

Structured Proliferation

Readers and the Narrative Art of Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*

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Keywords:

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Abstract:

Critical judgements of Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* have ranged from calling the work an unstructured imitation of the *Arcadia* to considering it an historic achievement by the first female author to write an original English romance. However, no studies have thoroughly reconsidered the work's intricate narrative structures in a generic and historical context. This is, I argue, among other reasons due to a problem of reading competence, which is, in part at least, a historical issue. It is the aim of my thesis, therefore, to propose a number of reading strategies that will allow modern readers to appreciate the *Urania* not only as a fascinating socio-historic document of a woman's negotiation of contemporary norms and circumstances, but also as an innovative literary work that combines, adopts and adapts literary traditions and forms. To this end, my thesis will, after an introductory discussion of the elaborate frontispiece of the *Urania*, reflect on the differences between modern and early modern reading practices. This includes a critical renegotiation of the narratological tools derived from structuralism, taking into account the historic, cultural and generic specificity of texts, as well as a discussion of the romance genre and the implications that the choice of this genre has on the text's structure and meaning. Turning to the *Urania* itself, I will subsequently provide a detailed analysis of the work's most remarkable structural features and of its recurring themes and plots to highlight the larger overarching patterns that shape Wroth's text. This analysis will allow me to outline a number of reading strategies with which early modern readers might have approached the *Urania* to make sense of the text. Based on the insights thus gained, I hope to provide a new approach to Wroth's fascinating work and to confirm Wroth's literary craftsmanship as an author in the context of historical and genre-specific reading practices.

They all smiled to heere this strange relation, butt most itt contented them because told by the most worthy and temperate Prince living, and the discreetest from all kinde of follis. Amphilanthus was mightely taken with the story, beeing so neatly discoursed and certainly well sett out by Rosindy, soe thinking in requitall to make some relation of one of his traviels, they were called in to the Court to super, after which they all went abroad againe, and by the river side they hapined on this pretty adventure. (II.i.36)

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Abbreviations and Short Titles

Primary Material and Reference Works

Urania Editions

Unless otherwise specified, all the quotations from the *Urania* are taken from the modern editions of the first or second part, edited respectively by Josephine A. Roberts and by Roberts, Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller.

- I Wroth, Mary. *The First Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Ed. Josephine A. Roberts. Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1995.
- II Wroth, Mary. *The Second Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Ed. Josephine A. Roberts. Completed by Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller. Tempe, AZ: Renaissance English Text Society and Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999.
- F Wroth, Mary. *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works. Part 1: Printed Writings, 1500-1640. Mary Wroth*. Vol. 10. Eds. Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen. Introd. Josephine A. Roberts. Aldershot: Scolar, 1996.
- UA Wroth, Mary. *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Abridged. Ed. Mary Ellen Lamb. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011.

Other Primary Works

- DP Sidney, Sir Philip. *Defence of Poesie*. Ed. Elizabeth Porges Watson. London: Everyman, 1997.
- FQ Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. London: Penguin, 1987.
- NA Sidney, Sir Philip. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Ed. Maurice Evans. London: Penguin, 1987.
- OA Sidney, Sir Philip. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Poems* Roberts, Josephine A., ed. *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.

Reference Works

- DNB* *Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. Sidney Lee. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1900.
- ODNB* *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: from the Earliest Times to the Year 2000*. Ed. H.C.G. Matthew et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- OED* *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, 2012. Web.
- STC* Pollard, Alfred W. and G. R. Redgrave. *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640*. 2nd ed. Eds. W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and Katharine F. Pantzer. London: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Secondary Material

- Cherished* Cavanagh, Sheila T. *Cherished Torment: The Emotional Geography of Lady Mary Wroth's Urania*. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2001.
- English* Salzman, Paul. *English Prose Fiction, 1558-1700: A Critical History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Introduction* Fludernik, Monika. *An Introduction to Narratology*. Trans. Patricia Häusler-Greenfield and Monika Fludernik. London: Routledge, 2009.
- MSLW* Hannay, Margaret P. *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010.
- 'Natural'* Fludernik, Monika. *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Reading* Salzman, Paul. *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- "Romancing"* Cavanagh, Sheila T. "Romancing the Epic: Lady Mary Wroth's Urania and Literary Traditions." *Approaches to the Anglo and American Female Epic, 1621-1982*. Ed. Bernard Schweizer. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. 19-36.
- "Story"* Abbott, Horace Porter. "Story, plot, and narration." *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*. Ed. David Herman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 39-51.
- Women* Hackett, Helen. *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Frontispiece

Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countesse of Mountgomerie Urania* presents a challenge to its modern academic readers due to a paradoxical combination of lack and abundance. The full title of the work—

The Countesse of Mountgomerie URANIA / Written by the right honorable the Lady /
MARY WROATH / Daughter to the right Noble Robert / Earle of Leiceſter / And Neece to
the ever famous, and re: / nowned S^r. Phillips [sic] Sidney knight. And to / y^e most exelēt
Lady Mary Countesse of / Pembroke late deceaſed

—is abundant in its heralding of the author's noble descent and, by implication, the work's literary lineage and status. Equally abundant is the engraving on the title page by the artist Simon van de Passe, inviting the viewer's gaze to enter, through an arch bearing the work's title in a cartouche, into a world that appears at once familiar and elusive. The *Urania* hence exemplifies Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker's general observation in *Reading, Society, and Politics in Early Modern England* that in early modern books "the architecture of the title page framed the authority of and entrance to the text, at times literally with column, arch and cartouche" (6). Before fully entering the world of the *Urania*, however, one has to step over, as it were, another cartouche, placed between the columns like a barrier, that reads, "LONDON / Printed for IOHⁿ MARRIOTT / and IOHN GRISMAND And / are to bee ſould at their ſhop / pes in S^t. Dunstons Church / yard in Fleetſtreet and in / Poules Alley at y^e ſigne of / the Gunn." Compared to the lofty aspirations evoked by the title, this second cartouche is literally down to earth, foregrounding the material mediation of the work and the publishers' financial stakes in it.

The rich title page, which will be discussed in more detail below, stands in striking contrast to the curious lack of other paratexts both preceding and following the narrative: there is no dedicatory epistle, no letter to the reader, no index and no "clavis," as for example

at the end of the 1628 translation of John Barclay's *Argenis*. Instead, the page following the title page starts with the repetition of the title "THE / COVNTESSE / OF MOVNTGOME- / RIES URANIA" and beneath it the heading "THE FIRST BOOKE." (I.i.1 F),¹ followed by the sentence:

When the Spring began to appeare like the welcome messenger of Summer, one sweet (and in that more sweet) morning, after Aurora had called all carefull eyes to attend the day, forth came the faire Shepherdesse Urania, (faire indeed; yet that farre too meane a title for her, who for beautie deserv'd the highest stile could be given by best knowing Judgements). (I.i.1)

In her introduction to the *Urania*, Josephine A. Roberts puts forward the following hypothesis to account for the missing paratextual material:

When Mathewes [Augustine Mathewes, the probable printer according to the *STC* (2:479)] began setting the text of the *Urania* on sig. B, he left sig. A for the expected preliminary dedicatory poems or prefaces, typically found in volumes of this period, especially those by aristocratic authors. Yet he apparently failed to receive any introductory material from the author or her friends, and so the text begins on sig. B, abruptly following the title-page in all surviving copies. (I.cx)

This lack of paratextual transition from the title page to the opening *in medias res* of Wroth's work means that readers face the text on their own, at liberty to read it in their own manner, but also without any apparent authorial or editorial guidance. It would of course be simplistic to take letters to the reader—be they addressed "TO THE GENTLEMEN READERS HEALTH" (144) or "To the Courteous and Courtly *Ladies of England*" (146) as in Robert Greene's *Penelope's Web*—at face value with regard to their claims about a work's nature and their recommended ways of reading it.² Paratexts addressed to readers often serve promotional or apologetic functions, i.e. authors, editors or booksellers try to sell the book, to

¹ The first and second part of the *Urania* are abbreviated by the Roman numerals I and II. The lower case numerals stand for the book in question, and the last number for the page. The letter F following the page number indication will be used for references to Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen's facsimile edition of the 1621 publication of the first part of the *Urania*, whose pagination differs from that of Roberts' modern edition. When quoting from the facsimile edition, I have silently regularised the letters i/j, u/v, w/vv and long s/s according to modern spelling. References to editors' notes in the modern edition of the *Urania* will be marked as n followed by the page and line number(s) to which the note refers. References to Mary Ellen Lamb's abridged edition of the *Urania* are indicated by the abbreviation UA.

² Cf. Helen Hackett's discussion in *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* of the ways in which paratexts and especially "epistles to women readers [...]" are designed to attract the potential buyer in the congested marketplace of St Paul's Churchyard" (11).

obtain patronage, to justify the book's publication or to shield themselves from possible negative reactions to a work.³ Yet, as Louise Wilson in "Playful Paratexts" points out, preliminaries can be appropriated for less straightforward purposes, too, like intertextual games or jokes addressed to a restricted audience, for example (122, 131-132). However, even if driven by such material or personal motives, paratexts still construct models of reading and raise expectations according to which, or against which, readers approach a text—assuming that they have not skipped the prefatory material, that is.⁴

With regard to the *Urania* no such models are provided, or rather, the elaborate frontispiece is the only paratext available to guide one's reading of Wroth's work. As my study investigates the expectations with which modern and early modern readers approach a text like the *Urania* and the reading strategies they are invited to develop by the text's narrative structures, this combination of paratextual lack and abundance is of particular interest because it prefigures, so to speak, the challenge that Wroth's text sets its readers, i.e. how to read the romance's textual proliferation with a minimum of extratextual guidance. In the remainder of this section, I will therefore address the question of how interpreting the lack of preliminaries, on the one hand, and the ornate frontispiece, on the other, might prepare readers—modern and early modern alike—for Wroth's complex narrative.

As Roberts' explanation cited above implies, the lack of preliminaries in the *Urania* is remarkable from a historical point of view. In her study *Reading Material in Early Modern England* Heidi Brayman Hackel writes: "By the early seventeenth century, many conventions were firmly established for both the dedicatory epistle and the address to the reader, the most basic of which was the expectation of their presence in most printed books" (103). Brayman Hackel even suggests that a work unaccompanied by an epistle would have been regarded as

³ Examples to illustrate these varying purposes of paratexts can be found in Heidi Brayman Hackel's study *Reading Material in Early Modern England* (114, 115, 118, 120, 121-122). See also the discussion of early modern reading practices in section 2.2 "Early Modern Reading practices" below.

⁴ Brayman Hackel's observation that early modern books often insist that readers read the preliminaries before proceeding further (91) suggests that skipping the prefatory material was not unthinkable.

incomplete at the time (103) and claims that “Aside from title pages” preliminaries belong, together with printed marginalia, to “the most nearly standard paratextual features of an early modern book” (88). Brayman Hackel’s statements are further supported by her analysis of the Countess of Bridgewater’s library in which “93 percent of the [241] books open with at least one preliminary address” (90). One may thus wonder how early modern readers of the *Urania* would have interpreted this unusual absence of preliminaries—especially since, as mentioned above, the text starts on signature B and signature A is missing.

One possibility is that they regarded the text as unauthorised for publication and the absence of signature A as a ploy of the publishers’ to make the book look authorised but accidentally incomplete. In other words, the publication of the *Urania* might have been considered as an attempt to profit from the popularity of Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* and the author’s illustrious family connections. Such an attitude would in turn make the work appear potentially scandalous because it might contain matter not meant for the general public, whether in terms of the story or in terms of personal information and references. Indeed the mere fact of publication revealed to Wroth’s contemporaries that she did not only write the occasional poem, which, Christina Luckyj suggests in “The Politics of Genre in Early Women’s Writing,” was an expected accomplishment of aristocratic women at the time (263-264), but that she spent a considerable amount of her time as a widow writing a romance. In *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* Helen Hackett shows how male-authored letters addressed to women readers conjure up the fantasy of voyeuristic access to women’s more private spaces for men (11-12), and the publication of the *Urania*, one might argue, allowed for this type of fantasy too, since it is material evidence of the hours Wroth spent writing in her closet or study.⁵

⁵ In his will from 1614 Robert Wroth expressly mentioned that “all her books and furniture of her studdye and closett” (*Poems* 23) should go to his wife, and George Manners, seventh Earl of Rutland, refers to “your study att Banerds Castle in London” (*Poems* 29, 244) in a letter that was very probably addressed to Lady Mary Wroth. Wroth then apparently had, as Margaret P. Hannay remarks in *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, “a room of her own’

This possible reaction of early modern readers to the lack of prefatory material places the responsibility for the publication of the *Urania* with the publisher—although this would not exempt Wroth from blame since it could be held against her that she should not have written the work in the first place.⁶ Another option would be to see Wroth as responsible for the omission of preliminaries. If intentional, the lack of letters to the reader or the dedicatee of the romance might seem an arrogant gesture because it appears to signal that—presumably thanks to her family connections—Wroth considers herself above the need of any protection from the dedicatee or the traditional “gentle” reader.⁷ Even if authors’ apologies for their work, a traditional element of the letters to the dedicatee or readers, very often serve self-promotional purposes, the absence of any such apology is striking, all the more so considering that Wroth is a woman writing in a traditionally male genre. Moreover, most of Wroth’s readers would probably have been familiar with Sidney’s *Arcadia*, prefaced by his letter addressed to his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, which contains Sidney’s well-known apology for “this idle work of mine” (NA 57), characterised as “a trifle, and that triflingly handled” (NA 57).

If the omission of prefatory material is not read as a presumptuous gesture, it could be interpreted as a means of indicating the intended readership of the *Urania*. As Brayman Hackel indicates, learned readers and dedicatees were often expressly told in preliminaries that they might skip the prefatory material and proceed to the text immediately (98). According to Aristotle, Brayman Hackel notes, “prefatory remarks are unnecessary if one has either a good case or a good audience” (116), implying that “a good audience” would be able to understand and therefore appreciate a text, just as “a good case” would convince readers. Hence the absence of preliminaries from Wroth’s romance might be seen to signal that the

for writing” (171) both in Loughton and Baynard’s Castle in London, where she regularly spent the time from autumn to spring according to Hannay’s biography—at least until the birth of her illegitimate children by William Herbert (66, 177, 252-253).

⁶ This is precisely what Lord Edward Denny, Baron of Waltham, did when he wrote to Wroth to “leave idle bookes alone / For wise and worthy women have writte none” (*Poems* 33).

⁷ The notion of the gentle reader will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2 “Early Modern Reading Practices” in the following chapter.

work is aimed only at a sophisticated audience that would not need any additional guidance to make their reading profitable. However, while the actual buyers of the folio—a relatively expensive work—might indeed primarily have been more educated people, the reaction of Lord Edward Denny, Wroth’s most famous contemporary critic, shows that this in itself was not enough to prevent negative criticism.

A third possible explanation for an intentional omission of prefatory material is offered by Mary Ellen Lamb in her introduction to the abridged *Urania*. Discussing the question of whether or to what extent Wroth was responsible for the publication, Lamb asks, “did Wroth fully intend its publication, but wished for it to seem accidental or beyond her control?” (*UA* 6). Wroth herself protested that “the books ‘were solde against my minde I never purposing to have had them published’” (I.cv). Yet anything but such a denial would have been highly surprising at the time, considering Wroth’s position in society and the worldly subject matter of her work. Contrary to this flat denial of involvement, “The publishing history of the *Urania* offers very mixed evidence concerning the author’s involvement in the bringing the work to press” (126),⁸ as Roberts puts it in her article “Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania*: A Response to Jacobean Censorship.” The missing introductory and dedicatory material, as well as the beginning of the text on signature B, could then be interpreted as the result of unauthorised publication or as a deliberate authorial strategy. Similarly, the fact that, as Roberts mentions, “the book received extensive and careful correction during the entire printing process” (“Textual Introduction” I.cxi) can be interpreted in different ways: Roberts favours the idea that the corrections are due to the corrector of the press “without the author’s involvement” (I.cxii). Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller, on the other hand, emphasise that such extensive correction indicates that the author or at least an agent of hers was involved in the printing process (II.xx n11). A further strong argument for Wroth’s involvement in the publication is

⁸ See also Tom W. N. Parker’s discussion of the folio’s “contradictory evidence” (135) in *Proportional Form in the Sonnets of the Sidney Circle* (134-137).

the elaborately engraved title page, discussed further below. Conversely, the dubious reputation with regard to pirated publications of “the probable printer,” Augustine Mathewes, as well as the publishers, Marriott and Grismond, rather seems to speak against Wroth’s involvement (“Textual Introduction” I.cvii), as does the puzzling ending of the printed text, which Roberts interprets as due to a lack of instruction from the author (I.cx).⁹ In *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth* Margaret P. Hannay quotes Michael G. Brennan, who opts for a compromise in the debate, proposing that Wroth might originally have intended to publish her work but later decided otherwise, with the publishers proceeding “regardless of her wishes, since they needed the profits from selling” (235) the work. The lack of preliminaries and the missing signature A would then again signify unauthorised publication and/or perhaps a lack of support from Wroth’s friends and family rather than resulting from a deliberate strategy of Wroth’s to obfuscate her involvement in the publication.¹⁰

A last plausible explanation for the omission of prefatory material would be that Wroth is imitating somebody else’s example. As mentioned, Sidney’s printed *Arcadia* opens with his letter to his sister already in the first edition in 1590 and can therefore not have served as a model. The likeliest candidate for imitation would presumably be Wroth’s aunt, Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, whose English translations of Robert Garnier’s *Antonius* and Philippe de Mornay’s *Discourse of Life and Death* were published in 1592 without any preliminaries except for “The Argument” prefacing the *dramatis personae* in *Antonius*.¹¹ This is quite remarkable because, as Suzanne Trill notes with regard to *Antonius* in “Spectres and

⁹ The book ends with the word “And” starting a new sentence, which, rather than an imitation of Sir Philip Sidney’s ending of the *New Arcadia* in mid-sentence, Roberts identifies as the catchword for the manuscript continuation of the romance (I.cxi).

¹⁰ The strategy Lamb suggests would correspond well to Hannay’s observation concerning the *Urania* that “Like Barclay, Wroth wanted to maintain deniability” (MSLW 234).

¹¹ Another but less likely model for imitation might have been the 1590 publication of Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, which in one of the variants of this edition (23080 STC 2nd ed.) does not include the dedication to Queen Elizabeth that follows the title page in other copies. Moreover, for unknown reasons, the usual preliminary paratexts follow at the end of the work. In “Fictions of Collaboration” Colin Burrow argues that this “relegation of the preliminaries to the rear” was remarked and even “mocked” by other authors like Nashe and that it “resulted in a strikingly solitary presentation of the author” (191).

