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Writing Renaissance Emblems: Flaming and Tortured Hearts in *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*

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The English habit of mind between 1560 and 1660 is more remote from our own than we are usually prepared to admit.... Now one of the then habits of mind most prevalent yet most remote from ourselves was the emblematical.....

E. M. W. Tillyard

Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word mimesis—that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight.

Sir Philip Sidney

In *Literature in Light of the Emblem* (1979), Peter Daly asserts that it “would be surprising if the great narrative prose works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not reveal something of the emblematic world-view of their authors,” and he notes that “[w]ithout doubt many of these narrative works contain images, maxims, episodes, and characters that owe much to the emblem-books and to emblematic modes of thought and composition.”

Daly’s notions are born out in the prose romances associated with the Sidney family. Regarding Sir Philip Sidney’s engagement with

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3 Peter Daly, *Literature in Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 168, 176. In *Speaking Pictures* (London: Longman, 1994), 7, Michael Bath notes that statistics suggest that “at least fifty emblem books were published in England up to the year 1700, in over 130 printings and editions. In the same period at least one thousand emblem books were published on the continent...."
this aspect of his culture, Rosemary Freeman points out that in a letter to Hubert Languet (1573), Sidney offered to send him a copy of Girolamo Ruscelli’s *Le imprese illustri* (1566). Victor Skretkowicz notes that in 1577, Sidney visited Joachim Camerarius, the younger, at Nuremberg, whose emblems would later be published in his *Symbolorum et Emblematum* (1593). Skretkowicz points out that the latter especially “exhibit parallels with the pictorial representations and mottos in the devices of the New Arcadia.” Sidney scholars will recall that in the 1980s, Skretkowicz and Robert Parker debated the nature of the emblematic imagery in Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia,* and it almost goes without saying, but should be said, that these observations and explorations of Sidney’s use of emblematic imagery in the *Arcadia* resonate with the notion of “a speaking picture,” a term he uses in his *Defence of Poetry.* That Sidney’s niece, Lady Mary Wroth, knew quite well her uncle’s *Arcadia* and his *Defence,* there is no doubt. Moreover, Wroth was clearly engaged with the emblematic modes of thinking of her own time. Her romance, *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania,* contains instances of “speaking pictures” created, in large part, from her use of imagery from court masques, as I have explored earlier, and, as I suggest here, from emblems—also a staple of imagery for court spectacle. While a great deal has been said about Sidney’s use of emblematic modes in his romance, and scholars have long commented on the ways in which Wroth was writing in response to the *Arcadia* in her *Urania,* an area that has been little explored is that of her own response to what Tillyard calls “the emblematical.”

The secular love emblems are especially of interest in this study because they resonate most strongly with the trials of romantic love that Wroth devises in her romance. Especially in

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7 See epigraph above. Freeman, *English Emblem Books,* 14 points out that the phrase comes from Plutarch who attributes it to Simonides, who suggests that poetry is a speaking picture and painting is dumb poetry.
scenes involving tortured hearts in Book Four, Wroth's imagery also resonates with sacred *emblemata*; however, the context of this test of romantic love suggests that if she is referring to the ubiquitous religious image of the martyred heart, she is conflating it for effect with the secular emblems of martyred lovers. 9 The secular love emblems provide Wroth a rich array of thematic material from which to draw for her enchantments, as well as offer visual cues for the action that occurs in them. In his discussion of the *Amorum Emblemata*, Karel Porteman writes:

[L]ove emblems simultaneously fulfill many different functions. ... They have to win people over to love and in this way work as arguments, they wish to offer insight into the psychology of love, they contribute to the civilizing of love-making, and manifest a sometimes complicated form of gallant, witty literariness. They wish to warn the lover against going off the rails and are aimed at both intellectual and visual consumption. 10

Porteman’s observations dovetail with Wroth’s use of emblematic tableaux featuring her characters’ trials in love.

In this essay, I look at scenes in The First Part of the *Urania* in which Wroth combines enchantment imagery with some of the visual characteristics and didacticism of the *amorum emblemata*, or love emblems. In particular, I examine the flaming heart and its attendant imagery of Venus and Cupid in the Three Towers enchantment in Book One, the positions of frozen lovers in the Marble Theater enchantment in Book Three, and the tortured hearts of Amphilanthus and Pamphilus in the Hell of Deceit enchantment in Book Four. Such images and the scenes in which they are embedded bring to mind those in popular emblem books

9 In general, it is difficult to say which sacred emblems may have influenced Wroth. Some that may be contemporaneous for Wroth, but that appear later in publication than her work may be seen in George Wither’s *A Collection of Emblems, Ancient and Moderne* (1634, 1635), the fourth book of which is dedicated to Wroth’s cousin, Philip Herbert. Another work that contains a few potentially evocative parallels with her imagery is Herman Hugo’s *Pia Desideria Emblematis Elegies* (1624). An emblem collection of general interest that may have been known to Wroth is Henry Peacham’s *Minerva Britannia* (1612), which contains an emblem of *Urania* (#177), as well as *Gloria principum* (#21), the latter of which is dedicated to William Herbert.

and seem especially to contain characteristics of what Peter Daly calls the “word-emblem” or what Patrick Scanlon calls the “narrative emblem.” Summarizing observations by Marc Bertonasco and T. O. Beachcroft, Daly suggests that the word-emblem may be characterized as follows:

1. It manifests “a peculiar, often gross, quite unmistakable visual and tactile vividness;”
2. It “stands motionless;”
3. And, there is often a “dwelling on concrete detail, or sensuous particulars, which are directly related to clear concepts, religious or moralistic.”

