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Masque scenery and the tradition of immobilization in The First Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania

Julie D. Campbell

The narrative of happiness is inevitably frustrated by the fact that only insufficiencies, defaults, deferrals can be 'told'.

D. A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents*¹

Eventually, when all has been properly constellated, the scales tip and the centre of light in the story emerges from the shadows to redeem the corrupted upper world, to end division and to bring everything at last into a state of perfect balance.

Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots*²

In Book Four of *The First Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), by Lady Mary Wroth (1586?–1653?), a love-sick lady of Nycaria explains that she often went to court to see a young nobleman. There, she says, 'I . . . saw those sports the Court affects, and are necessary follies for that place, as Masques and Dauncings, and was an Actor likewise my selfe amongst them . . .'.³ This statement recalls Wroth's experience as a viewer of and performer in court masques, experience upon which she clearly drew as she constructed her romance. Wroth danced in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605) and *Masque of Beauty* (1608), and, as Josephine Roberts has observed, she alludes to several of Jonson's masques in her romance, as well as to Thomas Campion's *Lord Hay's Masque* (1607), and Samuel Daniel's *Tethys' Festival* (1610).⁴ At this point in literary and performance history, when the Renaissance romance and court masque had arguably reached the zeniths of their popularity, it is not surprising to find references to masques in both parts of Wroth's romance.⁵ What is especially compelling, however, and merits further consideration, is the way in which Wroth synthesizes masque scenery and the tradition of immobilized dancers in enchantment scenes in her romance to gesture toward and to complicate what Christopher Booker has called 'the cosmic happy ending', defined in the epigraph.⁶

Wroth uses these masque elements to allegorize her key themes, the all-superseding virtue of constancy in love and the virtually inescapable vice of inconstancy in love. These two oppositional themes clash dramatically in the *Urania*, with the former appearing to conquer the latter, but because the story remains unfinished, readers cannot be certain. The triumph of constant love – and a satisfactory conclusion for the romance – may remain elusive because the major storyline concerning Pamphilia and Amphilanthus is thought to shadow⁷ the tumultuous, ultimately doomed relationship between Wroth and her cousin William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke (1580–1630). In light of these circumstances, Wroth's use of the remobilization trope, which, in masques illustrates the triumph of a positive force over a negative one, leading to a happy ending, leaves readers with an impression of deferred gratification. There is no happy, triumphant ending for the romance as a whole. Indeed, as my epigraphs suggest, her would-be 'narrative of happiness' is perpetually punctuated with the 'insufficiencies, defaults, and deferrals' of which Miller writes, but never reaches the 'state of perfect balance' to which Booker refers. Nonetheless, by using this tradition of remobilization along with masque-style scenery, Wroth embeds in her romance masque elements that *attempt* to put the main characters on a path to a happy ending, and she does so for a coterie of readers who would have been quite familiar with such visual rhetoric.

In this study, I examine two pivotal magical interventions in *The First Part* in which Wroth borrows her imagery from masque scenery and the tradition of immobilized dancers: the Three Towers of the House of Love and the Marble Theatre on an island in the Gulf of Venice. In these enchantments, which include architecturally fantastic structures, music, and symbolically entrapped characters, Wroth creates trials that test her characters' physical courage, as well as their moral acumen, while simultaneously trying their loyalty in love. In the first, Pamphilia, the Queen of Morea, and Amphilanthus, the King of Naples, thought to shadow Wroth and Herbert, liberate enchanted friends who try Venus' tests of love. In the second,

Amphilanthus and Veralinda, thought to represent Susan de Vere Herbert, the Countess of Montgomery (1587–1628/29), for whom the romance is named, free Pamphilia and more friends caught in yet another test of love. To break this spell conclusively, Veralinda must then discern her own true identity as the Princess of Frigia, which enables her to marry Leonius, Amphilanthus's younger brother thought to shadow Philip Herbert (1584–1649/50). In both cases, virtues embodied in the pairs are required to overcome the supernatural powers at work, bringing about triumphs of love and valour and paving the way for feasting and celebrations of royal matches, a pattern that mirrors masque tradition.

If we accept the *roman à clef* links posited between historical figures and characters that star in these scenes, we find allusions to masquers who were members of Wroth's coterie, lending further support to the notion that Wroth had masques in mind when she constructed these enchantments. Like Wroth, William Herbert, Susan de Vere Herbert, and her husband Philip Herbert were all popular performers at court. William is listed among participants in *Hymenaei* (1606) and *The Haddington Masque* (1608), as well as in *The Earl of Somerset's Masque* (1613) and *Challenge at Tilt* (1614).⁸ Susan danced in *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604), *The Masque of Blackness*, *The Masque of Beauty*, *The Masque of Queens* (1609), *Tethys' Festival* (1610) and *Hymenaei*.⁹ Philip performed in *Hymenaei*, *The Lords' Masque*, *The Earl of Somerset's Masque*, *Challenge at Tilt*, *The Vision of Delight* (1617), *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* and *For the Honour of Wales* (1618), *An Unknown Masque* (1619), *Love's Triumph Through Callipolis* (1631), and was a combatant in *Prince Henry's Barriers* (1610).¹⁰ The key characters in these enchantments, then, would be especially associated with masquing for Wroth's readership.

