"Love's sweet pleasing paine:" the Erotopian Community in Lady Mary Wroth's Love's Victory

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“Love’s sweet pleasing paine:”

The Erotopian Community in Lady Mary Wroth’s Love’s Victory

by

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# Table of Contents

Introduction: 1

Chapter 1: Musella and Philisses—The Play’s Model Couple for a Companionate Partnership 12

Chapter 2: Lissius and Simeana—Flawed Love turned True 43

Chapter 3: Venus and Cupid—The First Educators of Reciprocal Love and Community 72

Epilogue: 101

Works Cited: 110
Introduction

Lady Mary Wroth is one of the most significant writers of the early modern period. Her *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania* (published 1621) is the first romance written by an Englishwoman; her *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (published 1621) is the first sonnet sequence written by an English woman; and her pastoral tragicomedy *Love’s Victory* (c. 1620) is the first original comedy written by an Englishwoman.

Because of Wroth’s prominence as a writer, literary scholars have devoted much attention to the former two works; however, *Love’s Victory* has received little critical attention. In part, scholars have not studied this play because it was not published until Michael Brennan published an edition of the complete version of the drama, the Penshurst Manuscript owned by Viscount De. L’Isle, in 1988—an edition published in only 250 copies (Wynne-Davis 94). The inaccessibility of Brennan’s version and the late publication partly explain the critical silence; even after its publication over a decade ago, critics have still given this text but cursory attention.

When scholars do examine *Love’s Victory*, they focus on either biographical connections, suggesting that the characters in the play appear to represent people from Wroth’s life, such as Wroth herself or Philip and Mary Sidney, or attempt to position the play within the genre systems and conventions common to similar Renaissance works. Some of the earliest scholars to give *Love’s Victory* more than simply biographical attention are Carolyn Swift and Barbara Lewalski. Swift is the first to emphasize that within

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1 There are only two manuscript versions of *Love’s Victory*; one complete and one missing both a few lines as well as the ending. The incomplete manuscript is the Huntington manuscript missing a title page, I.i.1-38, V.i.68-74, and V.i.130 to the end (Cerasano and Wynne-Davis 95). This manuscript was never published.

the drama, “Wroth expands the conventional view of love’s triumph to include recognition of women as capable of governing their own lives” (Swift 172). Swift’s work paved the way for other criticism focusing on female agency. Barbara Lewalski broadens Swift’s initial attention to agency by arguing that “Wroth’s drama encodes an implicit feminist politics emphasizing the values of female agency, egalitarianism, female friendship, and community, a politics which subverts both the norms of the genre and of Jacobean society” (89). Though Lewalski draws brief attention to the literary representation of community in the drama, her essay mainly concentrates on Wroth’s deliberate alterations to the pastoral genre to develop “an implicit feminist politics.”

Following the tradition established by these individuals, other scholars on Love’s Victory also focus on female agency and female friendship. Much like Lewalski, most scholars only provide passing comments about the communal environment in the play usually referring to the lack of gender hierarchies in the community.

In this thesis, I examine Love’s Victory by looking past biographical connections and Wroth’s influences to focus instead on the literary representation of community and love specific to this play. Indeed, Wroth was deeply invested in women’s agency in her work, but I will demonstrate that female agency is only one of several key building blocks that work for a larger end: the establishment of what Gary Waller aptly calls an “erotopia” grounded in reciprocal love and egalitarianism. Some scholars, such as Lewalski and Waller, have provided brief commentary on how female agency works to “foster friendships and the

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3 For information on Wroth’s use of the pastoral tragicomedy genre, see Lewalski (1991): 89-95.
community” (Lewalski 97). Waller further observes that in *Love’s Victory*, Wroth created “a fantasy of community” founded on reciprocity over “competitive individualism” (243). In the same vein as Waller’s comments on community, I also maintain that the female characters use their agency to promote social equality, not “competitive individualism.” By analyzing only the instances of female agency, scholars of *Love’s Victory* have not sufficiently explored how male characters, even the protagonists, function in the community and in their relationships. To give both the male characters and the female characters equal voice, I argue that the female characters use their agency to work alongside men, not beneath or above them, so together they can build a community where notions of gender and class hierarchy are revised to encourage community, respect, and reciprocity.

Even taking into account the biographical connections and the potential context for the play, focusing on love and the community makes sense. Margaret Hannay suggests in her recent biography of Lady Mary Wroth that *Love’s Victory* may have been written for Wroth’s sister Barbara Sidney’s wedding to Sir Thomas Smythe, in the spring of 1619 (221). As Hannay assures, the dates provided in the Penshurst manuscript would fit with the time of the wedding. Also, the family references give the play “the feel of an occasional piece” as it also ends in a dance celebrating love’s triumph (221). In response to the constant emphasis on female agency, Hannay suggests that this focus would be appropriate if “the performance involved the women of the family, and even more so if it were written as a wedding gift from Wroth to her younger sister” (218). However, knowing that Wroth was forced into a marriage at the age of seventeen to Sir Robert Wroth (c. 1604), a man she did not love or respect, and the marriage ended in his death ten years later (Hannay 98-99), Wroth would have wanted to portray not only what a woman can bring to a relationship, but how both
lovers work together to create an ideal compatible marriage, thereby creating an image of a model couple.

As the title suggests, love is the focus in Love’s Victory. Therefore, every facet of the drama—the instances of female agency, the friendships, and the community—must be read through how that component works to encourage love. Along with a “fantasy of community,” Waller also describes the drama as a “fantasy of a mutual love regardless of gender, an erotopia of mutuality” (243). The community is indeed an erotopian society where reciprocal love governs all human relations. Mutuality and respect is encouraged, not only in the egalitarian community, but in the romantic relationships to balance out power dynamics between man and woman; thus making their union a partnership. By portraying reciprocal partnerships as her models of a successful relationship, Wroth seems to be responding to the 17th century movement towards more companionate marriages that meant to equalize the bond between husband and wife.

Besides just an occasional piece created for entertainment at her sister’s wedding, reading Love’s Victory through Wroth’s attention to community and reciprocal love suggests a larger social significance for examining this play. In her drama, Wroth appears to be dramatizing the changing views on the constitution of marriage towards a more companionate partnership that gained momentum during the Renaissance. In these marriages—as in Love’s Victory—mutual affection, loyalty, and respect were expected of both partners.

The connection between the rise in companionate marriages and the themes depicted in Love’s Victory has yet to be explored in the scholarship on the play. Scholars have noted, as Waller has mentioned, that Wroth did created an “erotopia of mutuality” or, as Swift
labels it, a “feminine dreamworld” where the “women can enlarge their freedom by overcoming family pressure and marrying as they wish” (171). As I will show, this focus on mutuality and choice mirrors the description of companionate marriages in the Renaissance. The scholars I will reference to illustrate both the standard image of Renaissance marriages and this rise in companionate partnerships, are Alan Macfarlane, Elizabeth Honig, and Ralph A. Houlbrooke. These works are useful to my study because their focus is on how companionate marriage was considered in the Renaissance, not in the 18th and 19th century when these types of marriage became more widespread.

Within most marriages in the 17th century, especially in the upper-class, “the worlds of men and women are separate, and this is the case after marriage as it was before[…] The blending of two personalities, two psychologies, is not involved” (Macfarlane 154). Although these marriages were the norm, ideals about “a leveling of male and female partners” (Honig 64), thus uniting their worlds, were being considered during the time period. This “leveling” was a move toward the modern concept of companionate marriages.

Husbands and wives in a companionate partnership in the Renaissance “assumed that the central advantage of marriage was mutual society and companionship, the identity of interests in an otherwise competitive and individualistic world” (Macfarlane 157). Those searching for a companionate partner, sought someone they could love and admire, and who they could converse with on relatively equal terms. With the focus on mutuality, a companionate marriage was “one of the most progressive contributions of the English Renaissance to the status of women, for it assumed that the wife was capable of the sympathy, understanding and intelligence necessary to maintain her side of the partnership” (Honig 64). This belief that a wife could have enough “understanding and intelligence” to
converse with her husband, did indeed work to level the role between husband and wife because it began to demonstrate that men and women could have reasonably equal intelligences.

Although these types of marriages were not by any means common, there was evidence of a move towards finding at least mutual affection in one’s life partner in literature and letters during the time period:

Mutual affection was generally recognized to be desirable or even essential in marriage, and there is plenty of evidence of its existence in letters, diaries, autobiographies and epitaphs. Christian thought assigned the husband a superior role in it, but in literature and secular analysis it was more freely recognized as a force which modified male supremacy in marriage. (Houlbrooke 119)

With mutual affection as the ideal, companionate marriages slowly began to supersede arranged marriages, since arranged marriages involved the marriages, sometimes, of strangers or at least individuals whose families made the decision for them. These ideals of mutual affection did not catch on quickly, largely because arranged marriages were focused on maintaining wealth and/or social class; therefore, companionate marriages were initially more common in the bourgeoisie and gentry and only gradually reached the upper class and aristocracy (Honig 63). Although the role of wife was still mainly a subordinate one, companionate marriage that promoted especially mutuality was a step towards equalizing the roles of husband and wife.

These passages clarify that the key values of a companionate marriage are mutuality, loyalty, and respect. As I will show, these are also the values upheld in the romantic relationships in Wroth’s Love’s Victory. Wroth was able to write about these revolutionary
ideas in her play mainly because *Love’s Victory* was either a closet drama or performed for her family. Marta Straznicky makes a significant suggestion about closet dramas applicable to this discussion in her book *Playreading and Women’s Closet Dramas*:

> The crossover between closet and stage, between solitary reading and political engagement, between print and performance reveals the *adaptability* of privacy to a variety of social, political, and economic agendas. Within such a framework, the “private” nature of women’s closet drama can be analyzed in terms of agency as well as constraint. (4)

Straznicky proposes that women may have been drawn to closet dramas (plays not meant to be performed) because the privacy of a closet drama allowed women to insert their “social, political, and economic agendas” if they so desired. Even considering Hannay’s suggestion that *Love’s Victory* may have been performed for Wroth’s family, since most of her famous literary family had progressive notions much like Wroth’s, Wroth still had the “adaptability” to have a social agenda for the play. Since *Love’s Victory* was a closet drama or given at a private, family function, Wroth had the privacy to create a world in her play where common hierarchies between male and female characters could be exchanged for mutuality and respect.

By examining Wroth’s play within this social context regarding marriage, I argue that the successful couples in Wroth’s drama are representatives of companionate partnerships where both partners have reciprocal love and respect for one another as these couples work together to create a truly compatible relationship. As these relationships develop into true companionships in the play, they also begin to reflect the values of the non-hierarchical community. Therefore, the ideal type of love encouraged for a marriage and the ideal values
encouraged for a community are almost interchangeable because, according to the play, both a harmonious marriage and a harmonious community must be founded on mutuality, constancy, and respect. The triumph of “Love’s victory” is the exchange of harmful power dynamics in romantic relationships, and in the community, for general reciprocity.

Chapters

As this play mainly focuses on character relationships, my approach to organizing my chapters similarly follows clusters of characters based on the nature of relationships and how these relationships develop into companionate partnerships or work to sustain the egalitarian community. Each of the four main romantic relationships in *Love’s Victory* represents a different type of love: True love—Musella and Philisses; Flawed love—Simeana and Lissius; Comic love—Dalina and Rustic, and Chaste love—Silvesta and the Forester (Cerasano and Wynne-Davis 94). My first chapter examines Musella and Philisses’ “true love” relationship because through their model relationship, the key themes of constancy, mutuality, and respect are understood as necessities to a companionate partnership. In the second chapter, I compare Musella and Philisses’ ideal love to Lissius and Simeana’s flawed love. My last chapter details how the divine representatives of love, Venus and Cupid, help further these love connections and provide balance and harmony to the mortal world. The epilogue analyzes the final public celebration in the play, which demonstrates the restored harmony and reciprocity in the community. I also provide further suggestions for research topics related to Wroth’s *Love’s Victory*.

In Chapter 1, I examine Musella and Philisses’ partnership since they are Wroth’s model couple—their love represents true love. They also portray Wroth’s depiction of an
ideal companionate alliance which is recognized by their mutual affection, respect for each other, and unfailing loyalty. Musella and Philisses have a partnership where they work together to solve problems in their own relationship and educate their fellow shepherds on true, companionate love. In the beginning of the play, their relationship has not developed due to the fact that they are unable to communicate their mutual attraction. Their relationship is also complicated when Philisses becomes jealous after being told that Musella loves Lissius. It is later exposed that this love is nothing but a false rumor; however, at the time, Philisses believes it to be true. Musella is not loved by only Philisses as she is also pursued by Rustic, Lacon, and Arcas. Philisses is her only suitor she loves in return. Musella and Philisses are happily united once she expels the false rumor. This happiness is threatened when Rustic attempts to force Musella into matrimony. To escape this marriage, Musella and Philisses decide to end their lives to be together in death. Given that their suicide would have proven that they would have died for true love’s sake, Venus, the goddess of love, saves them. By saving them, Venus shows that their companionate partnership with their mutual affection and respect for one another’s council and ideas is meant to be regarded as a model for the rest of the community members to admire and emulate.

Once true love is understood as a love that promotes mutuality, constancy, and respect, I then juxtapose Wroth’s ideal of love to the couple I examine in Chapter 2: the couple that represents a flawed love—Lissius and Simeana. I argue that though their love is flawed at the beginning of the play, Simeana and Lissius’ relationship evolves into a true, companionate partnership equal to Musella and Philisses’ model. At first, Lissius represents a cynic who does not promote reciprocity because he believes himself superior to love and to women. Because of his blatant cynicism, he especially offends Venus and Cupid who seek
revenge for his slander of love’s power. Though he scorns her, Simeana has remained ceaselessly devoted to Lissius hoping that one day he will return her constant love. Simeana, like her brother Philisses, is a model of an ideal companionate partner from the start of the play due to her unfailing loyalty and longing for a mutual, respectful love. Due to Cupid’s arrows and the shepherds’ mortal friendships, Lissius is rehabilitated, and by the end of the play is a compatible husband for Simeana and a valued community member.

In Chapter 3, I examine the divine partnership of Venus and Cupid and how they function outside and within the mortal world to promote community and the power of love. I find it helpful to understand why Wroth includes the supreme rulers Venus and Cupid in her drama after first examining the relationships mentioned above for the reason that, as divine representatives of love, Venus and Cupid are instrumental in bringing those couples together. I argue that they do not wreck havoc in the mortal world simply to demonstrate their overwhelming power, but have a specific purpose: to level out the gender and class hierarchies that were beginning to form in the community, to then empower the shepherds through love and reciprocity. Their role is significant as the play revolves around the plan that Venus has designed to enlighten the shepherds who have scorned the power of love. Venus has enlisted her son Cupid to help regain the mortals’ respect of love by use of his arrows. This plan is called “love’s victory” since Venus knows full well that Love will always reign.

In the epilogue, I examine the final moments of the play when the community celebrates their shared re-appropriation to community and to love through song and dance. Significantly, every character is on stage for this final, public celebration of love. The four couples resolve any lasting dilemmas, and, besides the Forester and Silvesta, look forward to
a life of companionship and mutual affection. Those without a partner are left with the hope for mutual love in their future. Everyone rejoices in the social harmony of their erotopia. Venus and Cupid simply look on, enjoying the fruition of their labors and their returned glory. I conclude by giving some further research topics appropriate for *Love’s Victory*, such as connecting her focus on egalitarianism and companionate marriage to her other works or other works by Renaissance women writers.

Wroth’s themes of reciprocal love, respect, friendship, community, female agency, and egalitarianism demonstrate the relevance and innovation of *Love’s Victory* as a Renaissance drama. Its connection to the progression towards companionate marriages that began in the 17th century adds yet another dimension to the play. The freedom of never planning to publish the work during her lifetime allowed Wroth secretly to insert her female voice in the multitude of male voices that dominated the drama scene in the Renaissance. In this thesis, I do not examine other works apart from Wroth’s to give her little known drama the attention it deserves.
Chapter 1: Musella and Philisses—The Play’s Model Couple for a Companionate Partnership

As a dramatization of “love’s victory,” Musella and Philisses’ relationship reveals itself to represent Wroth’s ideal model of a companionate partnership. When she was a lady of the court, Wroth most likely witnessed time and again the dissatisfaction of women who, like herself, were forced into arranged marriages. Therefore, Wroth would have wanted to use her play to portray an image of how a more affective marriage looks—one of mutual affection. As the plays’ model of true love, Musella and Philisses exemplify the values that Wroth equates with companionship: reciprocity, constancy, and respect for one another’s insights, aspirations, and council.

Besides embracing the values associated with companionship, Musella and Philisses are also the only couple to have unfailing love for each other right from the beginning of Love’s Victory regardless of the outside forces separating them—miscommunication, rumors, jealousy, and the threat of an unwanted arranged marriage between Musella and Rustic. The other couples must come to realize their love throughout the course of the play. Since theirs is a true love, the only reason Musella and Philisses are not together in the opening of the play is because they are unable to communicate their love. For the first few acts, this lack of communication does not allow their relationship to develop fully. Though they cannot speak of love in each other’s presence, separately, when Musella and Philisses talk about love (through soliloquies, asides, or to companions) they use the same language to describe their personal stance on love; both defining a “true love” under the framework of respect, mutuality, and constancy. Since they are Wroth’s true companionate couple, this chapter

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6 For a description of Wroth’s time in court and dismissal, see Hannay (2010): 245-254.
closely examines Musella and Philisses’ language of love to identify how the ideal type of love functions in their relationship, but also how it projects itself out into the community.

Throughout the drama, Musella and Philisses’ partnership is held up in the community as the relationship to admire and imitate, thereby making their relationship instrumental in changing the communities’ views on romantic relationships. Thus far current literary scholarship on *Love’s Victory* has mostly highlighted the instances when female agency and female friendships advanced the egalitarian community, leaving out the equally valuable role romantic love has on sustaining this society of Arcadia. The only key point in regards to love and marriage that receives attention by critics concerned with agency is the matter of choice; how “Wroth believed that women and men should freely choose whether to marry and whom to marry” (Swift 172). In *Love’s Victory*, Wroth not only portrays women’s desire for choice in marriage, but men’s desire for a compatible life partner. Choice is indeed central to Wroth’s construction of the romantic relationships in the play; however, not much has been suggested about what makes the couples fall in love with each other.

Musella’s character specifically values women’s right to choose because four men love her, Philisses, Rustic, Lacon, and Arcas; Philisses, however, is the only one she loves in return. Besides pointing out that Musella has agency, voice, and choice, scholars have not sufficiently explored what makes Musella choose Philisses over the three men who love her. The significance is not only in Musella’s decision to choose her own partner, but who she chooses is also important. Since Wroth has created a world where Musella has the means to choose her life partner, I argue that Musella agrees to participate in a romantic relationship only when that relationship offers “The truest, and most constant love” (V.ii.111). In light of the renovation of the ideal marriage in the Renaissance, Wroth provides Musella a
consciousness that reveals a woman in support of companionate marriages over conventional ideals that maintained the overwhelming dominance of the husband over the subordinate wife. Wroth not only provides Musella a consciousness about the advantages of a companionate marriage, but Philisses likewise demonstrates that he is in support of a companionate relationship as he does not try to dominate Musella, but only asks for mutual companionship. As the play progresses, Musella and Philisses begin to make known their personal aspirations and desires for a companionate relationship which they find to be shared preferences. Their like-mindedness signifies that they are truly compatible unlike the other men who love Musella and the other woman who loves Philisses.