Sisters,” “drama represents a potentially more public discourse than that of the *Psalmes*” (202). “This ‘silence’,” Trill continues, “could be read in many ways, but in neither case does Mary Sidney hide her authorship; both *Antonious* and *The Discourse of Life and Death* announce on their title-pages that they were ‘Done into English by the Countess of Pembroke’” (202). There is a parallel between these publications and Wroth’s insofar as they are both the first print publications—as opposed to manuscript circulation—of their respective authors. However, in contrast to Wroth’s romance, the works of the Countess of Pembroke are translations rather than original works and, as such, might have been considered less in need of paratextual apparatus.¹² Two further factors might have contributed to bestowing on the Countess an authority as a translator and poet that permitted her to publish her translations without preliminaries: the fame of her dead brother Philip and the circumstance that, as Hannay points out in *Philip’s Phoenix*, the Countess was in some sort continuing her brother’s translations of French Protestant authors by translating de Mornay (61). By the time of the publication of the *Urania* Wroth was also known as a writer, and a number of her poems were circulated at least from 1613 on (*Poems* 19), as some poems dedicated or referring to Wroth indicate. However, given her diminished social prominence after her husband’s and son’s deaths in 1614 and 1616 respectively, it seems probable that the audience of Wroth’s work was restricted to friends and family members, which, combined with Wroth’s choice of genre,

¹² Brayman Hackel seems to imply this much when observing that “Early modern women especially published primarily in genres that relied explicitly on their readings of other texts: translations, compilations, refutations, and editions” (55) rather than producing original works, and Travitsky in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print* lists translation as a socially acceptable text type for women writers (26). However, Margaret Tyler in her letter “to the Reader” prefacing her 1578 translation of *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood* famously justifies her work (Aiiii-Aiiii verso), thereby indicating that a woman’s translation of a romance was a transgressive act at the time. It is thus difficult to judge whether the Countess’s translations—one secular, one religious—would have been deemed transgressive, especially since, as Hannay suggests, the “translation of Mornay’s *Excellent discovrs de la Vie et de la Mort* likewise made both a religious and a political statement” (*Philip’s Phoenix* 61) and *Antonius*, too, with its focus “on national issues” (125) could be regarded as commenting on current political issues (126-129). Still, Hannay maintains that “Mary Sidney Herbert had pushed the boundaries of acceptable genres for women by publishing translations with her name on the title page, and she had circulated some of her poems, but elegies, translation, and religious verse, no matter how celebrated, were less transgressive than love poems” (*MSLW* 209).

makes the publication of the *Urania* without preliminaries more daring than the Countess of Pembroke's publications.



fig. 1: *The Countesse of Mountgomerie's Urania*, frontispiece. Reproduced with permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. Shelfmark J-J Sidney 55.

Whether early modern readers considered the lack of prefatory material as a sign of dubious provenance, arrogance, naivety, imitation or simply as an oversight or accident because the intended introductory letters or poems did not arrive at the printer's in time, the only material guidance to their reading was ultimately provided by the frontispiece, which therefore merits closer attention. Several modern critics have discussed the title page to the *Urania* and how it reflects on Wroth's work or on herself as an author. In *Incest and Agency in Elizabeth's England*, Maureen Quilligan sees the engraving as an instruction how to read the text (167-168) and as an idealized representation of a country estate that might be associated with Penshurst, which she suggests is used as a strategy of self-empowerment by Wroth (179-185).¹³ According to Shannon Miller in "Constructing the Female Self," the frontispiece rather illustrates Wroth's strategy used throughout the romance of making "women's movement toward the 'interior' of a physical structure" stand for the representation of their "movement into the interior self" (144). Lamb in *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* maintains that through its title and the engraving, the *Urania* represents "itself as reading appropriate to upper-class readers" with leisure enough for such "lengthy entertainments" (181). Commenting on the "Devious Topicality" of the *Urania*, Lamb adds, "This work, the title page implies, aims only to please" (181)—a claim undermined by the work's *roman-à-clef* features, i.e. the inclusion of potentially scandalous and offending references to historical events or persons (182-185). In her introduction to the abridged *Urania*, Lamb again comments on the frontispiece, interpreting the two figures walking towards the bridge on the bottom left of the image as representing male and female readers dressed up like dancers in a masque (UA 2). The title-page, Lamb writes, "portrays not only [the work's] content, but also the experience it offers us," inviting readers to "wander" and "explore" and mirroring "the meandering narratives, the winding sentences, the elegant vistas,

¹³ All of the references to Quilligan's work in this section refer to *Incest and Agency in Elizabeth's England*.

all contributing to a sense of leisurely enjoyment that is so much a part of the pleasure of reading the *Urania*” (UA 1). Roberts, finally, does not interpret the title page, but notes that the engraving “depicts the central episode of the Throne of Love” (“Textual Introduction” I.cvi), the enchantment that appears in the first book of the *Urania* and is described as follows:

Thus, on they went (but as in a Labyrinth without a thrid) till they came within sight of a rare and admirable Pallace.

It was scituated on a Hill, but that Hill formed, as if the world would needs raise one place of purpose to build Loves throne upon; all the Country besides humbly plaine, to shew the subjection to that powerfull dwelling. The Hill whereon this Pallace stood was just as big as to hold the House: three sides of the Hill made into delicate Gardens and Orchards: the further side was a fine and stately Wood. This 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 mainetaine, and uphold the honour, and House of Love. Comming towards it, they imagined it some Magicall work, for so daintily it appear’d in curiositie, as it seem’d as if it hung in the ayre, the Trees, Fountains, and all sweet delicacies being discerned through it. 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.

At the foote of this Hill ranne a pleasant and sweetly passing river, over which was a Bridge, on which were three Towres: 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 was a statue of white Marble, representing Venus, but so richly adorn’d, as it might for rarenesse, and exquisitenesse have beene taken for the Goddesses selfe, and have causd as strange an affection as the Image did to her maker, when he fell in love with his owne worke. She 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. (I.i.47-48)

This inclusion of an important scene on the title page is not uncommon for romances published at the time according to Quilligan, who gives the example of the 1619 edition of Anthony Munday’s *Amadis de Gaule*, which depicts the finding of Amadis by sailors on the frontispiece (174-175).¹⁴

¹⁴ Compare also the depiction of Musidorus and Pyrocles and a bear and a lion on the 1593 title page of Sidney’s *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*, alluding to the scene when the two princes defend Pamela and Philoclea from the wild beasts set free by Cecropia (cf. Corbett and Lightbown 58-62).

In the absence of any other paratexts, Quilligan's and Lamb's suggestion that the title page serves as an instruction for readers appears particularly attractive. Thus, for instance, discussing the windmill in the background on the right of the engraving (185-191), Quilligan proposes to read the emblem as an allusion to *Don Quixote*, indicating the "parodic bent of the text" (188). While Quilligan's reference to the prominence of windmills on the title page of the highly successful English translation of *Don Quixote* (186-190) makes her conclusions seem plausible, they obviously remain speculative given our inconclusive knowledge about the circumstances of the publication of the *Urania*. If one endorses the idea of the frontispiece as a guide for readers, this implies that van de Passe received detailed instructions from the author, from someone acting on her behalf or from a careful reader of the *Urania*. Roberts assumes that "someone very well-acquainted with the nature of the fiction" or even Wroth herself gave van de Passe instructions, mentioning Sir John Harington's translation of *Orlando Furioso* and "the 1593 edition of Sir Philip Sidney's works" as similar cases in which engravers received detailed instructions from "aristocratic authors" or their agents ("Textual Introduction" l.cvi). Hannay highlights Simon van de Passe's ties to the Herbert family, demonstrated by his engraving of the famous portrait of the Countess of Pembroke holding the *Psalmes* in 1618, as well as portraits of William and Philip Herbert (*MSLW* 233). This connection seems to support Roberts' assumptions that somebody close to the Herberts or Sidneys was involved in the publication,¹⁵ especially since Hannay sees the depiction of the Countess on van de Passe's engraving as the result of her own choice to represent herself as the author of the *Psalmes* (*Philip's Phoenix* 193). Quilligan variously attributes the inclusion of the windmill to "one contemporary reader's response to the text" (185), to van de

¹⁵ While Hannay discusses to what extent William Herbert might have furthered or rather opposed the publication of the *Urania* (*MSLW* 232-235), nobody to date, at least to my knowledge, has proposed the Countess of Montgomery as someone who might have been involved in its publication. Mentioned as the dedicatee in the title, her relation to Wroth's work parallels in some ways that of the Countess of Pembroke's to Sidney's *Arcadia*, and, as Roberts notes in her "Critical Introduction," Anthony Munday in the preliminaries to his *Amadis* translations published in 1618-1619 describes the Countess of Montgomery as actively encouraging if not requesting his work and hence its publication (l.xvii).

Passe “or whoever gave him directions for the engraving” (185), or even to William Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke (187-188), who was Wroth’s cousin and lover, as well as the real-life counterpart of the work’s fictional hero, Amphilanthus.¹⁶

In their book *The Comely Frontispiece*, Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbown emphatically maintain that frontispieces are authored by the writers of the text rather than the engravers of the image. They write, for example, that “in these designs we are confronted with conceits of the author, represented at the front of his [sic] book in visual symbols that he himself had chosen and designed as its most fitting emblems” (1), supporting their claim with the fact that the engravers signed their work with the words “fecit” or “sculpsit” rather than with the term “Inventor” (45). According to Corbett and Lightbown, artists would instruct the engravers orally or in written form (45), and

the design was not confined to the expression of one idea or one theme. It was the vehicle for the thoughts of the author on his work, but might also seek to give an indication of its scope, and include pictorial representations which could be understood only by perusing the book, thus stimulating the reader’s curiosity. All the themes were carefully interwoven into the set patterns for the design of title-pages, according to an inner logic, to make up the meaning of the whole. (35)

Corbett and Lightbown’s claims provide attractive suggestions with regard to the *Urania*, but there does not seem to be enough evidence to adopt them without reserve in the case of Wroth’s work.

Judging from the close correspondence, noted by Quilligan (168-174), between the visual representation of the Throne of Love on the title page and its textual representation in the first book (I.i.47-48),¹⁷ the assumption that the image on the engraving is due to somebody’s

¹⁶ Interestingly, Quilligan does not mention the possibility of Wroth having given these directions, even though she argues that the frontispiece visually represents Wroth’s strategy of self-empowerment as an author (191), i.e. her refusal to “be traded out” (212) of the protected space of her own family.

¹⁷ What Quilligan does not point out is that compared to the description of the bridge with the three towers in the text, its representation on the frontispiece is mirror-inverted. Whereas in the text the statues of Cupid and Venus both point with their right arm to the next tower, i.e. Cupid to Venus’ tower and Venus to Constancy’s tower, they do so with their left arm on the title-page. Victor Skretkowitz puts forth the hypothesis that “The engraver, Simon van de Passe, may simply have copied the original sketch without reversing it,” basing his assumption on the observation that the couple approaching the bridge, whom Skretkowitz identifies as Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, presents “a mirror-image of the text, where Pamphilia’s ‘left Glove was off, holding the King by the hand’ (I.169)” (277).

careful reading of the first book of the *Urania* seems fairly safe. It could be argued that all the careful reader need have read of the *Urania* are the two pages describing the setting of the Throne of Love and the trial it poses (I.i.47-49). Yet, such a minimalist hypothesis does not appear probable because these two pages do not occur at the very beginning, but only 39 pages into the narrative in the 1621 edition of the text (I.i.39-40 F).¹⁸ Moreover, the choice of representing the Throne of Love on the title page suggests a reader who has read the entire first book and knows that this enchantment is the book's climax and conclusion. On the basis of these assumptions I would like to speculate further that the frontispiece can indeed serve as a guide for the readers of the *Urania*—not so much by visualising Wroth's strategy of self-empowerment or gesturing towards a "movement into the interior self" ("Constructing the Female Self"), as Quilligan and Miller suggest respectively, but more along the lines of Lamb's ideas, by reflecting on the narrative structures and thematic focus of the text.¹⁹

The first impression of the title page is probably twofold and could be described by the terms symmetry and stateliness. All the salient features of the image except the hill are doubled and mirror each other: the top and bottom cartouches, the arch above and its shadow on the ground, the two columns on the left and the two on the right, the temple on the hill and the bridge over the river, the landscape to the left of the hill and that to the right of the hill. The hill is at the centre of the image, occupying a pivotal position. Apart from these symmetrical features, what catches the eye first is the stately architecture, which, Lamb

¹⁸ To compare, the finding of Amadis depicted on the title page of the 1619 edition of Munday's translation occurs towards the end of the second chapter, i.e. on pages 18-19 in Helen Moore's modern edition of Munday's translation and on pages 18-21 in Hugues Vaganay's edition of Herberay's French translation. It needs to be added though that Amadis' exposure on the sea is literally his first adventure in the text, whereas Urania, the eponymous heroine of Wroth's text, encounters a variety of adventures before reaching the Throne of Love. Thus, the choice of scene for the frontispiece of Wroth's text appears more conscious or at least less likely to be fortuitous than in the case of *Amadis*, and the *Urania* could in that respect be compared to the 1593 *Arcadia* mentioned in footnote 14, whose title page also alludes to a scene that only occurs in the last chapter of the first book (NA 176-180).

¹⁹ My interpretation seems to move into a similar direction as R. L. Widmann's study, "The Title page of Wroth's *Urania* (1621), Liberating Space, and Architexture." According to Roberts, who mentions this study in her "Textual Introduction," Widmann "shows how the multiple vanishing points of the engraving call attention to disruptions within the narrative" (I.cvi). Unfortunately I was not able to read Widmann's paper, which has not been published.

proposes, “An early modern reader might have admired [...] as conforming to the latest Palladian architectural style” (*UA* 1). The Corinthian columns, the elaborate arch, the tripartite front of the bridge and the temple, the turrets with the statues on the bridge and the statues decorating the temple—all these elements emphasise an impression of verticality and give the image a static and rigid quality.

It is only at a second glance that one perceives elements that relativise the impression of symmetry. The river, for instance, does not encircle the hill but only flows along one side of it, the gardens are not arranged symmetrically, the landscape to the right and left of the hill look different, the cluster of buildings on the left is faced by the windmill, and there is no second pair of figures mirroring the woman and the man approaching the bridge. The title page, then, presents a game of symmetry and variation based on doubled features that mirror each other, sometimes quite accurately, as in the case of the Corinthian columns, but more often with a difference. Additional examples to illustrate this would be the enclosed gardens and the columns of the arch and the temple. As far as the inside of the gardens is visible, their layout is perfectly symmetrical. Yet the layout of each garden differs from the next so that while the gardens present three versions of the same, they are not identical.²⁰ Similarly, the columns of the arch and the temple echo each other like the three gardens, but differ in style because rather than Corinthian, the columns of the temple appear Doric, and they do not seem to be crenellated.²¹ The pillars of the bridge could be added as a third term of comparison since they take up the vertical dimension of the columns but are fashioned in yet another style, opposing a plain stone-hewn front reminiscent of a medieval castle to the refined classical columns. In addition to differing amongst each other, the three gardens and the three

²⁰ Quilligan identifies the different types of gardens as “French parterres, an English-looking orchard, and an Italianate treillage” (181).

²¹ Commenting on the resemblances between the temple and the arch, Shannon Miller claims that the repetition “of the architectural traits of the framing arch—the base of the pillars, the shape of the cornice which is echoed by the roof of the Throne [the temple] [...] suggests the reader’s simultaneous view of and our position within the Throne” (142). However, given the differences between the two monuments enumerated above, I do not find this interpretation entirely convincing.

prominent architectural monuments could also be seen as mirroring oppositions. Moreover one notes the recurrence of tripartite structures with the three arches of the bridge, the three turrets topped by statues and the three statues in the niches of the temple front.

Another feature which fails to be symmetrical is the arrangement of the meandering paths in the landscape. These paths or roads, lined with trees, invite the viewer's eyes to explore the image in a leisurely fashion from the foreground almost to the horizon of the landscape. There is no path without a bend, and the paths seem only loosely connected. Due to their spatial arrangement and the trees lining the paths, the idea of a labyrinth comes to mind. Labyrinths, as Werner Senn explains in "The Labyrinth as a Structural Principle in Narrative Texts," can be of two kinds: "The unicursal, Daedalian or Cretan-type labyrinth [...] which has no intersections and no blind alleys but leads inevitably, though in an endlessly roundabout way, to the centre, and from which the way out is an exact duplication of the way in," and the "multicursal maze" with intersections and blind alleys arranged in a confusing manner (102). It is not clear which type of labyrinth the paths on the frontispiece resemble more closely because they do not seem to lead in a "roundabout way" to a centre, nor are there visible intersections and obvious blind alleys. The word 'labyrinth' may not even be quite the appropriate term for the meandering paths because they are at considerable distance from each other rather than confined in a restricted area as labyrinths usually are. Yet, the concept of the labyrinth is still useful for thinking about the wandering paths since they appear to extend far beyond the image's horizon and the privileged overview from an elevated position granted to the person looking at the frontispiece seems still too limited to discern a pattern in their arrangement. For the figures within the picture the situation is even worse: the trees combined with the bends obstruct the view of those venturing forth on one of these paths, and there is no knowing what is in store for them. However, considered from a different angle, the paths also provide guidance: they direct the onlooker's gaze and they are laid out for whoever enters

them. Yet this guidance comes on its own terms as the above discussion of the paths' arrangement and the limited prospect they provide indicates.

That a romance should be fronted by an engraving featuring meandering paths seems more than fitting when one considers the romance genre's stock character of the wandering knight. The genre of Wroth's text and its thematic concerns are indicated by other elements of the frontispiece as well. The central hill and its path leading up to the temple visualise the romance concept of the quest, with the river, the bridge, the first garden on the right and the steep ascent functioning as obstacles to be overcome or allurements to be withstood. For readers familiar with Iberian and Portuguese romances, in which, as Hackett illustrates, scenes of seduction often take place in enclosed gardens (*Women* 57-58, 63, 71), the three walled gardens on the title page could be seen as a further generic marker, announcing the text's concern with love and desire, that is, themes most commonly associated with romance.

This is made explicit, too, by the statues that stand on the bridge's three turrets. According to the text they represent Cupid, "curiously carv'd with his Bow bent, and Quiver at his backe," Venus, "crownd with Mirtle, and Pansies, in her left holding a flaming Heart," and Constancy, "holding in her hand the Keyes of the Pallace" (I.i.48). Without having recourse to the textual description of the statues, the figure of Constancy holding the keys does not seem identifiable—the keys on the frontispiece might as well be a sceptre or some other elongated object. Cupid and Venus, however, I would argue, could be recognised by their attributes, i.e. the bow and the flaming heart. Cupid is moreover naked, which corresponds to traditional depictions of Cupid and marks him as different from the other statues wearing women's clothes. Also, he holds an arrow in his left hand and seems to be winged.²² To recognise Venus' flaming heart as such is at first sight more difficult, but if one compares the object held by the statue to the flaming hearts in Gabriel Rollenhagen's *Nucleus*

²² This is hardly visible unless one consults copies of the original frontispiece of 1621.