Regarding such 'shadow' characters, Roberts writes, 'Any topical reading of the *Urania* runs the risk of being identified with an older mode of historicism that attempted to decipher texts in order to *fix* their meaning'; in contrast, it is more fruitful to consider the romance in light of 'more recent modes of historical criticism have been based on a more interactive model of how literary and historical texts relate'.¹¹ It is the latter notion that inspires this study. With its myriad literary and dramatic references and its constant overlapping of characters and storylines that bear resemblances to Wroth, her coterie members, and their experiences, the *Urania* both exudes topicality and is deeply imbued with artful ambiguity that resists definitive 'fixing' of any sort. The imitation of masque traditions is only part of a very complex whole; however, it is a part of the romance that 'interacts' in fascinating ways with contemporary court entertainments and deserves further consideration of its place in Wroth's narrative.

As for the trope of immobilization, it should be noted that the decorous stopped step in court masques became a favoured way of symbolizing spiritual or magical forces at work. The trajectory of this notion may be traced from the choreography of Italian dance masters to French and English court dance.¹² The dramatic possibilities of the stopped step are illustrated by Fabritio Caroso, who, in *Nobiltà di Dame* (1600), has a dance master explain to his student the *Passo Puntato Semigrave*, or the Semigrave Stopped Step. In doing so, the master compares the stop in dance to Ovid's use of the caesura, as well as to the halts in movement that people and animals make as they pause for reflection or become frozen with fear. He argues that a stop in a dance is equally significant as a full stop in writing.¹³ In masque practice, the stopped step became a part of presenting visual rhetoric to the audience, a means of 'pushing pause' or presenting a visual 'full stop' in the action, so that critical allegorical elements might be read. It was integrated into scenes of immobilization and transformation, two motifs that sometimes appear together in masques. Wroth uses the motif of immobilization in her enchantment scenes for similar purposes, as she displays lovers entrapped in ways that illustrate their folly and misery. Because she describes their entrapped states in detail, her readers may take in the symbolic nature of their predicaments as if looking at stilled action in a masque.

It should also be recognized that the use of allegorical figures, casting of spells, and enchanted places is as standard in the romance tradition as it is in the masque tradition. Roberts has indicated that Wroth's work is indebted to several romances, including Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Montemayor's *Diana*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and *Amadis de Gaule*.¹⁴ Even so, the enchantments in question in the *Urania* recall not only those used in romances but also very specifically those used in masques that make use of immobilization, and the scenery that she employs strongly recalls that described in masques that she would have heard about or

seen, or in which she and members of her coterie would have participated, especially those by Jonson and Campion.

First, I address Wroth's use of allegory and immobilization as they are typically presented in masque tradition and consider how they might be read in the two enchantment scenes. Next, I examine specific parallels between imagery from masques with which Wroth would have been familiar and the scenes in question. Finally, I consider how her imitations of masque traditions might function in the narrative as a whole.

READING ALLEGORY AND IMMOBILIZATION IN WROTH'S ENCHANTMENTS

In *The King's Arcadia: Inigo Jones and the Court Masque*, John Harris, Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong point out that the allegories in masques 'gave a higher meaning to the realities of politics and power' and 'their idealized fictions created heroic roles for the leaders of society'.¹⁵ In the scenarios of the Three Towers and the Marble Theatre, Wroth creates her own 'idealized fictions' that emblemize the romantic relationships she depicts, elevating to a higher allegorical plane the common vicissitudes of love. The enchantment of the Three Towers is also known as 'the triall of false or faithfull Lovers' and requires valour and constancy to triumph over inconstancy (48). The enchantment of the Marble Theatre is more ambiguously called a test for 'the man most loving, and most loved' and the 'sweetest and loveliest creature, that poore habits had disguised greatness in' (373). In each, Wroth employs immobilization to allegorize the struggles that lovers experience.

Writing of masquing traditions at the Stuart court, Clare McManus considers the ways in which 'the opposition of dance and language paralleled the trope of motion and immobility common in European court festivals'.¹⁶ She points out that this 'dichotomy was certainly central to the Jacobean masque in the much-used motif of the immobilisation of the masquers by the forces of the antimasque'.¹⁷ In Wroth's romance, the vice of inconstancy stands in for the antimasque or the negative power that must be overcome. Booker points out that in order to reach a happy ending, a story must 'culminate in an act of liberation from the dark power which produces a final image of integration with life'.¹⁸ That narrative tradition is encapsulated and concentrated in the masque trope of remobilization. Positive forces overcome negative ones, and the narrative concludes with revels and a sense of equilibrium restored.¹⁹ Noting that this tradition may be seen in Campion's *Lords' Masque* (1613) and Francis Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple* (1613), as well as in such French predecessors as the *Ballet comique de la reine* (1581) and the *Ballet de Monseigneur de Vandosme* (1610), McManus writes that in 'all of these entertainments, the release of the masquers from stillness into dance signalled the renewal of divine and royal favour and allowed the confirming action of the revels or *grand bal* to take place'.²⁰ A similar movement from entrapment to release and celebratory events may be seen in the two scenes in question in Wroth's romance.

During the periods of enchantment, characters undergo the following: In the trial of the Three Towers, false lovers endure the torments of burning desire in the first tower, and any lover may suffer 'Jelousie, Despaire, Feare, Hope, [and] Longings' in the second (48). Until the 'valiantest Knight' and the 'loyallist Lady' enter the third tower, all 'remain prisoners' (48-49). At first, they do not seem to be strictly motionless; they are trapped within the towers and within their hallucinations, a particularly harrowing kind of immobilization. Then, when Pamphilia and Amphilanthus come to free them, they appear on 'fine seates of white Marble', further immobilized because they are 'all chain'd one unto another with linkes of gold, enamiled with Roses and other flowers dedicated to Love' (169). In the Marble Theatre, lovers are frozen by a charm that 'holds their senses as it were sleeping . . .' (400). While in their trances, they first enjoy the delusions that occur when 'flattering love' deceived 'the true, and brought contrary effects to the most good', but they next suffer a 'worse Charme then the first, because now they perfectly saw and knew, misery to them that were subjects to it . . .' (373, 442). In both cases, facets of the immobilization trope illuminate the circumstances of lovers whose desires and intentions are being tried.

