivalric aspect of Uranian gallantry, as indicated in the concluding sentence of his tale:

Quarrells have also risen in our absence as I heare, all which will  
breed ill blood if wee stay out, wherfore I pray for returne. (*U1*,  
517, ll. 29-30).

Although it is sometimes the object of mockery,<sup>22</sup> Uranian 'gallantry' is also conclusively associated with physical strength and nobleness of mind, as

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<sup>22</sup> The king of Argos who has been rescued by Lusandrino and Nummurando shows little gratitude to them: 'Therfor now since you are heere within my power, I will

suggested in the description of 'the new Duke of Brounswick' (*U2*, 401, ll. 26-7):

Hee was a most gallant man, and one who att first Tourney with Amphilanthus was butt weake in body. Butt traviele, change of aire, and experience brought all such perfections together as made him up a Very Gallant, and exquisite man, for that is the naturall and properest phrase for any that are of that sex, and the Noblest, and hee of that as noble as any. (401, ll. 29-34)

Thus the Uranian 'gallant' corresponds to the ideal of the courtier extolled in Castiglione's book, as expressed by his character, Count Lodovico:

But to come to some particularitie, I judge the principall and true profession of a Courtier ought to bee in feates of armes, the which above all I will have him to practise lively, and to bee knowne among other of his hardines, for his atchieving [sic] of enterprises, and for his fidelitie towarde him whom he serveth. And hee shall

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delight my self in sporting with such gallants in my owne revenge' (*U2*, 89, ll. 20-1). Although in the mouth of this ungrateful king, the phrase 'such gallants' is stamped with disdain, the narrator operates another lexical analogy between gallantry and honesty: indeed, throughout the tale of these two heroes, he constantly refers to them as 'the tow honest defenders of the truth' (88[l. 42]-89[l. 1]), and again as 'the tow honest men' (89, l. 5). See also *U2*, 84, ll. 10-20. In another passage, the adverb 'gallantly' is used to create a comic effect, but it is once more related to the lexicon of chivalry. The comical character, the Marquess of Gargadia, is just back from hunting, and 'sware [Pamphilia] she "peaked nott, butt rode as gallantly as ever I did in my lyfe; nay, with that valliantcie as I beegan to distrust mine owne strength and sex. I Vowe I rode miraculously, expecially att last, for as I rid in a thick of [...], I stirrd a fierce beast"' (*U2*, 308, 3-7). Ironically, this 'fierce beast' is endowed with the chivalric attributes of 'gallantry': it is 'a gallant Stag which shewed them excellent sport, and made a fine, sweet, and gentle [chace]' (307, ll. 32-3).



purchase himselfe a name with these good conditions, in doing the  
deedes in every time and place. (*BC*, 35-6)

Another glance at the definition of the substantive 'galant' in Furetière's *Dictionnaire* may help to determine whether or not there is a cultural gap between the two texts. The adjective 'galant(e)' meaning 'honneste, civil, qui a de l'esprit, qui fait les choses de bonne grâce' is followed by a more restricted definition of the substantive 'galant' which designates 'un homme qui a l'air du monde, qui est poli, qui tasche à plaire, et particulièrement aux Dames, par ses manières honnestes et complaisantes, qui a beaucoup d'esprit, de la delicatesse, de l'enjouement, des manières touchantes, aisées et agreables'. One of the main characteristics of being a 'galant' (*i.e.* 'tascher à plaire, et particulièrement aux Dames') is not new: it derives from a tradition of knights braving innumerable dangers, charms and enchantments in order to gain their ladies' favour. In *Urania*, which with its many enchantment scenes pertains to the chivalric tradition, knights, throughout their journeys from one place to another, are also seen embarking on perilous adventures on behalf of a lady who requests their aid. Although the Uranian 'gallant' hero is more of a warrior than the Scuderian 'honnête homme', they both share an identical goal, that of pleasing ladies, and have an equal taste for high fashion.

It is in the descriptions of tournament scenes that we find close parallels between Uranian and Scuderian heroes. In the passage from the first part of *Urania* on page seventy-six (ll. 4-19), the word gallant is not mentioned; yet the description offers a 'glorious sight' of 'delicate Horses and gallant troopes of Knights' (*UI*, 129, ll. 15-6) — an illustration of the first definition given by the *OED*, *i.e.* 'gorgeous or showy in appearance, finely dressed'.

*Clélie* abounds in similar gatherings, the recurring feature of which is often the relation of 'fêtes galantes' and 'entertainments', whose style ranges from allegorical masquerades or ballets and pastoral performances with special effects to the more traditional staging of chivalric encounters. In Volume Seven, the characters have come to the Court of Cyparisse to watch the Olympic Games. The main event is the 'course de chevaux & de chariots' (C7, 452). It takes place on the last day of the Games — the only event which 'bienséance' allows women to attend, because it shows 'l'exercice [...] le plus noble de tous' (470). It is thus a show meant for the delight of ladies and princesses. Among the combatants are the amorous protagonists of the 'Story of Elismonde'. The 'course de chevaux' becomes a love contest — which is also very much in keeping with the tradition of chivalric romances. This point is reinforced by the conventional presence of an unknown knight:

Son chariot estoit superbe, ses chevaux estoient d'un gris pommelé à miroirs, avec les crins blancs, & son habillement estoit magnifique. [...] cét inconnu s'arresta devant les Princesses pour les saluer respectueusement, & laissa flotter au gré du vent, une banderole qui estoit entortillée à une javeline qu'il tenoit, afin qu'elles y pussent lire ces deux vers. (476-7)

If we now compare the Uranian knights in the entertainment scene above with the unknown knight in *Clélie*'s 'Olympic Games', they appear akin to each other, as belonging to the same mould as the ideal Courtier described in Castiglione's book. Thus if the word 'gallant' in *Urania* is clearly synonymous with 'bravery', it can nevertheless be associated with some attributes of French



‘galanterie’. The first, as seen above, is to please the fair sex (although mostly through the medium of chivalry in *Urania*). The second is courtly fashion.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, Uranian heroes and heroines may be dubbed ‘galants’ in the seventeenth-century French sense. Like their Scudarian counterparts, Uranian protagonists are ‘markedly polite’<sup>23</sup> and of ‘noble conversation’. The courtly culture of Uranian heroes and the urbane culture of Scudarian heroes thus converge. It is therefore not so much through the use of the word ‘gallant’ as through the use of alternative adjectives, such as ‘civil’, ‘courteous’, ‘fair’ and ‘delicate’, that the notion of ‘galanterie’ can be located in *Urania*. Indeed, phrases such as ‘faire company’ or ‘delicate societie’ may be interpreted as the expressions that come closest to the Scudarian ‘société galante’.

### VIII. Uranian and Scudarian gardens as the theatres of a ‘société galante’

As the theatre of the ‘société galante’, the garden is multifunctional. It is above all the place where women are represented as the leading participants in bucolic pastimes, including debates and storytelling in accordance with the laws of courtly ritual.

The Scudarian ‘troupe galante’ is often heard making definitions and philosophising at length on the anatomy of the heart, but characteristically the debates are often led by women. One such example can be found in Volume Four, where the characters discuss the topic of day-dreaming (*C4*, 889-92). The conversation is initiated by Bérélice: she has been walking deep in thought

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<sup>23</sup> This is one of the main definitions of the term ‘gallant’ given by the *OED*.

beside Clidamire (her rival) and Artémidore (the man they both love), and is asked to justify her silence. There ensues a dialogue between Bérélise and another character, a dialogue that ranks, as remarked by critics, Bérélise amongst the earliest predecessors of the romantic temperament characteristic of late-eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth-century heroes and heroines. Later in the volume, Bérélise is then the one who leads the conversation on constancy, seeking to counter-attack any of Clidamire's opinions on the subject, and thus adds spice to the debate which it is tempting to construe as a replica of the 'conversations galantes' in French salons. Another good replica of salon debates amongst the *Précieuses* is the scene in the 'Story of Hésiode' in Volume Eight. Hésiode has arrived at Clymène's solitary retreat where Bélinthe too has come to visit her: Clymène is sitting on the grass with her little dog. Bélinthe teases her for preferring the presence of her pet to anyone else. A debate on animals' behaviour is launched: Clymène argues that their instinctual and well-organised life makes them more civilised than man's disproportionate ambition and love of glory.<sup>24</sup> Bélinthe keeps mocking her, whereas Hésiode almost wishes he were metamorphosed into a little pet, so that he could win her favour and conquer her heart.

If *Urania*, like *Clélie*, can be interpreted in some ways as 'a chronicle'<sup>25</sup> of what we could term an early manifestation of salon life, one of the most telling examples of this can be found in the second part of Wroth's romance. After a conversation on constancy, Amphilanthus, Pamphilia, the King (her father) and the rest of the company enter 'a most delicate and pleasant garden'

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<sup>24</sup> This is a reference to Montaigne's defence of animals, *L'Apologie de Raymond de Sebond*, which was the object of controversial debates between Cartesians and anti-Cartesians: it was indeed a popular theme in seventeenth-century salon discussions. See H. Busson and F. Gohin (eds.), Jean de La Fontaine, *Discours à Madame de La Sablière: sur l'âme des animaux* (Paris: Droz, 1938). See also Nicole Aronson, 'Mademoiselle de Scudéry et les animaux', in Alain Niderst (ed.), *Actes du colloque du Havre 1-5 octobre 1991: les trois Scudéry* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993), pp. 523-32.

<sup>25</sup> DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, p. 55.



(*U2*, 29, l. 20), where they start a new discussion on ladies' skills in the art of singing. Pamphilia is asked to sing. Once she has finished singing, Amphilanthus praises her in the conventional and eulogising terms of courtly ritual (31[ll. 26-38]-32[ll. 1-8]. Although Pamphilia rejects Amphilanthus's praise and (31, ll. 29-34) reminds him that she is a woman, 'soe weake a creature' (ll. 36-7) and must act in accordance with the requirements of female decorum (which are to show 'humilitie'), she adopts at the same time the stance of the male courtier, as she transforms Amphilanthus into an object of worship (31[ll.37-8]-32[ll.1-3]). Indeed, she endows him with the characteristics of a Petrarchan lady who we know 'makes' her Petrarchan lover's 'eyes blinde with the luster of [her] all-seeing, all-knowing, all-expressing exquisitenes' (32, ll. 2-3). However, the effect of Pamphilia's speech on Amphilanthus is as expected: her speech, like the eyes, lips or voice of a Petrarchan lady, becomes in Amphilanthus's mouth an object of praise (32, ll. 4-8). And in keeping with the laws of courtly ritual, Amphilanthus goes on to characterise his beloved as the sovereign of his heart and expresses his complete submission to her.

As often is the case in the unfolding of the two narratives, the staging of 'promenades' or 'walks' in gardens reproduces the world of male and female courtiers. As in *Clélie*, princes in *Urania* are 'never weary of delicate societie' (*U2*, 32, ll. 17-8), and all characters 'are shown to be obsessively concerned with telling their own and others' stories or with making others tell their own stories'.<sup>26</sup> We may not, however, go so far as to say that, as in *Clélie*, the Uranian depiction of a 'private academy' becomes 'an interpreting assembly joined together for the purpose of analysing even the smallest element of the narrated stories',<sup>27</sup> for the simple reason that Uranian characters are rarely seen interacting with each other. Instead they listen to the storyteller, may identify

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<sup>26</sup> Joan DeJean, 'The Female Tradition', *L'Esprit créateur*, 23, 2 (1983), p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

with the hero or heroine of the story, and at the end of it occasionally comment on it, or even give advice to the narrator if it is an autobiographical tale. Inset stories in *Urania* mainly read as fables or tales with an inherent moral. The function of storytelling in *Urania* is akin to that in chivalric romances, in which a tale is often told to send a knight on a mission to save a lady from the fetters of tyranny. On the other hand, storytelling also appears as a courtly pastime comparable with the delineation of ‘salon’ life in *Clélie*:

This waulk made many of that Company remember their Olde passions, and with all as they had binn divers, som hapy, injoying, others dispairing and therfore grievous, soe were their discourses mixt with hunny, with Gall, with pleasure, with torture, with injoying, with flatt laments for never obtaining. And in thes diversities they remained till Urania, sitting downe on the sweet, short, yett dainty grass, Pamphilia by her, Amphilanthus liing along, and Steriamus, the one with his head on Uranias lap, the other on Pamphiliass, the rest as they were placed to ther best contents: Parselius with his Dalinea, Rosindy in his Merianas, Antissius with Selarina. (*U2*, 32, ll. 23-32)

This passage recalls a similar scene in the first part of *Urania* when, after a long soliloquy in which Pamphilia expresses her inner torments, she is interrupted by the ‘delicate society’ of Amphilanthus, Urania and Limena:

Then sat they all downe together, Amphilanthus laying his head on Pamphiliass Gowne, which she permitted him to do, being more then ever before she would grant to any: then fel they into discourse of many things, and as all must come to conclusion, so



they concluded with love, as the end of al sweet pleasure. Then variety of love came among them, I meane the discourses in that kind, every one relating a story, Urania was the last, and hers was this. (*UI*, 245, ll. 13-9)

We should note, in the first extract, the sitting position of Urania and Pamphilia as opposed to the reclining position of Amphilanthus, and also (this time in both excerpts) the image of the male lover's head laid on his lady's 'lap' or 'gowne'. This suggests that the male characters are being depicted as lovers in the physical posture of submission to their ladies.

Similarly in *Clélie*, a depiction of courtly ritual in a garden setting can be found in Volume Four. A 'troupe galante' is assembled in Cléodamas's garden. This fair company converses in a pleasant walk:

Mais comme le sujet de la conversation sembla assez curieux à Philonice, elle s'assit, & fit asseoir toutes les Dames; les hommes demeurant debout devant elles, à la reserve de quelques-uns qui se mirent à genoux sur des Carreaux pour parler bas à quelques femmes. (*C4*, 831)

If in *Urania* the courtly ritual is rendered by the description of Amphilanthus's 'head on [Pamphilia's] gowne or lap', it is here conveyed by the picture of these 'hommes demeurant debout' (standing) or '[se mettant] à genoux' (kneeling down). Later in the text, when the company meets for the second time at the same place, emphasis is laid on Cléodamas's civility or 'galanterie', as he honours the ladies with

des Quarreaux magnifiques pour toutes les Dames, qui s'assirent par divers rangs des deux costez des marches de ce Perron; laissant le milieu vuide, afin que personne ne fust directement devant Philonice. Mais afin qu'elle eust quelque commodité qui la distinguast des autres, Cleodamas mit les Quarreaux qui estoient destinez à cette Princesse au pied d'un des plus beaux Arbres du monde, qui fait le milieu de ce Perron. (C4, 893-4)

Whereas the two quoted passages from *Urania* are only evocative of the nearest equivalent of the French salon, the scenes in Cléodamas's estate clearly reproduce the configuration of conversations in a 'ruelle' or 'alcôve'. Just as in the 'ruelle' there is a space between where the audience sits and the bed on which the hostess lies, so too there is a clearly defined space maintained between the 'delicate society' and Philonice. She occupies a regal position as though in a masque or ballet:

Ainsi Philonice estant assise au pied de ce bel Arbre, ses branches qui s'estendent également luy servoient de Daix par leur agreable ombrage. (C4, 894)

She not only appears as the fictive doppelgänger of an 'Arthénice' but as a Queen, as suggested by the regal canopy formed by the trees. Like the Countess of Pembroke in Lanyer's 'Author's Dream' or Madeleine de Scudéry in Anne de la Vigne's *Ode* (see Chapter Four, pp. 153-6), Philonice emerges as a leading figure. Similarly in the above two extracts from the English text, *Urania* can be pictured as the female leader of this 'delicate societie'. In the first quotation, one thing in particular indicates her status as leader: like Philonice, *Urania* is the first to sit down, and is imitated by the rest of the



company. In the second quotation, although she is last to speak, the reader is made to hear her tale, whereas the other characters' stories are not reported. The length of Urania's story (thirteen pages) suggests that, like Philonice, she plays a central part in this 'delicate' scene — which it is tempting to interpret as a replica of the social gatherings at Wilton or Penshurst House.

These two Uranian scenes offer an idealistic vision of the relationships between the two sexes, and are illustrative, as it were, of the discourse of tenderness or 'amitié tendre' conceptualised in *Clélie* through the eponymous heroine's map. As seen in Chapter Two, the idea of 'amitié tendre' introduces the theme of relationships between men and women not just as lovers but also as friends. The *Carte de Tendre* was first conceived by Clélie for the benefit of her male friend, Herminius. Certainly, the strongest bond of friendship between men and women in *Clélie* is that between Clélie and Herminius, as testified by his 'violent friendship' for her, and in *Urania* that between Pamphilia and the Duke of Pergamus. Although Pamphilia is seen only once confiding in him, the passage is worth quoting:

With her trusty servant the Duke of Pergamus she did only converse, for the men kinde, and would sometimes let him see her weepe, who did heartily pittie her and best might; for hee had seene her bless'd, and knowne the time shee was as much happy as now distressed. When she did sigh and grieve, he would also mourne.  
(*UI*, 461 ll. 25-9)

Thus shee would complaine, but only to him who knew the continuance of her love. (*UI*, 462, ll. 14-5)

The portrayal of this relationship is interesting because Pamphilia confides in her 'trusty servant' in much the same way as in her female friends. It also shows that friendship between men and women is not impossible in the realm of 'amitié tendre'.

In conclusion, if gardens in the two works 'serv[ent] à la promenade de tout ce qu'il y a d'honnêtes gens [...] de l'un & de l'autre sexe' (C9, 326), the appearance of equality between men and women proves illusory, since the presence of a 'société galante' implies the existence of a 'rituel courtois qui accorde la primauté aux femmes traitées en souveraines'.<sup>28</sup> This means that the space where the 'société galante' can be visualised is feminocentric. Furthermore, although friendship between men and women is not altogether excluded from these gardenscapes, the two authors, as I go on to discuss, lay far greater emphasis on the depiction of 'amitié tendre' between women.

## IX. The fictionalisation and discourse of female friendship in *Urania* and *Clélie*

In the discourse of female friendship, melancholy binds women together; and just as heroes in chivalric romances, who are bound by friendship, are often seen wandering in pairs, the same is true of Uranian and Scudarian heroines. In both texts the lexicon indicates strong bonds between two female friends; and women can often be seen visiting each other, sharing identical feelings and common experiences.

In *Urania* female friendship is defined as synonymous with love. We are told, for example, of Meriana who 'had given so full a love to [Pamphilia]'

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<sup>28</sup> Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 134.



(*U1*, 460, l. 6), of Urania who 'as her selfe loved [Pamphilia], like such a friend, and a discreet, Counsellor joyned in commission with her friendship' (*U1*, 467, ll. 38-9). The Queen of Naples is described as Pamphilia's 'most honord friend' (*U1*, 363, l. 36) and as 'the true secretary of her thoughts' (*U2*, 277, l. 1). In the first book of the second part of *Urania*, we learn that 'never was ther greater or Constanter love beetweene woemen then beetweene [Pamphilia and Veralinda]' (*U2*, 109, ll. 37-8).

In *Clélie*, female friendship is synonymous with 'amitié tendre', the highest degree of 'love' according to her map. Indeed, to characterise the nature of the friendship between Hermilie and Collatine, the narrator uses the lexicon coined by Clélie to describe love itself: '[elles] vinrent à s'aymer tendrement' (*C5*, 105). In *Urania*, the 'true secretary of a [heroine's] thoughts' or her 'most honord friend' are synonymous with the phrase 'premiere amie' (*C5*, 55) in *Clélie*. Female friendship is the subject of one conversation between Clélie and Valérie: the latter mourns the loss of her dearest friend, Lucrece. She explains to Clélie how exclusive her love for Lucrece was, and as Meriana does for Pamphilia, she gives Clélie the privilege of participating in 'so full a love':

Ainsi, Madame, adjousta cette belle Fille, je puis vous dire que je sents [sic] aujourd'huy dans mon coeur pour vous, ce que je n'ay jamais senty que pour l'admirable Lucrece. Je vous suis infiniment obligée, repliqua Clelie, de mettre au rang d'une Personne qui ne peut estre comparée avec aucune autre sans injustice [...]. Mais pour des Amies, j'ay trouvé un si petit nombre de Femmes que j'aye creuës capables d'une solide amitié [...]. Mais pour vous, reprit Clelie, je sents une si forte disposition à vous aymer, qu'il ne

tiendra qu'à vous que dés aujourd'huy, je ne sois tout à fait vostre  
Amie. (C5, 55-7)

This dialogue almost reads like a love confession, not between two lovers, but between two women, as in the portrayal of male friendship in the romance tradition.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the strength of this relationship is reinforced in the two works by the fact that female friendship is also defined in spiritual terms. For instance in *Urania*, the scene where Orilena and Pamphilia sail together on a ship, writing love poetry, characterises their relationship as 'sister-like' (UI, 364, l. 17). Later Pamphilia isolates herself with her sister-in-law, Meriana who, asking to see some of her verses, addresses her as 'deare Sister' (UI, 460, l. 21). In a sense, the phrases 'deare sister' and 'sister-like' erase the blood difference that exists between these heroines who are sisters-in-law: in sharing melancholy discourses and exchanging their inner thoughts through the medium of poetry, these heroines invite us to see them as spiritual sisters. Likewise, in *Clélie*, heroines seen in pairs are not just 'premieres amies'. The way Lucrèce describes Valérie to Brutus could be applied to each of these heroines:

ne pouvant renfermer dans mon coeur tout ce que je pensois de  
cette aventure, je le dis à Valerie, qui est une autre moy-mesme.  
(C3, 389)<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> There is a clear reference here to Cicero's discourse of friendship, which was popular in the early modern period, as testified, for instance, in *Clélie* by its lengthy debate on the different kinds of 'friendships'. The idea of the female friend being 'une autre moy-mesme' recalls Cicero's phrase 'Est enim is qui est tamquam alter idem', in R. Combès (ed. and trans.), *Laelius de amicitia* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971), p. 49. Translated into English as 'a true friend is no other, in effect, than a second



This phrase 'une autre moy-mesme' — echoed in the recurring portrayal of female friends as inseparable (see C5, 38) — suggests that these Scudertian heroines are also 'sister-like'.

Furthermore, it is in the private retreats of female friends, such as gardens and rooms, that we can find the finest expressions of 'amitié tendre' between women. Nevertheless, while in *Urania* there are more garden scenes staging the discourse of female friendship than in *Clélie*, in the latter such scenes seem to be fraught with latent tragedy.

In Volume Four, there is one garden scene staging a dialogue between two female friends, Lysicoris and Bérélise. Bérélise, like Pamphilia, is a melancholy protagonist. In the following passage, a 'troupe galante' is strolling in Cléodamas's garden, while listening to a concert, 'l'Harmonie' (C4, 1047-8). The style is not as ornate as in Uranian passionate outbursts; yet the pattern is the same, as the female lover (Bérélise) has a confidante (Lysicoris), a lucid friend who, like Urania and Veralinda giving advice to the distressed Pamphilia (see below), epitomises reason when counselling her distraught friend. This garden scene is nevertheless turned into a stage of tragedy, as Bérélise is overheard by her unrequited wooer, Térille. This scene is shortly followed by a duel between Térille and Artémidore: a 'funeste aventure qui touchoit [Bérélise] plus qu'on ne peut dire: car non seulement elle estoit affligée pour celuy qu'elle aimoit, mais elle l'estoit encore de la mort de celuy

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self' (in William Melmoth [trans.], *Laelius, or an Essay on Friendship* [London and New York: Routledge, 1894], p. 302). It is however possible that the immediate source which Scudéry had in mind was *L'Astrée* (1607-1619), where the male character Alcandre defines his friendship with Bélisard in similar termes: 'C'estoit ma coutume d'emmener tousjours Bélisard avec moy, à cause que je l'aymois comme un autre moy-mesme.' (ed. Hugues Vaganay with a preface by Louis Mercier [Lyon: Pierre Masson, 1925], vol. 4, p. 534).

qu'elle n'aimoit pas' (C4, 1061). Another scene, in Volume Three, shows how insecure the discourse of female friendship is in Scuderian gardens: it is not a safe place for a lover's confession. Lucrèce has received a letter from Brutus. Although she kept the others he wrote to her secret, she decides to show this last one to Valérie (C3, 414). Lucrèce then confesses to Valérie that she loves Brutus, who overhears their conversation. Although here Lucrèce's confession is the beginning of a tender complicity between the two secret lovers, it is in a 'cabinet de verdure' that Lucrèce's secret love for another than Collatin, her unrequited wooer, is discovered (C3, 499-501). Thus, while privacy in Scuderian gardens may at all times be endangered, the Uranian garden appears as a safer retreat for female friendship.

In *Urania*, the female protagonist Pamphilia is often found by her closest friends wandering like a lost soul in a garden. The garden in *Urania* emerges as a space where women meet, entertain themselves and confide in each other in the utmost privacy. The garden can therefore be construed as a privileged space for female discourse: Pamphilia is most often seen with Urania, the Queen of Naples and with various nymphs. To a certain extent, the Uranian garden almost becomes emblematic of the solitary and intimate encounter between these women. In the following passage, Pamphilia has arrived at the Morean Court, where she is made welcome by the King, Queen, Urania, Philistella and Selarina. She is now 'gotten alone' (U1, 365, l. 27), and utters a woeful monologue which is soon to be interrupted by the arrival of the Queen of Naples:

While she was thus in loves best clothes apparreld, the bravest of Ladies of her time came to her, finding her in her ancient loving walk; she met her with joy and respect [...]. To her shee went, who in her armes entertained her, that humbly tooke her favour with a



low reverence, which love made her yeeld her. No time was lost betweene them, for each minute was fild with store of wit, which passed betweene them, as grounds are with shadowes where people walke: and the longer they discoursed still grew as much more excellent, as they, to nightward seeme longer. (*UI*, 366, ll. 11-3; 15-20)

This scene is suffused with the same friendliness as that of the Countess of Pembroke's 'imbrace' in Aemilia Lanyer's 'Author's Dream'. It clearly conveys the image of an 'amitié tendre' which only exists between 'premieres amies'. The intensity of their relationship is here marked by the lexicon itself: love is present and described as the binding force that unites them. Furthermore, mutual understanding characterises this 'amitié tendre': as amongst Scudertian heroines renowned for their 'noble conversation', their discourse is but 'store of wit'. Finally the sense of 'intimacy' between these two women is intensified by a sense of timelessness and here the image of darkness, which so often seems to be characteristic of Pamphilia's solitary retreats.<sup>30</sup>

In another scene, after the heroes' departure from Corinth for Italy and Germany, Pamphilia and the Queen of Naples are seen 'walk[ing] abroad' (*UI*, 457, l. 25). This time, silence — which can be here interpreted as another mark of mutual understanding in the discourse of female friendship — prevails:

Much the excellent Queene admired at her sadnes, and uncertaine answeres, oft she was about to urge her, but againe she let it passe, purposing by circumstance rather then plaine dealing to worke it

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<sup>30</sup> On the nature of Pamphilia's solitary retreats, see Chapter Seven, section VI, pp. 243-7.

out of her, or by some other to gaine the knowledge [...]. This  
 judiciall Queene had enough then, and too much, having a wound;  
 for shee loved Pamphilia, who, poore Lady went up and downe  
 like the shadow of her selfe. (ll. 30-4; 37-40)

This passage is quite intriguing, as one would expect that 'so deere a friend' would have wished to utter her grief to 'the true secretary of her thoughts'. Pamphilia appears to be a very secretive character, since she refuses to express her inner torments concerning Amphilanthus's disloyalty to her (ll. 24-30).<sup>31</sup> The first garden scene quoted above concludes with Pamphilia's relation of Nicholarchus's misfortunes in love. At the end of it, the two women resume their walk:

Still taulking of love, the brave Queene longing to heare the young  
 Queene confesse, shee willing enough if to any shee would have  
 spoken it, but hee [Amphilanthus], and shee must only bee rich in  
 that knowledge. (*UI*, 371, ll. 12-5)

Such secrecy can be explained by the simple fact that the Queen of Naples is Amphilanthus's mother. Nevertheless, the closeness between Pamphilia and her aunt is stressed by the strongly loaded word 'wound' which, in the rhetoric of love, denotes physical as well as emotional pain. The subtext of this silence thus creates a sense of sisterhood or 'community of feelings'.

In these solitary retreats where women share discourses of love, characters may also strike up friendships with nymphs who tell their own love tales. In the first part of *Urania*, Pamphilia and her ladies-in-waiting encounter

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<sup>31</sup> On Pamphilia's secrecy, see Quilligan, 'The Constant Subject', pp. 322-4.



a nymph called Silviana/Alarina (*UI*, 216, ll. 24-35).<sup>32</sup> We are here at the heart of the feminine retreat delineated in Ovid's tale of Actaeon. Men are excluded, as we learn that Pamphilia 'command[ed] all the men to stay [behind]' (l. 31). We can thus picture a female community bound by the discourse of female friendship:

The Queen perceiving that she was afraid, most mildly spake thus to her.

'Sweete Nymph bee not thus dismaid, wee are none such as will give cause of any harme to you; wee are your friends.' (ll. 36-9)

Although the word 'friend' is uttered by Pamphilia to reassure the nymph as to her intentions, it takes on a particular resonance as the nymph relates her story at Pamphilia's request. Through the tale of the nymph's misfortunes in love, Pamphilia is made to witness her past predicament, and consequently to wonder at Silviana's 'vow' to 'live free, and uncontroll'd of Fortunes selfe' (*UI*, 224, ll. 16-7), and 'devoutly' to serve Diana. As Silviana concludes her tale, she declares:

and thus I doe remaine your humblest Vassall, mighty Princesse,  
else sole Mistrisse of my thoughts, and freedomes rule.  
(*UI*, 224, ll. 18-9)

By conventionally characterising her relationship to the goddess of chastity and to the Queen as befits her condition, that is in feudal terms, the nymph also uses the Petrarchan rhetoric of love, which institutes a relationship between the

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<sup>32</sup> On this character, see also Chapter Two, pp. 103-4.

male lover and his beloved similar to that between vassal and sovereign. Earlier in the scene, as she tells Pamphilia her reason for hiding 'in this faire river', she describes her longing for Pamphilia's company in evocatively erotic terms:

Oft have I seene you hunt in these faire plaines, and somtimes taste of this (then blessed) brook; behinde the seges, I did once lye hid, when you dry, and farre from all places fit to entertaine your vertues in, sate downe, and drank of this cleere water. 'O', said I, 'how blessed wert thou if thou couldest but know into what happinesse thou shalt arrive, first to bee touched by those best deerest lipps, and so to passe into her royall breast?' (*U1*, 217, ll. 9-15)

The myth of Ovidian desire in the story of Actaeon is here reversed, since the gazing subject is not male but female, and desire is felt by a female subject for another female subject. The image of the touch of 'those best deerest lips' is of course conventional in the rhetoric of Renaissance sonneteers, which (when used as part of the discourse of female friendship) takes us back to the utopian atmosphere that suffuses Aemilia Lanyer's 'Author's Dream'. Indeed, in the nymph's words, the 'royall breast' may be seen as the seat of this 'amitié tendre', which only a few hearts may occupy. This is a scene that might well be characterised as a manifestation of homoerotic desire in a Renaissance text, since the word 'love' is often used to describe the intensity of either male or female friendship.

In the second part of *Urania*, Pamphilia meets another nymph, called Leutissia, with whom she makes friends. One morning 'Pamphilia and the Marquess [of Gargadia] tooke ther way to the delightfull Fountaine' (*U2*, 308,



ll. 27-8). The Marquess begins to fish and happens to catch a nymph. Terrified, the Marquess runs away, leaving Pamphilia on her own. And once Pamphilia and the nymph have made acquaintance with each other, Pamphilia entreats her to relate her story. The nymph first tells her how her lover Amarintus was slain by his ill-inclined father Demonarus, for trying to rescue his sister and mother from his murderous hands. She then goes on to relate how she fled from Demonarus's violence and became a nymph. The account (*U2*, 312, ll. 20-4) offers another idealistic vision of a female community, in which women are viewed sharing one another's distress and comforting each other. In a sense, the pastoral female community which the nymph Leutissia describes bears comparison with the convents or religious houses, where seventeenth-century women often retreated, and paradoxically found a certain kind of freedom.<sup>33</sup> The religiosity of this pagan abode is reinforced, as I have already noted in Chapter Two (pp. 91-2), by the nymph's self-identification with 'a living sepulcher to hold thos deerest reliques of purest love' (313, ll. 2-3), that is a testimony of her constant love for the dead Amarintus. Consequently, Leutissia's abode becomes Pamphilia's daily retreat where she 'meet[s] the deere, sweet Nimph, [...] discoursing of many delicate passages hapined to them in the time of ther loves' (351, ll. 7-10).

In *Urania*, the garden therefore emerges as one of the favoured retreats of female friends. Although female friends are more frequently seen together in gardens (a walk, a grove or an orchard), a few scenes throughout the romance allow us to visualize women in the more confined space of private rooms. Indeed, it is in rooms that both Uranian and Scudrian women play the role of counsellors to other women, who often are or become close friends. For instance, it is in Mirasilva's bedroom that Pamphilia hears her hostess's tale of

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<sup>33</sup> See Grande, *Stratégies de romancières*, p. 156.

misfortune. Mirasilva is a 'Forrest Nymph' (*U1*, 576, l. 42) who explains why she has chosen to live 'unmarried' (577, l. 2), as she has been left by her lover Sildurino who proved false to her. At the end of the tale, Pamphilia comforts her:

'Trust me,' said the Queene, 'hee is recanting, and ere long you will see it, but be carefull in accepting, lest the others importunitie, and your slacknesse marre not all againe'. (580, ll. 19-21)

It is possible that through this tale Pamphilia sees in Sildurino shades of her own inconstant lover Amphilanthus, and that she consequently identifies with Mirasilva. Sharing, even tacitly, one's own experience thus seems to be part of the discourse of female friendship. In the second part of *Urania*, Pamphilia's two-line counsel to Mirasilva is echoed in a dialogue between Pamphilia and Veralinda, discoursing in the gallery. Veralinda, accompanied by her young son, Amphilonus, has come 'to visitt and assist Pamphilia' (*U2*, 109, l. 36). The subject of the conversation is Amphilanthus, who as Pamphilia laments is still disloyal. Veralinda, like *Urania* (see *U1*, 467, ll. 37-40), gives a 'rare counsell' (*U2*, 112, l. 22):

Blame him nott causlessly; att least, I meane, beefore you are certaine of his fault. Dreames often goe by contraries and oftener then by truthes. Therefor bee warery, and doe nott wronge your perfect love with suspition. (111, ll. 23-6)<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> It is perhaps not a coincidence that *Urania* and Veralinda voice a similar discourse, since they have both been identified as Susan de Vere Herbert.



As in most female counsellors' speeches, Veralinda's discourse is almost didactic, as implied by the series of cause/consequence clauses, and more specifically if-clauses. The series of imperatives (see also 112, ll. 13-20) almost reads as a key to the problem of dealing with affairs of the heart. The concluding sentence of Veralinda's speech, 'Bee the Emperess of the world, commaunding the Empire of your owne minde' (112, ll. 20-1), recalls Urania's friendly admonishment of Pamphilia in the third book of the first part. Urania's speech, in this instance, is also characterised by if-clauses and the use of imperatives. As a friend, Urania not only expresses her concern as to Pamphilia's 'judgment, and discreet govern'd spirit' (*UI*, 468, l. 6), but also urges her to 'preserve [her] health' (469, l. 5).

Because Pamphilia is frequently pictured as the main female character who is constantly being counselled by her friends, her very short speech of advice to Mirasilva, as opposed to Veralinda's and Urania's lengthy speeches, may sound somewhat ironic — since the main plot revolves around her love for the inconstant Amphilanthus. Nevertheless, there is in the second part of *Urania* one major chamber scene in which Pamphilia plays the edifying role of confidante. She has now grown older and has a niece called Candiana. The aunt/niece relationship seems to be a significant one in the discourse of female friendship: earlier on we saw how in her own life, Wroth was particularly close to the Countess of Pembroke — which is replicated in *Urania* under the guise of Pamphilia and the Queen of Naples, although we should of course bear in mind that fiction distorts reality.<sup>35</sup> The close relationship between Pamphilia

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<sup>35</sup> See Margaret Patterson Hannay, "'Your Vertuous and Learned Aunt': The Countess of Pembroke as a Mentor to Mary Wroth", in Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller (eds.), *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), pp. 15-34.

and Candiana is described as a very natural and spontaneous one. This is stressed by the adverb 'instantly' in the following passage:

Pamphilia, having Candiana alone, discoursed with her of many things concerning her passed fortunes, and the cause att last of her pretty blushing when the Albanian Prince was named. She instantly (with her aunts promise, first, for secresie) discovered her affection, and the time of the continuance, with the divers fortunes and crosses in itt, and the hapines yett att last to meete, though soone againe to part. This made an earnest desire in Pamphilia to heere itt often, and wholly together, which she thus beegann:

'Most honored of all woemen, and my deerest Aunte, then heere this my story.' (U2, 357, ll. 7-16)

As an aunt, Pamphilia is endowed with the same attributes as the Queen of Naples; she is 'Most honored' (l. 15) and Candiana's 'deerest Aunte' (*ibid.*). Their intimacy is here marked by the presence of the adjective 'alone' and later by Pamphilia's 'promise [...] for secresie' (l. 10). Candiana, in the habit of a nymph, has fallen in love with Floristello. Yet in accordance with her nymph-like condition, she scorns his love; and Floristello is forced to depart. The last she sees of him is when he disappears in an enchantment. The penitent Candiana wants to go in search of him, but fears that Floristello, at the sight of her in her disguise, 'might bee assured many obsticles might bee beeweene [them]' (358, ll. 11-2). She then requests Pamphilia's aid, which the latter is pleased to grant her (ll. 12-24). Thus talking in the privacy of a confined retreat, they allow us once again to visualise the aunt/niece relationship more as a 'tendre amitié' than simply as a family bond.



In *Clélie*, rooms unlike gardens are clearly the favoured retreat for female friends. Apart from being the ungendered stage for ‘conversations galantes’ as well as for storytelling, they are endowed with a specific function: the staging of female friendship. The Scudarian textualisation of female intimacy suggests that women meet in a confined space inside the house.

There are sometimes time markers, such as ‘le soir’ which is often used to seal the end of a ‘conversation galante’, or ‘promenade’ in a garden, or even political talks in a room. Although this may announce another gathering of a ‘troupe galante’ in a garden, where a concert or any other nocturnal festivities are being held, it may also announce the dispersal of the fair company, and transfer us to a more private space where the heroines of inset stories often confide in their closest friends. Night time often appears to be the ideal moment for Scudarian heroines to open their hearts to each other. In Volume Three, after Brutus’s love confession to Lucrece, the latter intends to describe her afternoon to Valérie, but has to wait until the evening:

Elle ne pût pourtant luy parler que lors qu’elles furent retirées le soir à la Chambre où elles couchoient: car Hermilie, ou Racilia furent tousjours avec elles. Mais dés qu’elles furent en liberté, Lucrece raconta à son Amie parole pour parole, tout ce que Brutus luy avoit dit. (C3, 393)

The bedroom, an almost exclusively female space in *Clélie*, is both a private retreat and the locus of ‘liberty’. Unlike the garden, where private conversations may be overheard, here female characters can be certain to find both freedom of speech and secrecy. In Volume Six, after the visit of her amorous wooer, Lindamire broods over their conversation:

[Elle] fit cent reflections sur cette conversation, en parlant le soir  
avec ma soeur. (C6, 994)

In Volume Eight, after the dispersal of the fair company in a ‘prairie bordée de Saules’ (C8,1005), Hésiode and Clymène happen to sit beside each other on the banks of the river. After a long conversation on Hésiode’s own poetry, Clymène retires into her room at night to entertain herself with Bélinthe (1019-23). Likewise, Elismonde tells Cléontine of the conversation she has had with Mélante, her unrequited lover and the rival of Hortense, her beloved. Mélante comes to see her in her room; and after his departure, the room turns into an exclusively female retreat:

Elismonde [...] s’entretenoit avec sa chere Cleontine, à qui elle  
conta en peu de mots tout ce que Melante luy avoit dit. (C7, 537)

In these retreats, dialogues between two intimate female friends stage what we could call an entertaining act of comedy. The distress of the confiding heroines in these four examples (C3, 393-6; C6, 995-7; C7, 375-80; 537-9; C8, 1019-23) is constantly undermined by their confidante’s merry lucidity. In each dialogue, we find, as it were, identical stage directions which describe the confidante as ‘souriant’ (smiling), ‘riant’ (laughing) or ‘raillant’ (mocking) at her friend’s unfeasible determination not to love her favourite suitor. In these four different scenes, the Scudarian discourse of female friendship emphasises the sincerity of the confidante, who — like Urania or Veralinda — is not afraid of speaking the truth. Although they show as much wisdom as their Uranian counterparts, Scudarian confidantes are a good deal more playful with their interlocutors. This playfulness is considered to be a mark of frivolity by their afflicted friends, who characterise the confidante’s speech as ‘injurieux’ (C3, 396) in the



case of Lucrèce, or as not serious (C6, 996-7; C8, 1021) in the case of Lindamire. Although Lucrèce scolds Valérie for her ‘injurieux’ counsel, her ‘demy-sourire’ (C3, 396) may be interpreted as a tacit confession that she knows Valérie is right. In the others, the confidantes tend to resist such a dismissal of their interventions. In the last passage in question (C8, 1020-21), Bélinthe goes even further: she admits she is teasing Clymène; and in her own defence she asserts her sincerity as playfully as ever, by pointing at her friend’s own ‘insincerity’. Scudarian confidantes thus express their sincerity by giving straightforward, spontaneous answers. If, at some points, these confidantes seem frivolous, they are endowed with implacable logic: their speech is peppered with clauses beginning with link-words, such as ‘mais’ or ‘car’, which introduce a piece of reasoning. They also use phrases, such as ‘n’en mentir pas’ (C6, 996; C8, 1020), ‘tout de bon’ (C6, 996; C7, 378), ‘croyez moi’, ‘je pense que’ (C6, 995); ‘je ne raille point’, ‘je croy que’ (C6, 996), etc. The rhetoric employed by Scudarian confidantes conveys assertiveness — an assertiveness which can even prove prophetic, as implied by their use of the future tense. Most confidantes can predict that their friend will eventually yield to their passion. In a sense, their prophetic voice can be construed as synonymous with rationality, as suggested by Cléontine’s disapproval of those who try to understand oracles (C7, 375-6). Her speech on the vanity of those attempting to interpret oracles is reinforced towards the conclusion of the dialogue, when Cléontine states what she sees as the logical outcome of the story of Elismonde:

Je suis persuadée que vos sujets vous pri[e]ront de leur donner la  
paix, en vous donnant vous mesme à celuy qui vous fait la guerre.  
(378-9)

And as Elismonde contradicts her, Cléontine replies, still using the future tense:

Le temps vous fera peut-estre changer d'avis, reprit Cleontine, mais, adjousta-t'elle en riant, à ce que je voy vous ne croyez pas aussi impossible qu'Hortense puisse regner dans vostre coeur, puis que vous ne m'en dites rien. (379).

In *Clélie* the heroine's chamber, unlike the 'cabinet de verdure' in a garden, is clearly defined as the safest of retreats, in which female friendships become speaking pictures of 'amitié tendre' between women, and in which the smiles and rebukes of the room's occupants reveal the extreme closeness of their relationship.

As we have seen in this section, female friendship in *Urania* and *Clélie* is akin to love and is therefore described in terms reminiscent of those used to describe male friendship in earlier romances. Yet while the friendship between a Gauvain and Yvain or a Pyrocles and Musidorus is based on a chivalric pact to come to each other's rescue or fight side by side at any time, the emphasis in female friendships is different. Here there is less emphasis on heroic searches for a lost companion than on the seclusion of female friends in well-defined spaces, mostly bedrooms in *Clélie* and gardens in *Urania*, where discretion and silence, advice and the sharing of secrets form part of the discourse of female friendship.

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In Part Two, I have argued that the social roles of women in *Urania* and *Clélie* seem to reflect the situation in contemporary courtly gatherings.



Although the word 'salon' is not satisfactory to describe what happens on the literary stage of Elizabethan and Jacobean society, parallels can still be drawn between Wroth's and Scudéry's feminocentric coteries. Both circles, for instance, engage in collaborative writing, the circulation of manuscripts and similar types of pastoral games. A text like *Love's Victory* seems to serve as a key to the fantasy life of Wroth's circle in much the same way as Scudéry's fiction evokes the fictive world created by the habitués of her salon. Further parallels can be inferred from a close reading of *Urania* and *Clélie*. Both abound in feminocentric spaces that, to some extent, read as transmutations of reality into fiction. These spaces are of three types: the domestic space (including interiors as well as gardenscapes) where women are represented not only as ornaments of the environment they inhabit but also as their own masters; the social space, that is, the 'société galante' in which both men and women coexist but where the latter have a privileged status, in conformity with the tradition of courtly ritual; and lastly an exclusively female private space which serves as a stage for the discourse of friendship between women who, viewing each other as 'une autre moy-mesme', emerge as spiritual doppelgängers in the fullest sense of the phrase. Indeed, as we shall see in Part Three, these female retreats serve not only to nurture the discourse of female friendship but also help to engender female literary creativity.

### **Part Three**

#### **The *loci* of the feminine (2): creativity**



While Part Two focussed on the social role of heroines, in either the ungended space of gardens and rooms or in the more intimate and confined spaces of female friendship, Part Three begins by focussing on the link between the *loci* of the feminine (*i.e.* the moral prerequisites a woman ought to adorn herself with) and the representation of female authorship within the literary context of *Urania* and *Clélie* (Chapter Six). It then goes on to examine the link between the *loci* of the feminine (*i.e.* the solitary retreats, whether topographical or inward, of Uranian and Scudarian heroines) and female literary creativity (Chapter Seven).

## Chapter Six

### Female authorship in *Urania* and *Clélie*

In this chapter I will consider Wroth's and Scudéry's identification of the paradox inherent in early modern female authorship through their representations of female exemplars of 'rare génie'.<sup>1</sup> To begin with, I shall analyse the ways in which recognition of female authorship is fictionalised, first within the literary context in which Wroth and Scudéry wrote (section I), and then within their own works (section II), where, although women of letters are given wide recognition (section III), the reader is constantly reminded of the limits of female authorship.

#### I. Public recognition of female authorship in the early modern period

Of the texts under discussion, it is in Scudéry's romances that public recognition of female literary talent is most explicitly textualised.