Ultimately, he notes that the “word-emblem” is a verbal structure in which words convey both pictures and meanings. Similarly, Scanlon points out that the narrative emblem “is a static scene where characters are posed to relate to one another without dramatic interaction, a tableau filled with vividly concrete images.” These are the characteristics of emblematic imagery that are of interest in Wroth’s work. Keeping in mind Daly’s observation that “critics have been more successful when they interpret literature against the general background of emblem-books, using them not as sources but as parallels, or keys, to the understanding of the literature” (my emphasis), I would suggest that themes and imagery from emblems should be considered as general background for and parallels to the imagery in Wroth’s romance examined here, and to that end I include a few illustrations from Otto Van Veen’s *Amorum Emblemata* (1608) for comparison.

To begin, the notion that emblems are an important part of Wroth’s visual rhetoric is introduced in her frontispiece.

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12 Daly, *Literature*, 72.
13 Daly, *Literature*, 74.
15 Daly, *Literature*, 61.
Signed by Simon van de Passe, the Dutch engraver "known for his portraits of the royal family as well as of the leading members of the Sidney-Herbert circle," this elaborate device resonates with *emblemata* by other Dutch artists, including those by Van Veen in *Amorum Emblemata* and those in the anonymous *Théâtre d'Amour* (c. 1606). The frontispiece recalls such

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17 The *Théâtre d'Amour*, in spite of its French title, has roots in Dutch artistic tradition and was most likely published in the Netherlands, ca. 1606. For more on the history and evolution of this emblem collection, see Carsten-Peter Warneke, “Jestings on Love,” *Théâtre d’Amour: Complete Reprint of the Coloured Emblemata Amatoria of 1620* (Köl: Taschen, 2004), 314-15.
emblemata topically and thematically, as it depicts lovers about to experience Love’s torments, as well as visually, with its bucolic rolling hills and windmill just northeast of the Throne of Love. Note the similar landscape and placement of the windmill in the following emblem.

Love killed by his own nouriture, Amorum Emblemata (1608), 191. STC 24627a.8, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

While Wroth would have been familiar with emblems through her general exposure to them in popular culture and court performances, it is worth noting that she may have specifically had access to the edition of the Amorum Emblemata dedicated to her first cousins, William and Philip Herbert. One rather tantalizing aspect of her work that suggests she may have been familiar with that emblem book is the imagery in the first sonnet of Pamphilia to Amphilanthus, her poetry sequence appended to the First Part of

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18 Maureen Quilligan, Incest and Agency in Elizabeth’s England (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 185-91 discusses the possible meanings of the windmill in Wroth’s frontispiece, comparing it to windmills in other emblems and exploring its potential resonance with windmill references in Cervantes’s Don Quixote.

19 Specifically, the edition Amorum Emblemata, Figuris Aeneis Incisa Studio Othonis Vaeni Batavo-lugdunensis. Emblems of Love with Verse in Latin, English, and Italian (Antverpiæ: Venalia apud Auctorem, 1608). For this study, I consulted a copy at the Houghton Library, shelfmark Houghton typ. 630.08.867. Van Veen dedicates it to “the moste honorable, and woorthy brothers, William Earle of Penbrooke, and Philip Earle of Mountgomerie, patrons of learning and chevalrie.”
the *Urania*. In the sonnet, “bright Venus Queene of love,” with burning hearts held aloft in her hand, rides in “a Chariot drawne by wing’d desire,” while at her feet sits “her sonne,” a scene very similar to that which may be seen in Van Veen’s emblem below.


Josephine Roberts has pointed out the resonances between this sonnet and the opening of Petrarch’s *Trionfe d’Amore* and a similar image in *Astrophil and Stella*, as well as Ovid’s depiction of this scene in the *Metamorphoses*, XIV (probably Van Veen’s source for the image), but she does not mention the possible link between Wroth’s work and Van Veen’s emblem. Considering her rapport with the Herbert family, it seems likely that Wroth had access to this volume and that, in spite of Daly’s dictum which I quote above, it should be added to the list of possible sources for Wroth’s imagery in her sonnet, as well as in her romance as a

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whole. Regarding her romance, whether or not we accept that Wroth had a hand in designing her frontispiece, we have a confirmation of her publisher’s, and presumably her readers’, understanding of her intentional synthesis of Renaissance visual and verbal art forms. Daly points out that it “was common practice during the seventeenth century for an author to design, or cause to be designed, an emblematic frontispiece for his book, whether it was a work of prose fiction, a collection of poetry, or a meditational work.”