Emblematum Selectissimorum of 1611, the identification of the flaming heart seems manageable for a reader familiar with this emblematic representation of passion.²³

In addition to the statues of Cupid and Venus, one also notes the presence of three couples in the image, one approaching the bridge and two on top of it.²⁴ The couple walking towards the bridge and the one between the tower of Cupid and Venus clearly each consist of a woman and a man. The sex of the figures between the tower of Venus and of Constancy is less apparent; the one to the right is presumably a man because of what looks like a hat, whereas the other figure could be either a man or a woman, a woman being perhaps more probable given the other couples. Close scrutiny of the towers on the bridge reveals one more figure visible through the window of the tower of Constancy to the right. For readers who know Wroth's work, this figure might appear symbolic of the many constant female lovers abandoned by their faithless male lovers. Without this context, the loneliness of the figure perhaps assumes a less dramatic aspect, but, given that this is the only figure without a partner, it still seems to point to some of the suffering caused by unhappy love relationships, which,²⁵ Lamb remarks, "The balanced composition of the scene makes [...] easy to overlook" (UA 1). Combining the romance characteristics mentioned above—wandering, the quest and love—and considering their spatial and emblematic representation in the engraving,

²³ The flaming heart in the emblems represents both secular and spiritual love. Cf. emblems 39, 65, 79, 87 in Gabriel Rollenhagen's *Nucleus Emblematum Selectissimorum*, Centuria Prima and emblems 44, 72 and 79 *Nucleus Emblematum Selectissimorum*, Centuria Secunda. George Wither's use of Rollenhagen's plates for his 1635 *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* indicates that the emblem of the flaming heart continues to be well-known (cf. Wither's reproduction of Rollenhagen's emblems 39 and 65, reprinted in Charles Moseley's *A Century of Emblems* 232, 234), and Wroth prominently makes use of it in the opening sonnet of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (*Poems* 85). Cf. also Roberts' note on the Throne of Love episode (I.i.723 n48.19) mentioning further early modern works containing the flaming heart emblem. Julie D. Campbell in "Writing Renaissance Emblems: Flaming and Tortured Hearts in *The First Part of the Countnes of Montgomery's Urania*" argues that Wroth "may have have specifically had access to the [1608] edition of [Van Veen's] *Amorum Emblemata* dedicated to her first cousins, William and Philip Herbert" (6).

²⁴ Quilligan mentions "four different heterosexual couples" (179), but I cannot see a fourth couple.

²⁵ Considering that Wroth's text only relates the imprisonment of Urania and her maid in the tower of Love (I.i.49), but does not mention any character imprisoned in the tower of Constancy, the presence of the single imprisoned figure on the frontispiece is particularly intriguing. One possible way to account for this might be to read the frontispiece as a succession of scenes depicting the breaking of the enchantment by Pamphilia and Amphilanthus. In this reading the three couples would in fact be one and the same couple, that is, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, at first approaching the enchantment, then opening and/or passing the tower of Love in the middle and finally walking towards the tower of Constancy to end the enchantment. Such a reading would explain the presence of the imprisoned figure in the third tower, i.e. the only tower not yet opened.

one could interpret the frontispiece as a visual announcement of the work's content:²⁶ it signals to the prospective readers that the *Urania* is a spacious romance dealing with the love relations between women and men, detailing the obstacles such relations have to overcome, how they need to be perfected to become ideal and how easy it is for lovers to go astray or become victims of abandonment.²⁷

The open-endedness of the frontispiece's romance landscape is countered by the arch framing the image. The arch places the viewer outside in the position of a voyeur looking into an alien world as it were. But the arch also seems to invite the viewer to step into this world and to follow the figures advancing towards the bridge, to share their adventures and emulate their experiences, as Lamb eloquently demonstrates (*UA* 2). Furthermore, the elaborate decorations and the stateliness of the arch confer importance to whoever steps through it, calling to mind the triumphal arches through which early modern monarchs entered the city in a highly staged procession when acceding to their throne.²⁸ Given the work's concern with imperial power embodied in the protagonist Amphilanthus, one might be tempted to see the columns of the arch as an adaptation of the columns of Hercules, that is, as a symbol of imperial aspirations and the visual representation of the claim to the realm extending beyond the columns. Tracing the propagandist use of this device from Charles V through Elizabeth I to Henry IV, Frances A. Yates explains in *Astraea*: "The columns are the Columns of Hercules, boundary of the ancient world [i.e. the Roman empire cf. 23], which Charles's [Charles V] empire is to exceed [...], including in its sway new worlds of which the ancients

²⁶ I am obviously not claiming that what follows is all that the *Urania* is about. On the contrary, I hope that my study will illustrate the richness and diversity of Wroth's work.

²⁷ Quilligan goes even a step further by saying that the frontispiece "tells us much about the genre of romance we will be reading. This is not chivalric romance—or indeed a chorography—but a courtly prose narrative" (179).

²⁸ Susan Frye in *Pens and Needles* likewise makes the association between the arch on the frontispiece and the arches of the coronation procession of James I (202), as do Corbett and Lightbown in more general terms when they state that "the arch proper" of such architectural structures "was often regarded as a triumphal arch" (6), bearing "both the connotations of a stage and a monument" with the intent of giving "a stately and imposing front to the book" (9). For a detailed discussion of the practice of royal processions, see for example Frances A. Yates' chapter "The Entry of Charles IX and His Queen into Paris, 1571" in her book *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (127-148), or for a description of James I's procession through London see Thomas Dekker's *The Whole Magnificent Entertainment Giuen to King James*.

knew nothing” (54).²⁹ If the arch were an adapted version of the columns of Hercules, this would neatly sum up the invitation or challenge to enter and take possession of the world perceived through the arch’s position in the foreground, an enterprise that would prefigure and parallel the repeated travels and conquests of the romance’s male protagonists. However, such an association of the arch with the columns of Hercules is problematic because Simon van de Passe did actually depict the columns of Hercules in the frontispiece of Francis Bacon’s 1620 *Instauratio Magna*,³⁰ where the columns are isolated free-standing pillars and do not resemble the arch on the title page of the *Urania*. Between the columns one sees the expanse of the sea and two ships, one near the horizon to the left of the image and one positioned centrally between the columns and sailing towards the left columns.³¹ Considering that the arch of the *Urania* is much more in keeping with the architectural structures that commonly adorn frontispiece engravings or woodcuts of the time than with van de Passe’s representation of the columns of Hercules,³² to postulate an association between the two in the artist’s mind must remain highly conjectural. Nevertheless, a comparison between the two frontispieces is instructive because it shows that they share a similar spatial organisation, both providing a view through the framing architectural structure,³³ which, as Quilligan justly remarks (174), is the exception at the time since this space is normally filled with the work’s title, the name of its author and further publication details. Quilligan mentions “Hole’s

²⁹ As Jonathan Goldberg notes in *James I and the Politics of Literature*, representations of James I enthroned on coins adopt the imperial device, since the arms of the throne are shaped in the form of the columns of Hercules (43-46).

³⁰ The frontispiece of *Instauratio Magna* is listed on page 49 of Alfred F. Johnson’s *A Catalogue of Engraved and Etched English Title-Pages* and reproduced in the second half of the book under S. v. de Passe No. 2. Bacon adapts the symbol of imperial aspirations to the domain of science, as he explicitly states in *The Advancement of Learning*: “For why should a few received authors stand up like Hercules’ columns, beyond which there should be no sailing or discovering, since we have so bright and benign a star as your Majesty [James I] to conduct and prosper us?” (169). The symbol of Hercules’ columns appears again seven years later on the frontispiece of Bacon’s *Sylva Sylvarum* (cf. Corbett and Lightbown 184).

³¹ According to Corbett and Lightbown “The ships in his [Bacon’s] title-page symbolise human understanding going out to discover new territories for the empire of knowledge” (186).

³² Compare Johnson, *A Catalogue of Engraved and Etched English Title-Pages* or R. B. McKerrow and F. S. Ferguson, *Title-page Borders Used in England & Scotland 1485-1640*.

³³ The name of Bacon and the title of his work float freely in the sky between the columns, but like the top cartouche in the frontispiece of the *Urania*, they are mirrored by a cartouche at the bottom of the title-page, indicating the printer’s name.

engraving of Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1616) and his title page for a book called *The Surveyor* (1616)" as the only other engravings comparable to the *Urania* in this respect (174). Moreover, she sees a connection between these two books' aims of measuring and remapping the world and the use of the family estate as a source of authority for aristocratic early modern women (174-185). A more obvious explanation of the similarity between Hole's two engravings and van de Passe's frontispieces to the *Urania* and the *Instauratio Magna* might be their shared concern with an appropriation of territory: Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* maps England, Aaron Rathborne's *The Surveyor* advocates a more scientific practice of measuring land, Bacon, in Brian Vickers' words, "designed to put the whole of natural philosophy on a new footing" (*Francis Bacon* xviii), and the *Urania* visually combines territorial conquest with the motif of the quest mentioned above, since reaching the temple on the hill also means gaining an elevated position that dominates the surrounding landscape, a suggestion that is reinforced by the presence of steps leading up to some kind of dais within the temple.

This world, which the frontispiece tempts prospective readers to conquer, is marked not only by symmetry and near-symmetry, but also by a number of tensions resulting from oppositional spaces, styles and perspectives. The arch represents a point of entry, but it also suggests an idea of closure, which can be found again in the walled-in gardens. The landscape setting of the architectural structures in the engraving enacts an opposition between outside and inside, open versus closed spaces, natural versus artificial settings, with the enclosed gardens occupying an uneasy middle ground between nature and architecture. Yet, considering the tree-lined paths, it seems obvious that these are far from natural as well, i.e. the natural landscape is also highly stylized, but, contrary to the gardens and monuments, it affects an impression of plain simplicity. There is then, not only a tension of spaces, but also of styles: the pronounced elegance of the monuments is set off by a rural background—Susan Frye in *Pens and Needles* uses the term "pastoral" (204)—featuring a cluster of plain houses

on the left and the windmill discussed by Quilligan on the right.³⁴ The houses, while perhaps not realistic per se, seem to conjure up the illusion of realism and to gesture towards an everyday life familiar to the onlooker.³⁵ Against such a familiar rural backdrop the elegant temple on the hill, the gardens and the bridge with its statues, as well as the approaching couple in their rich costumes, are all the more to be admired. In other words, they stand out as the enchanting marvels that they are in the text, marvels or enchantments being of course another stock feature of romance.

The third source of tension in the frontispiece is the multiple perspectives present in the engraving.³⁶ What might go unnoticed at first sight due to the framing arch becomes almost disturbing at closer inspection: virtually no building in the engraving is drawn from the same perspective. Thus, there is an opposition between the unified perspective offered by the view through the arch and the multiple perspectives at work within the image. The vanishing point

³⁴ As mentioned above, Quilligan discusses the frontispiece as an idealized representation of Penshurst. She identifies three architectural styles in the engraving: “the Palladian structure on top of the hill, the Chenonceau-style bridge-cum-house spanning the river, and the cluster of buildings in the upper lefthand corner,” which resemble “a medieval village” and which Quilligan identifies as van de Passe’s representation of Penshurst (181-182). Moreover, she mentions the possibility that the Palladian temple could refer to Inigo Jones’ redesigning of Wilton (182). However, according to Nicholas Cooper in *The Jacobean Country House*, plans to rebuild Wilton only date from 1630 after the death of William Herbert, and the architect employed by Philip Herbert, the fourth Earl of Pembroke, was Isaac de Caus, an associate of Jones who perhaps benefitted from the latter’s advice (169-170). Wilton then only acquired its Palladian façade around 1635 (*The Jacobean Country House* 170). Yet from 1615 on, that is, as Miller points out, at the time Wroth wrote the *Urania* (“Constructing the Female Self” 142), the Countess of Pembroke had built a house for herself in Houghton, which features, according to Maurice Howard in *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England*, “on north and west fronts remarkable classical loggias that have conventionally been associated with Inigo Jones” because of their resemblance to his Palladian sketches (160).

³⁵ As Monika Fludernik stresses with regard to novels, realism is achieved not by “depict[ing] the real world,” but by creating the impression that the world depicted is “part of the real world” the contemporary reader is familiar with (*Introduction* 55). The same mechanism could be seen at work in van de Passe’s engraving. This would go against Quilligan’s claim however that “it is unlikely that the windmill is there simply to make the landscape realistic from a lowlander’s point of view” (185). Quilligan bases her claim on the scarcity of windmills in the engravings of Crispin van de Passe, Simon van de Passe’s father, for Rollenhagen’s *Nucleus Emblematicus Selectissimorum* and on the windmill’s association with “the punishment of sin” or “the fickleness of fortune” when it does appear—associations which to Quilligan do not seem “resonant” with regard to the *Urania* (185). However, in the emblems engraved by Crispin van de Passe the windmill also appears in connection with the concepts of (female) inconstancy (cf. emblem 73 *Nucleus Emblematicus Selectissimorum*, Centuria Secunda; according to Quilligan it represents the fickleness of fortune) and of death (cf. emblem 77 *Nucleus Emblematicus Selectissimorum*, Centuria Secunda), and there are also emblems featuring gallows (i.e. punishment) not accompanied by a windmill, which undermines Quilligan’s argument. Moreover, Frye points out that the windmill is “a common feature in the visual pastoral tradition” (204), and Hannay mentions the historical windmills “visible on the Hampstead hills above Baynards Castle in Visscher’s map” of London and the “two windmills during Wroth’s time there in Enfield” (*MSLW* 211 n14).

³⁶ I first noticed this circumstance when reading Roberts’ summary of Widmann’s study mentioned in footnote 19.

of the arch is situated in front of the temple on the hill, emphasizing the importance of reaching and entering it. This underlines the centrality of the monument and the hill on which it stands, creating an opposition between the centre and the margins of the world perceived through the arch. The multiple perspectives from which the temple, the bridge, the gardens or the background buildings are engraved imply shifting points of view within the landscape depicted or multiple perceptions that complicate the unified view from outside the arch. It is as if the frontispiece condensed the experience of first looking at the world beyond the arch from the outside and then entering it with the result that the original unified outside perspective is lost and the view of the buildings within the landscape changes as one progresses on the meandering paths.

A last source of tension that needs to be addressed is not found in the image proper, but in the texts of the top and bottom cartouche and brings us back to the issue of our relative ignorance with regard to Wroth's involvement in the publication of the *Urania*. As noted at the beginning of the introduction, the genealogical positioning of Wroth's work in the cartouche held up by the arch stands in contrast to the mention of the publishers' names and the locations where the book can be purchased. While it is tempting to interpret the title's emphasis on Wroth's family identity as an announcement of Wroth's strategy of self-authorisation as a writer in the Sidney tradition—witness her numerous allusions to Sidney's *Arcadia* and her fictional representation of her aunt and father as the Queen of Naples and the King of Morea—it should be remembered that, as Peter Beal points out in *In Praise of Scribes*, the primary purpose of a frontispiece is advertisement (18). Thus, although it seems plausible to assume that *The Countesse of Mountgomerie's Urania* is Wroth's own title for her work given the opening of the romance and the fictional representation of Susan Herbert, countess of Montgomery, as Urania and Veralinda (cf. Roberts, "Critical Introduction" I.lxxvi-lxxix), whether she is in any way responsible for the mention of her father, uncle and

aunt on the title page is questionable.³⁷ If read in conjunction with the commercially-minded cartouche at the bottom of the frontispiece, the listing of Wroth's relatives clearly functions as an advertisement attempting to capitalize on the fame and status of the Sidneys: seen from the booksellers' point of view, associating Wroth's name with that of her father and his title gives the book's author more prominence and seems more promising than to refer to her as the widow of Sir Robert Wroth, who by 1621 had already been dead for seven years. In addition, the mention of Sir Philip Sidney and his sister links the *Urania* to her uncle's work, from whose immense success the booksellers probably sought to profit in their turn—in 1621 *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* appeared in its fifth edition, and was reissued several times in the following years.³⁸

If the text in the cartouches serves as an advertisement, so does the frontispiece as a whole, ideally enticing as many people as possible to buy the book. It is important not to forget this commercial aspect of the title page. Yet, I would maintain that the title page can also be interpreted as a first set of instructions to guide prospective readers because it visualises the generic nature and important narrative structures of Wroth's work. With regard to genre, the analysis of the frontispiece has revealed the representation of stock romance features like the focus on love, the presence of marvels, the pleasures and dangers of erring in its obsolete sense of wandering and the motif of the quest. In addition, the concern with conquest or expansion, the staking of claims, which might be considered a trait of epic rather than of romance, is symbolised by the framing arch. These features, which have structural

³⁷ Tina Krontiris in *Oppositional Voices* seems to imply that Wroth is responsible for the entire title in the cartouche when she writes: "Lady Mary Wroth turned her family's great name into a licence to write and publish. The name of Sidney could serve as both an advertisement and a shield of protection. The full title of her romance provides a clear indication" (122). Similarly, Miller claims in connection with the frontispiece that "Wroth explicitly draws upon a writing tradition within the Sidney family to announce herself as a builder of narrative and of scenes ("Constructing the Female Self" 144) and Hannay presents Wroth's association with her father's, uncle's and aunt's names rather than with that of her husband as a deliberate choice of hers (MSLW 1).

³⁸ The recent death of Mary Herbert might have added to the publicity of Wroth's work and the 1621 edition of the *Arcadia*. Skretkowicz notes that "the words *Pembroke late deceased* are engraved in reduced size" and "squeezed into a space that would comfortably accommodate *Pembroke* alone, indicating a last-minute adjustment to the plate" (307).

implications in themselves, are complemented by the recurrent doubling or even tripling strategy in the title page, resulting both in symmetrical and near-symmetrical mirror images and in oppositions that create tensions. This strategy of multiplication is continued by the multiple perspectives in the world beyond the arch, which put into question the unified perspective through the framing arch. Furthermore, the frontispiece sets up an opposition between an elaborate high style and a more homely, plain style, between strange places and events and familiar scenes and circumstances—an opposition which might invite readers to discover meaningful correspondences between the two or even to discern topical allusions.