Musella and Philisses’ function in the play is not only to provide Wroth’s image of a companionate relationship, but they also share their revelation about the benefits of reciprocal love with the community in order to teach the cynics of love its value, and demonstrate to the rest of the community the necessity of finding a well-matched companion. Their relationship provides hope for those without a companion and offers a model for the rest of the lovers in the community to emulate.

Philisses: The Ideal Male Partner for a Companionate Relationship

Philisses is first of the couple to speak about love, and his reaction demonstrates that he is the ideal partner for a companionate relationship. In Act I, Scene ii, speaking frankly because he is alone on stage, Philisses pities himself as he has just been informed, though it turns out he is misinformed, that his beloved Musella loves Lissius. Instead of speaking in anger in his lines, he adopts a self-sacrificing approach showing he is respectful of Musella’s right to choose her lover:
Alas, poore sheapheard, miserable mee,
Yett faire Musella love, and worthy bee.
I blame thee nott butt myne own miserie.
Live you still hapy, and injoye your love,
And lett love paines in mee distressed move.
For since itt is my freind thou dost affect
Then wrong him once my self I will neglect.
And thus in secrett will my passions hide. (I.ii.64-74)

As is evident in Philisses’ bemoaning, with such words as “poore,” “miserable,” and “miserie,” he is suffering from the “paines” of jealousy. Instead of speaking with Musella to verify her change of heart, Philisses promptly gives her the freedom of choice as he takes the rumor as truth. He has chosen the supposed honorable path—keeping his love a “secret” and hiding his “passions” so that Musella can love Lissius without his interference. Even though Philisses does not fight for his love by at least hearing the rumor confirmed by Musella herself, he is ultimately respectful of Musella. Philisses has decided to respect Musella’s choice of lovers. If the rumors were true, his appropriate deference to Musella’s right to choose demonstrates that he is a worthy member of the non-hierarchical community that respects choice, even a woman’s right to choose, as he would only join Musella in marriage if there was a mutual love between them.

Since his jealousy is in fact unfounded, Philisses’ respectfulness also makes him an agreeable suitor for Musella’s affections because he does not attack or degrade her for not loving him. He still calls her “worthy” even when by all accounts Philisses will continue to “burne in scorners fires” (I.ii.178) due to her presumed love of another man. According to
S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies’ footnote, to “burn” in love alludes to the “Conventional Petrarchan image of the lover burning with desire; frequently evoked by Philip Sidney in *Astrophil and Stella*” (201). The motif of “fire” is also “frequently evoked” in this play and in Wroth’s other works. In *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Pamphila, like Philisses, describes Amphilanthus’ rejection as: “Like to the ashes of some happy fire / that flam’d in joy, but quench’d in misery” (15.7-8). Though Philisses burns in misery, even in the midst of jealousy, he still understands the importance of love and emphasizes two of the defining factors of the ideal type of companionate love—respect and mutuality—even if it is not he who Musella loves.

Philisses’ private thoughts on respectful, mutual love are expanded and become public in Act II, Scene I. Apparently desperate to converse with someone about the pains of love, Philisses suddenly turns to Rustic and asks: “hast thou ever lov’d?” (II.i.85). It must be noted that when Philisses asks this question, there is no scene direction for the rest of the company in attendance to exit, and this company includes Dalina, Simeana, Lissius, Lacon, and most importantly Musella herself. Thus, this discussion is no private male conversation; the whole company, specifically Musella, is present for this conversation. Therefore, everything said about love in this discussion between Philisses and Rustic is heard by Dalina, the fickle lady; Simeana, who is scorned by Lissius; Lissius, the community’s cynic about love; Lacon, who is scorned by Musella; Rustic, who will later attempt to force Musella to marry him; and Musella, Philisses’ beloved. Philisses’ public discourse on love acts to educate these individuals to seek a companionate, mutual relationship.

After enduring Rustic’s ridiculous account of love that will be described later in this chapter, Philisses expounds on his own explanation in a rather long lecture (21 lines worth).
Though lengthy, Philisses’ speech is divided into three sections illuminating how he personally defines love: 1. One must feel the pains of love, and remain constant through the agony in order to then experience its splendor; 2. Love is not selfish; 3. Lastly, true love is worth all of the pain, jealousy, and uncertainty. All of these points show the community members, specifically Musella, that Philisses is a great model for a companionate partner since he puts the needs of his lover first, and his own second.

Philisses first explains the “paine[s]” of love, describing it much like Venus’ notable line “Love’s sweet pleasing pain”:

Love is a paine which yet doth pleasure bring.
A passion which alone in harts doe move
And they that feel not this they cannot love.
’Twill make one joyfull, merry, pleasant, sad,

Cry weepe, sigh, fast, mourne, nay somtims stark mad. (II.i.93-98)

By declaring that “Love is a paine which yet doth pleasure bring,” he essentially says that “love is not easy,” and should not be taken lightly. Though he does not necessarily bring up the concept of constancy in these lines, the true message behind his words is that though love and “passion” can make one feel unstable through the varying emotions it inflicts, “joyfull, merry, pleasant, sad,” one still must remain forever constant through the madness.

In the next section of Philisses’ lecture on love, he describes love in the same way a non-hierarchical community is established; it is not selfish. It does not promote individualism. Philisses is the first to champion for a reciprocal love and does so in such a public scene:

If they parseave scorne, hate, or els disdaine
To wrap theyr woes in store for others’ gaine.
For that (butt Jealousie) is sure the wurst,
And then bee jealouse better bee acurst.
Butt O, some bee, and wowld itt nott disclose
They silent love, and loving feare. Ah, those
Deserve most pitty, favour, and reguard,

Yett ar they answer’d butt with scorne’s reward. (II.i.99-106)

At this point in his speech, Philisses describes his own experience with love. The first lines explain that some, even in their constancy, may feel “scorne,” “hate,” or “disdaine” from their lover. In this case, the constant lover can only “wrap theyr woes in store for others’ gaine.” As the footnotes explain, “wrap” in this line means “disguise, conceal” (202) and “store” implies “hoarded, put away in a storehouse” (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies202). In other words, the constant lover should hide his woes and hoard away his unrequited love. By saying that all of this disguising and hoarding away is for his lover’s “gaine,” Philisses alludes to choice. If love is not mutually felt by both parties, the individual unloved should recant his love so that his lover can—without restraint—set off to find someone else who does inspire “joyfull, merry, pleasant” feelings. Love is not a selfish act in Philisses’ mind.

As of yet, Philisses describes love as only “paine,” causing the honorable path that promotes only reciprocal love to seem unappealing; however, he ends by assuring that even the scorned lover “gaine[s]” from an unreturned love:

This theyr misfortune, and the like may fall
To you, or mee who waite misfortune’s call.
Butt if itt doe take heed, bee rul’d by mee,
Though you mistrust, mistrust nott that she see.

For then shee’ll smiling say, alas, poore foole,

This man hath learn’d all parts of folly’s scoole.

Bee wyse, make love, and love though nott obtaine

For to love truly is sufficient gaine. (II.i.106-114)

In this final segment, misfortune is personified as a woman who sometimes calls on the “poore foole[s]” scorned by love. Misfortune is “smiling” when she says the last lines of Philisses’ speech which means that the last two lines should be seen as a positive outcome to the overall misfortune. The message behind Philisses’ account of love is that there are different degrees of “gaine” when one is in love; either that one will “gaine” a mutual love or that one will “gaine” the significant experience of feeling a “true love.” As his last line illustrates, one only “gaines” something from love when they “love truly.” According to Philisses’ last 21 lines, to “love truly” means that a lover should never be selfish, but should search for a mutual, respectful love that perseveres through the varying emotions it inflicts and the outside forces that attempt to dissolve it.

This lengthy lecture about love is quite significant as it is heard by the majority of the community members. For those present who do not revere the power of love, Lissius and Rustic, Philisses encourages them to give up their selfish ways. For those who are scorned by or are fickle about love, Simeana, Lacon, and Dalina, his words encourage them to continue to love, and even if their love is unrequited, they will either benefit from their experiences or will one day find a mutual love. Through these words, Philisses provides the community members present a model of love to abide by and respect.
Philisses has shown himself to be an ideal husband for a companionate marriage because he reveals his belief that a successful relationship must comprise of mutual affection. In the 17th century, though many marriages were arranged, “Mutual affection was generally recognized to be desirable or even essential in marriage, and there is plenty of evidence of its existence in letters, diaries, autobiographies and epitaphs. Christian thought assigned the husband a superior role in it, but in literature and secular analysis it was more freely recognized as a force which modified male supremacy in marriage” (Houlbrooke 119). As a representation of the latter, Philisses does not deem himself superior in his mutual love, he simply believes his love to be unrequited. Philisses’ desire for mutual affection establishes that Wroth seems to use her work not only to “reveal a feminine consciousness” (Swift 174) that demonstrated that women seek reciprocity, but that men are also conscious of the advantages of mutual affection. As Musella is also present for Philisses lecture, since, as of yet, she has not heard Philisses speak of love in such an open way, these lines would confirm her own love of Philisses because he has indirectly proven to her that his views on love reflect her own: love is constant, love is not selfish, and love is worth the pain and uncertainty.

Musella: The Ideal Female Partner for a Companionate Relationship

As with Philisses, Musella also has moments in the play when she divulges her personal account of love. These moments, also both public and private, demonstrate that she is an ideal female partner for a companionate relationship and perfectly compatible with Philisses’ desires for a partner. She does not receive the 21 lines that Philisses does to vocalize her thoughts in the first few chapters of the play. There seems to be two possible explanations
for her silence: 1. The fact that if she were to express her feelings about Philisses right away, the enticing mystery of whom out of her possible lovers she does in fact love would be revealed too soon for the audience to enjoy the suspense. 2. As will be revealed, though Wroth had some progressive notions about women’s voice, it seems she is “aware of the prohibition on women’s assertiveness in love” (McLaren 290). Although she is not allowed to express her feelings to Philisses until he divulges his, Musella is still vocal about her thoughts on love in general. Also, she has as many lines in the play as Philisses because Wroth worked to give “her characters equal weight” (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 93). Through her first real mention of love in Act II, scene I, right before Philisses and Rustic’s discussion, the audience does begin to understand her personal stance on love.

At the very beginning of Act II, Scene i, right before Philisses and Rustic’s public discussion, Lissius and Musella have their own public dialogue about love with the same community members listening in: Dalina, Simeana, Rustic, Philisses, and Lacon. The company has just witnessed the Forester unaware of their presence beg the chaste votary of Diana, Silvesta to love him. After the Forester and Silvesta exit the scene, Lissius mocks the Forester for chasing after a woman who clearly does not wish for his affections.7

Musella is appalled that Lissius would mock instead of pity the Forester. She combats Lissius’ slander of love by acknowledging love’s ultimate power. She predicts that one day she will see him “waile, and weepe” (II.i.73) in love because she knows that it is not possible that he “cowlde nott still live free” (II.i.78) from it forever. This line is similar to Philisses’ later line “Non can have powre against a powrful love” (IV.i.129). Her discussion with

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7 I do not thoroughly examine Silvesta and Forester’s relationship because they represent “chaste love” and do not marry in the end of the play. For scholars who have analyzed Silvesta’s function in the play in great depth, see Hodgson-Wright (2000): 65-67; Miller (1996):213-215; and Roberts (2009): 313.
Lissius demonstrates that Musella, unlike Lissius, does not need to be educated about the power of love. She already acknowledges its power. Therefore, as revealed in the following chapter, it is appropriate that later in the play she becomes instrumental in Lissius’ rehabilitation to the love he previously slandered.

Though Musella is speaking about pitying the “constant love” (II.i.64) that the Forester unrequitedly shows Silvesta, the audience begins to learn about Musella’s personal stance on love. First, she acknowledges love’s power when Lissius dismisses it. Second, by calling the Forester’s love “constant,” she recognizes that constancy is an important aspect of love and it is indeed a pity when that love is not mutual. Philisses indirectly speaks of constancy in his account of love, but Musella here uses the word. Elaine V. Beilin explains that “constancy” is an attractive idea to artists and writers in the Renaissance because it can act as a “means to transcend the woes of a mutable world seemingly ruled by fortune” (218). When Wroth makes use of the concept of constancy in her other works, Beilin argues that: “Constancy, long associated with woman’s chastity, piety, and obedience, reappears in the 

_Urania_ and in _Pamphilia to Amphilanthus_ as the heroic virtue capable of transforming a lovelorn woman into a great queen, a poet, and finally, a transcendent image of divine love” (208). This is not entirely true in _Love’s Victory_ as a pastoral. None of the female characters become “great queens,” “poets,” or images of “divine love” because they are mere shepherdesses. However, the theme of constancy does emerge in a different form. As the play unfolds, since love and reciprocity are at the heart of the community, constancy unmistakably does not suggest its traditional association to female “obedience,” but is naturally encouraged by both male and female lovers to promote a mutual and permanent, not mutable love.
Much like her counterpart’s earlier lecture, Musella shows herself to be an educator of love in this scene. Lissius is her prime student. Musella, rather harshly, says that he will one day learn his lesson, and because he has been such a vicious slanderer of love, it will be a very painful lesson. For the rest present, Dalina, Simeana, and Lacon, she indirectly instructs them to likewise revere the power of love or they will suffer the same fate as Lissius. Since Philisses is present, Musella’s focus on constancy demonstrates that she too is an ideal partner for a companionate relationship because she values constancy, which is a pleasant surprise for Philisses when he finds out that she is constant in her love for only him.

For the entirety of Act I the audience does not know Musella’s private thoughts on Philisses or Lissius, who according to Philisses, she is in love with. It is not until Act II, after learning Philisses’ personal beliefs that describe a constant, respectful, mutual love, that the audience is finally privy to Musella’s thoughts regarding her suitors. As the rest of the company in attendance departs, she receives an aside finally revealing her love of, not Lissius, but Philisses: “Well lett’s away, and hether soone returne / That sunn to mee, whose absence make mee burne” (II.i.249-250); the “sunn” in this line being Philisses. In describing her feelings about Philisses, Musella uses the same fire or burning language Philisses used in Act I. Scene ii, when he said he “burne[s] in scorner’s fires” (I.i.178). As we learn in Musella’s line, since she does love Philisses and does not wish for his absence, Philisses is actually doing the scorning. Her use of the same language as Philisses signals their ultimate connection as they both “burne” in desire for each other. The placement of her first vocalization about her love for Philisses right after his admirable portrayal of love, demonstrates that Musella loves Philisses for the reason that his rendering of the ideal kind of
love as one of mutuality, respect, and constancy is fitting for a companionate marriage mirroring her own aspirations for a love match; thus proving their compatibility.

After finally revealing her love of Philisses in a brief aside, Musella bears all to her friend Silvesta in Act III, Scene i. Silvesta once loved Philisses herself before becoming a votary of Diana. As Musella and Silvesta are close friends, the beginning of their conversation consists of Musella making sure Silvesta is fine with Musella’s attentions to Philisses. Silvesta assures Musella by saying: “Now my loving time is gone. /Chastity my pleasure is” (III.i.5-6). Because she receives confirmation that admitting her love of Philisses will not upset Silvesta, Musella says:

Then knowe, Silvesta, I Philisses love,

Butt hee, although (or that because) hee loves,

Doth mee mistrust (ah) can such mischiefe move
As to mistrust her who such passion proves?

Butt soe hee doth, and thinks I have Lissius made
Master of my affections, which hath stay’d

Him ever yet from letting mee itt know

By words, although hee hides itt nott from showe. (III.i.70-78)

Musella officially admits to another person that she does love Philisses. She laments his mistake in mistrusting her love and believing her to have made Lissius “Master of [her] affections.” However, Musella does not understand Philisses’ absence because she knows that he loves her and she knows that she loves him. She is aware of his love because although Philisses is determined to hide his passions, Musella confirms that “hee hides itt nott from showe.” Thus, his plan to seem indifferent to Musella is ultimately a failure and
the rational Musella does not understand why he does not simply let her “know / By words.” This is a significant realization on her part. She becomes conscious of the fact that their relationship is not lacking love, but is lacking communication. This is an element that both Musella and Philisses need to learn in order to come together as true partners, since open communication is essential to a companionate relationship.

A further, and controversial, obstacle to open communication between Musella and Philisses is revealed in this scene. If Musella would simply tell Philisses she loves him and does not love Lissius, all would be set right. However, Musella refrains from sharing her feelings with Philisses because, as she tells Simeana: “Sometimes I faine would speak, then strait forbear / Knowing itt most unfitt; thus woe I beare” (III.i.77-78). Silvesta agrees saying “Indeed a woman to make love is ill” (III.i.79). As Wroth thought it improper for women to pursue men, Musella refrains from confiding in Philisses. He has never in their relationship openly admitted his love for her, although it was obvious from his actions. Because he has not, Musella cannot be the first to voice their mutual attraction. Musella seems concerned that if she would express her feelings, it would only hurt her chance of uniting with Philisses. This belief appears again later in the play when Simeana is also encouraged not to woo Lissius. I will discuss Wroth’s belief about the impropriety of women wooing men more in the next chapter. In this instance, it is significant that Musella is so despondent about Philisses believing a false rumor that she takes some action by seeking advice from a friend. This represents her community-focused mindset since she recognizes the value of human relationships.  

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8 I do not dwell on individual friendships as they are covered in great detail in Miller’s excellent essay (1996): 210-215.
Silvesta does indeed provide a helpful suggestion for Musella to work around this obstacle. She suggests trying “silent wooing,” as Stephanie Hodgson-Wright calls it (61). Silvesta instructs Musella to position herself in the place where Philisses “every morn” walks to “cry / Against his lyfe” (III.i.81-83). When Philisses sees Musella she must show her “self butt kind” (III.i.86). Hodgson-Wright sees this as a “performance” to a “selected audience” that is “seeming complian[t] with the dominant cultural codes of Jacobean England” (61). As a former lady of the court, Wroth is well aware of the “cultural codes” that govern women’s movements in the court. Margaret Ann McLaren suggests that “[t]he reader senses the pressure of what remains unspoken—Musella’s longing to express herself without restraint and of her own free will” (McLaren 291) Wroth either agrees with these cultural codes, or attempts to show how ridiculous it is to abide by these codes. In many ways, Musella’s hesitancy shows that no matter how far along the 17th century has come in thinking about companionate marriages, women still held subordinate roles in society. As Elizabeth Honig explains, “There is […] no doubt that in the ideal companionate marriage the woman’s role was a subordinate one” (64). Although Musella and Philisses represent in this play the ideal companionate partnership, through Musella’s fear of voicing her feelings, Wroth brings her audience back to reality—even in companionate marriages, the role between husband and wife is still not completely equal.

The first few acts of the play, where Musella and Philisses only speak separately and publically about love, are painful for the lovers as they are unable to share their feelings directly to each other due to either jealousy or unfair cultural norms. However, these first acts are important to their development because both have revealed that they seek reciprocated love and have demonstrated that they would be ideal companions in a
companionate marriage. Also, because Musella becomes so exasperated about their irrational separation due to a false rumor, Musella seeks advice from her friend who does provide her the way around the indecency of women wooing men. Significantly, throughout the entire first few acts, both couples work separately to educate the community on the ways of a companionate love.

_Musella and Philisses’ Mutual, Equal Love Realized_

Since the fundamental obstacle to their love is their own inability to communicate with each other, Musella and Philisses must come together and talk about love together, not separately, before they can realize their mutual love. As mentioned, in Act III, Scene i, Musella’s personal grief about realizing that Philisses loves her but knowing he cannot admit this love, persuades her to do what Philisses could not—find him and get the truth “By words.” In this scene Philisses and Musella are entirely alone. Their aloneness signals that they no longer need other’s advice or council; they simply need to be direct with each other to truly learn the value of open communication in a companionate relationship.