In the Three Towers enchantment itself, Venus’s Throne of Love is set against a verdant landscape of gardens and river. Regarding the towers, we are told:

Upon the first was the Image of Cupid, curiously carv’d with his Bow bent, and Quiver at his backe, but with his right hand pointing to the next Towre; on which a statue of white Marble, representing Venus, but so richly adorn’d, as it might for rarenesse, and exquisitenesse have beene taken for the Goddesse her selfe, and have caused as strange an affection as the Image did to her maker when he fell in love with his owne worke. Shee was crowned with Mirtle, and Pansies, in her left hand holding a flaming Heart, her right directing to the third Towre, before which, in all dainty riches, and rich delicacy, was the figure of Constancy, holding in her hand the Keyes of the

21 The burning heart depicted in Wroth’s description of the Three Towers scene, in this sonnet and in the hand of Venus on her frontispiece, also recalls that on the cover of Daniel Heinsius’s (possibly, Theocritus a Ganda) Emblemata Amatoria (Leiden, 1613). See the cover image in Warncke, “Jestings,” 317. Flaming hearts, hearts “transfix’d with arrows, others flaming,” and Venus riding in a chariot drawn by doves and swans are also imagery in The Haddington Masque, in Ben Jonson, Complete Masques, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 108.

22 In a letter to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, Wroth claimed that she did not plan to have her romance published. See the discussion of this issue in Roberts, “Critical Introduction,” The First Part, cv-cvi.

23 Daly, Literature, 180. Quilligan, Incest, 174 notes that the inclusion of a scene from the plot of a work in the frontispiece is a “romance device,” but suggests that “framed by the architectural structure, the Wroth scene becomes more than merely a foretaste of the story,” and she, too, comments on its emblematic elements.

24 Reference to Pygmalion, the sculptor who prayed to Venus to bring his sculpture of a beautiful woman to life. His story is included in Ovid’s Metamorphoses.
Pallace: which shewed that place was not to be open to all, but to few possessed with that vertue.\textsuperscript{25}

This is the “triall of false or faithfull Lovers.” Cupid’s Tower is that of Desire; false lovers may enter and suffer “torments fit for such a fault.” In Venus’s Tower of Love, any lover may enter but will suffer “unexpressable tortures, in severall kindes as their affections are most incident to; as Jelousie, Despaire, Feare, Hope, Longings, and such like.” But the tower of Constancy “can bee entred by none, till the valiantest Knight, with the loyallest Lady come together, and open that gate” (48-9). Wroth’s descriptions of the tortures that entrapped lovers experience in these towers resonate with those illustrated in the popular love emblems and reflect the lessons that they depict. An emblem from Van Veen’s collection that especially resonates thematically with Wroth’s trial of false or faithfull lovers is “Loves triall,” in which “As gold is by the fyre and by the fournace tryde, /And thereby rightly known if it bee bad or good, / Hard fortune and destresse do make it understood, / Where true love doth remayn and fayned love reside.”


\textsuperscript{25} Mary Wroth, *First Part of The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, 48. All quotations from this work will be from Josephine A. Roberts’s edition.
A few others with thematic resonance include “Loves miserie,” “Blynd fortune blyndeth love,” “Loves infinite paynes,” “Loue never untroobled,” and “Ever the same.” In each device, Cupid, usually with supporting characters, is depicted experiencing or enabling the torment of love in question, and he or they are positioned against the backdrop of a landscape, cityscape, or interior. In Wroth’s scene, Cupid’s Tower of Desire full of torments for lovers, Venus’s Tower of Love in which are bestowed the tortures of jealousy, despair, hope, and longing, and finally Constancy’s Tower which tests the lady whose love is indeed ever the same would all recall for Wroth’s readers similarly themed emblems.

Also in this tableau, we are shown the static scene of “those poore lovers who were there imprisoned, all chain’d one unto another with linkes of gold, enamiled with Roses and other flowers dedicated to Love” (169) awaiting rescue by Pamphilia and Amphilanthus. The notion that these lovers have been conquered by love is, of course, standard emblem imagery. An emblem with thematic parallels may be seen in the Amorum Emblemata.

No love without war, Amorum Emblemata (1608), 49. STC 24627a.8, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

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In her design of their release, however, Wroth also draws upon other emblematic precedents. Her addition of the figure of Constancy to this scene underscores the overarching allegorical conflict of her romance—that of Constancy vs. Inconstancy—and, in addition to echoing a familiar theme in the emblemata, it allows her to draw upon the emblematic imagery of another art form to design action to end the enchantment: the court masque.

Wroth’s figures of Venus and Constancy visually recall that of Truth in Jonson’s *Hymenaei* (1606), and Constancy’s agency in the scene is reminiscent of that of Truth in the masque. In Jonson’s masque, Truth holds in her right hand, “a sun with burning rays,” and in her left hand, “a curious bunch of golden keys, / With which heaven[s] gates she locketh and displays.”

Wroth’s Venus, who holds a flaming heart, and her Constancy, who holds the keys to the palace, share aspects of Jonson’s Truth, the allegorical figure who is reconciled to Hymen, thus providing a triumphant ending for the masque. Wroth’s character Pamphilgia literally embodies Constancy near the end of the scene and, like Truth in Jonson’s masque, serves as the reconciling allegorical figure in the Three Towers enchantment. Wroth writes that “Constancy stood holding the keyes, which Pamphilgia tooke; at which instant Constancy vanished, as metamorphosing her self into her breast” (169). For Jonson, Truth holds the keys to heaven, or spiritual truth. For Wroth, Pamphilgia, holding the keys to constant love, becomes the emblematic representative for Constancy, whose powers, at least temporarily, have vanquished inconstancy.