Of stopped action in masques, McManus notes, 'It would seem that static symbols and the bodies which made them were more readable than the body in motion: movement made for a less stable legibility.'²¹

Wroth, too, seemed to subscribe to the notion that static symbols and bodies hold special, readable meaning. Her immobilized figures partake of a visual, emblematic rhetoric that holds before her readers the torments that love can wreak upon its victims. There can be no subterfuge when characters are trapped, caught red-handed, as it were, in the depths of their follies when they are enchanted. They can do nothing to hide or dissemble their feelings and must endure the gaze of those who would watch – or read – and learn. Wroth's entrapped characters are meant, then, to provide object lessons in the trials of love for her readers. One is to observe the anguish and false joy written on their trapped or stilled forms and take heed.

Then, as Orpheus and Entheus with their soothing music and lyrics calm Jove's ire in *The Lords' Masque*, clearing the way for statues to come back to life, or Cynthia and Night are appeased by Hesperus in *Lord Hay's Masque*, so that the Knights turned to trees can be released from Cynthia's spell, Wroth's characters appointed to break the spells liberate their friends from the negative forces that hold them. Skiles Howard notes that courtly dancing 'visually articulated the signs and structures of power and difference, reflecting social pressures, and managing social anxieties'.²² He also observes that dancing 'invested the dancer with the honor and nobility of the courtly ideal, a kind of text written on the body that mnemonically preserved discursive values within the dancer as subject, and transmitted these by means of the dancer as object'.²³ Wroth invests her spell-breaking characters with the ideals of valour and constancy, as well as the more enigmatic one of greatness in disguise, writing on their bodies, so to speak, the virtues they represent: those necessary to combat inconstancy and the anxiety-producing political issue of royal matches that languish unmade because of fate and, as one might anachronistically put it, commitment phobia on the part of Amphilanthus.

Just as readers may observe the perils of false love written on the bodies of Wroth's immobilized characters, they may also read allegorizations of qualities required to free them in Wroth's spell-breaking characters. Pamphilia, the all-loving one, represents pure constancy, and Veralinda, the truly lovely one, stands for the revelation of truth and constancy, after a fashion, as we will see below. There is only one allegorical complication: Amphilanthus, whose name means lover of two must, in spite of his great valour, battle inconstancy within himself.²⁴ With her use of Amphilanthus as representative of both virtue and vice, Wroth complicates the path to a traditional 'cosmic happy ending'.

In the Three Towers enchantment, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus appease Venus, who thinks herself 'in these latter times, not so much, or much lesse honour'd then in ages past' (48), but not before Amphilanthus has done battle within himself. Before venturing this enchantment, Amphilanthus reflects, 'When I took Antissia, thought I not I was happy in the change?' but allows that this change only brought him affliction. Now, he sees clearly that 'Constancie . . . is the onely perfect vertue, and the contrary, the truest fault . . .' (135), and he vows to change his ways. Then, Amphilanthus and Pamphilia successfully make their way through the towers and into the gardens where 'round about a curious Fountaine were fine seates of white Marble, which after, or rather with the sound of rare and heavenly musick, were filled with those poore lovers who were there imprisoned . . .' (169). The music stops as a disembodied voice pronounces, 'Loyallist, and therefore most incomparable Pamphilia, release the Ladies, who must to your worth, with all of your sexe, yeeld right preheminance: and thou Amphilanthus, the valliantest and worthiest of they sexe, give freedome to the Knights, who with all other, must confesse thee matchlesse; and thus is *Love* by love and worth released' (169–70). Wroth writes, 'Then did the musick play againe, and in that time the Pallace and all vanished, the Knights and Ladies with admiration beholding each other' (170). In keeping with masque tradition, each knight then conducts his lady to the great feast that Pamphilia holds in her tent (170–72).

At this point in the narrative, it seems that Amphilanthus has won what Booker calls 'the three-cornered battle', the one within 'his own divided personality' in which he must contend with 'the dark power', so that, overcoming it, he may then be united with the 'loving feminine' and, finally, 'all the world'.²⁵ This, however, is only the end of an enchantment in Book One of the *First Part*, not the end of the romance, and proves to be a temporary state. Amphilanthus is put through this enchantment and others with the intention of curing his wandering eye and securing his devotion to Pamphilia, but such a change never conclusively happens. Even though the conclusion of this enchantment provides a nearly perfect rendering of a 'cosmic happy ending', the quest to change Amphilanthus has only just begun. Roberts has noted that Wroth uses

irony and satire in the *Urania* to 'reveal a rupture between the world of high idealism and that of hard, pragmatic circumstance'.²⁶ If the Three Towers enchantment epitomizes 'the world of high idealism' for Wroth, then the Marble Theatre enchantment illustrates her sense of irony and pragmatism.

In the Marble Theatre enchantment, Wroth brings Amphilanthus back for another chance at allegorical redemption, but this time, he loses the internal battle; as a result, a pragmatic happy ending for his brother provides the confirming action. A 'tryall of love' and a 'delicate adventure for [Veralinda's] discovery', this enchantment is by its double nature more allegorically complex than the Three Towers (456). The first clue is the designation of Amphilanthus as 'the man most loving, and best beloved', which connotes a positive meaning at face value, but may also be read ironically since he loves many and is much sought-after (442). The second clue is the false start on the remobilization trope. When Amphilanthus arrives, we are told, 'part of the Charme ended', and the immobilized lovers, 'at his coming receiving their best senses . . . ranne to welcome him', but then they again 'tooke their places being brought into a worse Charme then the first' (442). Amphilanthus, like the rest, becomes immobilized, and he is positioned beside Musalina, his old flame. The two are seated directly across from Pamphilia, rendering her pain particularly acute (442).