Musella’s inherent desire for a spouse who shares her search for a love match founded on mutuality, respect, and loyalty, provides her with the courage to speak to the man who fits this description. By initiating conversation, Musella opens the door for their first discussion on love. Since Philisses is so determined to hide his feelings, Musella must persuade him to talk to her: “How now, Philisses, why doe you thus grieve? / Speake, is ther non that can your paines relieve?” (138). Since Musella demands that he “Speake,” Philisses has no option but to reply. Musella continues to use questioning as her tactic of persuading Philisses to let her know he loves her with words, not by “showe.” After saying that no one
can relieve his “paines,” Musella attempts to prolong the conversation by asking the obvious question “Butt are you sure she doth your love disdaine?” (IV.i.57), since she knows full well that she is who he longs for and she does not “disdaine” Philisses. In a word, his answer is “yes” claiming that he has information that proves she “disdaine[s]” him. This leads to her final question: “Butt have you made itt knowne to her you love / That for her scorne, you doe thes torments prove?” (IV.i.69-70), thereby, addressing his ultimate mistake of not confessing his feelings for her instead of simply believing a rumor. These questions are extremely important to their first conversation about love because Musella is not indecently wooing Philisses, and by asking questions, she does not allow Philisses to shut down or desist conversing with her.

As necessary for a reciprocal relationship, her determination encourages him to be open about his feelings of love. When she finally succeeds in breaking down Philisses’ defenses he says:

I'le plainer speak though my owne end I gaine,
And soe to end, itt were to mee a blis.
Then know, for your deere sake my sorrow is,
Itt may bee you will hate mee, yett I have
By this some ease though with itt come my grave.
Yett, deere Musella, since for you I pine,
And suffer wellcome death […] (IV.i.72-82)

His words quite literally explain how “jealousy is the wurst;” it shall bring him to his grave if Musella does indeed “hate” him and his suspicions about Lissius are true. Philisses is
overcome with his emotions and has felt such “paine” and yet remained so constant, that the idea that she could not love him would result in his death.

Now that Musella received confirmation of Philisses’ affections for her, abiding by social conventions, she can now voice her full personal stance on love. In response to his declaration of love, she is properly able to say:

Well then, I love you, and soe ever must,

Though time, and fortune should bee still unjust.

For wee may love, and both may constant prove

Butt nott enjoy, unles ordain’d above. (IV.i.97-100).

Musella knows that she loves Philisses and assures him that she will be forever “constant” but knows that sometimes love is not enough. Sometimes “time” and “fortune” or those “above,” Venus and Cupid specifically, may not “ordain” it. At this point in the play, her arranged marriage to Rustic is not finalized. However, Musella seems to expect some sort of opposition toward Philisses and her commitment to each other; be it from Rustic or Venus and Cupid. She remains hopeful that love shall conquer and Venus and Cupid will come to her aid to indeed ordain their love.

To Philisses’ delight, Musella has been constant in her love for him right from the outset of their acquaintance. In his shock at his mistaken sorrow and jealousy he asks in disbelief: “Dost thou love mee?” (IV.i.101). She significantly replies: “More than my self, or love my self for thee, / The better much; butt wilt thou love like mee?” (103-104). This line officially demonstrates Musella’s personal desires for a “true love.” It is almost said as a test to see if Philisses loves her equally. At first she says that she loves him more than herself, but changes her mind to say “or love my self for thee, / The better much.” She
refuses to out-love him or lose herself in their love: she will continue to love herself, as well as love him. This line also demands the same respect and love from Philisses as she has for herself and for him, when she asks “wilt thou love like mee?” If he does not love her in this way, their love would not be compatible because if they were to be married, it would not be a companionate marriage, but one of imbalanced power and love dynamics. This line mirrors a line she says during the almost suicide scene: “I lov’d as firmly as thou could’st mee love” (V.iv.236). This is said to Philisses. She again, right before their supposed end, confirms that their love is an equal love. They love at the same level; no one loves more or less than the other.

In every statement about love Musella expresses her desire for faithfulness, but also mutuality and respect. In every reply to Musella’s request for true love, Philisses verifies that he can give her this type of love but asks that she give him the same love in return. Since his question “Dost thou love mee?” is met with an appropriate response, Philisses’ answer to her question “wilt thou love like mee?” is “my only lyfe, heer doe I vow to dy / When I prove faulse, or show unconstancie” (105-106). He too confirms that his love for her is a reciprocal, constant love. Through an open conversation, all rumors are dissolved, all feelings are conveyed, and Musella and Philisses finally realize their “true love” that was, to his surprise, always constant.

Musella and Philisses “Truly would for true love’s sake have dy/de”

After confessing their love to each other, their happiness is short lived (but not permanent) because in Act V, Musella receives the news from her mother that she must hastily marry Rustic; thus, taking away Musella’s right to choose. This is the final trial for Musella and
Philisses’ relationship: to demonstrate the importance of open communication in a reciprocal relationship.

The reason for this marriage is that Musella’s father wished for Musella’s union to Rustic before he died, and to ensure their marriage, he put this demand for their marriage in his will. Musella’s mother is resolute in keeping with this will and Musella must “yield” since she is “in her hands” (V.i.46), meaning that Musella must obey her mother since she is Musella’s surviving guardian. It is clear in Musella’s passage in Act V, Scene i, that this arranged marriage was indeed established for some sort of financial exchange between Rustic and her parents:

…And yet my true love crost,

Neglected for base gaine, and all worth lost

For riches? Then ‘tis time for good to dy,

When wealth must wed us to all misery. (V.i.2-5)

This type of arrangement goes against Musella’s personal beliefs about love because “true love” is “worth” more than “riches” and “wealth.” A marriage based on a transaction of money does not adhere to the definition of a companionate marriage based on true love because the sole factor meant to bind Rustic and Musella together is “wealth,” not love. Also, marriage for financial gain also does not promote the themes, respect, mutuality, and constancy that hold together the community because in this transaction Musella becomes an object without any say in the matter.

Although arranged marriages do not fit the world Wroth has created for her characters, it is definitely the norm in her own world. Through Musella’s search for emancipation of her arranged contract to Rustic, Wroth is undoubtedly responding to the
stubbornness of the old aristocracy that held to the practice of arranged marriage which made a compatible marriage unlikely. Considering Margaret Hannay’s suggestion about the play being written for Wroth’s sister’s wedding, Hannay is unable to provide specifics about Wroth’s sister Barbara’s feelings toward her fiancé, but it seems both the bride’s family and the groom’s family “were very much involved” (212), including Wroth herself. Wroth does seem to have “promoted her little sister’s welfare” (211), which most likely meant financial welfare. However, if this play was written for Barbara’s wedding, it seems that Wroth was also interested in promoting Barbara’s welfare in her marriage. Though theirs was most likely an arranged marriage, the play encourages both bride and groom to create a loving, companionate marriage, much like Musella and Philisses’ relationship.

Musella cannot accept the traditional role of an obedient daughter when her mind and heart disagree with her parents. In obeying her mother, Musella would lose her freedom and independence. Since Musella is accustomed to equality, she cannot abide by the rules of convention and obey her parents, thus losing her freedom. When Musella tells Philisses that she is to be “maried,” he asks “Butt will you marry? Or shoule love to mee, / Or her obay, and make mee wretched bee?” (V.i.47-48). She tells Philisses that she would rather die than marry Rustic, but that there is “one thing” (V.i.84) she wants from Philisses before her death; that his life “requite with” (V.i.84) hers. Musella does not see any way out of her arranged marriage besides suicide. Through her thoughts of death over an arranged marriage, Wroth illustrates the tragic fact that women were forced to either endure an arranged marriage to a stranger or resort to drastic measures to ensure the archaic marriage conventions.

Fortunately, Musella and Philisses do not die. Venus gives Silvesta a potion that mimics death to fool Musella and Philisses into thinking they are committing suicide. Venus
allows the community to think that Musella and Philisses are indeed dead to provide the lesson that it should be divine love that governs marriages, not earthly riches. Also, as the goddess of love, Venus wanted to save them because they “truly would for true love’s sake have dy’d” (V.vii.490). As will be discussed in the chapter outlining the triumph of “love’s victory,” true love is the love that Venus and Cupid also encourage for the lovers because only true love provides the reverence to love that Venus and Cupid expect from the shepherds.

As Silvesta says when Simeana finds her with the bodies, “heere [behold] love, and love’s tragedy” (V.iv.257-259), Musella and Philisses’ end could quite easily have been a tragedy; however, that is not the point of the play. Instead of “love’s tragedy,” the play promotes “love’s victory.” Excluding Love’s Victory, Wroth’s works, specifically Urania, (1621) often display “love’s tragedy” through marriages that are damaging to independent women. As Anne Shaver explains, Wroth’s intent in these texts is to draw attention to the “ways in which the institution of marriage, as understood in the early modern period, hurts and inhibits women” (Shaver 493). According to Wroth, a marriage that is indeed “painful” is one “in which the husband and wife lack compatibility, especially if the wife is a rarer spirit than her husband, and cannot adapt to his culturally encouraged expectations that she will do as he pleases and be satisfied” (Shaver 497). Since Love’s Victory seems to be a response to the slow, but changing conventions related to marriage, Wroth’s intention turns from representing damaging marriages, to providing a new image of marriage comprised of a companionate love that does not hurt or inhibit women; a love that is mutual and does not demand unquestioned obedience. Musella and Philisses’ salvation from death portrays, as Wynne-Davies explains in her essay, “the vindication of true love over the social
acceptability of arranged marriages” (320). This new image of a marriage of true love is seen through Musella and Philisses’ companionship that survives the lack of communication, jealousy, and arranged marriage.

*Musella and Philisses’ Incompatible Matches*

Though Musella and Philisses are the ideal couple, Wroth significantly allows other characters to love and come between them to demonstrate a compatible love, where lovers, like Musella and Philisses, are provided with different options, but ultimately have the right to choose for themselves. With various options, Musella and Philisses must decide who is right for them and who most fits their individual desires for a love match. Musella has four options: Philisses, Lacon, Arcas, and Rustic. Philisses has two: Musella and Philis. Because Philisses and Musella both desire a respectful, mutual, companionate marriage, their other options do not measure up, thereby proving Philisses to be Musella’s true love and Musella to be Philisses’ true love. Since the play emphasizes love and the community, the characters rejected by Musella and Philisses are not left destitute, but learn from the model couple’s example of true, enduring love.

Philis has one of the smallest roles in the play so the audience does not gain much information about her. She participates in the shepherds’ games and past times, but the only time she expresses her love of Philisses is when the four women, Dalina, Climeana, Simeana, and Philis, discuss various subjects, all relating to love. Half way through their discussion, she confesses her woes about loving Philisses for a “long time” (III.ii.175); however, though never “cruell” (III.ii.177) in his rejection, Philisses does not return her love. According to Cerasano’s and Wynne-Davies’ footnote “Wroth probably used the classical tale of Phyllis
and Demophoon in her creation of the following tale of unrequited love, as well as more
generally for her character Philis. In Ovid Phyllis hangs herself when she believes she has
been deserted by Demophoon her lover (*Heroides* II)” (204). This footnote portrays Philis as
a tragic figure which is how most critics view her character.

Because of characters such as Philis, who do not end up with a partner at the end of
the play, critic Alexandra G. Bennett believes that the ending of *Love’s Victory* should not be
considered a complete triumph of love since “problematic factors remain” (134). She
specifically references the three characters, Philis, Lacon, and Climeana, who “are left
without partners or closure: nor do they receive any benefit from heavenly assistance” (134).
However, after an analysis of the necessities of a true love according to the play, these
“problematic factors” can be explained by two uncomplicated factors: the focus on choice
and the overall hopeful, not conclusive ending. Due to Wroth’s concentration on choice, the
simple explanation behind why Philis does not gain Philisses’ love although she is constant
to him, is because she was not Philisses’ choice. Her love is not mutually felt by Philisses.
Although her love will remain unrequited, Philis seems to acknowledge Philisses’ right to
choose towards the end of the play. When the community thinks that Musella is dead and are
sharing their feelings for the departed Musella, Philis says: “What glory day did give us was
to show / The vertu in her beauty seem’d to grow” (V.v.304-305). She calls Musella virtuous
and beautiful indicating that Philis holds no ill feelings towards Musella, even after learning
that Philisses chose death with Musella over life with Philis. She seems to recognize and
accept that Musella and Philisses are truly compatible. Although not Philisses’ choice, there
is no indication that she is without means of finding someone else later on. Philis stays a
loving member of the community instead of choosing suicide, as Ovid’ Phyllis. With the
triumph of loves such as Musella and Philisses’ and also Lissius and Simeana’s, the play
ends with the hope that other relationships will flourish and follow in their path of true love.
Philis, even without a partner in the end, appreciates that a victorious relationship consists of
a mutual love.

Philis’ fate is also Lacon’s, since he too loved Musella but she did not reciprocate his
feelings. Unlike Musella’s other suitor Rustic, Lacon is not relentless in his attentions to
Musella. More like Philis, Lacon seems to accept Musella’s right to choose as he too praises
her when he thinks she is dead: “Noe worthe did live which in her had nott spring, / And she
thus gon to her grave worth doth bring” (V.v.308-309). Significantly, before he hears of her
death he says:

Soe I, although for her I oft have di’de,
Grieve for her loss, nott that I was deni’de;
I was unworthy of her, and she farr
Too worthy for this clowne [Rustic]. (V.iii.168-171)

Although he unfairly debases himself as “unworthy” of Musella, Lacon seems to see that he
is not right for her. His appreciation of Musella’s right to choose makes Lacon, unlike Rustic
the “clowne,” a valued member of the society from the start. Lacon, Philis, and Climeana, as
we will see, can hope for a compatible relationship in the future.

Musella’s second suitor, Arcas, is behind the scene stealthily trying to trap Musella
into loving him. As the villain of the play, he takes pleasure in ruining relationships out of
spite, specifically Musella’s, since he was rejected by her before the play begins. His tactic
is to use slander to damage relationships; his main rumor being when he tells Musella’s
mother that Musella has been having inappropriate relations with Philisses. Therefore, to
stop a scandal, Musella’s mother attempts to enforce the arranged marriage between Musella and Rustic. Arcas is punished for his mischief by Venus herself in the end. His unsuitability as a candidate for Musella’s true love is obvious.

Since Lacon and Arcas are less vocal in their attempt to court Musella and Rustic is the man who almost successfully forces Musella into marriage, getting a clear image of Rustic’s personality is important in understanding why Musella would never choose him for a husband; he is quite disrespectful of women and he views Musella as an object to be won from her parents. There are two scenes that portray Rustic’s incompatibility as Musella’s partner. With the majority of the shepherds in attendance in Act I, Scene iii, Dalina suggests that they decide on a diversion to pass away the time before they must tend their flocks.

They decide on singing. Rustic determines to use this opportunity as a chance to woo Musella through song:

When I doe see
Thee, whitest thee,
Yea, whiter then lamb’s wull,
How doe I joy
That thee injoye
I shall with my hart full.
Thy Eyes, doe play
Like Goats with hay,
And skip like kids flying
From the sly fox;
Soe eyelid’s box
Shutts up thy sights prying.
Thy cheeks are red
Like Okar spred
On a fatted sheep’s back;
Thy paps ar found
Like aples round
Noe praises shall lack. (I.iii.335-352)

This song is “a parody of the Petrarchian love poems sung by other shepherds and shepherdesses” (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 202). Even without the footnote’s explanation, this song is clearly offensive as Rustic describes Musella’s attributes to animal attributes: skin like “lamb’s wull;” eyes like “Goats” playing and “kids flying /from the sly fox;” and cheeks like “Okar spred,” which is “A yellow or red pigmentation used to mark sheep, in order to determine their owners” (202). The last three lines are the most offensive as “paps” means “breasts” (202); therefore, equating her breasts to “aples round.” Describing her breasts as round apples is not only embarrassing as others are listening in, but derogatory as well. This deprecating song indicates that Rustic is only interested in Musella’s appearance, unlike Philisses who finds her a “worthy” woman and would never describe her in such belittling terms.

As it is obvious from the song itself that Rustic is not worthy of the fair Musella, Musella is not shy in her rejection of Rustic. She, even before the song, when Rustic tells her “I will sing of thee” (I.iii.333), says “Sorry I ame I should your subject bee” (I.iii.334). She attempts to dissuade him from the beginning but when she is unsuccessful, her only other option for stopping his absurd song is to interrupt him: “Well you have praises given enough;
now let / An other come some other to commend” (I.iii.353-354). Naomi J. Miller describes Musella’s interruption as “Musella would rather author her own discourse than be subjected to the domineering discourse of an unwelcomed suitor” (167). Rustic was apparently not finished praising Musella’s breasts and other body parts when she interrupts him because he says, “I had much more to say butt thus I’me mett, / And stay’d, now will I hearken, and attend” (I.iii.355-356). Musella is not a woman to stand by and allow a man to describe her “round” breasts. Since the female characters in the play are allowed agency and “Wroth presents her women characters as respecting themselves” (Swift 178), they also demand respect from their community members, as they do in their romantic relationships. Therefore, Musella does not fain interest in Rustic or politely ignore him after his song; she boldly tells him she wishes he would not show interest in her and interrupts him before his song is through.

The reason why Rustic is not an appropriate match for Musella becomes even more noticeable in the Act II, Scene I, when Philisses receives an answer from Rustic to his question: “hast thou ever lov’d?” (II.i.85). Rustic’s reply is:

What call you love? I’have bin to trouble mov’d
As when my best cloke hath by chance bin torne.
I have liv’d wishing till itt mended were,
And butt soe lovers doe; nor cowld forbeare
To cry if I my bag, or bottle lost,
As lovers doe who by theyr loves ar crost,
And grieve as much for thes, as they for scorne. (II.i.85-92)
According to these lines, not surprisingly, Rustic does not feel or know how to feel love, though he relentlessly pursues Musella. From his first line “What call you love?,” Rustic shows that he has no experience to help him define love. He has apparently observed individuals in love as he knows that it is common for a lover to be “trouble mov’d.” He, however, has not felt this trouble in regards to love, but has when his “best cloke hath by chance bin torne.” He also says that he does “grieve as much for” a lost “bag” or “bottle” as others do when they feel the “scorne” of a “crost” lover. All of this Musella has heard and would not be pleased to hear that her suitor understands love as nothing stronger or deeper than a man’s love of his best cloak, bag, or bottle, suggesting that he cannot love another being, even Musella, as much as he loves his possessions. If Rustic were to marry, it can also be assumed that he would have to receive some form of material reward, be it money or goods, for him to enter into a marriage, which is confirmed later in the play. Furthermore, in describing love as equal to valuing a prized possession, Rustic’s wife in his mind, would also be equal to a possession. This was alluded to in his song as he described Musella through animal metaphors, animals that a shepherd would own such as goats and sheep, and even described her cheeks to a marking a shepherd would put on his sheep to indicate ownership.