The clear emblematic triumph of Constancy at the end of the Three Towers enchantment gives way to ever more complex enchantments and resolutions thereafter. The allegorical conflict of constancy vs. inconstancy which frames these enchantments becomes increasingly intense, in keeping with the on-going dilemmas of Amphibalanthus’s love life and the ensuing pain that he causes Pamphilgia. Regarding the allegorical implications of Pamphilgia’s embodiment of Constancy, several scholars, including Maureen Quilligan and Jacqueline Miller, have commented on resonances between Wroth’s romance and Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596), in particular the House of Busirane episode, featuring the constant Britomart as heroine, that concludes the third book, and the unfinished seventh book on constancy, or the mutability cantos. Both persuasively argue that Wroth is indeed

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28 See also my discussion of this scene in “Masque Scenery,” 233.
rewriting aspects of Spenser’s romance. Quilligan asserts that “it seems almost as if Wroth were inserting the reality of gender difference into each narrative turn [of Spenser’s work] to see what other eventuality would be the outcome.”

Miller argues that Wroth’s work is inevitably the most Spensarian “precisely at the moments when it becomes intent on resolution,” yet “resolution and conclusion become increasingly elusive goals in the *Urania.*” As we will see, Wroth’s tests aim to showcase constancy, and in this they succeed in the figure of Pamphilia. Constancy, however, does not definitively hold the field in the larger picture of the allegorical conflict.

For the Theater Enchantment, Pamphilia, Urania, Philistella, and Selarina venture by sea where, tossed in a magical storm, they are cast upon the great rock in the Gulf of Venice. This emblem provides a useful comparison, as does its verse: “The ship

Where the end is good all is good. *Amorum Emblemata* (1608), 109. STC 24627.a.8, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

tossed by waves doth to no purpose fail, / Unlesse the porte she gayn whereto her cours doth tend, / Right so th’event of love appeareth in the end, / For losse it is to love and never to prevaiile.”

There, these women see “a round building like a Theater, carved curiously, and in mighty pillars” (372). Pamphilia finds a key that enables the enchantment to be fully realized, and “Instantly appeard as magnificent a Theater, as Art could frame,” in which “there was a Throne which nine steps ascended unto, on the top were fowre rich chayers of Marble, in which were most delicate, and sumptuous imbroider’d cushions, a Carpet of rich embroidery lying before, and under them” (373). Charmed, the women venture to ascend the Throne, when instantly the sweetest musicke, and most enchanting harmony of voyces, so overruled their sences, as they thought no more of any thing, but went up, and sate downe in the chayers. The gate was instantly lock’d againe, and so was all thought in them shut up for their comming forth thence, till the man most loving, and most beloved, used his force, who should release them, but himselfe be inclosed till by the freeing of the sweetest and loveliest creature, that poore habits had disguised greatness in, he should be redeem’d, and then should all bee finished. (373)

In the Marble Theater, lovers are held static by a charm that “holds their senses as it were sleeping” (400). Just as lovers are caught in the torments of their weaknesses in love in the Three Towers, here lovers immobilized in the Marble Theater sit frozen, “seeing before them (as they thought) their loves smiling, and joying in them; thus flattering love deceiv’d the true, and brought contrary effects to the most good …” (373). That they falsely believe that they see their beloveds before them is reminiscent of the lines from Van Veen, “Imagining, hee sees his mistris lovely face, / And thogh shee absent be e, hee thinkes shee is in place, / And thus this all hee hath, nothing at all doth prove.”31 Wroth, however, intensifies the anguish that her characters experience in a manner that far outstrips Van Veen’s rather tame speculations about absent love. Instead, her precisely described figures present an emblematic didacticism that illustrates for her readers the torments and follies that love can wreak upon its victims. Regarding specific characters, we are told that “Pamphilia sits leaning her cheeke on

31 Van Veen, Amorum Emblemata, 192.
her hand, her eyes lifted upwards as asking helpe, at her feete lay Leandrus gazeing on her, and as much imploring pity from her, as she begged it from another, with whom her heart was..." (421). When Amphilanthes, perhaps ironically the man “most loving and best loved” (442), arrives at the theater, the first phase of the spell is broken, only to initiate one that is worse. Now Pamphilia is forced to sit “directly before” Musalina and Amphilanthes, “the halfe fullifier of the Adventure” (442). Her torture is to gaze upon her fickle lover and one of the many other women with whom he dallies during the course of the romance. In this scene, the “concrete detail, or sensuous particulars” that Daly mentions regarding word-emblems are strongly evident in the “visual and tactile vividness” of Wroth’s descriptions of the love-tortured positions of the enchanted.32