Initially, I claimed that the *Urania* challenges modern academic readers because of the lack of prefatory material and certain knowledge about the circumstances of the work's publication as well as the abundance of material provided by the frontispiece. I would now like to modify this claim and emphasise that while our lack of information is reason for caution with regard to interpretation, it is greatly outweighed by the problem of how to cope with the abundance of text with which the *Urania* confronts us and which might be symbolised by the two cornucopia-like pendants integrated in the frontispiece's arch. Luckyj, formulating this challenge positively, calls the *Urania* "literally an embarrassment of riches" (254). More negatively, Sheila T. Cavanagh in *Cherished Torment* thinks that the "structural patterns and philosophical resonances in the romance [...] are obscured by its length and complexity" (18). The issue which both of these critics implicitly address and which forms the basis of my discussion of the frontispiece and this study as a whole is the question of how to read and make sense of the *Urania*. Luckyj proposes an approach that focuses on Wroth's choice of genres or rather what Luckyj interprets as her move from poetry to narrative prose (267-269, 274-275), whereas Cavanagh aims to provide a historical "intellectual framework" made up of "philosophic and cosmographical components" (18) to facilitate the reading of Wroth's work. My approach, which will be discussed in more detail after an overview of the

critical reception of the *Urania*, shares Luckyj's generic and Cavanagh's historical concern but proposes to focus more extensively on modern and early modern reading expectations and the narrative structures of the *Urania* to analyse how the abundance of Wroth's text complicates modern narratological concepts and provides the reader with structural guidance of its own.

1.2 The Critical Reception of the *Urania*

In *Romance*, Barbara Fuchs notes that "Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621) [...] has only recently been recovered by feminist critics" (93). Indeed, apart from the work of Charlotte Kohler (cf. Roberts, "Textual Introduction" l.cxiii) and Bridget G. MacCarthy, there are no sustained studies on Wroth and her work before the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Yet, the history of the reception of the *Urania* goes back much further, beginning in the exchange of letters and poems between Lord Edward Denny, Baron of Waltham, and Wroth after the work's publication in 1621 because Denny considered that he and his family had been unfavourably portrayed in the story of Sirelius.³⁹ This exchange has frequently been discussed by critics,⁴⁰ but what has less often been noted is that Denny's characterisation of Wroth's work is formulated in generic terms: Denny advises Wroth to "redeeme the tym with writing as large a volume of heavenly layes and holy love as you have of lascivious tales and amorous toyes" (*Poems* 239),⁴¹ indicating clearly by his choice of words that he categorises the *Urania* as a romance. John Chamberlain, the other much cited early critic of Wroth's work, likewise foregrounds one of its generic features—namely its *roman-à-clef* aspect—when he notes that Wroth "takes great libertie or rather licence to traduce whom she please"

³⁹ For a detailed account of the early reception of the *Urania*, see Paul Salzman's chapter "Mary Wroth: From Obscurity to Canonization" in *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing* (60-89). All the subsequent references to Salzman in this section refer to this chapter unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁰ See for example Luckyj, Roberts in *Poems*, Naomi J. Miller in *Changing the Subject*, Juan Daniel Gil in "The Currency of the Beloved and the Authority of Lady Mary Wroth," Jocelyn Catty in *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England* and Salzman in *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing*.

⁴¹ Lord Edward Denny to Lady Mary Wroth, February 26, 1621/2.

(McClure 427).⁴² The same is obviously true for the 1640 letter of George Manners, the seventh Earl of Rutland, in which he requests a key to the *Urania* (*Poems* 244-245).

All the other references to the *Urania* from before the twentieth century listed by Paul Salzman designate Wroth as the work's author and at times relate the text to Sidney's *Arcadia*.⁴³ Wroth thereby turns from the "inheritrix of the Diuine wit of her Immortal Vncle" in Henry Peacham's 1622 *Compleat Gentleman* to "an Emulatress perhaps of Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*" in Edward Phillips' 1675 account of women writers (*Reading* 86-87)—a development which seems to prefigure the tenor of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century criticism on the *Urania*. As Salzman points out, the mention of the romance by J. J. Jusserand and Ernest A. Baker in 1890 and 1929 respectively is due to a renewed interest in early modern prose fiction provoked by their attempt to trace the origin of the novel (87-88). As a consequence both critics dismiss the *Urania* as an inferior imitation of the *Arcadia* and, like the latter, criticise it for its romance characteristics.⁴⁴ MacCarthy's 1944 discussion of Wroth's work in *Women Writers: Their Contribution to the English Novel 1621-1744*, which Salzman qualifies as more imaginative and sympathetic (87), needs to be read in the same context: MacCarthy reiterates the negative verdict of Baker, but comments positively on what she calls Wroth's "accidental realism" (64). This feature of the romance, she argues, is of "significance from the standpoint of fictional development" (59), which clearly shows that MacCarthy's reception of the *Urania* is determined by a perspective of the development of the novel towards realism.

⁴² John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, London, March 9, 1622.

⁴³ Since the *Arcadia* known by most early modern readers was a mixture between the *Old Arcadia* and the *New Arcadia*, I will generally refer to Sidney's *Arcadia* when concerned with the publications of the time and only make distinctions between the *Old* and *New Arcadia* when concerned with textual or plot details.

⁴⁴ Jusserand in *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare* describes the *Urania* as "a complete and pious imitation of Sidney's manner, especially of his defects" (268) and credits it with "All the peculiarities of [Sidney's] style and of his way, or rather want, of composition" (267-268). Baker in *The History of The English Novel* states that Wroth "copies and outdoes Sidney's utmost extravagance, both in the story and the mode of telling it" (122).

The early studies of the 1970s and 1980s are mainly concerned with the recovery and publication of Wroth's texts or with the biographical elements in Wroth's writing. In the course of the 1980s and especially in the 1990s, the studies on Wroth's work multiply.⁴⁵ Generally, these studies are articles published in journals or books on women's writing in early modern England and they analyse individual episodes or concentrate on a limited set of characters and/or themes. Cavanagh's *Cherished Torment* is, to my knowledge, the only book-length study focusing exclusively on Wroth's *Urania* and is also unique in its attempt to delineate the "philosophic and cosmographical" (18) principles and mechanisms of Wroth's world in both the first and second part of the romance. In contrast, more typical longer studies, such as, for instance, Lamb's *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, Naomi J. Miller's *Changing the Subject* or, more recently, Gavin Alexander's *Writing after Sidney*, analyse Wroth's work in connection with that of other members of her family or other female and male writers of the time.

The majority of the studies on the *Urania* consider the text in connection with feminist and gender issues, such as the construction of female subjectivity, identity or voice/authorship. Several aspects of it render the romance especially suitable for such an approach. To begin with, Wroth is the first English woman known to have written an original romance at a time when social norms limited the genres deemed acceptable for women writers to religious texts, especially translations, and mothers' advice books, as Betty S. Travitsky notes in her introduction to *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print* (26). Secondly, as Salzman points out in *English Prose Fiction*, the focus of Wroth's romance differs from that of romances by male authors:

⁴⁵ For an alternative summary of critical reactions to the *Urania* from the 1950s to the 1990s see Anne Shaver's 1991 article "A New Woman of Romance," and for a recent overview of the studies on all of Wroth's works see Clare R. Kinney's "The Critical Reception of Lady Mary Wroth: An Overview" (xv-xxxi) in her introduction to the *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700: Volume 4: Mary Wroth*.

Wroth creates a feminist reading of the romance form by directing her attention at the less salubrious underside of the heroic and courtly code. *Urania* has its valiant heroes, but the reader's attention is directed to the women who are left behind by the questing men, or whose paths cross the heroes' with invariably miserable results. (141)

Moreover, he notes that in contrast to other romances, the *Urania* devotes more space to the depiction of marriage and less to that of courtship (141). Further points of interest to feminism and gender criticism are the representation of female friendship, female rivalry and female rule,⁴⁶ as well as the question of whether Wroth succeeds in envisioning a new kind of female authority and autonomy without simultaneously reinscribing patriarchal gender stereotypes in her text.⁴⁷

Apart from, or sometimes in combination with, a feminist approach, critics have also paid considerable attention to the autobiographical traits of Wroth's writing.⁴⁸ The *Urania* contains numerous characters whose stories exhibit marked similarities to the life of Wroth herself or to that of her relatives. Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, for example, are generally understood to represent Wroth and her cousin, William Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke, while the Queen of Naples,⁴⁹ Amphilanthus' mother, serves as the fictional embodiment of Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. The romance's dedicatee Susan Herbert is thought to be represented by the characters of Urania and Veralinda, and the mysterious Faire Designe in the second part might owe his origin to the birth of Wroth and Herbert's illegitimate son William.

⁴⁶ Cf. Miller, "'Not much to be marked': Narrative of the Woman's Part in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*;" Nandini Das, *Renaissance Romance* and Roberts, "Radigund Revisited: Perspectives on Women Rulers in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*."

⁴⁷ Cf. for example Gwynne Kennedy, "She 'thincks she daunces in a net': The Reception of Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*;" Hackett, "'Yet tell me some such fiction': Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the 'Femininity' of Romance" and "'A book, and solitariness': Melancholia, Gender and Literary Subjectivity in Mary Wroth's *Urania*" or Lamb, "Women Readers in Mary Wroth's *Urania*."

⁴⁸ Cf. for instance Roberts' section "Personal Contexts" (I.lxix-civ) in "Critical Introduction" or "'The Knott Never to Bee Untide;'" Hannay, "'Your vertuous and learned Aunt;'" Luckyj, "The Politics of Genre in Early Women's Writing" or Lamb, "The Biopolitics of Romance."

⁴⁹ In contrast to the titles of characters with names, i.e. Pamphilia, the queen of Pamphilia for example, I capitalise the titles of nameless character, as for instance the Queen of Naples or the King of Morea, since these titles effectively stand in place of a name.

With such obvious parallels between fictional characters and historical counterparts, it is not surprising that Wroth's work has also been analysed from a psychoanalytical point of view by Gary Waller, for instance, in *The Sidney Family Romance*. His study is especially interested in Wroth's relations to prominent male figures in her life, namely her cousin, William Herbert, and her father, Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester, and the effect these relations had on her writing.⁵⁰ The tantalizingly unconventional biographic records of Wroth's life and her fictional self-portraits certainly encourage such reflections. Starting then from a different point of departure from the feminist critics, Waller also investigates Wroth's way of dealing with the patriarchal norms of her society.

Equally concerned with Wroth's family relations but oriented differently are those studies that centre around the literary influence that Wroth's father, Robert Sidney, her aunt, Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, and especially her uncle, Sir Philip Sidney, had on her writing. Wroth chose to write in the same three genres as her uncle as many critics have noted, but she seems not to have shared his interest in religious translations and apparently did not engage in writing or translating religious texts like her aunt. Not surprisingly, the Countess of Pembroke's writing is seldom discussed in connection with Wroth's works.⁵¹ Yet, Hannay in "'Your vertuous and learned Aunt': The Countess of Pembroke as a Mentor to Mary Wroth" and in *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth* sees the Countess as enabling and encouraging Wroth to write or at the very least as providing a model (56, 207-208, 229, 231). Robert Sidney's sonnet sequence on the other hand visibly influenced some of Wroth's sonnets in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, as the references and comparisons provided by Roberts in her

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Mazzola in *Favorite Sons: The Politics and Poetics of the Sidney Family* also chooses a psychoanalytical combined with an historical approach, concentrating especially on the issue of younger sons and the proliferation of younger brothers in the *Urania*.

⁵¹ For an exception see Nona Fienberg, "Mary Wroth and the Invention of Female Poetic Subjectivity," in which she argues that Wroth and Mary Herbert share the topic of loss.

edition of *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* show.⁵² Also *Astrophil and Stella* by Sir Philip Sidney influenced Wroth's poetry, and many studies mention Wroth's debt to the *Arcadia*.⁵³

The *Urania* contains a number of episodes reminiscent of Sidney's *Arcadia*, such as for example the opening *in medias res*, depicting the protagonist Urania who bewails her ignorance concerning her origins, which, as Quilligan shows in her various studies, rewrites Strephon and Claius' lamenting over the departure of Urania at the beginning of Sidney's *New Arcadia*. Not only does the character of Urania, the second most important heroine of the romance, recall Sidney's *Arcadia*, but the name of the main protagonist, Pamphilia, might be explained by more than just the meaning of her name, which is "all-loving" (I.720 n37.36). The name Pamphilia combines the names of Sidney's two heroines, as Roberts notes (I.xxv-xxvi), and Pamphilia's character can be understood as uniting both Pamela's prudence and Philoclea's passion. With regard to the male characters, there are fewer obvious parallels, but there is one character, Leonius, the younger brother of Amphilanthus, who saves Veralinda from a bear and later disguises himself as a nymph to be near her. Leonius thus combines features of both Musidorus, who rescues Pamela from the attack of a bear, and of Pyrocles who disguises himself as an amazon to enjoy Philoclea's company. These few examples illustrate Wroth's familiarity with Sidney's *Arcadia* and its importance as an intertext of the *Urania*. Yet, Sidney's is not the only influence on Wroth's writing, as other studies have shown.

Although Roberts, in her introduction to the first part of the *Urania*, enumerates several romances that could have influenced Wroth's work, such as for example Jorge Montemayor's *Diana*, Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée* and the cycle of *Amadis de Gaule* (I.xx), there are not many studies that

⁵² According to Katherine Duncan-Jones' review of Roberts' edition of the poems, the references to Robert Sidney's poems provided by Roberts "are by no means exhaustive" (566). So far, Miller in *Changing the Subject* (41-44, 82-87, 156-160), Parker in *Proportional Form* (113-145) and Alexander in *Writing After Sidney* (293) seem to be the only critics to discuss Wroth's rewriting of her father's poems in some more detail.

⁵³ Cf. for instance Luckyj, Quilligan or Shaver.

undertake extensive comparisons with other romances. Jorge Figueroa Dorrego discusses the *Urania* alongside Montemayor's *Diana* in "Love is a subject so delightful," Hackett in *Women and Romance Fiction* highlights the resemblances between Wroth's romance and a number of Iberian romances (163-171), and Miller in *Changing the Subject* considers the text in connection with d'Urfé's *Astrée*, for instance. Further articles like Jacqueline T. Miller's "Lady Mary Wroth in the House of Busirane" and Quilligan's "Lady Mary Wroth: Female Authority and the Family Romance" compare the Hell of Deceit, the last of Wroth's enchantments in the first part of the *Urania*, to the enchantment of Busirane at the end of book III of the *Faerie Queene*.⁵⁴ This is not the only allusion to Spenser's text, however: Cavanagh in "Romancing the Epic" discusses allusions to the Squire of Dames and Arthur, and there are also a pair of fake knights pretending to be Amphilanthus and Ollorandus, who resemble Braggadocchio and Trompart, or a lady in a castle who imprisons and seduces all the passing knights, recalling Spenser's Malecasta in book III, canto 1. Moreover, the issue of female rule and female monarchs addressed by Spenser's work is also of great importance in the *Urania*.

Apart from focusing on romance precursors, critics have also related Wroth's text to other possible sources. Hackett evokes the pre-Reformation saints' lives as subtexts for examples of women's more graphic suffering in "The Torture of Limena" and in *Women and Romance Fiction* (168-171). Robin Farabaugh discusses Wroth's use of classical texts in "Ariadne, Venus, and the Labyrinth," whereas Luckyj proposes Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* as an intertext for Wroth's romance. Miller in *Changing the Subject*, places the *Urania* in the context of a whole range of works, including among others Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*, Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*, the contemporaneous pamphlet debate over women and such genres as mothers'

⁵⁴ Another critic that discusses the Hell of Deceit is Elaine V. Beilin in *Redeeming Eve*.

advice books. Moreover, in her article “Engendering Discourse,” Miller compares Shakespeare’s and Wroth’s representation of female speech. In addition, Wroth’s work shares certain concerns with Jacobean drama, as for example the issue of marriage, discussed by Roberts in “‘The Knott Never to Bee Untide,’” and the nature of brother-sister relationships, commented on by Quilligan in *Incest and Agency* (203-206).

Whereas the studies mentioned above mostly analyse the *Urania* in relation to individual works, others are more interested in questions of genre and how Wroth’s romance negotiates generic traditions, appropriating and adapting them. As the titles of their studies suggest, Anne Shaver’s “A New Woman of Romance,” Jennifer Lee Carrell’s “A Pack of Lies in a Looking Glass: Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania* and the Magic Mirror of Romance” and Hackett’s “‘Yet tell me some such fiction’: Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania* and the ‘Femininity’ of Romance” consider the work’s intervention in romance traditions and the use Wroth makes of the genre’s characteristics. Amelia A. Zurcher places the *Urania* in the context of seventeenth-century romance in *Seventeenth-Century English Romance* and of pastoral romance in particular in “Pastoral, Temperance, and the Unitary Self in Wroth’s *Urania*,”⁵⁵ whereas Salzman, in *Literary Culture in Jacobean England*, focuses on the tension created by Wroth’s use of both chivalric and pastoral romance motifs (72-75). Clare R. Kinney in “‘Beleeve this butt a fiction’” and Lamb in “Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder” focus especially on the second part of Wroth’s work and argue that in it Wroth is undermining romance conventions and patterns of expectation set up by the first part. Tiffany Jo Werth in *The Fabulous Dark Cloister: Romance in England after the Reformation* regards romance as an important space to negotiate cultural and religious conflicts and analyses how Wroth’s work addresses the polemic attacks on romance as a papist genre that seduces especially female readers. Cavanagh in “Romancing the Epic” extends the discussion of the generic

⁵⁵ Another critic to discuss the *Urania* in the context of pastoral romance is Sue P. Starke in *The Heroines of English Pastoral Romance*.

context to the genres of the epic and of what she calls the mock-epic, and I have elsewhere suggested that other narrative modes that the *Urania* plays with are allegory, the fabliau and, as many critics have noted, the *roman à clef*.⁵⁶

Considering the royal cast of characters in the *Urania*, the lightly veiled depiction of contemporary scandals and the treatment of topics such as kingship, it is inevitable that a last category of criticism discusses the romance in connection with the Jacobean court, Jacobean politics and the historical allusions within the text.⁵⁷ Due to the multitude of rulers, both male and female, the romance offers a commentary on the institution of monarchy and the qualities needed to be a good king or queen. In addition to this explicitly political discourse in the romance, Melissa E. Sanchez in *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* claims that the rhetoric of love functions as coded political discourse too, and she interprets the relation between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus as an extended reflection on the position, attitude and duties of the political subject within the institution of monarchy. Sometimes the *Urania* alludes to political events of the recent past, as for example the rise to power and fall of James I's favourite Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset (I.i.34-37), but generally, there is no overt commentary on contemporary political events or actors although Queen Anne, to whose circle Wroth belonged when at court, seems to be portrayed repeatedly and not unequivocally. In contrast, obvious references to James I are scarce, and the critique of his politics that scholars like Sanchez have identified in Wroth's text is coded or indirect. Thus, Roberts sees the political and military success of the fictional Emperor Amphilanthus in her introduction to the romance as a "counter-myth" to the policy of non-involvement pursued by James I at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War (I.xlii). Victor Skretkowicz in *European Erotic Romance* develops Roberts' approach further by rigorously concentrating on the

⁵⁶ cf. Rahel Orgis, "Telling Tales: the Artistry of Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*."