In Chapter Four, we noted that Scudéry was also known as 'Sappho', her salon name. This is also the name of one of her heroines in *Le Grand Cyrus*: her story occurs in the second book of the tenth volume, where Scudéry revises the legend of the Lesbian poetess. This has led both contemporary and modern readers to read Scudéry's 'Story of Sappho' as a thinly veiled autobiography. After giving us an encomiastic portrait of Sappho, the narrator goes on to describe a female utopia. Sappho is introduced as the friend of four women of equal learning (GC, vol. 10, 338-40). In a few pages, the author takes the reader into a miniature 'city of

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<sup>1</sup> It is the phrase used by Christine de Pisan to characterise 'Pamphile', *La Cité des dames*, p. 111.



ladies', and although Cydnon is praised as her best friend, the presence of Erinne is significant, since she appears side by side with Sappho in Scudéry's earlier work, *Les Femmes Illustres*.

In *Clélie*, the author mentions Sappho once again in the 'Story of Hésiode' in Volume Eight. The narrator relates Hésiode's dream, which can be read as a continuation of Scudéry's *Femmes illustres*, *L'Honneste femme* (*The Compleat Woman*) by Jacques Du Bosc, or *Le Mérite des dames* by Sieur de Saint-Gabriel. Against the established belief that women are intellectually infirm as a result of their so-called physical weakness, these two male panegyrists provide us with female exemplars of 'highest wisdom' and excellence in both the arts and sciences. From one author to another, the examples vary very little. They all cite women from antiquity, and occasionally illustrate their point through the praise of contemporary women, as follows:

Et ne voyons nous pas au temps present cette sçavante fille  
Reine de Suede, laquelle, n'estant point empeschée par les  
hommes ses sujets, a si bien fait valoir les dispositions  
naturelles de son grand genie ès sciences & ès belles lettres,  
qu'elle s'y est renduë la merveille du monde [...]. Ainsi il  
ne faut pas que les hommes se glorifient de leurs sciences  
[...]; l'un des beaux esprits de ce temps se tient obligé à sa  
soeur des plus belles pensées de son livre.<sup>2</sup>

In the above extract from *Le Mérite des dames*, the French author has thought necessary to add a note in the margin saying 'Eloge de Mlle de Schudery', whose name a seventeenth-century reader could have simply

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<sup>2</sup> Sieur de Saint-Gabriel, *Le Mérite des dames, seconde édition, revue et augmentée par l'auteur, avec le résultat du conseil des héroïnes* (Paris: n.p., 1657), 8<sup>o</sup>, pp. 50-2.

inferred from the phrase 'à sa soeur' (a veiled hint to the sister of Georges de Scudéry), for it was common knowledge that Scudéry had her works published under her brother's name. As conveyed in the 'Story of Sappho', Scudéry was intensely conscious of her growing fame. Her name also appears in English tracts, such as *A Present for the Ladies: Being an Historical Account of Several Illustrious Persons of the Female Sex* (1693) by Nahum Tate, or *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (1694) by Mary Astell. Although these last two works are much later than *Clélie*, the 'Story of Hésiode' was written in a clearly defined sociocultural context that acknowledges women's emergence on the intellectual stage.

It is interesting to examine the ways in which Scudéry reproduces this encomiastic genre within her fiction. Does she adopt a protofeminist stance as explicit as that adopted by male apologists of the fair sex?

At first sight, it seems that, unlike Sieur de Saint-Gabriel in *Le Mérite des dames* or Jacques Du Bosc in *L'Honneste femme*,<sup>3</sup> or even her female predecessor, Marie de Gournay in *Egalité des hommes et des femmes* (1622), Scudéry is not exclusively concerned with a gendered discourse: instead she composes, in the first part of Hésiode's dream, a literary history which reflects seventeenth-century aesthetic taste. Her text reads like a general praise of both ancient and modern authors, both men and women. She presents us with a chronological list of thirty-six male poets from ancient Greece, then thirty male Latin poets; and moving on to modern times, she commends eleven male Italian poets and concludes with a eulogy of approximately twenty male French poets. This constitutes a total of ninety-seven male writers, as compared with seven poetesses altogether.

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<sup>3</sup> I am here referring to the English translation (1639), pp. 20-39; see Chapter Three, p. 111, footnote 1.



That men of letters should far outnumber women of letters is of course hardly a novelty. Scudéry is only being faithful to historical fact.

Yet despite this apparent faithfulness to reality, an analysis of the overall structure of Hésiode's dream seems subtly to convey the author's protofeminist motivation. As the narrator of this long history, Scudéry chooses the name of one of the nine Muses, Calliope, who we know came to be associated with 'epic poetry', and whose name means 'lovely voice' (*DCM*, p. 261) in Greek. To attach a still greater symbolic weight to the person of Calliope, Scudéry names her male protagonist after the famous Greek poet, Hesiod, who 'said that Calliope was the most important Muse because she had the tutelage of Kings' (*ibid.*). Hésiode's dream is not just a relation of literary history but is also about the poetic power of the female voice. Furthermore, it should be noted that the first part of the dream is carefully organised. It opens and ends with the eulogy of a female poet: first the Delphic poet-prophetess, Phémonoé (*C8*, 802), and then an anonymous lady whom critics have identified as one of Scudéry's friends, the Comtesse de La Suze (894-5).<sup>4</sup> The circular structure of the first part of the dream allows the reader to decipher its gendered subtext: these two women poets are described as both inspiring and possessing poetic powers. Phémonoé and the anonymous lady are the epitome of 'rare génie'. In fact, whereas some of the male poets that are listed might be described as 'mediocres', none of the women cited undergo such disparagement: they are all acclaimed for their literary inventiveness. Thus, we are told of 'la fameuse Sapho de Mytilene, qui sera celebre dans tous les siecles, par la beauté de ses vers, principalement par un certain caractere amoureux, & passionné qui sera presque inimitable', whose name 'vivra pourtant eternellement' and who 'sera nommée la dixième Muse' (806<sup>v</sup>). Scudéry writes here what we could call a synopsis of her story in *Le Grand Cyrus*, and implicitly refers

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<sup>4</sup> See Maître, *Les Précieuses*, pp. 311-24.

the reader to it. She devotes more lines to the *persona* of Corinne who outmatched Pindar:

[Elle] aura la gloire de le vaincre cinq fois publiquement, & de remporter le prix de mieux faire des vers que luy. (809)

Calliope tells Hésiode that Corinne's successive victories are the beginning of a secret love that besieges Pindar's heart:

*Elle le raillera agreablement*, & luy dira qu'il ne sçaura rien faire, puis qu'il ne sçaura rien feindre, lui soustenant fortement qu'il faut qu'il y ait de la fiction dans la belle Poësie. Pindare voulant en suite profiter de ce qu'elle luy aura dit, luy portera quelques jours apres un ouvrage tout remply de fictions entassées, mais cette belle fille *le raillant encore ingenieusement*, & le regardant *avec un souris moqueur*, il les faut semer avec jugement, luy dira-t'elle, & non pas les jetter à pleines mains comme tu viens de le faire. Et en effet, Pindare profitera si bien de ses conseils, qu'il fera l'admiration de son siecle, & de ceux qui le suivront. (809<sup>v</sup>-10)

Although Scudéry is only reiterating the praise of Corinne familiar from the work of Juan Luis Vives,<sup>5</sup> she transforms her into a typically Scudarian heroine: she has the same characteristics, such as her 'raillerie agréable' or 'son souris moqueur'. As seen in the last section of Chapter Five (pp. 196-200), one main feature of the Scudarian heroine is her wit, textualised through the mention of her skillful propensity for 'raillerie'. Yet

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<sup>5</sup> See *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, sig. C3<sup>r</sup>.



this time, Corinne is not the wise counsellor of a dispirited female friend, but is, as it were, depicted as an art critic. She proves to be a harsh judge. Advising Pindar on how to write fiction, she speaks like a theorist in the same manner as Georges de Scudéry in the preface to *Ibrahim*, or as the narrator commenting on Sappho's writings in *Le Grand Cyrus*.<sup>6</sup> We are therefore tempted to see in Corinne the shadow of Madeleine de Scudéry: one glance at her whole literary career shows that she constantly articulated her concern with the role of literature, and by that means contributed to the emergence of literary criticism.

Later, like her male predecessors and contemporaries writing panegyrics of the fair sex, Scudéry goes on to mention Cinthia, the mistress of Properce, another Roman poet. Then we are told of Lucain's wife, 'Polla Argentaria [qui] fera des vers aussi bien que luy' (836<sup>v</sup>) and of Stace's wife, 'Claudia qui sera illustre par son esprit, [et qui] fera aussi des vers, comme celle de Lucain' (836<sup>v</sup>-837<sup>r</sup>). Scudéry's comparison of Cinthia with Lesbia (834<sup>v</sup>) reinforces the above idea that the success of some men's works may well have to do with a woman's ingenious intervention. This may once again be a veiled allusion by Scudéry to her brother's appropriation of some of her writings. As for the treatment of Polla and Claudia, laconic as it may be, it partakes of the author's attempt to acknowledge the intellectual 'mérite des dames'. In the end, the dream can be interpreted as a piece of rhetorical prose whose subtext contributes to the construction of female identity. As the introduction of ancient and modern poets and poetesses

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<sup>6</sup> On Georges de Scudéry's precepts in the preface to *Ibrahim*, see General Introduction, pp. 31-2. The narrator of *Le Grand Cyrus* comments on Sappho's writings as follows: 'Cydon me montrait des Elegies, des Chançons, des Epigrammes, & mille autres sortes de choses si merveilleses [...]. Au reste on voyoit [...] qu'elle ne estoit pas comme ces Dames qui ayant quelque inclination à la Poësie, se contentent de la suivre, sans se donner la peine d'y chercher la derniere perfection; car elle n'escrivoit rien que de juste, & d'achevé.' (GC, vol. 10, 356).

draws to an end, Calliope herself reminds the reader that she and her female companions play an important role in the realm of literary creativity, and that they need ‘the favour of their King’ in order to carry on their mission as Muses:

Mes Compagnes & moy inspirerons le desir de chanter [la]  
gloire [du roi] à tous les Poëtes de son temps. (864)

To conclude, although the dream functions as an ornament to the whole ‘Story of Hésiode’, its structure and inner dynamics allow the reader to picture the role of women on the literary stage of history from a subtly protofeminist perspective. Yet as the figure of Corinne suggests, the women mentioned in this literary chronicle have much in common with Scudarian heroines. Indeed, the latter are often admired by their male counterparts as muses as well as poetesses, as we shall see; they are so many Calliopes driving the romance forward on every level.

## II. Public recognition of female poetic creativity in *Urania* and *Clélie*

Uranian and Scudarian amorous heroines often resort to the written word to express their sentiments. Whether incidentally or not, their love poems, love-letters, and love-songs (the tokens of these women’s inner lives) meet with as much acclaim as the writings of male characters.

For instance, during his peregrinations, Amphilanthus undergoes a strange encounter. He meets a lady from whom he learns that her mistress, called Emilina, has been betrayed by an evil man naming himself Amphilanthus. The real Amphilanthus promises to avenge the princess. As she and her male companions take him to Emilina, one of them sings a song which we are told ‘was made by her Lady, who was as perfect in all noble



qualities, as subject to love' (*UI*, 299, ll. 15-6). By 'noble qualities' (l. 16) one should understand those possessed, for example, by Castiglione's ideal gentlewoman (see *BC*, 191-2). At the end of the song, Amphilanthus's reaction is one of astonishment:

'Did Emilina,' said the Prince, 'write this? sure  
Amphilanthus could never be false to such a creature.' (*UI*,  
300, ll. 19-20)

Such a remark suggests Emilina's lines are suffused both with truthfulness and genius. In another instance, Amphilanthus meets Bellamira. As she tells him her misfortunes in love, she ends her tale with a poem — which he commends as follows:

'And perfect are you sweet Bellamira,' said the King, 'in  
this Art; pittie it is, that you should hide, or darken so rare a  
gift.' (*UI*, 391, ll. 30-1)

As *Urania* unfolds, we are also told of Musalina, 'grown likewise a Poet as being a necessary thing, and as unseparable from a witty lover as love from youth' (*UI*, 498, ll. 6-7), and finally of a 'pretty Pastorall' written by a lady (*UI*, 613, l. 40). But of course the one illustrious poetess in *Urania* is Pamphilia, who, like Sappho in *Le Grand Cyrus*, is renowned for her verse. In the second book, Amphilanthus is bidding farewell to his friends. From assiduously courting Antissia, he suddenly turns cold towards her, and transfers his attention to Pamphilia:

But now the time for the Kings departure drew neere, the day before which hee spake to Pamphilia for some Verses of hers, which he had heard of. (*UI*, 320, ll. 18-20)

His stance is echoed in the garden scene, briefly analysed in Chapter Five, where Meriana ‘intreat[s] Pamphilia to favour her so much as to say some verses to her; “For”, said shee, “I heare deare Sister, you are excellent in Poetry”’ (*UI*, 460, ll. 21-2). The phrase ‘I heare’ or clause ‘the verses he had heard of’ do not state the source of Meriana’s and Amphilanthus’s information. Yet these can be interpreted as a testimony of Pamphilia’s public fame as a poetess.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, one of the main characteristics Scudéry seems to have selected for her heroines is undoubtedly that of ‘learnedness’, that is wittiness and poetic skill, regardless of social status. This last point is suggested to the reader in Volume Three:

Car bien que la Poësie ne soit pas encore fort connuë à Rome, & qu’on n’y connoisse presque que ces vers acrostiches de la Sibille, Lucrece, Valerie, & Hermilie avoient l’esprit un peu plus éclairé que le reste du monde sur ces sortes de choses: parce que Racilia avoit un[e] Esclave Grecque chez elle, dont la Mere avoit esté autrefois aupres de la sçavante Cleobuline; fille de Periandre Roy de Corinthe. Si bien que cette Esclave qui avoit admirablement de l’esprit, leur avoit donné en secret quelque legere connoissance de sa Langue, & leur avoit recité cent belles

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<sup>7</sup> These positive representations of women as poets in *Urania* do not however exclude the presence of the countertype of the woman author: see the case of Antissia, Chapter Eight, section IV, pp. 314-7.



choses de Sapho, ou de Phocilide où elles avoient pris grand plaisir. (C3, 336-7)<sup>8</sup>

In this passage, female knowledge is shown as belonging to a strongly gendered legacy: it is depicted as being transmitted from woman to woman.

A few pages later, the same characters are assembled together, debating about love. One of the participants asks Lucrece what she thinks on the subject. Urged by her friends to give an answer, she eventually accepts but only if they allow her to write it down. None of them can make sense of her 'galimathias' or conundrum:

Toujours. l'on. si mais. aimoit. d'éternelles. hélas. amours.  
d'aimer. doux. Il. point. seroit. n'est. qu'il. (C3, 348)

Scolded by her dissatisfied friends, she replies in a manner characteristic of the Scudarian heroine:

[...] je vous proteste, reprit Lucrece en riant, que non seulement il y a du sens, mais qu'il y a un sens agreable, & noblement exprimé: & que de ma vie je n'ay dit, ny ne diray rien de si bien. Mais afin que vous ne m'accusiez pas de vanité, poursuivit elle, j'ay à vous advertir que ces paroles ne sont pas de moy, & que je les ay empruntées je ne sçais où, & je ne sçay à qui. (C3, 349-50)

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<sup>8</sup> By using the name 'Cleobuline' Scudéry is no doubt referring to Cleobulina, who is praised repeatedly in early modern texts. Of her Juan Luis Vives writes that '[she] was so geven unto learnyng and philosophie that she clearly despised al pleasure of the bodie' (*The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, sig. C<sup>v</sup>).

Her laughter, 'raillerie' and what she calls 'une fantaisie de modestie' (349) may well remind the seventeenth-century reader of the eponymous heroine in the 'Story of Sappho'. Although Lucrèce lets us know in the above quotation she is not the author of this verse, she implicitly emerges as the author of what Brutus privately recognises as a 'galanterie' (353) and later characterises as an 'invention ingenieuse' (354). Brutus, who has to pretend he is foolish for political reasons, is asked to decipher the conundrum by the company, who wants to make fun of this supposedly foolish character:

[...] il comprit la galanterie de Lucrece, & rangeant ces paroles comme elles le devoient estre, il reconnut que c'estoient deux Vers de Phocidide qu'on avoit traduits, [...] & que cette Esclave Grecque qui estoit chez Racilia avoit appris à Lucrece. (353-4)

Lucrèce's reappropriation of Phocidide's verse displays one of the attributes assigned to women in *La Femme généreuse*, that is 'une preuve de sa vivacité et subtilité' (p. 64). This is reinforced by the adjective Brutus applies to it, 'ingenieuse' suggestive once more of 'rare génie' — a 'rare génie' which is paradoxically made public. The passage can be construed as a salon scene within a salon scene. There are two audiences. Characters from the main narrative are gathered in the same room and are listening to the scene sketched as above. Lucrèce's stratagem is revealed to the external audience (the narrator's audience), but not to the internal audience (Lucrèce's). She cleverly conceals what she thinks on the subject of love through a witty artifice. Brutus quickly solves the enigma of these 'paroles enchantées' (C3, 351-2). Yet it has earlier been mentioned he must not show he 'a infiniment de l'esprit, & de cet esprit galant' (353). So, resorting to the same device as Lucrèce, he adds to her conundrum another stanza by



Phocidide. The company, apart from Lucrèce, dismisses his lines as nonsensical. Lucrèce decides to keep silent her discovery of Brutus's cleverness. The whole passage thus revolves around the dialectic of concealment. On the one hand, if we bear in mind the three requirements an early modern woman was requested to fulfil (*i.e.* chastity, obedience and silence), concealment or secrecy can be defined as one aspect of womanhood. Although Brutus plays a part in this dialectic, he is only playing Lucrèce's game: he concealingly replicates her 'ingenieuse invention'. In creating that scene, the author draws a picture of mutual understanding between two beings who, in spite of gender differences, are spiritually equal. The presence of Brutus is more than accessory: it clearly heightens the rarity of Lucrèce's genius, and makes it part of a wider coterie whose rules seem to be defined by its female participants.

To a certain extent, this scene bears comparison with another one in Volume Eight. This time the female protagonist is Bérélise. As in the passage discussed above, love is the subject of the conversation. Bérélise is requested by Anacréon to recite 'des vers bien amoureux' (C8, 781). Driven by jealousy, Bérélise is here transposing in a few words her own love story in the third person (781-2). The 'amant' is Artémidore, and the 'maistresse' is Clidamire. In concealing that she is the author of the lines she is to recite, she can implicitly reveal her bitterness at Artémidore's inconstancy, without allowing her listeners to decipher the meaning of her poem. Only Artémidore and Clidamire, the addressees of her poem, silently understand it all, and know she is its author, while the rest of the company praise the lines as 'assez amoureux' (783). This constitutes an indirect public recognition of the supposedly anonymous author's excellence in love poetry. In Scudéry's language, the amorousness of one's verses determines their quality. The amorousness of one's verses should not be contrived or artificial but truthful, natural and simple — to use the terminology

designating the discourse of virtuous women in early modern defences of the fair sex as well as 'la langue françoise' in treatises or prefaces.<sup>9</sup> Here the truthfulness of Bérélise's poem is conveyed by the adverb 'assez', which marks her listeners' approval of its aesthetic value.

In *Urania*, there is a similar example of autobiographical storytelling in the third person, at the end of Book Three. Pamphilia is with her friend Dolorina, who asks to see some of her verses. Pamphilia refuses, 'answer[ing] she was growne weary of rime, and all things but that which wearied her life' (*U1*, 498[l. 41]-499[l. 1]). Nevertheless, she starts telling her the tale of Lindamira, 'faigning it to be written in a French story' (499, ll. 8-9). She concludes it with a sonnet sequence, entitled 'Lindamira's complaint'. Although Pamphilia admits that 'because [she] lik'd it, or rather found [Lindamira's] estate so neere agree with [hers], [she] put [it] into Sonnets' (502, ll. 4-5), we may say that she half denies the authorship of the actual content of the sonnet. In her editorial notes, Josephine Roberts quotes Jeff Masten's remark on the ambiguity of this sentence: 'Who is speaking in the final clause, and about which Booke? Lindamira's tale? the French story? book three of *Urania*, which concludes with these poems?' To this, Josephine Roberts adds her own comment: 'One reading is that Pamphilia so strongly identifies with the story of Lindamira that she shifts into the first-person pronoun, thereby revealing the autobiographical nature of her tale' (*U1*, 778). Yet Dolorina, like Artémidore and Clidamire in the above passage, silently acknowledges Pamphilia as the sole inventor of Lindamira's complaints. She equates the tale of Lindamira with that of Pamphilia's own life:

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<sup>9</sup> See Claude Favre de Vaugelas, *Remarques sur la langue françoise* (1647), ed. Jeanne Streicher (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970).



Dolorina admired these Sonnets, and the story, which shee thought was some thing more exactly related then a fixion, yet her discretion taught her to be no Inquisitor. (505, ll. 8-10)

To sum up: female authorship in these three examples is defined in paradoxical terms. In each case the author of the verse conceals her identity, and in each case there are two different interpreting audiences. The first scene, which takes place on the social stage of ‘conversations galantes’ where male and female characters may normally speak overtly, illustrates a paradox inherent in the public recognition of female literary skills. On the one hand, Lucrèce’s ‘rare génie’ is silently acknowledged by Brutus, and on the other it is publicly acknowledged by the narrator of the ‘Story of Brutus’. In the second scene, the listeners’ reception of Bérélise’s lines, we may conclude, constitutes one example among others of implicit public recognition of female poetic creativity, since her audience, with the exception of Artémidore and Clidamire, does not know she is the author. Finally, although the third scene takes place in one of the confined retreats of Uranian female friendship (the garden), Dolorina’s ‘admiration’ of Pamphilia’s lines is also to be shared with an external audience, namely Wroth’s close friends and eventually any potential reader. While in *Arcadia* or *L’Astrée* female authorship is seldom acknowledged, both *Urania* and *Clélie* therefore include public recognition of female literary creativity, although this is often only implicit, as I shall go on to show at greater length in the next section.

### III. Implicit recognition of female literary genius in *Urania* and *Clélie*

In the second part of *Urania*, Amphilanthus, who is accompanying Pamphilia back to the Morean Court, arrives on the isle of Cyprus. They meet 'a fine page' who tells them about the island and its inhabitants. He goes on to give a brief account of his lady's misfortunes in love. Amphilanthus knows her lover, whom he recently saw; and on hearing this, the page gladly takes them to the Cyprian lady. Relating her own life, she tells her listeners of lines she wrote in a grove. Although she has no copy of them, for they were blown away by the wind, she readily recites them. After she has finished telling her story, her lover Andromarcko is overheard reciting her poem, which Amphilanthus praises as a 'Very neate peece of poetrye' (*U2*, 418, l. 18). Although the Cyprian lady's original version is slightly altered, Andromarcko's appropriation of her anonymous poem is significant.<sup>10</sup> Nothing says he knows the poem to be by her, or has recognised her handwriting. Nor is there any mention that he suspects it to be written by a woman at all. This recital tells us even more: in showing a male character who identifies his sentiments with those expressed in a woman's piece of writing, Wroth suggests that female poetry may convey as authentic feelings as male poetry does. Andromarcko's appropriation may thus be interpreted as an implicit recognition of female literary skills in general — a recognition which is not hampered by gender bias.

In *Clélie*, there is a similar example of a male lover learning by heart his beloved's lines. In Volume Eight, Hésiode strikes up a friendship with Bélinthe, the closest friend of Clymène, for whom he feels a growing inclination: he asks Bélinthe to tell him the story of Clymène's misfortunes

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<sup>10</sup> The male character alters the following lines: 'The soule alone hath onely will' (412, l. 2) into 'The soule above powrs hath the will' (418, l. 9); 'For Love was high'st inthron'd to see' (412, l. 6) into 'For love from highest heighth did see' (418, l. 13); and lastly 'And noe thing more then love is light' (412, l. 8) into 'Nott Venus darling that is light' (418, l. 15).



in love. In the course of narrating Clymène's life, Bélinthe mentions a poem written by Clymène. On hearing this, he entreats her to recite it, and promises he will keep it secret. Like his male counterparts in the rest of *Clélie* as well as in *Urania*, he declares his admiration emphatically: he commends her lines as 'des vers aussi amoureux' (C8, 933); the adverb 'aussi' has the same laudatory function as the adverb 'bien' or 'assez', encountered earlier in 'des vers bien/assez amoureux' (781). In his astonishment, he recalls the place where he first saw Clymène, that is at the fountain where Calliope appeared to him in his slumber. Thus, as he instantly associates Clymène with the 'fontaine d'Hipocrene', the symbol of poetic inspiration, he acknowledges her as possessing 'a rare gift'. The power of this 'rare gift' is illustrated later in a love scene typical of the Renaissance romance tradition, in which the male and female protagonists of the story gradually confess their love to each other. Interestingly, the narrator, who recounts Hésiode's new fame as a poet, defines glory from a masculine perspective: the narrator compares it to 'une maistresse, dont les premieres faveurs sont tout à fait douces' (876). It is this definition that Clymène must be bearing in mind when she rebukes him for longing after glory. Her rebuke is such that Hésiode starts muttering to himself, yet loud enough for everyone to hear, a few lines from the very poem Bélinthe recited to him. Only one word has he changed. In justifying himself for making Clymène's verse his own, he reasserts once more the power of the female word (976-7). His minor change from 'mon despit' in Clymène's original version to 'ma raison' in Hésiode's version may serve as another example of male appropriation of female characters' verses: 'Malgré ma raison, mon coeur n'est pas à moy', a line which recalls Pascal's famous fragment 'Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas'.<sup>11</sup> In a sense,

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<sup>11</sup> In Philippe Sellier (ed.), *Pensées* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1976), fragment 680, p. 359.

this minor change suggests that the male hero, as noted earlier in the case of the Uranian male, has less control over his passions than his female counterpart. This is reinforced by the fact that Hésiode has just made public his sentiments on a sudden impulse.

Furthermore, added to these two instances of a male lover's reappropriation of female verse, we find, in each text, one example of male lovers' use of female-authored genres, that is genres which are historically believed to be a woman's invention: the sapphics and 'vers acrostiches'.

Towards the end of the fourth book of the first part of *Urania*, Dorileus, the Duke of Wertenberg, a new character in the narrative, puts in an appearance. Like most Uranian characters, he is a perfect courtier, excellent in all arts, including 'playing', 'singing' (*U1*, 602[ll. 36-42]-603[ll. 1-3]), poetry and love. With his friend, Cauterino, Duke of Brunswick, he goes in search of Amphilanthus. Always carrying his lute with him, Dorileus is requested to play and sing, and

The other amorous Duke [Cauterino] seeing this came well  
on, able to play and sing allso, like a Duke help't by Art,  
sung these verses in manner or imitation of Saphiks. (*U1*,  
604, ll. 2-4)

In her editorial notes on *Urania*, Josephine Roberts informs us that 'Sir Philip Sidney experimented with sapphics in three poems' and that Mary Sidney 'used sapphics in *Psalm 125*.' (*U1*, 795). Did Wroth insert sapphics in remembrance of her uncle and aunt? Her choice is obviously open to many interpretations. At the time when Philip and Mary Sidney wrote in sapphic meters, Sappho was being rediscovered through the writings of Ovid and Longinus, and also through Catullus 'who is the first example we



encounter of the male writer who sees himself as Sappho's poetic double'.<sup>12</sup> Critics agree that Sappho 'apparently invented her own characteristic stanza, which has since been named after her', and Yvonne Day Merrill contends that 'perhaps she presided over the revival of Greek Lyric following the age of the heroic epic', and that 'the unique combination of Sappho's Aeolian dialect and [her] innovative stanza must have created a verse that stood apart from the established masculine genre'.<sup>13</sup> This assumption is not a novelty, as testified by texts such as *La Cité des dames*, and later the 'Story of Sappho' in *Le Grand Cyrus*. In the wake of Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus*, Christine de Pisan writes:

Ces propos de Boccace concernent la profonde science de Sapho et la grande érudition de ses ouvrages, dont la teneur est, selon le témoignage des Anciens, si difficile que même les hommes savants de la plus vive intelligence ont de la peine à la comprendre. Remarquablement écrits et composés, ses oeuvres et poèmes sont parvenus jusqu'à nous et demeurent des modèles d'inspiration pour les poètes et écrivains assoiffés de perfection. Sapho inventa plusieurs genres lyriques et poétiques: lais et dolentes élégies, curieux chants d'amour désespéré et autres poèmes lyriques d'inspiration différente, qui furent appelés saphiques pour l'excellence de leur prosodie.<sup>14</sup>

In *Le Grand Cyrus*, we find a similar account, although embellished for narrative purposes:

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<sup>12</sup> Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho 1546-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 35.

<sup>13</sup> Yvonne Day Merrill, *The Social Construction of Western Women's Rhetoric Before 1750* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), pp. 167-8.

<sup>14</sup> Christine de Pisan, *La Cité des dames*, p. 96.

[Sappho] a mesme inventé des mesures particulieres pour faire [des vers], qu'Hesiode & Homere ne connoissoient pas: & qui ont une telle approbation, que cette sorte de Vers [...] sont appelez Saphiques. [...] il y a un certain tour amoureux à tout ce qui part de son esprit, que nulle autre qu'elle ne sçauroit avoir. Elle exprime mesme si delicatement les sentimens les plus difficiles à exprimer; & elle sçait si bien faire l'anatomie d'un coeur amoureux, [...], qu'elle en sçait descrire exactement toutes les jalousies; toutes les inquietudes; toutes les impatiences; toutes les joyes; tous les dégousts; tous les murmures; tous les desespoirs; toutes les esperances; toutes les revoltes; & tous ces sentimens tumultueux, qui ne sont jamais bien connus que de ceux qui les sentent, ou qui les ont sentis. (GC, vol. 10, 333-4)

These two quotations clearly lay emphasis on the uniqueness of sapphic poetry which conveys more than just the elegiac expression of female despair: both Pisan and Scudéry conventionally argue that the Lesbian poetess's verse reflects human grief with such truthfulness that male poets yielded to her superiority.

Thus, in representing the amorous Duke 'singing' a poem written in a supposedly feminine genre, Wroth not only feminises her male character, but uses a poetical measure which is associated with the authentic expression of human affliction. In the *Old Arcadia*, the two sapphic poems, sung by two male characters, Pyrocles disguised as a woman and Basilius, King of Arcadia, are both rhythmic and hearty invocations to Hope.<sup>15</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> In Jean Robertson (ed.), *The Countess of Pembroke's Old Arcadia* (c.1580) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 81-2 and p. 226.



Duke of Brunswick's lines are the opposite: they convey instead the tragic dislocation of the speaking abandoned 'I'. These may well be compared to those Sappho wrote when Phaon, her lover, betrayed their love. Unlike Sidney, Wroth remains faithful to the best known aspect of Sappho's poetry, into which Scudéry gives us insight in the passage I have cited above. To a certain extent, even if this constitutes the only occurrence in the text, we may say that Wroth presents her 'Saphiks' as the locus of poetic truthfulness: this is here implicitly acknowledged by a male character's appropriation of that form in order to utter his grief.

In the fifth volume of *Clélie*, as seen in Chapter Two (pp. 77-79), Valérie receives a letter from Herminius which contains a hidden message. What we are here concerned with is the nature of Herminius's epistolary artifice: we are told that he has employed a female genre, that is

[...] la mesme invention dont la Sibille qui avoit vendu ses livres si cher à Tarquin, avoit fait ses Propheties, qui estoient toutes en vers Acrostiches. (C5, 270-1)

There follows a flood of intense epistolary activity between the two secret lovers. Through the ingenious use of 'vers acrostiches', they can conceal their love from inquisitive eyes. One day, Valérie sends to Herminius what seems to him an angry letter. Unable to fathom its meaning, he is assailed with mixed feelings and comes to think that Valérie means what she has written. At last, he goes to her and reproaches her for her cruelty. But Valérie shows him he has misread her 'billet', by having him read the last words of each line:

N'accusez que vostre malice,  
De cét innocent artifice (290)

Irony is here at work. Through this couplet, Valérie reminds him that he was first to use the sibyl's invention, and that he has fallen into the trap of his own artifice. What follows suggests that perfection in such an artifice is strongly gendered:

Ha! Madame s'escria-t'il, je suis un pauvre faiseur de  
fourbes en comparaison de vous, qui sçavez cacher des vers  
dans de la prose, & tromper si finement ceux qui vous ont  
trompée, qu'ils ne peuvent s'en apercevoir. En suite il loua  
son invention, en blasmant l'inhumanité qu'elle avoit eüe  
de le laisser dans une si cruelle inquietude. (290)

Herminius's praise could be read along with protofeminist texts of the time in which, as mentioned earlier, 'subtlety', insight and inventiveness are considered as true feminine qualities.<sup>16</sup> As Herminius commends her excellence in the rhetorical art of concealment, Valérie therefore emerges as a Scudarian replica of the ancient prophetess. The whole passage seems to suggest more than a mere association of Scudarian heroines with the sibyl.

To conclude, whether in *Clélie* or *Urania*, these male appropriations of female verse or female-authored genres allow us to redefine, from a masculine perspective, one aspect of female writing: its literary inventiveness. Yet if heroes often praise the heroine's skills in prose and verse, how does the heroine view female authorship? That is the question I shall set out to answer in the next section.

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<sup>16</sup> 'La femme est plus habile que l'homme, à raison de sa subtilité d'entendement qui naist en elle de ce qu'estant plus humide que l'homme, l'humidité obéit plus souplement et sans résistance aux mouvemens de son imagination' (*La Femme généreuse*, p. 65).



#### IV. Limitations of female authorship? (1):

##### *Theoretical views in the 'Story of Sappho'*

Because the 'Story of Sappho' in Volume Ten of *Le Grand Cyrus* is where Scudéry articulates her views on female access to culture, a preliminary examination of this inset story is essential to our understanding of the ways in which she puts her theories into practice through her representation of female authorship in *Clélie*. And although *Le Grand Cyrus* postdates *Urania*, the 'Story of Sappho' convincingly sheds light on Wroth's text, as it precisely reiterates a deep-rooted discourse on woman's education which we know lays emphasis on the fashioning of female virtue. Indeed, the 'Story of Sappho' provides the reader with some telling remarks, mainly voiced by Sappho, on the appropriate limits of female authorship. Throughout the whole story, there is great emphasis on the learned poetess's modesty. She is described as a

personne qui sçait tant de choses differentes, les sçait sans faire la sçavante; sans en avoir aucun orgueil; & sans mespriser celles qui ne les sçavent pas. En effet la conversation luy est si naturelle, si aisée, & si galante, qu'on ne luy entend jamais dire en une conversation generale, que des choses qu'on peut croire qu'une Personne de grand esprit pourroit dire sans avoir appris tout ce qu'elle sçait. (GC, vol. 10, 334-5)

Later, we are told that 'Sapho a mesme si bien inspiré [à Athys] cét air modeste qui la rend charmante, qu'Athys ne peut souffrir qu'on luy di[s]e

qu'elle sçait quelque chose que les autres Dames ne sçavent point' (339), and that she uses '[des] paroles ordinaires, pour en dire d'admirables' (351). This constant stress on modesty discloses the author's awareness of gender bias in the society she lives in. This is clearly suggested by the narrator, as he states that

[Sapho] songe tellement à demeurer dans la bien-seance de son Sexe, qu'elle ne parle presque jamais de ce que les Dames doivent parler. (335)

I shall here cite the English translation since it puts emphasis more markedly on one interesting aspect of female knowledge, which is that it was seen in the early modern period in spatial terms, as suggested in the following quotation:

[Sappho] was so carefull to keep herself within the Sphere of her own Sex, as she almost spoke of anything but such as was within the compass of a ladies' knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

To understand what is meant by 'within the Sphere of her own Sex', or 'within the compass of a ladies knowledge', we need to turn to contemporary conduct books for women. Anti-feminist writers, as mentioned several times, urge them to chastity, obedience and silence. Defenders of the fair sex adopt an ambiguously modern stance: they are in favour of education for women but for carefully specified purposes. Whether misogynist or not, they all seem to agree on what a girl should be taught. She should be taught, for instance, how to be a good housewife and good mother. But Sappho, the outspoken advocate of female education,

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<sup>17</sup> *Artamenes, or the Grand Cyrus*, p. 87.



covers up her more radical stance by using language of the sort standardised by the writings of Castiglione, Juan Luis Vives, Richard Brathwait, Jacques Du Bosc *et al.* In the second section of the story, the subject of women's education is brought up after the visit of the pedantic Damophile and her friends who embody the ridiculous type of the 'femme savante', as parodied by Molière.<sup>18</sup> Sappho sees the ignorance of women of quality as 'deshonnor[ant] [leur] sexe' (397):

[...] car à parler veritablement; je ne sçache rien de plus injurieux à nostre Sexe, que de dire qu'une Femme n'est point obligée de rien aprendre. (397)

She goes on to attack the ways in which women are educated and denounces the contradictions inherent in their education. Her attack (397-400) is written in the same vein as Thimothée-René de L'Espine's treatise, *La Parure des dames* (1606), for example, in which the author 's'attaque à la coquetterie des mondaines [...] et estime qu'au lieu de parer leur corps les "Dames devraient orner leur esprit"'.<sup>19</sup> The following quotation is even more revealing as to Scudéry's point of view on the subject of women's relationship to the sciences (401-2). Sappho handles her argumentation cleverly. She bases it on conduct books for women, which urge them to act

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<sup>18</sup> For a comparison between Damophile and the anti-heroine Antissia in *Urania*, see Chapter Eight, pp. 314-6.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 283. Sappho uses the same lexicon, when she affirms: 'je voudrois qu'on eust autant de soin d'orner son esprit que son corps' (GC, vol. 10, 400). She repeats this last precept later: 'je voudrois, dis-je, qu'elles eussent autant de soin, comme je l'ay desja dit, de parer leur esprit, que leur personne' (405). It is interesting to note that many early modern women writers exploit this theme on the paradox of women's education. One other good example is the poem, 'Introduction', by an eighteenth-century writer, Anne Finch, who exposes misogynistic attitudes towards a woman's intellectual education (in Myra Reynolds [ed.], *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903]), pp. 4-5, ll. 9-20.

and speak 'd'une manière si modeste et si peu affirmative' and 'sans sortir de la modestie de [leur] Sexe' (406). Modesty constitutes a prerequisite in the Scudarian fashioning of the learned woman — a prerequisite which is reinforced by the author's use of privative grammatical structures (*i.e.* 'sans en parler pourtant comme les Livres en parlent', sans faire trop la sçavante', 'sans choquer la bien-seance de son Sexe' [401-2]). Yet she does not name the sciences that a woman 'ought never to learn' (*Artamenes, or the Grand Cyrus*, 104), and establishes as important that, in the matter of knowledge, a woman should learn the art of concealment — a point which she expresses over and over as 'an infallible Maxime' (*ibid*).<sup>20</sup> Sappho's views on women's education (*GC*, vol. 10, 401) shed light on how female knowledge is perceived by Scudéry's contemporaries. When female knowledge is equated with ostentation, it is disparaged.<sup>21</sup> Sappho's speech on women's education is preceded by her encounter with the anti-heroine, Damophile. The latter vainly tries to imitate Sappho; but she does it so badly that she turns into a comic stereotype of the learned woman, the very type which Sappho dismisses in her diatribe. After their encounter, Sappho expresses her hatred towards such a race of women and even rejects the status of author as being a burden (363). She goes on to deny ever having written these verses published in her name (371).

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<sup>20</sup> The idea of 'concealment' is suggested in the English version, where the translator slightly modifies the original in the last sentence of the French citation: '[...] I would not have it said of them, that they are learned: not but that those who are called learned may know as much, and perhaps more than those unto whom they give that Title: yet I would have them conceal their knowledge' (p. 104).

<sup>21</sup> As mentioned in the General Introduction (pp. 17-8), there are a great number of women publishing anonymously or using a nom de plume in the early modern period up to the nineteenth century, for a woman author's name figuring on the front page of a book was seen as a physical manifestation of 'transgressing the modestie of her sex' (*Artamenes, or the Grand Cyrus*, p. 105).



In dismissing her status as a woman of letters, Sappho voices the prejudices that prevailed in the early modern period concerning female authorship. The example of Damophile could be interpreted as a projection of male-authored caricatures of all learned women through the figure of the 'précieuse ridicule' in seventeenth-century French society. By using the antagonistic pair, Sappho and Damophile, Scudéry is able to object to such a demeaning generalisation. But at the same time, as she enunciates her views on the value of women's education, she paradoxically exhorts them to keep their knowledge secret. In *Urania* and *Clélie* this paradox is textualised, as we shall see in the next section, through the representation of female self-censorship.

## V. Limitations of female authorship? (2)

### The practice of self-censorship

In *Urania*, prejudice against women writers is not voiced by heroes, who tend to praise their female counterparts, but by the heroines themselves. In verbally censoring themselves for writing, they reproduce the traditional male-authored discourse that both muted and condemned the female voice as low and vile.<sup>22</sup>

Pamphilia, for example, who has been woefully wandering in the garden happens to meet the nymph Silviana. Silviana tells her the tale of her own misfortunes in love, in the days when she was known as the Shepherdess Alarina. As she recounts her beloved's inconstancy, she remembers her inner turmoils (*UI*, 220[ll. 32-42]-221[ll. 1-3]). The passage in question textualises Silviana's awareness of the transgressive nature of female speech. Female speech is here associated with 'offence': she presents her own voice (and in a sense, the female voice in general) as

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<sup>22</sup> On the representation of female baseness, see Chapter Eight, pp. 285-321.

moderated and bridled by decorum. Yet the cultural muting of the female voice is here contrasted by the character's retrospective utterance of her inner monologue. Thus, the silence into which she is forced emerges as a form of feminine retreat, and eventually leads her to use another mode of expression: epistolary writing. Silviana's letter to her lover, written in the secrecy of her room, reads like a continuation of her inner monologue (*UI*, 221, ll. 5-8). The opening paragraph of her letter allows us to establish a parallel between female speech and female writing: what is thought to be an alternative to speech turns out to be inherently 'offending' (l. 8). This is reinforced by her lover's reaction to her letter. To justify herself, she utters what she 'had framd millions of times' inwardly (l. 2):

'Alas,' said I, 'what should I do opprest? I am half mad,  
distracted with your scorne; I could not silent be, nor yet  
could speake.' (*UI*, 221[l. 41]-222 [l. 1])

She sees speaking as a bodily function distinct from that of writing. Yet in affirming that '[she] could not silent be', she redefines female writing as synonymous with breaking silence, therefore upsetting the harmonious balance of the triptych 'chastity, obedience, silence'. In other words, she characterises the female word as breaking with convention.

In another scene, Pamphilia is seen retiring to her room where she bewails the coldness of Amphilanthus. Penning her thoughts in verse, she suddenly exclaims:

'Fie passion,' said she, 'how foolish canst thou make us?  
and when with much paine and businesse thou hast gain'd  
us, how dost thou then dispose us unto folly, making our  
choicest wits testimonies to our faces of our weaknesses,



and, as at this time dost, bring my owne hands to witnesse  
 against me, unblushingly showing my idlenesses to mee.'  
 (U1, 63, ll. 9-14)

This passage may be taken as a rewriting of a scene in the *New Arcadia*, in which Philoclea is wandering in the woods: she arrives at the marble stone on which she wrote a poem three days before the arrival of her lover Pyrocles. While in the case of poems written by male characters the marble stone is indicative of the permanency of writing, here in the case of a poem written by a female character, it proves otherwise (NA, 147[ll. 26-9, 31-5]-148 [l. 1]). The denial of authorship is materialised by the absence of light, and textualised by Philoclea through her emphasis on the word 'blot', out of which she creates a metaphor, that of 'self-erasure'. The female writer, in this scene, has no identity: her 'ink' is but 'blotted', and 'blotted ink' implies 'blotted words' which cannot but beget a 'blotted writer'. As a writer she cannot exist; and she justifies nature's denial of her authorship as 'the marks of [her] inconstancy' (NA, 148, l. 4), 'an attribute commonly ascribed to female language'.<sup>23</sup> She thus analyses her own words as fickle in opposition to the purity and whiteness of the marble stone — an opposition which is confirmed by the regular, well-balanced structure of the second half of the poem (ll. 15-8) that she attempts to write below the first one:

My words, in hope to blaze my steadfast mind,  
 This marble chose, as of like temper known:  
 But lo, my words defaced, my fancies blind,  
 Blots to the stone, shame to myself I find;  
     And witness am, how ill agree in one,  
     A woman's hand with constant marble stone.

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<sup>23</sup> Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 98.

My words full weak, the marble full of might;  
 My words in store, the marble all alone;  
 My words black ink, the marble kindly white;  
 My words unseen, the marble still in sight,  
     May witness bear, how ill agree in one,  
     A woman's hand with constant marble stone. (NA,  
 148, ll. 9-20)

Throughout her poem she states the existence of a deep-rooted association in early modern society of a 'woman's hand' with physical degeneracy: the association is here rendered by the description of her own words as 'blots to the stone' and 'full weak'. Through 'this recantation' (148, l. 21), she expresses her 'shame' as a female writer, which, as she stresses from line eighteen to line twenty, is heightened by the contrasting 'whiteness' and 'constancy' of the marble stone.

Similarly, Pamphilia reproves her own act through her ironic use of the adverb 'unblushingly' (*U1*, 63, l. 13). A blush in early modern aesthetics is the speaking picture of female modesty; it is the physical manifestation of a woman's awareness that some spoken or written discourse or some other action might be unbecoming to her sex. Thus, in rebuking herself for having written these lines, she implicitly suggests that she is now blushing at her poem. As a result, she decides to erase it:

'Then tooke shee the new-writ lines, and as soone almost as  
 shee had given them life, shee likewise gave them buriall.'  
 (ll. 15-6)

Pamphilia's self-censorship clearly contrasts with Philoclea's powerlessness: although Philoclea censors her words in the first poem, she



‘would have adjoined [verses] to the other’ (NA, 148, l. 7). If her new poem physically exists on the page, it has no existence in the Arcadian world. Philoclea’s authorship is inhibited by external elements. A parallel reading with the *New Arcadia* throws light on the subtext of the Uranian scene. Wroth presents her female protagonist as self-critical, but her gesture of self-censorship can be construed as a mark of her assertiveness as an author: authorship is not denied to her by external circumstances; the erasure of her verse is her own doing.

In another passage, Wroth reiterates the commonplace which treats female writing as indistinguishable from female foolishness and idleness, as suggested by Pamphilia’s characterisation of her verse as a ‘folly’ (UI, 320, ll. 18-26).<sup>24</sup> Although she shows her writings to Amphilanthus, she acts in accordance with decorum, that is as befits ‘a discreetest fashiond woman’ (ll. 21-2). Indeed, as indicated in the concluding clause of the passage in question, Pamphilia once more censors her poetry — censorship which she physically enacts through a ‘blush’ (l. 25) and verbally reinforces in voicing her ‘shame’ (*ibid.*).