The second part of this grueling spell is broken by Veralinda, a shepherdess-revealed-to-be-princess (of Frigia), whose story resembles that of Urania. Many masque-like elements occur in the concluding of this enchantment, including an appearance by the god Apollo who tosses Veralinda a magic rod with which to touch and awaken the stillled characters (455), thus dissolving the emblematic motionless nature of the scene. As the spell is broken, Amphilanthes takes Musalina’s hand, but drops it. Pamphilia rises. The love-torn Leandrus and Musalina gaze upon the faces of Pamphilia and Amphilanthes, and then the chairs vanish as a pillar of gold arises, on which is hung the book that will explain Veralinda’s identity. The moments of consternation for Pamphilia and Amphilanthes illustrated just as their emblematic positioning concludes receive no further explanation. All does not end as triumphantly or as neatly at the conclusion of this enchantment as it did in the Three Towers scene. Following her description of Pamphilia’s trial of love in this scene, Wroth writes,

but she must and did indure it, though how, with such unquietness, affliction, and multitudes of teares as what succeeded? losse of so much beauty, as made many have cause (I meane slight lovers) to see her less amiable, then less love-worthy, and so she was left, and this is the truth of mans affection, yet did hee not imagine, or rather would not consider this was caused by his leaving her ... yet did not shee, nor would accuse him, who was altogether so faulty as

32 Daly, Literature, 72.
condemned to be, though more than she deserved unkind. (442)

In case the imagery itself did not make the message plain enough, Wroth underscores how hard love has been on Pamphilia. It has aged and depressed her, yet she has remained constant in her affections. Moreover, we are told that when the enchantment is concluded,

All returned to Corinth where triumphs were made for their coming, Amphilanthus presently after taking his journey towards Italy, and so to Germany, accompanied with all the men, the Ladies appointed to stay there with the King of Morea till their returne, when as all the lovers should be made happy with their long desired loves in marriage ... onely Pamphilia was unpromised.... (457)

The ambivalence of Amphilanthus’s love is clearly inscribed in the emblematic positioning of the characters in this enchantment as he is depicted sitting immobilized before Pamphilia and beside Musalina, then again in the concluding action of the scene as he takes Musalina’s hand, but drops it. The same is true of his departure after the enchantment is concluded when he leaves Pamphilia, of all the ladies, unpromised. The sorts of emblems that might come to mind for Wroth’s readers are Van Veen’s “Choise breeds confusion,” or any of those associated with fickleness and inconstancy, such as one that may now be seen in George Withers’ Collection of Emblems Ancient and Moderne (1635), the verse for which states, “No Emblem, can as full declare, / How fickle, Minds-unconstant are.” Emblems such as these referring to inconstancy or fickleness usually depict female characters instead of male, so Wroth’s readers must “rethink” the traditional figures as Wroth replaces them with Amphilanthus in her tableaux. At this point in her narrative, no doubt to her audience’s amusement and dismay, Wroth is re-visioning one of the most common emblems in popular collections, and she does so to further emphasize her theme that women are the constant ones.

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35 Van Veen, Amorum Emblemata, 212; George Withers, A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne (1634, 1635), introduced by Rosemary Freeman (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1975), 7, 231.
34 Quilligan, Incest, 198 suggests that Wroth “rewrites the ‘Mutabilitie Cantos’ ... insisting that the female is the principle not of Mutability but of Constancy,”
If Wroth is to follow the pattern of enchantments orchestrated to push Amphilanthus and Pamphilia toward the reward of constant love, readers might expect the trials of love to be increased, or at the very least, to grow more complex, and they would not be mistaken. They might, however, be disappointed. After the Theater Enchantment, when Pamphilia is still shaken by Amphilanthus’s attentions to Musalina, Urania gently attempts to make Pamphilia consider that “discretion” might make her “discerne when [she] should bee constant,” but Pamphilia rebuffs her (459). A bit later, quite fed up with Pamphilia’s suffering for the sake of constancy, Urania soundly reproves her, exclaiming the now-well-known line, “Tis pittie ... that ever that fruitlesse thing Constancy was taught you as a vertue” (671). Her scolding, however, is to no avail. Pamphilia perseveres, and Wroth ratchets up the torments in her trials of love.35

The negative extremity of Wroth’s emblematic imagery increases steadily in her enchantments as the First Part of her romance unfolds. In the Three Towers, readers see familiar emblematic references to Venus, Cupid, and Constancy, and are given a somewhat brief description of the tortures and immobilized figures. In the Theater enchantment, Wroth lingers over the static positions of the figures and even more graphically depicts their suffering, especially underscoring that of Pamphilia. And finally, in the Hell of Deceit, she creates two mirroring episodes of the same enchantment in which Amphilanthus and Pamphilia appear to each other with their chests ripped open and the other’s name carved into each other’s heart. Each essentially becomes, then, a love emblem.

In his chapter on the word emblem, Daly cites Eric Jacobsen’s study of the motif of “the name written in a heart,” noting that this is “a variation on the theme of the picture of the beloved painted in the lover’s heart.” Wroth chooses the former tradition for her depictions of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus in the Hell of Deceit, but she complicates this familiar emblematic motif by adding the accompanying imagery of inconstancy in the first case and martyrdom in the second.37 Porteman’s observation that

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35 Lewalski, *Writing*, 273 notes that constancy and discretion are Pamphilia’s “route to integrity and agency”; thus, she will not be dissuaded by Urania’s rhetoric.
36 The study Daly, *Literature*, 62 cites is Eric Jacobsen’s *Die Metamorphosen der Liebe und Friedrich Spees Trutzachtigall* (Copenhagen, 1954).
37 Quilligan, *Incest*, 197 points out that with this choice of imagery, Wroth is also making reference to the first poem of Spenser’s *Amoretti*, in which “his beloved reader is asked to read what has been written in tears in ‘heart’s close bleeding book.’”
some love emblems seem “to wish to warn the lover against going off the rails”\textsuperscript{38} seems particularly pertinent here.