⁵⁷ See for example Claire Jowitt, "'Et in Arcadia Ego': The Politics of Pirates in the *Old Arcadia*, *New Arcadia* and *Urania*;" Ellis Hanson, "Sodomy and Kingcraft in *Urania* and *Antony and Cleopatra*," and Salzman's chapter "Transformations of Romance" in *Literary Culture in Jacobean England. Reading 1621*.

romance's *roman-à-clef* aspect and reading the *Urania* as an "allegorised political fantasy" (273) that represents and propagates the importance of the Sidney-Herbert faction and their "militant Protestantism" (334) and that "conjures up a vision of a Protestant Europe" (273). Moreover, Skretkowicz, like Zurcher in *Seventeenth-Century English Romance*, discusses Wroth's negotiation of the contemporary political concept of self-interest.

Apart from dealing with Jacobean politics, Wroth's romance also mirrors important aspects of the Jacobean court in general. Entertainments in the form of masques in particular are depicted in detail and have been analysed by Marion Wynne-Davies in "The Queen's Masque" and by Heather L. Weidemann in "Theatricality and Female Identity in Mary Wroth's *Urania*."⁵⁸ Since Wroth took part in such masques herself, the description of masques in her romance provides a kind of insider view on this form of entertainment.⁵⁹ Yet, Wroth's integration of masques in her text is not merely a reflection of court customs; they also serve as allegorical comments on the events in the romance. Similarly meaningful are the frequent descriptions of clothes and textiles that Frye analyses in *Pens and Needles*, discussing Wroth's romance in the context of contemporary practices and ideas related to the "production and consumption" (192) of cloth. Another aspect that the *Urania* addresses and that Johanna Rickman takes up in her study *Love, Lust, and License in Early Modern England* is the existence and consequences of illicit affairs in Jacobean society. Involved herself in an affair with her cousin and well-connected to society through her family, Wroth would also have known of other affairs and scandals, which presumably influenced her representation of such issues in her romance.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Other critics discussing the masques in Wroth's text are Barbara K. Lewalski in *Writing Women in Jacobean England* and Ann Rosalind Jones in "Designing Women: The Self as Spectacle in Mary Wroth and Veronica Franco." An earlier study commenting on the masques in the *Urania* is Margaret A. Witten-Hannah's unpublished 1978 doctoral dissertation "Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*: The Work and the Tradition."

⁵⁹ Another courtly entertainment that figures repeatedly in the *Urania* is hunting. See Sylvia Bowerbank's discussion of hunting in *Speaking for Nature* (27-51).

⁶⁰ The most prominent and widely discussed example in this respect is of course the story of Sirelius that occasioned Denny's violent reaction.

Finally, in connection with the studies that investigate Wroth's work in its Jacobean milieu, one should also mention Bernadette Andrea's reading of the *Urania* in the context of empire and Kim F. Hall's focus on the topics of race and colonialism.⁶¹ Andrea highlights the imperialist aspects of Wroth's work and the importance of the Ottoman Empire as erased 'other' in the text. Hall also looks beyond Jacobean England and, questioning what being black in Wroth's romance means,⁶² analyses the text in relation to the colonial discourse that early modern English men and women made use of to position themselves in the social hierarchy of the time. Thus, Hall combines the focus on blackness, race and colonialism with issues important to feminism and gender studies like self-empowerment and subjectivity.

This combination of critical approaches is typical of criticism on Wroth. Hardly any studies adhere exclusively to one of the approaches outlined above. This, on the one hand, leads to interesting insights when certain topics are discussed from differing critical viewpoints. On the other hand, due to the predominance of feminist and gender studies in the field, be they combined with other approaches or not, articles on Wroth repeatedly seem to come back to the same kind of questions. In her recent overview of criticism on Wroth in the introduction to the *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700: Volume 4: Mary Wroth*, Kinney, sketches two possible future approaches to Wroth's work and the *Urania* in particular: to study the *Urania* in the context of a different set of works, i.e. "in relation to later women writers" (xxx) or "to more 'popular' prose fictions" (xxxi) of her time, or to attempt "A rereading of Wrothian complexity which includes thoughtful and historically-minded attention to formal particulars" (xxxi) in a new formalist vein.⁶³ It is broadly in the latter category that I would situate my own work which focuses on the

⁶¹ Cf. Bernadette Andrea, "Pamphilia's Cabinet" and *Women and Islam* and Kim F. Hall, "'I Rather Would Wish to Be a Black-moor': Beauty, race and rank in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*" and her chapter on Wroth in *Things of Darkness*.

⁶² There are several black or dark-skinned characters in the *Urania*, among them one of great importance, namely Rodomandro, the Tartarian King, who is introduced in the second part and becomes Pamphilia's husband.

⁶³ Kinney here refers to Marjorie Levinson's article "What Is New Formalism."

development of reading strategies for the *Urania* and the work's narrative structures.⁶⁴ Combining a historicist with a formal approach,⁶⁵ I maintain that a close analysis of form is essential in connection with the discussion of reading experience and reading strategies since these are partly based on and guided by recurring formal patterns. At the same time it is important to reflect on the impact of form on reading from a historical perspective, considering that the meaning and interpretation of form are historically contingent.

1.3 Aim and Outline of the Study

As detailed above, the *Urania* has, since the 1990s, engendered a continuous output of scholarly articles, book chapters or even book-length studies. In other words, there is an increasing number of academics who have read at least parts of Wroth's romance.⁶⁶ The reasons for this increase are manifold: thanks to feminist criticism and gender studies texts written by women have received more attention and have been integrated more frequently and regularly in university curricula;⁶⁷ thanks to Josephine A. Roberts, Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller as well as Mary Ellen Lamb both parts of Wroth's romance have become far more easily accessible; and thanks to pioneering studies on Wroth's work, other scholars have discovered the wealth of material for analysis and investigation the *Urania* presents, especially coupled with Wroth's intriguing biography. Many scholars, myself included, may have come to the *Urania* via Wroth's poetry, via the works of the Sidneys or via the writing of other early modern women writers. Comparatively few people, I would assume, have taken

⁶⁴ I am using the plural to indicate that there are several structuring principles at work in the *Urania*.

⁶⁵ Following Susan Wolfson, Levinson calls this "strain" of new formalism "activist formalism" and opposes it to "normative formalism," which understands itself as a more radical critique and reaction against new historicism (559).

⁶⁶ Assuming that the *Urania* today has virtually no readers that are not academics, my study will in general be concerned with modern scholarly readers. The early modern counterpart of today's academic readers would, I suspect, be educated and well-to-do male and female readers, given the publication of the work as a folio and the evidence the extant twenty-nine copies of 1621 provide with regard to their various owners (cf. Roberts' description of the 29 copies I.663-664).

⁶⁷ Presumably, the inclusion of the *Urania* in university curricula has become more frequent still since the publication of the abridged version of the *Urania* in 2011, edited by Lamb.

the work off a library shelf for recreational reading, because they felt like reading a long early modern romance, or for narratological reasons, because it had been recommended to them as a text displaying “a fascinating approach to narrative structure” (*English* 186), to quote Salzman’s description of French heroic romances.

The *Urania* continues to challenge modern readers due to its “length and complexity” (*Cherished* 18), as noted by Cavanagh, but also due to its otherness. It invites us to question our expectations of reading with regard to early modern texts and to become aware of the historically contingent nature of these expectations. Reading expectations change over time; they are influenced by normative ideologies or theories; they develop on the basis of reading experience and training.⁶⁸ As Robert Darnton puts it in “First Steps Toward a History of Reading,” “Reading has a history. It was not always and everywhere the same. [...] Interpretive schemes belong to cultural configurations, which have varied enormously over time.” (176) An obvious consequence of this circumstance is the changing appreciation of individual works of art over time, demonstrated by studies of a given work’s reception. This is the case for Wroth’s romance, as the overview of the critical reception of the *Urania* has illustrated. In other words, when we approach Wroth’s work today, we do so with a set of different reading expectations from those early modern readers would have had. Unlike the first readers of the *Urania*, I would argue, we are readers that have grown up with realist fiction, especially novels. As specialist readers we have usually been formed academically by our encounter with a selection of medieval texts, examples of early modern poetry and drama, postmodern texts and the various critical theories of the last thirty years. While it is not possible for us to approach Wroth’s romance in the same way as early modern readers, it is

⁶⁸ Cf. Jonathan Culler’s discussion of “literary competence” in *Structuralist Poetics* (148-152, 161-187), to be discussed in some more detail in the following chapter.

worth trying to recover early modern reading expectations in order to understand how these readers would have received the text and how Wroth engages with their expectations.⁶⁹

The aim of this study then is to develop reading strategies with which to approach the *Urania*. On the one hand, these reading strategies will be elaborated on the basis of what is known about early modern reading practices and early modern readers' familiarity with generic conventions. On the other hand, they will be derived from a detailed analysis of Wroth's text itself, its narrative structures and what it has to say about the acts of narration and reading in its more self-reflective moments. Quilligan in *The Language of Allegory* analyses the ways in which allegorical works like Spenser's *Faerie Queene* teach readers to make meaning of the text (24), and I would like to make a claim for a similar kind of instruction in the *Urania* on the level of both structure and content.

A study proposing to delineate reading strategies for the *Urania* is not entirely original. All the critical studies on Wroth's work described above implicitly or explicitly propose a strategy of reading with which to approach the text. As mentioned before, what most of these studies share, with a few notable exceptions,⁷⁰ is their focus on individual episodes, characters and/or themes rather than on overarching patterns in both parts of the romance. In "The Biopolitics of Romance" Lamb aptly sums up critical readings of the *Urania* when she states the following: "To write about the *Urania* at all requires a form of rewriting: a selection of events according to a reader's own critical agenda to create a coherent pattern. Of necessity, this artificial coherence distorts a central feature of the *Urania*: a refusal to cohere" (165). While I do not entirely agree that the *Urania* refuses "to cohere,"⁷¹ it is certainly true that the selection of specific episodes for discussion highlights one overarching pattern at the expense of others and that such studies rarely address the larger narrative structures of the *Urania* in

⁶⁹ For an extended discussion of early modern readers' identities, practices and expectations, as well as of the difficulties modern scholars face when trying to recover early modern readers' traces see Brayman Hackel.

⁷⁰ See for instance Cavangh, *Cherished Torment* or Carrell, "A Pack of Lies in a Looking Glass."

⁷¹ See especially section 3.5 "Published Part One vs. Manuscript Continuation Part Two" below for a discussion of the problem of coherence.

detail. Another shared characteristic, excepting the genre-oriented studies listed above of course, is that critical discussions tend to focus more on how Wroth's text intervenes in normative patriarchal discourses of the time than on how it interacts with literary traditions and generic frameworks. These are areas where my study seeks to differ from others and to provide a new "rewriting" of the *Urania* in Lamb's words: it will try to envisage reading strategies that take into account the entire work's narrative and structural principles, and it attempts to foreground the text's literariness, that is, Wroth's conscious combination, adoption and adaptation of literary traditions and generic forms.

In "The Critical Reception of Lady Mary Wroth," Kinney notes that "The burgeoning interest in early modern women writers from 1980 onward coincided with a growing suspicion of formalist analysis in the academy," with the result that Wroth's sonnets, for instance, have not been studied with the same attention to "textual detail" (xxxix) as other sonnet sequences. Kinney even thinks that some critics have "treated textual detail in a somewhat cavalier fashion in their eagerness to offer totalizing readings or to advance particular agendas" (xxxix). The same, I would argue, is to some extent true for the *Urania*, although with regard to narrative structures rather than "textual detail." Whereas the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics who mention the *Urania* still focus on the text's formal aspects insofar as they criticise its structure and cite it as grounds to disqualify Wroth's work as inferior to the *Arcadia* in particular and to later novels in general, more recent criticism on Wroth's romance usually includes no more than a few passing remarks on the form and does not praise Wroth's literary achievement on formal grounds but rather treats the *Urania* as a fascinating socio-historic document of a woman's negotiation of contemporary norms and circumstances.

Salzman's studies on the *Urania* are an interesting case in this respect since they recurrently address the issue of textual complexity in more or less detail. In *English Prose*

Fiction Salzman praises French heroic romance for its intricate but ultimately unified narrative structure (138, 144, 186), whereas he implicitly criticises Wroth's work for not meeting this standard, nor that of the *Arcadia*'s narrative structure. Rather than experiencing an "increasing sense of cohesion" (189) as when reading French heroic romances, readers of the *Urania* are in danger of losing the overview as the following quote indicates:

Urania is not structured in the epic manner of the *Arcadia*, but is more like an old-fashioned chivalric romance. It has a very large cast of characters, and the narrative moves from one group of them to another, while including a substantial number of subsidiary stories. The characters and stories are in fact so numerous that the reader is hard pressed to keep track of them, and without a firm structure, the narrative tends to become increasingly fragmented. (141)

Salzman's criticism is based on a number of characteristics of Wroth's work, such as its multiplicity of characters, stories, narrative levels and strands, and his description of the *Urania* makes it appear like a collection of numerous fragmented stories rather than a unified whole progressing towards closure, even though he mentions the work's "thematic" unity, i.e. its focus on the "destructive power" (141) of love. By characterising the *Urania* as "an old-fashioned chivalric romance" rather than "structured in the epic manner of the *Arcadia*," Salzman moreover refers to a number of further structural features that he outlines in his introduction and on which he bases his distinction between medieval romance and "sophisticated Elizabethan romance" (5).

Salzman describes medieval romance as a "seamless web of adventure" with a "definite narrative beginning" which "may open up to an eternity" due to the "interlace" technique that "produces proliferating characters whose adventures all occur in the present and are interwoven by the narrator" (4). In contrast to the medieval type, he claims that "Elizabethan romance," like, for example, Sidney's *Arcadia*, was influenced by Greek romance, which, he says, put more weight on structure. Furthermore, he adds, later romance took over certain of the characteristics of Greek romance that are "derived from the structure of the epic," such as the beginning *in medias res* and a "retrospective narrative method" (4). This means that only a

part of the action takes place in what Salzman calls “the narrative present” (186), whereas most of the heroes’ adventures are related retrospectively among the characters. However, the two elements in the *Arcadia* which Salzman traces back to the epic via the Greek romance, i.e. a beginning *in medias res* and a retrospective narrative pattern, are both present in the *Urania* as well.⁷² Still, the two works do differ from each other in one respect as Salzman notes correctly: the *Urania* consists of different narrative strands, and the narrator takes the reader from one strand to another. Thus, contrary to the *Arcadia*, in which stories of past adventures are mainly exchanged among major characters,⁷³ Wroth’s romance also contains many instances when protagonists encounter secondary characters on their journeys and listen to their stories. It is probably this feature that led Salzman to compare the *Urania* to medieval romance.

Salzman’s early comments in *English Prose Fiction* seem reminiscent of MacCarthy’s more negative evaluation of the *Urania* when she states that

It would serve no good purpose to continue to outline so complicated, repetitive and extravagant a plot. The scene shifts in kaleidoscopic fashion, and we find ourselves now in Pantaleria, now in Morea, now in Constantinople, Rhodes, Delos, Negropont, Pamphilia or Mytilene. But in fact the scene is always Arcadia, and the blue-blooded shepherds and shepherdesses remain ever faithful to the heroic-pastoral code. After many wanderings, exploits, and sufferings which serve merely to discover their enduring constancy, all the lovers are united, all the kings reinstated, and all the mysteries are resolved. (58)

Both MacCarthy and Salzman emphasise the shifting nature of the narrative and its resulting complexity—MacCarthy in terms of place and Salzman in terms of narrative strands. This is contrasted by each critic with a more constant aspect of Wroth’s work, the “heroic-pastoral code” for MacCarthy and the focus on love for Salzman. As mentioned above, MacCarthy’s assessment of the *Urania* echoes to some extent the judgment of Baker and perhaps

⁷² Arguably, a larger part of the *Arcadia* is related retrospectively than this is the case in the *Urania*, but Wroth’s work nevertheless starts in the middle of things rather than with the birth or childhood of her protagonists, for instance.

⁷³ In the *New Arcadia* characters that become intradiegetic narrators include Kalander, Pyrocles, Helen, Ismenus, Basilius, Pamela, Musidorus, Philoclea, Miso, Mopsa, Cecropia, Philanax, Euarchus, Plangus and Kalodulus. Added to these is Philisides in Sir William Alexander’s supplement. In the *Old Arcadia*, inset stories are primarily related in the eclogues except for Musidorus’ revelation of his identity to Pamela via storytelling.

Jusserand, who, privileging the genre of the novel, both criticise Wroth's text for typical romance features. In addition, MacCarthy cites Sidney Lee's verdict in the *Dictionary of National Biography* when he describes the romance as a "tedious narrative [...] in prose, which is extraordinarily long-winded and awkward" (162).⁷⁴ There exists then something of a tradition of negative evaluations of the work's narrative shape,⁷⁵ even though none of the critics mentioned actually engage in an extended analysis of its structural aspects.

In his later work on the *Urania*, Salzman continues to point out the work's complexity, but arguably in a more positive tone. In *Literary Culture in Jacobean England*, Salzman mentions "Wroth's careful use of multivalent narratives, voices, characters, situations" and suggests that these "can be valuably read as an unfixing of the univocal nature of patriarchal discourse, and certainly as the questioning of any essentialised position on political or gender issues" (70).⁷⁶ This comment is interesting for the way it recuperates the complexity of Wroth's text for the feminist and gender issues predominant in Wroth studies: on the one hand, Wroth is no longer criticised on formal grounds, but on the other, the structure of her work does not receive extended analysis and is considered in ideological rather than literary terms.

In *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing*, Salzman gives more space again to the discussion of the text's formal aspects, i.e. its "extraordinarily complex series of intersecting narratives" (74) and also reconsiders the question of reading experience (76-77). More precisely, in a passage that needs to be quoted at length since it raises a number of issues that are central to my own work, Salzman reflects on the reading practices of today's readers as opposed to early modern readers:

⁷⁴ For Jusserand's and Baker's comments see footnote 44.

⁷⁵ Salzman does not mention MacCarthy's study or Sidney Lee's comments in his discussion of the work's form, but he cites both critics when writing about the romance's content and Wroth's biography, respectively.