There is an identical scene in *Le Grand Cyrus*. Phaon, the counterpart of Amphilanthus, is in love with Sappho without her officially knowing it. As she has allowed him and another close friend, Tisandre, to read some of her verses, he grows jealous: he is convinced that the passion she expresses in her poetry is the fruit of her inclination for a rival whose identity he unsuccessfully tries to discover. Meanwhile, Sappho has retired to her closet, out of modesty. Phaon becomes more and more eager to see other writings by her. One day Sappho, who is living with a female friend,

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<sup>24</sup> Here the word ‘folly’ is to be understood in sense (1c) recorded in the *OED*: ‘an example of foolishness, a foolish action or practice, a ridiculous thing, an absurdity’ rather than in its alternative meaning ‘wickedness, evil, mischief, harm’ or ‘madness’, in the sense of ‘insanity, rage, anger’. It is, however, possible that Wroth is also bearing in mind sense (1a) mentioned: folly as in the sense of ‘lewd and unchaste’.

is visited by Tisandre and Phaon. Tisandre has come to see the ‘Cabinet de Sapho, qui avoit esté peint’ (GC, vol. 10, 470):

Cette belle Personne n’osant le luy refuser, elle l’ouvrit: & toute la compagnie y entra. De sorte que Phaon y entrant comme les autres, prit garde que Sapho ayant veû des Tablettes sur la Table en avoit rougy: & s’estoit hastée de les mettre diligemment dans un Tiroir à demy ouvert, qu’elle ne pût mesme refermer tout à fait, parce qu’elle le fit avec trop de precipitation: & que de plus Tisandre l’ayant tirée vers les Fenestres (sur le pretexte de la belle veuë, afin de luy pouvoir parler un moment en particulier) luy en osta le moyen. Si bien que Phaon qui avoit tousjours dans l’esprit sa bizarre jalousie, eut une envie estrange de voir les Tablettes, que Sapho avoit serrées si diligemment: & qui l’avoient fait rougir. (471)

In the last clause, Phaon’s indirect discourse reproduces almost word for word the narrator’s account of the scene: this double emphasis on Sappho’s blush belongs to the same rhetoric as that used in *Urania*, and constitutes a major aspect of Wroth’s and Scudéry’s textualisation of female self-censorship. This is corroborated by her ‘[hâte] de mettre [les tablettes] diligemment dans un tiroir’, that is to hide them from the public gaze. What here adds poignancy to the whole passage is the account of her affliction at the loss of her verses, after the departure of the company (482). Her aborted ‘intention de les brusler’ (*ibid.*) shows how close her attitude is to that of Pamphilia: she expresses self-censorship in identical terms.

A similar treatment of female writing can be found in the ‘Story of Lindamire and Thémiste’ in *Clélie*. In Part One (pp. 121-2), I have



described Lindamire as one of the epitomes of 'la femme généreuse' on the political stage. More generally speaking, she appears as one of the most 'compleat' Scudertian heroines in *Clélie*: she embodies virtue and modesty, is learned, and writes letters, songs, and poems. Lindamire shows a similar relationship towards her writings to that of Pamphilia in *Urania*, or of Sappho in *Le Grand Cyrus*. In the following passage, Lindamire is saddened by the absence of her lover Thémiste who is away at war. She is here pictured in her daily retreat, a garden cabinet adorned with love maxims:

Tantost elle y resvoit, tantost elle y relisoit les lettres de Themiste; & tantost voulant *fixer ses pensées*, elle prenoit ses tablettes, & *escrivoit quelque chose dedans*. Quelquefois mesme prenant un crayon qu'elle portoit d'ordinaire, elle s'amusoit à dessiner, ou escrivoit quelque galanterie pleine de tendresse sur des quarrez de marbre blanc & rouge, qui estoient en divers endroits de ce cabinet: elle l'effaçoit pourtant aussi-tost, si ce n'estoit qu'elle l'oubliast. (C6, 1032)

Lindamire's erasure of her own lines suggests her awareness that she ought to conceal her thoughts from the public gaze: indeed the marble stone as opposed to the 'tablettes' she takes out '[pour] fixer ses pensées' functions, in the poetics of pastoral romances, as a lover's implicit public confession of his or her passion or grief: from being the private receptacle of a lover's secret thoughts, it turns into a public object when discovered by other characters. The 'tablettes', on the contrary, emerge here as the safest method of keeping one's secrecy: no detail of what she has written on them is disclosed to us; the narrator remains vague, when stating that 'elle escrivoit

quelque chose dedans'. A few pages later, the marble stone recovers its function as a pastoral prop. Thémiste has decided to visit Lindamire. It is early morning, and Lindamire is still asleep. He enters her cabinet, and to his delight, notices the love maxims with which it is decorated:

Lisant donc avec precipitation, il trouva les huit vers que  
[...] [Lindamire] avoit faits, qu'elle avoit escrits en ce lieu-  
là, & qu'elle avoit oublié d'effacer. (1042)

What follows encompasses all the aspects of female writing delineated throughout this section. Thémiste's '[transport] de joye' at her lines confirms the status of female writing as the locus of truthfulness. Her poem is composed of 'des vers si amoureux', of 'caracteres precieux',

[qui] firent une si forte impression dans [l'] esprit [de  
Thémiste], qu'il trouva qu'il les sçavoit quand il fut en estat  
de les vouloir relire. (1044)

He even expresses fear at the thought of erasing them inadvertently if he kisses them. He is nevertheless aware of the paradoxical nature of her lines:

Comme il sçavoit que sa Princesse estoit tres-considerée, il  
jugeoit bien qu'il falloit qu'elle eust oublié à effacer ces  
vers qui luy estoient si agreable[s]. (*ibid.*)

The adjective 'considerée' seems to have a well-defined function: it is a reminder of her virtue, her discretion. Had she been a 'Damophile', her act of writing would have been castigated as vile. Here it is excused; and instead of inspiring awe, her lines lead Thémiste to literary creativity. After



writing his poem underneath hers, he walks out of the cabinet, and hides behind a bush, waiting for Lindamire. As she awakes, she realises she forgot to erase her lines, and rushes back to the cabinet

où elle ne fut pas plustost qu'elle songea à effacer ce qu'elle avoit escrit. Elle le fit si brusquement, qu'elle pensa effacer en mesme temps sans y prendre garde: les vers que Themiste avoit faits; mais tout d'un coup apercevant quelque chose d'escrit au dessous de ceux qu'elle avoit desja à demy effacez, elle *rougit*, & eut une douleur estrange de connoistre par l[à] qu'il falloit que quelqu'un fust entré dans ce cabinet; & que par consequent il falloit que ses vers eussent esté veus. (1047-8)

This scene clearly echoes that in which Sappho returns to her closet in haste. It also gives credit to Thémiste's inner statement about Lindamire who he knows is 'tres-considerée'. Female self-censorship is encapsulated within a single clause: 'elle rougit'. Her blush is followed by a 'douleur estrange', the same symptomatic pain as Sappho felt, that is 'une douleur si sensible, qu'elle n'en avoit jamais senty de pareille' (GC, vol. 10, 482).

These fictional poetesses share common feelings and common gestures regarding the disclosure of their inner thoughts in verse: their blushes and feelings of shame are so many testimonials of their modesty and virtue. Yet as these three cabinet scenes show, the heroines also entertain a sentimental regard for their own writings: Pamphilia 'kisses [her papers]' before handing them to Amphilanthus, and Sappho 'ne trouvoit point de souhait plus doux à faire, sinon que ce fust Phaon qui eust pris ses Vers'

(GC, vol. 10, 482-3). As for Lindamire, 'ayant reconnu l'écriture de Themiste, sa douleur se changea en joye' (C6, 1048).

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In Chapter Six, I have argued that Wroth and Scudéry characterise female writing, whether implicitly or explicitly, as the *locus* of truthfulness, poetic creativity, inventiveness, and 'rare génie'. These are qualities which elicit male admiration, as seen in the opening sections of the chapter: and this admiration is confirmed by male lovers' appropriation of female verse as well as of female-authored genres. What the narrator in the 'Story of Sappho' says about the eponymous heroine's lines (which 'esmeu[vent], & attendri[ssent]', which 'expriment si délicatement les sentimens les plus difficiles à exprimer', GC, vol. 10, 333-4) could therefore be applied to the writings of her female counterparts in *Urania* and *Clélie*. Furthermore, while a heroine's verses, written in utter privacy, come to light in one way or another, the above examples of female self-censorship shed light on the paradox of female literary privacy. They also help us visualise the female literary space as one that contributes to the construction of feminine identity, as I shall go on to argue in the next chapter.



## Chapter Seven

### Female literary creativity in *Urania* and *Clélie*

Before looking at specific features or shared themes in poems by Uranian and Scudarian heroines, we must first consider the relationship between the female retreat and female literary creativity.

In Chapter Five, gardens and rooms were identified as privileged spaces for the discourse of female friendship and intimacy as well as for a sisterhood of art. I will now develop this last point at greater length. Section VI explores the *loci* of female literary creativity in the confined retreats of metaphorical gardens. In the *chiaroscuro* of Uranian retreats, the blurring of boundaries between 'space' and the female voice makes way for an analysis of the inner tragedy of Uranian 'poetesses' (sections VII) which contrasts stylistically with that of their Scudarian counterparts (section VIII).

#### VI. Gardens and rooms as the *loci* of female literary creativity

Female characters in *Urania* are often pictured in the actual process of writing poetry, whereas in *Clélie* writings by women are either read or recited by a narrator, or a character from an inset story. The example of Lindamire that I have analysed above seems to be the only exception. Spontaneous verse-making in *Clélie* is normally representative of social encounters between the characters whom Scudéry has portrayed as mouthpieces of seventeenth-century 'salon' culture. Spontaneous verse-making in *Clélie* is a 'jeu d'esprit'. Yet the case study of Lindamire provides the reader with one key phrase, which characterises her solitary retreat as 'le depositaire de [ses] pensées' (C6, 1037), and *in extenso* 'le depositaire' of her melancholy and 'resveries'. Although the description of the cabinet is rather sparse, it shares common features with the Uranian female retreat. The image of Pamphilia 'walk[ing] up and downe in the

maze of her trouble' (*UI*, 46, l. 40), when physically wandering in the maze of a wood has its equivalent in the Scudarian cabinet scene:

Encore y avoit-il des heures, où elle se promenoit plustost toute seule qu'avec [Mélinthe], & où elle s'alloit assoir dans cét agreable cabinet que Meriandre avoit fait faire depuis peu [...], en suite de quoy elle rendoit compte à ma soeur de tout ce qu'elle avoit fait, ou pensé, comme si elle fust venuë d'un voyage. (*C6*, 1031-2)

Lindamire's solitary retreat is thus viewed as a safe haven for a 'voyage', a sentimental journey into the realm of love, as conveyed by the maxims inscribed in the cabinet.<sup>1</sup>

In *Urania*, the female retreat has the charm of a mannerist painting: in Uranian aesthetics, the boundaries between rooms and gardens are literally blurred. Such a blurring happens in *Clélie*, but it does so on the social stage of 'conversations galantes', where, as discussed in Chapter Five (pp. 178-85), the interior of a 'ruelle' is transposed outside, to a 'perron' or a 'grove', or simply to the leisure space afforded by 'promenades'. Occasionally, it is the interior that is literally transformed into a garden; but here again it remains a social delight:

[Des] Dames entrèrent dans une chambre tres proprement meublée, dont tout le plancher estoit semé de ces premieres fleurs qui annoncent le Printemps, & de qui l'odeur delicate, ne peut mesme estre surpassée en douceur, par celle des roses, ny par celle des oeillets. Mais comme toutes ces Dames n'en avoient point encore veu, elles agirent en entrant dans cette chambre, comme si elles fussent entrées

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'voyage' occurs once more on p. 1045.



dans un parterre, car elles se baisserent avec promptitude pour ramasser de ses fleurs, afin d'en faire des bouquets. (C5, 182-3).

The blurring of boundaries between gardens and rooms in this scene reveals one aspect of seventeenth-century culture; it re-enacts its taste for the harmonious combination of nature and artifice, reality and illusion — as illustrated through the lengthy descriptions of gardenscapes in *Clélie*.

In *Urania* the garden, grove, or wood in which, for example, Pamphilia is mostly seen wandering, resembles the replica of an interior, and more precisely, the interior of a bedroom.

Quickly was she ready, and as soone left her Chamber, going into the Gardens, passing out of one into another, finding that all places are alike to Love, tedious. Then opened she a doore into a fine wood, delicately contriv'd into strange, and delightfull walkes. (U1, 90, ll. 28-31)

Seeing this place delicate without, as shee was faire, and darke within as her sorrowes, shee went into the thickest part of it [...]. The ground in this place, where shee stayed was plaine, covered with greene grasse, which being low and thicke, looked as if of purpose it had beene covered with a greene Velvet Carpet, to entertaine this melancholy Lady, for her the softer to tread, loth to hurt her feet. (91, ll. 11-2; ll. 19-23)

We should note here the complexity of the labyrinthine architecture of Pamphilia's retreat. It takes us into a garden within a garden as into a house with rooms within rooms: we are made to witness Pamphilia's progress into

‘the thickest part of [the] place’. Her escape from her own ‘Chamber’ leads her into another confined space. She enters a world in which pathetic fallacy is at work. Nature appears as though sympathising with Pamphilia’s distress and seems to be recreating for her, as it were, the comfort of a cosy room; cosiness which is here rendered by the tactile image of ‘the greene Velvet Carpet’. As the passage unfolds, the garden gradually emerges even more vividly as a metaphorical chamber. After ‘[having laid] her excelling selfe upon that (then most blessed ground)’ (92, ll. 19-20), she utters a monologue, as if she were in the confines of her own room: she is often pictured in this reclining posture in any of her retreats. This metaphorical displacement is reinforced at the end of her soliloquy, as the ‘ground’ this time is not compared to but metaphorically visualised as a functional object: she ‘then hastily [rose] from her low greene bed’ (l. 29). She is pictured in the very process of writing, as though in her closet, ‘finish[ing] a Sonnet, which at other times shee had begunne to ingrave in the barke of one of those fayre and straight Ashes’ (ll. 31-3). The time marker ‘at other times’ suggests that this metaphorical chamber has become Pamphilia’s familiar and favourite retreat in which the grass ‘serves’ as a ‘bed’, and ‘the rootes [of a tree], whereon she had laid her head, serv[ed] (though hard) for a pillow at that time, to uphold the richest World of wisdome in her sex’ (93, ll. 8-10).

In a later scene, Pamphilia is once more seen progressing into a wood whose description recalls the earlier setting:

Then went shee a little further, and on a stub, which was  
betweene two trees, she sate downe, letting the one serve as  
the backe of a chayer to rest upon: the other to hold her  
dainty feete against; Her armes she folded on her breast, as  
embracing his brave heart, or rather wrapping it within her  
armes. (*UI*, 318, ll. 13-7)



Here is recreated in a few lines a decor which is again very suggestive of a snug and well-confined interior. Throughout the first part of *Urania*, all Pamphilia's retreats are interchangeable: as a garden within a garden, her sylvan abode naturally metamorphoses into a 'room' where, as in her chamber, she 'get[s] more libertie to expresse her woe' (*UI*, 62, l. 15). As the *loci* of female woeful soliloquies, these retreats serve as metaphors for the female inner 'I'. Through the superposition of spaces on spaces, Wroth offers a baroque picture of the female 'I', as conveyed by Wroth's extensive use of spatial and architectural metaphors when depicting Pamphilia's inner state.<sup>2</sup> Pamphilia is, as mentioned earlier, introduced to us as 'walk[ing] up and downe in the maze of her trouble' (*UI*, 46, l. 40) and later depicted as 'wander[ing] in her raving thoughts' (*UI*, 216, l. 13). Another female character, Sydelia, is described as 'rid[ing], and travel[ing] her thoughts irresolutely' (*UI*, 272, l. 5): although the first meaning of 'travel[ing] thoughts' is what Wroth, earlier in the romance, calls 'sorrowing thoughts' (*UI*, 1, l. 32), the fact that she associates this image with that of riding suggests that Wroth plays with the double meaning of the verb 'travel'. Thus, the use of verbs of movement (more specifically, 'walk up and down', 'wander') and the image of the maze in association with the flow of the heroine's consciousness clearly define her mind in spatial terms, as though it were a 'room'. In exploring the metaphorical displacement over and over,

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this chapter I am using Jean Rousset's, Philip Butler's and Claude-Gilbert Dubois's definition of baroque aesthetics. In *Classicisme et baroque dans l'oeuvre de Racine* (Paris: Nizet, 1959), Philip Butler defines baroque aesthetics as follows: 'Le baroque, peinture ou sculpture, est un art du mouvement, et par suite un art du moment, de l'instantané saisi dans son déséquilibre transitoire, un art déjà 'cinématique' qui postule le facteur temporel, un art non seulement à trois mais à quatre dimensions, et par là, le plus souvent, un art dramatique où tout est action, surprise, violence même' (p. 21). Although the author considers here baroque painting and sculpture, his remark as illustrated through his study of Racine can be applied to the study of literature.

Wroth represents her heroine's mind as an inner space which we could quite appropriately term an inner chamber or garden.

This takes us back to the garden scene, which in Chapter Five (pp. 189-90) we partly construed as the gathering place of a 'société galante' and the privileged space for the discourse of female friendship. Walking in the garden with Pamphilia, the Queen of Naples perceives her niece's despair:

Shee loved Pamphilia, who, poore Lady went up and downe  
like the shadow of her selfe; into saddest walkes which  
were there shee often went, and with her owne thoughts  
discoursed. (*U1*, 457, ll. 39-41)

Two pages later, Pamphilia is left on her own once again, and utters a love complaint. Urania arrives and tries to cheer her up. Her counselling speech is yet interrupted by the arrival of Musalina and the Queen of Bulgaria:

Urania was glad, because shee hoped company would assist  
her desire in her Cousens good; but shee was deceiv'd, for  
Pamphilia was in company, and alone much one, shee could  
bee in greatest assemblies as private with her owne  
thoughts, as if in her Cabinet, and there have as much  
discourse with her imagination and cruell memory, as if in  
the presence. (*U1*, 459, ll. 24-8)

In the whole scene the world of the mind is delineated in spatial terms, as textualised by the simile 'as if in her cabinet'. Although she is amongst her friends, she still succeeds in retiring into the confines of her inner 'chamber'. And while 'the walkes' are imprinted with her sadness, her



'thoughts' actively become the *locus* of literary creativity: 'shee cast some Verses Sonnet-waies in her thoughts' (458, l. 9).

The retreat of the Uranian heroine into her room, garden or any other enclosed space therefore offers a 'passage' to the confines of feminine inwardness — an inwardness that is woven within the poetics of melancholy. These women all experience similar symptoms, such as despair, sadness, grief, oppression, molestation and vexations.<sup>3</sup> The Uranian feminine retreat appears as a 'paysage choisi', in the sense that it is the reflection of the Pamphilian soul.<sup>4</sup> The characterisation of the heroine's inner landscape reaches its utmost expression through the recurring *chiaroscuro* motif, which is often paired with the fictionalisation of female literary creativity.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the *chiaroscuro* motif emerges as one of the feminine *loci* of poetic expression: it is, for instance, in a *chiaroscuro* setting that Pamphilia and Orilena are pictured writing poetry:

While [Orilena and Pamphilia] were at Sea, they made verses, comparing the evening to the coolnesse of absence, the day break, to the hope of sight, and the warmth to the enjoying, the waves to the swelling sorrowes their brests indured, and every thing they made to serve their turnes, to

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<sup>3</sup> The noun 'molestation' and its derivatives ('molested', 'molesting') recur a good many times in *Urania*. The word is to be understood in its original although now obsolete meaning recorded in the *OED*: coming from the Spanish 'molestar' and Italian and Latin 'molestare', it refers to 'something that causes trouble, grief' and also 'afflicts or affects' when referring to a disease. It is in this sense of the word that Pamphilia exclaims, for instance: 'Never at quiet tormenting passion, what more canst thou desire? What, covet that thou hast not gaind? in absence thou doth molest me with those cruell paines, in presence thou torturest me with feare and despaire, then dost burne with desire to obtaine.' (*U1*, 244, ll. 15-8).

<sup>4</sup> Paul Verlaine, 'Clair de lune', in *Fêtes galantes* (1869), in Y-G Le Dantec and Jacques Borel (eds.), *Oeuvres poétiques complètes de Verlaine* (Paris: NRF/Gallimard, 1962), line 1 ('Votre âme est un paysage choisi').

<sup>5</sup> *Chiaroscuro* is a well-known baroque motif. On this subject Philip Butler writes: 'L'importance toute nouvelle des jeux de l'ombre et de la lumière est peut-être l'aspect le plus frappant de la nouvelle peinture' (*Classicisme et baroque*, p. 20).

expresse their affections by. By the Sun they sent their hot passions to their loves; in the cold Moones face writ Characters of their sorrowes for their absence, which she with pale wan visage delivered to their eyes, greev'd as to the death, she could not helpe those amorous Ladyes. (*U1*, 364, ll. 4-12)

Fusion occurs between the setting and the two female characters: the motions of their inner lives are identified with those of natural elements, as though merging with the diurnal and nocturnal cycle of nature. Emphasis is laid on the description of the moon, which we know symbolises femininity in the Renaissance world picture. The moon is personified as a Uranian melancholy woman: she comes to emblematisé the 'true suffering[s]' (l. 19) of Pamphilia, as the faint presence of the moon throws light on the inner torments of her two worshippers.

It is, perhaps, at the beginning of the romance that we find one of the most vivid illustrations of the *chiaroscuro* motif concomitant with both the rhetoric of introspectiveness and literary creativity. At this stage of the narrative, Amphilanthus is in love with Antissia, which is the cause of Pamphilia's grief:

Being heavie, [Pamphilia] went into her bed, but not with hope of rest, but to get more libertie to expresse her woe. At last, her servants gone, and all things quiet, but her ceaselesse mourning soule, she softly rose out of her bed, going to her window, and looking out beheld the Moone, who was then faire and bright in her selfe, being almost at the full, but rounded about with blacke, and broken clouds. 'Ah Diana,' said she, 'how doe my fortunes resemble thee? my love and heart as cleare, and bright in faith, as thou art



in thy face, and the fulnesse of my sorrowes in the same substance: and as thy wane must bee, so is my wane of hopes in my love; affections in him, being as cold to me, as thou art in comparison of the Sunnes heate: broken joyes, blacke despaire, incircling me, as those dissevered clouds do strive to shadow by straight compassing thy best light.'  
(*UI*, 62, ll. 14-26)

Here is staged the inner tragedy of the Pamphilian 'I', defining itself as a 'ceaseless mourning soule'. Furthermore, Pamphilia verbally identifies herself with Diana, the goddess of the moon, by means of comparisons (*my fortunes resemble thee, as thou art in thy face, in the same substance, so is my wane of hopes*). It is nevertheless in the final clause of her soliloquy that the metaphorical fusion between the Moon and the Pamphilian 'I' creates a rhetorical set of images that reveals most tellingly the baroque nature of the female voice. This last clause opens with a three-beat rhythm, namely two noun phrases and a gerund ('*broken joyes, blacke despaire, incircling me*') followed by a long simile sub-clause ('*as those dissevered clouds do strive[...]*'). The first part of the clause echoes the concluding clause of the preceding paragraph ('*the Moone[...]* rounded about with blacke, and broken clouds'). Wroth's chiasmic reversal of the adjectives 'blacke' and 'broken' in the second paragraph is reinforced by the gerund 'incircling me', placed in third position, which recalls the past participle 'rounded about' placed in first position. This image of confinement which she creates in so little space, through her use of a circular rhythm and through the lexicon of circularity, conjures up images of darkness and physical disintegration, as stressed by the associations of the adjectives 'black' and 'broken'. This is then carried on in the final sub-clause where the past participle 'broken' is echoed by the synonymous past participle 'dissevered', and where darkness and confinement are rendered

simultaneously by the verbs 'shadow' and 'compasse'. It is in such a state of mind or 'paysage choisi' that Pamphilia sets out to write a poem in which images of disintegration prevail.

All in all, little is said about the retreat of female literary creativity in *Clélie*. As noted earlier, a simple word or image in Scudery's style is often enough in itself to suffuse a whole scene with the romantic aura of 'les rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire'. But whereas in *Clélie* the blurring of boundaries between gardens and rooms often leads to the study of a given social group, in *Urania* it leads instead to a metaphorical exploration of the female 'I'.

## VII. Baroque aesthetics and the inner tragedy of the Uranian poetess

Heart drops distilling like a new cut-vine  
 Weepe for the paines that doe my soule oppresse,  
(U1, 62, ll. 32-3)

[...]

Wherewith young hopes in bud are wrackt,  
 Yet deerer eyes the rock must show.

Which never weepe, but killingly disclose  
 Plagues, famine, murder in the fullest store,  
 But threaten more.

This knowledge cloyes my brest with woes.

(U1, 63, ll. 1-6)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> We find a similar poem by Pamphilia later (U1, 460-1).



These lines pertain to baroque aesthetics, as defined in the works of Jean Rousset and Claude-Gilbert Dubois. The presence of tropes, such as the antithesis in line one and the hyperbolic run-on line which introduces a series of violent images, creates 'dans le minimum d'espace verbal le maximum d'effet psychologique'.<sup>7</sup> These images are rendered all the more intense as 'le minimum d'espace verbal' coincides with the depiction of her 'soule oppress[ed]' and her 'brest [cloyed] with woes'. Her lines tell us about 'les aventures de [son] âme', 'aventures' which Claude-Gilbert Dubois characterises as 'celles du héros baroque' (*op. cit.*, p. 72) who is naturally prone to passionate outbursts and nightly complaints, as opposed to the 'héros sage' or 'modéré' as remarks René Godenne in *Les Romans de Mademoiselle de Scudéry* (pp. 270-7).

The opening line of her poem is suggestively baroque: the image of the 'heart drops distilling' is one that can be found in Jean Rousset's chapter on transience.<sup>8</sup> Water images in the Uranian text seem to be very characteristic of the female retreat. If we take one more look at Silviana's description of her distress before and after writing her letter to her unworthy lover, this secondary character can be construed as a shadow of the Pamphilian 'I':

Then did I silently lament this harme, and mournfully  
bewaile my misery, speaking unto my selfe, as if to him,  
[...], then weepe, and spend whole nights in this distresse.  
(*U1*, 220[ll. 40-2]-221[l. 1])  
[...]

The next day he did come, and found me in my bed, bathing  
my self in my poore, yet choice teares. (221, ll. 36-8)

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<sup>7</sup> Claude-Gilbert Dubois, *Le Baroque: profondeurs de l'apparence* (Paris: Larousse, 1973), p. 59.

<sup>8</sup> See 'La vie en mouvement', in *La Littérature de l'âge baroque en France: Circé et la Paon* (Paris: José Corti, 1954), pp. 112-57.

A few pages later, Pamphilia 'alone in the Woods' (*UI*, 244, l. 14) is uttering another of her woeful soliloquies, at the end of which she exclaims:

'Welcome my teares,' cry'd shee, 'you are more tender and more kind, striving to ease mee by your carefull meanes'.

Then wept she, sigh'd, sobd, and groand in her anguish; but when the spring had run it selfe even dry, she rose from off the grasse, which a while had been her bed, when these extreamest weights of heavinesse oppressed her. (244, [ll. 40-2]-245[ll. 1-4]).

If Wroth's use of 'teares' and water adds a baroque note to the female retreat, it is possible that Wroth was inspired by her uncle's treatment of the tear motif. The description of Silviana's 'bathing in [her] poore yet choice tears' may be an echo of the scene in the *New Arcadia*, where Zelmane/Pyrocles realises that he is nothing but 'a blubberd face' (*NA*, 228, l. 34). As for Pamphilia's address to her 'tears', it almost sounds like an ironic pastiche of Pyrocles's monologue in verse: whereas he 'trusts [these brooks] to ease [his] eyes', namely his tears and 'sorrowes' (*NA*, 229, ll. 9-14), Pamphilia invokes, on the contrary, the 'easing' power of her own tears. In *Urania*, tears seem to serve less as an ornament than as 'the privatised locus of female poetic expression'.<sup>9</sup> This motif is most fully developed in a poem written by Musalina, mourning the departure of Amphilanthus, who has become her lover. In this scene she addresses her country which has been affected by a 'great drought'. Yet she quickly transforms her poem into an address to her own lover and into a passionate

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<sup>9</sup> Jeff Masten, "'Shall I Turne Blabb': Circulation, Gender, and Subjectivity in Mary Wroth's Sonnets", in Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller (eds.), *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1991), p. 76.



outburst through which water imagery becomes one with the speaking subject:

Why doe you so much wish for raine, when I,  
 Whose eyes still showring are, stand you so nigh?  
 Thinke you that my poore eyes now cannot lend  
 You store enough? alas, but rightly bend  
 Your looks on me, and you shall see a store  
 Able to moisten Earth, and ten earths more:  
 Sighs to make Heaven as soft as tender wooll,  
 And grieve sufficient to make up the full  
 Of all despaires, then wish not, since in me  
 Contained are teares, grieve, and misery.

(*U1*, 498, ll. 15-24)

Through her lines, the listener or reader is made to witness the construction of the female 'I' through its own disintegration, which is enacted by a series of enjambements. Disintegration is syntactically marked by a run-on line from the beginning of her poem. The speaking 'I' is severed from its verb ('stand') by a relative clause. The latter semantically reinforces this syntactical dislocation, as it informs us about the physicality of the speaking 'I'. Through the hyperbolic use of the verb 'shower' to depict her 'eyes', the female subject emerges on the one hand as figuratively hypertrophied, and on the other as lexically liquescent. The next interesting enjambement, in the character's self-portrayal, carries this image of hypertrophy and liquefaction even further:

[...] a store  
 Able to moisten Earth, and ten earths more.

(*U1*, 498, ll. 19-20)

Liquefaction (signalled here by the verb 'moisten') is paired, by means of an alliterative and almost chiasmic effect, with quantity ('more'). Through this enjambement, the noun 'store' expands into an hypertrophic and liquescent object that has no boundaries. Yet within this process of distillation, the 'I' is defined in spatial terms, as suggested first by a vertical reading of the main enjambements: this enables us to equate the pronoun 'I' with 'store', then the substantive 'full', and back to the first person pronoun 'me'. The speaking subject regains its shape in the last enjambement where it literally takes on the characteristics of a 'vessel', as rendered by the phrase 'in me / Contained'. As the poem unfolds, we drift from a physical portrayal of the I's liquefaction to the portrayal of its inmost depths. This drift is announced by the enjambement 'the full / Of all despaire'. Musalina's inner turmoils too become hypertrophic, as marked here by the double emphasis on quantity ('full' and 'all'). Her grief and despair syntactically burst forth out of the lines, and reach their climactic expression in an alliterative ('[r]') and assonant ('[i:]') crescendo of racking and piercing sounds: 'teares, grieve, and misery'.

It is perhaps in Wroth's sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, that the most poignant accents of Pamphilian melancholy can be heard.<sup>10</sup> Since we are here concerned with poetry by women in *Urania*, it seems appropriate to cast a glance at the sonnet sequence which was published together with the first part of *Urania* in 1621. Placed at the end of the volume, it can be read as a continuation in verse of Pamphilia's numerous soliloquies. Her sonnet sequence enlightens the reader as to the inmost depths of the Pamphilian 'I'. Adopting the stance of a Petrarchan sonneteer, Pamphilia repeatedly alludes to herself as a disintegrated 'I'. We

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<sup>10</sup> In Roberts (ed.), *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, pp. 85-145.



are made to picture the female speaker's 'loss of agency'.<sup>11</sup> The Pamphilian 'I', as in Musalina's poem, appears as cut off from its verb and objects, as an 'I' whose physical stability is jeopardised by the syntactical pattern within which it expresses itself:

Watch butt my sleepe, if I take any rest  
 For thought of you, my spiritt soe distrest  
 As pale, and famish'd, I, for mercy cry. [P3, ll. 9-11]

The last line of the above tercet is echoed further:

Then I who pale, and white ame with griefs store.  
[P25, l. 7]

In Sonnet [P48], she materialises the deconstruction of an 'I' intruded upon by 'grief', by means of an anaphora:

Then looke on mee; I ame to thes adrest,  
 I, ame the soule that feeles the greatest smart;  
 I, ame that hartles trunk of harts depart  
 And I, that one, by love, and grieve oprest. (ll. 5-8)

The female Uranian as well as the poetess's voice from the sonnet sequence conform to Gary Waller's definition of the poetic expression of unfulfilled desire:

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<sup>11</sup> Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 7; see also her chapter on Mary Wroth, pp. 135-61.

The self that writes is continually rewritten, and the more it writes, the more words interpose themselves as frustration, or negative mediations between the desperate object and its object of desire.<sup>12</sup>

A reading of *Urania* and of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* shows how complementary the two texts are to each other. The *chiaroscuro* retreat in which Pamphilia writes in *Urania* often dissolves through her sonnet sequence into the leitmotif of utter darkness. The heroine's 'I', poetic voice and retreat seem to be constantly converging into one entity. In the sylvan room scene, analysed at the beginning of this chapter, Pamphilia's physical contact with the ground and trees, personified as 'true friends', suggests that a fusion has occurred between the female poetic voice and the landscape, that is between the leaves of the trees and the act of writing. Sonnet [P22] reproduces the Pamphilian retreat as we find it in *Urania*. The trees in this sonnet are not just 'true friends', they are 'mourners' (l. 13). The landscape overshadowed by the 'dying coulers' of the leaves (l. 7) serves as a reflection of 'mee oprest' (l. 3); and the 'leaves distrest' (l. 6) take on the figurative meaning of the poetic link between the words and the very act of writing. This suggestion of a poetic link between the leaves of a tree and the act of writing takes us back to Pamphilia's sylvan abode. Although the tree *topos* is one often used in Renaissance romances (like *L'Astrée*), in which lovers are often seen carving love poems on trees, the 'tree' in Wroth's poetics emerges as the emblem of both female distress and female literary creativity, as conveyed by the image of the skin as well as the double emphasis on that of 'testament'. Like the leaves in sonnet [P22], the skin of the tree takes on the meaning of parchment or pages. The choice of the

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<sup>12</sup> *The Sidney Family Romance: Mary Wroth, William Herbert, and the Early Modern Construction of Gender* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), p. 135.



word 'skin', like that of 'distrest' and 'dead leaves', partakes too of a poetics which stages the tragic disintegration of the female 'I'. It calls up the image of the 'wound'; and as Pamphilia carves her sonnet, she comes to associate the act of writing with that of making a wound. In doing so, she entangles herself within her own imagery:

Keepe in thy skin this testament of me

[...]

Pitiles I doe wound thee, while that I

Unpitied, and unthought on, wounded crie:

Then out-live me, and testifie my woes.

(*UI*, 92 [l. 38]-93[ll. 5-7])<sup>13</sup>

The act of writing is therefore seen as a painful act, in the process of which the speaking 'I' can be seen disintegrating itself once again within the metre, as suggested by the enjambement in the tercet quoted above. The speaking 'I' negatively expands through a series of past participles with privative prefixes. This syntactic and semantic disintegration is echoed in the next stanza which Pamphilia is seen adding to the above sonnet:

My thoughts thou hast supported without rest,

My tyred body here hath laine opprest

With love, and feare: yet be thou ever blest;

Spring, prosper, last; I am alone unblest. (93, ll. 11-4)

The image of her tired body culminates in the antithetical structure of the concluding clause, in which the character's self-portrayal as 'alone unblest' tragically contrasts with the images of life and hope that open this line. The

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<sup>13</sup> On this poem and Wroth's revision of Sidney's text, see Quilligan, 'The Constant Subject', pp. 316-8.

tragic note that concludes the quatrain is further reinforced by the presence of the haunting rhyme ‘-est’: in the Uranian poetics of female melancholy, the constantly recurring phoneme ‘-est’ is more often evocative of distress than hope, of hypertrophic martyrdom than bliss.

If we compare Pamphilia’s poems to her sonnet sequence, it seems that the latter offers a more poignantly tragic picture of the female protagonist’s inner turmoils. Nowhere else does the female poet appear to achieve so tragic an expression of female melancholy and martyrdom. As we hasten towards the end of the sequence, Pamphilia exclaims in terms that conjure up the leitmotif of obscurity:

O! that noe day would ever more appeere,  
 Butt cloudy night to governe this sad place,  
 Nor light from heav’n thes haples rooms to grace  
 Since that light’s shadow’d which my love holds deere;

Lett thickest mists in envy master heere,  
 [...]
 Lett mee bee darke, since bard of my chiefe light;  
 And wounding jealousie commands by might.

[P100, ll. 1-5; 9-10]

The lines operate a metaphorical fusion between the palpable space of the room and the inner space of the Pamphilian ‘I’. They converge with each other through a series of poetic analogies, such as the adjective ‘haples’ and the noun ‘room’. Indeed, ‘haples’ is also used by the female poet-lover to characterise herself (see [P102, l. 10]), and therefore emphasises the privation she is bound to. At this point of the sequence, ‘haples rooms’ may be construed as one of those displacements from outward into inward spaces, which, as the poetess reveals her torments, is reasserted by her



request for metamorphosis: 'lett mee bee darke'. In Sonnet [P13, ll. 9-12], Night is personified as a feminine character, endowed with physical features ('a face' and 'a force'), as if Pamphilia and Night were indeed one, or as if Night were the signifier of Pamphilia's soul or inner landscape. Night is spatially delimited. It is, when 'most blessed', the 'happy time for love, / The shade for Lovers, and theyr loves delight' [P65, ll. 1-2]. Yet when at its 'darkest', Night is bound up with a semantic web of lethal images which invade the poet's 'poore self', as conveyed in Sonnet [P17, l. 12]. Again Night emerges as a *persona* from beneath the rhetorical device of pathetic fallacy, which stresses the sadness of her 'attire' (l. 2), her 'count'nance' (l. 9) and 'sober pace' (*ibid.*). The poet uses apparel similes and metaphors to characterise Night as a mourning signifier of her own loss, the loss of 'lightsomeness' and happiness:

Come darkest night, beecoming sorrow best;  
 Light; leave thy light; fitt for a lightsome soule;  
 Darknes doth truly sute with mee oprest  
 Whom absence power doth from mirthe controle.

[P22, ll. 1-4]

The verb 'sute' therefore links together the palpable physicality of Night and the female poet's body, and by extension weaves the subtext of both eros and death:

I love thy grave, and saddest lookes to see,  
 Which seems my soule, and dying hart intire,  
 Like to the ashes of some happy fire. [P17, ll. 5-8]

Similar imagery can be found in two poems in *Urania*, embedded in the tales of two unfortunate secondary heroines. Here female poetry takes

on as tragic a tone as in the sonnet sequence. The two heroines, Emilina and the unnamed lover of Polidorus conclusively emerge as the shadows of the Pamphilian 'I'.

Emilina is loved, and then betrayed by an impostor who, as we have seen earlier, has named himself after Amphilanthus. The situation is quite comic, as she tells her story to the real Amphilanthus. The latter's anger at this impostor's inconstancy may well be seen as ironic, given the inconstancy of the real Amphilanthus. In fact, the mention of an impostor who pretends to be Amphilanthus reinforces the idea that Emilina is a shadow of the female protagonist. Both have had the same fate as lovers, and both have suffered from the scorn of their respective admirers, as expressed by Emilina in the following lines:

From victory in love I now am come  
 Like a commander kild at the last blow:  
 Instead of Lawrell, to obtaine a tombe  
 With triumph that a steely faith I show.  
 Here must my grave be, which I thus will frame. (*UI*, 299,  
 ll. 18-22)

From the outset of her song, the 'triumph of love' is turned into the triumph of 'death' by the inconstancy of the male lover.<sup>14</sup> We can note the funerary lexicon ('grave' and 'tombe') through which the poem takes on a religious gravity, as pagan and Christian imagery converges in the second stanza (ll. 26-33). Its pattern is seemingly reversed: it is invaded with images of light, truth, victory through which human and divine love are associated with each other. And yet it falls short, all at once, in the last line which takes us back to a world of shadows and darkness, into 'the thickest part' of the

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<sup>14</sup> See Dubrow's chapter on Wroth in *Echoes of Desire* (pp. 135-61), where she discusses her indebtedness to Petrarch's *Trionfi* and also to Dante's *Vita Nuova*.



female 'I' that obsessively refers to death. In the third stanza she defines her voice as a 'dying' voice (299, l. 36), a self-definition which opens the song with the exclamation 'I come' (l. 1), and is tragically re-emphasised in the concluding line of her song: 'thus Death I come, I come' (300, l. 18). Here Wroth seems to be reworking the tragic deaths of Parthenia in the *New Arcadia* and of Juliet in Shakespeare's play. In these two works, the tragic heroines are the epitomes of true and eternal love: they die because their lover has died. At the sight of her husband dying, Parthenia cries out 'Argalus, I will follow thee! I will follow thee!' (NA, 378, l. 11), and a few pages later, after his death, '[having] inward messengers of the desired death's approach' (398, ll. 6-7), she exclaims while breathing her last:

O life! O death! [...] I come, my Argalus! I come! (ll. 20-3)<sup>15</sup>

What may suggest that Wroth was also thinking of *Romeo and Juliet* is Juliet's monologue in the second scene of the third act:

Come, civil night,  
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,  
[...]  
With thy black mantle, till strange love grown bold  
Think true love acted simple modesty.  
Come, night, come, Romeo, come, thou day in night;  
[...]

Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,

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<sup>15</sup> This scene became very popular through Francis Quarles's work: *Argalus and Parthenia* (1629) which, named after Sidney's tragic couple. See David Freeman's introduction to his edition (Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986).

Give me my Romeo [...]. (3. 2. 10-21) <sup>16</sup>

Although at this stage, Juliet's words denote hope rather than death, they simultaneously forebode the tragic end of the two lovers.<sup>17</sup> Unlike Juliet's and Parthenia's lover, Emilina's is unfaithful. And yet the words she speaks and the passion she expresses elevate her from the status of minor heroine to that of a tragic heroine who can be seen as one of the many Uranian mouthpieces of female martyrdom in love.

In the unnamed female character's poem, the female speaker is a widow who mourns the loss of her late husband, Polidorus. She is overheard by Amphilanthus, Polarchos and Philarchos who are travelling together in search of the enchanted princesses. Unlike Emilina's lover, Polidorus was always loyal to his wife. In the soliloquy preceding her poem, she may also remind the reader of Parthenia after Argalus's death, for she addresses Polidorus as follows:

My dearest, and alone deare Lord, I know that thou art  
dead, else were I fetched by thee, to joy with thee, where as  
now I remaine in my living death. (*U1*, 350, ll. 25-7)

This scene encapsulates all the aspects of the Uranian feminine retreat. It is first located in the most private parts of a garden, as we learn from the three male characters' progress into these recesses (*U1*, 349[ll. 38-42]-350[ll. 1-4]). The characters' eyes are made to rest upon a 'Tombe' from which they can hear a woman's soliloquy. Thus the 'tombe' has the same characteristics as the 'thickest part' of Pamphilia's wood, for it is revealed

<sup>16</sup> Quotations are from the cited edition, see p. 48, footnote 8.

<sup>17</sup> Another close parallel can be found in Act Four, Scene Three, where Juliet invokes 'the horrible conceit of death and night' (l. 37), as she is about to take the drug that plunges her into the semblance of death: 'Romeo, I come! this do I drink to thee' (l. 58).



as the 'privatised locus of poetic female expression'.<sup>18</sup> There is once more a fusion between the setting and the speaking subject, that is between the darkness of the tomb and the female voice (*UI*, 350, ll. 13-5). Like Night in Pamphilia's sonnet sequence, the 'Tombe' is personified. A voice speaks from within the tomb:

'Unfortunate woman,' said it, 'that cannot die, having such occasion. Is it possible deare Tombe, that thou canst hold, and inclose my woes, yet keepe them safe in thee, and with the multitudes of them? [...] finish thy labour, and my woes, let this bee my last minute of unquietnesse, redeeme me from the cruell slavery of living, and bring mee to the excellent libertie of dying; for how can life be pleasing, when Polidorus is not? (*UI*, 350, ll. 16-8; 22-5)

But it is in the widow's long poem that the fusion between darkness and the female voice takes on its most tragic tonality (350-1). It is a dying voice that constructs itself before us, and yet finds its own expression in the process of self-destruction. Nowhere in *Urania* can we find a finer treatment of the metaphorical fusion between the palpable space of the feminine retreat and the inner space of the speaking subject. The fact that the speaking subject is not seen, but only heard by the three male characters, suggests that the voice is physically associated with the confines of the 'Tombe', that is by analogy with the confines of death. Yet the speaking voice leads us beyond the confines of death; it takes us on a journey to the underworld — as suggested by the adjectives 'Infernall' and 'Hellish' (350, ll. 36, 39) and by its many references to Hades, symbolised in the figures of Pluto (l. 38) and Charon (l. 40). This 'underworld' is characterised not just as one- but two-dimensional; a two-dimensionality through which the female voice can

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<sup>18</sup> See above, p. 252, footnote 9.

identify itself, as implied by the association of emotive adjectives with images of space and vice-versa ('thy sad abiding' [l. 38], 'hollow Cave' [351, l. 15], 'horrid complaints' [l. 16], 'mournfull, and vast caverne' [l. 17], 'Darke grieffe' [l. 26]). Like her male counterparts both in the rest of Wroth's romance and in the *New Arcadia*, the widow is endowed with an inner self: each line that she 'spins' is thus 'spun' in a language that opens up the world of human inwardness. From the outset of her poem, the reader is made to explore the female character's 'Cavy depths' (350, l. 37), that is the 'darkest pits' of a *persona* that has all the characteristics of a baroque heroine.

This analysis of the female poetic voice in *Urania* allows us to define the Uranian heroine as baroque. She therefore belongs to a syntactical world whose aesthetics, as noted on several occasions, differ markedly from that which is found in *Clélie*. Scudertian aesthetics, by contrast, reflect in many ways the precepts of what has come to be known as French 'classicism', a term whose meaning has altered slightly over the last decades.<sup>19</sup>

Before going any further, we should pause to consider these two concepts. Despite the traditional opposition between baroque aesthetics and classicism in literature, it is possible to speak of a continuity rather than incompatibility between baroque and classical aesthetics. Book and essay titles, such as *Classicisme et baroque dans l'oeuvre de Racine*, suggest that the opposition is somewhat arbitrary. Classicism is not just confined to one given period of French literary history, but takes shape under the quills of theorists from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the present. It involves, especially in architecture and painting, an appropriation of some aspects of baroque aesthetics, such as its advocacy of decency and decorum

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<sup>19</sup> In *Panorama de la littérature française: le classicisme* (Paris: Hachette, 1996), Jean Rohou explores the manifold aspects of classicism.



as well as its taste for ostentation.<sup>20</sup> This link to the baroque can be observed too when analysing 'classical' style.<sup>21</sup> As commonly agreed by critics,<sup>22</sup> classicism begins with Malherbe followed by Vaugelas who strives to inaugurate stylistic economy. It condemns metaphors, periphrases, and analogies. Yet in resorting to economic tropes (*e.g.* oxymorons and hyperboles), it implicitly states its debt to baroque style.