This enchantment occurs in Book Four, during a period when Pamphilia and Amphilanthus are temporarily happily united. During a hunt, we learn that Amphilanthus is lost in the woods (575). Heartbroken, Pamphilia goes in search of him, eventually coming to the “Desartest place,” where she sees “a white Bone” … “of some beast that had been killed, or died there, and the rest consumed,” more fresh blood and, on a place “made round like a Crowne of mighty stones,” she sees Amphilanthus’s bloody armor; nearby are his dead horse and a slain boar (581-2). When Pamphilia and company realize that this is an enchantment (the smoke and fire flying out of holes among the stones tip them off), we are told that she

pulled hard at a ring of iron which appeared, open the great stone, when a doore shewed entrance, but within she might see a place like a Hell of flames, and fire, and as if many walking and throwing pieces of men and women up and downe the flames, partly burnt, and they still stirring the fire, and more brought in, and the longer she looked, the more she discerned, yet all as in the hell of deceit, at last she saw Musalina sitting in a Chaire of Gold, a Crowne on her head, and Lucenia holding a sword, which Musalina tooke in her hand, and before them Amphilanthus was standing, with his heart ript open, and Pamphilia written in it, Musalina ready with the point of the sword to conclude all, by razing that name out, and so his heart as the wound to perish. Faine she would, nay there was no remedy, but she would goe in to helpe him, flames, fier, Hell it selfe not being fruitfull enough to keepe her from passing through to him; so with as firm, and as hot flames as those she saw, and more bravely and truly burning, she ran into the fire, but presently she was throwne out againe in a swound, and the doore shut; when she came to her selfe, cursing her destinie, meaning to attempt againe, shee saw the stone whole, and where the way into it was, there were these words written.

\begin{quote}
Faithfull lovers keepe from hence
None but false ones here can enter:
This conclusion hath from whence
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38} Porteman, “Introduction,” 16.
Falsehood flowes: and such may venter. (583-4)

A reader of emblem books might recall the verse from Van Veen’s “Loves triall,” in which “As gold is by the fyre and by the fournace tryde” (44). However, since only false lovers may enter this fiery place, and those posed in the tableau that Pamphilia witnesses are the characters most duplicitous in love, much more seems to be at work than trial by fire. Additionally, we have a trial by throne, crown, and sword suggesting, emblematically, that powers other than Amphilanthus’s own have sway over his choices. These symbols of power traditionally associated with rulers are placed in the possession of his paramours, suggesting that Amphilanthus is at their mercy. Even so, it is Pamphilia’s name that is carved in his heart. Whether or not it will stay that way is ambiguously left to the reader’s imagination.  

After viewing this tableau, Pamphilia was cast out of the place. Reading the inscription, she “perceived what this was”; then, she returned to Court “where more like a religious, then a Court life, she lived some yeares” (584). What she perceived in the emblematic vision brought her despair and resignation. The theme of Amphilanthus’s inconstancy and his lack of power over it are underscored perhaps more emphatically in this graphic tableau than in any other place in the narrative. He may have become the embodiment of the emblematic tradition of having one’s true love’s name carved in one’s heart, but it is not clear that he will remain so.

The second part of the enchantment appears in the text several pages later, this time recounted from Amphilanthus’s perspective. We are told that when Amphilanthus was lost during the hunt, he tried to find Pamphilia only to be informed, as she was about him, that she had been “stollen away by Theeves” (654). He then finds the Crown of stones, and is attacked by the boar, which kills his horse. He, in turn, kills the boar. Then, he is attacked by many men. He kills “one young man unarm’d, but above all most harming him,” and after that, all the rest vanish. As he strikes the young man on the head, a voice cries, “Farewell Amphilanthus” (655), and he realizes that instead of a young man, he has slain Pamphilia. She is carried into the tall, middle stone, and,

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39 Regarding comparisons of this enchantment with Spenser’s Busirane episode, Quilligan, Incest, 196 points out that Britomart is successful in her rescue of Amoret, while Pamphilia is not in her efforts to help Amphilanthus. She notes that “Pamphilia’s impotence recalls Scudamour’s when he cannot pass the flames.”
following, he strikes it with his sword to try to free her, but to no avail. Pulling hard a ring of iron, he opens the stone and sees

Pamphilia dead, lying within an arch, her breast open and in it his name made in little flames burning like pretty lamps which made the letters, as if set round with diamonds, and so cleare it was, as hee distinctly saw the letters ingraven at the bottom in Characters of bloud; he ran to take her up, and try how to uncharm her, but was instantly throwne out of the Cave in a trance, and being come againe to himself, resolving to dye, or to release her since he found her loyalty, he saw these words onely written in place of the entrance.