Bennett also has a different assessment of Rustic’s song and account of love. She rightly says that Rustic’s “language and behaviour […] mark him as an aesthetic and class outsider to the sentiments and activities of the community” (Bennett 129). Bennett, however, believes, unlike other critics arguing that Wroth has created an “egalitarian community” (Lewalski 95), that there are indeed hierarchies encoded in Wroth’s text (Bennett 126), and Rustic is the “most obvious subject of [this] hierarchical snobbery” (128) since the characters including Musella and Philisses treat him as an “encroaching threat whose pretensions must
be thwarted” (Bennett 129). I disagree with Bennett’s contentions about the community representing a hierarchy by being a tad snobbish to Rustic and argue the reverse. The fact that Rustic is met with “snobbery” is because through Rustic’s song to Musella and his description of love, it is he who describes the beginning of a hierarchy—when money becomes the defining factor of prestige and when a wife is a “prized possession” of her husband. This unmistakably describes society in Renaissance England but not the shepherding community in the play that as McLaren states “stops at the edge of the field” (McLaren 289). Money is not mentioned in the play by other characters; only Rustic. Rustic clearly does not hold the same values in regards to sustaining the “extended egalitarian community, without gender or class hierarchy” (Lewalski 95).

By the end of the play, Rustic is reformed—his “materialism” will be transformed to “generosity” and he will become an advocate for a reciprocal community. This reformation happens when he learns not of Musella and Philisses’ death, but of their resurrection. Because of Venus’ interference and Musella and Philisses’ commitment to true love, he finally sees that the power of love should reign in all hearts: “When Venus wills, men can nott but obey” (V.vii.536). He frees Musella from her contracts to him and is then embraced by the community after his reformation. He is especially embraced by Dalina who actually desires to be his wife; they are the representatives of “comic love.” This union to Dalina allows him to rethink his unsuitable account of love for this non-hierarchical shepherding community. The shepherds and shepherdesses never attempt to exile Rustic from the community, they instead work together to reform him in the ways of love and reciprocity; thus offering him a friendship.
Conclusion

As these different strands of love relationships surrounding Musella and Philisses depict, the two characters have a relationship that is built on the same defining factors of the egalitarian community, and has affected not only their own lives, but others. Their companionate love conquered arranged marriage since arranged marriages were not an appropriate option for women living in a non-hierarchical community. Lastly, they were able to educate Musella’s various suitors and Philis on the true meaning of love. This education led to the happy union of Rustic and Dalina and inspired hope in Philis and Lacon that true love will eventually come their way. Philisses, and specifically Musella, reappear in subsequent chapters because throughout the play they act to resolve problems within the community as the model couple, as well as model citizens. Their reciprocal, mutual, constant, love continues to be influential to other’s lives than just their own.
Chapter 2: Lissius and Simeana—Flawed Love turned True

Whereas in Musella and Philisses’ true love relationship Wroth demonstrates how a companionate partnership models values of a community (respect and reciprocity), in Simeana and Lissius’ relationship Wroth creates an image of a couple divided on their opinions of love. Since Musella and Philisses stand for Wroth’s ideal couple, their companionate alliance provides a model in which to read the rest of the romantic relationships in the play. Simeana and Lissius’ disjointed relationship is the antithesis to Musella and Philisses’ partnership as they represent “flawed love.” Where Musella and Philisses were kept apart by false rumors and an arranged marriage, Simeana and Lissius are initially kept apart solely by their separate views on love: he is inconstant and disrespectful where she is ceaselessly constant in her longing for him to show her mutual love.

From the beginning of the play, Philisses’ sister Simeana, much like her brother, reveres the power of love and seeks the love of Lissius. However, unlike her brother who was misled by false accounts but was never shunned by Musella, Simeana is in fact scorned by Lissius. He “represents an anti-marriage and anti-woman stance in the play” (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 202) as he has the classic fear of being “tied t’a woman’s faithless bond” (II.i.68), does not respect self-sufficient women, and disregards the one woman deserving of his love. It must be noted that he does not completely reject love because, according to Simeana, Lissius would sometimes show Simeana affection but would most of the time neglect her. Lissius views represent a hierarchy—he deems himself superior to constant love, therefore, superior to other shepherds suffering from “Love’s sweet pleasing pain.” His hierarchical claims make him an outsider to the values held by his fellow community members: reciprocal love and egalitarianism. For him to transform into a valued member of
the community and be deserving of Simeana’s constancy, Lissius must be re-appropriated not only in the ways of love and marriage, but also in the ways of the non-hierarchical community.

The need for Lissius’ rehabilitation into the community makes this relationship important to examine because it shows how various members of the community work to eradicate threats, such as Lissius’ stratified views, from the social equality established in their Erotopian society. The individuals who collectively succeed in educating Lissius about his mistakes on general reciprocity are Venus and Cupid, Musella, and Simeana. Venus and Cupid are particularly interested in Lissius as they seek revenge for his deliberate slander of love. The independent Musella wants to see Lissius rehabilitated because she considers his insults as the beginning of a gender hierarchy. It is clear why Simeana would want Lissius to be converted to the ways of love so that he can return her own constant love. Venus and Musella, on the other hand, are invested in Lissius’ rehabilitation because they both want the same thing; to sustain the equality of the community by encouraging love. As Gary Waller notes, the world Wroth has created in her play “is the fantasy of a mutual love regardless of gender, an erotopia of mutuality. It is a fantasy of community, not of competitive individualism” (Waller 243). Lissius disrupts this fantasy as he espouses the rhetoric of individualism and cynicism where he looks out for only his own well being and openly mocks those around him who actually revere love and community.

In this chapter, I examine the moments when the community members step in to demonstrate to Lissius the importance of reciprocal fellowship, as well as help both Simeana and Lissius find true love in each other. With this in mind, I aim to analyze when and why Lissius’ slanders of love turn to praises of love, Simeana’s constant pro-marriage and pro-
love stance, and when these divided discourses on love become unified. Referencing Musella and Philisses’ previous rhetoric of true love is useful in detecting when Lissius’ discourse of individualism shifts to one of reciprocity. I argue that through the help of the community and divine assistance, Simeana and Lissius’ “flawed love” is eventually exchanged for the established necessities of a true, companionate love; mutuality, respect, and constancy. Once Lissius respects women and the power of love, he becomes an ideal spouse for a companionate partnership, thereby a compatible match for the loyal Simeana.

Simeana and Lissius’ relationship in its entirety receives very little scholarly criticism—most likely because their relationship is often overshadowed by Musella and Philisses. When critics do focus on Lissius and Simeana’s relationship, they mainly highlight the scene in which Climeana, the other woman pining for Lissius’ affections, attempts to woo Lissius into loving her and not Simeana. Lissius responds by reprimanding her for her indecency: “Fy, I doe blush for you, a woman woo? / The most unfitting’st, shamfull’st thing to doe” (III.ii.291-292). Many feminist critics such as Margaret McLaren and Alexandra G. Bennett express their disproval of Wroth holding to the convention that considers it improper for a woman to woo a man, while other scholars attempt to understand it through the cultural norms of the time. 9 This is indeed a significant moment in the work and deserves attention. To understand this instance, since Wroth believed that both men and women should have the right to choose their spouse, I find it important also to examine why Lissius ultimately chooses Simeana over Climeana and if Climeana’s indecency is in fact the cause of Lissius disinterest in her. Since compatibility is important to Wroth, the fact that Lissius chooses

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Simeana over Climeana shows that he finds Simeana’s traits more in tune with his own.

Though Climeana is not chosen by Lissius, she is still considered a valued member of society and learns from Lissius and Simeana’s eventual true love companionship the importance of finding a compatible life-partner who shares her mutual feelings.

_Lissius’ Individualistic, Patriarchal Attitude_

Lissius starts out the play adamant in his “anti-love” and “anti-woman” stance showing that he is outside of the non-hierarchical community and the ideas of love as a positive, mutual, reciprocal experience. Lissius is not silent about his views but publically slanders both love and women throughout the first few acts of the play. However, early in Act I, Lissius is given a private moment that reveals his true character during a soliloquy where he discusses with himself his disapproval of Philisses’ obsession of Musella:

_I’le non of this, I’le rather seeke my grave._

_Love, by your favor, I will none of you,_

_I rather you shoulde miss then I shoulde sue._ (I.ii.106-108).

His individualistic attitude is quite extreme—so much so that he overdramatically claims that he would rather die than be connected to another human being. He also tells love, i.e. Cupid, to intentionally “miss” shooting him with his arrows so that he can be saved from all of the excessive wooing going on around him. In this early soliloquy, Lissius deliberately declares love, as well as Cupid and Venus who represent love, beneath him since he will have “none” of it. By having Lissius express these sentiments that would clearly offend Venus and Cupid early on in the play, Wroth prepares the audience for Venus and Cupid’s revenge on Lissius.
Since Lissius disrespects love and women mutually, both divine assistance and mortal friendship must intervene to succeed in restoring Lissius’ reverence of love, and at the same time his status in the community. Venus and Cupid have a secret hand in punishing Lissius’ disrespect by use of Cupid’s arrows. Musella intervenes, as well, but by use of speech. In Act II, Scene i, the majority of the community, Musella, Dalina, Simeana, Philisses, Lissius, Rustic, and Lacon are gathered together to pass away the time. Dalina suggests that the group “play / Att something while [they] yet have pleasing day” (II.i.1-2). As soon as she says this, the Forester and Silvesta enter not aware of the group’s presence. The Forester says to Silvesta: “Pitty mee nott, els judg with your faire eyes / My loving soule which to you captive lies” (II.i.21-22). Once he declares his love for her, she rejects it: “I have vow’d, which vowes I will obay / Unto Diana; what more can I say” (II.i.27-28). After her refusal, they exit with the Forester in “most griefe, most woe” (II.i.62) and Silvesta seeking solitude. Silvesta’s character is important in the discussion on choice as she fits in with the other women in romantic relationships as they all “attempt to assert their sovereign right to choose, whether between suitors, as with Musella and Simeana, or between marriage and chastity, as with Silvesta” (Miller 131). Furthermore, although she allows chastity to govern her life, she remains a valued member of the Erotopian society because she remains a true friend of the other community members, especially Musella and Philisses, as noted in the previous chapter.

As the model of an ideal companionate partner, Musella desires all of the shepherds to view love in the same way that she does; a true love sustained on respect and mutuality. Musella, aware of Lissius’ hatred of love, decides to test the extent of that hatred by asking for his thoughts on the heartrending spectacle they observed:
Musella: Lissius, I hope this sight doth something move
In you to pitty soe much constant love.

Lissius: Yes. Thus it moves: That man should be so fond
As to be tied t'a woman’s faithless bond!
For wee shouuld women love butt as owr sheep
Who beeing kind and gentle gives us ease,
Butt cross, or strayning, stuborne, and unmeeke,
Shun’d as the woulf, which most owr flocks disease. (II.i.65-72)

Musella’s hope is that by seeing the Forester’s constant love to Silvesta, Lissius would be moved by their love and give up his anti-love stance. However, the scene has a contrary affect giving Lissius a chance to mock the Forester; thus love. He describes the Forester’s love as being “tied” to Silvesta, which is similar to the idea of being “tied down,” meaning trapped in marriage. His cynicism is also evident in claiming that the bond a man ties to a woman is “faithless” on the woman’s part. With this view of love, he says that men should instead love women as shepherds love their sheep; keeping with the pastoral images. He describes how men should welcome women only at times when they are “kind” and “gentle,” but shun them “as the woulf” when they are “cross,” “strayning,” “stuborne,” and “unmeeke.” Unhappily for Lissius most of Wroth’s “female characters are far from the silent, chaste, and obedient ideals favored by Petrarchan convention” (Campbell 111). He is dissatisfied with all the women in the community because he considers their independence as a type of “disease” to be cured.

Here Lissius represents the men of Wroth’s time who wanted silent, fragile, sheep-like women and not women who are independent—therefore, “stuborne” and “unmeeke.”
Although Wroth provides a revision of marriage that eventually Lissius will support, at this point he holds to the “official image of marriage” that Wroth seems so against as it deems women “the subordinate partner” (Houlbrooke 118). As the subordinate, “Woman was thought to be man’s inferior in intellect and virtue. This notion was challenged, but with limited practical consequences” (Houlbrooke 118). Since Lissius represents individualistic and patriarchal attitudes, he expresses his desire for relationships within the community to represent usual 17th century marriages; where “the worlds of men and women are separate” (Mcfarlane 154). By showing Lissius’ stubbornness, Wroth demonstrates the progressiveness of her ideal of marriage, since, similar to Rustic described in the previous chapter, not all of the shepherds accept the general reciprocity promoted by the rest of the community until they are converted. Only in Wroth’s Arcadia, reciprocal love has unlimited “practical consequences.”

The community members who make up the group in attendance for Musella and Lissius’ argument are significant. Philisses, Rustic, and Lacon are all in love with Musella; therefore, they do not share Lissius’ cynicism. Excluding Rustic who agrees with arranged marriages, Philisses and Lacon are nothing but respectful to women so they also do not share Lissius’ contempt for independent women. Dalina, though fickle about love, has had many lovers in the past making her quite the expert on love and an independent woman. With this in mind, she is most likely extremely affronted by Lissius’ slander of women. Simeana’s attendance is the most significant because she gains further evidence that Lissius does not at this point share her views on love. Knowing this background information paints the image of six of Lissius’ fellow community members glaring at him as he utters these words of slander. His mockery is directed at not only love, but both women and men like the Forester who
actually desire to be “tied t’a woman’s faithless bond,” which, in fact, also include Philisses, Rustic, and Lacon.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, out of this company, Musella is the right person to confront Lissius’ defamation because throughout the entire play, Musella never ceases to respect the power of love. Also, Musella is the female character who most frequently asserts her agency to “act to resolve problems and foster friendship and community” (Lewalski 97). Being the “stuborne” and “unmeeke” woman that she is, Musella does not allow Lissius to get away with disrespecting either love or the values of the community. Speaking for especially the women present, Musella says:

Wee little ar beholding unto you,

In kindness les, yett you thes words may rue,

I hope to live to see you waile, and weepe

And deeme your greife farr sweeter then your sleep.

Then butt remember this, and think on mee

Who truly told, you cowld nott still live free. (II.i.73-78)

Musella observes that the reason for Lissius’ cynicism is the fact that he “beholds” women as less than kind. She chastises him for his sexist comments saying that she hopes to live long enough to see him “waile, and weepe.” This is reminiscent of Venus’ speech a scene before, when she also tells Cupid that she would have: “all to waile, and all to weepe” (I.iv.387), meaning that all should be humbled through love. There is a clear connection between Venus and Musella because they both want the same thing; to maintain the equality of the community by encouraging love. Since Lissius disrupts this, he deserves their wrath.

Musella continues in her speech to use his reference to being tied to love, but contradicts him
by saying he cannot remain free from it. She also switches the negative connotation in which he used “tied” by stating instead that being tied to love is not an unwelcome bondage. She claims that even if love involves grief, it is still “farr sweeter” than remaining in “sleep,” or unaware of its merit. She lastly says that he cannot live free from love forever, thus addressing his individualistic attitude. Musella’s main attempt at educating Lissius to the ways of love and marriage is to promote respect.

Since this is Lissius’ first public insult of love, as his previous slander in Act I was said in a soliloquy, Musella is the first to confront him on his unfair prejudice and encourage him to respect not only women, but love. Also, with her focus on “constancy” and her prediction that he will one day feel mutual love, her words are meant to educate Lissius on the only appropriate type of love in their community; one of mutuality, constancy, and, the one he presently most offends, respect. Musella will continue to be instrumental in Lissius’ return to love and the community’s favor.

As of yet, Lissius believes his initial words directed to Cupid “I rather you shoulld miss then I shoulld sue,” have saved him from the arrow that has struck his friend Philisses. Because of his false sense of security, Lissius quite publically disrespects love, proves himself to be like the majority of men in the 17th century who considered themselves vastly superior to women, does not value constancy, and ridicules the poor Forester. Simultaneously, he places himself above love, women, and men “fond” of being “tied t’a woman’s faithless bond.” His snobbery does not go unchecked in later scenes as he soon feels the full force of the wrath of Venus and Cupid who, like Musella, are determined to one day see him “waile, and weepe” in love.
Simeana the Constant Lover versus Climeana the Mutable lover

Unlike Lissius, Simeana is not vocal about her thoughts on love in the first acts of the play for the main reason that the man she loves so openly disrespects love; his slander silences her. She is left to suffer unrequited love alone. As when Musella finally admitted her love of Philisses to Silvesta, in Act III, Scene ii, Simeana’s personal stance on love is revealed during a female discussion with Dalina, Climeana, Simeana, and Philis present. This very public, but only female scene represents the tight-knit female community in the play. These women create a safe space for the dejected Simeana to open up and share her feelings without fear of being mocked by Lissius.

Critics, such as Naomi J. Miller and Carolyn Ruth Swift, have argued that scenes such as this emphasize female “homosocial bonds” (Miller 212). Swift clarifies that “As the characters frankly reveal truths about their lives and discuss women’s roles in romance, Wroth creates a vision of women who strengthen one another and thus create love’s victory” (Swift 172). These communal scenes are indeed vastly significant in the success of “love’s victory” because, as in this case, the community members work to “strengthen” and provide council to each other.

Act III, Scene II does represent a private female moment as Dalina is the first to speak saying:

Now w’are alone let every one confess
Truly to other what our lucks have bin,
How often lik’d, and lov’d and soe express
Owr passions past […] (III.ii.125-128)
In the words “w’are alone” Dalina specifically means that they are alone from men. The only women missing from this company are Musella and Silvesta who, just two scenes prior, had their own private conversation about their luck with love and passions. Without Musella and Silvesta, who are both dominate voices in the play, some of the lesser characters, such as Philis and Clineana who were unexplainably missing from previous group scenes, receive space to voice their opinions about love.

Dalina continues the conversation by giving her own account of “passions past,” admitting to have loved and liked many a man. She is as the dramatis persona a “fickle lady” who represents inconstancy. She, as mentioned in the previous chapter, eventually chooses to give up her fickleness for monogamy at the end of the play. After Dalina’s account

Simeana takes her turn giving the exact opposite account of fickle love; constant love:

I ame the next, and have butt losses wun,

Yett still I constant was, though still rejected.

Lov’d, and nott lov’d I was, lik’d, and neglected,

Yett now some hopes remains when love thought dead

Proves like the spring’s young bud, when leavs ar fled. (III.ii.262-266)

Simeana finally provides background information about Lissius and Simeana’s relationship. According to these lines, before the play begins, Lissius would sometimes show Simeana love and would other times neglect her. His previous pessimisms about love support this because though he may enjoy the benefits of being loved by another at times, he does not want to be tied to that person. His inconstancy demonstrates Lissius’ selfishness, which by Philisses’ account of love does not indicate that his affections for Simeana have been true. Lissius has raised Simeana’s hopes, then crushed them over and over again, but as her last
lines indicate, she still holds on to hope. She, unlike her lover’s pessimism, allows the
optimism of love’s power to guide her. The key to Simeana’s optimism is constancy. She is
not deterred by Lissius’ slander and believes he can be transformed if she allows him time to
come to that decision himself. She, much like her brother, respects choice. As of yet,
Lissius’ choice has been to remain free from love and marriage; therefore, Simeana
unwearyingly remains constant and eager for him to change his mind.

Regardless of Lissius’ slander, he still receives the attentions of not only Simeana, but
Climeana. Though their names are similar, Climeana and Simeana’s accounts of love are
not—as Simeana’s love is a constant love and Climeana’s love is a mutable love. Climeana
seems one of the only characters not a native of Arcadia. When it is her turn to discuss her
passions past, she indicates she had a lover from her previous home:

For since I came I did a lover turne,

And turne I did indeed when I lov’d heere.