⁷⁶ Salzman in *Literary Culture in Jacobean England: Reading 1621* rewrites his earlier chapter "The Strang[e] Constructions of Mary Wroth's *Urania*: Arcadian Romance and the Public Realm" in Neil Rhodes' *English Renaissance Prose. History, Language, and Politics*, where he comments on the structure of the *Urania* in the same words.

It is worth asking a few more questions, at this point in my account of Wroth, about exactly how *Urania* can be read. Many modern readers have quailed, not so much at the sheer bulk of *Urania* (though, at 1,081 pages in the modern edition, the bulk is rather frightening), as at the multitudinous stories, which seem to become more ravelled as they go on. In this sense, Wroth is, as Helen Hackett [in *Women and Romance Fiction*] has astutely noted, heir to and adapter of the long medieval tradition of romance, and she also anticipates the complications of the French heroic romance which flourished two decades after *Urania*'s publication. The modern edition of both parts of *Urania* allows the wearied reader to disentangle the stories of the various characters because both volumes provide detailed indexes for individual characters. Not only does this enable the stories to be followed easily, but it also clarifies the dynastic interrelationships between the characters. (And incidentally, indicates how, in the second part, Wroth herself still needed to clear up some interrelationships and dangling or contradictory plot strands.) But it is possible that this modern hesitation before the complexity of Wroth's narrative was not felt by seventeenth-century readers. It seems to have taken Edward Denny (or his informant) only a matter of a few months after *Urania*'s publication to 'interpret' the story of Sirelius. The narrative of Sirelius's marriage comes very late in Book Four of the published *Urania*—that is, the reader needs to get through 435 pages of the folio, reading, one assumes, with great attention, before the fairly brief account that enflamed Denny takes place. It is a short, embedded story, rather than a major plot strand, and so would have demanded close reading, especially as the names of the characters in the narrative do not signal their relationship to the real people involved, unlike, say, the anagrammatic Lindamira (= Lady Mary [Wroth]). If John Chamberlain testifies to a general sense of embedded stories in the romance, then it is possible to see *Urania*'s readers as performing a very different reading 'process' to that performed (or backed away from) by its readers today. (76)

As in his remarks in *English Prose Fiction*, Salzman addresses the challenge that the *Urania* presents for modern readers and grounds it on the work's structural characteristics. It is only thanks to the copious commentary and indices in the modern editions that the romance has become more accessible to readers it seems.⁷⁷ Early modern readers by contrast had no such critical apparatus, and yet, as Salzman notes, they, or at least somebody in Denny's entourage, appear to have read the text in a relatively short time.⁷⁸ From this, Salzman concludes that these readers' reading practices might have differed from ours today, and he envisions a

⁷⁷ Brayman Hackel compares these indices to those added by two early modern readers to their copies of Sidney's *Arcadia* (169-175) and, like Salzman, implies modern readers' need of such textual apparatus when she writes that Roberts "does provide [the work's] grateful readers with similar indexes of characters, places, and poems." (169, n108).

⁷⁸ The first of Denny's letters to Wroth from February 26 1621/1622 suggests an alternative explanation for Denny's finding of the Sirelius episode: in his letter Denny refutes Wroth's protestation of her innocence by claiming that "so many noble witnesses may be brought to aver that your own mouth hath published me to be the man whom that spitefull and scornfull passa[g]e did concerne" (*Poems* 239). In other words, Denny might have learned of his portrayal in the romance through hearsay and need not have read the whole text. However, Denny's remark that "the whole wor[l]d conceives me to be ment in one of the weakest and unworthiest passages of your booke" (*Poems* 238) implies that at least some people have read larger parts of the *Urania* by that time. For comparison, Brayman Hackel calculates on the basis of a marginal annotation that Lady Anne Clifford had John Barclay's *Argenis* read to her at an average rate of forty folio pages per day, i.e. about two and a half hours of reading aloud per day (234-235).

reading strategy informed by the nature of the *roman à clef*, that is, a reading strategy aimed at discovering personal references and allusions to recent or important events. The aim of the reading practice of today's "wearied reader" by contrast seems to be to "disentangle the stories of the various characters" according to Salzman—a strategy which implies a more linear and end-directed approach to the text than the hunting for episodes with extratextual references.

The insight that, to quote Salzman again, "The very entangled narrative details that readers today may find daunting could [...] have had the opposite effect on *Urania's* contemporary readers, who combed it for references to real people and events" (77) seems important to me and one that, to date, has not been sufficiently addressed by Wroth studies. However, rather than limiting early modern readers' approaches to the *Urania* to practices suitable for a *roman à clef*, I would like to suggest that readers at the time made more or less conscious use of a number of reading strategies, based on their training, their reading experience and their reading habits.⁷⁹ Knowledge of generic conventions, acquired through training or reading experience, certainly plays a significant role, but it should not be restricted to the *roman-à-clef* mode. Rather, I would argue, the evidence of texts like Sidney's *Arcadia* or Wroth's *Urania* indicates that their authors expected readers well-versed in the conventions of a number of genres and narrative modes.

Such generic knowledge not only shapes readers' expectations with regard to a work's content, but also in respect to its structural characteristics. Our reading of narrative structures still depends to a large extent on narratological concepts and terminology that have developed from structuralism. Furthermore, the most widely known narratological theory of Gérard

⁷⁹ Brayman Hackel notes, for instance, that Clifford does not seem to have been very interested in the topical references of Barclay's *Argenis* since her annotations to the *roman à clef* point to a personal and idiosyncratic rather than a political reading of the work (235-238). Further, as Brayman Hackel's study of reading practices shows, plot appears to have been important to early modern readers given that some of the most common types of marginalia are finding notes (98, 131-132, 159, 164), and the compilation order of quotations in commonplace books suggests that early modern readers approached texts in a linear manner (187, 191-192, 194).

Genette and his followers, like Mieke Bal and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, is “realist in orientation since its primary focus was the novel between Defoe and Virginia Woolf” (263), as Monika Fludernik points out in “Natural Narratology and Cognitive Parameters.” As a consequence, the narratological tools derived from this theory are only partly useful when analysing early modern romance, and it appears obvious that they do not reflect the reading practices of the time. Moreover, they generally imply a valorisation of unity and linearity based on the characteristics of the novel. Judged by such standards, the literary merit of the *Urania* must necessarily fall short of modern readers’ expectations, and it is perhaps not surprising that Salzman in 1985—shortly after the heyday of structuralism—commented on the work’s structure in less positive terms.

Thus, a detailed structural analysis of the *Urania* and the attempt to recover early modern readers’ expectations entail a critical renegotiation of the narratological concepts on the basis of which we tend to represent and assess a work’s formal aspects. Hence, the following chapter of my study will begin both by introducing the narratological terminology to be used in the analysis and by exploring its limitations and the value judgements inherent in a structuralist approach to literature. This discussion will also try to sketch in more detail some common structural expectations of modern readers and oppose them to the historical reading practices of early modern readers. Furthermore, I will give a short overview of characteristic romance features and consider what implications this choice of genre has on the structure and meaning of the *Urania* as well as on early modern reading expectations. This will allow me to highlight how Wroth experiments within the romance genre, adapting traditional literary forms and innovatively combining narrative strategies to approach the personal, social and political issues with which she is concerned.

Turning to the *Urania* itself, the subsequent chapters will provide a detailed analysis of the work’s most remarkable structural features and the recurrent narrative patterns that

structure the whole of Wroth's work. Thus, I will devote the third chapter to the multiplication of narrative levels, voices and strands, which is at the basis of the work's complexity and gave rise to the unfavourable early criticism of the *Urania*. Furthermore, I will discuss the figures of the narrator and the narratee, since they are of great interest as they serve as the reader's guides and imply the role and attitude expected of an ideal reader. Another aspect that deserves attention is the spatial and temporal frame of the *Urania* which, like other structural features, defies easy analysis with the tools offered by traditional narratology. Finally, I will compare the published first part and the manuscript continuation of Wroth's work to indicate the changes and continuities in Wroth's narrative strategies.

In the fourth chapter that focuses more on recurring plots, motifs and themes, I will illustrate how Wroth weaves a tight narrative web that invites the reader to reflect on the predominant issues of the *Urania*. By developing multiple versions of plots dealing with problems of identity, royal succession and love, Wroth not only manages to create the impression of a coherent and self-sufficient fictional universe, but also offers the reader a multi-dimensional view of the issues in question. Far from depicting marriage, for example, from a single and unified perspective, Wroth successively enriches the representation of the theme by foregrounding different facets. This is valid for the main level of narration, which features the protagonists' adventures and experiences, but Wroth takes the development of the important themes of the *Urania* a step further: on a secondary level of narration, the inset tales related by protagonists or minor characters within the romance take up the same themes and thus add yet another layer of reflection. However, these embedded tales not only mirror and develop the plots on the main level of narration; they also enrich the romance by introducing contrasting and critical comment on the text. Wroth thus uses the inset stories of minor characters to include stories of fabliau-character in her text, to address delicate issues such as incest or, as Salzman's quote illustrates with reference to Denny (*Reading* 76), to allude to

recent scandals at court. Although sometimes neglected in criticism, such minor tales are of importance with regard to the reading of the romance, since the humour and the veiled criticism expressed in them opposes, relativizes but also complements the serious, emotional and, at times, tragic tone of other parts of the *Urania*, bringing to the fore the latent irony in Wroth's work.

The analysis of the narrative structure, on the one hand, and the development of plots, motifs and themes on the different narrative levels, on the other, will highlight the larger overarching patterns that shape Wroth's text. Combined with a recapitulation of the more abstract discussion of reader expectations in a narratological, historical and generic context, the insights gained from the study of the romance's structural features will allow me to outline a number of reading strategies with which early modern readers might have approached the *Urania* to make sense of the text. Hence, the conclusion will attempt to sketch a reader-oriented approach to Wroth's fascinating work and propose a historically grounded reconsideration of narratological criteria by which to evaluate the narrative and structural principles that govern the romance. Moreover, by emphasising the textual strategies that Wroth uses to intervene in the literary traditions of her time and make the *Urania* meaningful to her readers, I hope to draw more critical attention to Wroth's literary craftsmanship as an author.

2 Modern and Early Modern Reading Strategies

In this chapter I propose to approach the phenomenon of reading from three different angles with a special focus on the gap between modern and early modern reading strategies. In a first section I reflect on the practice of reading in general and the reading of narrative structures in particular from a theoretical perspective based on reader-response and narrative theory. The second section is primarily concerned with the reading practices of early modern readers, which I discuss in the material context of book history. In the third section the focus lies on the reading of romance and the importance of readers' awareness of genre when approaching a text. What all the three sections share is an underlying historical perspective, that is, a reflection on the historical and cultural contingency of theoretical approaches, material practices and generic traditions.

2.1 Reading Narrative Structure

In *Structuralist Poetics*, Jonathan Culler postulates that “A work can only be read in connection with or against texts, which provide a grid through which it is read and structured by establishing expectations which enable one to pick out salient features and give them structure” (163).⁸⁰ In other words, when readers approach a new text, they do not read it as an isolated work but within the framework of their prior reading experience and the expectations resulting from this appropriated knowledge of texts. An “experienced reader of literature” (149), according to Culler, has acquired what he calls “literary competence” (132), i.e. “sets of categories and procedures for their application” (xi) that allow the reader to process a text “as literature” (132). This literary competence, which Culler also describes as “an assimilated

⁸⁰ Unless otherwise indicated, all of the following page references to Culler refer to his *Structuralist Poetics*.

system which is largely interpersonal” (149), becomes especially visible when readers are faced with works that for some reason resist understanding, as Culler explains:

the difficulty of interpreting some works provides evidence of the restricted nature of the conventions [internalized as literary competence] actually in force in a culture. Moreover, if a difficult work later becomes intelligible it is because new ways of reading have been developed in order to meet what is the fundamental demand of the system: the demand for sense. A comparison of old and new readings will shed light on the change in the institution of literature. (143)

Culler’s model of literary competence, it appears, is alternately a dynamic and a static concept as over time it incorporates new reading strategies that are then institutionalised. Thus, when readers recuperate difficult and resisting textual elements in a process Culler terms “naturalization” (162), they extend or adapt the set of conventions on which literary competence is based. As a result textual characteristics of a literary work that may initially have appeared disruptive come to seem “natural” (161). On the other hand, literary competence also has a limiting, institutionalising effect since it enables the reader to produce interpretations that are deemed “acceptable” by a wider community (144).⁸¹

Several critics have taken up and developed Culler’s ideas by considering in more detail with what kind of literary competence readers approach texts and what strategies they apply when reading. Stanley Fish’s notion of “interpretive communities,” as discussed in his book *Is There a Text in This Class?* (167-173), seems to be a useful concept in this respect since it underlines that literary competence is not solely based on the works of literature one reads but also on theoretical currents, which result in the existence of a number of interpretive communities. “Interpretative communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions” (171), Fish explains. Thus, according to Fish,

⁸¹ Culler distinguishes between real readers that might not live up to the literary competence they actually have (143-144) and an ideal reader who, as “a theoretical construct,” is “perhaps best thought of as a representation of the central notion of acceptability” (144).

different interpretive communities create different texts by virtue of the reading strategies with which they approach the text (171-173).⁸²

In *Before Reading* Peter J. Rabinowitz illustrates that even within such interpretive communities readers can come up with different interpretations of works of literature because “interpretation depends radically on the reader’s starting point, which will influence (although not necessarily determine) his or her reading experience” (37). Contrary to Culler’s concern with a constructed ideal reader or Fish’s discussion of relatively stable interpretations by interpretive communities,⁸³ Rabinowitz insists that

Each member of the actual audience is different, and each reads in his or her own way, with a distance from other readers depending upon such variables as class, gender, race, personality, training, culture, and historical situation. (20-21)

Thus Rabinowitz echoes Culler’s statement cited at the beginning of this chapter, but extends the “grid through which” we read to include individual characteristics of readers and the cultural historical context in which they read. Moreover, Rabinowitz not only pays more attention to individual readers, observing that “any study of reading will depend, implicitly or explicitly, in part on records of reading by others” (11), but he also specifies the kind of reading that he analyses, namely what he calls “Authorial reading” (26) or “Reading as authorial audience” (25). Rabinowitz describes this kind of reading as “the acceptance of the author’s invitation to read in a particular socially constituted way that is shared by the author and his or her expected readers” (22).⁸⁴ This type of reading, he points out, is far from the only possible or valid kind of reading (29-30), but it is one that is practised by a large number of people from academics to “nonprofessional readers” (23). Furthermore, authorial reading can usefully be distinguished from other “approaches to texts [which] skip over the authorial

⁸² Culler’s model of literary competence does not foreground the possibility of different acceptable and mutually conflicting readings of literary texts, but neither is this possibility excluded, as Culler argues (xi).

⁸³ For a retrospective discussion of the critical move from the concern with “the reader” to that of “readers, in the plural” (xxi), see Culler’s “Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition” of *The Pursuit of Signs*, in which he argues for the continued importance of investigating “the reader” which a text “posits” (xxi).

⁸⁴ By introducing the concept of an authorial audience, Rabinowitz avoids simply positing authorial intention as such, starting rather from the observation that readers in general assume the existence of authorial intention and the possibility of discovering it (22-23).

audience entirely,”⁸⁵ but it also “provides the foundation for many other types of reading” (30) that “depend for their power on a prior understanding of the authorial meaning” (30-31).⁸⁶

How do these theoretical considerations concerning reading and readers bear on a reading of the *Urania* and, more precisely, a structural reading of the *Urania*? Firstly, they may serve as a warning against the danger of generalisations with regard to readers and reading. Given the individuality of readers and the many different types of reading they can engage in, more general conclusions about readers and reading practices remain for the most part speculative and provisional. Secondly, the theoretical reflections outlined above account to a large extent for the kinds of readings that Wroth’s work has received since its rediscovery. Today’s readers of the *Urania* are most likely to be scholarly readers, given the available editions of the text and its nature, i.e. its length, language, subject matter and the fact that it is little known beyond academic circles. A brief survey of the scholars who have published on the romance in the bibliography of Hannay’s Wroth biography (*MSLW* 319-348) reveals that these scholars are typically female and have written on the *Urania* in the past twenty years.⁸⁷ For such readers, the theoretical framework “in connection with or against” which they read Wroth’s romance is most likely to include post-structuralism and feminism and, perhaps more prominently, new historicism and cultural materialism. As the overview of the critical reception of the *Urania* has shown, one of the consequences of this theoretical orientation of critics is the comparative neglect of the work’s narrative structures. Put in very general terms, new historicism and cultural material criticism tend to focus on the historical and social context of works and their engagement in discourses of power,⁸⁸ whereas feminism and

⁸⁵ Rabinowitz mentions “certain kinds of structuralist or stylistic studies, for instance, or the kind of subjective reading proposed by David Bleich in *Readings and Feelings*” (30).

⁸⁶ Rabinowitz gives examples of Freudian, Marxist or feminist approaches to texts (31).

⁸⁷ The relation between the number of female and male critics is roughly five to one.

⁸⁸ See for instance the description of New Historicism in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism* (698-699) or Peter Barry’s introduction to new historicism and cultural materialism (172-173, 182).

gender studies concentrate on representations and questions of gender, with a special focus on women's writing, subjectivity and negotiation of patriarchal norms.⁸⁹ In all of these approaches, narrative structures are of relatively little concern unless they are seen to break with established norms and can be discussed in terms of ideological subversion.⁹⁰ Post-structural approaches to literature share this preoccupation with subversion and add indeterminacy; after all, Culler, in his "Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition" notes that post-structuralism "is best understood as the critique of the systematizing ambitions of structuralism, or at least of the idea that it might be possible to achieve a comprehensive science of matters involving meaning and culture" (viii).⁹¹ Thus, none of the prominent theories of the last twenty years is particularly concerned with in-depth analyses of narrative structure.

Apart from providing an explanation for the kinds of readings the *Urania* has received so far, the theoretical approaches to reading introduced at the beginning of this section reveal the inevitable anachronism involved in modern readers' interpretations of older texts. Bringing our own interiorised literary competence to the texts we read, it is not possible to approach an early modern text exactly like an early modern reader, even if such a person as *the* early modern reader existed, which is, of course, not the case. This circumstance does not render modern analyses of older texts invalid, but it seems important to distinguish between essentially modern critical readings of older texts which do not take into account historical practices of reading and attempts to approach texts from a more historical perspective. Differently put, what matters is an awareness of the ideological and historical implications and limitations of the theories that inform our reading of literary texts in order to avoid

⁸⁹ Cf. for example Barry's list of "What feminist critics do" (134).

⁹⁰ Consider for example studies like Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and Its Counterdiscourses* and Fienberg, "Mary Wroth's Poetics of the Self," which all discuss Wroth's negotiation of male Petrarchan discourse in her sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*.