Veralinda, who believes herself to be a shepherdess, finally arrives. The gate of the Theatre opens to her and her companions 'with such Musicke as amazed them all', as did the sight of enchanted lovers. Apollo 'appear'd, commanding Veralinda to touch them with a rod he threw her down', and when she did, 'they all awaked, and held each one his lover by the hand' (455). Amphilanthus reaches first for Musalina, then drops her hand, but does not reach for Pamphilia, from whom he remains estranged. The confirming action instead relies on Veralinda's discovery of her identity as a princess and that of her companion Leonia's as the prince Leonius, which clears the way for them to marry. Like Pamphilia, Veralinda also stands for constancy, but in an ironic way. Veralinda fell in love with Leonius earlier in the story, but believed it impossible he should love her in her lowly status. He, too, fell in love and disguised himself as Leonia, a 'Forrest Nimph', to be near her. The two then became inseparable, passing their time kissing, 'wishing', and 'loving', until 'at last the wonder of such affection twixt women was discovered' (431–435). Veralinda is thus ironically as constant in her love for Leonius when he is a woman as when he is a man, an 'amorous accident' caused by love, according to the narrator (436). The Marble Theatre enchantment, then, displays the traditional characteristics of the remobilization trope, but does so with an ironic twist.

At the end of the enchantment, this match and others are celebrated. Wroth writes that after the princes return from their next assignment, 'all the lovers should be made happy with their long desired loves in marriage, for the Parents and friends of all were agreed, onely Pamphilia was unpromised . . .' (457). In this enchantment, Wroth pragmatically makes use of the *roman à clef* elements of her romance to produce a masque-like scenario, but one that deconstructs both the cosmic happy ending of narrative theory and that of confirming action following remobilization in masques. At the end of this enchantment, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus do not come together 'in an act of overwhelming love'.²⁷ Veralinda and Leonius do.

Wroth's enchantment allegories are as personally designed for her coterie as an allegory in a Stuart masque would be for a specific court audience. One reading of Veralinda's character is that she shadows Susan de Vere Herbert, the Countess of Montgomery, whose legitimate birth was slanderously questioned. Reared by her maternal grandfather, Lord Burghley, she may have grown up with questions about her identity.²⁸ For her friend, Wroth creates an allegory of legitimacy via the shepherdess Veralinda who is discovered to be a princess of impeccable lineage. Leonius, who has disguised himself as a nymph of the forest to be near her, recalls Prince Pyrocles, disguised as the Amazon Zelmane, who loves Philoclea in Sir Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. He also seems to shadow Philip Herbert, William Herbert's younger brother who marries Susan de Vere; thus, the scenario celebrates their union, even as it emblemizes the ongoing struggle between constancy and inconstancy for Amphilanthus and Pamphilia.

Immobilization and allegory in these two enchantment scenes clearly function in ways associated with such scenes in masques. Positive forces contend with negative ones over issues meaningful to a specific courtly audience. Music punctuates the action in each scene, as does symbolic movement. Royal matches are celebrated in a manner reminiscent of court masques performed for weddings, such as *Lord Hay's Masque*, *The Lords' Masque*, or *Hymenai*. Further examination of these scenes in light of masques with which

Wroth would have been familiar underscores Wroth's intentionality regarding her inclusion of masque elements to shape these enchantments.

WRITING MASQUE DESIGN IN THE ENCHANTMENTS

Wroth's description of the Three Towers is especially reminiscent of those in Jonson's and Campion's masques. The 'Throne of Beauty' from Jonson's *Masque of Beauty* is echoed in the 'Throne of Love', as Venus's 'house of Love' is also called.²⁹ The 'grove of grown trees', the 'two fountains', and 'the arbors' on the sides of Jonson's 'Throne of Beauty' are reflected in the 'delicate Gardens and Orchards', the 'fine and stately Wood', and the 'Fountains' surrounding the 'Throne of Love' (*Masque of Beauty*, 69; *First Part*, 47–48). Wroth's frontispiece serves to underscore this deliberate use of visual reference and gives her audience an enigmatic emblem to ponder, one that prominently displays couples taking in their surroundings (Fig. 1).³⁰ While the engraving itself, by Simon van de Passe, a Dutch artist 'known for his portraits of the royal family as well as of the leading members of the Sidney-Herbert circle',³¹ clearly refers to *emblemata* by other Dutch artists, down to the windmill just north-east of the Throne of Love, its architectural elements also echo designs for masque settings familiar to Wroth, most of which were designed by Inigo Jones.