If, for example, the Uranian heroine's poems that I have analysed above are characterised by their many enjambements (a metrical device dismissed by Malherbe's 'modernist' movement), the apparent syntactical stability in the two Scudarian elegies below is counterbalanced by their inner rhythms, reminders of a baroque air. This interplay between baroque and classical aesthetics in *Clélie*'s female verse is the object of the following section.

### VIII. Classical aesthetics and the inner tragedy of the Scudarian poetess

In this section we will be looking at Clymène's and Lysimire's elegies, both written in the secret confines of the melancholy and solitary female retreat. The lovers' names are the pastoral ones conventionally used in salon poetry, conversation and games, namely Tircis, Amarillis and Daphnis. Despite this conventional aspect, the two elegies can be read not

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<sup>20</sup> Although sobriety, naivety, harmony, lucidity and order are advocated in the visual arts throughout the reign of Louis XIV, order and harmony are coupled with magnificence and ostentation, as suggested by the supplanting of drama by royal ballets and operas. With their machinery, perspective and mirror effects, the theatrical forms belong in a sense to baroque aesthetics, of which *Clélie*'s gardens and collation scenes offer fine examples.

<sup>21</sup> On the baroque/classicism overlap, see Rousset's chapter, 'Le baroque et le classique' (*op. cit.*, pp. 242-6).

<sup>22</sup> See Rohou, *Panorama de la littérature française*; and also French manuals or anthologies of seventeenth-century French literature, such as André Lagarde et Laurent Michard (eds.), *Les Grands auteurs français du programme* (Paris: Bordas, 1963), vol. 3, pp. 15-7.

only as the product of salon life or of 'préciosité', but also of classical aesthetics as a whole.

Clymène's poem is recited to Hésiode by Bélinthe who, on Hésiode's request, narrates Clymène's tale of misfortunes in love. Clymène, as we have seen, is the solitary young lady of whom Hésiode catches a glimpse at the fountain where he had his dream. Clymène's elegy first reads as a negative answer to her lover Lysicrate, here named Tircis. It introduces one leitmotif which pertains to female poetry: not the cruelty of one's mistress as in a male sonneteer's complaints, but the inconstancy and scorn of the poetess's lover which leads her to literary creativity:

Non, vous n'eustes jamais le coeur bien amoureux,  
 Puis que mon amitié ne vous peut rendre heureux,  
 Et que malgré l'ardeur d'une innocente flame,  
 La fiere ambition me chasse de vostre ame. (C8, 928)

While a Scudarian poet's love verse, such as Cloranisbe's elegy (C9, 683-6) is often tuned in the plaintive key of Petrarchan poetry, the Scudarian female poet adopts an almost philosophical stance. Her poem becomes an elegiac reflexion on man's vanity, on his 'fière ambition':

Vous resvez en tous lieux, vos desirs sont changez,  
 Vous avez cent desseins, vos soins sont partagez,  
 Ce qui fit vos plaisirs, fait vostre inquietude,  
 Le tumulte vous plaist, plus que la solitude. (C8, 928)<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 'Ambition fiere' is a popular theme in seventeenth-century French literature. See Myriam Maître's analysis of the 'Story of Hésiode': 'Dans cette gracieuse histoire sont évidemment confrontés l'ambition et l'amour, les plaisirs empoisonnés des cours et l'innocent bonheur des champs. Ce thème, de *L'Astrée* aux pastorales de Fontenelle, emplit toute la poésie bucolique du dix-septième siècle' (*Les Précieuses*, p. 401). We also find a similar discourse in a poem by the Comtesse de La Suze, entitled *A Monseigneur Le Comte de S. Paul. Stances* (See



We should note here the metrical regularity of each alexandrine: each hemistich introduces a short, concise phrase which semantically counterbalances the steady rhythm of the lines themselves and suggests on the contrary the wavering nature of the male lover being described. 'Ambition fiere', 'desseins', 'tumulte' are commonplaces that have come to designate life at court itself synonymous with 'cabales' and 'intrigues', as expressed in Pascal's *Pensées*:

Vanité, jeu, chasse, visite, comédies, fausse perpétuité de  
nom. (Fragment [521])<sup>24</sup>

Clymène's elegy, as it were, replicates Pascal's *Pensées*: her lover Lysicrate has the same characteristics as the universal picture Pascal draws of the human condition. In preferring 'le tumulte' to her 'charmant Desert', Lysicrate belongs to this kind '[qui] ne sait pas demeurer en repos [...], [qui] aime tant le bruit et le remuement [...], et [pour qui] le plaisir de la solitude est une chose incompréhensible' (*Pensées* [fragment 139]). Thus, once more, from beneath the veil of poetic expression, the Scudarian heroine emerges as the embodiment of 'la morale vivante' (*CI*, 300). This is reinforced by her diatribe against fortune. Fortune can be here construed as synonymous with masculine glory, which earlier in the inset story is characterised as a 'maistresse'.<sup>25</sup> The image is here more extensively exploited. Clymène plays with both gender and emblematic significations: traditionally a female figure, fortune is thus personified as in an emblem,

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*Recueil de pièces galantes en prose et en vers* [Paris: Gabriel Quinet, 1675], 12<sup>0</sup>, pp. 100-1).

<sup>24</sup> All quotations from Pascal's *Pensées* are from Philippe Sellier's edition (Paris: Mercure de France, 1976).

<sup>25</sup> 'Il est vray que les louanges que tout le monde donnoit aux vers qu'[Hésiode] faisoit, servirent fort à le consoler, car la gloire est une maistresse dont les

and represents both power and treachery. The mere naming of the word 'fortune' can be seen as one of the first pivotal moments in the elegy. The binary rhythm of the alexandrine mostly prevails and slowly unveils the inner turmoil of the poetess:

Vous aimez la fortune, avec ses caprices,  
 Vous suivez son esclat, vous vivez sous sa loy,  
 Vous n'êtes plus à vous, vous n'êtes plus à moy,  
 Vous estes son Captif, elle est vostre Maistresse,  
(C8, 928-9)

The rhythm then changes, as Clymène draws a negative portrait of fortune, that of a ruthless mistress:

Elle donne sans choix, sans sujet, sans amour,  
 Ses caresses souvent ne durent pas un jour,  
 De ses plus chers Amis l'inconstante se jouë.  
 Ce qu'elle leur promet son coeur le desadvouë, (929)

But quickly she reverts to a binary structure invested this time with even more emotiveness as she dismisses her lover in the imperative mode:

[...]  
 Suivez, ingrat, suivez, cette injuste trompeuse,  
 [...]  
 Ne la quittez jamais, quittez moy pour tousjours, (929-30)

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premieres faveurs sont tout à fait douces (C8, 876) [...], & son coeur ne parut plus estre sensible qu'à la gloire & qu'à l'ambition (877).'



Here the pace slows down, as the poetess now draws upon a generic definition, namely upon the contrast between the rustic world of a 'simple bergere' and the epic world of her redoubtable rival:

[...]

La fortune est l'objet de l'amour d'un Heros,  
Elle tient en ses mains tous les thresors du monde,  
Son pouvoir est esgal sur la terre & sur l'onde,  
Elle peut en cent lieux vous desclarer vainqueur,  
Mais elle ne peut pas disposer de mon coeur, (930).

This final portrait of fortune, whose heroic and imperturbable solemnity is rendered by the regular rhythm of each alexandrine, ends on a climactic phrase: 'mon coeur'. All at once, the elegy shifts from the portrayal of the poetess's lover and allegorical rival to that of her heart whose motions can be inferred from the pace of her lines:

Il est en mon pouvoir, ô Dieux! le puis-je dire?  
Helas! en le disant je sens que je soupire. (930)

In his article, 'Représenter la passion: la sobriété racinienne', Gilles Declercq offers an analysis of the female voicing of passion which may be applied to our present study.<sup>26</sup> As noted earlier, the elegy is invested with the lucidity of a thinking, rational subject who has a propensity for philosophising on the universal themes that lie at the core of 'conversations galantes'. The passionate female poetic voice in the Scudarian world of prose and verse emerges as the literary product of an elite society, of a 'norme que les théoriciens ne cessent de préciser et dans laquelle chaque

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<sup>26</sup> In Georges Forestier (ed.), *La Littérature et le réel, Littératures classiques*, 11 (1989), pp. 69-93.

écrivain s'efforce de s'inscrire pour mieux l'illustrer'.<sup>27</sup> This norm is what Dominique Bouhours in *Les Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* calls '*juste temperament*', that is 'le principe quintilianiste de *l'apte dicere*, or 'l'heureuse conjonction du bon sens et de la bienséance'.<sup>28</sup> Passionate outbursts in verse or prose by women characters in *Clélie* seem to follow the precepts of seventeenth-century French rhetoricians such as Malherbe, Bouhours and Vaugelas, who unanimously condemned the highflown style, and especially embellishment by way of metaphors. Although the imagery and language used by Clymène to express her grief appears to be less colourful than in the poems of her Uranian counterparts, the Scudertian heroine achieves a vivid depiction of female passion. Her loss of agency is here delineated through the rhythm of the alexandrines and through exclamations such as the dramatic 'helas' and 'ô', both creating pathos and announcing a new stage in the unfolding of the elegy. At last the reader is allowed to visualise the inmost depths of the female speaker. Along with Gilles Declercq, we can therefore say that here

l'exclamation joue donc le rôle syntactique d'une ponctuation émotionnelle; mais l'énoncé de la passion ne possède pas de marqueurs spécifiques de véhémence. Le passage qui suit l'apostrophe ou l'interjection procède selon une syntaxe ordonnée, et introduit dans *la discursivité pathétique cette démarche rationalisante*, cette intellection qui pour L. Spitzer est le principal procédé de l'assourdissement passionnel. ('Représenter la passion', 88)

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<sup>27</sup> Gilles Declercq, 'Usage et bel usage: l'éloge de la langue dans *Les Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* du Père Bouhours', in Georges Molinié (ed.), *Le Style au XXII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Littératures classiques*, 28 (1996), p. 113.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117 and p. 118.



What Gilles Declercq calls the ‘*démarche rationalisante de la discursivité pathétique*’ is represented at the beginning of the elegy by Clymène’s generalisation about man’s ‘*ambition fiere*’, next by her commonplace depiction of fortune, and now through her analysis of her own emotions. She is recalling emotional facts (‘*je sens que je soupire / Et qu’un trouble secret, me dit quand je vous voy*’ [930-1]), and concludes ‘*Que malgré [son] despit, [son] coeur n’est plus à [elle]*’ (931). She thus describes her heart as though it were an entity distinct, severed from her and yet sentient, endowed with her own voice:

Il murmure, il se plein [sic], mais il veut qu’on l’apaise,  
Par de tendres discours, dont la douceur luy plaise,  
Il cherche à se tromper, trompez le donc Tircis, (931)

Analysing the speech of Bérénice, the Racinian heroine, Gilles Declercq writes: ‘*sitôt l’exclamation proférée, indice d’émotion, [son] discours s’ordonne en une expansion lyrique de cadence croissante*’.<sup>29</sup> This equally applies to Clymène’s discourse. This is mostly conveyed by the recurring symmetrical rhythm created by the use of epizeuxis in the apostrophe quoted above and emphasised in the next lines through the redundant imperatives

Venez, venez jurer à votre Amarillis, (931)

and then the anaphoric structure:

[...]  
Peut-être en ce moment, verrez vous dans ses yeux,  
De quoy guerir le coeur le plus ambitieux:

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<sup>29</sup> In ‘Représenter la passion: la sobriété racinienne’, p. 89.

Peut-être en ce moment verrezvous dans son ame, (*ibid.*)

As Gilles Declercq remarked in his commentary on Bérénice, here too 'la construction discursive va jusqu'à créer un dialogue fictif' (p. 89), a fictional dialogue with her lover in which the poetess augments the distance between her own voice and her own self: the speaking 'I' dissolves into a third person referent ('à notre Amarillis', 'ses yeux', 'son ame'), and finally bursts out into a rhythmic hyperbolic enumeration of her experience:

Tant de fidélité, tant d'ardeur, tant de flame, (931)

Like the word 'coeur' earlier, this elegiac enumeration may be read as a conclusive turning point in the exploration of the poetess's inner self. At last the female speaker engages in an imaginary first person dialogue with her lover. The steady rhythm and regular structure of the alexandrines in the earlier parts of the elegy now intrude upon Clymène's disarray, whose self-expression oscillates between supplicatory imperatives and the irremediable sound of death:

[...]

O! moment précieux, viens soulager mes peines,  
Je ne puis plus porter de si pesantes chaines,  
Soustenez les Tircis, ou je les briseray,  
Hélas! en les brisant, Tircis j'expireray, (932)

Pathos is here fully achieved through the alliteration and through the chiasmic structure of the second couplet; and yet as Clymène hastens towards the end of the elegy, she seems all of a sudden to be regaining peacefulness, as though reconciled with her inner turmoils: these, she finally concludes, are an 'aimable tourment' (*ibid.*).



She thus ends her elegy, quite unexpectedly, with absolute serenity and philosophy:

[...]

Et j'aime mieux cent fois cet aimable tourment,  
Que d'estre sans douleur & d'estre sans Amant. (*ibid.*)

This sudden reversal not only signifies the triumph of reason over passion, but takes us to the heart of the Scudarian ethos, the ethos of 'mondanité' or 'préciosité' — which, as shown by Myriam Maître, is a hymn to joy.<sup>30</sup>

The lightheartedness of the final couplet, through which Clymène emerges as the epitome of the 'vraie précieuse', strongly contrasts with the poetess's irremediable grief in the second elegy. The latter is read to Plotine, who is in love with Martius, who is loved in turn by Lucie. Jealous at Martius's inclination for Plotine, Lucie shows her the poem of Lysimire who was once Martius's mistress. Believing Martius was being disloyal to her, Lysimire dies of despair not long after writing this melancholy piece. In incorporating a 'posthumous' poem into her narrative, the author can create a female voice whose accents are those of tragedy, and which thus offers a new perspective on the ethos of the 'esprit de joie' which we know characterises salon writing. The elegy may have been inspired by the melancholy aura of the Comtesse de La Suze's elegies which were acclaimed as fine 'melancholy' pieces in the 'société galante'.

In this elegy, Lysimire expands Clymène's final couplet into a reflection on life without love or desire — a reflection during which she shifts back and forth between despair and glimpses of hope. Although Lysimire shares many characteristics with Clymène, her elegy seems to be

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<sup>30</sup> 'C'est par ce syntagme "d'esprit de joie" que Mlle de Scudéry définit le mieux le but de la sociabilité mondaine, son "climat" et sa portée morale' (*Les Précieuses*, p. 516).

the only instance in the whole text where a female character voices her inner torments with such poignancy. A line-by-line reading, rather than a thematic one, may help us picture the tragic evolution of this melancholy heroine. As in the sepulchral poems from *Urania* and *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, the tone is set from the opening line:

Sortez de mon esprit sombre melancholie,  
Qui troublez trop long-temps le repos de ma vie. (C10, 977)

The opening line suggests that, as in *Urania*, the mind is viewed as a physical space, and that the speaking subject, like Pamphilia, is the prey of darkness. Although the adjective ‘sombre’ is the only reference to darkness, it denotes the depth of Lysimire’s grief and expands into an even darker image as the next sentence unfolds into a set of six alexandrines:

Je ne puis plus souffrir les douleurs que je sents [sic],  
Tous mes plaisirs passez, me sont de maux presens,  
Et mon coeur affligé, n’ayant plus d’esperance,  
Ne voit dans l’advenir qu’une longue souffrance  
Qui trouble ma raison, qui me fait soupirer  
Et souffrir mille morts sans pouvoir expirer. (*ibid.*)

The poetess describes herself in similar terms to those used by the female poetess in *Urania*. Rarely do we find in the Scudarian text such rich lexical variations on a particular theme, in this case melancholy: ‘douleurs’, ‘maux’, ‘coeur affligé’, and ‘longue souffrance’ which culminate in the concluding hyperbolic clause (‘Et souffrir mille morts sans pouvoir expirer’). The phrase ‘mille morts’ conjures up its corollary image, that of ‘cruel amour’:



Amour, cruel Amour, source de tant de larmes,  
 Qu'un coeur est malheureux, de connoistre tes charmes,  
 Et qu'il seroit heureux s'il ignoroit toûjours,  
 Et les tendres soupirs & les tendres amours.  
 On vivroit sans plaisir, mais on vivroit sans peine,  
 [...]  
 On ne connoistroit point tous ces cruels supplices,  
 [...]  
 On ne connoistroit point ces tourmens eternels, (977-8)

The pace, as in Clymène's elegy, quickens through the repetition of identical structures. Yet, as Lysimire produces a negative definition of passion by means of negative and privative structures ('ne .. pas', 'ne... point', 'sans'), she shows rationality:

[...]  
 Je sçay bien que la triste & froide indifférence  
 Fait qu'on regarde tout avec nonchalance, (978-9)

She then engages in a more extensive analysis of the implications of 'vivre sans aimer':

Que vivant sans aimer, on n'a point de desirs,  
 Que ne desirant rien, on n'a point de plaisirs,  
 Que l'abondance même est souvent importune,  
 Et qu'on peut s'ennuyer avec la fortune, (979)

She here reproduces the discourse held by the Stoicists who we know advocate 'repression of emotion, indifference to pleasure or pain' (*OED*). She goes on to sketch a bucolic, clichéd world:

Mais ces legers ennuis sont de foibles douleurs,  
 Que l'on souffre aisément sans répandre de pleurs,  
 Le chant des Rossignols, & le bruit des fontaines,  
 Suffisent pour charmer de si legeres peines,  
 On se trouve du moins avec sa liberté,  
 [...]  
 On jouyt du Soleil, de l'air, & d'un beau jour, (979)<sup>31</sup>

But this description is all at once made invalid as Lysimire exclaims:

Mais est-ce vivre hélas que vivre sans amour?  
 Et peut-il estre un mal, plus grand, plus effroyable,  
 Que n'estre point aimé, que n'estre point aymable,  
 Que n'aimer rien que soy, que vivre tiedement,  
 Sans sçavoir ce que c'est que d'aimer ardemment,  
 Sans connaistre le prix des soupirs & des larmes. (980)

The reader may recognise a veiled allusion here to Scudéry's '[hostilité] au stoïcisme'. These alexandrines illustrate Myriam Maître's remark on Scudéry's essay 'Contre l'indifference' in *Conversations*: 'le projet d'éradication des passions prive selon [Madeleine de Scudéry] l'humanité de toute aspiration au bien' (*op. cit.*, p. 519). Lysimire's elegy thus takes on a philosophical and almost existential dimension, as it redefines love as a universal principle, that which constitutes the basis for human relationships. From her dismissal of passion earlier on, she now turns to a positive portrayal of love. It is not love but its absence that is the cause of 'un mal

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<sup>31</sup> This bucolic, clichéd world seems in *Clélie* mainly to characterise male poetry, as suggested by Cloranisbe's description of his heart in his elegy: 'Et mon coeur affranchy de violens desirs / Y trouvoit aisément de tranquiles plaisirs / Le bel



plus grand, plus effroyable' (*C10*, 980). Through Lysimire, Scudéry re-enacts an ongoing debate in which the *Précieuses* actively took part. Myriam Maître gives an interesting quotation as she comments on Mme Deshoulières's dismissal of stoicism which she addresses in verse to La Rochefoucauld:

Quittez ces dures contraintes,  
Adoucissez par des plaintes  
De vos maux la cruauté;  
Songez qu'insensible aux vôtres,  
On vous croira pour les autres  
Peu de sensibilité.<sup>32</sup>

However, Lysimire's elegy takes us beyond the context of the seventeenth-century salon and 'préciosité'. Its alexandrines are interwoven with the poetics of passion, by means of hyperbole, anaphora and rhythmic alternations — the poetics of what Descartes termed 'les émotions intérieures de l'âme'. Indeed, hardly has Lysimire convinced herself 'd'aimer Daphnis tout negligent qu'il est' than the mere utterance of her lover's assumed name revives her 'douleur extrême' (981):

Est-il juste d'aimer beaucoup plus qu'on ne m'aime,  
De souffrir mille maux que Daphnis ne sent pas,  
Luy qui devoit toujours me suivre pas à pas,

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esmail des prez, une fertile plaine, / La fraîcheur des Zephirs, le bruit d'une fontaine, / Le murmure charmant, de cent petits ruisseaux [...]' (*C10*, 683).

<sup>32</sup> In *Les Précieuses*, p. 520. La Rochefoucauld is known for his *Maximes*. Maxims were a fashionable genre in French intellectual life in the seventeenth century, as suggested once again by Scudéry's insertion of maxims in *Clélie* (*C6*, 1360-78). One of the characteristics of La Rochefoucauld's maxims is their pessimism concerning human passions. La Rochefoucauld is not only regarded as a pessimist but also as a stoic by his contemporaries, among them Mme Deshoulières, an habituée of the 'salons'.

Ne vivre que pour moy, ne songer qu'à me plaire,  
 Ne me donner jamais ni chagrin ni colere,  
 Qui par mille sermens m'a juré mille fois,  
 Qu'il se tenoit heureux de vivre sous mes loix,  
 Qu'il y vouloit mourir, & que tousjours sa flame,  
 D'une constante ardeur embraseroit son ame,  
 Qu'il vouloit m'adorer jusqu'au dernier moment,  
 Et n'estre surpassé par aucun autre Ama[n]t. (981)

Lysimire is here reminiscing on her lover's discourse, which echoes the romance hero's vows to his lady. Although this discourse is stereotyped, its mere articulation ascends to a climax. Like Sappho in *Le Grand Cyrus*, Lysimire views her lover as 'insensible', 'inconstant' (982) and exclaims:

J'aime bien mieux mourir qu'apprendre l'inconstance,  
 De cet injuste Amant dont je pleure l'absence. (982-3)

Nevertheless her condemnation of her lover's disloyalty is not absolute; instead it seems to have a cathartic effect upon her, for she repents:

Non, non, mon cher Daphnis je vous accuse à tort,  
 Vous m'aimez, je vous aime, & jusques à la mort,  
 Nous vivrons l'un pour l'autre, & les races futures,  
 A la posterité diront nos aventures;  
 On parlera de nous à tous les vrais Amants,  
 Ils ne se regleron[t] que par nos sentimens,  
 Nostre exemple instruira tout l'amoureux Empire. (983)

The elegy thus discloses an 'I' that is constantly tossed to and fro between extremes. Although she now directly addresses her lover with the utmost



tenderness, and imagines a fairy-tale future which will perpetuate the fame of their true love, her optimism is, in the following sentence of equivalent length (seven alexandrines), conquered once again by her 'sombre melancholie':

Cependant malgré moy je sens que je soupire,  
La crainte dans mon coeur veut regner à son tour,  
Mais tout ce que je sens enfin est de l'amour, (983-4)

She describes her reason or will as besieged by her 'émotions intérieures' which she lists one by one:

Mes craintes, mes soupçons, mes chagrins, mes murmures,  
Mes larmes, mes soupirs, mes despits, mes injures, (984)

The regular rhythm of each phrase is heightened by her final performative utterances:

Tout est amour Daphnis, & toutes mes douleurs,  
Vous disent mille fois, je meurs Daphnis, je meurs. (*ibid.*)<sup>33</sup>

As in the poem of the unnamed female character in *Urania*, it is a dying voice which throughout the elegy takes us into the labyrinth of the female poetic 'I'.

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<sup>33</sup> The end of this elegy may remind the reader of an elegy by the Comtesse de La Suze, in which she depicts 'l[es] émotion[s] de [son] coeur' (p. 132) and which she concludes with the *amor/mors* motif: 'L'estranger changement de mon visage blême, / Te fera quelque jour connoistre que je t'aime, / De mon teint abattu la mortelle pâleur, / Te dira mon amour sans blesser ma pudeur, / Mon mal me sera doux, & je mourray contente, / Si tu sçais par ma mort que je meurs ton Amante' (*Pièces Galantes*, pp. 132-3).

I have been arguing in sections VI and VII that female poetry in *Urania* is solely based on rhythm and movement, while these two elegies from *Clélie* convey a harmonious balance between syntax and metre. Syntax in these two poems seems to reflect the processes of 'reason' itself, and manifests a certain 'maîtrise de soi' or self-control that constitutes one of the main characteristics of the classical hero as opposed to the baroque hero who is overwhelmed by passion and grief. The role of 'reason' is certainly what most distinguishes baroque from classical aesthetics. Reason plays a great part in the birth of classical heroism; yet in the world of Scudarian ethos, it would be a mistake to define it as antagonistic to love:

A l'opposé des incertitudes de la raison relevées par Pascal,  
les précieuses accordent à la raison un plein pouvoir sur les  
passions, qui ne sont pas si tyranniques qu'on le dit.

La raison est donc le principe de tout amour véritable, et  
son pédagogue.<sup>34</sup>

While 'reason' does not belong to the lexicon of Uranian poetesses, it serves as a major referent in the poems of the two Scudarian poetesses. The treatment of the feminine poetic voice in *Clélie* at first sight differs aesthetically from Uranian female poetry; yet its inner rhythms, as we saw through a line-by-line analysis of the two elegies, disclose an equally complex world, in which the speaking 'I' is tossed to and fro between the powers of reason and passion.

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<sup>34</sup> Maître, *Les Précieuses*, pp. 518-9. Although Scudéry is not a 'cartésienne' (see Jean-Baptiste de Proyard, 'L'anticartésianisme de Madeleine de Scudéry', in Alain Niderst (ed.), *Actes du colloque du Havre 1-5 octobre 1991: les trois Scudéry* [Paris: Klincksieck, 1993], pp. 645-58), we must bear in mind that Descartes's influential *Passions de l'âme* (1649) reflects the early modern period's need to define human passions in rational terms.



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In Part Three I have argued that female literary creativity occupies a significant part in both Wroth's and Scudéry's representations of heroism. Their fictionalisation of the public recognition of female genius in poetry seems to participate in a protofeminist project of re-evaluating the female legacy in the realm of letters. On the other hand, in this idealised world where women of letters are accorded due praise, female characters display a scrupulous regard for decorum, and frequently figure as the censors of their own writings by either concealing their authorship, erasing verses or blushing—all three tokens of modesty. Yet these writings exist typographically and often allow the reader to visualise Uranian and Scudarian heroines engaging in the actual process of poetic creativity.

The treatment of female literary creativity in the two works thus differs only on a stylistic level. For instance, the solitary retreat of female literary creativity in *Clélie* is less pictorial than in *Urania*, and is often left to the reader's imagination. In Wroth's romance, the blurring of boundaries between gardens and rooms, the use of the gardenscape as metaphor for the inner state of the female 'I', or the *topos* of water images linked to the motif of physical disintegration in the heroines' verses, comprise just a few of the baroque *loci* of female poetic expression. In *Clélie*, on the other hand, the female 'I' expresses itself in a less intricate syntax than its Uranian counterpart and does not decorate its discourse with baroque imagery. Nevertheless both texts transcribe a similar experience, clearly distinct from the traditionally male Petrarchan discourse. While in male love poetry it is often the lady's refusal to grant her love to the poet that leads the poet to literary creativity, in the love poetry of Uranian and Scudarian heroines, as in the deep-rooted tradition of female complaint going back to Ovid's *Heroides*, it is the absence and disloyalty of the poetess's lover that prompt

her to weave her discourse within the poetics of the conventional *amor/mors* motif.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See John Kerrigan (ed.), *Motives of Woe, Shakespeare and 'Female Complaint': A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).



## **Part 4**

### ***Pictorial representations of women in Urania and Clélie***

In this final part I examine the subject of my thesis, *Picturing women in Urania and Clélie*, in its literal sense. In order to do so, I shall adopt John Bender's method in *Spenser and Literary Pictorialism*, which will be to analyse Wroth's and Scudéry's 'representation of visual materials' in their treatment of the female body, and the ways in which their images of women 'can seem like pictures'.<sup>1</sup> I will also relate, where appropriate, images of women in *Urania* and *Clélie* to those found in the visual arts of the early modern period, such as emblems, engravings, paintings, masques or ballets.

As mentioned in my discussion of the protofeminist stance of our two authors, although Wroth and Scudéry put female heroism to the fore of their narrative, they also prove sharp judges towards women who 'dishonour their sex'. It is this contrast that I shall explore throughout my fourth part. This explains why I shall first discuss the presence of negative representations of womanhood in *Urania* and *Clélie* (Chapter Eight), before moving to the examination, in the final chapter, of pictorial representations of virtuous women in the two works.

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<sup>1</sup> John B. Bender, *Spenser and Literary Pictorialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 24. John Bender explains his method as follows: 'I wish to abandon awkward categorical distinctions between visual and literary arts, and to base my consideration of Spenser's pictorialism directly upon an analysis of his literary presentation of visual materials' (p. 23). He goes on to argue that 'the fascinating question is not what great paintings a particular poem evokes, but how poems which attempt to imitate our experience of real and imagined visual worlds can seem like pictures at all' (p. 24). In other words, he undertakes a close examination of the ways in which 'the poet engages his reader's imagination through an artful, inevitably contrived analogue of vision' (p. 29).



## Chapter Eight

### *Negative representations of womanhood in Urania and Clélie*

This chapter begins with a preliminary analysis of the problems of representing women pictorially in the early modern period (section I). The second section illustrates these contradictions through an analysis of images of women as monsters, leading to a discussion of negative representations of female beauty (section III), and finally to a study of the ways in which negative portraits may be read as allegories of Vanity and Folly (section IV).

#### I. Contradictions in early modern representations of women

In Part One and Part Two, we were mainly concerned with the problem of reconciling heroism with female virtue. It remains for us to examine the mapping of womanhood in *Urania* and *Clélie* in a broader context, that of the problem of representing women in the early modern period:

La féminité est l'essence même de la contradiction. Extrême en toute chose, on la représente soit sous les traits d'un ange, soit sous ceux d'un diable.<sup>2</sup>

Both *Urania's* and *Clélie's* external and internal audiences are constantly reminded of the early modern dualistic codification of female behaviour. A number of commonplaces in *Urania*, for instance, illustrate aspects of the representation of the female sex in the early modern period.

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<sup>2</sup> Sara F. Matthews Grieco, *Ange ou diablesse: la représentation de la femme au seizième siècle* (Paris: Histoires/Flammarion, 1991), p. 71.

One set of commonplaces is alluded to in the description of sea and ship when Pamphilia and Orilena are sailing to the 'enchanted Theatre':

She grew angry to see she was made to serve her perfections,  
and in *fury* waxed intraged, *the Shippe grew kindly* with  
bending her selfe to each wave to aske pittie, and bowing with  
reverence to demaund safety, and returne. But shee the more  
sought to, *like a proud insolent woman, grew the more stout,*  
*and haughty*, regarding nothing more then her owne *pride* and  
striving to molest those beautyes. (*UI*, 371[ll. 40-2]-  
372 [ll. 1-3])

The simile 'like a proud insolent woman', the adjectives 'stout' and 'haughty' and the noun 'pride' all pertain to a lexicon that is commonly used in misogynistic discourse to disparage the female sex. The combined image of the sea and the ship creates a double effect: it emblematises the dual nature of the female sex, as in emblems where distinction is made between *fortuna bona* and *fortuna mala*. Indeed the sea's 'fury' contrasts with the 'kindness' and 'solemnity' of the ship. On the other hand, this combined image of the sea and ship may recall Swetnam's metaphorical association of these two elements with the female sex in his misogynistic polemic, *The Arraignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women*:

[Women] are also compared unto a painted ship, which  
seemeth faire outwardly and yet nothing but ballace within hir,  
or as the Idolls in *Spaine* which are bravely gilt outwardly and  
yet nothing but lead in them, or like unto the Sea which at  
sometimes is so calme that a cockbote may safely endure hir



might, but anon againe, without rage she is so grown that it  
overwelmeth the tallest Ship that is. (p. 3)

To a certain extent, Wroth confirms Swetnam's opinion, for here the image of the ship is again associated with the 'uncertainties of the sea': it is 'tossed as pleased Destiney' (*U1*, 372, l. 17), and embodies weakness in terms that conjure up another commonplace metaphor for the female sex, that of the 'weaker vessel', which was widely used in anti- and pro-woman debates.<sup>3</sup> In the shipwreck at the beginning of Sidney's *New Arcadia*, the rescued character is male, and the ship dehumanised;<sup>4</sup> but Wroth seems to reverse the scene: the protagonists are not male but female; and she humanises the ship by endowing it with feelings. At the same time, she resorts to an imagery that cannot fail to remind us of the use of the ship and the sea as conventional objects in the early modern depiction of the vagaries of the female sex.

The second enlightening statement is voiced by Philarchos in the second part of *Urania*. Philarchos is married to Orilena. During his peregrinations, he encounters a melancholy woman who turns out to be in love with him. Trying to bring her back to her senses, he becomes the spokesman of this tradition, in reiterating a familiar discourse which urges women to be 'modest' and 'chaste' (*U2*, 130, ll. 1-5). 'Ange ou diablesse', 'Angell' (*ibid.*, l. 4) or 'beast of the hansommer sort' (*ibid.*), the Uranian

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<sup>3</sup> In her response to Joseph Swetnam (see General Introduction, p. 36, footnote 71), Ester Sowernam alludes to his mention of the ship as a metaphor for the physiology and character of the female sex: 'It is a shame [man] hath no more government over the weaker vessel. It is a shame he hath hardened her tender sides, and gentle heart with his boistrous and northern blasts' (*Ester Hath Hang'd Haman*, pp. 43-4).

<sup>4</sup> The ship is described as a carcass; *i.e.* a dead body which is suggested by the mention of 'some few bones of the carcass, hulling there, part broken, part burned, part drowned' (ll. 21-2). This explains why the ship is depersonified and referred to as 'it' rather than as 'she' (*NA*, p. 7).

female character belongs to a pantheon of 'stéréotypes séculaires'.<sup>5</sup> In *Clélie*, the most telling illustration of this dichotomy between female virtue and vice is to be found in the example of the two sisters, la Princesse and la Princesse Tullie, who bear the same patronym and same forename (C2, 861-3; 866).<sup>6</sup> In juxtaposing the two portraits, the author illustrates Sara Matthews Grieco's definition of femininity as 'l'essence même de la contradiction'.

Clearly, then, the Uranian and Scudarian narratives not only represent a utopian world where female virtue triumphs, but also a gallery of vengeful women. Wroth and Scudéry exploit a whole repertoire of negative discursive and iconographic representations of women that might have become available to them not only through moral writings and romances, but also through the visual arts, such as emblems, engravings, paintings, plays, masques and ballets. In the two texts, as we shall see in the next section, we find similar characterisations of female wickedness: both texts provide us with a lexicon that perfectly conforms to the 'Alphabet infame de leur [= women's] imperfection et malice' alluded to by Le Chevalier de l'Escale in his *Alphabet de l'excellence et perfection des femmes* (see p. 112, footnote 3). In other words, the characterisation of Wroth and Scudéry as protofeminists needs to be qualified by a recognition that they are also capable of relying on literary and artistic conventions that seem, on the surface of it, deeply inimical to protofeminism.

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<sup>5</sup> Matthews Grieco, *Ange ou diablesse*, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup> See Venosoen's chapter on 'Madeleine de Scudéry', in *Etudes sur la littérature féminine au dix-septième siècle*, pp. 44-65.



## II. Women as monsters

As noted several times throughout the first two parts of my thesis, *Urania* is a far more traditional romance than *Clélie* is. In the former, one can detect the many elements that characterise pastoral and epic works from the fourteenth to the early seventeenth century, such as enchantment scenes, the presence of giants and dwarves, of enchantresses, wizards and witches, and of nymphs and shepherds, all of which are absent in *Clélie*. In that sense, *Clélie* is a perfect illustration of Georges and Madeleine de Scudéry's precepts in their preface to *Ibrahim*, where they advocate, as we have already seen, 'vraisemblance' in fiction.

This may explain why in *Clélie* there are no literal representations of women as monsters. There is, on the other hand, one such portrait in Wroth's romance, which can be found in the the second part.<sup>7</sup> Clavarindo, exiled second son of the King of Thessaly, goes in search of the lost Morean children with his cousin Licandro, and is separated from him on the island of Engia — where he meets Clianté, daughter of Ollymander who has been enslaved by a giant. Clavarindo starts telling her about his life and how he came to kill a monster:

'I mett a fierce thing, and a monster itt was, butt a deveelish, cuning one, and partly had some beauty. For itt had a woemans face (and one som what tolerable), the rest like a lion partly, as the hinn legs and haulf the body; the shoulders and fore legs like a Grifon, and as flattring a face and countenance as the most dissembling creature of woeman kinde cowl'd have.' (*U2*, 69, ll. 3-8)

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<sup>7</sup> See Jocelyn Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 189-208.

This hybrid creature springs from the many monster descriptions in classical and early modern literature (and the visual arts),<sup>8</sup> and may well remind us, for instance, of Spenser's she-monster in *The Faerie Queene*, called Echidna:

*Echidna* is a Monster direfull dred,  
[...]  
A faire young Mayden, full of comely glee;  
But all her hinder parts did plaine expresse  
A monstrous Dragon, full of fearfull vglinesse (vi. 6. 10)

Clavarindo's portrait of the she-monster highlights the several themes that characterise portraits of evil women in *Urania* and *Clélie*: their dissimulation, disproportion and excess emblematised by the outward appearance and grotesque shape of this she-monster; their beastliness reinforced by the nature of her language ('She roared out [beeing the onely language I heard her use]' [U2, 69, ll. 25-6]); and their lust rendered by the labial alliteration when the narrator describes her 'wagling her head like a light wanton, licking her lips for treacherous kisses' (U2, 69, ll. 9-10). Clavarindo's portrait of this she-monster clearly alludes to the misogynistic statements of the early modern period. This is the only occurrence in the text of a female monster represented as a hybrid creature. The editors' note (U2, 491), citing the work of E. Topsell and of Jonson, indicates that there was in Renaissance England a real fascination for descriptions of monsters. This fascination may have also sprung from the reading of the popular romance, *Amadis de Gaule*. Wroth's insertion of one such portrait inscribes itself in the political agenda that underpins other romances (*Jerusalem Delivered* and *Orlando Furioso*) which stage the Christian victory over

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<sup>8</sup> I am thinking of classical mythology, and in particular of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.



paganism. In the religious context in which *Urania* was written, it might well be Catholicism rather than paganism that is here embodied by the giants and giantesses. Christian victory over the barbarians is later confirmed in *Urania*, as the wife of the defeated evil Giant Lamurandus is christened. This scene may recall *Amadis de Gaule* where 'now and then an evil ruler can be reformed and converts to goodness'.<sup>9</sup> We shall now turn to what seems to be the standard Uranian and Scudarian description of the female monster: she is not depicted as a physically hybrid creature; but her description allows us to relate her to the she-monster of Clavarindo's tale and of Spenser's verse.

In *Urania*, one inset tale which occurs at different stages of the narrative provides us with an extraordinarily rich corpus of phrases, through which the three narrators of this fragmented tale demonise an ambitious woman. At the beginning of the story, she is a young widow and is soon to become the wife of a widower, the King of Romania who has a son called Antissius. She succeeds in making her husband believe that his son Antissius is plotting against him, and has the latter banished from his kingdom. Her wickedness will lead to the tragic death of Antissius and his wife, called Lucenia. Antissius's stepmother is first introduced to us as a 'wicked woman' (*UI*, 32, l. 39), and further as 'young, politique and wicked' (33, ll. 5-6). The adjective 'politique' reads here as a negative attribute, unbecoming to the fair sex, which according to Juan Luis Vives should confine itself to the domestic sphere.<sup>10</sup> Later, in the continuation of

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<sup>9</sup> John O' Connor, *Amadis de Gaule and its Influence on Elizabethan Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 78.

<sup>10</sup> This is suggested in the first book of his *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, entitled 'Of the bringing of a maide when she is a babe', where he praises 'in Rome all maydes [who] whan they were first marryed, brought unto theyr husbandes house distaffe and spindel with wolfe' (sig. B3<sup>v</sup>). His mention of the distaff and spindle indicates what daily activities he deemed to be appropriate for a woman — activities which necessarily confine her to her home. In another instance, he advises married women 'to go abroade' (sig. Cc2<sup>i</sup>) as little as possible. Other writers, such as John Knox in *His First Blast of the Trumpet*

the story, the same adjective is used to characterise her 'ends, which never were but either politike, or lascivious' (73, l. 17). Indeed, the several portrayals of this female character are lexical variations on, and extensions of the theme of the 'wicked, politicke, and lascivious' woman. Were she pictorially represented, she would certainly appear in the shape of a devil, as suggested by the 'damnable' nature of her 'counsell[s]' (33, l. 10). Her demonic nature is re-emphasised by the second narrator, Seleucius, Antissius's uncle, who introduces her as a 'malitious creature' (52, l. 1). The choice of the noun 'creature' suggests that the narrator sees her more as a beast than as a human being. Indeed, later on, he characterises her as an 'insatiable Monster' (53, l. 13). Lucenia too, as reported by Seleucius, describes her as a 'monster of women' (56, ll. 20-1), and in the last part of the tale, the third narrator, Lisandrinus, calls her a 'devill of women' (71, l. 14). Wroth explores the lexicon of female wickedness further, when she provides the reader with a list of vices which detractors of the female sex took delight in citing endlessly. She epitomises all evil: 'treason, adultery, witchcraft and murder, were plentifully in her' (52, l. 4). The noun 'witchcraft' is another word whose derivatives Wroth uses extensively in her portrayal of evil women: we learn of her old husband being 'undone by her bewitching fawnings' (ll. 19-20), of one of her servants whom she '[draws] into the yoke of her witch-craft' (71, l. 29) and who '[a] long time [was] bewicht with her craft, allur'd by her beautie' (72, l. 3). As stated earlier, Wroth operates many more lexical variations and creates a chain of

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*against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, show a misogynistic attitude towards female rulers: 'to promote a woman to beare rule, superioritie, dominion or empire over any realme, nation, or citie, is repugnant to nature, contumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reveled will, and approved ordinance, and finallie it is the subversion of good order, of all equitie and justice' (cited in *Amazons and Warrior Women*, p. 23). Simon Shepherd nevertheless attracts our attention to the motivations underpinning Knox's discourse, which are primarily religious. 'The [female] rulers', he mentions, 'were Catholics, and their activities furthered the cause of the religion that Knox hated. This is the context for Knox's views on the suppression of female rule' (*ibid.*). Knox's discourse is nonetheless one repeatedly reiterated in anti-woman writings.



synonymous phrases: successively we are told of her 'flatterings and dissembling falshoods' (52, ll. 17-8), her cunning (53, l. 23), and 'dissimulation' (71, l. 28). The Queen of Romania epitomises the creature shaped by misogynists in their texts, namely a creature that excels in the art of deception and the practice of artifice.<sup>11</sup> Although the portrayal of this evil character is mainly lexical, outward appearance is characterised twice in quasi-pictorial terms, namely as a 'colour':

'Then had she enough, vowing to be revengd on al, and under  
this colour to execute her malice, and purge her spleene upon  
the famous Prince his son. (*UI*, 52, ll. 21-3)

She came abroad, but oft-times blushing; modesty was the  
colour put upon it. (*UI*, 53, ll. 7-8)

The first quotation lends substance to the deep-rooted misogynous discourse concerning woman's inner corruption of this female character, which is evoked by the mention of her 'spleene'. Although in this particular case the portrayal of the wicked woman in *Urania* draws upon a discursive rather than an iconographic tradition, Wroth achieves a complete picture of female sinfulness in thoroughly conventional terms which her audience would have readily associated with visual or discursive representations of biblical and pagan women, examples of which are listed by moralists in their castigation of the female sex.