This no wonder's of much waight,
'Tis the hell of deepe deceit. (655-6)

The grim details of both parts of this enchantment clearly recall Daly's articulation of "the peculiar, often gross, quite unmistakable visual and tactile vividness" of the word-emblem. Moreover, they seem to gesture toward "clear concepts" that are "moralistic" in nature. Pamphilia's martyred pose would especially resonate with two of Van Veen's emblems. The first is "Love in enduring death."

Love in enduring death, Amorum Emblemata (1608), 185. STC 24627a.8, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

40 Daly, Literature, 72.
The verse for this emblem reads, "If loves beloved should, all mortall hatred shew, / Gainst him by swoord & fyre, by torment & by death, / Yet constant hee remaynes, whyle hee hath anie breath, / True love in death it self, none can unconstant know." The second emblem is "Triall made to late," the verse for which reads, "Too late the proof is made to make true meaning see, / When by noght els but death it onlie must bee known, / Tis too extreme a proof where such effect is shewn, / Enough but not too much, alas enough had been."

Triall made to late, Amorum Emblemata (1608), 247. STC 24627.a.8, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Also worthy of note in these scenes is the dead boar whose carcass marks the place of the enchantment. E. Cobham Brewer points out that the wild boar itself is an emblem of "warlike fury and merciless brutality." Clearly, by this point in her romance, Wroth conjures extreme, merciless enchantments to attempt to change Amphilanthus’s inconstant nature and to serve as a warning for Pamphilia with her unswerving constancy (and, perhaps, to celebrate her unyielding will regarding this virtue). Yet the

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conclusion to this enchantment is even more ambiguous than that of the Marble Theater.

Afterward, Amphilanthus believes that he sees Musalina and Lucenia in need of rescue, and we are told that all that night in the wood he lay, as “three passions distract him, tyred with running, and laded with griefe, in sleepe Lucenia wan him, all passions now but how to recover her having abandoned him; three days hee did wander thus, till at the end of them towards night hee came unto the Sea” where he sees her taken away by boat, but then he hears Musalina crying from the wood (656). He pursues Lucenia by boat, still dithering about whether or not to return to Pamphilia, and finally he is brought, by a storm, to Tenedos, where he sees “Musalina and Lucenia walking and safe; Musalina having by divellish Art beene the cause of all this” (656). The conclusion is especially strange: we learn that the women welcome him “most affectionatly” and tell him “no more shall charmes now trouble you” (660). Afterwards, still in Tenedos, he watches a nymph undress by a brook as she prepares to bathe. He marvels at her naked beauty and considers his desire for her, but “unwilling to let such passions governe in him,” he “walked away toward the house” and “strangly altered he grew” (658). The enchantment’s conclusion seems to have wrought some change in him, but exactly what kind and how long it will last remain to be seen.

Amphilanthus soon proposes to go to Germany, but the Duke of Saxony’s tales of Pamphilia’s longing for him eventually convince him that he should “land him on the Pamphilian shore,” where he finds her “lying among the flowers” (659-60). She runs to him, “forgiving, nay forgetting all injuries,” and he says that he has drunk water “mixed with her teares;” a draught so infused with “constancy and perfect truth of love in it” that it has wrought in him the same effect” (660). For a brief moment, it seems that constancy has triumphed and that the final enchantment has succeeded in ensuring Amphilanthus’s faithful love for Pamphilia. However, it is important to recall that each of the three enchantments has concluded with more emblematic ambiguity than the last. The tension between the tests of the emblematic visions and their tenuous outcomes continues to be reflected in the narrative: Amphilanthus then swears, “[W]e are now again together, and never, so againe, I hope, to part” (660). The words “I hope” in his brief exchange with Pamphilia upon their reconciliation destabilize any sense of certainty regarding their future together. Even though they linger in Pamphilia until Amphilanthus decides that he must continue on to Germany, and he “intreats Pamphilia to goe as far as Italy with him, to visit the
matchles Queene his mother” (661), those familiar with the romance know that even by the end of the Second Part, Amphilanthus and Pamphilia never conclusively achieve a constant relationship.42

Scanlon notes that in Sidney’s Arcadia, emblematic images “appear at significant moments in the narrative to provide distilled emblematic ‘statements’ about the fiction’s thematic concerns and to externalize personality.”43 Clearly, Wroth uses the same tactics in The First Part of her romance. Scanlon, however, suggests that had Sidney completed his revision of the New Arcadia, Love “would have brought about a resolution.”44 It is much more problematic to assert that had Wroth provided a conclusion to her romance, Love would have brought about an end to Amphilanthus’s inconstancy. While the masque-like imagery in some of her enchantment scenes gestures toward what Christopher Booker calls “the cosmic happy ending,”45 it certainly never appears. What we can ask, however, is what might her readers have made of her choices of emblematic themes and figures? While we cannot answer this question definitively, we can consider theories and themes of emblem practice regarding this period and examine them, at least in part, in light of Wroth’s work.