Since for an other I in love did burne

To whom I thought I had bin held as deere,

Butt was deceav’d. When I for him had left

My freinds and country, was of him bereft,

And all; butt that you kindly did imbrace,

And wellcome mee into this happy place. (III.ii.195-200)

Sadly, Climeana loved and burned for another, but when he did not return her affections, she
derparted. Unlike Simeana who remains constant to her lover, even when Lissius has loved
and left her time and again, Climeana simply left her birthplace as soon as she found that her
lover did not hold her as “deere” as she held him. Now, as her second line indicates, her love
has turned to another; Lissius. Significantly, as the only outsider to enter the community, Climeana makes a mention of how the community has been kind and welcoming to her. This is a clear indication of the general reciprocity of the community that would take in a dejected person, such as Climeana, and embrace her as one of their own.

Simeana is immediately offended by Climeana’s account of love, not simply because of Climeana’s interest in Lissius, but because Climeana did “burn” in love for another man before turning her attentions to Lissius. This friendly discussion becomes competitive between Simeana and Climeana because Simeana has constantly “burned” for Lissius while Climeana ran away at the first chance of scorn from her previous lover and is now overconfident in her chances of gaining Lissius’ love: “And when his eyes to love shall open bee, / I trust hee will turne pitty unto mee” (III.ii. 215-216). Katherine Larson’s essay that examines what she calls the “conversational games” and the “articulations of desire” in both Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *Love’s Victory*, provides useful insight into Simeana and Climeana’s debate. This scene is not only a private female moment, but is also one of the many games played by the community. The game, devised by Dalina, is a “game of confession” (184). Since the rule of this game is honesty, this rule validates Simeana and Climeana’s “fervent articulation of their desires and their determination actively to pursue their lover” (185). This scene presents a competition; however, as Larson clarifies, Simeana and Climeana’s argument is not improper, but truthful and abides by the rules of their established game.

Their conversation is indeed a true competition as they even have an “I love him most,” “I love him best” (III.ii.237) exchange. Simeana puts an end to the argument by saying:
Well now you hope to win
This second. Yett I, like those, loose noe time.
Butt can you think that you can this way clime
To your desires? This shows you love have tride,
And that you can both chuse, and choice devide,
Butt take your course, and win him if you can
And I’le proceed in truth as I beegan. (III.ii.240-246)

Simeana’s main argument against Climeana is that her love of Lissius cannot be stronger
than her own because Simeana’s choice to love Lissius has never “devide[d].” Furthermore,
as Simeana’s account of her relationship with Lissius has indicated, he has shown Simeana
some feelings of love in the past, so it is underhanded of Climeana to want to come between
them. Although Lissius is not constant in his attentions, he has by all indication shown only
Simeana any hint of affection. It should not be mistaken that through her lines on “choice
dvide” Simeana believes that Climeana should return to her previous home, find her old
lover, and remain constant to him though she was scorned. Simeana simply believes that
between the two, she has more right to Lissius because Lissius was her “first, and last”
(III.ii.225) choice; while he was Climeana’s “second.” Where Climeana can forget her past
lover and move on to the next, Simeana cannot. As mentioned in the previous chapter,
Simeana witnessed Philisses’ public lecture on love in Act II. Simeana has retained that
lesson and repeats part of that here when she expresses her belief that even when love is “nott
obtain[e]d” (II.i.113), a lover should remain constant. Her unfailing loyalty juxtaposed to
first Dalina’s story of inconstancy, then Climeana’s story of mutability, demonstrates that
Simeana is an ideal partner for a companionate partnership because she demonstrates the need for an unbreakable bond between man and woman in a true companionate relationship.

After this argument, comes the much contested scene about women wooing men. The issue critics have with this scene begins when Dalina advises Simeana and Climeana:

Lett [men] alone, and they will seek, and sue,
Butt yield to them and they’l with scorn pursue.
Hold a while of, they’ll kneele and follow you. (III.i.251-253)

The best explanation for this passage is provided by Julie D. Campbell. The message for women behind Dalina’s speech is that “in order for women to woo successfully, they must employ reverse psychology; that is, they must woo by seeming not to do so at all” (107). This message is clearly not far from many contemporary female opinions on the subject. However, it still hinders women from having complete agency over the situation since their agency is achieved through stealth.

The loss of agency for women when they attempt to woo men is clearly observed when this private female discussion is interrupted when Lissius walks in. Climeana does not heed Dalina’s advice and wastes no time to approach him and declare her love. His response is:

[…] Is this for a mayd
To follow, and to haunt mee thus? You blame
Mee for disdaine butt see nott your owne shame.
Fy, I doe blush for you, a woman woo?
The most unfitting’st, shamfull’st thing to doe. (III.i. 287-292)
Unlike Dalina who simply says that it is not in women’s best interest to woo a man, Lissius says that it is “unfitting” and “shameful.” In regards to both Musella’s previous decision not to pursue Philisses, and Dalina and Lissius’ words provided here against women wooing, Bennett argues that “While Wroth is unusual in portraying women as having wants of their own, she does so in order to demonstrate how they must conform to extant social codes […] to achieve their goals” (132). Likewise, McLaren believes that these scenes collectively show instances when the women are still considered “second class citizens” even in this supposed non-hierarchical community (38).

Both of these suggestions are quite negative without considering fully Wroth’s background and the cultural norms of the time. Hodgson-Wright rightly suggests that “Perhaps Wroth is drawing upon the experience of herself and many more young women at court, as the decorated performers placed before a range of single men in order to catch the eye of a potential husband” (62). As a former lady of the court, Wroth would only have experience of these indirect means women used to catch a man; either by the “reverse psychology” Campbell indicates, or “decorate” themselves and “perform” in ways that would attract the opposite sex. It is unclear if Wroth simply disapproved of women wooing men or meant to portray Musella and Simeana’s longing to express themselves “without constant and of [their] own free will” (McLaren 291) to demonstrate the ridiculousness of the social code that did not allow them to do so. Regardless, the main message to remember from both of these scenes is that unlike other performers, Musella and Simeana mutually love Philisses and Lissius not for monetary or self-gratifying reasons, but out of true love. Though these women cannot ultimately express their feelings, they do gain their choice of companions.
It must also be noted that Lissius does not lose interest in Climeana because of her wooing him; she was never his choice to begin with. In response to her declaration of love he says “Pray lett me goe, you know I can nott love” (III.ii. 283) indicating that he has told her he cannot love her before. This must have happened before the play began—meaning that when he told her this, he did not truly love anyone, even Simeana. However, this instance is different because in the preceding act to this scene his rhetoric on love indicates that his eyes are now open to love. Still in Act II, Lissius admits to Philisses that “itt is your sister who must end my care” (II.ii.285). This is in Act II before hearing Climeana’s improper declaration of love. Lissius’ first positive words about love are to admit his love of Simeana. Now that he is open to love, he thinks of no other woman but Simeana because he says only she “can end” or “ease” (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 202) away his cynicism. He indicated here that his transformation is not complete without Simeana’s loving assistance. Climeana was never a contender to receive Lissius’ mutual love. He loved Simeana all the while and merely needed to learn the value of being “tied” down and constant to love.

As with Philis and Lacon, Climeana is left without a partner. She does not receive any lines about Simeana and Lissius’ eventual reconciliation, but it can be assumed she was unhappy to learn that she lost the game. However, as Climeana shared with the other female community members, “you kindly did imbrace, / And welcome mee into this happy place” (III.ii.201); Climeana, who as an outsider has been welcomed into Arcadia and, as will be revealed in the conclusion, joins the other shepherds in the celebration and song at the end of the play. Though she did not win Lissius, she has won a supportive community, and like Philis and Lacon, she can hope for a companionate marriage in the future.
Simeana’s discourse about love demonstrates that she, like her brother, desires a companionate relationship based on constancy, respect, and mutuality. She represents all three, especially the later, showing that she is in fact another representative of an ideal companionate partner. However, as of yet, Lissius has not shown himself compatible with her desires for a relationship. Until he can change his views, though she may be constant, he is not an appropriate choice for her because he clearly does not share her preferences for a love match.

Forgiveness of Lissius’ Inconstancy

As did Musella and Philisses, Simeana and Lissius must come together and discuss their thoughts on love collectively before they can realize their now mutual love. It is significant that though Lissius vocalizes his slanderous opinions on love publically allowing Simeana to hear, neither Simeana nor Lissius have spoken directly to each other. Because of her fear of him mocking her and the fact social conventions would not allow it, Simeana hides her feelings entirely from Lissius. Through his continuous rants, Lissius seems to avoid or ignore Simeana altogether. It is not until half way through the play that Lissius’ slow education finally succeeds in re-appropriating him to love. In Act III, Lissius now seeks Simeana to share with her his submission to love’s power and reverence of reciprocal true love.

After his first declaration indicating his change of heart, officially by Act III, Scene ii, Lissius is a changed man. He even apologizes to Cupid through a song:

Love, pardon mee, I know I did amiss,

When I thee scorn’d, or thought thy blame my blis.
O, pitty mee, alas, I pitty crave.

Doe nott sett Trophes on my luckles grave.

Though I, poore slave and ignorant, did scorne

Thy blessed name, lett nott my hart bee torne

With thus much torture. O, butt looke on mee,

Take mee a faithfull servant unto thee. (III.ii.273-280)

Where he once thought himself above love saying he would have “none of this,” he now labels himself love’s “faithfull servent.” Ironically, Lissius now asks for Cupid’s help in winning Simeana because he knows that his scorn has insulted not only Cupid, but Simeana.

Unlike Climeana, Simeana does not attempt to woo Lissius. Instead, more like Musella, Simeana “places” herself in Lissius’ line of sight, not to impose her feelings on him, but to see if he will impose his on her. Her strategic planning allows for Lissius and Simeana’s first conversation of their now mutual love. After apologizing to Cupid, Lissius is ready to apologize to Simeana:

    O, Sweet Simeana, looke butt on my paine,
    I grieve, and curse my self for my disdaine,
    Now butt have pitty, love doth make me serve;
    And for your wrong, and you I will reserve
    My lyfe to pay, your love butt to deserve,
    And for your sake I doe my self preserve. (III.ii.319-324)

Lissius finally returns Simeana’s love, recognizes his wrongs, and, as with Cupid, asks for pity and forgiveness. Along with mutuality, he now promises constancy in offering to spend his “lyfe” striving to deserve her love.
Since she was so wounded by Lissius’ inconstancy to her time and again, Simeana follows Dalina’s advice and does not quickly pity his pains or accept his forgiveness:

Preserve itt nott for mee, I seeke nott nowe,
Nor can I creditt this or any vowe
Which you shall make. I was too long dispis’d
To bee deceav’d. Noe, I wilbe advis’d
By reason now, my love shall noe more blind
Mee, nor make mee beeleeve more than I find. (III.ii.325-330)

Simeana specifically reserves her forgiveness because she cannot trust him. Since she has heard his change of heart many different times in their relationship, any “vowe” he gives her now still seem like empty words. Simeana claims to be ruled by reason and though she will remain forever constant, she now demands more from Lissius than before; complete mutuality, but also constancy. The latter, being her personal best quality, is what Simeana also tries to specifically educate Lissius on to assist in his transformation.

Since reason now counsels Simeana on the ways of love, Lissius must reason with her and wear down her defenses not by questions like Musella, but with declarations of love since that is what he was incapable of doing before:

Beeleeve butt that, and I shall have the end
Of all my paine, and wishes, I pretend
A vertious love, then grant mee my desire,
Who now do wast in true, and faithfull fire.
[… ] My faith shall tell
That in true love I will all els excell,
Butt then, will you love mee as I doe you? (III.ii.331-337)

In these lines Lissius uses the word “true” to describe his love and even places “true” alongside of “faithfull” showing that he has been educated, by both Simeana and earlier Musella, on the importance of constancy. His last line explicitly says that his faith and true love signify that he will in “all els excell,” suggesting that he will be respectful of the type of love that Simeana needs; a mutual and constant love. After a few more doubting words met with his genuine new found reverence to a true love, Simeana finally gives in admitting that her love of him is also a true love: “Then bee att rest, / And of my true affection bee possest” (III.ii.343-344). Through these lines Lissius demonstrates that he has been educated on true love which is respectful, not selfish, mutual, unvarying, and is on his way of finally deserving Simeana’s unfailing constancy.

“Lissius to soone is blест”

Although Lissius and Simeana are finally reconciled with the help of many of the community members, it must not be forgotten that Venus and Cupid have a secret hand in Lissius’ rehabilitation. The entirety of their involvement in Lissius’ renewal of love will be discussed in more depth in the subsequent chapter. It was the community member’s lessons on love, Simeana’s constant love, and Cupid’s arrows that changed Lissius’ cynical heart. However, since Lissius outright offended the gods by placing himself above their supremacy, and even though he is finally pro-marriage and pro-women, Venus is not satisfied with their revenge on Lissius and instructs Cupid to be tougher on him because “Lissius to soone is blест, / And with too little paine hath gott his rest” (III.iii.357-358). Lissius’ turnaround is rather quick, and since he is the character who most offended love, he should receive the most pain.
Cupid’s more brutal attack on Lissius is to encourage Arcas to spread the rumor that Lissius did “kiss, and then embrace” (IV.i.276) Climeana so that Simeana breaks off their engagement in Act IV. Due to this separation, Lissius loses love, after just finding it, thus placing him on the same level as all of the other love-struck, forlorn characters suffering from “love’s sweet pleasing pain.”

Musella’s Final Lesson for Lissius on Love and Respect

Just like Lissius’ rehabilitation, Lissius and Simeana’s separation is a public event. In Act IV, Scene i, Rustic interrupts a private moment between Musella and Philisses, so Philisses suggests they seek the rest of their company. They instead find Lissius and Simeana who enter singing of love’s end, then quickly exiting. Philisses, Rustic, and Musella are confused by the suddenness of their separation, so Philisses tells Musella to “Learne you itt out” (IV.i.166) and Rustic says “Wee’ll leave you” (IV.i.167). It is not odd that Rustic wants to get away from this awkward situation; however, Philisses is Lissius’ closest friend, but he tells Musella to go to Lissius instead of doing so himself. It is clear that both of these men know that Musella is the best candidate to talk with Lissius, since she is known as a resolver of arguments.

As a resolver of arguments, a fierce friend, and an educator of true love, Musella is determined to “know this” (IV.i.166) and rekindle Simeana and Lissius’ love. She right away demands that Lissius explain the argument between him and Simeana:

Musella: Come Lissius, tell mee, whence proceeds this grievfe?

Discover itt, and you may find reliefe.
Lissius: No, I’le goe seeke Philisses, hee I’me sure
Will comfort mee who doth the like indure.
Yett faire Musella, do thus much for mee:
Tell fierce Simeana she hath murder’d mee.
Musella: Nay, Lissius, heare mee; tell mee ere you goe
Whatt soddaine matter moves in you this woe. (IV.i.169-176)

This dialogue completely supports Lewalski’s thesis that *Love’s Victory* “encodes an implicit feminist politics emphasizing the values of female agency, egalitarianism, female friendship, and community” (89), because Musella embraces her agency, and promotes “egalitarianism, and “community” in all of four lines. First, she insists that Lissius tell her of his “griefe.” He refuses and sticks to the convention of keeping friendship in the same gender by saying he will “goe seeke Philisses,” and that she should go talk to Simeana. In her examination of the homosocial bonds present in *Love’s Victory*, Miller argues that “[a]s the play proceeds, cross-gender friendships comes to be recognized by male characters as well as female characters as one acceptable configuration of relations between the sexes” (212). At this point in the play, Philisses has shown that he accepts this configuration as he has encouraged Musella to speak with Lissius signaling he no longer sees Lissius as a threat to their relationship. Musella has shown herself time and again to be a “friend and confidante to men and women alike” (Lewalski 99), so assisting Lissius in his time of need is not abnormal for her. Lissius is the only one resistant to the independence of women.

Musella continues to educate Lissius on respect and the value of “cross-gender friendships” by not allowing him to snub her act of friendship, but by commanding him to “heare” her and “tell” her more. She refuses to let her voice be stifled by a man. She breaks
the gender barrier that Lissius places between them and insists that he befriend her in his time of need. This shows that Musella is trying to keep the equality, especially the gender equality, within the community intact by not letting Lissius repress her right to speak. Though Lissius has learned to respect Simeana as a partner, he needs further education on respecting women in general.

Lissius shows that the defense he puts up in women’s presence is slowly being lowered when he does not protest anymore and divulges his laments. He claims he did nothing inappropriate with Climeana and his heart is solely Simeana’s. He lastly claims:

[…] Butt my hart was ever true

Since fist I vow’d, and that my death shall tell,

Which is my last hope that will please her well. (IV.i.202-204)

It is ironic that in Act I, Lissius said he would rather die than have love. He now would rather die than not have love.

Since Musella represents the model female partner in a companionate relationship, she deems it her duty to help her fellow shepherd regain his true love. After he is through bemoaning, as a good friend ready to placate Lissius and smooth over a confrontation, Musella takes charge of the situation:

Soft, I will speak with [Simeana], and know her minde,

And why on such a soddaine she’s unkind.

Then truly bring you answer what she says.

Tell then bee quiet, for itt can noe prayse

Bring to your death when you shall wayling dy,
Without soe just a cause as to know why. (IV.i.177-182)

She is quick to comfort his threat of seeking death, and promises to find out what brought on Simeana’s “soddaine” unkindness. She commands him to “bee quiet” until they “know why” Simeana recanted her love, thus pacifying him until she finds out Simeana’s unkindness so that Lissius does not harm himself. Because of Musella’s urging, he complies, and according to the scene directions, “prostrates himself, grief-stricken” as he awaits the news. Musella’s and Venus’s foreshadowing statement that Lissius will one day wail and weep finally comes to pass. It is now Musella’s job to smooth over his grief and to bring happiness once more to the changed Lissius.

**Lissius and Simeana to live as “One”**

Musella, as a devoted friend and determined to see all right again, goes to find Simeana and brings her back to see Lissius’ pathetic state. Musella not only befriends Lissius, but Simeana. Musella, from experience, councils Simeana not to believe rumors and allow her “bace jealousie” (IV.i.263) ruin her chance at happiness with Lissius. Musella also assures Simeana that Lissius is “past all bragging” (IV.i.289)—meaning his previous boast of being above love. Therefore, she advises Simeana to “Go, haste and save him” (IV.i.292).

Simeana agrees to reconcile with Lissius. Musella becomes the pacifier of their relationship and stays to guide them through their problems. It is fitting for her to be in this role since she was the one who knew this would one day happen to Lissius. Also, Musella has a firm understanding of a love that is appropriate for their community; one that is constant, mutual, and respectful.
Similar to when her brother was misled, Simeana has to apologize for her mistaken jealousy and says that she will die if it will make Lissius happy. He dissuades Simeana, understanding why she was jealous. Musella represents almost a counselor to their reconciliation by helping them see that now they are back together “All care now past; let joy in triumph sit, / This for such lovers ever is most fitt” (IV.i.315)—meaning that all past mistakes should be forgotten and only their new found mutual love should remain.

After expressing their thanks to Musella, they heed her advice declaring their love once more finally indicating that their diverse opinions of love have come together:

**Lissius:** Thou lov’st mee, ‘tis enough and now injoy

All rest, nor bring new doubts to cross owr joy.

I all forgett, and only hold thee deere,

And from thee all faults past my love doth cleere.

**Simeana:** Soe let us ever doubtles live, and love,

And noe mistrust in least sort our harts move.