In *Clélie*, there is little lexical variety. Scudertian evil women are all characterised identically: they are 'fieres', 'cruelles', 'artificieuses', 'malicieuses' and 'jalouses'. It is perhaps in the 'Story of Tarquin' that the author introduces her wider range of epithets and predicates in her portrayal of Tullie, who is described as an 'abominable personne' (C2, 917), 'la plus

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<sup>11</sup> See Matthews Grieco, *Ange ou diablesse*, p. 264.

perfide femme au monde' (940), a 'barbare' (973), a 'detestable Princesse' (1008), 'cette inhumaine princesse' (C3, 180), 'impitoyable' and 'inspirée par la cruauté mesme' (C2, 1017), 'si naturellement fiere, & mechante' (1018). These terms 'fiere', 'cruelle' (see C2, 971, 972, 992) almost serve as a title indissociable from the name 'Tullie'; but above all she is remembered for her horrible deed which labels her for ever as the emblem of cruelty:

Il est vray que personne ne doute que ce ne soit un artifice de  
la cruelle Tullie. Mais peut-on croire un[e] femme, reprit  
Cesonie, qui a passé avec son chariot sur le corps de son pere?  
(C10, 565)

Tullie's 'chariot' takes on the visual function of an emblem of her wickedness, for with it she ran over her father's body. In the Scudarian narrative the name Tullie thus becomes inseparable from the noun 'chariot', through which she is identified as a 'monster' by her onlookers.<sup>12</sup>

Wicked women in *Clélie* are never explicitly compared to monsters or devils. Yet adjectives such as 'barbare', 'inhumaine', 'abominable' summarise the horror felt by the witnesses of her wickedness. Although it is only as wife of Tarquin that Tullie may fulfil her aspiration to power, she is often pictured as the one fomenting behind the scenes while Tarquin executes her commands:

La fiere Tullie qui avoit toujours dans l'esprit le dessein de  
nuire à quelqu'un, & de faire servir toutes choses ou à sa  
vangeance ou à son ambition, cherchoit dans son esprit si

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<sup>12</sup> In Barthélémy Aneau's *Picta Poesis. Ut Pictura Poesis Erit* (Lyon: Macé Bonhomme, 1552), 8<sup>0</sup>, the emblem called *Anteroseros* represents Tullia driving over her father (sig. E2<sup>v</sup>). In the French translation (*Imagination poetique, traduite en vers François, des Latins, & Grecz, par l'auteur mesme d'iceux. Horace en l'art. La Poësie est comme la pincture* (Lyon: Macé Bonhomme, 1552), 8<sup>0</sup>, the emblem is called *Contr'Amour* (sig. F3<sup>r</sup>).



fertile en inventions de mechanceté, ce qu'elle pourroit faire  
pour empescher l'exécution de la paix ou pour tourmenter du  
moins Clelie. (C9, 249)

'Execution de la paix ou pour tourmenter du moins Clelie'? This concluding clause suggests that Tullie is not just 'politicke' but shares features with the portrait of Envy in the *Roman de la Rose*:

Après refu portraite envie  
Qui ne rist onques en sa vie  
N'onques por rien ne s'esjoi,  
S'el ne vit ou se n'oi  
Aucun grant damage retraire  
Nule riens ne li puet tant plaie  
Com fet maus e mesaventure.  
[...]  
(Anvie est de tel corage,  
Quant biens avient, par po n'enrage) (ll. 239-252b)<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly enough, in both *Urania* and *Clélie*, Envy is always connected to the female sex. Its representation appears here very much in keeping with a deep-rooted tradition that pictures Envy with the features of a woman, and bases its assumption of female weakness on a specific reading of Genesis. The temptation of Eve by the devil who seduced her

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<sup>13</sup> Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. Armand Strubel (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1992), p. 54. In Frances Horgan (trans. and ed.), *The Romance of the Rose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), it is translated as follows: 'Envy was portrayed next, who never in her life laughed or enjoyed anything except when she saw or heard tell of some great trouble. Nothing pleases her so much as evils and misfortune [...]. She burned and melted with rage when she saw anyone who was worthy or good or fair, or whom men loved or praised' (pp. 6-7).

into taking the apple was exploited over and over by the writers involved in the *Querelle des Femmes*.<sup>14</sup> This commonplace association between the figure of Envy and the female sex is particularly pronounced when Scudéry isolates the portrait of Envy in the 'Story of Valérie'. Valérie and Salonine are friends, until the latter's jealousy of the former puts an end to their friendship. Salonine is loved by Spurius whom she decides to scorn. Nevertheless, Spurius quickly forgets her rebuttal, and transfers his affections to Valérie, whom he starts courting. As for Valérie, she is happily in love with Herminius: and because these two happy lovers have been keeping their love secret, it is widely believed that Valérie is enamoured of Spurius. Salonine, who is of a perverse temperament, wants Spurius back and becomes envious of Valérie:

Quand [Salonine] parloit mesme à quelqu'une de ces belles Envieuses dont il y a par tout le monde, & avec qui l'on peut tousjours parler librement au desavantage de toutes les autres belles, elle souffroit volontiers qu'elles disent de Valerie, tout ce que la malignité de l'envie leur en faisoit penser. (C5, 219)

This is preceded by a brief description of Salonine's state of mind (217-8). Although her 'air contraint sur son visage' (217) is the only physical detail,

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<sup>14</sup> It suffices to quote on the one hand Joseph Swetnam, and on the other Esther Sowernam's response to this specific argument to see how rhetorical the woman controversy is. Let us first quote Swetnam, who, after relating Eve's base creation, goes on to comment on her acceptance of the devil's gift: 'Againe, in a manner she was no sooner made but straight way her minde was set upon mischief, for by her aspiring minde and wanton will she quickly procured mans fall, and therefore ever since they are, and have been a woe unto man, and follow the line of their first leader' (*op. cit.*, 1). Sowernam explains man's fall differently: 'Now the woman taking view of the Garden, she was assaulted with a Serpent of the masculine gender; who maliciously env[ied] the happiness in which man was at this time, like a mischievous Politician' (*op. cit.*, 7).



it betrays, like one of Le Brun's brushstrokes,<sup>15</sup> the real nature of the portrayed character and recalls the conventional portrayal of Envy's ugly expression. The picturing of Envy through the *persona* of Salonine is all the more enlightening, as it introduces a lexicon which takes us back to the *Alphabet de l'imperfection et malice [des femmes]*. Salonine is indeed nothing but 'vanitas vanitorum', as suggested by the phrase 'jalousie d'orgueil' (217) which is further echoed in a *huis-clos* scene where Flavie, who is Valérie's confidante, 'tries' Salonine for her malice against Valérie:

Je vous declare que ce que vous avez dans le coeur, n'est autre chose qu'une jalousie de vanité. (C5, 232)

Envy thus metamorphoses Salonine into a damnable creature, who like Amérinthe in the love tale of Zénocrate and Elismonde '[fait] toujours du venin de toutes choses' (C9, 321-2). Rarely does Scudéry employ visual elements to describe her wicked female *personae*. Images of monsters, devils and serpents have no existence in the world of Scuderyan prose. Evoking the image of the serpent, the word 'venin' conjures up many analogies, including those, of course, of woman as the incarnation of the devil, of woman as the origin of evil and social chaos.

If we turn now to the portrayal of Envy in *Urania*, we will find it allegorised in the figures of Antissia and Lucenia who are both jealous of Amphilanthus's love for Pamphilia (U1, 362[ll. 29-42]-363[ll. 1-25]). The imagery (the 'nettle' simile [362, l. 29] and the 'sedge' metaphor [363, l. 18]) used in the passage in question to characterise Antissia's and Lucenia's base feelings is of particular interest. Indeed, the nettle and the sedge share common characteristics: they are 'unfriendly plants', stinging in the case of nettles, and cutting in the case of sedge. Furthermore, since

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<sup>15</sup> Le Brun is well-known as a physiognomist in his drawings where he relates parts of the human body to those of animals.

nettles are unwanted plants in a garden, and sedge grows in marshy lands, they conjure up the Shakespearean image of the 'unweeded garden', one that specifically recalls the language Hamlet uses, when castigating his newly widowed mother as the embodiment of vice for betraying the memory of her dead husband.<sup>16</sup> In Shakespeare's text, the image of the 'unweeded garden' is, as in *Urania*, associated with 'increase of appetite', which takes us back to the image of insatiable women in the two main texts of this study.

With the exception of the female hybrid creature in *Urania*, the portrayal of evil women in both works is mainly conveyed through visual and lexical analogies to monsters. What turns these women into 'monsters' is not so much their physical appearance as their moral attributes: flattery, covetousness, envy, jealousy and violence. Moral monstrosity may often, however, be concealed beneath a physical appearance that conforms to all the literary stereotypes of beauty, as I shall show in the next section.

### III. Negative representations of female beauty

'Envieuses', 'jalouses', 'irritées', 'vindicatives', Uranian and Scudarian wicked women are nevertheless often armed with their most redoubtable weapon: beauty. Beauty is made the associate of cruelty and danger, as implied by phrases such as 'la belle & dangereuse Amerinthe' (C9, 305). Although Scudarian wicked women are not lexically metamorphosed into witches or sorceresses, they are, like their Uranian counterparts, skilled in the art of 'dissimulation'. In the love tale of Thémiste and Lindamire, for instance, Démarate plays the role of the anti-heroine. Having known Thémiste since she was a child, because her

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<sup>16</sup> *Hamlet*, in Horace Howard Furness (ed.), *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1877), vol. 1, i. 2. 133-6.



governess was Thémiste's aunt, Démarate is deeply in love with the young man who, after a long absence, comes back to Syracuse. It is her misfortune to have been promised to Périanthe, Prince of Syracuse. Her governess, who has guessed Démarate's state of mind, resorts to reason, reminding her:

que les personnes de sa condition ne se marioient pas par choix, & qu'il n'y avoit point de Prince Souverain dans [leur] Isle, qui luy fust si avantageux d'espouser que Perianthe. Si bien que [Démarate] qui avoit desja beaucoup d'esprit, & qui l'avoit fier, & ambitieux, se resolvant tout d'un coup à espouser le Prince de Syracuse, se resolut en mesme temps de s'en faire aimer. Ce ne fut pourtant pas pour le plaisir d'en estre aimée, mais seulement pour avoir du credit dans son esprit, & par consequent dans sa Cour. Elle dissimula donc, & agit avec tant d'adresse qu'elle donna de l'amour au Prince, & de l'amour la plus ardente: ainsi elle vint effectivement à avoir tout le credit qu'elle pouvoit souhaiter. (C6, 863-4)

Of Démarate, we are repeatedly told that she is 'artificieuse' (C6, 1124): '[elle] dissimule mieux ses sentimens que qui que ce soit' (939), '[elle] sçait mieux l'art de dissimuler que personne ne l'a jamais sçeu' (1058) and she constantly resorts to 'cét art de dissimuler qu'elle sçavoit si bien' (1064). And like Antissius's 'wicked grandmother' in *Urania*, she knows how to flatter her husband with 'bewitching fawnings'. Discovering Thémiste's love for Lindamire, who is her sister-in-law, Démarate sets out to plot against their secret happiness: as stated above, Démarate was forced to marry Périanthe and is jealous to see that the man whom she loves loves another. To achieve her ends, she involves her husband Périanthe who, as the brother of the orphan Lindamire, has all power over her marital future. Démarate convinces him that Thémiste has been disloyal to him, and argues

that Lindamire must marry Thémiste's rival (the Prince of Messène). One day, after visiting his sister Lindamire with the intention of telling her about Thémiste's so-called disloyalty, Périanthe returns home, and 'trouva Demarate belle, douce, & flatteuse, qui acheva de tourner son esprit comme bon luy sembla' (1217).

While there is hardly any emphasis on the particular physical traits of wicked women in *Clélie*, the treatment of female sinfulness in *Urania* is far more pictorial: Wroth resorts to a metaphorical language that faithfully reproduces the misogynistic discourse on female beauty. This is best illustrated in Clarimatto's autobiographical tale. Having been betrayed by a lady, Clarimatto describes her in a manner that recalls well-known analogies between female beauty and inner foulness (*UI*, 102[ll. 34-9]-103[ll. 1-2]). The description resembles a universal warning against the deceptive appearance of beauty. Following the misogynists, Clarimatto defines beauty as a snare, as 'the cage of a foule mind, and the keeper of a corrupt soule' (102, ll. 37-8), or in Swetnam's words as 'the bane of many a man' (*op. cit.*, 14). This dualistic image of beauty is reinforced at the end of Clarimatto's tale:

Behold this creature by you, your shame, and mine, and in her  
forehead the faire field of our disgrace. (104, ll. 32-3)

The most negative visual representation of female beauty is achieved in the following passage where Polarchos arrives at the castle of a lascivious lady, whom he has agreed to deceive in order to free Parselius and Leandrus, two knights imprisoned by her. This lady lives in an 'impregnable Castle', and is 'unwinable' (*UI*, 401, l. 38), 'crafty and devilish', but also 'loves her pleasure' and is 'passionate' (403, ll. 12-4). The lady emerges as the embodiment of lust and lasciviousness (ll. 21-30). She is no true Venus, as is implied by the description of her ostentatious nakedness. She is utterly



bereft of the delicacy that adorns the beauty of Uranian and Scudorian virtuous women.<sup>17</sup> Her 'nakednesse' (l. 26) is lexically associated with 'immodestie' (l. 25), as conveyed by unflattering pictorial details such as 'her necke all bare as low as her brests' (l. 24), 'her sleeves loose' (l. 25) and the description of her apparel:

She had her haire curled, and dress'd up with Jewels, and Rings, and many pritty devises, as wantonly, and phantastically placed as her eyes, which laboured in twinckling to moistnesse, giving occasion for beliefe, that that humor was most ruling in her. Unsteady she was in her fashion, her head set upon so slight a necke, as it turnd like a weather-cocke to any vaine conceit that blew her braines about: or like a staulke of Oates, the eare being waighty: her feete never but mooving, as not willing to stand, or sit still; her gate wagling and wanton, businesse she had perpetually in her selfe, and with her selfe, the looking-glasse being most beholding to her for stay. (ll. 31-40)

On female vanity Richard Brathwait writes a similar description in *The English Gentlewoman*:

The third Superfluity ariseth from their vanity, who take delight in wearing great sleeves, misshapen Elephantine bodies, traines sweeping the earth with huge poakes to shroud their phantasticke heads, as if they had committed some egragarious fact which deserved that censure.

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<sup>17</sup> On Wroth's and Scudéry's reconciliation of female beauty and female virtue, see Chapter Nine, section XI, pp. 372-84.

Further addressing his gentlewoman, Brathwait clearly identifies vanity as a vice related to the female sex:

There is nothing which introduces more effeminacy into flourishing State than vanity in habit.<sup>18</sup>

Although this work was published some ten years after *Urania*, it transcribes an ongoing debate on woman and fashion throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>19</sup> In that respect, it is interesting that Brathwait and Wroth should use the same word ('phantasticke') to describe female vanity and include a similar reference to a woman's 'sleeves', for this suggests that they both resort to the same fashion lexicon commonly found in disparaging descriptions of 'wanton Venuses', *i.e.* courtesans. But before going any further in the interpretation of Wroth's portrayal of her young courtesan, we need to analyse another version of female wantonness in the shape of an older woman.

Wroth inserts within the narrative of the second part of *Urania* a striking portrait of 'the greatest libertine the world had of female flesh' (*U2*, 159, ll. 37-8). This woman is an evil enchantress. In other words she incarnates the antithesis of Melissea who, as seen in Part One, is the *dea ex machina* who reigns over the Uranian world. Yet while beauty that adorns the body of an evil woman is a commonplace used by artists to expose the dual nature of women, the explicit representation of a woman's physical ugliness offers an even sharper, more grotesque version of her vices:

A woeman dangerous in all kinds, flattering and insinuating abundantly, winning by matchless intising; [...] her traines

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<sup>18</sup> (London: Bernard Alsop and Thomas Fawcet, 1631), fol., p. 15 and p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> On excess in female dress as a mark of moral dubiousness, see below, p. 319, footnote 37.



farr exceeding her love and as full of faulshood as of vaine  
 and endles expressions, beeing for *her over-acting fashion  
 more like a play-boy dressed gawdely* up to shew a fond,  
 loving, woemans part then a great Lady; soe busy, soe full of  
 taulke, and in such a sett formallity. (U2, 159 [ll. 39-42] - 160  
 [ll. 1-3]).

This opening portrait of female devilishness is written in the same vein as the previous one. Emphasis is once more on the female character's vanity, slyness and extravagance. The narrator's allusion to the 'over-acting fashion more like a play-boy' is intriguing. This simile is also found earlier in the depiction of Antissius's wicked stepmother, who is compared to 'a delicate play-boy act[ing] a loving womans part' (U1, 73, ll. 30-1). These two actor similes convey, in each case, the narrator's disapproval of these women's behaviour. They are portrayed as breaking with early modern decorum, which dismisses acting as a profession unsuitable for a woman, and instead has men perform female roles. By playing the role of a boy playing the part of a woman, they deprive themselves of their true femininity.

In the above portrayal of the old libertine, femininity is explicitly defined as synonymous with 'purest modesty and bashfullnes' (U2, 160, l. 5). Wroth's depiction of this lady concentrates on the character's 'endles [facial] expressions' (159[l. 42]-160[l. 1]), which we learn are nothing but counterfeiting, as suggested by her 'soe many framed lookes, fained smiles, and nods, with a deceitfull downe-cast looke' (160, ll. 3-5). As for her speech, we are told that 'her toungue [rang] chimes of faulse beeguilings and intrapping charmes' (ll. 9-10). She therefore embodies everything early modern misogynists regard as a danger to man's moral integrity and 'sexual virtue'. And the minuteness of her physical description is even more interesting, since it recalls grotesque representations of witches in early modern engravings:

Her minde [is] suteable to her proportion. She is, as I sayd,  
 light and slender, longe-Visaged and sufficiently craggy,  
 bony, sunck in the cheekes, and eyes soe hollow as if they  
 ment to goe a reverse and see how her frantick plotts sute with  
 her braines; wide-mouthed, ill-toothed, which promiseth noe  
 perfumed breath if nott by art; leane and therfor dreadfull.  
 (ll. 32-7)

Each detail may make one think of Mandrague, the old witch from *L'Astrée*; or of Hans Baldung Grien's paintings, such as a *Study of an Old Woman: The Hag* (c.1535), *The Bewitched Groom* (c.1544), or *The Three Witches* (1514).<sup>20</sup> Wroth's 'libertine' is even more reminiscent of Jeremias Falck's engraving *An Old Woman at the Toilet Table* (see Illustration 2). Just as Falck's 'old woman [who] with a wrinckled face and sagging breasts that hang out of the body of her fancy dress, looks into a mirror', and 'therefore seems oblivious to the fact she is old and ugly', Wroth's sorceress appears obsessed with the details of her 'toilette'. Falck's 'old woman' is shown 'holding flowers in her hands, one of them in front of her breasts, seemingly trying to decide where to adorn herself'.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Wroth's reader is enabled to picture her ugly 'sorcerress' (*U2*, 162, l. 24) doing her make-up at her 'toilet table', as the female narrator exclaims reprovingly:

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<sup>20</sup> The portrait of Mandrague in the story of Damon and Fortune is part of the description of a painting: she embodies 'le laid en sa perfection' (*L'Astrée*, vol. 1, 445), and is portrayed as a courtesan too (*ibid.*, p. 445-6). On the representation of witches in the visual arts, see James H. Marrow and Alan Shestack (eds.), *Hans Baldung Grien: Prints and Drawings* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1981), p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> Diane H. Russell and Bernadine Barnes (eds.), *Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints* (Washington: National Gallery of Art; New York: Feminist Press, 1990) p. 197.



For she hath too freely parted with her flesh, painted  
*abominably* as to stopping up of the furrowes time and ill  
 living hath plowed her face with. (160, ll. 37-9)

The adverb 'abominably' not only conveys the female narrator's horror at such vanity but summarises, once more, early modern attitudes regarding a woman's outward appearance. The make-up theme is a leitmotif in writings that 'admonish women to adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire'.<sup>22</sup> In *La Courtisane déchiffrée* (1642), the anonymous author divides his book into chapters entitled 'charm i', 'charm ii', 'charm iii' (etc.). Make-up is the subject of 'charm iv'. As conveyed by the title of the book, the word 'charm' must be here construed as synonymous with the malevolent powers of the female libertine who leads man astray. The anonymous author defines the use of 'fard, plâtre et parfum' in conventional terms and explains with profound disdain that such women

croyent estre des Deesses sur terre qui meritent d'estre  
 adorées, qu'elles sçachent qu'elles ne sont que du fumier  
 couvert de neige, & de la fiente avec des fleurs, un riche  
 coffre plein de vers, une vapeur legere que le moindre souffle  
 reduit au neant, comme l'ecume de la mer, qui de loin et au  
 soleil se retirant, elle n'est qu'ecume sale et un excrement  
 abject de cet element: c'est une fleur de foin qui s'ouvre le  
 matin; s'espanouit à midy, & le vent donnant dessus, la fleur  
 tombe, elle devient neant, puis ce qui reste n'est que soin et

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

nourriture des bestes. Telles sont les beautez artificielles des Courtisanes.<sup>23</sup>

Given the ugliness of Wroth's 'libertine', the mention of her 'flesh, painted abominably' creates an even more repulsive picture of female vanity, which once again belongs to a deep-rooted discourse on woman's use of cosmetics.<sup>24</sup> The portrait of the wanton lady by Clarimatto, which I have analysed above, and that of the ugly sorceress both end with a reference to the narcissistic nature of these two women. While the old woman appears as most concerned with her appearance, her younger and handsomer version emerges too as one of the vulgarised stereotypes found in the visual arts: the presence of concrete physical details, such as 'her head set upon so slight a necke, as it turnd like a weather-cocke' (*U1*, 403, l. 35), 'her gate wagling and wanton' (l. 38) and the 'looking-glasse being most beholding to her for stay' (ll. 39-40), conjures up the allegorical images of female inconstancy, lust and vanity, often represented similarly in engravings and emblems. The motif of the looking-glass, in particular, is one that constantly recurs in the iconographical denunciation of woman's egotism.<sup>25</sup> Under the sharp brushstrokes of satirists, 'la Dame à sa Toilette' becomes 'a ridiculous figure' which in the example of the Uranian 'wanton Venus' is comically

<sup>23</sup> Anon., *La Courtisane déchiffrée dédiée aux dames vertueuses de ce temps* (Paris: Jacques Villery, 1642), 8<sup>0</sup>, p. 136 and p. 141.

<sup>24</sup> The use of cosmetics was even considered to be a sin in religious terms (see Juan Luis Vives, *Intruction of a Christen Woman* (sigs. G2-G4).

<sup>25</sup> We should nevertheless note that the mirror has a twofold function. On the one hand, it emblematises female vanity, on the other it is also used in emblems to depict virtue or wisdom, as suggested by the figure of 'Prudenza' in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia or Morall Emblems* (London: Benj[amin] Motte, 1709), 4<sup>0</sup>, p. 63, fig. 251. See also Thomas Salter, *A Mirrhor Mete for all Mothers, Matrones, and Maidens, Intituled the Mirrhor of Modestie*, where the author makes a similar distinction. He insists that there are two kinds of mirrors: 'the Mirrhor of Modestie is made of another manner of matter and is much more worthe then any Chrystall Mirrhor for as one teacheth how to attire the outward bodie, so the other guideth to garnishe the inwarde mynde, and maketh it meete for vertue' (London: Edward White, 1579, 16<sup>0</sup>, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>). See also Matthews Grieco, *Ange ou diablesse*, p. 256.



rendered: the looking-glass is not just an instrument in which the lady looks at herself but an agent endowed with a magnetic power, as it 'is beholding to her for stay'.<sup>26</sup>

*Clélie* offers a still more ironic treatment of the mirror motif, as it is associated with female vanity. Lucrèce, Valérie, the Prince of Pométie and Mutius are gathered at Racilia's house. Seeing a beautiful vase on a table, the Prince of Pométie starts praising its workmanship. On hearing this, two slaves decide to bring the vase over to him, so that he can have a closer look, but they happen to break it. All the company shows consternation; yet to the astonishment of them all, Racilia remains calm. This starts a conversation on the choleric nature of women, and how 'les belles doivent encore avoir plus de soin de s'en corriger que les autres, car lors que la colere est excessive elle gaste la beauté' (C3, 273). To illustrate her point, Lucrèce proceeds to tell her audience the tale of a lady who, having decided to admire herself in her mirror, became ugly all at once (274-82):

Ce qu'il y eut de rare fut qu'elle trouva *son miroir si effroyablement terny*, qu'elle ne s'y voyoit que comme on se voit à travers *un broüillard fort espais*. De sorte que ne sçachant d'abord *s'il y avoit effectivement du broüillard* dans sa Chambre, quoy qu'il fist fort beau, elle se tourna avec

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<sup>26</sup> See Russell and Barnes (eds.), *Eva/Ave*, p. 197. We should also note that the *OED* remarks that 'the general acceptance of "beholding" may have been due to a notion that it meant looking (e.g. with respect, or dependence), or to association with the idea of "holding of" or "from" a feudal superior.' It then goes on to give two definitions, both now obsolete. The first means 'under obligation, obliged, indebted', and the second refers to 'that [which] holds fast the eyes; [is] engaging, attractive'; and is followed by an example from Sidney's *Arcadia* (I, 50,1598): 'when he saw me [...] my beautie was no more beholding to him than my harmony'. Wroth clearly puns on the double meaning, and suggests that the relationship between her proud woman and the mirror is, as it were, a feudal one, in the sense that her female *persona* appears as a slave to the image that she sees reflected in the mirror, and the mirror as a sovereign object among her paraphernalia.

chagrin du costé où nous estions ses Amies & moy: si bien que comme nous vismes son action chagrine, & que nous connusmes ce qui la causoit, parce que nous estions vis à vis de son miroir aussi bien qu'elle, nous en rismes. (277)

The mirror can be seen as a pivotal object around which the whole scene is structured. The situation in this passage resembles that of Falck's engraving to which I have already alluded. Lucrèce and the two other friends are like the 'two comely young women' in *An Old Woman at the Toilet Table*. Their cheerfulness contrasts with 'l'action chagrine' of this conceited 'Venus' who is so concerned with her beauty that she cannot help looking at herself in her mirror, because of the 'plaisir excessif que sa beauté luy causoit' (277). Irony is of course at work: her mirror is blurred and thus her vanity punished. The scene is all the more ironical since conventionally the past participle 'terny' applies to the description of beauty itself. Thus rather than a mirror being 'si effroyablement terny', it would normally, as in Falck's engraving, reflect, in Ronsard's words, 'la vieillesse/ [qui] fera ternir [la] beauté'.<sup>27</sup> This unconventional reversal is emphasised by the mist simile ('qu'elle ne voyoit que comme on se voit à travers un broüillard fort espais') which ironically troubles this woman's senses ('De sorte que ne sçachant d'abord s'il y avoit effectivement du broüillard [...], quoy qu' il fist fort beau'). Not only is she vain but she cannot make sense of what has happened. Epitomising vanity, she also comes to embody ill temper. Indeed, each intervention by Lucrèce to appease her contributes to the metamorphosis of this proud woman into a yet more comical stereotype of female vanity:

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<sup>27</sup> In Jean Céard et al. (eds.), *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: NRF/Gallimard, 1993), 'Ode xvii', ll. 17-8.



Mais à peine eus-je ouvert la bouche, que la colere de cette belle irritée changeant d'objet, elle se tourna vers moy [...], adjoustant paroles sur paroles, sans donner le temps à personne de parler. Cependant *les lis & les roses de son beau teint se confondoient* de telle sorte, qu'on ne les discernoit déjà plus: car elle estoit toute rouge, *le blanc de ses yeux* n'estoit mesme plus tout à fait blanc, elle les avoit *grands, & plus grands qu'à l'ordinaire*, ils estoient pourtant *troublez, & esgarez*, elle regardoit comme si elle n'eust point veu, *la bouche luy avoit changé de forme*, elle *redisoit vingt fois la mesme chose*, & elle ressembloit bien plus à une Bachante en fureur, qu'à une modeste Romaine (279-80)

Her vanity literally metamorphoses her beauty into a comically grotesque appearance, as conveyed by the hyperbolic description of her face, which recalls Wroth's 'she-monster'. Like Wroth, Scudéry draws attention to details of her character's eyes and language. The latter betrays her loss of her intellectual faculties: 'elle redisoit vingt fois la mesme chose', while her face has lost its fair proportions and has become misshapen and ugly. Indeed, the Latin equivalent of 'shape' or 'form', that is 'formosum', originally means beauty, which implies that anything that is not 'formosum' or 'shapely' is ugly. This is reinforced by the comparison to a 'Bachante en fureur', whose representation as a dishevelled and terrifying spectacle owes debt to a deep-rooted stereotypical representation of female folly which can be traced back to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

In all these various examples of negative representations of the female sex, beauty is defined in dualistic terms. Physical beauty in the above instances is contrasted with inward ugliness, a contrast which is reinforced through the recurring association with witchcraft, as evinced by

the multiple metaphorical analogies (commonplace in the period) between the use of cosmetics and sorcery. Represented as the doing of a witch-like mind, beauty is here conventionally depicted as synonymous with female vanity, the irremediable outcome of which is folly, as shown in the example of the 'Bachante en fureur'. Yet if, as a 'Bachante en fureur', the Scuderian anti-heroine emblematises not only vanity but folly (in the sense of madness or loss of reason), it is, however, in *Urania* that the treatment of folly as a feminine entity is more fully explored, as we shall see in the next section.

#### IV. Pictorial representations of folly as a feminine entity in *Urania*

In *Urania*, there are two representations of female folly which conjure up the image of the 'Bachante en fureur'. In the first part, she is embodied by Nereana, and in the second by Antissia.

Although Antissia is presented as Pamphilia's good friend at the beginning of the romance, she takes on, in the course of the narrative, the features of an anti-heroine and turns, on several occasions, into the opposite of Pamphilian wisdom. Rosindy tells his sister, Pamphilia, the story of Antissia's 'brainsick' fury (*U2*, 35, l. 25). Jealous of Amphilanthus's love for Pamphilia, Antissia is driven to madness:

O Jelousy, the prettiest, yett the harmfulest frency that is!  
How itt makes one mistake all truthes, and takes onely faulce  
shaddowes into their considerations! She fretted, she coulerd,  
she flunge to her chamber, she ther railed, she cried, she  
stamp'd, she revild all, heavenly things allmost, but all curstily  
she curst and condemn'd to everlastinge distruction. (*U2*, 33,  
ll. 16-21)



‘Madness’ is here clearly rendered through a succession of extremely visual actions which, as the portrayal of Antissia’s fury unfolds, increase in intensity. Nevertheless, the opening of her story, which could be construed in terms of theatrical performance, contrasts with the static posture of Antissia in the second half of her portrait, whose pictorial quality makes it a speaking picture of female folly:

She was upon the sand, neither waulking, running, nor  
standing still, yett partly exercising all. She neither sange, nor  
spake, nor cried, nor laughed, butt a strange mixture of all thes  
together. (33, ll. 36-9)

There follows a description of her apparel (33[ll. 39-42]-34[ll. 1-7]), recalling that of female vanity analysed above. The loss of her senses (33, ll. 36-9) is equated with the looseness of her clothes (34, ll. 1-7). Once more, as in the portrait of the beautiful libertine sketched by Wroth in the first part of *Urania* and by Brathwait in *The English Gentlewoman*, the narrator mentions one particularly significant detail: her ‘wide-bent sleeves’ (l. 4) which clearly associate her with one of the ‘multiples défauts du sexe faible’, namely female propensity for cosmetic ostentation.<sup>28</sup> Details, such as the ‘feather’ on ‘the top’ of her ‘hatt’ (l. 1), normally symbolise pride or envy in early modern representations of the seven deadly sins. The strangeness and unattractiveness of her attire are reinforced by the absence of ‘lace’, a more delicate and less ostentatious adornment than her incongruous combination of ‘a band, with a little ruff’ (ll. 2-3). If one compares, for instance, Pierre Cool’s *Effigie des sept péchés mortels* with his *Effigie des sept vertus* (see Illustration 3), one will notice that the women epitomising fickleness in the first ‘effigy’ all wear ruffs, whereas

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<sup>28</sup> See Matthews Grieco, *Ange ou diablesse*, pp. 247-385.

the women epitomising virtue in the second engraving wear a plain dress in the Roman style.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the lack of 'nobleness', as remarked by the editors of the second part of *Urania*, is also suggested in the description of her buskins (34, ll. 10-2):

Peach color, according to Henri Peacham, symbolizes love: 'Of the Signification of Colours', *The Compleate Gentleman* (London: E. Tyler, 1661) Wing P943, 157. Sicile (a pseudonym for the herald of Alphonso V, King of Aragon) in his treatise on colour symbolism, *Les Blasons des couleurs* (1528), associates the color peach with 'diminished riches, lost courage, and little nobleness' (*Lincithium*, 40). (U2, 482).

Depicted as a 'mad, concieted Nimphe' (U2, 34, ll. 12-3) whose costume resembles the attire of Nereana, Antissia may also remind Wroth's audience of engravings representing allegories of Wisdom and Ignorance. The image of Antissia 'upon the sand' is later developed:

Her foule consience brought a retirednes to her. In that time her thoughts must yett bee busy, and soe she fell to studdy and gott a tuter [...]. This fellow was brought to her by meere chance, beeing waulking on thos sands, raving out high-strained lines which had broke the bounds of his braines, and yett raged in the same fitt still. Itt was Antissias ill fortune to heere of him, and soe to send for him to her, shee beeing butt on the top of the hill, and soe entertained him into her service. And soe fittly hath hee served her as to make her as mad as him self. (40 [ll. 32-4; 36-8]-41 [ll.1-4])

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.



Antissia has similar allegorical attributes to those of 'Ignorance' in Etienne Delaune's *La Sagesse* (Paris, 1569). The setting (the sand and the sea) in which the reader is made to picture Antissia may be construed as the sanctuary of Ignorance. Indeed, like Ignorance in Delaune's picture, 'une femme enfoncée à demi dans le sol, à l'orée d'un bois',<sup>30</sup> Antissia is first seen 'upon the sand'. Antissia appears as surrounded and endowed with all the attributes of Ignorance which

incarne ainsi la nature physiologique, terrestre et humide de la  
féminité qui l'exclut du domaine de l'intellect et du  
royaume.<sup>31</sup>

Although we see Antissia on top of the hill, her physical elevation characterises her presumptuous aspiration to equal the legendary poetess, Sappho. Ironically, however, Antissia defines herself in the following scene as the epitome of Ignorance. Having decided to find a means of curing Antissia's madness, her husband takes her to Melissea. Once arrived at the latter's abode, Antissia starts praising the enchantress in extravagant terms (*U2*, 52, ll. 4-15). Melissea is the figure of 'wisdom', 'the illustrious commandress of knowledg' (l. 7), 'the guiding starr to understanding' (ll. 10-1) in Antissia's eyes. Melissea thus retains all the characteristics of wisdom through which Wroth completes her representation of 'l'opposition entre la femme céleste et la femme terrestre'. In Sara Matthews Grieco's words, Antissia embodies 'l'univers équivoque de la nature et les mystères du monde souterrain', and Melissea, the Uranian *Dea ex machina*, is on the contrary 'cette femme spirituelle':

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<sup>30</sup> See Matthews Grieco, *Ange ou diablesse*, p. 74.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Douée du privilège de la Connaissance, elle est inspirée par la lumière divine à laquelle elle se réfère.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, throughout the whole narrative, this 'juxtaposition allégorique' is achieved principally through the antagonistic *personae* of Antissia and Pamphilia. Both write poetry, yet while the matchless Pamphilia excels in the poetic art, Antissia's verses are the fruit of her 'phansies' (*U2*, 251, l. 8), which she, like her husband Dolorindus earlier (51, l. 10), dismissively defines as 'poetticall furie[s]' (251, l. 20). Antissia and Pamphilia are undoubtedly equivalent to Scudéry's Damophile and Sappho. Antissia and Damophile differ from each other in many ways. Unlike Damophile in *Le Grand Cyrus* who strives to compete with Sappho, Antissia does not aim to imitate Pamphilia. Antissia is temporarily 'possest with poetticall raptures, and fixions able to turne a world of such like woemens heads into the mist of noe sence' (251, ll. 17-9). While the reader may pity Antissia's lot or find her a rather entertaining character, Damophile, a scornful and opportunistic woman (the perfect stereotype of the 'précieuse ridicule'), instead inspires awe. Nevertheless, in both cases the writer's intention seems to be the same:

Il n'y a rien de plus aimable, ny de plus charmant qu'une Femme qui s'est donné la peine d'orner son esprit de mille agreables connoissances, quand elle en sçait bien user; il n'y a rien aussi de si ridicule, ny de si ennuyeux, qu'une Femme sottement sçavante. (*GC*; vol. 10, 352)

In *Urania*, we find a similar sentiment expressed by Antissius, who describes his aunt's 'strained pratling ore stage-like-acting taulke' (*U2*, 35, ll. 32-3) and 'raging, raving extravagant discursive language' (41, l. 11):

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



Beeing a dangerous thing att any time for a weake woeman to studdy higher matters then their cappasitie can reach to; and indeed she was butt weake in true sence, butt colorick ever and rash, and now such a heighth of poetry, which att the best is butt a frency. [...] if you did, Madame, butt see her speake, you wowld say you never saw soe direct a mad woeman. Such Jestures and such brutish demeanor, fitter for a man in woemans clothes acting a sibilla then a woeman, [...] whos very face doth claime att least outward discreasion. (ll. 4-7; 12-7)

Beneath these lines there lurks, once more, the early modern discourse that castigates 'le caquet des femmes' as unseemly to the female sex.<sup>33</sup> The unseemliness of Antissia's speech is stressed by Wroth's use of the acting metaphor (ll. 14-15) — one of the rhetorical devices that best expresses a character's disapproval of a woman's actions.<sup>34</sup> Antissius's dismissal of his aunt's behaviour is later echoed by Dolorindus. At this stage, Dolorindus and Antissia have set sail for 'Delos, wher the sage Melissea remain[s]' (*U2*, 51, ll. 13-4). During the journey, Antissia is heard 'singing (as she called itt) [a] tedious ditty, onely noiseworthy butt noe way senceble, att least pleasing to her husband, therfor nott much meritting prising' (50, ll. 13-5). Hearing her sing, Dolorindus exclaims in the reproving manner of a seventeenth-century moralist:

Did ever a chaste lady make such a songe, ore chaste eares indure the hearing itt? Fy, fy, Antissia, if you will write, write

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<sup>33</sup> See Matthews Grieco, *Ange ou diablesse*, p. 317.

<sup>34</sup> Women did not appear in the Jacobean theatre. Such an appearance was deemed to be inappropriate for their sex; on this subject; see p. 324, footnote 1.

sence and modestie, nott this stuff that maides will blush to  
heere. (51, ll. 4-7)

Dolorindus does not utterly condemn women's writing as long as it shows 'modesty'. Beneath Dolorindus's nuanced rebuke we can hear Wroth's own voice which is implicitly reasserting a woman's right to the sphere of letters, so long as, to use Sappho's words in *Le Grand Cyrus*, she does not 'dishonour her sex'. Like Scudéry through the *persona* of Sappho, Wroth condemns the 'Damophile' type of woman. Yet she also voices her disapproval through Antissia herself, who, long after recovering from her 'poeticall furies', relates her adventure to the Queen of Bulgaria (*U2*, 251, ll. 7-33):

And in that fearfull dress did I traviele alonge, all the while  
taulking and ravingly throwing out undigested rimes, and to  
my thinking, gallant comparisons, and daintie expressions of  
the foulishest Vaine phansies that ever spoiled a silly braine  
that straind itt self, ore rather squised itt self, into foulerie in  
the foulishest degree. (ll. 29-33)

Antissia's castigation of her own 'follies' not only reproduces a conventional discourse which associates the female sex with baseness, but also textualises early modern women's sharp judgment towards other women who sully their reputation and thus are the cause of such misogyny. While the past participle 'possest' (l. 17) almost conjures up the image of the devil, Antissia's stress on the superlative 'foulishest' (coupled with the adjective 'Vaine' and the noun 'foulerie') this time combines the image not of vanity with beauty, but with madness or ridicule. One sense of 'foulerie' is foolery, which is synonymous with folly or 'absurdity' (one of the first meanings listed by the *OED*; madness comes last). On the other hand, while



the third sense of 'foul' recorded in the *OED* refers to 'blotted, illegible handwriting', the first sense is 'grossly offensive to the senses, physically loathsome' (*ibid.*). It is possible then that Wroth is here playing with these different meanings.

The first sense of the word 'foul' (*i.e.* 'putridity' or 'corruption') is often used by early modern moralists writing on female vices. It is invariably often synonymous with dirt, uncomeliness and deformity.<sup>35</sup> The many meanings of the cognate 'foul' also suggest that Antissia views her past conduct not simply in moral but also physiological terms, as reinforced by her phrase 'undigested rimes' (l. 30). It was indeed a commonplace for early modern misogynists to list every single bodily function of woman in order to demonstrate her baseness as well as her inferiority.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Antissia's shame at her 'fearfull dress' (l. 29) is also enlightening as to early modern attitudes to female fashion. As she awakes from her nightmarish world, the dress is the first thing she notices:

Butt when she saw her apparell, soe strange, soe phantastick,  
soe madd like, her couler rose in her cheeks, shame in her  
hart, that in an extreame passion she ran to her bed and  
covered her dispised self soe close as she had neere stifled her  
self, beeing soe consious to her self as she was afraid and  
asham'd her owne self showld see her. (*U2*, 53, ll. 18-22)

The scene is not just comical, but offers an illustration of the early modern stereotyping of folly as a woman, which is derived from Erasmus's female character Stultitia in the *Praise of Folly*.

As remarked by the editors of the second part of *Urania*, Antissia's 'fearful' attire is very similar to that worn by Nereana in the first part, when

<sup>35</sup> See Juan Luis Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, sigs. H4<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> See Kate Aughterson (ed.), *Renaissance Woman, A Source Book: Constructions of Femininity in England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

she is abducted by the madman Alanius, who mistakes her for a goddess of the woods (*UI*, 197 [ll. 36-42]-198 [ll. 4-12]). In her explanatory notes, Josephine Roberts quotes Davenporte who wrote remarks in his own copy of the 1621 *Urania*:

here the storye goes on to Nereana with the pretty [pass]ages  
of hers, wherein was well rewarded Insolency, meeting madd  
Allanus, who [treat]ed her in her kynd. (*UI*, 741)

Davenporte's remark suggests that the reader is to learn a lesson from this story, which is not purely an anecdote but a moral fable relating to female 'insolence' or impudence.

Josephine Roberts also comments on 'the combination of red and green' (which 'suggests lechery') and on her 'act of gazing at her own reflection [which] links her with the proud Narcissus' (*UI*, 741). I would add that this links the *persona* of Nereana to the emblematic representation of female vanity which, as seen earlier, shows a woman looking at herself in a mirror often reflecting a negative image of her. Nevertheless, Wroth's obvious reference to the Ovidian tale of Narcissus is all the more interesting since she implicitly alludes to it when depicting another proud woman, the Queen of Bulgaria.

Characterised as the 'Empresse of Pride' (*UI*, 399, l. 19), she is also referred to as the 'selfe-loving Queene' (459, ll. 23-4):

Shee was a stranger, a Queene; more, a beautifull Queene,  
and most, a most proud Queene, shee therefore claimed it as  
their parts to observe, and marke her, who had businesse  
enough in her selfe upon such a day, in such a place, and such  
a presence, to heed, and study her selfe. How if any part of her  
haire had been out of order, her gowne rumped with turning



to them, her ruffes and delicate inventions disorderd with stirring? had not the least of these been a terrible disaster? Yes, and to her a heart grieffe [...]. This I take the Queenes case to bee, and thus I thinke I excuse her, especially being knowne to love nothing but her selfe, her Glasse, and for recreation, or glory (as some accounts it) to have a servant, the Prince of Iambolly. (544, ll. 15-22; ll. 28-31)

The whole passage resounds with irony towards the Queen's obsession with appearing immaculate. But how does such irony account for the comic depiction of Nerenea's and Antissia's 'phantasticke apparel'? What binds the portraits of these three women to each other is the fact that they are acting immoderately: excess in a woman's deportment in early modern culture was synonymous with lasciviousness.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, while 'lechery' is made explicit in the portrayals of Nereana and Antissia through the minute description of their attire, in the case of the Queen of Bulgaria it is instead the portrayal of her actions which turns her into a parody of female vanity. A few lines earlier, Wroth gives an amusing and colourful portrait of the Queen's lustfulness:

The Iambollian then cast his eyes cravingly towards [the Queen of Bulgaria], she onely lickt her lipps, that when they returned to sight, they might looke like cherries after raine, red, and plumpe, and totterd her head, which made a feather

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<sup>37</sup> One good example of the condemnation of excess is the castigation of woman's ostentatious apparel. See, for example, Juan Luis Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, sig. H4<sup>r</sup>; Richard Brathwait, *The English Gentlewoman*, or Jean de Marconville who, in *De la bonté ou de la mauvaiseté des femmes*, writes at length about sumptuary laws in Greek and Roman days, and praises Oppia for laying down strict rules on female fashion. The title of his chapter summarises the deep-rooted discourse concerning woman's clothes: 'De la curiosité superflue et superfluité curieuse d'habillements des femmes', pp. 109-11.

shake she had on it [...]; but she was so weake in bearing passion, as againe shee had retyred, and so often she did it, and so tumble her selfe up and downe, wallowing in pleasure, and unsufferable content, as she was in such a heate, as that angred her, because she thought she looked not well, having too much colour. (543, ll. 12-5, ll. 20-4)

The description of her lips, the mention of her feather, the movement of her head and of her body are not only evidence of her lustfulness but also of her metamorphosis into a ridiculous stock character. Each appearance of the Queen of Bulgaria in the narrative is like a scene in a comedy, raising a laugh. Her first appearance in the second part of *Urania* reads as an ironic contrast to the theatrical appearance of the heroic Melissea on her chariot:

Hee Visited that brave Queene, matchles in noe thinge save pride, and som unnessessary vertues, which she never would have come in compe[ti]tioun with her over-mastring, and endles compelling, and ruling phantesies. For in her had Juno her greatest throne, and soe as att last her great Goddeship grew Jealous and most Vexed her Peacokes had left to draw her glory, and attend this new Junoes Chariott. (*U2*, 176, ll. 7-12)

The association of the Queen of Bulgaria with the mythical goddess Juno creates a theatrical visual effect, as suggested by the image of the 'Chariott' and that of the peacocks which, in traditional iconography, emblematised pride and vanity.

These scenes form a strong contrast with a later one in which the Queen of Bulgaria is nearly raped. Rescued by Amphilanthus, she resembles



Antissia and Nereana, 'soe strangely undrest, and tattered in her habitts' (*U2*, 299, ll. 23-4). Despite this tragic event, her plight can hardly fail to bring a smile to our faces, since what she is most concerned with is 'her heare [being] soe ruffeld, and her store of Ladys and looking glasses [being] all distante' (ll. 24-5). One might be surprised at the lightheartedness with which Wroth treats male violence in the cases of Nereana and the Queen of Bulgaria; but it is worth noting that it is not so much male violence, but female vanity that is her target here.<sup>38</sup> Why? Does this imply a critique of biased assumptions made by male authors in the romance tradition or an acceptance of it? The answer to this question, as I shall try to explain more fully in the following conclusion to the whole chapter, depends on the type of female character Wroth and Scudéry choose to represent.

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Wroth's and Scudéry's negative images of women as monsters and witches, whether literal or metaphorical, should be read as reflecting their internalisation of dominant cultural values in the whole of Europe concerning the woman question. As evidence of how far they had internalised these values, the examples of Antissia, Nereana and the Queen of Bulgaria are particularly interesting. The three women undergo humiliation and shame in a very similar way: they are literally shorn of their clothes, and transformed into objects of ridicule. Their example illustrates the symbolic importance attached to an early modern woman's garments and gait, which Brathwait summarises as follows:

The habit of the mind is discovered by the state or posture of the body. (*The English Gentlewoman*, 91)

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<sup>38</sup> On the combined representation of male violence and female heroism, see Chapter Nine, section XII, pp. 386-393.

Almost naked, they are like Eves who view their bodies with some shame. The misadventures of these three Uranian women, as well as of the Scuderian 'Bachante en fureur', may therefore be construed as fables or allegories with a moral lesson telling us that debasement is the lot that awaits a proud, vain or wanton woman. These scenes therefore suggest that for depraved and conceited women Wroth and Scudéry reserve as punishment the ridicule that misogynists direct at the sex as a whole.

Yet in the world of Renaissance aesthetics, the equation of ostentation (whether it exhibits a woman's sumptuary riches or nudity) and of outward beauty with lust and evil is equivocal, as evinced by the commonplace image in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature and arts of the Neoplatonic opposition between the heavenly Venus and the earthly Venus. The controversy over the figure of Venus in Renaissance Italy is a good example of the paradoxical attitude of early modern society towards the representation of the female body in art. While 'conservative opinion regarded Venus as the embodiment of lust',<sup>39</sup> the goddess is seen by others as

a nymph of excellent comeliness, born of Heaven [...]. Her soul and mind are Love and Charity, her eyes Dignity and Magnanimity, her hands Liberality and Magnificence, her feet Comeliness and Modesty. The whole, then, is Temperance and Honesty, Charm and Splendour. Oh, what exquisite beauty!<sup>40</sup>

Thus the last chapter of my thesis explores the ways in which outward beauty as well as the partial disclosure of the female body reflect the inward virtues of Uranian and Scuderian heroines.

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<sup>39</sup> Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art* (Edinburgh: John Murray, 1956), p. 90.

<sup>40</sup> Marsilio Ficino quoted in Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 92.