⁹¹ See also Barry's opposition of structuralist and post-structuralist practical approaches to texts (72-73).

naïvely anachronistic interpretations.⁹² If, in addition, one takes into consideration historical reading strategies and attitudes to reading, this opens yet another avenue for exploring older texts and usefully interrogates the mechanisms of canon formation.⁹³

Proposing an analysis of the *Urania* from a narratological perspective might then appear doubly anachronistic since “Narratology is a branch of structuralism” (222), to quote Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory*, and hence does not figure prominently in current critical practice,⁹⁴ and at the same time it is yet another essentially modern lens through which to view an older text. However, while narratological concepts as developed by Genette and his followers are undoubtedly dated, I contend that they retain their usefulness as tools to analyse a work’s narrative structures in detail when combined critically with a historical approach to reading and questions of genre, as discussed in the following sections. Such a detailed structural analysis, I believe, helpfully contributes to our understanding of how the *Urania* might have been read by its early modern readers. By identifying structural and thematic patterns and by analysing the characteristics of the narrator, narratee and the spatio-temporal framework of Wroth’s text, we may at least to some extent recover a set of guidelines provided by Wroth for her readers within her work. Reading, as Rabinowitz suggests when discussing the rules of reading applied by an authorial audience, involves an active processing of narrative structures and patterns, which are in part responsible for directing readers’

⁹² Rabinowitz writes in *Before Reading* that “Study of conventions [...] can help us escape some of the more confining effects of our culture by unmasking them, and can thus help us transform both reading and teaching into more liberating activities than they currently are” (9). While his comment is targeted primarily at ideological issues, it seems to some extent applicable to the problem of approaching older texts with modern theories.

⁹³ Rabinowitz’ analysis of the different critical evaluation of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* and Margaret Ayer Barnes’ *Edna His Wife* (213-229) illustrates the usefulness of interrogating historical reading strategies. In the case of *Edna His Wife*, Rabinowitz argues that the reading strategies of the time of its publication contributed to its exclusion from the canon while modern feminist approaches make it possible to recuperate the novel’s qualities. Wroth’s *Urania* has similarly been recuperated by feminist critical approaches, one might say, but, in common with romance in general, its status has also suffered from earlier nineteenth-and twentieth-century criticism privileging the novel, as the previous chapter has illustrated.

⁹⁴ For a useful overview of the origins and development of narrative theory see David Herman, “Histories of Narrative Theory (I): A Genealogy of Early Developments” and Fludernik, “Histories of Narrative Theory (II): From Structuralism to the Present.”

attention and for raising certain expectations (43-45).⁹⁵ It follows then that a careful narratological analysis of a work can serve as a basis from which to draw inferences about the ways in which Wroth expected her readers to approach the text.⁹⁶ However, as indicated above, it is important to apply theoretical tools critically, especially with regard to the implicit assumptions that they bring to bear on the text in question. Classical narratology, as mentioned, grew out of structuralism, and I will mainly be using terminology introduced by Genette during that period and refined or adapted by Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* and Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*.⁹⁷ Although dating from the 1970s, the concepts developed by Genette and his followers are still widely known and invoked, and Genette's work thus arguably provides the narratological vocabulary that is most accessible also to literary and/or early modern scholars. The concepts that will be of most importance to this study are those of the narrator and the narratee, narrative level and narrative strands, the notions of plot and theme as well as questions of time and space.

The main problem involved in applying these concepts to Wroth's romance is the circumstance that they were developed on the basis of a restricted literary corpus, as Fludernik points out in *An Introduction to Narratology*:

Classical narratology of the French school (Genette, Greimas, Bremond, Todorov) such as it developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s concentrated on the novel as the prototypical form of literary narrative. This has meant that the theoretical concepts applied in narrative theory derive from a body of novel (and also short-story) texts dating from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Postmodern texts and, above all, narratives originating before the

⁹⁵ Rabinowitz argues for the existence of textual clues left by authors and intended by them to be "found" (22, 27-28) by readers to guide their interpretation, but he also remarks that only readers who approach the text with the particular interpretive strategies that make their discovery possible will find these clues (27) and that readers may well identify authorial guidelines that were never intended as such by authors (28). He thus proposes a compromise between the New Critical position that the text itself is the sole repository of its meaning and an extreme reader-response position claiming that the meaning of a text is exclusively created by its reader (cf. 27-28).

⁹⁶ While it is notoriously problematic to speculate about an author's intentions, I agree with Rabinowitz that authors do not write "without making assumptions about the readers' beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions," that is, "they design their books rhetorically for some more or less specific hypothetical audience" (21).

⁹⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, all the following references to Rimmon-Kenan refer to this study.

eighteenth century were only discussed as exceptions to the rule, and medieval narrative was almost entirely ignored. (110)

This limitation of the corpus that provided the basis for narratological concepts seriously undermines their claim to universality. Narratology, Fludernik explains, “has, for the most part, concerned itself with the universal structures found in narrative [...] and historical matters have been regarded as the domain of genre theory or non-narratological literary studies” (*Introduction* 110). Thus, with regard to early modern prose fiction, narrative theory as it is traditionally applied presents two major problems. Firstly, although its typologies aspire to be universal and to “classify every conceivable kind of narrative” (*Introduction* 110), to quote Fludernik again, they apply primarily to the genres of the novel and short stories. In other words, narratological approaches to literature often lack historical and generic awareness and do not consider the influence of genre or generic change on narrative form.⁹⁸

Secondly, whereas structural approaches to narrative aim to be descriptive in nature—Rimmon-Kenan, for example, “wish[es] to present a description of the system governing all fictional narratives” (*Narrative Fiction* 4) and Fludernik states that narratology’s “objective is to describe the constants, variables and combinations typical of narrative” (*Introduction* 8)—the concentration on the novel as the prototypical instance of prose fiction leads to implicit normative aesthetic judgements when narratological terminology is applied to narratives that do not conform to the received standard definitions of narratological concepts. Fludernik addresses this problem in *Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology* with regard to postmodern literature, which when analysed with the tools of traditional narratology is likely to be described in negative terms of deviance from established norms (314, 332-333). Put differently, reading a text through the “grid” of traditional narratology leads to the implicit expectation that the text’s narrative structures either comply with narratological categories or

⁹⁸ For a critical discussion of the “(Im)Possibility” of “seamlessly integrating the tools and insights of narratology with the contingencies of history” (68), see Brian McHale, “Ghosts and Monsters: On the (Im)Possibility of Narrating the History of Narrative Theory.”

consciously subvert and deconstruct them in a postmodern fashion. Moreover, as Fludernik's observation suggests, such expectations give rise to aesthetic value judgements, and theories of narratology thus participate in mechanisms of canon formation.

If narratology fails to account in positive terms for modern experimental fiction, its application to prose fiction preceding the novel is equally problematic as the investigation of the narratological concepts that I will be most concerned with reveals. The first concept to be considered is that of the narrator. Narrators whose presence in the text is obvious are generally experienced as stable personae exerting narrative control over the story they tell, unless one encounters indications in the text that contradict this view.⁹⁹ This impression of narrative control results from the different ways in which narrators are seen to influence the telling of a story. As Rimmon-Kenan points out, "The narrative level to which the narrator belongs, the extent of his participation in the story, the degree of perceptibility of his role, and finally his reliability are crucial factors in the reader's understanding of and attitude to the story" (94). Thus, Rimmon-Kenan claims that it makes a difference for readers whether a story is told by the main narrator or by a secondary narrator within the story and that we experience narrators as more or less active, overt and reliable.¹⁰⁰

In *Figures III* Genette proposes another approach to the issue of narrative control by offering a typology of narrators, based on the narrative level on which they are situated and their relation to the narrative they tell (252-256). In other words, Genette distinguishes

⁹⁹ I will use the term story according to Bal's definition in *Narratology*, designating the elements of a narrative, such as events, actors, time and location "organized in a certain way into a story" (7). As Fludernik points out, the term story is "used with a number of different meanings," both in "Narratology and everyday usage" (*Introduction* 161). In the wake of the Russian Formalists, Genette and Seymour Chatman, some narratologists like Rimmon-Kenan understand the term story as the events of a narrative in their abstract chronological order (3), opposing it to what they call "text" (3) or, like Chatman, discourse (cf. Horace Porter Abbott "Story" 41). Since my analysis of the *Urania* is frequently concerned with what is commonly called storytelling, but does not focus on the processes of transformation involved in turning a series of chronologically ordered events (i.e. Rimmon-Kenan's story) into discourse or text, I prefer to adopt Bal's tripartite model which shares the concept of text with Rimmon-Kenan but employs the term fabula for what Rimmon-Kenan calls story and uses the term story roughly equivalent to the everyday use of the word or its meaning in storytelling, which usually implies that a certain organisation of the events to be recounted has already taken place.

¹⁰⁰ The terms overt and covert were introduced by Chatman in *Story and Discourse* (33, 197-211).

between the extradiegetic main narrator and secondary narrators within the story,¹⁰¹ and he describes narrators as homo- or heterodiegetic, depending on whether or not they are involved in the events of their narratives (252). Whereas there is only one type of heterodiegetic narrator—a typical example for a heterodiegetic narrator would be the narrative voice in *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance—two different kinds of homodiegetic narrators are possible: either the homodiegetic narrators are witnesses of the events they relate, as for instance Mr Lockwood and Nelly Dean in *Wuthering Heights* (cf. Genette 253), or they are the story’s protagonists, like the eponymous heroine Jane Eyre, in which case they tell their own story and are therefore not only homo- but also autodiegetic narrators, to use Genette’s term (253). In addition to this typology of various kinds of narrators, Genette suggests that narrators can further be analysed in terms of the different functions they fulfil (261-264).¹⁰² The five functions Genette identifies are: narrative function (261), directive function (262), communicational function (262), testimonial function (262) and ideological function (262-263).¹⁰³ Thus, where in conjunction with narrative level Rimmon-Kenan invokes the concepts of the narrator’s participation, perceptibility and reliability to account for readers’ experience of different narrators, Genette implies that readers’ perception of narrators is based on how and to what extent narrators of various levels fulfil the above-mentioned five functions.

In contrast to the narrator, the narratee, a concept familiarised by Gerald Prince,¹⁰⁴ is often less prominent in narrative texts. As Rimmon-Kenan specifies, “The narratee is sometimes fully personified, sometimes not. In any case, the narratee is the agent addressed by the narrator, and all the criteria classifying the latter also apply to the former” (104).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ The technical Genettian terms extradiegetic and intradiegetic will be discussed in more detail below.

¹⁰² For an alternative typology of the functions of the narrator see Ansgar Nünning’s “Die Funktionen von Erzählinstanzen: Analysekatoren und Modelle zur Beschreibung des Erzählverhaltens.”

¹⁰³ The French terms Genette uses are: fonction narrative, fonction de régie, fonction de communication, fonction testimoniale ou d’attestation, fonction idéologique (261-263).

¹⁰⁴ In “Notes Towards a Preliminary Categorization of Fictional ‘Narratees,’” Prince proposes the first systematic typology of fictional narratees.

¹⁰⁵ By adopting Rimmon-Kenan’s definition I limit the figure of the narratee to the “the specifically described recipients of a narrative, palpably addressed by the narrator” (Shaw 302), in contrast to the alternative option

Thus, Rimmon-Kenan suggests that readers' awareness of and reaction to narratees are shaped by the same factors as their perception of narrators, that is, the distinction of the narrative levels on which narratees are situated and of the extent to which narratees are active, overt and reliable. However, Rimmon-Kenan also notes that narratees have traditionally received less attention in criticism than narrators (103), and unless they are explicitly designated or particularly active and overt, their presence in narrative texts may well go unnoticed. Genette even claims that while characters like Mr Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights* that assume the role of a narratee within the story keep readers at a distance due to their position between narrators and readers, this is not the case for the main narratees—for instance the “reader” addressed by Jane Eyre—whose position readers are, on the contrary, invited to adopt (266). The more covert the evocation of the narratee in the text, Genette adds, the easier or more “irrésistible” such an identification or substitution (266). It follows that although the presence of a narratee in a text may be less prominent, it is nevertheless of crucial importance as to how readers relate to a text.

On the basis of the above introduction of the concepts of narrator and narratee, these appear straightforward and unproblematic. Yet, as Harry E. Shaw usefully reminds us in “Why Won’t Our Terms Stay Put? The Narrative Communication Diagram Scrutinized and Historicized,” the types of narrators and narratees that readers encounter in texts depend to some extent on the historical period during which they were created (309-310). Thus, Shaw argues that in fiction of the nineteenth century, “narrators tend, to a greater degree than in fiction of other periods, to possess the kind of substantiality I have argued obtains with the narrators of Eliot and Thackeray” (309). Shaw’s primary term of comparison is later fiction, but his observation might be applied to earlier narrative texts as well. Alison Case likewise

described by Henry E. Shaw in which the narratee might also “simply be a figure the narrator has in mind in telling the story” (302). Shaw believes that such a limitation of the narratee results in only two types of narratees, characters in frame tales who become narratees or specifically addressed narratees like the “Madam” in *Tristram Shandy* (302).

underlines the historic contingency of narrators in her discussion of narrators in *David Copperfield* and *Bleak House* in “Gender and History in Narrative Theory.” She observes that in Dickens’ novels “self-conscious narrative mastery is coded as a masculine attribute” (320) and comes to the conclusion that Dickens’ construction of Esther as a hesitant narrator conforms to the historical cultural norms of his time with regard to the authority of female narrators (320-321). With respect to Wroth, in addition to historic contingency and the importance of gender one might add genre as a third dimension that will need to be kept in mind in an analysis of the work’s narrator. Furthermore, all of the above considerations should also inform an analysis of the narratee addressed by the narrator.

The narratological concepts to be considered next are narrative level, storyline and plot. The idea that a narrative may contain different levels has already been invoked in the above quotations concerning narrators. These levels can be envisioned as a hierarchical and hence vertical structure, as does Genette, or they can be considered from a more linear and horizontal perspective, as proposed by Fludernik in *Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology*. Both approaches are problematic for certain reasons when applied to a work like the *Urania*. Fludernik discusses narrative levels in terms of frame and embedded narrative and pays attention to the proportional relation between framing narratives and embedded stories (342-343). This proposal seems appropriate for dealing with narratives that contain a fairly limited number of inset stories or that are explicitly set up in the manner of Boccaccio’s *Decamerone* or Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. It is less useful however in Wroth’s case given the frequency of embedded tales in the *Urania* and the structural effects of the continual transitions between narrative levels. In terms of proportion, embedded narratives take up slightly more than a quarter of the text of the first and second part of the *Urania* combined, with a higher rate in the first than in the second part.¹⁰⁶ The number of transitions between narrative levels per

¹⁰⁶ For the basis of these statistics, see fig. 9 in the Appendix.

book varies from roughly twenty-six to forty, which undermines the distinction between framing and framed narratives.

Genette's analytic approach to narrative level, on the other hand, is equally unlikely to capture the early modern reading experience of Wroth's text adequately since it is questionable whether early modern readers would have conceived of shifts in narrative level in terms of Genette's vertical hierarchical structure. Perhaps early modern readers would have experienced the reading of interpolated stories simply as entertaining variety and episodic storytelling, for example, without any notion of textual depth. However, for the purpose of analysis and to distinguish between different narrative levels, Genette's model offers a terminological precision that Fludernik's concept lacks. Therefore I will adopt Genette's terminology developed in *Figures III* (238-241) and revised by Bal in "Narrative and Focalization" (90), bearing in mind that such a differentiation of narrative levels would hardly have occurred to early modern readers. Genette distinguishes the different levels by calling the spatial and temporal universe created by the main narrator of a text diegesis and using it as a point of reference to elucidate the narrative structure of a text (280). The events and characters that appear on this level, i.e. in what is commonly referred to as the main narrative, are called intradiegetic or diegetic by Genette because they are within the diegesis, contrary to the narrator who presents them and who is situated outside the diegesis, on the extradiegetic level. To avoid confusion I will consistently use the term intradiegetic for characters on the level of the diegesis who turn into narrators. Furthermore, I will, like Rimmon-Kenan (91-92), adopt Bal's term hypodiegetic for narrators of tales within tales, rather than Genette's somewhat misleading term metadiegetic.

Genette does not only distinguish between the narrative levels on which inset tales occur, but also describes three different types of relations between embedded stories and the happenings on the main narrative level (242-243). The first type has the function to explain

previous events that lead up to the present situation and serve thus as a kind of analepsis, with the information shared among intradiegetic characters rather than provided by the extradiegetic narrator. Hence, the relation between the inset and the main narrative is one of direct causality. The second type of relation is based on the thematic resemblance between embedded and main narrative. The events in the embedded narrative are told because they mirror or contrast with those on the main narrative level and therefore serve as a commentary on them. When the inset story is a virtually complete reproduction of events of the main narrative, this is called a *mise en abyme*, defined by Rimmon-Kenan as “An analogy which verges on identity, making the hypodiegetic level a mirror and reduplication of the diegetic” (93). Contrary to the first and the second, the third type of relation between embedded and main narrative does not depend on a logical connection between the events that are represented. Rather, it is the act of narration itself that is crucial to the events on the main narrative level, as in Scheherazade’s life-saving telling of stories to the sultan in *A Thousand and One Nights*, as Rimmon-Kenan illustrates (92).

Narrative structure can be complicated vertically, so to speak, by the introduction of different narrative levels, and horizontally by the inclusion of several storylines, which, when dealing with the *Urania*, I will refer to as narrative strands. Rimmon-Kenan distinguishes between “*main story-line*” and “*subsidiary story-line*” (16, italics in the original) and points out that a storyline “is restricted to one set of individuals” (16) among the whole cast of characters in a narrative. Thus, the story of the protagonist of a given text is often paralleled or opposed by that of another character, just as the subplot in drama frequently reflects on the main events of a play.¹⁰⁷ In *Before Reading*, Rabinowitz observes that finding parallels in a text is one of a number of readerly strategies to make sense of a work’s structure and contributes to the readers’ experience of closure and coherence after reading (159-160). This

¹⁰⁷ Refer also to Prince’s definitions of counterplot (17), double plot (23) and subplot (93) in *A Dictionary of Narratology*.

strategy is most effective, I would argue, if the storylines that reflect on each other are limited in number and logically connected, which, as the discussion of the romance genre will show, is more typically or at least more obviously the case in novels than in romance.