Figure 1. Frontispiece, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University

In *The Lords' Masque*, Campion describes an edifice on which are 'four Noble women-statues of silver, standing in severall nicies',³² and he writes that over

every statue was placed a history in gold, which seemed to be of base reliefe, the conceits which were figured in them were these. In the first was Prometheus, embossing in clay the figure of a woman; in the second he was represented stealing fire from the chariot-wheele of the Sunne; in the third he is exprest putting life with his fire into his figure of clay; and in the fourth square, Jupiter, enraged, turnes these new made women into statues. (255)

Campion thus shows how the *raison d'être* for immobilization in his masque is illustrated in the architectural details of the scenery, and Wroth does something similar in her description of Venus' Throne of Love. She writes:

The sumptuous House was square, set all upon Pillars of blacke Marble, the ground paved with the same. Every one of those pillars, presenting the lively Image (as perfectly as carving could demonstrat) of brave, and mighty men, and sweet and delicate Ladies, such as had been conquer'd by loves power: but placed there, as still to maintaine, and uphold the honour, and House of Love. (47–48)

Wroth's carved pillars depicting men and women conquered by Love's power recall 'the conceits' carved in 'base relieve' above the silver statues of women that refer to the story of Jupiter's anger with Prometheus in *The Lords' Masque* (255). They also recall the 'blacke pillors' of the 'house of Night' in Campion's *Lord Hay's Masque* (212). In both of these masques, as in Wroth's scene, statuary, carvings, and other scenery reflect the powers at work in the enchantments.

Wroth's description of the upper storey of the House of Love, moreover, seems to echo that of Jonson's for the House of Fame from the *Masque of Queens*. She writes:

The upper Story had the Gods most fairely and richly appearing in their thrones; their proportions such as their powers, and quallities are described. As Mars in Armes, weapons of Warre about him, Trophies of his Victories, and many demonstrations of his Warre-like God-head. Apollo with Musicke, Mercurie, Saturne, and the rest in their kind. (48)

Regarding his upper storey, Jonson describes how Achilles, Aeneas, Caesar, and all the great heroes celebrated by the poets represented on his lower storey stood 'as in massy gold', and between 'the pillars, underneath, were figured land battles, sea fights, triumphs, loves, sacrifices, and all magnificent subjects of honour . . .' (138). Wroth's attention to the details of the levels of her edifice suggests her familiarity with masque description that does the same, and her depiction of statues with visualized aspects of their histories around them especially resonates with that of Jonson's heroes.³³

The resonance with masque imagery continues as Wroth describes the statues of her own classical conceits:

Upon the first [tower] 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 was a statue of white Marble representing Venus, but so richly adorn'd, as it might for rareness, and exquisitenesse have beene taken for the Goddess her selfe. . . . Shee was crownd 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 Pallace: which shewed, that place was not to be open to all, but to few possessed with that vertue. (48)

Not only do Wroth's statues recall imagery from Campion's masques, her figures of Venus and Constancy recall that of Truth in Jonson's *Hymenaei*, in which 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 gates she locketh and displays' (105). 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 Pamphilia, like Truth, serves as the reconciling allegorical figure in the Three Towers enchantment. Wroth writes that 'Constancy stood holding the keyes, which Pamphilia tooke; at which instant Constancy vanished, as metamorphosing her self into her breast' (169). Pamphilia, then, is the allegorical representative for Constancy, whose powers, at least temporarily, have vanquished inconstancy.

For the Marble Theatre enchantment, Pamphilia, Urania, Philistella, and Selarina venture out to sea where, tossed in a magical storm, they are cast upon the great rock in the Gulf of Venice. Again, Wroth seems to draw her imagery from a familiar masque. In the *Masque of Beauty*, the daughters of Niger are described as 'nymphs at sea' who were 'almost lost' until 'on an island they by chance arrived' (64). On their great rock, Pamphilia and company see 'a round building like a Theatre, carved curiously, and in mighty pillars' (372). Pamphilia finds a key that enables the enchantment to be fully realized. Instantly 'appeared as magnificent a Theatre, as Art could frame', in which 'there was a Throne which nine steps ascended unto, on the top were fowre rich chayes of Marble, in which were most delicate, and sumptuous imbroider'd cushions, a Carpet of rich embrodery lying before, and under them' (373). The women then

venture to ascend the Throne, when instantly the sweetest musicke, and most enchanting harmony of voyces, so overruled their senses, 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 greatnesse in, he should be redeemed, and then should all bee finished. (373)

The structure used in this enchantment, a pillared marble edifice with throne and chairs, is reminiscent of those described in such masques as Jonson's *Masque of Beauty* and *Masque of Queens*, and Campion's *The Lords' Masque* and *Lord Hay's Masque*, as well as Daniel's *Tethys' Festival* with its throne raised six steps and its four 'neeces' where ladies sit.³⁴ Description of intricately designed architecture for seating key masquers is a standard part of masque texts, and Wroth's enchanted figures seated on the Throne of the Marble Theatre strongly recall this tradition.

Another masque reference occurs in the *deus ex machina* moment when Apollo appears and commands Veralinda to 'touch [the enchanted lovers] with a rod' that he throws down to her (455). The magic wand is often a key part of masque enchantments. In *Lord Hay's Masque*, Night touches the ranks of trees with a wand and they turn back into Apollo's knights (221–23). Interestingly, these trees do get to 'free' their 'fettered roots' and dance with joy in anticipation of being turned back into knights (220). In Campion's *The Earl of Somerset's Masque* (1614), for which scenery was designed by Prince Henry's architect, M. Constantine, the queen is invited to break a branch from the 'Sacred Tree', which she then gives to a Nobleman who then gives it to a Squire who uses it to 'uncharm' the Knights who have vanished into pillars of gold.³⁵ In the seminal French masque, the *Ballet comique*, Circe freezes the dancers with her 'verge d' or', her rod of gold.³⁶ The symbolic action of power passing from a supernatural (or royal) source to a wand or similar object and into the action of the enchantment is a common motif in masque action.