## Chapter Nine

### Pictorial representations of virtuous women in *Urania* and *Clélie*

Chapter Nine opens with a preliminary introduction on Petrarchan representations of the ideal of female beauty in the early modern period (section V). It goes on to analyse the extent to which portraits of virtuous women in *Urania* (section VI) and in *Clélie* (section VII) may be seen as Petrarchan. It then proceeds to an analysis of the theatricality of representations of women in the two texts, and more specifically of the Uranian and Scudarian heroines' apparel (section VIII and IX).<sup>1</sup> Theatrical in their appearance, Uranian and Scudarian virtuous women are fetishised into objects of male contemplation, as I shall suggest in section X. The discussion then moves on to an examination of the treatment of the female body in the two texts (section XI). This section will allow us to draw close parallels between early modern aesthetics in literature and the visual arts,

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<sup>1</sup> We should note that Englishwomen did not appear on either the Elizabethan or the Jacobean stage. Neither did French noblewomen in seventeenth-century France, although women of lower rank did. See Jan Clarke's article 'Of Actresses and Acrobats', in Jennifer Britnell and Ann Moss (eds.), *Female Saints and Sinners, Saintes et Mondaines (France 1450-1650)* (Durham, University of Durham, 2002), pp. 267-83. Nevertheless it was perfectly acceptable for English noblewomen, among them Wroth, to perform in masques; and for French noblewomen to participate in 'ballets de cour'. Queens in both England and France were actively involved too: on this subject, see Leeds Barroll, 'The Arts at the English Court of Anna of Denmark', in S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds.), *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History and Performance 1594-1998* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 47-59; see also Margaret McGowan, *L'Art du ballet de cour en France 1581-1643* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1963). Thus the term theatricality is to be understood in the courtly context in which Wroth and Scudéry wrote: by 'theatricality' we here mean 'the quality or character' of 'having the style of dramatic performance' in the restricted sense of being 'spectacular' (*OED*), and I would add majestic. However, as we shall see, the term will not only refer to any appearance of the female character in public as in a court event (*i.e.* masques or 'fêtes galantes'), but also to her stately demeanour in the confines of her own home. See also Anita M. Hagerman's article, '"But Worth Pretends": Discovering Jonsonian Masque in Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 6, 3 (2001), 1-17.

and help us understand the extent to which Wroth's and Scudéry's treatment of the female body in the heroical scenes of *Urania* and *Clélie* differs from that of their male counterparts (section XII).

### V. Petrarchan representations of the ideal of female beauty

In *Urania* and *Clélie*, the pictorial treatment of ideal female beauty springs, in many respects, from the Petrarchan tradition.<sup>2</sup> In Renaissance France, the main authors who were representative of the Petrarchan style were Lazare de Baïf, Maurice Scève, Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim Du Bellay and Rémy Belleau. In Renaissance England, Edmund Spenser's and Philip Sidney's 'share in the legacy of the Pléiade was very large'.<sup>3</sup>

It is not the purpose of this study to examine at length the links between these different male authors from different European countries, which have already been the object of many exhaustive analyses, but rather to consider the ways in which Wroth and Scudéry manipulate the Petrarchan representation of female beauty. Nevertheless, I shall discuss a few elements in some of these authors' writings which are relevant to our reading of *Urania* and *Clélie*.

The term 'Petrarchan' has come to define the type of discourse in which the speaking subject is often an unrequited lover addressing his or her beloved in a supplicatory tone. Scorn, cruelty, and physical and spiritual beauty are some of the *topoi* which characterise what we may call Italian, French and English Petrarchisms. Within each *topos*, one finds recurring

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<sup>2</sup> On the popularity of Petrarchism in Europe, see Leonard Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Alfred W. Satterthwaite, *Spenser, Ronsard, and Du Bellay: A Renaissance Comparison* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 37.



motifs which together form 'a cognitive style'.<sup>4</sup> A few examples from English and French poetry will suffice to identify a 'cognitive style' in Renaissance representations of female beauty. The reader of sonnets or elegies dedicated to a 'Stella', 'Cassandra' or 'Marie' is made to enter a male-authored world in which the female voice has no agency, and in which the lady becomes the object of the male speaking subject's gaze, transforming her body into a *locus* of poetical metamorphoses: each part of her body is compared to or transformed into one of nature's treasures. This the poet achieves by means of the blason technique:

The blason is indeed a sort of litany, very much involved in repetition, alliteration and the use of sound in general in a somewhat fragmentary fashion.<sup>5</sup>

Spenser's *Amoretti* 64 provides us with a fine example of the ways in which female beauty is conventionally described. In Spenser's words, the Petrarchan lady is a 'gardin of sweet flowers' (l. 2), which he renders in likening each part of her body to a flower:

Her lips did smell lyke unto Gillyflowers,  
 her ruddy cheekes lyke unto Roses red:  
 her snowy browes lyke budded Bellamoures,  
 her lovely eyes lyke Pincks but newly spred,  
 Her goodly bosome lyke a Strawberry bed,  
 her neck lyke to a bouch of Cullambynes:

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), quoted in Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender, Representation, Identity* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Dudley Butler Wilson, *Descriptive Poetry in France from Blason to Baroque* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), p. 6.

her brest lyke lillyes, ere theyr leaves be shed,  
 her nipples lyke yong blossomd Jessemynes.  
 Such fragrant flowres doe give most odorous smell,  
 but her sweet odour did them all excell. (ll. 5-14)<sup>6</sup>

The female body, under the poet's pen, may also turn into a landscape, and the landscape into a topographical exploration of the female body.

A case in point is the idealisation of woman's beauty in Sidney's *New Arcadia*, which we know had a direct influence on *Urania*. It admirably illustrates the conventionalisation of the female portrait in Renaissance Europe. In the following scene, Pyrocles (disguised as an Amazon and calling himself Zelmane) is invited to go bathing with Philoclea and her ladies-in-waiting. Pyrocles stays behind. While watching Philoclea bathing, he utters a lyrical soliloquy which he concludes with an elegiac song written in the poetical mode of the blason. Indeed, almost every stanza of his song corresponds to a part of Philoclea's body: 'the hair, the forehead, the cheeks, the nose, the chin, the pretty ears, the ruddy lips, her heav'nly-dewed tongue, the neck, the lively clusters, the waist, the ribs, her navel, her belly, her knees, her brave calves, her foot, her back, her shoulders, and her arms, all her limbs' (NA, 191-5). Pyrocles's use of geographical names (*Albion*, *Atlas*) to describe her thighs (193, l. 22) and calves (194, l. 1) echoes the earlier description of Philoclea's sister whose breasts 'rase up like two fair mountainets in the pleasant vale of Tempe' (NA, 84, ll. 1-2). This cobweb of correspondences between the female body and nature is clearly suggested in the last stanza of Pyrocles's song, when we are told that 'Nature herself enamelled [Philoclea's hand]' (194, l. 22). Thus through Zelmane's poetical exploration of Philoclea's body, beauty

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<sup>6</sup> In William O. Aram et al. (eds.), *Poems of Edmund Spenser* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 638-9.



becomes 'colour', a palette of red tints from claret and aurora-like (191, l. 18; l. 19) to ruddy and porphyry (192, l. 1; l. 21). In Petrarchan imagery, female characters epitomise beauty and chastity, the attributes of the earthly Venus and heavenly Venus. George Peele's play, *The Arraignment of Paris* illustrates this opposition in the description by the *persona* Diana of 'the Nymphel Eliza, a figure of the Queene': 'her robes of purple and of scarlet lie' (an obvious reference to the goddess of love, Venus), 'and her vayle of white as befits a mayde' (an implicit reference to Vesta).<sup>7</sup> 'White and red' (which is also the title of one of Edward de Vere's poems) are the two recurring colours that are often used to characterise a woman's beauty. One striking example in Sidney's text is the description of the tragic heroine, Parthenia, just before her death:

Her beauty then, even in despite of the past sorrow, or coming death, assuring all beholders that it was nothing short of perfection: for her exceeding fair eyes having with continual weeping gotten a little redness about them; her roundy, sweetly swelling lips a little trembling, as though they kissed their neighbour, death; in her cheeks, the whiteness striving by little and little to get upon the rosiness of them; her neck (a neck indeed of alabaster) displaying the wound which with most dainty blood laboured to drown his own beauties, so as here was *a river of purest red, there, an island of perfittest white*, each giving lustre to the other—with the sweet countenance, God knows, full of an unaffected languishing. (NA, 397, ll. 20-35)

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<sup>7</sup> (London: Henrie Marsh, 1584; London: Malone Society Reprints, 1910), v. 1. 1256-7. On the description of Queen Elizabeth as 'the ideal lady of Petrarchistic convention' and its political implications, see Forster, *The Icy Fire*, 'The Virgin Queen', pp. 122-47.

Although this is a passage in prose and not in verse, it is clearly written in the vein of Petrarchan poetics: once more, we find a poetical blason which associates, as in Zelmane's song, parts of the female body with a geographical entity (*river of purest red, island of perfittest white*), while at the same time creating an image through the elaborate combination of the two colours red and white.

On the use of colours in the Pléiade's poetry, Françoise Joukovsky comments that

selon Platon, le blanc est le plus beau, et est celui qui est le moins mélangé. Les dégradés à l'intérieur d'une même teinte sont beaucoup plus rares, par exemple, la comparaison entre le rouge vermeil et de l'oeillet, et le rose pâle de la rose.<sup>8</sup>

Here, 'le rouge vermeil de l'oeillet' is 'the river of the purest red' (l. 32) and 'le rose pâle de la rose', the rosiness of Parthenia's cheeks (l. 30). In the poetical realm of Renaissance authors, the association of 'reds' and 'whites' is therefore one that conjures up the Platonic idea of beauty. Because Petrarchan beauty is defined as a verbal alliance of both earthly and divine elements, of physical attributes ('river' and 'island', l. 31 and l. 32) and pure abstractions (symbolised by the colours, l. 31), the treatment of the idealised woman makes her an object of veneration. The mere mention of a white and pure material (*i.e.* 'alabaster', l. 31) in Parthenia's portrayal elevates her to the level of celestial beauties: alabaster embodies immutability, measure, proportion. Alabaster constitutes, in fact, a trope which is favoured by poets when they want to create a picture of immutable beauty. The pictorial description of Philoclea's 'belly', a 'spotless mine of alabaster, / Like alabaster fair and sleek, / But soft and supple, satin-like' (NA, 193, ll. 12-3)

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<sup>8</sup> Françoise Joukovsky, *Le Bel objet: les paradis artificiels de la Pléiade* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1991), p. 70.



suggests that her lover, like Pygmalion, views her beauty as a sculpture coming to life.<sup>9</sup> In his sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney uses the word in a similar sense, but this time transforming the desired object into an architectural work of art:

Queene *Vertue*'s court, which some call *Stella*'s face,  
Prepar'd by Nature's chiefest furniture,  
Hath his front built of Alabaster pure;  
Gold is the covering of that stately place. (Sonnet 9)<sup>10</sup>

Female beauty is therefore likened to an architectural work of art, as conveyed by the Pythagorean description of Philoclea's face whose whiteness is emphatically stressed (NA, 190[l. 37]-191[ll. 1-9]). Indeed, it suggests that there exists a geometry of virtue and fairness which is enhanced by the image of evenness and equality given by 'lines', 'angles' and arches' (191, l. 5; l. 8).

Yet if Philoclea first looks like a perfect model of Renaissance architecture, she then takes on the features of a Venus by one of the Renaissance artists:

The lively clusters of her breasts,

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<sup>9</sup> The myth tells us that Pygmalion, who was repelled by the ill-customs of the only women he knew, 'carved his snow-white ivory / With marvellous triumphant artistry / And gave it perfect shape, more beautiful / Than ever woman born. His masterwork / Fired him with love.' When the day of the Festival of Venus came, Pygmalion asked the goddess if he could marry a woman who was 'the living likeness of [his] ivory girl'. After returning home, he 'kissed her as she lay, and she seemed warm; / Again he kissed her and with marvelling touch / Caressed her breast; beneath his touch the flesh / Grew soft, its ivory hardness vanishing, / And yielded to his hands [...]' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville with an introduction and notes by E. J. Kenney [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986], Book X, pp. 232-4).

<sup>10</sup> In William A. Ringler (ed.), *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 69.

Of Venus' babe the wanton nests,  
 Like pommels round of marble clear,  
 Where azured veins well mixed appear,  
 With dearest tops of porphyry. (NA, 192, ll. 17-21)

Once more, the stanza reunites all the elements pertaining to the Petrarchan rhetoric of female beauty: Philoclea's whiteness is evoked by the simile 'marble clear', the presence of a glittering red by the image of 'porphyry', and that of blue by the image of the 'azured vein'. Thus Philoclea, throughout Pyrocles's song, is everything at the same time — heaven and earth, matter and colour. She is all of these: art, sculpture, painting and poetry, which elevate her to the 'crystal skies' (NA, 193, l. 33). In that sense, her portrait reads as the Greco-Latin palimpsest of Renaissance aesthetics: the mention of 'porphiry', 'a reddish, igneous rock with large crystals scattered in a matrix of much smaller crystals' (*OED*), of 'her hair fine threads of finest gold' (190, l. 3), of her 'black stars' (191, l. 10) strongly imply that she is not only *proportio* but *lux*. Ficino defines *Splendor* or light as the major component of beauty:

Beauty is the radiance of the divine goodness.

Beauty is the Splendor of the Divine Countenance. But we call 'beautiful' the pure colors, the sun and the moon, one sound, the glow of gold, the gleam of silver, wisdom, and the soul, all of which are simple, and they certainly please us like beautiful things.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted from Sears Reynolds Jayne (trans. and ed.), *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* (1474-1475) (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1944), p. 135 and pp. 168-9.



Ficino's definitions of beauty influenced European writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Françoise Joukovsky's enlightening remark on the Pléiade's portraits may thus be extended to numerous contemporary works that extol female beauty. She suggests that the Pléiade's poetry

n'est pas seulement l'expression d'idées ou de sentiments, mais aussi une possibilité de création plastique, parfois doublée d'une ébauche d'art.<sup>12</sup>

Portraits of beautiful women in Renaissance poetry and romances conform to the Renaissance interpretation of Horace's *Ut Pictura Poesis*, which John Bender shows became 'a dogma of Renaissance criticism'.<sup>13</sup> While the Latin poet compares a poem to a picture in favour of the former, the Renaissance poet, on the contrary, sees the two terms on an equal footing.<sup>14</sup> Under the pen of most Renaissance poets, the Horatian simile *Ut pictura poesis* becomes an 'embellished' metaphor, as conveyed by Sidney's definition of 'Poesie' as 'an Arte of imitation' in his *Apologie for Poetrie*: after analysing the function of 'Poetry, its relation to fact and nature', he goes on to conclude:

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<sup>12</sup> Joukovsky, *Le Bel objet*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Bender, *Spenser and Literary Pictorialism*, p. 12; see also p. 7. A title like Barthélémy Aneau's *Picta Poesis. Ut Pictura Poesis Erit* illustrates for example Richard Maber's point that the comparison between poetry and painting was popular in the early modern period: 'It goes without saying that the theme is not a new one [...]. The relationship between poetry and painting is a philosophical and literary commonplace throughout antiquity, and goes back at least as far as Simonides of Ceos (c.556-467 BC), the author of the often-quoted statement that "painting is mute poetry, and poetry a speaking picture"' ('Poetic Picture-Galleries in Seventeenth-Century France', in Margaret-Anne Hutton [ed.], *Text(e)/Image*, Durham Modern Languages Series: Durham French Colloquies, 7 [Durham: University of Durham, 1999], p. 42).

<sup>14</sup> The stance of the Renaissance painter is different. On this subject, see Leonardo Da Vinci, *A Treatise on Painting*, trans. Philip A. McMahon with an introduction by Ludwig H. Heydenreich, vol. 1, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 26-8.

Poesie therefore is an arte of imitation, for so *Aristotle* termeth it in his word *Mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfetting, or figuring forth: to speake metaphorically, a speaking picture: with this end, to teach and delight.<sup>15</sup>

In Sidney's words, 'poesie' is therefore not 'like a picture', but 'a speaking picture'.

To conclude, whether under the pen of the poets of the Pléiade or under the aegis of most European authors of love poetry and romance, the Renaissance lady idealised in verse or prose is conventionally depicted in pictorial or sculptural terms, as I have shown through the above examples. The same may be said of Wroth's and Scudéry's heroines whose beauty, as we shall see in the next section, is described in a manner that precisely recalls the representations of the female body in the written and visual works of their male predecessors.

## VI. Portraits of virtuous women in *Urania*

In *Urania*, we find several portraits of virtuous women which include poetical blasons. I shall begin with three examples. In the first, Licandro has been made prisoner in Ingia by giants, after having fought against them. Delivered by his friend, Clavarindo, he is then seen wandering in the solitude of the gardens of the castle where the giants kept him captive. There the melancholy Licandro comes in sight of a beautiful lady, the unnamed sister of the King of Tartaria (*U2*, 76, ll. 1-11). In the second

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<sup>15</sup> Philip Sidney, *Apologie for Poetrie* (1595), ed. J. Churton Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p. 10.



example, Rosindy has arrived at the castle of Lindafillia, at whose beauty he marvels (*U2*, 167-8). The last example which I shall quote at length describes Candiana, Pamphilia's niece who is disguised as the nymph Clorina:

Her forehead most faire, cleere in the rarest beauty with the perfect shape, proportion, and lovelines, noe way exceeding the absolute frame of excellencye. Her browes black and shining like the heavenly bowes for proportion, and soe smoothe as if drawne with the curiourest pensell, and nott naturall, yett nature surpasseth art, and soe did thes matchles browes all limmers art. Eyes, O heavenly lights of the cleerest, and best Gray inclining.  
(*U2*, 206, ll. 15-21)

The two other descriptions, to which I referred at the beginning of this section, are written in the same encomiastic vein as that of Clorina. It is interesting that each of these lyrical scenes should be either sung by a male voice or beheld by a male character. Wroth therefore recreates the Petrarchan celebration of female beauty from a masculine point of view. If we examined her sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, in which, as in Louise Labé's sonnets, the speaking subject is the poetess herself, and the object of desire is not a cruel woman but an inconstant man, we would notice that Pamphilia never gives any anatomical detail of Amphilanthus's body, apart from his eyes. In her representation of ideal female beauty, on the other hand, she resorts to the many devices listed in the preliminary section. Her use of the blason sets forth a 'structure qui combine énumération et métaphore',<sup>16</sup> a combination through which she seems to be casting an ironic eye on the lyricism of her male lovers. Indeed, the metaphorical treatment of the lady's eyes, hand or skin often gives rise to

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<sup>16</sup> Joukovsky, *Le Bel objet*, p. 102.

syntactical digressions introduced by parentheses or the lyrical interjection 'O'. This occurs, for instance, in the portrait of Lindafillia's skin (*U2*, 168, ll. 29-32), and even more emphatically in that of Clorina, where the description of her eyes soon digresses into an extolling comparison of eight lines with Amphilanthus's eyes (*U2*, 206, ll. 21-9). Wroth also makes great use of Petrarchan conceits which combine object and colour: 'snow' (*U2*, 76, l. 9) denotes whiteness, and stones, such as 'the sweetest Pinck couler, ore Virgine blush' (*U2*, 168, l. 18) and 'Rubies' (l. 6, l. 23), denote red. She creates a similar world to that of Sidney, Spenser, the French and Italian poets, where the lady's teeth are 'of the most Orient pearle, her cheekes of Roses damaske, her forehead [...] of purest snowe' (*U2*, 76, ll. 7-9). All women in these portraits have brown hair, but not any shade of brown: in all cases it has the quality of 'a lovely light browne' (*U2*, 76, l. 3), of a 'dainty, light Browne' (*U2*, 168, l. 15). We should also note the digression on the 'fine sweet brownes' of Clorina's hair (*U2*, 205, ll. 40-1) which is

butt soe farr from dullnes ore darknes as itt carried a most delectable shine of the heavenly brightnes of the paler sort of sunn beames, soe as the sweete brownes served for the richest foile to the richest and most richly to bee prised illustration of the beautifullest and most exquisite haire the world had scene.  
(*U2*, 205 [ll. 41-2]- 206 [ll. 1-3])

These images clearly suggest that Wroth has internalised the Petrarchan discourse on the importance of light in the representation of beauty.

Each of the lady's limbs that is the object of praise radiates a kind of light, as conveyed by the presence of jewellery imagery, of the recurring verb 'shine', and by association with 'snow' and fire. Furthermore, the lady's 'browes' are systematically paired with the Platonic notion of *proportio*, which too is one major component of Petrarchan beauty. For



example, Licandro tells us of the 'eye browes' of the sister of the King of Tartaria which are 'black, and soe perfect in comelines and proportion' (*U2*, 76, l. 4), and similarly Clorina's 'browes' are

black and shining like the heavenly bowes for proportion, and  
soe smoothe as if drawne with *the curioucest pensell*, and nott  
naturall, yett nature surpasseth art, and soe did thes matchles  
browes all *limmers art*. (*U2*, 206, ll. 17-20)

It is interesting to note that Wroth here borrows her imagery from the lexical field of the visual arts to describe her female *personae*'s brows: the technical noun 'limner', meaning portraitist or miniaturist, suggests that she was familiar with the art of Nicholas Hilliard and his student Isaac Olivier, who were renowned Elizabethan and Jacobean portraitists. Although Hilliard's treatise (*Treatise Concerning the Arte of Limning*) remained in manuscript until 1912, he was an acknowledged authority in the art of limning and in the Elizabethan world of the visual arts as a whole. His 'tactful indication of [Elizabeth I's] pale features, and small dark eyes'<sup>17</sup> may explain Wroth's depiction of the eyes of her beautiful virtuous women. More generally speaking, in bringing the worlds of prose and of painting together, Wroth resorts, like her male predecessors and contemporaries, to the *Ut pictura poesis* device: her lyrical portrait in prose is 'like a painting', or more precisely a composite work in which various genres are combined.

As seen earlier on, whiteness in representations of beauty is often connected to a specific kind of matter, *i.e.* marble, alabaster or ivory. Although the description of Clorina, for example, may evoke one of Titian's Venuses or Danaes, Wroth makes the analogy of Clorina's beauty to a sculpture explicit for us ('wee may call her the true Efigiea of all

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<sup>17</sup> See William Gaunt, *Court Painting in England from Tudor to Victorian Times* (London: Constable, 1980), p. 44.

excellencies' [207, ll.1-2]), since an effigy, in the poetic sense of the Latin word (*effigia*), is 'the plastic (less frequently, the pictorial) representation of an object, an image, statue or portrait' (*LD*).

The portrayal of Melasinda by Ollorandus, who has had a vision of her, raises the question: does she appear more like a model in a painting or like a sculpture? In the opening lines of her portrait, the narrator compares his beloved to a painted portrait, as implied once more by the words he uses to describe her shape:

'I saw a Creature, for shape a woman, but for excellencie, such as all the rarenes in that sexe, curiously, and skilfully mixed, could but frame such an one; and yet but such a one in shew, like a Picture well drawne.' (*UI*, 78, ll.12-5)<sup>18</sup>

The words 'frame' and 'skilfully mixed' as well as the simile 'like a Picture' frame our own reading of this portrait within the confines of an imaginary painting which we progressively discover as Ollorandus recounts, in sequential units, his visual and emotive experience of Melasinda's appearance in his dream. A few lines later, she is endowed, like Clorina, with the whiteness and fair proportion of the Petrarchan ideal of female beauty. Her whiteness directly links her to the whiteness of a Renaissance sculpture, as conveyed by the description of her neck (*UI*, 78, l. 22): 'the curiourest pillar' (symbolising measure) 'of white Marble' (symbolising pure matter).

Sculptures or models? Clorina and Melasinda emerge as the perfect illustrations of the Horatian motto *Ut pictura poesis*: they are above all

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<sup>18</sup> The idea that only a painting may represent true beauty is certainly a reference to the famous anecdote about the painter Zeuxis told by Cicero, Pliny and later Alberti in his treatise. 'He chose [...] the five most beautiful young girls [...] in order to draw from them whatever beauty is praised in woman', cited in Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, p. 2.



‘speaking pictures’ of female beauty, illusionistic portraits in prose and verse where, as in the male writers’ examples briefly analysed in the opening section, ‘tout est trompe-l’oeil, puisqu’il s’agit de donner l’illusion de la vie’.<sup>19</sup> If we again compare the portraits of Clorina and Melasinda, we will notice that Wroth, like a Renaissance painter or sculptor, adds ‘movement’ to the statuesque whiteness of her female *personae*. For instance, the sculptural description of Melasinda’s neck contrasts with her ‘breast of Snow, or smooth waves of Milke, swelling, or falling, as the sweet gale of her most sweet breath did rise, or slacke’ (*U1*, 78, ll. 22-4). We find a similar contrast in the description of Clorina’s ‘neck’ and ‘breast’ (*U2*, 206, ll. 29-36). The syntax and choice of words recall Sidney’s syntactical world of fluidity and sensuality, which he achieves by means of an abundant use of river similes and metaphors, particularly when representing the female body, as sketched in the preliminary section. While the motion of Melasinda’s and Clorina’s breast may recall the description of Philoclea’s ‘belly’ (*NA*, 193, ll. 12-3), the description of Clorina’s ‘Longe, straite armes, graced with the purest white hands, enterlaced with the cleerest Celestiall Vaines’ (*U2*, 206, ll. 36-7) seems to echo that of Philoclea’s hands where ‘there fall those sapphire-coloured brooks’ (*NA*, 194, l. 25). Both ‘sapphire-coloured brooks’ and ‘the cleerest celestiall Vaines’ evoke the same blue tint, and ‘Vaines’ and ‘brooks’, the same refined limned lines of a Hilliard miniature.

To conclude, Wroth’s portrayal of virtuous women differs little from the portrayals of their male counterparts. In keeping with the Renaissance concept of the *Ut pictura poesis*, her portraits conjure up close parallels with the poetry of her male predecessors or with heroines of conventional romances. However, her recurrent use of brown in her depiction of her

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<sup>19</sup> Joukovsky, *Le Bel objet*, p. 64.

heroines' hair or eyes indicates, as I have suggested, the possible influence of Elizabeth I's portraits on Wroth's representation of the female body. In that sense, it may be argued that the presence of Elizabeth I as an available model for Wroth's heroines gives them an aura of verisimilitude, which was denied to most of Wroth's precursors.

## VII. Portraits of virtuous women in *Clélie*: a seventeenth-century French genre?

In *Clélie*, where portraits are one of the main genres interwoven in the narrative of the romance, the parallel between painted portraits and literary portraits is made more explicit than in *Urania*. This finds an explanation in the cultural context in which Scudéry wrote her two major works, *Le Grand Cyrus* and *Clélie*. *Clélie* is contemporaneous with one major literary phenomenon in seventeenth-century France, namely the vogue for portraits or 'la mode des portraits' which had become a social, civil gesture that one had to perform amongst men and women of letters and high rank.<sup>20</sup> The greatest testimony to this literary fashion is perhaps once again Conrart's *Recueil* (see Chapter Four, pp. 150-1). In the *Recueil Conrart*, there are two interesting statements, one by the Marquise Maulny and the other by M. de Mériguat:

Puisque c'est la mode de faire son portrait, il faut que je fasse le mien, comme les autres. (MS. 5418, vol. 9, 783)

Puisque c'est la mode que chacun fasse son portrait, mettant cette fantaisie au nombre des actions indifférentes, je veux bien

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<sup>20</sup> See Jacqueline Plantié, *La Mode du portrait littéraire en France 1641-1681* (Genève: Slatkine; Paris: Honoré Champion, 1994). However, the author notes that if the art of the literary portrait is theorised as a genre in itself, it is not an exclusively seventeenth-century creation even though it was regarded, at the time, as a seventeenth-century innovation (see pp. 78-9).



avoir cette complaisance pour une chose si fort en usage. (MS. 5420, vol. 11, 187)

Credit should of course be given to the significant role of Mlle de Montpensier in influencing this literary fashion, as Jacqueline Plantié has demonstrated; but my focus will be here on specific passages from *Clélie*. It should be noted that *Clélie*, like *Le Grand Cyrus*, was written over many years: critics have noticed that, by the last volumes of *Clélie*, the pace of the narrative has significantly slowed down, due to the overabundance of portraits, particularly in the third part of the romance published in 1657.<sup>21</sup> *Clélie* undoubtedly reflects what had become a favourite pastime of the 'société mondaine', of which Conrart's *Recueil* gives a fine picture through several examples of portraits whose tone often recalls that of Scuderian 'oral' painters. The purpose of this section is to analyse the ways in which *Clélie*'s 'peintures' draw upon Renaissance rhetorical devices.

As the mirror of a literary fashion, *Clélie* illustrates the extent to which the early modern adoption of the *Ut Pictura Poesis* motto has blurred the boundaries between literature and painting.<sup>22</sup> Two good examples, in Conrart's *Recueil*, are 'Le Portrait de Célimène' and the opening stanzas of Charles Perrault's 'Portrait d' Iris' (*i.e.* Mme Bordier):

Voilà, mon cher Lysidas, cette incomparable Célimène, dont la lumière a pénétré jusques dans notre hermitage, voilà toute les richesses et de son corps, et de son âme, ou du moins en voilà comme *un crayon*. Mais ce qui se fait de l'assemblage de tant de divines perfections; c'est certainement ce qu'on ne peut mettre ny sur *la toile*, ny sur le papier. (MS. 5420, vol. 11, 182)

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

De l'objet le plus beau qui soit en la Nature,

[...]

J'entreprins de tracer une vive peinture<sup>23</sup>

[...]

Voilà donc mon Iris la charmante peinture,

Mais l'ouvrage imparfait de *mon faible pinceau*,

Puisqu'enfin, je luy fais injure,

Et que l'original est mille fois plus beau.

Il reste maintenant qu'à *ce riche tableau*

Je face *une digne bordure*,

Ma muse, prenons *le ciseau*. (MS. 5418, vol. 9, 709)

The words 'crayon', 'toille', 'tracer', 'peinture', 'pinceau', 'tableau', 'bordure' figure among those enumerated by Jacqueline Plantié.<sup>24</sup> As seen earlier on, most of these terms were used by the poets of the Pléiade and of Elizabethan England. This list of technical phrases employed by seventeenth-century writers makes Wroth's use of the words 'limner', 'frame', 'traced' even more interesting, in the sense that

le portrait annonciateur des peintures de 1659 est de tous les temps et sans doute de tous les pays, il est aussi de tous les genres, on le rencontre dans les ouvrages des historiens, des essayistes, des épistoliers, des auteurs de dialogues, des romanciers, des biographes, des hagiographes; on pourrait le découvrir encore dans les épîtres liminaires, dans les plaidoyers, dans les oraisons funèbres.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Here again, the phrase 'j'entreprins de tracer une vive peinture' conjures up the image of the poet comparing himself to Pygmalion (as I have commented earlier on Sidney's fictive poet in the *New Arcadia*; see above, p. 330, footnote 9).

<sup>24</sup> In *La Mode du portrait*, pp. 136-8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78-9.



In *Clélie* one of the many recurring phrases is ‘faire la peinture’: Scudarian characters seem to be devoting their time, very much like the habitués of the ‘Samedis’ and the ‘chambre bleue’, to ‘painting’ one another verbally. Thus, Scudarian narrators will often consent to sketch the verbal portrait of the hero or heroine of the tale they are narrating:

Je m’en vay vous faire la peinture de la mere des Amour[s], en vous faisant celle de [Lindamire]. (C6, 846)

Quand ce ne seroit que pour faire une chose nouvelle, dit Amilcar, il faut vous faire la peinture d’une personne que vous avez veuë sans la voir. (C10, 868)

The many requests from the audience to its narrator to ‘peindre’ or ‘despeindre’ a character imply that the narrator’s role is to teach and delight his audience. The Scudarian portrait must therefore create the illusion of being real, a ‘speaking picture’ moving the audience’s imagination to visualise in their minds a portrait as though it were a painting *in praesentia*. How is this achieved?

A simple answer can be found in Volume Six, at the beginning of ‘the story of Artélise, Mélicrate, Lysidas, Caliante and Alcimède’ related by Emile to Octave, Herminius, Horace and Persandre in Amilcar’s tent in a military camp. Emile starts his story with a description of the town Erice, where he lived in retirement for a while, and whose princess, called Clarinte, ‘est ce qui rend cette petite Cour la plus polie, la plus divertissante & la plus spirituelle qu’[il] y [ait] veuë’ (C6, 1324). On hearing this, Amilcar interrupts him:

De grace [...], donnez-vous la peine de nous despeindre sa beauté, son esprit, & son humeur. (*ibid.*)

This informs us as to the tripartite structure of Scudarian portraits, starting with physical appearance (beauté), mind (esprit) and temperament (humeur). In tracing back the origins of literary portraits, Jacqueline Plantié sketches a brief comparison between Sallust, Tacitus and Suetonius, *i.e.* ‘ceux qui ont voulu “réciter” l’homme’.<sup>26</sup> She argues that Scudarian portraitists show less ruthlessness towards their models than their Latin predecessors, and more specifically Suetonius

qui oppose fréquemment le corps et l’âme, l’intérieur et l’extérieur, qui ne recule devant aucun détail repoussant pourvu qu’il permette de reconstituer une personne dans tout ce qu’elle a de singulier, de différent de toutes les autres.<sup>27</sup>

On the contrary, when analysing Scudarian portraits, one must bear in mind Richelet’s definition:

Le Portrait est une description grave, enjouée, ou satirique de quelque personne. Il a pour matiere le corps, l’esprit, les vertus, ou les vices. Son caractère est fleuri, et naturel. On fait le portrait en vers, ou en prose; ou bien en vers et en prose tout ensemble. Les choses s’y tournent d’une maniere à inspirer de l’estime, de l’amour, ou de la haine: et l’on travaille à y marquer naturellement l’air, le visage, les moeurs et les inclinations des gens. L’une de ses plus sensibles beautez consiste en cela. *Il ne faut pourtant pas peindre si fort d’après-nature, qu’on n’aille un*

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.



*peu au delà; mais sans choquer la vrai-semblance. Les grands Peintres le pratiquent de la sorte; et on doit les imiter.*<sup>28</sup>

The concern of the portraitists of the ‘société mondaine’ with decorum ([*ne pas*] *choquer la vrai-semblance*) accounts in *Clélie* for the greater number of portraits of virtuous women than of fickle women. These tripartite portraits of Scudertian heroines also replicate, to a certain extent, the pattern of poetical blasons.

Each of the following portraits is similarly structured. As in the blason portraits of Uranian heroines, examined above, emphasis is often first on the female character’s shape or stature. Curiously the narrators of each text seem to feel the need to go beyond a mere physical statement: if we compare the stature of Licandro’s lover and of Clorina with that of Valérie, we will notice that Wroth and Scudéry resort to similar stylistic devices:

[The King of Tartaria’s sister] was of a midle stature of woemen: nott to lowe, nor to manlike tall ore boisterous, butt most sweetly beehaved. (*U2*, 76, ll. 1-3)

[Clorina] was of lesser stature, as a woeman showld be[e], butt to equall that she seem’d and was the first in beautie, and to-bee-admired gentlenes of all the Nimphs of her time. (*U2*, 205, ll. 16-9)

[Valerie] n’est sans doute que de mediocre taille, mais elle est si bien faite, qu’elle ne doit pas envier celles qui sont plus grandes qu’elles. (*C5*, 171)

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<sup>28</sup> Cited in Plantié, *La Mode des portraits*, p. 22.

The adjective 'mediocre' in its original sense comes from the Latin 'mediocris', meaning 'moderate' and from 'medium', meaning 'middle'. Taken out of its cultural context, this term 'mediocre' appears to denote a negative characteristic; hence, in the two texts, the nuance added by means of a contrastive conjunction ('but', 'mais') introducing a hyperbolic praise ('but most sweetly beehaved'; 'mais elle est si bien faite') which turns the female *personae* into icons of the ideal of female beauty. As already mentioned, proportion is a key word that all early modern portraitists always bore in mind. Indeed, when a female character is of a higher stature than the ideal prescribed by decorum, the narrator insists on her being well-proportioned, by resorting once again to a contrastive conjunction, such as 'pourtant' in the following example:

Vous sçaurez donc que [Clarinte] est de cette agreable grandeur, qui estant beaucoup au dessus de la mediocre, n'est pourtant pas excessive. (C6, 1325-6)

Furthermore, the importance of proportion is emphasised by the recurrence of details such as 'visage rond, tour du visage beau, tour du visage agreable', etc., which all convey the perfect geometry of these women's bodies.

The abundant use of sub-clauses constitutes another main characteristic in these portraits. These sub-clauses may well remind us of the Petrarchan imagery also used by Wroth: Valérie's eyes are adorned with the same powers as those of Melasinda in *Urania*.

Ses yeux [Valérie's] ne sont pas non plus de ces grands yeux, qui semblent vouloir regarder de trois ou quatre costez à la fois, tant ils sont ouverts, mais ce sont de ces yeux qui ont de l'esprit, & de l'amour, & qui n'ont point de ces regards muets qui ne



sçavent ni esmouvoir, ni conquerir les coeurs de ceux à qui ils  
s'adressent. (C5, 171-2)

[Melasinda's] face bare, boldly telling me, not I onely, but all  
hearts must burne in that purenesse: Eyes like the perfect'st  
mixtures of heavenly powers, not to be resisted but submitted to.  
(U1, 78, ll. 18-20)

Both Wroth and Scudéry here make conventional use of a Petrarchan conceit. Sight in Petrarchan rhetoric is number one in the hierarchy of senses. Eyes are, in Ficinian terms, 'the clear windows of the soul', a source of light that arrays the lady with a 'physionomie spirituelle' (C1, 180-1).<sup>29</sup> Indeed, although portraits of women in *Clélie* only tell us about, for example, the 'brillant' of the eponymous heroine's eyes (C1, 180) or 'feu' of Lindamire's eyes (C6, 1327), these details suffice to illustrate Scudéry's debt to the Renaissance ideal of beauty. Her portraits also conform with Renaissance rules of shadows and colours as delineated in the first two sections of this chapter. These oral portraits of Scuderian heroines all radiate beauty because they radiate light. The characterisation of Clarinte's and Lindamire's hair illustrates Scudéry's conformity with the aesthetic theories that define what is essential to achieve perfect beauty:

[Clarinte] est blonde, mais c'est de ce blond qui n'a rien de fade,  
& qui sied bien à la beauté. (C6, 1326)

[Lindamire] a les cheveux d'un blond cendré le plus beau que je  
vy jamais, ils ont mesme une beauté si particuliere, qu'à parler  
juste on ne peut positivement dire qu'ils [ne] sont ni blonds, ni

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<sup>29</sup> See Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, Sixth Speech, Chapter X, 'What characteristics are due to the Father of Love?', p. 199.

chatains, ni cendrez, mais on peut hardiment assurer qu'il n'y en eut jamais de si beaux. (C6, 850)

Scudéry's nuances on the blond colour of her heroines' hair recall Wroth's treatment of the colour brown. Similarly, the description of Valérie's and Clorinda's 'complexion' or 'teint' is revealing as to the Renaissance ideals of beauty in the Scudarian text. For example, Valérie's 'legere pasleur' is characterised in positive terms: '[un] je ne sçay quel air languissant & modeste' (C5, 172) We have here, in a few lines, an illustration of Leonardo da Vinci's precepts in his *Treatise on Painting* as to how to represent the 'beauty of faces':

[413] Do not paint muscles with harsh outlines, but let soft lights fade imperceptibly into pleasant, delightful shadow; from this come about grace and beauty of form. (p. 153)

Clarinte's 'teint', however, is an even more convincing example of the legacy of Renaissance poetry and art in *Clélie*:

Pour le teint [Clarinte] l'a si admirable, qu'il n'est pas au pouvoir des plus rigoureux hyvers d'effacer le bel incarnat qui le rend si beau, & qui donne un si grand éclat à sa merveilleuse blancheur, qu'on y voit en toute saison cette fraîcheur qu'on ne voit qu'au lever de l'aurore sur les plus belles roses du Printemps. (C6, 1326)

The floral imagery and the contrast between the 'bel incarnat' and 'merveilleuse blancheur' of Clarinte's complexion bring her close to a female Renaissance model. Her 'teint' radiates the same light as the Graces of Botticelli's *Primavera*, the same 'fraicheur' as the celebrated beauty of a



sonneteer's lady. However, one may object that, in comparison with the large proportion of the text devoted to long digressive philosophical conversations, this type of floral description is rare in *Clélie*.

So far we have analysed one type of portrait, that which unfolds in 'sequential units' and is representative of the tradition of the poetical blason commonly used by male poets in their representations of the female body. Although Scudéry's portraits form part of a specifically French literary fashion, they have much in common with Wroth's. Indeed, both owe a debt to the lexical field of painting and Italian aesthetics, as they resort to similar ways of qualifying the colour of the eyes or hair, the size and stature of a character; qualifications without which their heroines could not be regarded as the effigies of female beauty. This specific treatment of the Uranian and Scuderian heroine's anatomy is reinforced, as I shall discuss in the next section, by the descriptions of her ostentatious apparel through which she is identified, unlike the figure of the anti-heroine in the two works (see Chapter Eight), as the speaking picture of virtue.

### **VIII. Portraits of virtuous women 'identified as essentialised sites of spectacle'**

In conclusion to Chapter Eight we noted the contradiction inherent in the early modern discourse on woman's apparel. Before going any further, let us look at the following quotations:

[La] propreté [d'Hersilie] est sans contrainte, elle s'habille d'un bon air, & se coiffe fort avantageusement, sans qu'il y paroisse ni trop, ni trop peu d'art. (*C10*, 871)

C'est que [la Princesse d'Elide] a l'action fort libre, & qu'encore qu'elle s'aime assez, elle ne fait pourtant point trop la belle; elle est mesme propre d'une certaine propreté naturelle, qui ne sent point l'affectation, sa coiffure n'est ni trop ajustée, ni trop négligée, & ses habillemens ne sont jamais trop magnifiques. Ils sont pourtant fort galants, & les porte de tres-bonne grace. (C7, 137)

These two quotations illustrate this contradiction, as conveyed by the juxtaposition of antonymous phrases ('ni trop/trop peu, ni trop ajustée/ni trop négligée, jamais trop magnifiques/pourtant fort galants'). While a woman's 'propreté' must be 'sans contrainte', the following quotation clearly suggests that, in order to achieve such an effect, a woman must spend a great deal of time:

Elle choisit avec adresse les couleurs qui luy sont avantageuses, & si elle a quelque soin particulier, c'est d'avoir des bracelets ingenieux & agreables, & d'estre tousjours esgalement propre, soit qu'elle soit parée, ou qu'elle ne le soit pas. (*ibid.*)

Adjectives such as 'négligé' are ambiguous.<sup>30</sup> At times, they denote fickleness, at others virtue. Volume Nine provides us with one example where the term 'négligé' takes on an ambivalent meaning. Having been chosen as the hostages that were to be sent to the camp of the enemy, Clélie and her female companions 'avoient eu dessein d'estre assez negligées' (C9, 225-6). A longer examination of the different meanings of the term 'négligé(e)' will be tackled later on; for the time being, we shall simply conclude that in this particular context, it characterises the humility of the

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<sup>30</sup> I discuss the positive meaning of the term 'négligence' and its cognates at greater length below, pp. 380-3.



heroines who will illustrate themselves in the later scene of the 'traversée du Tibre' with as much modesty (see Chapter Three, pp. 117-20). In wanting to look 'négligées', they act in accordance with *bienséance*, which is to behave in a modest fashion; but all this is contradicted by the etiquette of court culture:

On leur avoit ordonné au contraire de se parer, afin d'attirer plus de respect, & d'estre plus dignes d'estre présentées au Roy d'Etrurie. (226)

This one sentence reveals the early modern paradox of a culture in which 'a display of finery was not an empty gesture of vanity [as it is in representations of fickle women], but a significant means through which women made their position visible to the eyes of society'.<sup>31</sup> The treatment of apparel worn by virtuous women illustrates this contradiction. While the dress of Antissia and the sleeves of Nereana are a sign of fickleness and devilry, the sleeves of Lindafillia's dress almost function as a synecdoche for the perfect proportion of her body. Her Asian fashion (*U2*, 168, ll. 15-26) may remind the reader of the description of the Queen of Euterilyda in Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia*, when Poliphilus sees her for the first time, sitting 'on a degreed regall throne, set full of glystering stones in a marvelous order' (*Hypn*, O3<sup>v</sup>- O4<sup>r</sup>). These two portraits embody light, as conveyed by the pictorial emphasis on the two female *personae*'s jewellery. As embodiments of light, they are therefore also embodiments of beauty. In *The Courtiers Academy*, Annibale Romei defines this commonplace parallel between light and beauty as follows:

Light is the greatest of all beauties sensible, as that which is no other but a beame and influence of divine essence, dispersed

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<sup>31</sup> Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, p. 5.

over the w[h]ole world (as I have said) this being graunted to the most perfect, of all bodies sensible, which is the sun, to the end that by it, it might not only be beautifullest of all other creatures, but that it should also bee the meane and principal cause, of the appearance of all other beauties.<sup>32</sup>

This statement summarises the whole of Renaissance aesthetics. More simply put, 'la beauté n'est pas seulement une harmonie des parties, elle est illumination', as Françoise Joukovsky observes, to which she adds that 'à la Renaissance, cette esthétique de la lumière contribue à renforcer le goût de la matière brillante'.<sup>33</sup>

This 'goût de la matière brillante' is generally satisfied in literary texts by enumerations of stones. Whether they are rubies, amethysts, diamonds, opals, or curious pearls, these stones are not chosen arbitrarily: the pictorial combination of different stones is 'an exploitation of the philosophical reflections on light'.<sup>34</sup> It is charged with symbolism. But the description of Lindafillia's 'spectacular costume' pertains to a culture that is 'a display culture'.<sup>35</sup> The depiction of Lindafillia 'sitting on the throne' recalls Renaissance noblewomen who appeared in Jacobean masques in 'a highly circumscribed manner', whose 'jewels and dresses were themselves part of the show' and whose bodies were identified as 'essentialised sites of spectacle'.<sup>36</sup> Of course, stones and jewellery are indicative of these women's wealth and therefore social status; but it is also probable, for instance, that Wroth wanted to recreate the glamour of Ben Jonson's female

<sup>32</sup> Cited in John C. Meagher, *Method and Meaning in Jonson's Masques* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), p. 110.

<sup>33</sup> Joukovsky, *Le Bel objet*, p. 45.

<sup>34</sup> Meagher, *Method and Meaning in Jonson's Masques*, p. 110.

<sup>35</sup> Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, p. 51.