**Lissius:** Noe doubt of thee shall ever stir in mine

**Simeana:** Nor breed in mee so wholly I am thine. (IV.i)

Both agree to forget “faults past,” the inconstancy and jealousy, and now live and love completely without doubt in each other. This declaration of love is almost like wedding vows promising never to be inconstant again and never doubt the other’s mutual love. Houlbrooke’s explanation of wedding vows in the 17th century strengthens the connection between the couple’s words to a marriage vow: “the exchange of marriage vows and words of mutual acceptance were the basis of the couple’s marriage partnership, which they solemnly undertook to continue through all the vicissitudes of life” (87). Lissius and
Simeana’s lines are not only “words of mutual acceptance,” but also mutual love. Their relationship that was so separate in the beginning is now a true partnership that they plan to maintain the rest of their lives. Also, now that Lissius has been tested by Simeana, Venus, and Cupid, his vows are now undoubtedly genuine proving he will never be inconstant to Simeana again.

Musella never leaves during their reconciliation. All throughout Lissius and Simeana’s relationship, Musella has been instrumental in helping them discover their mutual love: first she confronts and educates Lissius about his mistakes on love, she then brings them back together after Venus and Cupid have completely humbled Lissius to love’s power, and lastly she oversees their final reunion. In her final advice for the couple, Musella almost takes on a priestly role officiating their previous unofficial wedding vows. She says: “Live both contented and live still as one, / Never divided till your lives be done” (IV.i.347-348). Her lines are reminiscent of Matthew 19.5: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh […] So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Holy Bible: The King James Bible). Both this verse and Musella’s words mention that men and women in love should be as “one.” This is a clear connection to the values of a companionate marriage because, often connected to Christianity, the idea behind a marriage of this sorts is “the joining of two halves” or the “blending of two personalities, two psychologies” (Macfarlane 154). As Honig explains, the idea of a couple becoming “one” in a companionate relationship “implies a leveling of male and female partners indicating that they cannot be hierarchised after their union” (Honig 64-65). Similar to her relationship with Philisses, Musella councils Simeana and Lissius to have a reciprocal relationship that is not
“hierarchised” like their community. Musella provides Simeana and Lissius the knowledge on how to build their new found love on companionship and respect.

Musella continues on to describe the last component of a true love, constancy, when she ends by saying to Lissius and Simeana that they should not divide, just as the Bible says that man and woman should not “separate,” until death. Musella’s final words of wisdom for the happy couple signify that, as a representative of true love, Musella now deems Simeana and Lissius’ relationship worthy of the title of “true love.” Musella succeeds in bringing them together and leaves them happy because Lissius has truly felt “Love’s sweet pleasing pain.” Giving up his “anti-love” stance, he sees the value of constancy and has become a man who actually wants to be “tied” to his true love, Simeana. They now have the foundation of a companionate relationship in order to continue developing their new found mutual love.

These final acts, Lissius’ first reconciliation with Simeana, their devastating separation, and their second reconciliation demonstrate that Lissius has given up on half of his previous stance on love; he is no longer “anti-love.” In regards to the second half, his “anti-woman” stance, Lissius shows himself to have come full circle when he later comes to Musella’s defense against her mother after hearing of Musella and Philisses’ supposed suicide. He clearly wants to compensate for Musella’s loyal friendship to him. He addresses Musella’s mother directly, saying: “Can you endure this change, and hear us say / Your forced marriage brought her funeral day?” (V.v.118-119). He places the blame for Musella’s death all on the mother. He, as Musella did for him, tries to educate the mother in the ways of love and equality verses forced marriages and unfair social conventions. It is also ironic that Lissius adopts this role because of his early declarations against love. His individualistic attitude has been officially eradicated from his personality and he now
promotes reciprocity as he defends another community member; significantly a female community member. It is with Musella’s help that he can now claim to be an expert on love and equality.

Conclusion

After Lissius’ slow, but steady education of love and community, he has finally proven himself to be an ideal partner for a companionate marriage and an ideal member of the community. His discourse on individualism has now been exchanged for one of reciprocity as he sees the benefit of mutual, constant love, respecting women, and becoming a valued community member. He no longer represents a 17th century man wanting separate spaces for men and women, as he now endorses integration and reciprocity. He also now wants to be tied to Simeana who in her constancy has proven time and again that she is his perfect match. Their relationship is no longer flawed as they end up with a companionate relationship founded on genuine reciprocity, constancy, and respect. In addition, their true love has shown Climeana the value of constant, mutual love. As the next chapter will reveal, Venus and Cupid were deeply involved in bringing Lissius and Simeana together. Though a long and painful process, because of divine intervention and mortal friendship, Lissius and Simeana’s companionship now matches that of Musella and Philisses’ model of a true love.
Chapter 3: Venus and Cupid—The First Educators of Reciprocal Love and Community

Although by the end of *Love’s Victory* the community of shepherds have worked together to reconcile divided couples and educate each other on the ways of love and community, they had to be first persuaded to do so by divine assistance. That assistance comes from the play’s two immortal characters: Venus and Cupid. The actual beginning of the play opens with Venus voicing her displeasure at the shepherds of Arcadia who no longer respect the power of love. Venus’ words reveal that before the play begins, the shepherds are not grateful for the benefits of love and community that they will grow to appreciate during the play. Therefore, indirectly, the first educators of reciprocal love, respect, and valuing the community are Venus and Cupid.

This education comes in the form of Venus’s plan, “love’s victory”—the notion so central to the play that, when accomplished, it officially creates the shepherd’s community into an Erotopian society. Venus has called on her son Cupid to partner with her as divine representatives of love and to regain the shepherds’ respect of love by use of his legendary arrows. Her plan comes in two waves. The first wave is for Cupid to use his arrows to cause “all to waile, and all to weepe” (I.iv.387) in the agony of “Love’s sweet pleasing pain” (III.iii.24). The second wave is her moment to descend from the heavens as an almost *deus ex machina* figure to restore harmony and encourage the community to “bee the treasures of love’s lasting glory” (V.vii.579). It should not be misunderstood that Venus and Cupid represent a totally controlling force that turns the shepherds into nothing more than puppets surrendering to their awesome power. Their role is to equalize the community of shepherds so that no individual feels superior to love or his/her fellow shepherds. Together Venus and
Cupid provide balance to the community so that the community can then be empowered by both reciprocity and the power of love.

Venus is overseer of “love’s victory,” and through that responsibility she is presented as both a divine ruler and maternal figure. As a divine ruler she is concerned about regaining her lost supremacy over the mortals. As a maternal figure, she instructs her son on how to help her regain the family sovereignty. However, I argue that through these roles another image of Venus surfaces—the image of Venus as teacher. As teacher, she becomes a facilitator of knowledge that works, on so many levels, to nurture reciprocity and respect.

First, for “love’s victory” to succeed, Venus and Cupid must unite their forces to work as equal partners. For that to happen, Venus must first teach Cupid how to assert his own supremacy so he can effectively use his arrows to recover their authority over the shepherds and level out the hierarchies in the community through love’s power. As he learns and maintains his lessons from his teacher/mother, his role advances from student to partner, thus evolving their relationship into its own sort of divine partnership. In this play of non-hierarchical communities, the divine world and the mortal world, there is still the traditional hierarchy of gods over mortals. This is the only appropriate hierarchy in the play.

Significantly, although there are two separate communities, within each community there are no hierarchies.

Second, the aim of “love’s victory” is to teach the shepherds a lesson on love. Since Cupid’s part in the plan is to humble the shepherds since he has use of the arrows, Venus’ role is to enter the scene as educator of love. Indirectly, Venus and Cupid have both been encouraging love and reciprocity all throughout the play in the relationships detailed in earlier chapters. However, at the end of the play, when Venus ascends from the heavens to
converse in person with the entire community of shepherds, she directly encourages them all to find joy in true love. The type of true love she promotes is understood when she publically identifies Musella and Philisses’ relationship as the model of “true love” since they “truly would for true love’s sake have dy’d” (V.vii.490). Identifying Musella and Philisses’ love as the ideal type of true love, Venus herself indicates that a true love is one founded on reciprocity, constancy, and respect. Venus’ words to Musella and Philisses also show that she is a proponent of companionate marriages over arranged marriages because Venus saves Musella and Philisses from death. She does so to teach the community the lesson that it should be divine love that reigns over a marriage, not earthly riches. Finally, Venus encourages the shepherds to revere the type of companionate love that Musella and Philisses have modeled for them because it has power to sustain the shepherds’ restored fellowship.

Venus and Cupid’s roles in the drama dominate the scholarship on Love’s Victory since they represent a hierarchy as divine rulers over the mortal shepherds. This hierarchy receives a great deal of critical attention without considering what Venus and Cupid do to promote community and social equality in the mortal realm. Moreover, with the current criticism’s focus on female agency, in regards to Venus and Cupid’s function in the play, Cupid’s role is often deemphasized to then emphasize Venus’ supremacy. Because of her positions as female sovereign and mother-figure, Venus’ character has received a great deal of critical attention. Scholars such as Barbara Lewalski focus on how Venus “masterminds the entire enterprise” (Lewalski 293). By labeling her “mastermind,” Cupid becomes nothing more than her servant to “foment trials and troubles” (Lewalski 96). Similarly, Margaret Anne McLaren goes as far as to say that Venus specifically “serves Lady Wroth as an
analogue of female power” (285). Naomi J. Miller particularly concentrates on Venus as a maternal figure contending that Wroth atypically presents motherhood as a role of authority not one of weakness since Venus has authority over first her son and then her subjects “who are cast in a child-like relation to her” (Miller 95). On the other side of this argument are Stephanie Hodgson-Wright and Alexandra G. Bennett who question Venus’ ultimate autonomy saying that Cupid eventually usurps Venus’ power near the end of the play (Hodgson-Wright 64) making Venus appear as “a supplicant to her powerful infant” (Bennett 127). These critics actually emphasize Cupid’s role in order to read his character as a dominating male force.

Viewing Venus and Cupid’s relationship as first a teacher/student relationship that turns into an equal partnership, revises how their roles should be interpreted because their alliance proves that neither Venus nor Cupid are solely all-powerful or subservient. Instead, their relationship can be viewed as a model of the ideal type of community they are attempting to teach the mortals; one of mutual exchange of respect, love, and reciprocity. In large part, scholars disagree on the extent of Venus’ power. Some say Venus is all-powerful while Cupid is nothing but her servant thereby making “love’s victory” her victory. Others say it is Cupid who has complete authority, and while he does share some of his glory with Venus, ultimately the happy ending of the play is his victory. As I will argue, the way in which to join these diverse views is to see Venus and Cupid’s relationship as a divine community since they actively work together to bring about the successful conclusion so they again can again share in their “ancient glory” (I.i.33).

Venus: Deity, Mother, Teacher

Venus’ roles as deity, mother, and teacher together assist Venus in her objective of fostering reciprocity and love between not only the mortal realm, but also the divine realm. In the first three scenes in which Venus and Cupid appear they are outside the mortal realm. Therefore, her first lessons are for her son only as she begins teaching him techniques of asserting his own supremacy so he can humble the shepherds to the power of love. She has two lessons for him: 1. For love to reign over the community, every shepherd, not just a few, must revere the power of love or discord among the shepherds will persist; 2. Those who have most offended the gods, deserve the most punishment. If the offender receives happiness quickly after punishment, Venus and Cupid’s overall lessons on reciprocal love and community will too soon be forgotten.

As the presiding deity over Arcadia, Venus reigns over the mortals making it her duty to enforce her supremacy and maintain order in the mortal realm. In accepting her role as divine maintainer of the peace, Venus has sent for the assistance of her son Cupid in order to achieve respect from the mortals by use of his arrows. His arrows are essential to her plan because through the chaos they create, Venus will have the opportunity to demonstrate her overwhelming supremacy by coming in to set all right. Though this plan strives to regain her own authority over the shepherds, her opening lines in Act I, Scene i specify that Venus is not merely concentrating on merely her own sovereignty, but rather acknowledging Cupid’s as well:

Cupid, me thinks wee have too long bin still
And that thes people growe to scorne owr will.
Mercy to those ungratefull breeds neglect,
Then lett us grewe owr greatnes to respect.

Make them acknowledg that owr heav’ny power

Can nott theyr strength butt even themselves devoure. (I.i.1-6)

Venus does not rule alone as sole image of divine love as she shares this role with her son. Therefore, his authority over the scornful shepherds is as much at jeopardy as her authority, which is apparently why, along with her need for his arrows, Venus has sent for him. Even she does not focus solely on herself saying “wee” and “owr will.” Though it is possible that as a goddess Venus’ use of “we” in these lines is used in the royal we, it is safe to say that since she says “me” in her very first line and continues to use first person throughout the play even when she ascends from the heavens to converse with the mortals, her use of “we” includes Cupid. “We” is significant because even within the first few lines of the play through her rhetoric, Venus unites herself with her son.

Scholars have yet to read these lines as Venus creating her shared supremacy with her son, but instead they read them as evidence of Venus’ dominant authoritative role. As a female ruler, Venus has been often connected by scholars to previously reigning monarchs that Wroth would have been familiar with, specifically Queen Elizabeth. One such critic, McLaren, suggests that the portrayal of Venus as an “outsider solicited to resolve difficulties within the drama” could be an allusion to the portrayal of Queen Elizabeth in Sir Philip Sidney’s one act play _The Lady of May_. Sidney’s Queen Elizabeth is “all-powerful” which is how McLaren sees Venus, thereby proposing that Wroth’s “choice of Venus as the presiding genius in her play can be construed as a delicate compliment to the part played by Elizabeth in Sidney’s work” (McLaren 285). Miller contradicts McLaren’s comparison by pointing out that “[a]lthough it is certainly true that the action of both plays is subject to the influence of
female authority, in Sidney’s play the queen can only sit and observe and pass judgment […] while in Wroth’s play the goddess takes an active part in the affairs of the lovers” (131).

Miller is correct to argue that Wroth’s Venus deviates from the comparison of Sidney’s Queen Elizabeth since Venus has even more agency and supremacy as she is not simply an supervisor—she also has an active role in the events that transpire in the play. Venus’ role further differs from the portrayal of Queen Elizabeth in one more way that neither critic notes—Venus does not rule alone as sole divine representative of love but shares her authority with the god of love; Cupid.

Their joint authority is further established as her opening speech continues. Her focus shifts from their will to Cupid’s will with no mention of herself:

Thou shalt discern theyr harts, and make them know
That humble homage unto thee they owe.
Take thou the shaft which headed is with steele
And make them bowe whose thoughts did lately reele […]
Wound them butt kill them nott, so may they live
To honor thee, and thankfullnes to give.
Shun noe great cross which may theyr crosses breed
Butt yett lett blest injoying them succeed.
Griefe is sufficient to declare thy might,
And in thy mercy glory will shine bright. (I.i.11-22)

None of the pronouns used in these lines are “we” or “owr,” but “thee” and “thou.” Her language indicates that she has not enlisted Cupid as her errand-boy to “foment trials and troubles,” but has enlisted him to work alongside her in making the shepherds realize their
mistakes about love. Although she wants her own sovereignty returned to her, she also wants the shepherds to give “humble homage” to Cupid. Her plan is created for the purpose that together they will make the shepherds give “humble homage,” “honor,” and “thankfulness” to love, and to both Venus and Cupid when they together restore peace and love in the community. This plan is not one-sided; it is not an order he must obey. “Love’s victory” is a give-and-take arrangement where Cupid provides his needed service as arrow bearer but gains “humble homage” and “honor” from the mortals living in Arcadia.

Though they are to be partners in “love’s victory,” Venus’ lines are in fact instructions for Cupid on the way of achieving victory. Venus advises Cupid to first show no mercy with his arrows so that in their grief the shepherds will pay him “humble homage.” In this first step he should not kill them because his second step is then to show mercy so that they will then be “thankful” for Cupid’s service to them. “Love’s victory” succeeds in not only recovering Venus’ sovereignty but also succeeds in teaching Cupid the traditional way for a god to rule over the mortals: first be cruel, next give mercy, then “glory will shine bright.” As the play continues, Venus, resembling a devoted teacher, oversees Cupid’s progress to make sure he holds to her formula for success. As the rest of their discussions will indicate, her instructions for Cupid are not intended to show him ways of recovering power over the mortals for power’s sake, but are meant to show him the proper techniques for a god to tutor his subjects on the ways of love which then works to educate them on fostering community.

In an equal partnership, both partners must be in accord. Cupid’s response shows that he is more than willing to join her in her cause: “This will I doe, your will and minde to serve, / And to your triumph will thes rites preserve” (I.i.31-32). Cupid clearly approves of
Venus’ plan as he agrees to “serve” her “will” and “mind,” and even says that, when met with victory, she alone will receive the full triumph. The pronouns he uses after agreeing to her plan are “your;” “your will,” and “your triumph.” With his focus on her authority, his words could be regarded as indication of his servitude to his mother’s ultimate control over him. However, Venus’ response diffuses his stratified view. Though Venus seems pleased by his respectful response, immediately after Cupid’s lines, she says “Then shall wee have againe owr ancient glory” (I.i.33). In this line she has returned to using “wee” and “owr.” Venus rejects Cupid’s intent to award her all of the glory, instead including Cupid in their equal triumph. Therefore, this is another teachable moment between mother and son where she tries to get him to see their relationship as a partnership.

Two contrary ways of analyzing this opening scene have been suggested by current scholars on the play without considering Venus and Cupid’s role as one of mutual exchange between mother/teacher and son/pupil. First, in her chapter “Sovereign Subject,” Miller views these lines as nothing more than Venus expressing her “concern with maintaining her sovereignty” (Miller 130) with no mention of the fact that Venus is also concerned about maintaining Cupid’s sovereignty. Also, in her focus on pointing out the “multiplicity of female voices” in the play, Miller argues that oftentimes these female voices take over the discourses of men (131) including when Cupid takes instructions from Venus thereby downgrading Cupid’s role as Venus’ servant. Miller’s suggestion does not hold to the idea that Wroth is representing an egalitarian community. Since Cupid has such a central role in successfully carrying out the victory, it cannot be concluded that Venus alone is responsible for the successful conclusion, and it is unfair to consider “love’s victory” solely her triumph.
Though she wants to reclaim her own sovereignty, she wants Cupid to do so as well, with the intention that they can then share in the glory once restored to their former greatness.

In response to critics such as Miller who focus on Venus’ sovereignty, Bennett proposes an alternative view. As mentioned, Bennett does not accept what the majority of critics have said about the prevalence of female agency in the play. Hence, in regards to Venus, Bennett argues that “[t]hough Venus wishes to assert the supremacy of love, she does not, or cannot, directly demonstrate her power-rather, she urges her son […] to make the mortals his own, so that ultimately he will be praised and honoured. It appears that she cannot effect her desires directly, but must employ Cupid as her executor” (126). Unlike Miller who applauds Wroth’s use of an omniscient female sovereign, Bennett instead argues that Wroth continues to uphold traditional gender roles presenting the male god Cupid as presiding deity over the goddess since Venus cannot demonstrate her own power thereby requiring male help. Although Bennett is right in drawing attention to Cupid’s part in executing “love’s victory,” she neglects to mention that Venus is actively involved in overseeing Cupid’s progress and assists Cupid in affecting the victory at the end of the play.