Bath, recalling Albrecht Schöne’s work, notes that emblems “normally moralise the actual properties of objects in the real world, and they thus depend, in ways that not all metaphor does, on a belief shared by author and reader in the reality of their symbolic object and its properties.”46 With her emblematic positioning of her key characters, Wroth invites her readers to consider richly layered references to the “reality” of her symbolic

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42 Some emblematic imagery, mainly in the form of birthmarks, also appears in Mary Wroth’s The Second Part, of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania, edited by Josephine Roberts, Suzanne Gossett, and Janel Mueller. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 211 (Tempe, AZ: Renaissance English Text Society and Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999). Floristello’s birthmark is in the shape of a lioness about to prey upon his bleeding “hart stroke with loves dart”; he believes his future wife will have a birthmark that is a “delicate, curious flower within a star.” 97. Parselius tells Amicles of a young lady who “hath a delicate mole on her left brest resembling a heart, with a dart shott thorough it,” 219. These references to emblems written on bodies do not ultimately figure as largely in Wroth’s story-telling as her emblematic imagery does in the First Part.
44 Scanlon, “Emblematic Narrative,” 221.
46 Bath, Speaking Pictures, 4. The work to which he refers is Schöne’s Emblemak und Drama im Zeitalter des Barock (Munich: Beck, 1964).
figures, especially since they include “shadowed” historical figures to whom Josephine Roberts alludes. Some of them would have also been among the most intimate circle of readers for this text. Their knowledge of the vicissitudes of the “shadowed” relationships involved in the narrative would have no doubt added greatly to their understanding of what Wroth was “moralising” in her emblematic tableaux. To what extent her meanings reached for them, we simply cannot know, but the entwining of readers, characters, and emblematic circumstances must have resonated strongly regarding the beliefs her readers may have shared about the objects, figures, and frozen actions that they were reading/viewing in her text.

Moreover, Wroth uses her emblematic depictions to underscore her thematic elevation of the virtue of constancy over that of chastity, a characteristic of Pamphilia’s that is illustrated in all three enchantments discussed here. Pamphilia embodies constancy in the Three Towers; she demonstrates constancy and is tortured for it in the Marble Theater; and, finally, she becomes a martyr to it in the Hell of Deceit. Ultimately, we see that a key feature of Wroth’s visual rhetoric regarding her use of emblematic imagery is her moralization of the virtue of constancy over that of chastity. Since constancy is celebrated throughout the love emblems, the resonances with them that she incorporates in her narrative make sense. They provide a visual, rhetorical type of auctoritas that those familiar with the love emblem tradition would recognize. Van Veen’s collection features “Love is everlasting,” “Only one,” and “Love after death,” to mention only a few that have not previously been noted. In the Théâtre d’Amour we find, “Not even death,” and in Heinsius’s Emblemata amatoria, “Without end.” Such sentiments about constancy permeate collections of love emblems.


48 Regarding general aspects of Wroth’s rewriting of the “major concerns of the male romance world,” Lewalski, Writing Women, 265 concludes that in Urania, the “male heroes are courageous fighters and attractive lovers, but all are flawed by inconstancy or worse. The higher heroism belongs to a few women, and involves the preservation of personal integrity and agency amid intense social and psychological pressures and constraints.”

49 Van Veen, Amorum Emblemata, 1, 2-3, 244-5.

50 See Warncke, “Jestings,” for Théâtre d’Amour, folio 26; see Heinsius in Warncke, folio 50. On folio 26 is the emblem “Not even death” from the Théâtre d’Amour, reproduced from Daniel Heinsius’s series of that name published in Amsterdam 1601 and 1608. On folio 50 is the emblem “Without end,” reproduced from Heinsius’s Emblemata amatoria, Leiden, 1613. These series are included in Warncke’s volume, entitled Théâtre d’Amour: Complete Reprint of the Coloured
Finally, Wroth clearly expected her readers to be fully capable of participating in the “polysemus allegorical tradition” that had developed in English literature during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Her blending of masque traditions, with their own emblematic references, along with the literary tradition of word emblems, which seem even more directly influenced by the *emblemata*, supports this notion. Her readership would have been skilled in what T. M. Greene calls “subreading,” which Bath defines as the “pervasive technique in Renaissance writing where understanding depends on the recognition of sources.” Wroth’s readers would have clearly recognized references to masques and emblems in her enchantment scenes, thus enriching their enjoyment and understanding of her narrative as a whole, perhaps in ways now lost to modern readers.

What we can see with clarity, however, is that Wroth’s approach to the themes and imagery of the *emblemata* is deserving of further consideration regarding the rest of her œuvre. She employs the didactic aspects of love emblems in the *Urania* as she portrays lovers caught in the trials and perils of love, and the immobilization of her characters in the enchantments doubles as a strategy to depict allegorically the vicissitudes of love as the artists and authors of *emblemata* do in their portrayals of Cupid, Venus, and the victims of their power. Wroth, like Van Veen and other emblem writers and illustrators, pairs visual and verbal rhetoric to captivate her audience in a manner that illustrates her acute grasp of how powerful a vehicle for meaning the combination of emblem, spectacle, and text could be for her contemporaries.

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*Emblemata amatoria of 1620* (Köln: Taschen, 2004).

51 Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 29 is referring to T. M. Greene’s notion of the *mundus significans* which Greene discusses in *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).