<sup>36</sup> Heather L. Weidemann, 'Theatricality and Female Identity in Mary Wroth's *Urania*', in Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller (eds.), *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), p. 193 and p. 195.



maskers in *The Masque of Beauty* (1608) — of which the Venetian Ambassador, Zorzi Giustiniani, gives a brief account:

I must just touch on the spendour of the spectacle, which was worthy of her Majesty's greatness. The apparatus and the cunning of the stage machinery was a miracle, the abundance of beauty of the lights immense, the music and the dance most sumptuous. But what beggared all else and possibly exceeded the public expectation was the wealth of pearls and jewels that adorned the Queen and her ladies, so abundant and splendid that in everyone's opinion no other court could have displayed such pomp and riches.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, the detailed description in Samuel Daniel's *Tethys' Festival* (1610) of the ladies' apparel, and more specifically their dress, may have influenced Wroth, who describes Lindafillia's 'robe' (*U2*, 168, l. 18) with the same minuteness: she focusses first on '[its] lower part [that] was cutt in gores' (ll. 18-9), then moves from the 'longe bote sleeves' (l. 20) to the 'wearing sleeves' and 'lining' (l. 21), and back again to the 'wearing sleeve' which 'beeing cutt beetweene the borders, discoverd a cuttwourke smock' (ll. 25-6).<sup>38</sup>

In this second type of portraits of female characters, two genres converge, the pictorial world of literature and the visual world of masques and ballets, as conveyed by Melissea's and Urania's theatrical appearances in a chariot (see *U2*, 112, ll. 29-37, and 136, ll. 30-2). Besides the two sources suggested by *Urania's* editors, these two examples may also recall the theatrical scene in the *New Arcadia*, where the narrator gives an account

<sup>37</sup> In Richard Hutton (ed.), *Jacobean and Caroline Masques* (Nottingham: Nottingham Drama Texts, 1981), vol. 1, p. 55.

<sup>38</sup> For an account of the ladies' apparel in *Tethys' Festival*, see *Jacobean and Caroline Masques*, vol. 1, p. 109, ll. 296-308.

of a beauty contest (NA, 94, ll. 23-6).<sup>39</sup> Although Wroth was well acquainted with Sidney's romance, Melissea's appearance is not a pure imitation of Sidney's scene. The Uranian world is as theatrical as Sidney's Arcadian world. If, with its many enchantment scenes, *Urania* re-enacts the romance tradition established by Tasso or Ariosto, it also seems to take root in the complex world of masques. We should note that the main characteristic of Jacobean masques is the representation of the triumph of cosmic harmony, normally embodied in the *persona* of Queen Anne and her attendants, who put in an appearance with the utmost effect, as they descend on the stage on a mechanical cloud. Each of Melissea's appearances bears a resemblance to those of the Jacobean Queen at the end of a masque. Indeed, Melissea's repeated spectacular interventions correspond to the restoration of harmony.

*Urania* not only reproduces the world of masquerades but also that of Jacobean court culture as a whole, a *theatrum mundi* in itself — where any regal event, any courtly pastime became a glittering display of finery (see *U2*, 245, ll. 19-26). The other descriptions of Uranian women in their chariots or on horseback seem to recreate courtly magnificence: all radiate a certain conventional stateliness that reflects, once more, the Renaissance ideal of beauty. In several portraits of women riding a horse or a chariot, we find the same imagery, the same colours and nuances (see *U1*, 169, ll. 9-17; *U2*, 119, ll. 6-16). Here is one example:

A Lady (of rare beautie she had binn), and still indeed continued  
 beautifull and lovely, mounted [on] a delicate horse for shape  
 and stature. Non beeing neere comparison with him, soe curious

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<sup>39</sup> The editors of *Urania* have identified two sources: 'Wroth may have borrowed the detail of the chariot from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the chariots of Ceres and Medea are drawn by dragons: 5:642 and 7:398. [...] the fire and darkness accompanying the chariot may derive from the account of the enchantress



every way hee was, his couler Iron gray, dapled soe exactly with the black as sett him out extreamly; his maine and taile black, with a list downe his back of the same. The furniture was black and Gold, and soe was her apparell. She ware a hatt, and in that a great plume of feathers, black, save one fall, which was greene.  
(U2, 242, ll. 13-20)

In *Clélie*, we find similar portraits of women on horseback, which makes them appear as 'essentialised sites of spectacle' and beauty (see, for example, C9, 238-40). The passage in question shows that Jacobean and seventeenth-century French cultures share a similar symbolic vision of the world as well as similar ornamental motifs in the domain of the visual arts. For instance, the Uranian heroine's horse, 'Iron gray, dapled soe exactly with the black as sett him out extreamly' (U2, 242, ll. 16-7), conjures up an image of solemn beauty that is close to that of the Scudarian heroine's 'cheval blanc [qui] estoit avec une estoile noire au front' (C9, 239). These pictorial similarities between Wroth's and Scudéry's treatment of their noblewomen suggest that, despite stylistic differences between the two works, they share an identical culture, which is specific to European court life. Wroth's and Scudéry's descriptions of women's apparel are testimonies of cross-cultural exchanges in early modern Europe, which certainly were helped by political alliances.<sup>40</sup>

There is nevertheless more to say about the symbolism of Uranian and Scudarian heroines' apparel. In *Urania*, attention to colour details, such as blacks, golds, greens and silvers, reveals exterior beauty as well as, in accordance with Neoplatonic philosophy, the inner beauty of the character

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Urganda, who arrives in a galley on a burning sea to foretell the future of Oriana in Book 2 of *Amadis*, sig. 2B' (U2, 497).

<sup>40</sup> The French queens, Catherine and Marie de Medicis were Italian, Anne of Austria was Spanish; and the English queen of the Jacobean era, Anne of Denmark, was Danish. All of them shared a common taste for high fashion and festivities.

depicted (see *U1*, 169, ll. 9-17 and *U2*, 119, ll. 6-16). Green emerges as a dominant colour in portraits of Uranian heroines: while green in a fickle character may embody jealousy, in the portrait of a virtuous woman green denotes a pastoral quality: not surprisingly, it is the colour that adorns the nymphs' attire in *Urania*. The green colour and its variants in the depiction of a heroine's apparel often link her to the pastoral world of innocence.

Although there seems to be less emphasis on colour details in *Clélie*, this link is enhanced in the two texts by the presence of other pastoral and mythological elements which often fuse with each other. One example of this fusion of pastoral and mythological ideals of female beauty is the Astrean picture of three delicate nymphs in *Urania*:

But happier for them [Peryneus and Alarinus] and the honour of Lovers it fell out; for three delicate Nymphes came by, coming from hunting with their bowes in their hands, and Quivers at their backes, their apparell greene, white buskins and delicate Garlands on their heads. (*U1*, 591, ll. 21-4)

In *L'Astrée*, a similar description reads as follows:

Et lors que [Céladon] estoit entre la mort et la vie, il arriva sur le lieu trois belles Nymphes, dont les cheveux espars alloient ondoyans sur les espaules, couverts d'une guirlande de diverses perles [...]. Chacune avoit au costé le carquois rempli de flesches, et portoit en la main un arc d'ivoire. (p. 15)

The representation of nymphs in the habit of Diana is a recurring motif in *Urania*; Uranian nymphs, as remarked in Part Two on the discourse of female friendship, constantly reassert themselves as the servants of Diana,



the mythological goddess of hunting and chastity.<sup>41</sup> In both literature and the visual arts, the motif of the female *persona* in the nymph-like habit of Diana is a commonplace. One perfect example in *Clélie* is to be found in Volume Four:

Philonice [...] monta à cheval, suivie de vingt femmes de qualité, qui avoient des chevaux admirables, dont les housses magnifiques sembloient les rendre plus fiers. Ces Dames estoient toutes habillées comme on peint les Nymphes de Diane; elles avoient un Arc à la main, & un Carquois sur l'espaule; & leur teste estoit couverte de coiffures de Plumes de couleur si vives, si bien meslées, & si differentes, que cela faisoit le plus bel objet du monde dans cette belle Plaine [...]. Philonice, entre les autres, sembloit estre Diane elle mesme, tant elle avoit l'air noble, & modeste tout ensemble. (C4, 808-9)

The link between the representation of Philonice as Diana and the visual arts is asserted by the narrator himself, as he concludes:

Mais pour la faire encore mieux remarquer, son Arc & son Carquois estoient ornez de Pierreries, & le tour de Plumes qui formoit sa coiffure, avoit une espece de Guirlande de Diamans, qui sembloit presque représenter ce jeune croissant qu'on met sur la teste de Diane. (809)

We find a similar description of Diana in Samuel Daniel's masque, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604), which suggests that it is conventional in its representation of the mythological huntress:

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<sup>41</sup> On the iconography of Diana, see Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (London: Routledge, 1989).

Diana, in a green mantle embroidered with silver half-moons, and a croissant of pearl on her head: presents a bow and a quiver.<sup>42</sup>

Wroth's depiction of Candiana as the nymph Clorina is interesting, as the object of comparison is reversed:

Diana was nott more couragious in the chace, Venus more faire, nor Minerva more chaste. (*U2*, 205, ll. 19-20).<sup>43</sup>

This time it is not the female character who is compared to the goddesses of chastity, love and peace, but the other way round.

To conclude, a close reading of the two texts therefore shows that what makes the bodies of these glamorous women 'essentialised sites of spectacle' is not solely their 'display of finery'. Indeed, Wroth's and Scudéry's constant references to the figures of chastity, wisdom and beauty (that is Diana, Minerva and Venus, or Diana alone) make these virtuous women appear as the *personae* of a Jacobean entertainment or French 'fête galante'.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the following analysis of a third type of image of the virtuous woman shows that representations of women as participants in royal pastimes are not Wroth's and Scudéry's only focus.

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<sup>42</sup> In *Jacobean and Caroline Masques*, vol. 1, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth I was often compared with these three goddesses. See George Peele's *Arraignment of Paris* (1584), which I have discussed earlier, p. 328.

<sup>44</sup> In her article 'The Mediatisation of Diane (de Poitiers)', in Margaret-Anne Hutton (ed.), *Text(e)/Image*, Durham Modern Languages Series: Durham French Colloquies, 7 (Durham: University of Durham, 1999), Catherine Hampton defines the goddess Diana as a 'virago figure embody[ing] a combination of potency and chastity', p. 38.



## IX. The theatricality of Uranian and Scuderian women in black

If we glance back, once more, at the portraits of the 'Princesse d'Elide' and of the Uranian lady on horseback described above, we will notice that focus is not only on their jewellery, but also on the colour 'black'. Although these two characters are not appalled all in black, the mere mention of 'black' adds a certain solemnity to their pose.

'Black', in the two works, is often associated with female virtue, fortitude, modesty, wisdom and constancy. It is possible, for instance, that when creating her *persona*, Melissea, Wroth was thinking of Samuel Daniel's *Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*. It appears to be the only masque where one of the *figurante* is dressed in black.<sup>45</sup> It is Proserpina who appears 'in a black mantle embroidered with gold flames, with a crown of gold on her head: present[ing] a mine of gold ore'.<sup>46</sup> Although she is more commonly represented as 'the Queen of the dead' (*DCM*, 312), Samuel Daniel revives the other side of the legend which shows her as 'a deity of joy and hope' (*DCM*, 312):

Next rich Proserpina, with flames of gold,  
Whose state altho' within the earth, yet she  
Comes from above, and in her hand doth hold  
The mine of wealth, with cheerful majesty.<sup>47</sup>

It is indeed significant that the only physical details we have of Melissea are her 'black habit' (*UI*, 139, l. 26) and her 'face' in which 'wisdome,

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<sup>45</sup> In Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605), in which Wroth performed, masquers are not appalled but painted in black, as they are supposed to be Ethiopians (see *Jacobean and Caroline Masques*, vol. 1, p. 18). For this reason, the description of Proserpina in Daniel's masque is more relevant to our discussion of women dressed in black.

<sup>46</sup> In *Jacobean and Caroline Masques*, vol. 1, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

modestie and goodnesse figured' (ll. 31-2), and that she is an Astrologer as well as a benevolent enchantress, referred to in one instance as a 'sage' (U2, 51, l. 13) — a word usually applied to men.

Although Melissea is endowed with supernatural powers, the Uranian paragons of female wisdom share many common features with her. One example is the appearance of Urania on a chariot in the garden where the dejected Amphilanthus is heard uttering a melancholy soliloquy. To some extent, Urania is the human doppelgänger of the superhuman Melissea. As seen in Part One and Two, Urania embodies reason: she is the one who reproves her melancholy amorous friends, male and female, for giving in to their emotions. She, as an experienced woman in matters of love, is the one who brings them back to their senses. It is therefore significant that the colour of her chariot should be 'lined with black Vellvett, butt studded with pure golde' (U2, 136, ll. 31-2), a sober detail that recalls Melissea's modest fashion and introduces Urania as the earthly embodiment of wisdom.

In *Urania*, wisdom is also embodied by nymphs. In one particular instance, the 'gravity' of the forest nymph Mirasilva is conveyed by the sobriety of her habit in the following passage:

*[Mirasilva] returned in a garment of blacke Damaske, which reached to her knees, and another below that, that came to the small of her leg, of Sattin, buskins she had of the finest leather laced and tyed with pretty knots of ribbin, but al blacke, and so had she gone ever since her love left her. On her head shee wore a hat, but her haire under it, tyed and braded so finely, as shee might throw off her hat at pleasure, and remaine finer then before. (U1, 575, ll. 34-40)*



The nymph-like *persona* is not just a nymph but a mourner: she resembles the model for a Renaissance painting. She may remind the reader of Lavinia Fontana's three portraits of women in dark apparel, that of 'Costanza Alidosi' (1595) and that of 'A Woman with a Small Dog' (1597-1598); see Illustrations 4 and 5. There is no evidence of Wroth's familiarity with the Bolognese female painter. Yet there are striking similarities between their portraits of women in dark colours: the countenance and 'finely detailed apparel'<sup>48</sup> of Fontana's models are, in a sense, paralleled by Wroth's description of the nymph's 'haire tyed and braded so finely' (l. 39) and her 'buskins' made 'of the finest leather laced' (ll. 36-7). Added to the sad expressions of Fontana's models, the handkerchief they are holding in one hand suggests that these three women are mourners, and that Fontana and Wroth cultivate images of women that belong to 'a particular ideal of womanhood'.<sup>49</sup>

This pictorial parallel is reinforced in *Clélie*, where portraits of women in black only ever represent widows:

Comme cette Princesse estoit veuve depuis peu de jours [...], sa chambre estoit tenduë de noir [...]: cinquante lampes de cristal l'esclairaient; & en un coin de la chambre estoit un lit couvert d'un grand pavillon noir retroussé par les quatre coins avec des cordons à houpes noires [...]. Si bien que Themiste voyant au milieu de tant de noir, une personne jeune, belle, blonde, blanche, de bonne grâce, d'air modeste, triste, & civile, [...] elle luy toucha le coeur. (C6, 878-9)

<sup>48</sup> Vera Fortunati (ed.), *Lavinia Fontana 1552-1614* (Milan: Electa, 1994), p. 96.

<sup>49</sup> Frederika H. Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa: Women Artists and the Language of Art History and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 180.

Scudéry presents the scene as though it were the description of a painting: she organises the space as a seventeenth-century painter would; that is, around the lighting effect of a *chiaroscuro* setting whose light not only comes from the 'cinquante lampes de cristal' but from the beauty radiated by this 'personne jeune, belle, blonde, blanche, de bonne grâce, d'air modeste, triste & civile'. No detail of her apparel is here given. It is left to the reader's imagination. Nevertheless, the portrait of Elismonde as a widow completes the Scuderian representation of widowhood: rather than focussing on the function of decor as the metonymy for the female *persona*'s sadness, the following passage concentrates on a detailed description of Elismonde's attire:

Elismonde estoit ce jour là coiffée assez negligemment, de sorte que ses cheveux blonds s'eschappant par dessous un grand voile de gase noire qui luy tomboient sur les espauls, luy donnoient beaucoup d'agrément: elle avoit *la gorge à demy découverte*, & comme elle l'a *admirablement blanche*, & bien taillée, elle en paroissoit plus belle. (C7, 263-4)

For the time being, we shall only comment on physical details, such as Lindamire's and Elismonde's hands — which, in a sense, links them to Fontana's portraits of her noblewomen, where peculiar attention seems to be given to their white hands contrasting with the darkness of their apparel. In both Scudéry's and Fontana's portraits, the lady's pale hand holding a white handkerchief, plays a specific role: it directs the early modern viewer's interpretation of what he or she sees. Nevertheless, Scudéry's portrait of Elismonde is highly suggestive of erotic femininity, as conveyed by the mention of her 'gorge à demy découverte' and 'admirablement blanche', and of her 'bras à moitié découverts'. It is reinforced a few pages later, where the narrator asserts once more the link between the narrative



pictoriality of her portrait and a literal painting (C7, 279-80). Again, emphasis is on the lighting effects produced by her 'petit voile de gase blanche' and 'rubans noirs', the 'quarreaux noirs à houpes d'argent' (279) and the 'pavillon de gase noire [...] avec des cordons d'argent' (280), as though indeed there were a perfect symbiosis between the decor and the female *persona* dwelling there. While the comparison with Diana lying 'sur un lit de gazon au pied d'un arbre' (279) conjures up the image of Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus*, the whole decor evokes that of Titian's *Venus of Urbino* whom he has placed in the intimate confines of a bedroom.

This third type of portrait contrasts at first sight with the second type that takes us to the realm of seventeenth-century pomp, and seems to conform with the ideal of female outward appearance put forward by seventeenth-century moralists. On the other hand, although black is associated with sobriety and humility as well as reason and wisdom, these portraits of women in black can be suggestively Giorgionesque and Titianesque, as I have shown at the end of this section. There is yet more to say, as we shall see in the next two sections, about Uranian and Scudarian pictorial representations of female sensuality. As I shall first discuss, the picturing of female sensuality implies the presence of a beholder; and in *Urania* and *Clélie*, this beholder is often male, in which case he shares common traits with the protagonist of Ovid's story of Actaeon.

## **X. The male character as Actaeon in the female spaces of *Urania* and *Clélie***

In all the passages I have looked at so far, portraits of women are not simply descriptions isolated in a narrative: they directly involve the presence of a beholder (or more than one in the case of regal events). It is very often through the eyes of a male character that the reader is made to gaze upon the

sight of female beauty, as well as the setting in which the female *persona* figures. This is the case with Lindafillia who is represented ‘sitting on a throne’, and whom Rosindy sees in the magnificent interior of her castle (*U2*, 168). It is also the case with the unnamed lady whom Licandro happens to espy while sadly wandering in an arbour (*U2*, 76). It is the case with Clorina whom Parselius is made to contemplate (*U2*, 205-6); and in the excerpts from *Clélie* given above, it is the case with Lindamire and Elismonde, with whom Thémiste and Hortense respectively fall in love at first sight.

Wroth’s and Scudéry’s female models are represented either in the pastoral setting of Giorgione’s *Sleeping Venus* or in the more intimate interior of Titian’s *Venus of Urbino*. As demonstrated in Part Three, the boundaries between gardens and rooms are blurred. Gardens may have the function of a bedroom, and vice-versa. These gardens or rooms, where these Uranian and Scuderian female *personae* are pictured, might be described as earthly paradises which reproduce the narrative pattern of Ovid’s story of Actaeon. In this famous story, Ovid delineates a feminine space, that of Diana’s retreat to which only female companions may be admitted. The story of Actaeon stages the tragic fate of the hero transformed into a stag by Diana, when she catches him gazing on her naked body in the climactic bathing scene:

So deeply blushed Diana, caught unclothed.  
 Her troop pressed close about her, but she turned  
 Aside and looking backwards (would she had  
 Her arrows ready!) all she had, the water,  
 She seized and flung it in the young man’s face,  
 [...]  
 [...]With that one threat



Antlers she raised upon his dripping head,  
 Lengthened his neck, pointed his ears, transformed  
 His hands to hooves, arms to long legs, and draped  
 His body with a dappled hide [...].<sup>50</sup>

The story of Actaeon, in psychoanalytical terms, may be seen as having fostered the rhetoric of male voyeurism.<sup>51</sup> The purpose of this section is, however, to acknowledge Wroth's and Scudéry's indebtedness to the Ovidian tradition in Renaissance literature, and also to consider whether they simply reproduce it or subvert its pattern.

Heroes in *Hypnerotomachia*, *Urania* and *Clélie* are often portrayed as 'Actaeons' intruding upon the confines of a female community. Earlier on, we mentioned a possible parallel between Rosindy's progress into Lindafillia's castle and that of Poliphilus in *Hypnerotomachia*. I will suggest another parallel between *Urania* and *Hypnerotomachia* and *Clélie*: the fountain *topos*. In the passage in question (*Hypn.*, K2<sup>v</sup>), the nymph, depicted as both a sleeping Venus and a fountain, is immediately associated with love and latent *voluptas*. The fountain *topos* can also be found in *The Faerie Queene*, where it introduces more directly the theme of male voyeurism. In the twelfth canto of the second book, Guyon enters 'the most daintie Paradise on ground' (ii, 12, 58):

And in the midst of all, a fountaine stood,  
 Of richest substance, that on earth might bee,  
 So pure and shiny, that the siluer flood  
 Through euery channell running one might see; (ii, 12, 60)

<sup>50</sup> *Metamorphoses*, Book III, p. 56; from the cited edition, see p. 330, footnote 9.

<sup>51</sup> See Nancy J. Vickers, 'Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme', in Elizabeth Abel (ed.), *Writing and Sexual Difference* (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), pp. 95-109.

[...]

Two naked Damzelles he therein espyde,  
Which therein bathing, seemed to contend,  
And wrestle wantonly, ne car'd to hyde,  
Their dainty partes from vew of any, which them eyd. (ii, 12, 63)

The female space in Wroth's and Scudéry's texts unveils itself too, as though being intruded upon by the voyeuristic stare of an 'Actaeon'. The treatment of male voyeurism in *Hypnerotomachia*, *The Faerie Queene*, *Urania* and *Clélie* is more elaborate than in the Ovidian tale of Actaeon. The reader in the four texts of our present study is actually made to follow step by step the male intruder's progress encompassed within an almost cinematographic *tour de force*. The intruder's progress nevertheless carries with it echoes of the Ovidian narrative of desire.

I have selected one passage in *Urania* which discloses itself as a 'bower of bliss', a 'Paradice on Earth' (*U1*, 422, l. 42) which Leonius, like Poliphilus and Guyon, is made to behold:

When he had seene all the varieties encrease in varying to  
pleasure, he was yet set uppon by a more admirable sight  
which was the most delightfull object for man to like, and  
this as well to be liked as any, being a faire and daintie  
woman, appearing a Shepheardesse. (*U1*, 423, ll. 4-8)

The semantic abundance of gaze verbs ('wonder'd' [423, l. 1], 'contemplate' [l. 2], 'beholding' [l. 4], 'had seene' [l. 4], 'beheld this shining Starre' [l. 12], 'gazed even to blindnes' [424, l. 24]) is combined with the rhetoric of love and desire, whose birth we are witnessing progressively. Leonius's entrance into this earthly paradise enacts Ficino's



definition of 'Human Love', in which sight plays a key role: 'and so all love begins with sight'; but not any kind of sight, as he affirms in an earlier speech where he defines 'what lovers seek':

They seek beauty, for love is the desire of enjoying beauty. But beauty is a certain splendor, attracting the human soul to itself. Certainly bodily beauty is nothing but splendor in the ornament of colors and lines. Beauty of the Soul also is splendor in a harmony of knowledge and morals. That bodily glow, neither the ears, nor the sense of smell, nor taste, nor touch perceives, but only the eye. If the eye alone recognizes, it alone enjoys. Therefore, the eye alone enjoys the beauty of the body. Since love is nothing more than the desire of enjoying beauty, and beauty is perceived by the eyes alone, the lover of the body is content with the sight alone.<sup>52</sup>

Leonius's progress is syntactically contained within six paragraphs delineating a synaesthetic world in which sight and sound, female eroticism and music revive the myth of woman's enchanting power. In other words, this pastoral scene reads as the continuation of both Ovidian and Petrarchan narratives intertwining the motif of the male character's intrusive stare and that of the hero's subsequent loss of senses (see *U1*, 424, ll. 22-9). These two motifs, merging into the motif of lovers as 'prisoners' (l. 29) of their beloved's cruelty, constantly recur in *Urania's* and *Clélie's* love complaints. The Uranian hero in this scene goes through each stage of the birth of love, crowned by the metaphorical kiss that unites sight, touch and sound.<sup>53</sup> The

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<sup>52</sup> Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 'First Speech', Chapter IX, p. 146.

<sup>53</sup> 'Hearing', in Ficino's classification of 'the six powers of the soul pertaining to cognition', comes third after 'reason and sight' (p. 165 and p. 167).

kiss introduces a new paragraph, thereby shifting the narrative focus from a pictorial description to a tale of pastoral love:

He durst not follow neere, yet did his eies kisse every step  
she took, while he imboldned with love, yet a little with-held  
by feare, went sadly and softly on. (424, ll. 30-32)

As we follow Leonius's progress, this realm of love becomes the floral gallery of renowned heroines and goddesses, as implied by the brief allusion to Oenone's beauty (423, ll. 8-11) and later by the more suggestively erotic imagery emblematised in both the figure of Venus (424, l. 20) and her sylvan attributes, e.g. 'Mirtle' (l. 19), 'Grove' and 'Sicamore trees' (l. 13). Myrtle in Petrarchan poetry is commonly used to refer to Venus; as for the 'Grove' and 'Sicamore trees', they pertain to the sylvan decor of the pastoral theatre of love whose queen is Venus herself. However, Leonius is first drawn to a fountain by the sound of 'exquisite Musique' (423, l. 36). There is no explicit reference to the goddess of love; but her presence lurks beneath the lexical emphasis on the fountain element. The semantic cluster of fluidity first nominalised ('a full shower of raine' [424, l. 2]), then adverbialised ('showringly' [l. 3]), next verbalised ('it had rayned' [l. 5]) and finally nominalised again ('an Aprill shower' [l. 6]), suggests that the fountain constitutes the centre of this earthly paradise. The whole passage is thus suffused with biblical symbolism which associates the female body not just with a garden but also a fountain, as sung by Solomon:

A garden inclosed *is* my sister, *my* spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.



A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon.<sup>54</sup>

In *Urania*, Solomon's simile is echoed, although reversed, as the fountain itself is compared to a 'maide' in a second passage which is structured in an identical way to the one just analysed. This time it is not Leonius but Dolorindus who 'came into a dainty fine wood of straight high Oakes' (*UI*, 132, ll. 41-2). The setting is similar; and like Leonius he is made to behold a 'delicate Fountaine' (135, l. 41), which 'was most curious, being a faire Maide as it were' (136, l. 4).

In *Clélie*, the fountain is similarly associated with femininity, as we are told, for example, that 'Artaxandre qui a naturellement l'action assez libre, entra dans ce jardin: il n'y fut pas plustost, qu'il vit cinq ou six Femmes à l'entour d'une Fontaine' (*C2*, 1205). It is, however, in the story of Hésiode in Volume Eight of *Clélie*, that the reader will find more obvious similarities with Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia*.

Like Poliphilus, Hésiode arrives in a delightful place. Yet unlike the former 'being come to a faire river' and 'laying under [a] mightie Oake' (*Hypn.*, B3) in an unknown region, Hésiode is made to slumber at the feet of 'cette fameuse fontaine d'Hipocrene [...] celebre par cette vertu merueilleuse qu'on luy attribué, d'inspirer à ceux qui en boivent la facilité de faire des vers' (*C8*, 798). The content of Hésiode's dream utterly differs from that of Poliphilus: he is not made to progress through a 'queendom', but to watch, as seen in Chapter Six (pp. 208-12), famous Greek, Latin, Italian and French men and women of letters parading before him. Despite this liminal difference, the setting bears comparison with the above descriptions of Colonna's, Spenser's and Wroth's gardens of love. The

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<sup>54</sup> *The Holy Bible, Authorised King James Version* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Song of Solomon, 4. 12-15.

description of the scenery (C8, 798-9), which constitutes once more the first stage of the narrative configuration of the earthly paradise, is expanded in the protagonist's dream:

Hesiode vit, ou creut voir, toutes les Muses à l'entour de luy; mais telles qu'on les despeind, c'est à dire avec des habillemens de Nymphes, des robes volantes, des cheveux espars, des guirlandes de fleurs sur la teste, & divers instrumens à la main, selon les diverses choses qu'elles ont inventées. Hesiode vit donc tout d'un coup cette celeste Troupe à l'entour de luy. Il entendit un si doux concert, qu'il en fut charmé [...]. Mais à la fin la musique ayant cessé, Caliope s'avançant vers luy, apres en avoir eu le consentement de ses Compagnes, luy parla. (C8, 799<sup>r-v</sup>)

The end of the concert marks the second stage of the hero's progress into the garden of love: like Poliphilus in *Hypnerotomachia*, and Leonius in *Urania*, he is 'set uppon by a more admirable sight' (U1, 423, ll. 5-6), that of the Muses and their mistress 'Caliope'. It constitutes one of the rare scenes in *Clélie* whose treatment takes the reader back to the irrational pastoral world of Arcadian and Astrean romances. Without contradicting the precepts of mimesis outlined in the preface to *Ibrahim*, she can allow herself this deviation from verisimilitude in fiction, as she employs the dream motif, the *locus* where all transgressions are permitted, where the 'seen' is not called into question but accepted as true. This last remark is again suggested by the redundancy of the verb 'voir' throughout the whole dream and at the end of it:



En cét instant il vit je ne sçay quoi de lumineux qui l'éblouït, & se leva sans sçavoir ce qu'il vo[u]loit faire, ayant l'esprit si remply de ce qu'il croyoit avoir veu [...], qu'il en estoit tout interdit. Il le fut encore davantage, lors qu'estant un peu revenu à luy, il vit une jeune & belle personne [...]. Son coeur en fut esmeu. D'abord il pensa croire que c'estoit une des Muses, qui estoit demeurée au bord de la fontaine, mais cette erreur ne dura qu'un moment. (C8, 870-1)

As in the passage from *Urania* analysed earlier, the whole episode of Hésiode's dream is clearly constructed around the conventional leitmotifs of the fountain of love, of a male character's intrusive stare and of love at first sight. There are many other similar instances in the Scudarian text, in which male protagonists appear as and occasionally compare themselves to Actaeon — such as Zénocrate who is in love with Elismonde and writes her a 'billet galant':

Comme un jeune Acteon, temeraire & profane,  
Je vous suy pas à pas trop charmante Diane. (C9, 370)

Earlier in Volume Four, Scudéry plays variations on the Actaeon myth in a manner that sounds, in a sense, subversive. Artémidore, a prisoner of war and in love with the inconstant Clidamire who has left him for Térésille, strikes up a friendship with Bérélice, during his captivity in Agrigente. Térésille turns out to be Bérélice's brother. One day, the couple is invited to a country house in Carisatis by Philonice, Bérélice's best friend. As the melancholy Artémidore wanders in this 'aimable lieu', left to his own devices, he takes on the characteristics of Actaeon before the mythological hero's metamorphosis, as he comes upon female bathers, amongst whom are

his former and new lovers, Clidamire and Bérélise (*C4*, 877-9). Up to this point, Artémidore's progress resembles Actaeon's in Diana's woodland. Yet as the scene unfolds, the author slightly subverts the original tale: Artémidore does not get caught or metamorphosed into a stag by the chief commandress of this female community. He is instead turned into the judge, like Paris, of Clidamire's and Bérélise's beauty:

Il les vit bien differentes; car il faut que vous sçachiez que tous les charmes de Clidamire sont en son visage seulement; [...] elle a les mains seiches & maigres, les bras plats, la gorge mal taillée, & le corps sans doute fort disproportionné à l'agrément de ses yeux, estant mesme moins blanche qu'elle ne paroist l'estre. Mais pour Berelise, Artemidore ne la vit pas ainsi: [...] il ne laissa pas de voir [...] qu'elle avoit sans doute un des plus beaux corps du monde. [...] Ces deux images s'imprimerent si fortement dans son esprit, qu' [...] il vit tout le reste du soir & toute la nuit toutes les beautez de l'une, & tous les deffauts de l'autre [...] (*C4*, 880-1)

Thus rather than condemning the male intruder's curiosity, the Scudarian bathing scene reads as a moralising tale on exterior and inner beauty, a tale in which the gazing male unexpectedly learns the truth about his former lover's falsehood. Clidamire and Bérélise are the ones who are metamorphosed, as it were, in Artémidore's imagination, into the allegories of vice and virtue.

In conclusion to this section, it appears that Wroth's use of the Ovidian theme of a male character's progress into the domain of a female community is conventional, as it conjures up many parallels with scenes



from the *Arcadia*, *The Faerie Queene* and *Hypnerotomachia* as well as other texts. This shows that she is resorting to a well-used theme in her predecessors' work. Scudéry, on the other hand, playfully rewrites the Ovidian tale not from a protofeminist but rather from a conventionally moralistic point of view, because its message is clearly directed to women and not men as in Ovid's tale. Scudéry's version warns women against vanity whereas Ovid's tale may be read as a warning against masculine breach of decorum. However, in other love tales, Scudéry plays variations on the story of Actaeon, when, for example, Artaxandre in Volume Two and Brutus in Volume Three are made to marvel at Cynésie and Lucrece who are profoundly asleep. In these passages, there is no bathing scene, yet they can be construed as revelatory moments in the two male characters' lives: they are like two Actaeons, gazing not on Diana but on the Venusian beauty of the female body. Intrusive without being seen, the male character in both Wroth's and Scudéry's texts is not literally metamorphosed into a stag as such; but his progress into the realm of womanhood inevitably comes to a standstill as he becomes transfixed by the sight of the heroine's half nakedness — a sight which contributes to the arousal not just of male desire, as I have shown through this section, but also of aesthetic pleasure. I shall now develop this last point at greater length and discuss whether or not Wroth's and Scudéry's pictorial representations of female sensuality differ aesthetically from the way male writers present such scenes.

## XI. Aesthetic pleasure and the female body in *Urania* and *Clélie*

Prominent among the Scudarian representations of female beauty that arouse aesthetic pleasure is the portrait of Cynésie. Scudéry explicitly draws an interesting parallel between Cynésie's beauty and that of female models

in the works of great painters. Artaxandre, after a long journey, returns home at night. He is surprised to find his bedroom door ajar (C2, 1276-8):

Comme il faisoit chaud, un grand Pavillon de couleur de Pourpre, qui couvroit [le] Lit de [Cynésie], estoit retroussé, & laissoit à Artaxandre la liberté de pouvoir admirer sa beauté, qui luy parut d'autant plus merveilleuse, qu'il fut agreablement surpris par un si bel objet. [...] la Couverture qui la couvroit estoit assez simple, on voyoit toute la forme de son corps, comme on voit celle de ces Figures que les grands Peintres font. (1277)

In many of Scudéry's portraits of female beauty, we may detect references to the sleeping Venus of Renaissance artists, as suggested by the several direct allusions to paintings, some of which we have already noted. Although Scudéry does not specifically name any painter — apart from her fictitious characters, Nélante and Méléandre, who critics contend are respectively Nanteuil and Charles Le Brun — we may conclude that she bases her descriptions of the female body as much on pictorial representations in literature as on existing paintings.<sup>55</sup> The most suggestive evidence for this is her insertion in *Clélie* of the description of a painting. This is an interesting piece of narrative, as it casts light on seventeenth-century aesthetic taste. An imaginary visit to Mélinthe's palace leads us to the most private part of her retreat, her cabinet:

A un de ses tableaux [...] où l'on ne voit rien d'habité ni de vivant, que cette belle personne, qui paroissant estre rebutée du monde, est appuyée d'une maniere nonchalante, qui fait assez

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<sup>55</sup> On Nanteuil and Charles Le Brun, see Plantié, *La Mode des portraits*, p. 448.



voir que la lumiere mesme n'est plus l'objet de ses regards, tant elle paroist recueillie en elle mesme. Ses beaux cheveux blonds sont épars sur ses espauls, dont la blancheur ne peut estre surpassée que par le teint de cette belle solitaire, sur le visage de laquelle on voit une si belle douleur, que la joye n'a jamais rien eu de si agreable. [...] Ce que l'on voit de son corps est admirable, le peu de Drapperie qui paroist est naturel, le païsage est la nature mesme, & ce tableau est enfin digne de l'excellent Peintre qui l'a fait. (C10, 883-4).

While this painting may make one think of Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* whom he places in a pastoral setting, the portrait of Cynésie may remind us of Titian's *Venus of Urbino* who is painted in a contemporary interior. Cynésie's pose which shows her 'couchée à demy sur le costé droit' (C2, 1277) clearly conjures up the image of the reclining Venus by Giorgione or Titian. Yet unlike Titian's 'Venus of Urbino' who is not represented sleeping, she does not '[engage] with her viewer in a direct exchange of glance'.<sup>56</sup> Her body unveils itself as the object of Artémidore's contemplation. Her nudity emerges nevertheless against a similar background to that in Titian's paintings of the female nude as rendered by the 'Pavillon de couleur de pourpre' and the 'Couverture' (which the narrator compares to the 'plis de ces admirables draperies' [C2, 1277]).

The Scuderian room as the private retreat of a heroine therefore functions as the Uranian 'Paradise on Earth' (U1, 422, l. 42); it participates in the inception of love. Uranian and Scuderian 'Actaeons' are like Poliphilus, who describes himself as 'trembling and shaking like the fearfull hinde calves', 'feeling all his joyntes quaking like the leaves of an aspe in a bitter winde' (*Hypn.*, L') at the sight of beauty, and as having forgotten and

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<sup>56</sup> Daniel Arasse, 'The Archetype of a Glance', in Rona Goffen (ed.), *Titian's Venus of Urbino* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 92.

lost his senses. Leonius is 'ravished' by 'love onely a senselesse passion, especially when so suddenly surprising' (*U1*, 423, ll. 26-7); so is Licandro, at the sight of the King of Tartaria's sister:

Amased hee was beeyound expression, and hee, who formerly had onely binn a complemter, was nowe a flatt, meere lover, and all his cerimonious and Courtly fashion turnd into direct timorousnes and bashfullnes. Hee stood gazing and blushing faintly, fondly adventuring to goe towards her. (*U2*, 76, ll. 14-8)

In *Clélie*, we are told of Hortense's 'surprise' (*C7*, 264) and of Thémiste's enthrallment:

Hortense [...] sentit je ne sçay quoy qui le retint quand il fut devant Elismonde. (*C7*, 264-5)

Aussi [Lindamire] prit-elle [le coeur] de Themiste, qui n'estant venu chez elle qu'avec des sentiments d'ambition, s'en retourna avec beaucoup d'amour. (*C6*, 879)

These women's beauty is endowed with the power of enchantment — as conveyed, in each case, by the narrator's use of hyperbolic phrases such as 'd'autant plus merveilleuse', 'un si bel objet' (*C2*, 1277), 'les mains les plus belles du monde' (*C8*, 879), 'la gorge [...] admirablement blanche' (*C7*, 263), 'of the rarest and cleerest complexion' (*U2*, 7, ll. 15-6), 'a most delectable shine' (*U2*, 205, ll. 41-2), 'excellency of softnes' (*U2*, 206, l. 4), 'a foile to the excellency of the perfections in this creature, so much surpassing description as conceit doth commonly excell expression' (*U1*, 423, ll. 9-11).



Whether a garden or a room, the female retreat is turned into a sanctuary where parts of the female body (a hand, a throat, etc.) and fashion accessories ('un voile de femme' [C2, 1277], 'a fine ruffe' or 'knots of ash-colour ribbon' [U1, 423, l. 14 and ll. 18-9]) function as the erotic synecdoches for female beauty. In the Renaissance celebration of female beauty, either in literature or in the visual arts, 'un détail particulièrement recherché est constitué par la main'.<sup>57</sup> It is thus not surprising that in Uranian and Scuderian portraits of women, the 'hand' should be treated as an aesthetic object. In his *Treatise on Painting*, Leonardo da Vinci writes that

the hands and the arms must whenever possible, display all their actions, the intention of the mind that moves them, because by means of them whoever has feeling and understanding can follow the mind's intent in all movements. (p. 149)

In *Urania*, the beautiful lady's hand, as shown earlier on, is an element in the poetic blason; yet it also has an ecphrastic function: its immaculate whiteness makes us relate it to a cobweb of visual and emotive correspondences. The 'hand' that arouses desire is, for instance, described in conventional Petrarchan terms:

Hands of purest snowe, yett the sight had the like effect of  
commune snowe (for if you play with itt, 'twill burne), while the  
beeholding her rarenes sett harts on fire. (U2, 76, ll. 9-11).

If the female hand in *Urania* not only arouses desire but also aesthetic pleasure, in *Clélie* its rhetorical treatment is less intricate, but it

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<sup>57</sup> Joukovsky, *Le Bel objet*, p. 85.

may nonetheless remind the reader of the Giorgionesque or Titianesque female hand that plays a major role as an emblem of modesty. Indeed, female figures, represented half naked or wholly so, often conceal their private charms with one hand. One interesting example can be found in Volume Three, where Brutus falls in love with Lucrece. Passing by her room one evening, Brutus is overtaken by curiosity and sneaks in:

Sa curiosité ne fut pourtant pas trop satisfaite: car bien qu'il vist  
 Lucrece endormie, on peut dire qu'il la vit moins qu'il ne la  
 voyoit quand elle estoit debout, parce qu'elle estoit endormie  
 d'une façon si modeste, qu'il ne luy pût voir que la main droite.  
 (C3, 299)

Under Brutus's gaze, Lucrece's hand is transformed into a synecdoche for love, as it plays a part in the migration of Brutus's heart, a Petrarchan conceit par excellence:

Il est vray que cette main luy parût si belle, qu'on peut assurer  
 qu'elle acheva le larcin que ses yeux avoient commencé de faire,  
 & qu'elle luy déroba le coeur. Brutus ne s'aperceut pourtant pas  
 encore de ce foible commencement d'amour; il appella curiosité  
 ce premier mouvement de sa passion. (C3, 299-300).

In the portraits of Elismonde and Lindamire, the heroine's hand seems to be directing the viewer's gaze: it radiates light, and epitomises ethereal beauty:

La belle Lindamire estoit apuyée negligemment sur des carreaux:  
 mais de telle sorte que sans aucune affec[ta]tion, on luy voyoit  
 les mains qu'elle a les plus belles du monde. (C6, 878-9)



[Elismonde] avoit les bras à moitié découverts, des bracelets noirs, & les mains si belles, qu'elle estoit parée sans l'estre. (C7, 264)

The Uranian and Scuderian motif of the hand introduces the motifs of 'grazia' (grace) and 'leggiadara' (elegance) as well as 'vaghezza' (alluring charm), 'venusta' (loveliness) and 'maesta' (majesty). These are five of the six female qualities which are listed by Agnolo Firenzuola in his *Dialogo delle Belliza Donne* (1548), and read as the universal characteristics of female beauty in early modern Western literature and art.<sup>58</sup> The idea of gracefulness is suggested in the description of Clorina's 'armes' that I have quoted earlier (p. 338). It is perhaps more evident in the above examples from *Clélie*, where 'grace' is symbolised by the 'petit Voile blanc' of Lucrece which 'elle sembloit tenir si negligemment' (C3, 299), or by Lindamire's 'grand voile qui luy pendoit nonchalamment jusques à terre, & dont elle tenoit un coin agreablement entortillé à son bras gauche' (C6, 885). The veil is one important accessory that is exploited by artists in the representation of the female nude. We also find it in Ronsard's, Belleau's, and Du Bellay's poetry, in Titian's *Danae*, Botticelli's *Primavera*, and Fontana's *Minerva*. The veil appears as a highly erotic object. Like the hand, the veil or any other type of garment (such as Cynésie's 'tunique plissée' [C2, 1278]) partly conceals parts of the female body. The other visual poetic object that is the equivalent of the veil is the lady's hair.

In most of the portraits we have examined, the hair serves as a poetical and visual element which most convincingly contributes to the 'grazzia' and 'leggiadara' of female beauty:

Her haire carelesly throwne up, neither tyde, nor untyde, but cast  
into a delightfull neglectivenes, some pretty flowers, and knots

<sup>58</sup> Cited in Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa*, p. 123.

of ash-colour ribon, being here and there placed between the loose fastenings of her haire. (*U1*, 423, ll. 16-20)

Elismonde estoit donc habillée de blanc ce jour là, ses beaux cheveux paroissoient negligemment au dessous d'une espee de petit voile de gase blanche. (*C7*, 279)<sup>59</sup>

The hair, like the veil, appears as the hallmark of erotic sensuality — a sensuality which evokes the gracefulness of Botticelli's models, but also of the ladies in Jonson's masques. In *The Masque of Beauty* (1608), for example, careful attention is given to the stylish 'carelessness' of the 'eight figures, representing the Elements of Beauty, [...] and being female', and more particularly to the hair of Splendour, Germinatio, Laetitia and Venustas:

Splendour: in a robe of flame colour, naked-breasted; her bright hair loose flowing [...]

Germinatio: In green, with a zone of gold about her waist, crowned with myrtle, her hair likewise flowing [...].

Laetitia: [...] her hair flowing, and stuck with flowers.

Venustas: in a silver robe, with a thin subtle veil over her hair.<sup>60</sup>

The flowing characteristic of these female figures' hair seems to be representative of a Renaissance artistic principle. It recalls Leonardo da Vinci's advice, in his *Treatise on Painting*, as to how 'to depict hair':

<sup>59</sup> Similar descriptions of hair abound in both works: see, for instance, *U1*, 78[ll. 16-8]; *U2*, 205 [ll. 41-2]-206[ll. 3-11]; *C2*, 1278; and *C7*, 263.

<sup>60</sup> In *Jacobean and Caroline Masques*, vol. 1, pp. 61-2. See also the description of the ladies' attire in Jonson's *Hymenaei* (1606), in *Jacobean and Caroline Masques*, vol. 1, pp. 46-7.



Depict hair which an imaginary wind causes to play about youthful faces, and adorn heads you paint with curling locks of various kinds. (p. 162)

And while Renaissance painters resort to lighting effects and undulating shapes to create movement and grace, writers exploit lexical variations on 'aria', the sixth quality of female beauty listed in *Dialogo delle Belliza Donne*. Throughout this chapter, the reader may have been struck by the recurrence of words, in Scudéry's portraits of women, such as 'nonchalant', 'nonchalamment', 'négligé', 'négligemment', 'languissant', 'languueur', which also have their equivalents in *Urania*, such as careless/carelessness, neglectiveness. The description of the shepherdess (*U1*, 423, ll. 17-20) or of Clorina (*U2*, 205-206) yet suggests that this 'carelessness' or 'neglectiveness' is associated with 'daintiness' and 'delicacy', another pair of characteristics which we find in all of Wroth's depictions of female beauty. To a modern reader, a phrase such as 'a delightfull neglectivenes' (*U1*, 423, ll. 17-8) may sound antonymous, and the image of a 'haire hanging carelesse' (*U1*, 78, l. 16) be interpreted as a sign of shamelessness, exhibiting a 'lack of proper care and attention' (*OED*). The *OED* records only that meaning for the other noun 'neglectiveness', which is characterised as an obsolete form of the cognate 'neglect'. No specific definition of the various uses of the word 'neglectiveness' in the seventeenth century is given. Nevertheless, the *OED* illustrates its different uses through a series of quotations, two of which are extracted from *Urania*:

Her haire[...] cast into a delightfull neglectivenes. (362)

Her hayre shee onely kept cleane, and neglectively wore it.  
(393)<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted from 'Lady Mary Wroath, *The Countesse of Mountgomerie Urania* (1621)' (*OED Bibliography*).