After Veralinda touches the enchanted lovers with Apollo's rod, 'the Chaires were vanished, and a Pillar of Gold stood in their stead, on which hung a Booke . . .' (455). Pillars are frequently used pieces of masque architecture. A 'translucent pillar shining with several-coloured lights' stands in the midst of the scenery in *The Masque of Beauty* (67). In *The Earl of Somerset's Masque*, as noted above, the six knights were turned into six 'Pillars all of golde./ Faire to our eyes, but wofull to beholde' (270). A similar object appears in *The Lords' Masque*, where, after a scene change, 'in the middle was erected an Obeliske, all of silver . . .' (259). Wroth's magically appearing pillar of gold is also suggestive of the ways in which scenes change in masques, as is her statement at the end of the Three Towers enchantment, '. . . the Pallace and all vanished' (170). In the Marble Theatre, the chairs' disappearance, which clears the way for the appearance of the pillar, is especially reminiscent of the use of various stage machines to create special effects for scenery changes.

In *Lord Hay's Masque*, the trees/enchanted knights magically sank 'a yarde', then they 'cleft in three parts' and masquers 'appeared out of the tops of them', a sequence repeated with each row of trees, thanks to 'an Ingin plac't under the stage' (221–22). In *The Lords' Masque*, huge stars 'mooved in an exceeding strange and delightfull maner' then 'suddainely vanished', thanks to the artifice of 'Master Innigoe Jones' (254). Also in this masque 'the Scaene was insensibly changed' after the 'Torche-bearers Daunce' and again after the 'Maskers second dance' making way for the scene with the Obeliske (255, 259). Dramatic changes of scenery were the forte of court architects, and Jones was especially renowned. In *The Masque of Queens*, Jonson, writing of Jones's work, notes that

the hell into which [the hags] ran quite vanished, and the whole face of the scene altered, scarce suffering the memory of such a thing. But in the place of it appeared a glorious and magnificent building figuring the House of Fame, in the top of which were discovered the twelve masquers sitting upon a throne triumphal erected in the form of a pyramid and circled with all store of light. (134)

Wroth's magically disappearing and appearing scenery resonates with the masque scene changes described by Jonson and Campion. The special effects created by Jones and others seem to have captured her imagination, inspiring her to write this aspect of masque action into her enchantments.

From her frontispiece depicting the scene of the Three Towers enchantment to her descriptions of opulent edifices, carvings, statuary, thrones, pillars, seating for enchanted figures, use of the magic wand, and dramatic changes of scenery, Wroth was clearly influenced by masque spectacle. The combination of masque-like scenery, action, and inaction in her enchantment scenes suggests that she was intentionally including masque ethos in her romance, but to what end? What role might the masque-like interludes be meant to play in her narrative? In the last section, I consider these questions in light of narrative and masque theory.

NARRATIVE AND MASQUE TRADITIONS AND THE OPEN ENDING

Summarizing Roland Barthes's observation that 'we bring to any readable narrative a set of narrative codes', H. Porter Abbott argues that two of Barthes's codes most applicable to the notion of closure are the proairetic and hermeneutic, having to do respectively with 'expectations and actions' and 'questions and answers'.³⁷ Regarding expectations, Abbott writes that 'we learn at a very early age to read and decode not just words but whole patterns like the genre of romance', and regarding questions, 'we seek enlightenment' and want to know exactly how a narrative will end.³⁸ Of course, based on our expectations, we typically look for closure that satisfies our sense of where things are headed in the narrative. Abbott notes that we seek closure 'in the same way that we look for answers to questions or fulfillment of expectations'; thus, 'the promise of closure has great rhetorical power in narrative'.³⁹

Wroth's romance is punctuated with enchantments, rescue missions, and acts of heroism, the outcomes of which lead readers to expect a triumphant ending. It also includes tales of love interrupted, lovers who are untrue, and lovers who are deserted, interjecting a line of cynicism that complicates the reader's ability to 'decode' the romance according to traditional expectations. From either perspective, however, the *Urania* is full of what Abbott above calls 'the promise of closure'. Each time that Pamphilia and Amphilanthus reconcile, there is renewed hope that the ending will indeed exemplify the 'cosmic happy ending' in which 'the hero and heroine are finally brought physically and spiritually together, melting into each other in an act of overwhelming love', one that 'symbolizes life, light and hope for the future'.⁴⁰ One might argue, of course, that Wroth includes enough negative events involving Pamphilia and Amphilanthus to foreshadow not a cosmic happy ending, but a dark, cynical, perhaps ultimately tragic ending, appropriate to the *roman à clef* nature of the *Urania*.⁴¹ If that were her desired outcome for the romance, however, it seems that she would have written it – or, if she were determined to imitate the open end of her uncle's *Arcadia*, she would have at least gestured towards it more emphatically near the open end of the *Second Part*. That, however, is not the case. 'The promise of closure' near the end of each part of the romance reinforces expectations of a happy ending.

Near the very end of the *First Part*, after surviving a particularly gruesome enchantment called 'The Hell of Deceit' in Book Four (654–55), Amphilanthus returns to Pamphilia (after a brief pause to lust after a bathing nymph). The two of them reconcile once more, and the last line reads, 'all things are prepared for the journey [to Italy], all now merry, contented, nothing amisse; greife forsaken, sadnes cast off, Pamphilia is the Queene of all content; Amphilanthus joying worthily in her; And' (661). It is, of course, the 'And . . .' that prohibits closure for the *First Part*, but everything in the line prefacing the 'And' shows the 'great rhetorical power' of the promise of closure.