Unquestionably, Cupid and Venus have equally active roles in carrying out Venus’ initial plan. In fact, for her plan to work, both gods need each other’s assistance: Venus needs Cupid’s arrows, and apparent through their discourse, Cupid needs her advice on how to assert his own power. As I will show, though Venus and Cupid are to be seen as rulers, as they are gods, and are outside the mortal sphere, they form their own sort of divine community based around mutual exchange of ideas, support, and respect.
**First Lesson: “Cupid can cruell bee as well as kind”**

Their first discussion in Act I, Scene i, happens before any action has taken place. As Cupid begins to carry out their plan, Venus occasionally assesses his progress. In the first assessment, since Cupid has not accomplished much, Venus gives him his first lesson: 1. For love to govern the community, every shepherd must respect love’s power or their community will never be a loving, reciprocal community. It is Cupid’s task to make them see this by using his arrows. In this lesson, Venus focuses on instructing Cupid how to impose egalitarianism in the community: hitting each shepherd equally so they equally feel “Love’s sweet pleasing pain.” This is necessary so that when he has succeeded, she can then teach the mortals about the joys of love and harmonious community.

Settling into their roles as teacher and pupil, in the rest of the scenes in which Venus and Cupid appear, Venus assesses his progress seeing if they are close to “victory.” The first assessment is observed in Act I, Scene iv when they appear in the clouds, according to scene directions, as they discuss Cupid’s handiwork on the love-struck shepherds below. At this point he has done little to display his power as he has only spread the rumor that Musella is in love with Lissius causing Philisses to suffer in jealousy. Venus is not impressed with Cupid’s progress:

> Fy, this is nothing, what? Is this your care?
> That among ten the hauflf of them you spare.
> I would have all to waile, and all to weepe.
> Will you att such a time as this goe sleepe?
> Awake your forces and make Lissius finde

Cupid can cruell bee as well as kind.
Shall hee goe scorning thee, and all thy traine?
And pleasure take hee can thy force disdaine,
Strike him, and tell him thou his lord wilt prove,
And hee a vassell unto mighty love,
And all the rest that scorners bee of thee,
Make with theyr griefe, or thy might feelers bee. (I.iv.385-396)

Venus rejects Cupid’s kindness in sparing a few of the shepherds, specifically Lissius, who at this point in the play, has not paid the “humble homage” to Cupid or love that Venus demands from every shepherd. As the previous chapter explained, Lissius, a few scenes prior to this scene, has greatly offended Venus and Cupid by saying “Love, by your favor, I will none of you” (I.ii.107), indicating that he deems himself superior to love and Cupid. Lissius’ stratified language deserves their wrath because for “love’s victory” to be a success, all of the shepherds must “waile” and “weepe” for them to be truly deferential to the power of love. Her line “Cupid can cruell bee as well as kind” is a reference to their plan: Venus instructs Cupid to hit every shepherd equally so that when they are restored to love, they will thank Cupid for his kindness. Venus’ words do not seem to be said in anger, but in disappointment since Cupid has only partially shown his full power. She expects more from her son’s abilities and prompts him to awaken his forces entirely so that every shepherd, specifically Lissius, acknowledges that Cupid is lord. Also, because Cupid has not completed his instructions, as teacher, Venus corrects his work explaining how he can do better.

Josephine A. Roberts provides an alternative image of this scene. In reference to Venus’ line, “Fy, this is nothing, what? Is this your care?,” she says that Wroth “subtly
reveals the baser side of Venus at the end of Act I, when she leans out of the clouds and like a fishwife bellows at her son” (310). Though a humorous image of Venus as a “fishwife,” Roberts is incorrect about how this scene would be staged. The scene directions clearly state, “Venus, and Cupid apeering in the clowds.” Venus is not “bellowing” down at Cupid, they are conversing side by side. Roberts’ image places Venus above Cupid demonstrating a difference in rank instead of seeing them as level, not only in rank but where they are literally standing. Roberts goes on to say that, in regards to Venus’ desire for Lissius to “waile” and “weep,” “Wroth thus hints that the process of securing supremacy comes only at a human price” (310). This is also an erroneous claim as the shepherds end up joyful and thankful for Venus and Cupid’s interference in their lives. Though a painful process, “love’s victory” and all of the “wailing” and “weeping” it brings to the shepherds is meant to better the community by eradicating harmful hierarchies and show them the bliss of true love.

The true evidence of Venus and Cupid’s reciprocal, respectful relationship is apparent through their dialogues. Cupid’s response to her constructive criticism is not words of obedience by a servant to a master or words of anger by a powerful male heir at the outspokenness of his supplicant mother, but as an apt pupil agreeing with her words of wisdom:

‘Tis true that Lissius, and some others yett
Ar free and lively; butt they shalbee mett
With care sufficient […]
They shall both cry, and sigh, and wayle, and weepe,
And for owr mercy shall most humbly creepe.
Love hath most glory when as greatest sprites
Hee downward throwse unto his owne delights

Then take noe care love’s victory shall shine,

Whenas your honor shalbee raysed by mine (I.iv.397-405)

By repeating her words “wayle” and “weepe,” he promises to make all wail and all weep in love thus agreeing with her critique. He, like his mother/teacher, exudes confidence in his abilities to complete the task at hand, which guarantees the conquest of “love’s victory.” The last words of his speech are the most significant, as he says that Venus’ “honor shalbee raysed” not below or above but “by” his own honor proving their equal victory. There is a drastic shift here in Cupid’s language as he has gone from telling Venus “your will and minde to serve, / And to your triumph will thes rites preserve” (I.i.31-32), to a more reciprocal approach to their expected triumph, saying it will be a equal triumph. Cupid appears to have learned his lesson from his previous immature, stratified comment to now use similar language as his mother that demonstrates their reciprocal, respectful relationship.

Like her respectful son, Venus does not respond to Cupid’s reply to her criticism as a master to a servant. Though her previous words to Cupid were of disappointment, her response to Cupid’s promise of their equal honor is quite significant: “Thanks, Cupid” (I.iv.411). Her gratitude for Cupid’s words and his assistance to her cause shows that she is not a master who sees herself so far above her servant to show appreciation. However, as a teacher, she provides a few more words of wisdom as Cupid continues on his quest:

Thanks, Cupid, if thou doe parforme thine othe

As needs you must for gods must want noe trothe.

Lett mortalls never think itt od, or vaine

To hear that love can in all speritts raine.
Princes ar nott exempted from owr mights,

Much less showld sheaphers scorne us and owr rights,

Though they as well can love, and like affect,

They must nott therfor owr commands neglect. (I.iv.411-418).

Through these lines Venus teaches Cupid why the gods, such as her and Cupid, must not allow their subjects to neglect divine command. If mortals would begin to ignore the power of the gods, divine rule will be compromised and chaos will ensue, which is what is indeed happening in Arcadia. When it comes to divine rule every mortal, be it a prince or a shepherd, is equally “nott exempted” from the gods’ power. Since she is exclusively referring to “owr mights” and “owr rights,” in relation to their shared power, she specifically means that when it comes to love, princes and shepherds are equally affected by its power. In these lines, Venus teaches Cupid that in love, there are no hierarchies.

Further evidence of Venus and Cupid acting to level the hierarchies can be observed in juxtaposing Cupid’s function in Love’s Victory to his function in Urania. As Roberts briefly notes in her comparison of Love’s Victory to Wroth’s Urania: “the characters of the prose fiction frequently blame Cupid for their misery” (310). This is true in Urania when, mirroring Venus’ words provided above, Lemnia says “now doe I see that Cupid can use his slights and conquering hand on Princes as well as on us” (2.50). The connection between Venus and Lemnia’s lines show that “Wroth’s narrator frequently observes that even kings and queens fall under love’s command. The power of love to subjugate all is a source of fascination to Wroth, for she observes again and again how figures of authority are reduced in status to the level of their own servants” (Roberts 310). Cupid is able to show over and over that, as Lindamira from Wroth’s Urania rightly states, “in Love’s Court all are fellow-
subjects” (500). These same images are present in Love’s Victory as Venus and Cupid try to make the entire community “fellow-subjects” in love.

Likewise, Venus and Cupid are also “fellow-subjects” in their scheme to assert love’s supremacy. To attest that he has indeed heard his lesson and plans on taking her advice, Cupid first guarantees that he will not allow the shepherds to neglect their commands, and then recites her plan for success once more:

And arrows heere I have of purpose fram’d
Which as theyr qualities soe ar they nam’d,
Love, jealousy, malice, feare, and mistrust.
Yett all thes shall att last incounter just,
Harme shalbe non yet all shall harme endure,
For some small season then of joye bee sure.
Like you this, mother? (I.iv.419-428)

By listing all of the emotions that he will inflict on the shepherds: “Love, jealousy, malice, feare, and mistrust,” he guarantees the first part of their plan: to be cruel. However, the second part of the plan is not forgotten in that no real harm will come to the shepherds so that then “joye [will] bee sure.” As a pupil and a son seeking approval from his teacher/mother he then asks “Like you this, mother?” inquiring if his recital of her instructions was correct. Without a line break signaling Venus’ immediate satisfaction, the scene ends with the approval Cupid sought: “Son, I like this well / And faile nott now in least part of thy spell” (I.iv.427-428). Cupid has received the encouragement and instructions needed to improve his tactic of being cruel to be kind.
Second Lesson: “easy wining breeds [...] more neglect”

Much like Act I, Scene vi, in Act III, Scene iii Venus again assesses Cupid’s progress after he has caused a bit more pain and suffering among the shepherds. After Cupid has caused Lissius to change his “anti-love” stance to one in support of a reciprocal love, Lissius and Simeana are united. Cupid asks Venus to evaluate his new victory. Because Lissius has barely felt love’s pain before he feels love’s joy, Venus has another lesson to teach Cupid: those who most offend love, such as Lissius, ought to have the most punishment. The intent of this lesson is to make sure that Lissius will not return to his old ways. As observed in the previous chapter, Lissius has been inconstant in his affections to Simeana. Venus is not convinced that he has truly changed his ways. As the shepherd who most slandered love and his fellow shepherds, Lissius needs the most instruction on the power of love and fellowship.

This second assessment of Cupid’s progress occurs right after Lissius begs for and receives forgiveness from Simeana for his inconstancy. Since Scene iii does not receive scene directions, it is unclear if Venus and Cupid are in the clouds looking down upon Lissius and Simeana’s reconcile or surveying the scene a ways off, hidden from the mortals. Since his last evaluation was not met with satisfaction, Cupid begins their conversation seeking approval from his mother/teacher:

Is nott this pretty? Who doth free remaine
Of all this flock that waits nott in owr traine?
Will you have yet more sorrow? Yett more woe?
Shall I an other bitter arrow throwe?
Speak, if you will, my hand now knows the way
To make all harts your sacred power obay. (III.iii.349-354)
He hopes this romantic scene that proves Lissius’ rehabilitation to love will be marked a “pretty scene” by his teacher. Cupid is proud of his progress but is apprehensive about how his mother will rate this improvement: exemplary, sufficient, or “nothing” as before, so he quickly says that if it is one of the latter scores, he will be more than happy to continue bettering his performance.

Since Cupid is adamant about improving and has indeed advanced their success, Venus’ next tactic to teach Cupid how to continue enhancing his performance is to give a quick compliment about his “pretty” work then provide more instructions:

‘Tis pretty, butt ‘tis nott enough; some are
To slightly wounded, they had greater share
In scorning us. Lissius to soone is blest,
And with too little paine hath got his rest.
Scarce had hee learn’d to sigh befor hee gain’d,
Nor shed a teare, ‘ere hee his hopes obtain’d.
This easy wining breeds us more neglect,
Without much paine, few doe lou’s joys respect.
Then are they sweetest purchas’d with felt griefe
To floods of woe sweet looks gives full reliefe. […]
Strike then to favor him, and lett him gaine
His love, and blis by Love’s sweet pleasing paine. (III.iii.355-372)

Venus does assure Cupid that he is making progress, but suggests ways of making his progress even better. Since Lissius is the one publically to scorn love and their power, he should receive the blunt of their wrath. In this lecture, Venus teaches Cupid that if an
offender of love wins back love’s favor too easily after punishment, the lesson behind the punishment might not be remembered and might lead to neglect again. Though he felt a twinge of grief after Simeana’s initial rejection of his plea for forgiveness, Lissius has now won her back rather quickly. His turnabout was so sudden that Lissius did not even shed a “teare.” As Venus has said before, the true triumph of “love’s victory” will come when all have equally wailed and wept. Lissius has yet to weep and has too slightly felt “Love’s sweet pleasing paine;” therefore, Lissius deserves a higher dose of that pain.

This lesson is significant because it not only emphasizes Venus’ overall focus on equalizing the community, but seems to stress the importance of companionate relationships. Indeed, Lissius is reconciled with Simeana; however, Venus does not seem convinced he will remain constant to her if Venus and Cupid do not cause him to realize what a special love he has with Simeana. Venus’ lesson here is very much like the idea that “one does not know what they have until they have lost it.” Lissius has never lost Simeana because of her relentless loyalty to him, so he does not appreciate what he has. Venus instructs Cupid to make Lissius realize this by finding a way to take Simeana away from him. Lissius has now seen the benefit of a companionship that is “the joining of two halves” (Macfarlane 154), so when his half is taken away from him, he will truly understand why he needs love.

As Cupid responded to Venus criticism previously, he first agrees with her logic then promises to impress her in their next assessment with his new plan for Lissius:

That shalbee dunn, nor had hee this delight
Beestow’d butt for this greater harme, and spite,
You shall beefor this Act bee ended see
Hee doth sufficiently taste miserie,
‘Tis far more griefe from joye to bee done throwne,

Then joy to bee advanc’d to pleasur’s throuene. (III.iii.373-378)

His lines mirror a student’s comments to a teacher after receiving a low mark; he promises to do better as soon as possible. Since Venus wants Lissius to learn the value of love by having him lose it, Cupid delights her with promises of “miserie” and “griefe.” His new plan is met with approval by his teacher as she replies: “Lett mee see that, and I contended ame” (III.iii.380), showing her approval of his plan.

Cupid’s “conquest is sufficient”

By Act VI, Musella and Philisses are united and Lissius and Simeana have been brought together, torn apart, and reconciled. Venus’ lesson for specifically Lissius has been taught and learned by him. Lissius’ stratified views have been erased, proving that Cupid followed her instructions and completed his assignment from the last assessment. Venus, as she said, is “contented” by Act VI, Scene ii.

Venus is indeed content with their revenge on Lissius, so much so that she considers herself completely satisfied with Cupid’s success in assuring that all of the mortals suffered from “Love’s sweet pleasing pain:” “Now have thy torments long enough endur’d, / And of thy force they are enough assur’d” (IV.ii.448-449). As promised, Cupid succeeds in causing Lissius to wail and weep as Simeana breaks off their engagement since she is told that Lissius was unfaithful to her. Obviously a misunderstanding arranged by Cupid, they are brought back together and again are happy. Because Venus believes that, at this point, Cupid’s “conquest is sufficient” (IV.ii.450) since the main slanderer of love has been taught his lesson, she tells Cupid that he can now “slacken then [his] hate” (IV.ii.453).
Significantly, she does not grade their victory at this point as exemplary, but “sufficient,” indicating that more could be done to encourage love and reciprocity but Cupid’s progress is adequate for now.

As with the traditional hierarchical relationship between teacher and apprentice, when the apprentice receives all of the knowledge the teacher can provide, the hierarchy is exchanged for a relationship of equals. Instead of saying “your will and minde to serve” as he has previously, Cupid has sufficiently learned Venus’ lessons and sees that their victory is not assured:

I mean to save them butt some yett must try

More paine, ere they theyr blessings may come ny.

Butt in the end most shalbee well againe,

And sweetest is that love obtain’d with paine. (IV.ii.461-464).

Instead of agreeing with her, he says that he does mean to “slaken” his hate, but he has more pain to cause. This does not, in all actuality, go against her lessons. Though she deems his torments sufficient at this time, Venus has previously asked him to make sure that “all wail and weep” which Cupid himself has taken to heart through his first two lessons. If the play were to end here, their triumph would not be complete because all do not revere the power of love: Rustic has not learned the ways of love and community, Arcas has not been punished, and Musella’s mother has not been taught the harms of arranged marriage implying that Musella is still at risk of being forced to marry Rustic. Cupid desires to be thorough in his mission. This is the moment Venus has been leading up to in their training by having him take some authority, not just over the shepherds, but over the plan; thus taking the reins as an
equal partner. Cupid’s decision to cause more pain instead of providing premature mercy follows their initial plan more closely than her hasty assessment.

This shift in their positions receives a great deal of critique by scholars questioning Venus’ power. Instead of seeing this as a discourse between equal partners, Bennett argues that Cupid “wrestle[s] command from his mother in a simultaneous enforcement of gender decorum and reversal of familial order” (127). She does say that Venus does regain some agency through the happy conclusion; however, since she had to enlist Cupid’s help to begin with and he “wrestles” all command from her eventually, Venus barely shows herself to hold any power throughout the play. Hodgson-Wright adds that when “Cupid’s power apparently takes over from Venus’s” it “threatens to turn the play into a tragedy” (64). These critics view Venus and Cupid’s relationship as a constant competition for power.

Critics championing for Venus’ agency argue that while Cupid may seem to take over, Venus ultimately holds all of the power because where Cupid would turn the play into a tragedy, she allows it to turn comic by coming in as a *deus ex machina* figure in the end of the play to set all right, thereby making “‘love’s victory’ a triumph of feminine authority” (Miller 132). Critics such as Miller argue that Cupid’s final acts of cruelty are tyrannical referring to the priests’ song provided after Cupid’s declaration to cause more pain:

> Love, thy powerfull hand withdraw,

> All doe yield unto thy lawe,

> Rebels now thy subjects bee,

> Bound they ar who late were free.

> Most confess thy powre, and might,

> All harts yield unto thy right,
Thoughts derected ar by thee,
Soules doe strive thy joys to see.
Pitty then, and mercy give
To those harts wher you doe live,
They your Images doe prove,
In them may you see great love.
They your Mirrors, you theyr eyes,
By which they true love doe spy;
Ease awhile theyr cruell smarts,
And Behold humble harts.
Greater glory ‘tis to save,
When that you the conquest have,
Then with tiranny to press,
Which still makes the honor less.
Gods doe Princes’ harts derect,
Then to thes have some respect. (Iv.ii.465-486)

The best explanation given for this song is provided by Hodgson-Wright when she explains that the song delineates “where beneficent rule ends and tyranny begins” (Hodgson-Wright 64). The priests side with Venus in that Cupid’s victory is secured because “All doe yield unto [his] lawe.” If Cupid refuses to withdrawal his “powerfull hand,” his authority will be categorized as “tiranny,” which will then take away his “honor” as a kind and just ruler. According to these critics agreeing with the priests’ song, Cupid’s last acts are borderline
tyranny; therefore, it is the benevolent Venus who must come in at the end of the play to clean up Cupid’s mess.

Though the priests’ song is negative towards Cupid’s decision to continue wreaking havoc, I argue that there are two possibilities to consider. First, the priests are wrong. They claim that “Rebels now [Cupid’s] subjects bee” but then contradict themselves two lines later saying “Most confess thy powre, and might, / All harts yield unto thy right.” There seems to be some uncertainty among the priests about the amount of shepherds who truly revere the power of love since they first say that “most confess” love’s power but then say “All harts yield unto thy right.” In fact, their first lines say that all of the shepherds who were rebels are now Cupid’s subjects. However, though this may be true for Lissius, there are three other rebels of love who are not in any way Cupid’s subjects: Rustic, Musella’s mother, and Arcas. Cupid has yet to deviate from the plan or become tyrannical because once he succeeds in thoroughly completing his mission, he says that he “means to save them.” He is not a dictator planning on leaving his subjects wallowing in misery, but intends to provide harmony to the community once all threats against love are eradicated, such as Rustic and Musella’s mother’s preparation for Musella’s arranged marriage and Arcas’ villainy.