The aesthetic implication of Wroth's use of the word 'neglectiveness' is tackled in the third definition of the word 'negligence' which seems to have become more and more widely used toward the late 1650s and throughout the eighteenth century:

A careless indifference, as in appearance or costume or in literary style, in later use, especially with suggestion of an agreeable absence of artificiality or restraint.

For a more precise definition of the notion of 'negligence' or 'neglectiveness', 'nonchalance' or 'carelessness', one interesting source is Furetière's *Dictionnaire* (1690). Indeed, 'nonchalance' is clearly defined as a synonym for 'negligence': the adverb 'nonchalamment' 'est un fort bon mot qui se dit en quelques endroits avec plus de grâce que negligemment'. A look at the definitions Furetière gives of 'negligence' is enlightening as to early modern ideals of female beauty. The first definition is the one with which we are more familiar and which reads in parallel with the one in the *OED*: 'nonchalance, manque de soin, d'application'. The second, by contrast, tells us that '[la négligence] se dit de tout ce qui est opposé à l'exactitude ou à l'art'. Furetière illustrates his second definition with quotations from seventeenth-century authors which are relevant to our discussion, as they clearly suggest that 'négligence' is construed as synonymous with grace in the first quotation below, and represents the highest quality in the next one:

La *negligence* a quelquefois plus de grâce que les plus beaux ornemens (Chev. de M.).



Au travers de la negligence de cette femme on voit je ne sçay  
 quoi d'heureux qui surpasse la magnificence des plus superbes  
 habits (Corn.).<sup>62</sup>

For the adjective 'négligent' and adverb 'négligemment', the definitions are similar, and refer to written style. On the phrase 'à la négligence' 'qui signifie négligemment', Furetière adds an interesting example which implies that 'négligence' may also be construed as the opposite of ostentatious behaviour, that is as the mark of female virtue and humility:

Les femmes sont d'ordinairement vestues à la négligence, quand  
 elles vont à l'église.

The meanings of the words 'delicacy' and 'daintiness' in the same period are also those of 'neglectiveness' or 'nonchalance'. The fourth meaning of 'delicacy', which is now obsolete, makes it 'a quality being delightful to intellectual senses; to beauty, daintiness and pleasantness'. Its fifth meaning relates 'delicacy' to 'exquisite fineness of texture, substance, finish, etc.; to graceful slightness, slenderness or softness; soft tender beauty'. And its tenth meaning is 'a refined sense of what is becoming, modest or proper; sensitiveness to the feelings of modesty and shame [...]'. I have here only quoted the senses used in *Urania*. The portraits of the shepherdess (*U1*, 423) and Clorina (*U2*, 205-6) perfectly illustrate these various uses of the words 'delicacy' and 'neglectiveness'. They also add more to the image of gracefulness as Wroth conceives it, for they introduce the notion of modesty and chastity when characterising the unclothed parts

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<sup>62</sup> Furetière does not state his source. However, the abbreviations 'Chev. de M.' and 'Corn.' no doubt refer to Le Chevalier de Méré and one of the Corneille brothers.

of a virtuous female character, as in the following description of Pamphilia on her arrival at the Throne of Love:

Her necke was modestly bare, yet made all discern, it was not to be beheld with eyes of freedome. (*UI*, 169, ll. 17-8)

In *Clélie*, ‘nonchalance’ and ‘langueur’ are implicitly defined as contrary to ‘affectation’:

Au reste elle a un si grand air de jeunesse, qu’on voit paroistre sur son visage une certaine fleur d’innocence, qui redouble tous ses charmes: mais ce qui augmente encore la beauté de Lindamire, c’est qu’elle a quelquefois une aimable negligence qui luy sied si bien, que rien ne luy peut resister. Car ce qu’il y a de remarquable, c’est que quoy qu’elle fasse elle a tousjours bonne grace, & toujours l’air galant, & que l’action la plus negligée qu’elle puisse faire, sert à la faire paroistre plus belle. [...] elle a un son dans la voix qui esmeut le coeur dès qu’il a frapé l’oreille. Elle y a de la douceur, de la tendresse, & je ne sçay quelle aimable nonchalance. (*C6*, 851-2)

Thus the portrait of Lindamire provides us with a perfect illustration as to the positive use of the lexicon of ‘nonchalance’, which denotes physical as well as spiritual beauty.

My study in this section of scenes where Wroth’s and Scudéry’s women are conventionally represented, as in a painting, reclining, sleeping or sitting, suggests the extent to which their texts are influenced by the visual arts. This influence is reinforced by their use of a common feature in



sixteenth- and seventeenth-century 'erotic' painting: the partial disclosure of the female body. The influence is, however, more explicit in *Clélie* since, in mentioning the 'Figures que les grands Peintres font' in her description of Cynésie (C2, 1277), Scudéry invites her reader to engage in a mental process, that of investigating his or her visual memory of paintings by early modern masters of the female nude. The idea of 'aesthetic pleasure' is therefore twofold: it not only transcribes a male character's delight and physical enthrallment at viewing female beauty, but it reflects a whole society's conception of art in relation to the representation of the female body in the early modern period. Indeed, the lady's hand, the lady's hair or veil are some of the props found in visual representations of women which serve here as rhetorical devices imbuing Wroth's and Scudéry's virtuous female characters with 'grazzia' and 'leggiadara'. In that sense, there is no discernible difference between these female-authored static images of beautiful women and those found in the visual arts. However, these static images strongly contrast with another type of pictorial representation of female beauty, that is Wroth's and Scudéry's representations of female heroism (*i.e.* scenes where their women display extraordinary bravery). I shall therefore discuss in the following section whether or not such scenes provide us with conclusive clues to the two authors' protofeminism.

## XII. Heroism and the female body in *Urania* and *Clélie*

In the heroical scenes of *Clélie*, where women emerge as paragons of 'gloire féminine', their apparel is rarely described. Take, for instance, the scenes of the 'traversée du Tibre' and of Lindamire's political negotiations with her lover, Thémiste (see Chapter Three, pp. 117-20 and pp. 121-2). The absence of colour and ornament in these two scenes is in each case counterbalanced by one simple allusion, one to the 'robe' of Clélie and her female companions, and one to 'l'habit negligé' of Lindamire. These are

two mere details which, in the world of Scudarian prose, are charged with symbolism, in the sense that, as already mentioned, they are the outward signs of these heroines' modesty. I have found only one scene which treats the Scudarian heroine's 'habit negligé' in much more detail. In this scene, Artémidore's real identity is only known to his sister Lysimène, whom he has come to visit. Yet their older brother is convinced that Artémidore is her lover. Having been told by his agents that Lysimène's so-called lover is with her in her house, he decides to go and surprise the two lovers. Artémidore has already sneaked out of her room, but happens to meet his older brother on his way out. The latter refuses to listen to Artémidore's explanation, and the young man is compelled to defend his own life: on hearing the sound of swords, Lysimène

sortit en diligence apres qu'elle fut revenuë de son premier estonnement, & sans considerer qu'elle n'avoit *qu'une simple robe volante d'une estoffe blanche, & fort legere*; qu'elle avoit la gorge à demy nuë, *les cheveux espars*, & les bras découverts, elle sort du perron, traverse tous ces gens armez; s'expose aux coups de fleches & de javelots, & *faisant honte par sa rare beauté aux Graces* au pied desquelles Artemidore deffendoit vaillamment sa vie, elle se mit entre ce vaillant Prince & ceux qui l'attaquoient, voulant par cette action *genereuse* faire cesser le combat. (C9, 415-6)

By not naming 'nonchalance' or 'negligence', but by describing it, the narrator creates a vivid picture of the gracefulness which lurks beneath the epithets characterising her dress ('simple' and 'fort legere'). Furthermore, Scudéry combines, in this tableau of female beauty, objects ('robe', 'estoffe', 'cheveux') with the quality of lightness or subtle movement



(‘volante’, ‘fort legere’, ‘espars’), and draws a direct link between Lysonice’s ‘rare beauty’ and the sculptural beauty of the Three Graces.

At the heart of this scene, which may remind us, once again, of Botticelli’s *Primavera* — where his women’s bodies are adorned with a similar ‘robe volante d’une estoffe blanche’ — there lies the definition of early modern heroinism which allies sensual beauty and ‘générosité’.<sup>63</sup> The term ‘genereuse’ is indeed the only epithet that characterises the ‘aria’ or countenance of Lysonice.

It is nevertheless in the examples of Limena and Lucrece that heroinism is most fully achieved, as they both constitute exemplars of martyrdom. These two female characters are, in a sense, controversial. They are respectively in love with Perissus and Brutus; but for political reasons, they must be married to Philargus and Collatin. Loyal to their husbands, although still tacitly bound to their first loves, they are to become epitomes of wifely virtue and ‘gloire féminine’. While the tale of Limena is primarily that of a husband’s violence towards his wife, the tale of Lucrece is that of a woman dishonoured by male baseness.

In the case of Nereana, as seen in Chapter Eight (pp. 317-8), the representation of a woman assaulted and tortured by a man creates a distinctly comic scene. This lighthearted treatment of male violence contrasts with the torture scene in which Limena emerges as an exemplar of martyrdom:

[Philargus] tooke my clothes, and with them wip’d the bloud off from me, I expecting nothing but the last act, which I thought should have been concluded with my burning; his mind chang’d from the first resolution, so as taking me by the haire, and dragging me into the Wood among the bushes (whose cursenesse

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<sup>63</sup> The term ‘générosité’ in the seventeenth-century sense means nobleness of spirit, bravery and heroism. See my introduction to Chapter Three, p. 111.

seconded their masters furie) tearing my skinne, and scratching my bare leggs, to a tree he there tied me. (*U1*, 88, ll. 3-9).

This description of a husband mistreating his wife may be construed as an inversion of the '*Weibermacht topos*' which represents 'the dangerous power of women over men in images of women beating men with distaffs'.<sup>64</sup> While in Nereana's case, the minuteness of visual details focusses on the ridiculous garment with which Alanius attires her, in Limena's case, it creates a tragic and realistic picture of female martyrdom from a female viewpoint. Details such as 'tearing my skinne' (*U1*, 88, l. 8), 'daily whippings, and such other tortures, as pinching with irons' (ll. 15-6), 'whipt me, after washing the stripes and blisters with salt water' (ll. 20-1) delineate what the daily reality of a mistreated wife's life may have been and take us beyond the boundaries of the romance prose world.<sup>65</sup> These crude details may also evoke the image of Christ on the Way of the Cross. This is hinted at in an earlier account of the scene witnessed by Parselius:

The Morean Prince staid to behold, and beholding did admire *the exquisitenes of that sad beautie*, but more then that did the cruelty of the armed man seeme wonderful, for leading her to a pillar which stood on the sand (a fit place that the sea might stil wash away the memorie of such inhumanity) he tied her to it by the haire, which was of great length, and Sun-like brightnesse. Then pulled hee off a mantle which she wore, *leaving her from the girdle upwards al naked*, her soft, daintie white hands hee fastened behind her, with a cord about both wrists, in manner of *a crosse, as testimony of her cruellest Martyrdome*. (*U1*, 84, ll. 11-20)

<sup>64</sup> Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 144.

<sup>65</sup> See Hackett, 'The Torture of Limena', pp. 93-100.



On the one hand, the 'exquisitenes of that sad beautie', her naked upper body, and the mention of the 'crosse' shape ('as testimony of her cruellest Martyrdome') conjure up pictorial versions of the crucifixion of Christ. Most of these represent him as the embodiment of 'virtue, patience, grace, love, piety' (*SDRJ*, 299, l. 958), feminine attributes *par excellence*. The description of Limena's tortured body in the two scenes shares similarities with the description of Christ's body in Aemilia Lanyer's poem, which may be construed as a transcription in verse of late Renaissance paintings of Christ:

His joints disjointed, and his legs hang down,  
 His alabaster breast, his bloody side,  
 His members torn, and on his head a crown. (*SDRJ*, 305,  
 ll. 1161-3).

On the other hand, the detail of her 'haire which, was of great length, and Sun-like brightnesse' might conjure up images of Mary Magdalene painted by Titian; and the mention of 'her soft, daintie, white hands' might make one think of the *Madonna lactans* tradition. Through these strongly symbolic elements, Limena, in this instance, emerges as an exemplar of female martyrdom that binds her to pictorial representations of female Christian martyrs. But it is also highly probable that in writing this scene Wroth bore in mind Ovid's tale of Perseus and Andromeda in *Metamorphoses*, and may have been influenced by paintings of it:

Andromeda was pinioned to a rock.  
 When Perseus saw her, had a wafting breeze  
 Not stirred her hair, her eyes not overflowed  
 With trembling tears, he had imagined her  
 A marble statue. Love, before he knew,

Kindled; he gazed entranced; and overcome  
 By loveliness so exquisite, so rare,  
 Almost forgot to hover in the air. (Book IV, p. 95)

A good illustration is certainly Vasari's painting *Perseus and Andromeda* (1570-1572). The rock in the mythological heroine's narrative or in Vasari's painting is, in the story of Limena, 'the pillar'; and it can be argued that the dragon is here her husband who will be slain like the Ovidian monster.<sup>66</sup>

The *persona* of Limena therefore encapsulates many aspects of an aesthetic tradition which is characterised by the fusion of myth and religion, paganism and Christianity. Limena belongs to this cultural fusion of seemingly opposite values and beliefs, which is made invalid when it comes to praising female virtue. Had Limena been a mythological, biblical or historical worthy, she would have had a place in the early modern panegyrics of magnanimous women, pagan and Christian.

The Scuderian counterpart is of course the legendary *persona* of Lucrece.<sup>67</sup> Commenting on the several interpretations of Lucretia's rapes, Ian Donaldson writes:

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<sup>66</sup> The myth of Andromeda and Perseus is one which was used in both Renaissance England and France as a political allegory in plays and emblems. See Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies*, where the author argues that Elizabeth I 'might be Andromeda in need of rescue' (p. 45). See Daniel Russell, *Emblematic Structures in Renaissance French Culture* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1995) where he discusses the use of emblems for political propaganda (pp. 199-201) and mentions Jean Leclerc's emblem 'La délivrance de la France par le Persée François' (1594); see Philostratus the Elder, *Les Images (Eikones)*, trans. Blaise de Vigenère (Paris: Chez la veuve Abel L'Angelier, 1614; New York and London: Garland, 1976), pp. 254-64. The translation was first published in 1578. However, Ovid's tale certainly contributed to the popularity of this theme.

<sup>67</sup> When referring to the fictive character in French texts, I will use the name Lucrece as stated in the original version, and the name Lucretia when referring to the actual legend or when used in the original works under discussion.



Scudéry entirely reverses the traditional emphases in the story of Lucretia and Brutus. Lucretia is no longer a model of marital devotion, or Brutus one of stern emotional repression. Collatinus, traditionally an impulsive man, is shown to be shallow and tepid in his feelings. Brutus's passion for Lucretia is the central driving force of the story, the fact that is intended to make all its events intelligible. It is this passion which fires Brutus in his zeal for revenge against the Tarquins; political considerations are altogether secondary.<sup>68</sup>

Scudéry not only 'reverses the traditional emphases in [her] story of Lucrece and Brutus', but also alters the traditional representation of the legendary heroine in paintings. Indeed while, for instance, Pierre Le Moyne's pictorial treatment of Lucrece in his *Gallerie des femmes fortes* bears comparison with paintings of the pagan heroine by Lucas Cranach, or Joan Van Cleve and Guido Reni, Scudéry's treatment of Lucrece in *Clélie* recalls instead

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<sup>68</sup> Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and its Transformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p 128. See also Shepherd, 'the influential early discussion of the Lucrece story' in *Amazons and Warrior Women*, pp. 169-178; on the controversy over Lucretia's exemplarity, see Jed's article 'Salutati's *Declamatio Lucretiae* (pp. 209-25), mentioned in Chapter Two, p. 98, footnote 25. It is also possible that Scudéry had in mind the rape scene in *L'Astrée* ('Histoire d'Eudoxe, Valentinian et Ursace', vol. 2, pp. 492-559), where focus is on the rape itself, rather than on the glorification of female virtue (pp. 520-1). As in England with Shakespeare's *Lucrece* and his successors (see Shepherd, *supra*), the Lucretia legend was undoubtedly a popular one in Renaissance France: see Pollie Bromilow, 'The Case of Lucretia: Female Exemplarity in Boaistuau and Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*', in Jennifer Britnell and Ann Moss (eds.), *Female Saints and Sinners, Saintes et Mondaines (France 1450-1650)* (Durham: University of Durham, 2002), pp. 163-78. It was also popular in mid-seventeenth-century France, as indicated by the number of plays named after the pagan heroine, such as Urbain Chevreau's play *La Lucesse romaine* (Paris: Toussaint Quinet, 1637), 4<sup>o</sup>; and Pierre Du Ryer, *Lucrece* (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, 1638), 4<sup>o</sup>.

Artemisia Gentileschi's revised version of this female 'paragon of integrity':<sup>69</sup>

A ce discours de larmes, Lucrece fait une reponse de son sang et de soupirs: elle baisse les yeux sur la playe comme pour faire signe à Collatin, de regarder au moins son coeur nu par cette ouverture. Et je croy que le dernier mouvement de ses levres, est un serment par lequel elle l'asseure, qu'il le trouvera net de la souillure de son corps; qu'il n'y verra point d'autre image que la sienne.<sup>70</sup>

Ils virent paroistre la belle & vertueuse Lucrece à l'autre costé d'un grand Vestibule qui estoit au bas de l'Escalier: mais ils la virent negligée, pasle, & melancolique: & ils virent dans ses regards de la douleur, de la colere, & de la confusion. Il est vray qu'elle rougit estrangement lors que venant à lever les yeux pour commencer de parler, elle rencontra ceux de Brutus. Cette veuë la troubla si fort qu'elle se recula d'un pas, détourna la teste, & ne pût achever ce qu'elle avoit voulu dire. Mais à la fin apres avoir levé les yeux au Ciel elle se tourna vers son Pere & vers son Mary. (C4, 1376 ).

In Le Moyne's version, Lucrece is described as an 'impassive Renaissance figure' in the sense that she is, like Cranach's 'Lucretia', looking downwards, and therefore 'producing an image of erotic submissiveness'. The contrast between Le Moyne's and Scudéry's accounts of her death is therefore striking, since Scudéry's Lucrece is represented as in Gentileschi's

<sup>69</sup> Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi* p. 220.

<sup>70</sup> Pierre Le Moyne, *La Galerie des femmes fortes* (Lyon: Benoist Coral et Antoine Du Perrier, 1672), 12<sup>o</sup>, p. 311.



two paintings, 'turning [her] eyes heavenward' (see Illustrations 6 and 7).<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, as Ian Donaldson points out, Lucrece is 'transform[ed] from a severe Roman matron into a Woman of Sensibility, poised on the brink of adultery, endowing her with a disposition and a predicament intended to make her appear more interesting and understandable to readers of their times'.<sup>72</sup> While in Le Moyne's version Lucrece turns her eyes towards her husband Collatin, in *Clélie* her eyes meet those of Brutus. The whole scene is striking for the manner in which its pictorial quality creates dramatic tension: as in Gentileschi's painting of Lucretia (*Lucretia*, 1642-1643), the surrounding architectural elements contribute to the story's tragic aura. While Gentileschi's heroine is represented in a sitting position, Lucrece in *Clélie* almost emerges as a theatrical figure — as suggested by the mention of the 'vestibule' and 'escalier'. As in Gentileschi's two paintings, the stress is not so much on 'the close-up view of her tender flesh penetrated, or about to be, by the sharp blade' as on the intensity of her gaze, of her 'douleur', 'colere', and 'confusion', all marks of 'profound psychological expression'.<sup>73</sup> Only a few lines later, Scudéry draws the reader's attention to the very last moments of Lucrece's life in vivid terms that may well remind us of a Caravaggio painting, like Gentileschi's *Judith and Holophernes*, where 'naturalism [is pushed] to horrific extremes'.<sup>74</sup> Lucrece's suicide is certainly one of the rare scenes in *Clélie* where tragedy is conveyed through realism — a realism achieved by the emphasis on blood, the sight of which was forbidden in seventeenth-century French theatre:

A ces mots, la vertueuse Lucrece paroissant plus belle, & plus  
resoluë qu'auparavant, tira un poignard qu'elle avoit caché, &

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<sup>71</sup> Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, p. 227.

<sup>72</sup> Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia*, p. 84.

<sup>73</sup> Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, p. 227.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

haussant le bras, & la main, *en levant les yeux au Ciel*, comme pour s'offrir en sacrifice aux Dieux qu'elle invoquoit, elle se l'enfonça dans le sein, & tomba *la gorge toute couverte de sang aux pieds du malheureux Brutus*, qui eut le funeste avantage d'avoir le dernier de ses regards, & d'entendre son dernier soupir. (C4, 1380)

Unlike in many literary and pictorial representations of the Lucretia story, Lucrèce here shows resolution, rather than impassivity, devotion rather than submission. In addition, the structure of the whole scene is circular: it opens with the image of Lucrèce 'levant les yeux au Ciel' and directing her eyes towards Brutus, and ends with the picture of her 'tomb[ant] [...] aux pieds du malheureux Brutus'. The circular structure of the scene therefore suggests that the Scudarian version of the Lucretian legend is as much 'the triumph of *pudicitia*' over *superbia*', of modesty and chastity over luxury and pride'<sup>75</sup> as a tragic love story.

To recapitulate, it is perhaps through these last two examples that Wroth and Scudéry adopt a most convincingly protofeminist stance, if we construe, for instance, the Limena episode as 'an allegory of the mental and emotional pain suffered by women trapped within loveless unions',<sup>76</sup> and if we note the gendered similarities between Scudéry's version and Gentileschi's painting of Lucretia's death. Indeed, their stress is on Lucretia's virtue and stoicism and not on her shame as in most versions by male authors. Have these two versions by women therefore been created from a strictly female point of view with the intention of reinterpreting positively the tragic destiny of the Roman heroine? A yes answer is of course tempting. What is equally interesting is Wroth's and Scudéry's

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>76</sup> Hackett, 'The Torture of Limena', p. 103.



emphasis on the female body (not only in this section but throughout their various representations of women) as 'a surface or text on which the signs of virtue are written'.<sup>77</sup> More specifically, while in Scudéry's text the portrayal of the heroine's 'générosité' (that is heroical virtue) does not exclude the 'nonchalant' partial disclosure of her body, the same may be said of Wroth's representation of her heroine's tortured body. 'Générosité' and 'nonchalance' in *Clélie*, and physical suffering and 'exquisiteness' in *Urania* therefore emerge as the *sine qua non* of heroinism. Thus the notion of 'nonchalance' constitutes not only the hallmark of ideal female beauty, but also the hallmark of female heroism, *i.e.* innocence, virtue and 'gloire féminine'.

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In the course of Part Four, we have noted how the juxtaposition of two types of representation of women, fickle and virtuous, enables us to measure the ambivalence of certain terms (such as ostentation, mirror, the colour green, etc.) in early modern attitudes to woman's outward appearance. In Chapter Eight, we analysed the ways in which negative representations of Uranian and Scudorian women read as perfect illustrations of early modern discourse (whether discursive or visual) on the inferiority and turpitude of the female sex. Wroth's and Scudéry's sinful woman is presented to us as 'Avidissum animal', 'naufragium vitae', 'peccati autrix', 'quietis cassatio', 'sylva superbiae', 'truculenta tyrannis', 'vanitas vanitorum', in other words, as possessing all the attributes which participate in the condemnation of sumptuary ostentation.<sup>78</sup> Yet in seventeenth-century society, the notion of ostentation is contradictory. When characterising a fickle woman, ostentation is necessarily charged with

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>78</sup> In *Alphabet infame de leur imperfection et malice*, quoted by Adam Scaliger in *L'Alphabet de l'excellence et perfection des femmes*, p. 40 (see Chapter Three, p. 112, footnote 3).

negative attributes. Ostentation, Scudéry keeps reminding us, is synonymous with vice. But when characterising female virtue it takes on a positive meaning. For instance, the analysis in Chapter Nine of the glittering, intricate descriptions of women's apparel shows that they operate in direct contrast to the early modern moralists' castigation of ostentatious clothes and the use of cosmetics as marks of devilry. Instead, they provide us with 'images of women [which] appear [...] through the screen of the ideals of the society in which they were produced: ideals of beauty, of behaviour, of display'.<sup>79</sup>

The differences between these portraits of virtuous women and the representations of female fickleness are to be found in the symbolism of the female character's apparel. Indeed, the treatment of the female body depends on whether Wroth and Scudéry are depicting vice or virtue. We saw that the magnificence of their heroines' apparel does not have the same significance as the attire of a coquettish, proud or choleric woman, since sober countenance is one of the criteria through which Uranian and Scudarian heroines distinguish themselves from anti-heroines. Likewise, the treatment of male violence towards a heroine utterly differs from that inflicted upon anti-heroines. While in the representation of anti-heroism, the female body epitomises lechery, in that of heroism it symbolises virtue and modesty. Similarly, the treatment of male violence towards the female sex depends on the moral integrity of the female character being wronged.

I have noted on several occasions how conventional these Uranian and Scudarian pictorial representations of female beauty are, and how little they seem to differ, at least on the surface, from male-authored ones. However, it is in their representation of female heroic beauty that the two authors' subversive stance can be detected. In other words, the difference between Wroth's and Scudéry's conventional static images of women and their portrayals of female heroic beauty is that the latter carry with them a

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<sup>79</sup> Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, p. 4.



criticism of patriarchy; patriarchy which in the two works, as we have seen throughout the thesis, is constantly associated with male violence.

## **Conclusion**



*Urania* and *Clélie*, two works that have been labelled *romans à clefs* as well as romances, can arguably be characterised as antithetical to one another. One reflects baroque aesthetics and the other French classicism, as illustrated, for instance, in the difference between Wroth's and Scudéry's rhetoric (the former being florid and convoluted; the latter plainer and less ornamental). The antithesis is visible, too, in their different use of romance *topoi* (such as enchantment scenes, descriptions of landscape and relations of heroic actions) and of narrative devices (storytelling and moral conversations), but also in their psychological treatment of their characters, as I have tried to show throughout this thesis.

Yet arbitrary as this opposition between baroque and classical aesthetics may be, it helps to highlight certain characteristics specific to each author's own background and language.<sup>1</sup> It appears that Wroth owes more debt to romance conventions than Scudéry, who writes under the aegis of the theorisation of the French tongue. Furthermore, both write in a given political and cultural context, which shapes their work. Yet while *Urania* may read as an allegorical commentary on James I's foreign policy at the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, and *Clélie* as reflecting the climate of the post-Fronde, both works are the 'illustration d'une société en représentation permanente',<sup>2</sup> as suggested by the many references to masques in *Urania* and to 'fêtes galantes' in *Clélie*. Despite the stylistic discrepancy between *Urania* and *Clélie* and their intrinsic specificities, representations of women in these two texts offer some important common insights into the mental world of seventeenth-century court society, and inform us about Wroth's and Scudéry's internalisation of dominant cultural values in the broad context of early modern Europe. It is especially through their juxtaposition of female virtue and vice that they replicate not an exclusively national debate, but one that is the fruit of the didactic literature

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Seven, pp. 264-5.

<sup>2</sup> Grande, *Stratégies de romancières*, p. 167.

and commonly held beliefs regarding the woman question which were widespread in Europe through the *Querelle des femmes*.

Moreover, the milieux to which Wroth and Scudéry belong dictate further ideals of female conduct that form part of court etiquette, *i.e.* an ethos that allows both authors to play with decorum concerning images of virtuous women promoted in both Protestant and Catholic moral treatises. The ethos underpinning one of the most popular sixteenth-century conduct books for women, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* by Juan Luis Vives, and that sustaining the fashioning of the noblewoman in Castiglione's influential *Book of the Courtier*, overlap one another in the fictions of Scudéry and Wroth.

Wroth's and Scudéry's heroines illustrate, on the one hand, the various forms of ambivalence that govern the mapping of womanhood in early modern Western Europe. On the other, they belong to a new generation of heroines, the novelistic type, as reinforced by the treatment of heroinism in the books of other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women authors.

Indeed, my study, 'Picturing Women in *Urania* and *Clélie*', could easily have been extended to embrace the works of Wroth's and Scudéry's European contemporaries, such as *The Worth of Women* (1592) by Moderata Fonte; *Arcadia Felice* (1605) by Lucrezia Marinella in Italy; and *Desengaños Amorosos* (*The Disenchantments of Love*, 1647) by Maria de Zayas and *Vigilia e Octavio de San Juan Baptista* (c.1650) by Ana Abarca de Bolea in Spain. It is not my purpose here to establish any connection between these female authors, but simply to suggest further possibilities for research by briefly pointing to their similarities with *Urania* and *Clélie*.

For instance, the Uranian and Scudarian heroines' rhetorical assaults on patriarchal laws, on marital contentions and on male inconstancy, as well as their reiterated defences of true love and freedom, find an equivalent in a series of dialogues in Fonte's text, or of tragic tales in the novellas of Zayas, where her heroines emerge as exemplars of female martyrdom like Wroth's



Limena. Furthermore, as in *Urania* and *Clélie*, the focus in these texts by Italian and Spanish women is on the delineation of a female community or sisterhood. And in Fonte's, Bolea's and Zayas's texts, we find one specific *topos* central to *Urania* and *Clélie*: the recognition of female authorship and of women's 'rare gift' in the realm of letters.<sup>3</sup> Although each author incorporates in her work narrative elements that are specific to her own culture, these topical similarities allow us to conclude that *Urania* and *Clélie* are part of a widespread discourse on the woman question articulated in early modern Western Europe by educated women.

Among these learned women who left a mark of their own, there were not only writers but also artists. Throughout the final part of my thesis, I have attempted to draw parallels between Wroth's and Scudéry's images of women and the visual arts. Amongst these I have mentioned two female painters: Lavinia Fontana (1552-1614) and Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1652?) who seem to have shown a similar response to that of Wroth and Scudéry with regard to male representations of women in art. Although Gentileschi and Fontana, like Wroth and Scudéry, often paint royal occasions and portraits of noblewomen that are in keeping with decorum, they also exploit the many images of biblical and pagan heroines available to them in ways that are daringly indecorous.

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<sup>3</sup> Commenting on Marinella's romance, Françoise Lavocat remarks that it is written along the lines of the Renaissance 'academic romance' which excludes women from the literary arts. Although Marinella subverts this convention by creating one female character, Camente, who is endowed with poetic gifts, Camente is only given a minor role: 'Si les figures féminines abondent dans le roman pastoral héroïque, les poétesses, ou les femmes dont on souligne la sagesse et le savoir en sont chassées. [...]. Dans *l'Arcadia Felice* de Lucrezia Marinella, une intéressante figure de bergère inspirée [...] est par la suite totalement écartée' (*Arcadies malheureuses: aux origines du roman moderne* [Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998], p. 149). Fonte's 'talented damsel' is Corinna who, in many ways, prefigures the Scudertian poetess, as she 'recites [her poetry] with a pleasing air of modesty' (*The Worth of Women, Wherein Is Clearly Revealed their Nobility and their Superiority to Men (Il Merito delle Donne* 1600), trans. and ed. Virginia Cox [Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997], p. 50 and p. 49); and Zayas's most accomplished woman is Doña Isabel Fajardo who is 'especially

Fontana's and Gentileschi's works suggest that they are as fascinated as Wroth and Scudéry by the figure of the 'femme forte' or female ruler, such as Judith, remembered as the embodiment of victory over tyranny. There is no 'Judith' in either *Urania* or *Clélie*, but rather sensuous heroines like Gentileschi's Lucretia and suggestively erotic female *personae* like Fontana's Minerva. It may be argued that Gentileschi and Fontana are indebted to the legacy of male painters, beginning with the influence of their own fathers. But it can also be convincingly argued that the most important connection between these two early modern female artists and our two female writers is the fact that they represent real women as well as legendary ones. Both Gentileschi and Fontana have left self-portraits, in which they represent themselves as artists. Fontana's self-portraits are particularly interesting, since she paints herself not only in her *studiolo* as a *pittrice*, but also as a woman of letters sitting at her desk with a quill in her hand (*Self-Portrait*, 1579), or as playing the harpsichord (*Self-Portrait*, 1577).

In the same way, Uranian and Scudarian heroines are often represented as learned musicians and as poetesses, as though they were the shadows of Wroth and Scudéry themselves in the process of literary creativity. In representing their heroines not only as readers and learned women, but also as involved in the poetical act of writing and erasing, weighing and choosing words, Wroth and Scudéry give the impression of revealing aspects of themselves as authors at work. In doing so, they give us an insight into their own literary lives and into the nature of the retreat favoured by learned women — a type of retreat which is to become a commonplace in representations of heroines from the 1650s to at least the early 1800s. Thus, while Lindamire's solitary 'voyage' in the cabinet of her country house anticipates, for instance, the first retreat of Madame de La Fayette's eponymous heroine, the 'Princesse de Clèves', Lucrece's and

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good at writing poetry' (*The Disenchantments of Love*, ed. and trans. H. Patsy Boyer [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997], p. 44).



Lysimène's seclusion from the world prefigures her conventual retreat at the end of the novel.

In a sense, Wroth's and Scudéry's treatment of their heroines as educated women announces a new era, a new literature where, for instance, the heroines in Weamys's *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia* (1651), in Aphra Behn's *Love-letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684), in Madame de Villedieu's *Désordres de l'Amour* (1675), in Richardson's *Pamela* (1740-1741), in Laclos's *Liaisons dangereuses* (1782), or in Mme de Staël's *Delphine* (1802), are intensely involved in epistolary activities. We also find women represented as painters, such as Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's female protagonist, an accomplished artist, in *Histoire d'Ernestine* (1762). And perhaps, as Helen O. Borowitz argues, the closest example in French literature to Scudéry's fictive women of letters is Madame de Staël's eponymous heroine Corinne.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most striking similarities between the works, whether in verse or prose, of our two seventeenth-century authors and of the generation of female writers which followed them, is their emphasis on a spiritual sisterhood, whether literary or social. The discourse of female friendship in these two works paves the way for Wroth's and Scudéry's sibylline successors. Scudéry's posthumous fortune as a writer can be more easily verified than Wroth's, although it still constitutes a neglected area in both French and English studies.

In France, Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon's encomiastic text, *L'Apothéose de Mademoiselle de Scudéry* (1702), and Marie-Anne de Roumier Robert's novel, *La Paysanne philosophe* (1761-1762), are two convincing examples of her legacy. In *L'Apothéose de Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, L'Héritier rewrites Scudéry's version of Hésiode's dream. While Scudéry commends both men and women of letters in her fictive pantheon

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<sup>4</sup> Helen O. Borowitz, 'The Unconfessed Précieuse: Madame de Staël's Debt to Mademoiselle de Scudéry', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 11 (1982-1983), pp. 32-59.

(although she does so, as I argued in Chapter Six, from a protofeminist perspective), L'Héritier creates, like Aemilia Lanyer in her 'Author's Dream' or Anne de La Vigne in her 'Ode à Madeleine de Scudéry', a sisterhood of art in its fullest sense. Indeed, she imagines an exclusively female community of authors from both ancient and modern times, and describes Scudéry as its figurehead.<sup>5</sup> Robert in *La Paysanne philosophe*, as though in homage to Scudéry, has her protagonists, Flore and the Baron (her unconfessed lover), revisit the lexicon of the *Carte de Tendre* and debate on the different sorts of friendships, and more specifically on les 'Droits de l'Amitié'. But as in *Clélie*, Robert transposes the dialectics of 'tendre amitié' into one that above all governs relationships between 'premières amies', and thus recreates, although in the confines of a convent, the Scuderian haven of female friendship.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, as Ros Ballaster has shown, the vogue for Scudéry's work as well as for that of other contemporary female French authors was at its height in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England.<sup>7</sup> It is particularly in women's writings that Scudéry's influence can be felt.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *L'Apothéose de Mademoiselle de Scudéry* ([Paris: Jean Moreau, 1702], 12<sup>0</sup>) was possibly influenced by another female writer's text: Marguerite Buffet's *Nouvelles Observations sur la langue françoise* ([Paris: Jean Cusson, 1668], 12<sup>0</sup>), in which the author devotes a whole chapter to seventeenth-century learned women, amongst whom Anna Maria van Schurman (p. 2), Christine of Sweden (pp. 237-242) and, of course, Madeleine de Scudéry (pp. 244-8).

<sup>6</sup> Marie-Anne de Roumier, Robert, *La Paysanne philosophe ou les aventures de Madame la Comtesse de \*\*\** (Amsterdam: Chez les libraires associés, 1761-1762), 12<sup>0</sup>, vol. 1, seconde partie, pp. 151-3.

<sup>7</sup> In *Seductive forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 31-66.

<sup>8</sup> Her work appealed, however, to a wide public, as testifies the adaptation of her romances to theatre; see, for example, Nathaniel Lee, *Lucius Junius Brutus* (London: n.p., 1681), 4<sup>0</sup>. See also Elfrieda Dubois, 'Les romans des Scudéry, traductions et adaptations en anglais', in Alain Niderst (ed.), *Actes du colloque du Havre 1-5 Octobre 1991: les trois Scudéry* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993), pp. 597-607.



I am thinking, among others, of the foremother of the bluestockings,<sup>9</sup> Katherine Philips (1631-1664), whose poetic work 'celebrates friendship and love between women', in a manner clearly reminiscent of Scudéry.<sup>10</sup> Although we cannot say for sure if Philips read Wroth's work, it is very likely that she knew of Scudéry's novels, as testified by her translation of a pastoral poem from Scudéry's *Almahide*. Furthermore, Philips's letter entitled 'To Worthy Poliarchus', which the first editor of her poems placed at the beginning of her collection, recalls Sappho's modesty in *Le Grand Cyrus* with regard to her activities as a poetess, although this stance is scarcely unusual.

Another poem, *A Voyage to the Island of Love* (c.1684) by Aphra Behn gives another indication of the far-reaching influence of Scudéry on her English contemporaries. Although, as its title suggests, Behn's poem is based on *Voyage de l'isle de l'amour* (1663) by the abbé Paul Tallemant, Behn's division of her poem into sections, named after abstract entities ('Respect', 'Cares', 'Hope', 'The River of Pretension', etc.), some of which recall those that figure in the *Carte de Tendre*, is perhaps as much a veiled homage to Scudéry's work as a rewriting of Tallemant's text.<sup>11</sup>

Scudéry also appears to have influenced Anna Meades, who wrote *The History of Cleanthes, an Englishman of the Highest Quality, and Celemene, the Illustrious Amazonian Princess* (1757),<sup>12</sup> and Delarivier Manley whose best known work is a roman à clef, *The New Atalantis* (1709).<sup>13</sup> Although Manley, like Scudéry, ridicules the 'Coquette' and

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<sup>9</sup> See Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Ferguson, *First Feminists*, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> See Janet Todd (ed), *The Works of Aphra Behn*, vol. 1 (London: William Pickering 1992), pp. 102-159 and pp. 402-5.

<sup>12</sup> See Duncan T. Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 429.

<sup>13</sup> See Clara L. Thomson, *Samuel Richardson: A Biographical and Critical Study* (London: Horace Marshall, 1900), p. 138. See also Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, pp. 138-9.

stages similar scenes of 'cabals', her tone and style suggest that her work parodies rather than imitates Scudarian prose.

Explicit mention of our seventeenth-century French Sappho can however be found in Mary Astell's *Serious Proposal* (1694; see below). But it is in Dorothy Osborne's correspondence (between 1652-1654) with Sir William Temple that we can find some of the most interesting responses to French romances.<sup>14</sup> Osborne proves an enthusiastic reader of *Le Grand Cyrus*. She sends each volume to her correspondent as she finishes it, and in only a few months reads the whole work. Some of her letters (letters 36, 37, 38, 45, 47, 58) offer remarks on the characters' actions and sentiments, whereby she guides her correspondent's reading of the romance, and solicits his opinions. Her letters, like Madame de Sevigné's, thus present us with reading practices which are not uncommon throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth century and are to become the object of disdain and mockery as in Margaret Cavendish's fiction<sup>15</sup> and later in *The Female Quixote, or the Adventures of Arabella* (1752) by Charlotte Lennox. Lennox's novel parodies the female reader's addiction to French romances, and in particular to *Le Grand Cyrus* and *Clélie*, to which the heroine constantly and nonsensically refers as an index to actual relationships.<sup>16</sup>

Wroth's influence is more difficult to assess than Scudéry's. Margaret Cavendish pastiches Lord Denny's dithyrambic lines against Wroth, in her Epistle to 'All noble and worthy Ladies' in *Poems, and Fancies* (1653). 'Work Lady, Work', she writes, 'let writing Books alone, / For surely wiser Women nere wrote one'.<sup>17</sup> She reiterates this statement in her preface to *Sociable Letters* (1664), thus reinforcing the

<sup>14</sup> See G. C. Moore Smith (ed), *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

<sup>15</sup> See Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, pp. 184-5.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, p. 7, p. 42, pp. 44-5, p. 62, p. 78, pp. 81-2, pp. 121-2 and pp. 237-9, in Margaret Dalziel (ed), *The Female Quixote, or the Adventures of Arabella* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>17</sup> Facs. (Menston, Yorks.: Scholar, 1972), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.



social stigma that lies behind female authorship.<sup>18</sup> It seems, then, that Wroth's posthumous reputation is only due to the Denny scandal she triggered; although there is a more positive mention of Wroth in *The Ladies' Dictionary*<sup>19</sup> under the entry Poetesses (p. 416):

The Lady Mary Wroth [...] was an emulatress of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, by her *Urania*, a Poetical History, much of the same nature, being a very curious piece, tho not meeting with the like reception. (p. 418)

If we cannot retrace Wroth's influence amongst female writers with much certainty, *Urania* suggests nevertheless that female friendship as well as female authorship and education were highly valued in Wroth's circle. In fact, a comparative study of the roles of women in the works of Wroth and Scudéry shows that, despite their very probable ignorance of each other, they express, in anticipation of eighteenth-century women writers, 'first their awareness that they are writing about women for women'<sup>20</sup> through their exposure of patriarchal precepts, and 'second a strong sense that as women writers they belong to an ever increasing community of women writers',<sup>21</sup> through their fictionalisation of a female community and of female literary creativity.

Wroth's and Scudéry's fiction reflects the social reality of the emergence of the woman of letters in the whole of Europe; a woman who is, like Sophia and Anne of Denmark, Christine of Sweden, Anna Maria van Schurman, Margaret Cavendish, or Madame Dacier, interested not just in verse-making, but also in the sciences and philosophy.

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<sup>18</sup> See Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, pp. 183-5.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter One, p. 69, footnote 22.

<sup>20</sup> R. W. Uphaus and G. M. Foster (eds.), 'Introduction' to *The 'Other' Eighteenth-Century: English Women of Letters 1660-1800* (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1991), p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

In both *Urania* and *Clélie*, there are examples of women particularly skilled in the field of science, a field which we know was reserved for men in the early modern period.<sup>22</sup> *Clélie*, for instance, with its many philosophical conversations casting light on human nature, reveals the taste of its readers for moral reflections, which is to blaze a trail for men and women of the Enlightenment period. And this may account for Astell's praise of Scudéry, despite her rejection of romances:

Since the French Tongue is understood by most ladies methinks they may much better improve it by the study of philosophy (as I hear the French Ladies do), *Descartes*, *Mallebranche* and others than by reading idle Novels and Romances. 'Tis strange we should be so forward to imitate their fashions and fopperies, and have no regard to what really deserves Imitation. And why shall I not be thought as genteel to understand French philosophy, as to be accoutred in a French mode? Let therefore the famous *Madame Dacier* and *Schudery*, etc. and our incomparable *Orinda* excite the emulation of the English Ladies.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, *Urania*, which is not peppered with philosophical debates, occasionally takes us to a lower strata of society than that to which the princely heroes and heroines belong. Although the protagonists' encounters with shepherds may simply appear as a characteristic of pastoral romances, they also meet ordinary people and readily listen to their tales. One of these narratives, Fancy's tale, is not solely the story of her misfortunes as an inconstant woman, but also seems to describe the

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<sup>22</sup> This aspect is discussed by Mary Ellen Lamb in 'Women Readers in Mary Wroth's *Urania*', where she writes that 'Wroth's romance was written during the height of the witch craze between 1580 to 1650', in Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller (eds.), *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1991), p. 224.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (London: n.p. 1694), 12<sup>o</sup>, pp. 51-2.



domestic life of the commonalty. Her anecdote suggests that Wroth may have been an acute observer, and was perhaps unusually sensitive to how people of modest means conducted their lives. Despite the more philosophical tone of *Clélie*, as seen in Part One, we can detect in both texts an identical discourse on the feminine condition in the early modern period; a discourse that is to become a more general one on society as a whole. It prefigures in a sense the writings of Aphra Behn in the late seventeenth century and of eighteenth-century female authors, such as Elizabeth Carter and Hannah Moore in England or Olympe de Gouges in France, who express their concern not just with gender but also with issues of race and class.<sup>24</sup>

All in all, images of women in *Urania* and *Clélie*, as well as in Fontana's and Gentileschi's paintings, are produced by a first generation of female artists whose stance does not have the radical tonality of their militant successors (the bluestockings), but who — in reproducing and manipulating early modern representations of the female sex — enable their readers to view the society, and more specifically the aristocratic milieu in which they lived, from a double perspective, that is from both a male and female point of view. Unafraid of showing woman's defects in a tone that blatantly recalls, as we saw in Chapter Eight, the attacks of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century misogynists, they nevertheless laid particular emphasis on heroinism. In feminising their heroes and endowing their heroines with a 'Masculine spirit' (*UI*, 468, l. 13), in resorting to the Petrarchan canonisation of female beauty, and yet transforming their heroines from Petrarchan objects of desire into heroic figures of female virtue, Wroth and Scudéry offer a multifaceted type of heroinism. If the Uranian or Scudarian heroine combines the virtues of her predecessors in male romances with

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<sup>24</sup> On the English Bluestockings, see Gary Kelly's article: 'Women's Providence: Religion and Bluestocking Feminism in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762)', in Rebecca D'Monté and Nicole Pohl (eds.), *Female Communities 1600-1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 167.

those of the female ruler and the accomplished female author (as eulogised in contemporary panegyrics of the fair sex), she is undeniably (whether in the context of political and marital issues, or of courtly love and literature), a hymn to the 'enchanting' power of the female word.



## Appendix









Illustration 2  
*An Old Woman at the Toilet Table* (Jeremias Falck)





Illustration 3  
Effigie des sept péchés mortels and Effigie des sept vertus (Pierre Cool)





Illustration 4  
*Portrait of Costanza Alidosi (Lavinia Fontana)*





Illustration 5  
*Portrait of a Woman with a Small Dog* (Lavinia Fontana)





Illustration 6  
*Lucretia* (Artemisia Gentileschi, 1621)





Illustration 7  
*Lucretia* (Artemisia Gentileschi, 1642-43)



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