Leading up to this stopping place for *Part One*, Wroth does what Abbott says all successful writers of narratives must do: she keeps her readers 'in a fluctuating state of impatience, wonderment, and partial gratification' as she recounts the adventures and misadventures in love that her characters experience.⁴² In the interest of giving her readers 'partial gratification', Wroth embeds in her romance the scenes that partake of the masque traditions discussed in the sections above. In doing so, she taps into the rhetorical power of the promise of closure. Orgel points out that 'the masque . . . is always about the resolution of

discord; antitheses, paradoxes, and the movement from disorder to order are central to its nature'.⁴³Through her ekphrastic inclusion of masque-like allegory and imagery, Wroth writes into her romance instances of masque-like resolutions, complete with confirming action that illustrates the end of discord. Even with the rhetorical sidestep that she performs in the Marble Theatre enchantment as she has Veralinda and Leonius provide a happy ending for that scene, she gestures toward a conclusion for the romance in which couples are brought together. Since her coterie of readers were familiar with the typical pattern of the masque genre and understood that masques end happily and triumphantly, they would perhaps deduce that Wroth tantalizingly alludes to the possibility that a similar ending might conclude her romance, if just the right magic spell were broken.

Such logic would not be mistaken. At the open end of *The Second Part*, there remains one last enchantment, known as the 'great Inchantment', in which a group of lost princes and princesses are entrapped. They await rescue by Amphilanthus and the Faire Designe, a gallant youth of unknown parentage, but who is hinted to be Amphilanthus' son. Wroth leaves her readers with Andromarko's challenging words to Amphilanthus: 'And Sir, your Faire Designe hath now left all things (beeing certainly informed by severall wisards, especially the sage Melissea), that the great Inchantment will nott bee concluded thes many yeeres; nay, nev[er], if you live not to assiste in the concluding' (418). Four lines later, the narrative breaks off, necessitating that readers use their imaginations to invoke a fitting conclusion to the 'great Inchantment', one, perhaps, that finally releases Amphilanthus from his wayward desires and rewards Pamphilia with the constant love she craves, as well as reveals something about the Faire Designe's parentage. The stage is thus set for a 'cosmic happy ending', but, of course, it does not materialize. We are simply told that 'Amphilanthus was extreemly . . .' (418), and the narrative halts.

Since we do not get to 'see' the breaking of this spell, we do not know if Wroth intended to use masque-like allegory and imagery in it, but she leads up to this enchantment in ways familiar to those who have read the Three Towers and the Marble Theatre enchantment scenes. A group of princes and princesses are entrapped in an enchantment, and those capable of breaking the spell have been supernaturally appointed. The sage Melissea foresees that 'one nott Capable as yett of knowledg must prove a man' and 'end that inchantment wherin the younge princes and princesses [are] inclosed' (174). And, as noted above, Andromarko announces that Amphilanthus must also be involved. If the Three Towers and the Marble Theatre enchantments may be read as foreshadowing for this one, the 'great Inchantment' does seem to be set up to bring the romance to a grand conclusion – with confirming action that illustrates some of the keys to Booker's 'cosmic happy ending' in that 'people have discovered everything they need to know, including their true identities', 'egotism and division . . . [have] at last been transcended', and 'at the heart of this transformation from incompleteness to wholeness has lain the transformation of just one individual, the central figure of the story'.⁴⁴ None of this, alas, comes to pass.

Wroth's deferral of a traditional masque-like conclusion in favour of an open ending precludes such gratification. The ambiguous ending, however, should not be considered to undermine the artistry of Wroth's synthesis of masque and romance traditions. When we consider romance-writing tradition in her family, her imitation of the open ending of Sidney's *Arcadia* makes sense. Moreover, as her numerous references to masques and masquers suggest, that art form, too, was a key influence on her development of narrative. Wroth's readers familiar with the masque traditions mentioned in this study – contention between opposing ideological forces, enchantment and immobilization, positive allegorical virtues breaking the enchantment, remobilization, and, finally, confirming action – would understand that they would have to defer their enjoyment of such a conclusion. Such deferral, however, might hold a certain pleasure for her audience, as it requires that they engage their imaginations to conclude the enchantment and join in the revels of this romance.

FOOTNOTES

1 D. A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981): 3.

2 Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (London: Continuum, 2004), 273.

3 Lady Mary Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, ed. Josephine Roberts, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 140; Renaissance English Text Society, Seventh Series, XVII (for 1992) (Binghamton, 1995), 536. Note: after the initial identification of a primary source, all the following page references will be given in parentheses.

4 Roberts, Introduction, *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 13. See also Roberts, Introduction, *First Part*, xxxi.

5 In the *First Part*, see the description of the masque to celebrate the marriage of the daughter of the Lord of Cephalonia and the son of the Lord of Zante, 41–42, and the masque-like entertainment put on by Lord Redulus, 184–85. In the *Second Part* [ed. Josephine Roberts, Suzanne Gossett, and Janel Mueller, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* Vol. 211, Renaissance English Text Society Seventh Series, XXIV (for 1999) (Tempe, 1999)], see the masque staged by the King of Tartaria, 46–49, and the magical, masque-like ‘verie pretty show’ orchestrated by the sorceress Melissea for Pamphilia, 112–15.

6 In addition to his comments in the epigraph, Booker suggests that the cosmic happy ending includes ‘the supreme moment of liberation in a story’ when ‘the hero and heroine are finally brought physically and spiritually together, melting into each other in an act of overwhelming love’. He also notes that this bringing together of the hero and heroine, both of whom have achieved a state of ‘individual balance and self-realisation’, creates a ‘new and perfect whole, the microcosm of some infinite state of union, shining with life, light and hope for the future’, *Seven Basic Plots*, 272–75.

7 I borrow the term ‘shadow’ from Roberts who explains that it ‘accurately describes the intermittent nature’ of the topicality of Wroth’s references to actual figures and relationships (Introduction to the *First Part*, lxxi).