The second and more important factor to consider is that Venus does not contradict Cupid. Again, the scholars argue ways around this saying that she does not contradict him because he has usurped her power, challenging the critics who agree that Venus is Wroth’s “analogue of female power” (McLaren 285). However, I propose that her silence after Cupid’s decision is not because she is powerless to oppose his choice, but simply that she agrees with his logic. By saying “no,” Cupid achieves their victory since he is thorough in causing all of the shepherds to wail and weep in love. As an analysis of the last act will
show, Cupid’s final acts of cruelty allows for a more triumphant victory, complete with a grand celebration for Venus in her temple with her now humble subjects, as both Venus and Cupid are returned to their “ancient glory.”

*Final Act: “the Triumph of love’s victory”*

Cupid’s controversial final acts of cruelty consist of him encouraging the villain Arcas to spread the rumor that Musella has been having inappropriate relations with Philisses, causing her mother to move up Musella’s engagement to Rustic to avoid scandal. To escape this arranged marriage, Musella and Philisses decide to sacrifice themselves at the altar of the Temple of Love drinking what they assume to be poison given to them by Silvesta. Because she was an accomplice to their murder, Silvesta is then sentenced to die.

These seemingly tragic events complete “love’s victory” in two ways: One, two of the final rebels, Rustic and Musella’s mother, finally acknowledge love’s power. Rustic gives up his claims for Musella seeing that she did not truly love him. He then finds love with the now constant, not fickle Dalina. Also, Musella’s mother admits that Musella’s death was her fault, as well as the fault of an arranged marriage. Second, Cupid’s final acts also set up a scenario where Venus can close the victory by coming in as saver of Musella and Philisses, exonerator of Silvesta, judger of Arcas faults, and, most importantly, encourager of true love; thereby, appearing in glory. Unlike critics claiming that this last scene is merely Venus cleaning up Cupid’s chaos, I contend that they were in agreement with Cupid’s final acts because, as comprehended from the initial plans for “love’s victory,” his arrows were to provide the means for Venus to educate the mortals on love’s power which these concluding “tragic” acts were able to do.
The final scene, Act V, Scene vi, opens quite elaborately as the scene directions explicitly say: “The Temple, and the dead bodys on the Aulter, the shepherds, and shepherdesses casting flowers on them” and “Venus apeers in glory.” Every character, including Venus’ priests and Venus and Cupid, are onstage. More importantly, this final scene opens with Venus appearing in glory.

With the devastating circumstances that gather the whole company to the Temple of Love, the supposed death of Musella and Philisses and Silvesta’s looming punishment, the play seems as if it will indeed end a tragedy. Venus does not allow this to happen. Comically, Philisses and Musella suddenly arise from the alter, since the poison Philisses and Musella consumed was not poison as they thought, but only a potion that mimicked death. This is revealed when the previously disapproving priests become instruments in Venus’ return to glory, as they speak these words when Philisses and Musella arise from the altar:

Philisses, of us take Musella faire,

Wee joine your hands, rise and abandon care.

Venus hath caus’d this wounder for her glory,

And the Triumph of love’s victory. (V.ii.483-486)

With these words, all previous apprehension of Cupid’s tactics has disappeared, and these current events seem to be Venus, Cupid, and even the priests’ plan all along. As Cupid is the one to set up this seemingly cruel death by causing the rumor that drives Musella and Philisses to thoughts of suicide, Venus comes in as the one to show the kindness of preventing their death by giving the false potion to Silvesta, all of which allows the priests to marry Philisses and Musella and prove Silvesta’s innocence.
Venus’ last step of securing “love’s victory” is to educate her now-humbled subjects a final lesson on love. Since the shepherds have indeed done their equal share of weeping and wailing and all hierarchies are removed from the community, Venus leaves them with two lessons: to live happily in love and never forget love’s supremacy. She presents her first lesson after Musella and Philisses’ awakening and Silvesta is found innocent. She tells Musella and Philisses:

Come forth, and joy your faith hath bin thus tride,

Who truly would for true love’s sake have dy’dde.

Silvesta was my instrument ordain’d

To kill, and save her freinds; by which sh’ hath gain’d

Immortall fame, and bands of firmest love

In theyr kind brests, wher true affections move. (V.vii.489-494)

Venus upholds Musella and Philisses’ sacrifice to love as a model of “true love” since they refused to live without love. By allowing the goddess of love herself to directly use the words “true love,” Wroth signals to the audience that they, along with the shepherds, should view Musella and Philisses’ love as the ideal kind of love. As established in previous chapters, their love is defined as a companionate love sustained on mutuality, respect, and constancy. Hence, the love that Venus considers ideal love is also a companionate love founded on these values.

Venus further uses Musella and Philisses’ sacrifice as a lesson on living happily with love by demonstrating how their love is better than arranged marriages. When she saved them from death, she shows her support for a companionate marriage. Arranged marriages are not often agreed on for an exchange of love, but an exchange of money. Therefore, as the
goddess of love, Venus cannot support such marriages. By saving Musella and Philisses, she encourages the community to allow love to govern their marriages and partnerships, not financial gains.

Venus’ last words in the play are to end with a reminder of love’s power. She tells the mortals:

And now all duties ar parform’d to Love.

Looke that noe more owr powers by scorn you move,

Butt bee the treasures of love’s lasting glory. (V.vii.577-579)

Now that all are happy as all appropriate partners have found their other halves and reciprocity is widely established, Venus reminds the shepherds that they must remain in this state and refrain from scorning love or they will have to start this whole process of “love’s victory” again. Instead, they, like one of the ideal values in a true love, must remain constant in their reverence of “love’s lasting glory.” By using the word “treasures,” Venus seems to tell the shepherds to be models of an ideal love; a true love based on mutuality, loyalty, and respect. Only by maintaining their deference to this type of love can the shepherds sustain the new found balance and harmony in their community.

Due to “love’s victory,” every character is left happy enjoying their true love or left to search for a true love. The last images of the play are of joy: Lissius, the former slanderer of love, stands by his soon to be wife, Simeana; Philisses and Musella are not dead, but married; Musella’s mother stands in approval of their marriage as she is now a mother promoting a love match, not a match for monetary gain; Rustic no longer believes that he has the right to force women to marry him but found mutual love in Dalina; Arcas is left an outsider as an enemy of love; Silvesta remains a votary of Diana but gives the Forester her chaste love and
friendship; and the other characters marvel in the events that transpired demonstrating to
them that true love is the only type of love worth seeking. As understood by Venus’
concluding line, “And I your Princeses Crown’d with Victory” (V.vii.580), the last image
Wroth leaves her audience of Venus and Cupid is of them surrounded by their joyous
subjects, Venus’ priests, in the temple of love, and enjoying their return to their “ancient
glory.”
Epilogue

*Love’s Victory* ends in song—the early modern representation of the parallel between social cohesion and the music of the spheres. In the last scene after Musella and Philisses are awoken, Venus encourages the community of shepherds to “all rejoice, and with a loving song/ Conclude the joye hath bin kept downe to long” (V.vii.495-496). Whereas earlier in the play Venus told Cupid to cause the shepherds “all to waile, and all to weepe” in order to equalize them through love, she now tells the shepherds to “all rejoice.” The entire community has endured the pain that was necessary to educate them on the love and fellowship that they were scorning in the beginning of the play. Such a communal song solidifies and makes manifest the feelings of reciprocal love and community felt by the characters.

Scholarship on the play mostly provides only a summary of the ending of *Love’s Victory* without providing any commentary on what it signifies. The only scholar to suggest some interpretation is Naomi Miller as her focus is on the emphasis of friendship at the end. Lewalski and Hannay also provide useful information about the pastoral genre convention of ending a drama with singing.

Ending on a song is standard for the pastoral genre (Lewalski 92) and could, quite possibly, have involved dancing (Hannay 221). However, Lewalski notes that Wroth’s ending deters from traditional pastorals in one especially significant way: “Generic convention calls for the final resolutions—the wonderful escapes of the lovers from danger and their reunion—to be narrated, in the classical manner, rather than represented […] But

12 Sadly, the actual song the community sings is missing from both manuscripts of *Love’s Victory*. Cerasano and Wynne-Davies make a case that the blank space left in the manuscript where the song could be indicates that Wroth meant eventually to fill in the song but never did (208).
[Wroth] adds to this a more dramatic resolution scene with all the company assembled in the Temple of Venus” (101). The entire company has never been on stage all at once. It is not until this final moment of the drama that every character, even the smaller roles and Venus’ priests (the number of priests is unspecified), are all on stage for the entire last scene. The multitude of bodies on stage, seventeen at least—possibly more—provides an elaborate finale. Even the setting is notable as the Temple of Love backdrop also represents the successful creation of an erotopia with mutual love at the center of the community. Wroth’s alteration was deliberate; the final song and the presence of every character on stage for the first time signals, not only the triumph of “love’s victory,” but the triumph of restored balance and complete harmony within the community.

It is not only the first time the whole company is on stage, but it is the first time every character is joyous. The four couples receive much of the spotlight as this celebration is about love. Silvesta and the Forester, the text’s chaste couple, finally come to an agreement about their relationship. Silvesta has been running away from the Forester’s declarations of love the entire play, but because of his intended sacrifice, she acknowledges that love: “For you kind Forester, my chast love take, / And know I grieve now only for your sake” (V.vii.519-520). Though they are considered one of the four main couples in the play, Silvesta does not return the Forester’s romantic feelings of love and remains a chaste votary of Diana. Unlike the other couples, they are not to marry—Silvesta has only given the Forester her chaste love and friendship. She even tells him that she grieves for him since his love is not requited in the exact way he would have preferred. Though he does not receive her hand in marriage, the Forester seems content: “My joys encrease, she grieves now for my
paine. / Ah, hapy proffer’d lyfe which this can gaine” (V.vii.521-522). Merely that she grieves for him and gives him as much affection as she can is enough for the Forester.

Hodgson-Wright best describes Wroth’s decision not to have Silvesta marry the Forester: “The text thereby signals chastity as one of a range of positive life-choices for women, alongside the various partnerships embarked upon by the other women characters” (66). Since Wroth believed in choice, she also believed that a woman had the right not to choose marriage even if she is offered love and respect from a man. Silvesta is outside the perspective of the other happy couples because she does not desire companionship. Although she does not want love for herself, she was instrumental in saving Musella and Philisses and, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is a devoted friend to both Musella and Philisses. Silvesta may be an outsider of the companionate marriages; however, she remains a loyal friend of the play’s lovers and a valued member of the community.

For the comic couple, Rustic frees Musella from her contract to him and finds love with Dalina. Dalina seems drawn to Rustic after he appropriately gives up his claim on Musella and offers herself as a substitute: “I wowld I might butt name the hapy mayde / Showld bee your wyfe” (V.vii.546). He replies: “Your self name and all’s sayd” (V.vii.546). She agrees: “In trothe agreed, I’le prove a loving wyfe” (V.vii.548). This conversation proves that Dalina has given up her fickle ways and agrees to a monogamist relationship. Also, Rustic has been educated on the harms of arranged marriages through Musella and Philisses’ mocked deaths. He has now found a “loving wyfe” who has given him her mutual affections by her own accord. Rustic humorously makes a final speech to the crowd gathered: “now god give you all joye, / And blest ame I who this sweet las injoy” (V.vii.550). His blessings to all shows that he desires to be accepted back into the community since his
previous actions have made him an outsider. Appropriately, Musella is the one to respond as she says: “A good exchange, and every one agreed” (V.vii.551). Musella has forgiven him and expresses her approval of Rustic and Dalina’s union. She also speaks for everyone showing that Rustic is accepted back into the community as well. Though the audience receives little warning for this unexpected match, as the play’s comic characters, Wroth seems to suggest that they are naturally compatible. Two rebels of love, the inconstant Dalina and the patriarchal Rustic, have been reformed and seem ready to commit themselves to a truly companionate partnership.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Lissius and Simeana, the flawed couple, have already been brought together before this final scene. Since Musella and Philisses’ supposed death scene comes right after Simeana and Lissius’ final union, Lissius has not spoken to Philisses about wanting to marry his sister, Simeana. He thus asks for Philisses’ blessing:

Your Sister for my wyfe I seeke; alone
I crave butt her, and love makes her mine owne.
Tow bodys wee ar, yett have butt one hart,
Then rather joine then lett such deere love part. (V.vii.527-530)

Lissius desires to prove to Philisses that his cynicism has been exchanged for love and respect making him now a good match for Simeana. This final declaration of love by Lissius illustrates that he has taken to heart every piece of wisdom Musella has given him during his re-appropriation to love. He sees the worth of mutual love—living as “butt one hart”—and he never wants to be parted from Simeana again. Since many other community members, especially Musella, have provided council and advice for this couple, Philisses is the last person who needs to offer his approval of their union as a representative of Simeana’s
family: “Join’d in firm love, and hapines attend / Your day on earth untill your lives doe end” (V.vii.533-534). Philisses recognizes Lissius’ changed ways and sees that he will now be constant and respectful to Simeana. Philisses thereby offers his blessing. Lissius and Simeana’s relationship has now been blessed by both Musella and Philisses, and Lissius has proven himself worthy of Simeana. They can now continue to live as one, never to separate again.

Musella and Philisses have escaped death and through their willingness to sacrifice themselves have shown that true love is the only worthy love. Besides their near death experience, one significant moment in their relationship at the very end of the play is the reconciliation of Musella and her mother. As with Rustic, the Mother has been educated on the anguish arranged marriages can cause. The Mother now sees that Philisses is the most compatible match for Musella, and thus asks for forgiveness, as well as give her own blessing of their match: “Pardon my fault, injoye, and blessed bee, / And children, and thyr children’s children see” (V.vii.501-502). With this line, the Mother not only asks for forgiveness, but also “Wroth puts into words the fruition of a mother’s blessing in motherhood itself” (Miller 97). Musella’s mother is now in complete support of Musella and Philisses’ relationship and even wishes for grandchildren. With the Mother’s apology, Musella also asks for forgiveness for the pain their supposed suicide caused: “Pardon mee first who have your sorrow wrought” (V.vii.503). Through these lines, Musella illustrates that though she went against her mother’s wishes, she is still a dutiful, loving daughter. Philisses shows his respect and thanks the Mother for her blessing as well: “Mother, for soe your gyfte makes mee you call, / Receave my humble thanks” (V.vii.507-508). With the

13 For an excellent examination of the Mother’s role in the play, see Miller (1996):131-136.
forgiveness of both Musella and Philisses, “[i]nitially disparaged by the other characters, Musella’s mother finally receives honor from all for her enduring love for her daughter” (Miller 98). Musella and Philisses’ companionate partnership has been a model to every character in the play, even Musella’s mother. Through their loyalty, for not only each other but their loyalty as devoted friends, Musella and Philisses received the support and blessing from their community during their time of need. Now, because of their constancy and true love, Musella and Philisses can look forward to a life of companionship and the possibility of children.

Although the rest of the characters are left without a partner, as Alison Findlay rightly states, the happily ever after conclusion of the play is the “rebirth into a paradise of love and hope for the future” (94). Lacon, Philis, and Climeana did not end up with the person they believed themselves to love, but they have been educated through Musella and Philisses’ and Lissius and Simeana’s companionate partnerships on the necessities needed for a truly compatible relationship: mutuality, respect, and constancy. With this knowledge, they can now search for someone more compatible for them and someone who will return their love. Also, although they have not found love, they are embraced by their loving, supportive erotopian community.

Venus and Cupid are especially happy with all of this love and community as it completes their plan “love’s victory.” Both divine beings have regained their sovereignty as representatives of love and have successfully encouraged love and community. In this last scene Venus, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is credited with saving Musella, Philisses, and Silvesta, punishing Arcas, and provides her blessing to all. Significantly, apart from this final scene, Venus and Cupid are never shown to communicate directly with the mortals.
Even Cupid is never in direct contact with the shepherds as the audience is left to image the moments Cupid shoots various characters with his arrows. However, at the end, Venus is not the only immortal to speak to the shepherds, as Cupid does have a song:

Now my warrs in love hath end,
Each one heere injoys theyr freind;
And soe all shall henceforth say
Who my laws will still obay. (V.vii.555-560)

In these lines he publicly declares the completion of his “warrs in love” showing that he learned the lesson to be kind after being cruel. Also, he repeats one of Venus’ last lessons for the mortals: to never forget love’s power. Miller provides a further suggestion that his mention of friendship seems to emphasize egalitarianism: “The nongendered reference to “freind,” moreover, encompasses cross-gender as well as same-sex friendship” (215). In his last song, Cupid shows that he has learned every lesson Venus has taught him including his role to emphasize reciprocity in the community.

Venus’ final act is to punish Arcas. This punishment further demonstrates Venus’ role as educator of love and community, as well as proves her generosity as a ruler. Instead of punishing him by executing him or some other severe punishment, she only commands that:

In these fair plains, where you shall never hide
The shame of falsehood printed in your face;
Nor hence remove, but in the self-same place
You did commit that error foul and ill,
There your days left, with grief and shame shall fill (V.vii.144-148)
His sentence is to stay in Arcadia and deal with his consequences by not hiding and wearing “the shame of falsehood” on his face throughout “these fair plains.” He is left within the community that is now completely equal and all are happily dwelling in love. Though his days “with grief and shame shall fill,” this punishment gives him a chance to re-appropriate himself to this love and kindness so that he may one day be seen as an equal within the community as well.

All throughout Love’s Victory, Venus, Cupid, and specific shepherds have worked to promote reciprocity and respect, regardless of gender, to those who were not yet in complete support of the social equality of their society. By the end of the drama, every character recognizes the rewards of reciprocity and reveres the power of love. Wroth alters the traditional pastoral ending to give every character a part in the celebration of restored harmony and general reciprocity. The last images of the play are of every shepherd singing and dancing, with Venus and Cupid “Crown’d with Victory,” (V.Vii.580) looking on and reminding the crowd to forget not love’s power, but rejoice in its “lasting glore” (V.vii.580).

Conclusion

Love’s Victory holds great critical value. Its attention to egalitarianism, female agency, friendship regardless of gender, and mutual love makes Love’s Victory a remarkably innovative drama for a Renaissance piece written by a woman. Lewalski, in her essay “Writing Women and Reading the Renaissance,” rightly observes that early modern women’s texts are often “too narrowly contextualized in literary and historical terms—a pity since they come before us bare and unaccommodated, without the accretion of scholarship and critical opinion through the ages that so largely determines how we understand and value literary
work” (793). Since Love’s Victory has received very little critical attention, much more could be explored in the text than what has been suggested in current scholarship—especially what the text itself is saying, since it has be “too narrowly contextualized” in literary, historical, and biographical terms.

Along with its literary and historical significance, I believe that Wroth’s drama holds great social interest as well. Wroth was personally motivated in critiquing the constitution of marriage and companionship and was intent on providing various models of both. As the world in Love’s Victory is an erotopia, comparing the relationships in this play to her other works that present tragic images of love and marriage could expand the social significance of this play and her romance and sonnet sequence. As my focus was on Love’s Victory alone, it would also be interesting to see if other Renaissance women writers were responding to this rise in companionate marriages as well. However, “[i]t is important that we as a modern audience do not allow an almost forgotten but unexpectedly revealing [drama] like “Loves Victorie” to die” (McLaren 293). The fact that Love’s Victory can be analyzed through literary, historical, biographical and social terms demonstrates its immense significance as a Renaissance work written by a female author. Especially with its focus on egalitarianism, it would be remarkable to perform Love’s Victory to see how a modern audience would react to the play as its revolutionary themes of reciprocal love, respect, friendship, community, female agency and egalitarianism make the drama still quite relevant in today’s society.
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