8 See Jonson, *Complete Masques*, 476–77 and David J. Kathman, *Biographical Index of English Drama Before 1660*, <<http://www.shakespeareauthorship.com/bd/bio-h.htm>>, section H.

9 See Roberts, Introduction to *The First Part*, lxxviii and Orgel and Strong, 1: 89, 105, 131, and 191. Jones’s costume design for the Countess of Montgomery in *The Masque of Queens* may be seen in Orgel and Strong, 1: 143.

10 See Orgel and Strong, 1: 105, 241, 271, 277, 299, 405, and 159. See also Kathman, *Biographical Index of English Drama Before 1660*, section H.

11 Roberts, Introduction to the *First Part*, lxx.

12 In *Ballet in Western Culture: A History of Its Origins and Evolution* (New York: Routledge, 2002), Carol Lee points out that with Cesare Negri ‘came [to the French court] the skills of figured dancing that eventually culminated in the lively fashion of Italianate dancing and the splendid court ballets of Catharine de Medici’s regency,’ 39. Also part of this trend was the chief organizer of Catherine de Medici’s royal entertainments, Balthasar de Beaujoyeulx, né Baldassare da Belgioioso, under whose watch the magnificent spectacles of the French court rose to international prominence. One characteristic of his productions was his use of ‘static positions’ which were included in his *Ballet de Polonais* (1573) for the celebration of Henri III’s election to the Polish throne and his *Ballet comique de la reine* (1581) for the marriage of the Duc de Joyeuse to Marguerite de Lorraine, 42–46.

- 13 Fabritio Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame (1600): A Treatise on Courtly Dance*, trans. Julia Sutton, music transcribed by F. Marian Walker (Oxford University Press, 1986), 102–3.
- 14 Roberts, Introduction to the *First Part*, xx–xxxi.
- 15 John Harris, Stephen Orgel, and Roy Strong, *The King's Arcadia: Inigo Jones and the Court Masque* (London, 1973), 35.
- 16 Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court 1590–1619* (Manchester University Press, 2002), 45.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Booker, *Seven Basic Plots*, 267.
- 19 Skiles Howard, in *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), writes that court celebrations were a means to show how the ‘equilibrium of an unstable society might be secured’, 39.
- 20 McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 45.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 44.
- 22 Howard, *Politics of Courtly Dancing*, 23.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 24 See Roberts's discussion of the meanings of these characters’ names in her introduction to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 42, and in her introduction to *The First Part*, lxxvi–lxxvii.
- 25 Booker, *Seven Basic Plots*, 271.
- 26 Roberts, Introduction to the *First Part*, xxiii.
- 27 Booker, *Seven Basic Plots*, 272.
- 28 Roberts, Introduction, *The First Part*, lxxvi–lxxix.
- 29 Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Beauty*, *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven, 1969), 67; Wroth, *First Part*, 48.
- 30 Regarding the question of Wroth's connection with the design of the frontispiece, see Julie Campbell, ‘Lady Mary (Sidney) Wroth, Title Page, *Urania* (1621)’ in *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550–1700*, ed. by Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer (New York, 2004), 294–96. It is interesting to note that the engraving for her frontispiece is reminiscent of the *emblemata* in such works as the anonymously designed *Theatre d'Amour* (c. 1606) and Otto van Veen's *Amorum Emblemata* (1608), one edition of which is dedicated to William and Philip Herbert. See the edition *Amorum Emblemata, Figuris Aeneis Incisa Studio Othonis Vaeni Batavo-lvgdvnensis. Emblems of Love with Verse in Latin, English, and Italian* (Antverpiae, 1608). It is dedicated to ‘the moste honorable, and woorthie brothers, William Earle of Penbroke, and Philip Earle of Mountgomerie, patrons of learning and chevalrie’.

31 Roberts, Introduction to the *First Part*, cvi.

32 Niches.

33 In John Peacock's *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones: The European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), see plate 21 on p. 73, Jones's design for the House of Fame.

34 Samuel Daniel, *Tethys Festival*, *The Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Samuel Daniel*, ed. Alexander Grosart, 5 vols. (New York, 1963), 3: 316–7. Orgel and Strong note that the designer for this masque is Jones, 1: 191.

35 Campion, *The Earl of Somerset's Masque*, *The Works of Thomas Campion*, ed. Walter R. Davis (New York: Norton, 1970), 270, 272–3.

36 Balthasar Beaujoyeulx, *Balet comique de la Royne* (Paris, 1582), 22v–24v. In *Ballet in Western Culture: A History of Its Origins and Evolution* (New York, 2002), Carol Lee points out that 'several hundred copies of the printed *Ballet Comique* were presented to European courts and wealthy families', inciting 'widespread imitation', 45.

37 H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 53. See also Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang-Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), 18–21.

38 Porter, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 54–7.

39 *Ibid.*, 59–60.

40 Booker, *Seven Basic Plots*, 272, 275.

41 Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller write, 'Pembroke's definitive gesture of rejection (he bequeathed his estate to his nephew – not his son with Wroth) may have ended romance in both senses, that is, whatever remained of the love affair and the project of the *Urania*, its literary representation. In any case, the death of Susan Herbert, Countess of Montgomery, in 1629, and the death of William Herbert himself in 1630 serve as quite certain overtures for the romance and easily explain Lady Mary's loss of interest in completing the story': Introduction to *The Second Part*, xxiii.

42 Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 53.

43 Orgel, Introduction, *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, 3.

44 Booker, *Seven Basic Plots*, 274.