To introduce more than one storyline has of course repercussions both on a narrative's plot and on its temporal structure. To define plot is a difficult venture even though theories of narratology are mostly plot-based, as Fludernik argues (*'Natural'* 323-328).¹⁰⁸ This difficulty is partly due to the varying binary or tripartite oppositions that different narratological models set up—such as, for instance, story vs. text vs. narration (Rimmon-Kenan based on Genette), fabula vs. story vs. narration (Bal) or story vs. discourse (Chatman)—in their attempt to theorise the transformation of the bare elements of a story into a finished narrative on the page. As not all of the models envision the logical organisation of events at the same stage of this transformation process, this results in different understandings of the term plot—understandings susceptible to being confused or merged in scholarly discourse.¹⁰⁹ It is telling, then, that in the “Glossary of Narratological Terms” provided at the end of Fludernik's *Introduction to Narratology*, the term plot does not have an entry of its own but is treated within the entry for story (159, 161), and Rimmon-Kenan prefers to do without the term entirely which she thinks “has become too vague in ordinary critical usage” (135). The classical definition remains of course E. M. Forster's, which Fludernik paraphrases when she defines plot as “a logically structured story that spells out motivations” (*Introduction* 29). Opposed to this definition is the everyday usage of the term as more or less “identical with story” (43), as Horace Porter Abbott notes in “Story, plot, and narration,” and Fludernik likewise states that “The term plot is frequently used simply to refer to the sequence of events in a narrative without providing more information about whether the reference is to the fable

¹⁰⁸ For definitions of plot and further references to critical studies, see also Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology* (71-72).

¹⁰⁹ For a diagram that outlines some of the interferences between different narratological systems, see Fludernik, *The Fictions of Language and the Language of Fiction* (62). See also my footnote 99 on the problem concerning the term “story.”

[i.e. the bare story material] or includes causal links or temporal reordering” (*Introduction* 161). In contrast to these rather vague definitions, Abbott, in an attempt to spell out the different meanings of the term, distinguishes between three usages (“Story” 43). The first is the use of plot to refer to “a skeletal story, either universal or culturally fabricated, which performs its psycho-social work while cloaked in a diversity of narrative dress” (43). This meaning of plot is based on the work of scholars like Vladimir Propp or Northrop Frye, who “developed anatomies of plot types” (“Story” 43), as Abbott puts it,¹¹⁰ and it is in this sense that, as Culler claims, readers recognise plots in narratives (*Structuralist Poetics* 239-241). The second usage of plot according to Abbott is based on Aristotle’s notion of *muthos*, that is, the idea that a well-organised story should have a beginning, middle and end (“Story” 43). As Abbott points out, “In this sense, [plot] is often used as a value term” (“Story” 43), suggesting that only a teleologically structured narrative that achieves closure “brings the story to its fullness and authenticity as story” (“Story” 43). The third meaning of the term plot mentioned by Abbott designates the structural rearrangement of story elements that takes place when the chronological sequence of events at the basis of a narrative is transformed into the actual text, i.e. “the ways in which the plot re-arranges, expands, contracts, or repeats events of the story” (“Story” 43). As Abbott usefully remarks, “the second and third [meaning], with their emphasis on the art by which a story is delivered, might more accurately be referred to as ‘emplotment’” (“Story” 44). Keeping in mind the various approaches to the concept of plot and the difficulties of defining it, I propose to use the term plot in the present study to refer to a sequence of events organised in terms of temporal succession and causality and functioning as the narrative realisation of one or more themes.¹¹¹ My use of the concept thus corresponds most closely to Abbott’s first usage of plot and also takes up Culler’s general remark that plot

¹¹⁰ See also Christopher Booker’s *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*. London: Continuum, 2007.

¹¹¹ Prince in his *Dictionary of Narratology* defines theme as follows: “A semantic macrostructural category or FRAME extractable from (or allowing for the unification of) distinct (and discontinuous) textual elements which (are taken to) illustrate it and expressing the more general and abstract entities (ideas, thoughts, etc.) that a text or part thereof is (or may be considered to be) about” (97).

can be seen “as a passage from one state to another and this passage or movement must be such that it serves as a representation of theme” (*Structuralist Poetics* 259). Moreover, I would venture that readers experience some plots as more typical realisations of the themes in question and that such plots therefore serve as reference plots or prototypes against or through which individual narratives are read. Abbott, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, proposes the term “masterplots” (46-49) for such culturally recognized reference plots, insisting on their “strong rhetorical impact” (46) and the ways in which they are invoked in narratives to make sense of one’s life, identity, both individual and collective, and of the world and events around us (46-49).

While plots are in general relatively easy to isolate in works with one storyline, matters become more complicated if a narrative contains several storylines or narrative strands and hence a larger cast of characters. There may be several plots at work then— probably the reason Fludernik in *Introduction to Narratology* talks of plot strands rather than storylines (30, 46)—all of which must be organized with respect to each other. “Such spatial and temporal coordination between characters is not unproblematic” (*Introduction* 30), as Fludernik remarks. Indeed, it needs to be remembered that one’s reading experience is generally linear, at least in a first reading of a text, and the effect produced by multiple narrative strands depends to a large extent on their arrangement within the text, i.e. whether they alternate, intersect, follow each other or are embedded within each other. Moreover, as Fludernik’s comment emphasises, the presence of more than one narrative strand complicates a narrative’s temporal and spatial structure. Thus, while according to Rimmon-Kenan, a common assumption of modern readers with regard to a narrative’s temporal framework is that it should be possible to re-establish a chronology of the events even if these events are mixed up in the telling, this expectation is often at odds with the actual structure of narratives:

The minute there is more than one character, events may become simultaneous and the story is often multilinear rather than unilinear. Strict linear chronology, then, is neither natural nor

an actual characteristic of most stories. It is a conventional 'norm' which has become so widespread as to replace the actual multilinear temporality of the story and acquire a pseudo-natural status. (17)

It follows from Rimmon-Kenan's quote that the expectation and hence valorisation of a unified time frame in a narrative is a historically contingent cultural norm. Indeed, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith usefully reminds us in "Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories," such a readerly attitude is far from absolute or universal (110). While she claims that readers do tend to "construe some chronology of events" (110) when processing a narrative, this activity is among other factors shaped by readers' "familiarity with the relevant conventions and traditions of the style and genre of that narrative" (110). In other words, while to a modern reader of short stories, for instance, a unified time frame might be the "norm," to an early modern reader of romance a "multilinear" narrative would presumably appear more "natural."

With regard to a narrative's spatial framework, texts with multiple narrative strands also pose potential problems. On the one hand, if the events featured in the various storylines are situated in the same locations, the temporal and spatial movements of characters must be coordinated so as to preserve overall causality and to avoid contradiction or confusion. On the other hand, if narrative strands are to stand in some kind of meaningful relation to each other, readers must be able to establish a point of contact between their respective spatial frameworks. As Rimmon-Kenan puts it, if "any two events, arranged in chronological order" suffice to create a story, one would expect that "the events in question occur in the same represented world" (19). The same assumption applies to narrative strands it would seem, i.e. readers will expect that the text posits a fictional universe able to encompass the different storylines. Rimmon-Kenan thereby credits readers with considerable ingenuity, implying that they might be able to "imagine some world" in which even events that do not seem to fit together "can co-exist" (19).

Like the concepts of the narrator and the narratee, the notions of narrative levels, narrative strands, plot and spatio-temporal narrative framework derive primarily from critics'

narratological analyses of novels. Thus, they reflect the predominant focus of narratology on eighteenth- to twentieth-century fiction, but also to a considerable extent, I would argue, the expectations of modern readers. The narratological terminology presented above is widely taught and applied as a useful “toolkit” for the analysis and discussion of narratives,¹¹² even among scholars of different critical orientations.¹¹³ Moreover, the narratological concepts outlined above seem recognizable from our experience as modern readers, that is, from our knowledge of the genre of the novel or short stories. We are aware of an ironic narrative voice when reading novels by Austen for example, we are familiar with narrative levels, frame narrative and framed narrative from texts like James’ *The Turn of the Screw*, and the complexities of coordinating narrative strands within a spatio-temporal framework loom large in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. Rimmon-Kenan in “Towards...: Afterthoughts, Almost Twenty Years Later” articulates this twofold familiarity with narratological concepts—due to their diffusion and one’s reading experience—as follows:

Narratology, even of the classical brand, still ‘works’, [sic] I believe, for historical and anthropological reasons: cultures consciously or unconsciously generate narrative structures, patterns, processes as one mode of perceiving, constructing, making sense of things and experiences. Narratology, in turn, gives names and a relational network to them. (50)

If historically and socially developed reading practices and narratological concepts mutually inform each other, as Rimmon-Kenan suggests, it is not surprising that the latter make up part of the reading strategies and expectations with which modern readers approach prose narratives. And as Rabinowitz extensively illustrates in *Before Reading*, these strategies and expectations in turn greatly influence the reception of works,¹¹⁴ which makes understandable why, as Fludernik remarks, experimental texts are described in terms of deviance from norms.

These reflections bring us back to the problem of anachronism when reading older literature. Reading the *Urania* as a modern reader of the twenty-first century, it is neither

¹¹² Nünning uses the expression “analytical toolkit” (348) in “Towards a Cultural and Historical Narratology: a Survey of Diachronic Approaches, Concepts, and Research projects.”

¹¹³ Cf. Rimmon-Kenan’s discussion of the relation between narratology and other critical theories in “Towards...” or Nünning’s in “Towards a Cultural and Historical Narratology.”

¹¹⁴ Cf. Rabinowitz’ chapter “Through *The Glass Key* Darkly: Presupposition and Misunderstanding” (173-208).

desirable nor possible entirely to discard reading strategies and habits developed in the course of reading classical and contemporary fiction. Yet, one needs to be aware of such strategies and expectations when applying narratological concepts to the *Urania* and that they differ markedly from the strategies and reading practices of early modern readers. This is due on the one hand to the “variables” listed by Rabinowitz, i.e. “class, gender” or “training, culture, and historical situation” (21), and to the different “intertextual grid” through which the *Urania* is read on the other. Thus, to return to the term plot once more, for instance, although this may be “A vexed term” (*Cambridge Introduction* 240), according to Abbott, none of the modern meanings of plot come even close to the early modern understanding of the term that Lorna Hutson elaborates in her article “Fortunate Travelers: Reading for the Plot in Sixteenth-Century England.” Plot in an early modern sense, or rather the more frequent variant “plat” (86), is first and foremost conceived of as “a piece of ground used for some special purpose, or a chart” (86) and by extension comes to be used almost interchangeably with the word “project” (87), that is, “a practical scheme of the exploitation of material resources in the interest of public prosperity or the ‘commonweal’” (87).¹¹⁵ Adopting the title of Peter Brooks’ famous study, Hutson then outlines what “reading for the plot” (87) would have meant for early modern readers, arguing convincingly that it consisted of studying and memorising exemplary military, political and also rhetorical strategies found in texts that could usefully be applied to current policies and the persuasive representation of the policies in question (87-94). Hence, Hutson concludes that “‘Plot’ or ‘ground plot’ then seems to be able to refer both to the conceptual organization of a scheme and to its effective communication or probability in discourse” (88). The marked difference between the modern and early modern understandings of the term plot that emerges from Hutson’s discussion reveals the

¹¹⁵ It is at first sight in the spatial sense of the word plot that Sidney in the *Defence of Poesy* claims that readers “in Poesie, looking for fiction, [...] shal use the narration but as an imaginative groundplot of a profitable invention” (111-112), but in conjunction with the expression “profitable invention” it comes quite close to Hutson’s concept of a beneficial “project.”

considerable gap that separates our reading practices from those of early modern readers. In order to explore such fundamental differences between modern and early modern reading strategies further, the following section will attempt to give an overview of early modern reading practices and approaches to reading. This will also provide a context for the discussion of the traces left by early modern readers in the twenty-nine extant copies of the *Urania*.

2.2 Early Modern Reading Practices

In *Reading Material*, Brayman Hackel seeks to recover at least partially the identity and reading habits of “the great Variety of Readers” (3) to whom John Heminge and Henry Condell address Shakespeare’s First Folio and hence to “displac[e] both the singular ‘ideal’ or transhistorical reader and the extraordinary male reader” (8). Yet Brayman Hackel also concedes that “most readers do not survive to meet the historian’s gaze” (257) because, as James D. Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor put it in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, “The fact that individual testimonies survived at all has to be attributed to singular experience, activity, luck or to a combination of those factors” (14). In other words, although reading is “a material practice” (8), as Brayman Hackel insists, and “embodied in acts, spaces, and habits” (3) according to Roger Chartier in *The Order of Books*, reading practices can only be recovered with some certainty on the basis of the physical records of reading that have survived. These records can assume a variety of forms—marginal annotations, commonplace books, prefatory material, library inventories, wills, letters, diaries, verbal and pictorial representations of reading or material reading equipment—but most of them involve writing, and, as Brayman Hackel points out, “histories of writing readers fail to capture many readers and ways of reading” (257), as for example those by semi-literate readers, illiterate aural readers or, very often, women. The following overview of some

recurring early modern reading practices as well as approaches to, or assumptions about reading must therefore of necessity remain incomplete and cannot claim to be representative of the actual variety of early modern readers or of reading practices particular to individual genres.

With these cautionary remarks in mind, what can be affirmed is the sheer variety of readers, of reading practices, of texts, both with regard to kind and format, the variety of spaces in which people read and the different forms of access to texts that coexisted in the early modern period. Anthony Grafton in “The Humanist as Reader” illustrates this point when citing Machiavelli’s account of his reading habits while in rural exile in a letter to Francesco Vettori from 1513 (179-181). Machiavelli, according to his letter, passes the day reading both for entertainment and for instruction: he reads vernacular or love literature in portable books outside and consults classical authoritative texts in his study. Thus, Machiavelli, one single reader, practises different approaches to different kinds of books on one and the same day, and not all of them are equally recoverable for modern historians without such testimony as Machiavelli’s letter. Whereas larger books consulted in the study might survive because of their function, greater value and size and hence might contain readerly annotations that survive as well,¹¹⁶ smaller books that can be carried around and read outside are more likely to fall apart or get lost, together with any annotations they might have contained.¹¹⁷ This example thus not only bears out Brayman Hackel’s remark that “Reading has surely never been a culturally monolithic and uniform activity” (141), but also showcases

¹¹⁶ Sharpe and Zwicker note that folios were more “likely to be bound and hence preserved for posterity” than smaller books which were often sold unbound (5), and Brayman Hackel suggests the impracticalities of annotating a book anywhere else than at a table or desk given the number of tools that were necessary for writing (207).

¹¹⁷ William H. Sherman in *Used Books* notes that there is no conclusive answer yet to the question what format of books, i.e. folio, quarto, octavo, etc., was most frequently annotated due to the differences between the collections that have been examined by various scholars (18). He notes, however, that it was “very common” (5) for readers to annotate, but that precisely such heavy use of books also endangered their survival (5). In addition, manuscript annotations were frequently destroyed by later book collectors (6), so that the number of extant early modern books containing handwritten marginalia is hardly representative.

the difficulty of representing historical reading practices adequately in the face of all the evidence that has not survived.

In addition to the different types of books, sites and methods of reading exemplified in Machiavelli's letter, a number of further aspects of reading need to be mentioned that determine the nature of readers' engagement with texts. First of all, while, according to Brayman Hackel (46), most readers—in a modern understanding of the term—were able to read silently in the early modern period, reading aloud was still widely practised and a reader's interaction with a book was not necessarily solitary. Brayman Hackel defines "its ties to spoken language and its frequent role as a public, shared activity" as "fundamental elements of early modern reading" (51). In this context, Sharpe and Zwicker introduce the notion of "communities of reading" (8) or "interpretive communities" (9), as they also call them, based on such aspects as readers' class, their religious beliefs and political positions (9).¹¹⁸ Thus, reading in different sites, such as the household or at school, not only affected early modern readers' physical engagement with the text, but also informed their interpretive community or communities, as Sharpe and Zwicker explain, insisting on the "multiplicity of reading communities to which an individual at any time might belong" (9). Hence, the definition of an early modern reader is far from straightforward. Moreover, aural readers who had texts read to them also need to be taken into account, as Stephen B. Dobranski points out in "Reading Strategies" (109-110), keeping in mind the various possible reasons for aural reading. These might range from illiteracy to active choice on the part of the aural reader, they might be of a generic nature given that texts like sermons or proclamations require an audience rather than readers (Sharpe and Zwicker 17), or they might have to do with social norms, as for instance attempts to restrict women's active reading.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Sharpe and Zwicker thus historicize Fish's notion of "interpretive communities" (8-9).

¹¹⁹ Cf. Brayman Hackel 51-52 for a discussion of the different implications of aural reading with regard to agency when the audience is illiterate or an accomplished reader like Lady Anne Clifford. Brayman Hackel also discusses the restrictions of women's public reading of the Bible in the 16th century and the normative early

It is obvious that aural readers do not leave immediate traces of their reading in the same way that readers who handle books might. Even Lady Anne Clifford, who presumably dictated annotations to a secretary while being read to, acted through an intermediary on such occasions instead of annotating the book herself as at other times (Brayman Hackel 236). In contrast to silent and solitary reading, however, aural reading would be more likely to engender discussion and debate among the people involved in the reading—at least in a group of more or less social equals. Such a situation of reception would be particularly suited to texts that feature debates themselves or invite debate among the audience, that is, the active type of response that Helen Cooper in *The English Romance in Time* characterises as being expected from a romance audience (12-13). With regard to the *Urania*, Denny's accusation that Wroth herself identified him as Sirelius' father-in-law in the presence of witnesses could be interpreted as referring to such a communal scene of reading and discussion, with the added bonus of the author's presence.¹²⁰ In the romance itself, Wroth portrays Dalinea and her ladies engaged in just such a scene of communal reading—"she read while they wrought"—which is interrupted by Parselius' arrival (I.i.124).¹²¹

Another factor that influences readers' practices is the kind of access they had to texts. Ownership of books bought by readers themselves is only one possible option. Books might also have been accessible to readers because they belonged to someone else in the household or because they were circulated in a coterie.¹²² In addition, people might have acquired books second-hand, which, as with books that circulated in households or among friends, entailed

modern construction of women as passive readers (53-55, 197-203, 210-213). Cf. Edith Snook's *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* for an alternative discussion of the female reader (12-21), and see also Sharpe and Zwicker's discussion of the gendered association of certain genres (13-14) and of the representation of male and female reading (15).

¹²⁰ Cf. footnote 78 for Denny's accusation.

¹²¹ This scene has been discussed more in detail by Frye in *Pens and Needles* (219-220) and Lamb in "Women Readers in Mary Wroth's *Urania*" (217-218).

¹²² Brayman Hackel provides an interesting discussion of the circulation of books within households and the strategies of owners to mark books as their own (159-162, 217-219), and Sherman mentions that "It is not unusual [...] to find the phrase *et amicorum* (and friends) accompanying a signature on a Renaissance title page or binding" (18).

not only an engagement with the text, but also with any marks previous readers might have left.¹²³ The Folger 2 copy of the *Urania*, for example, seems to have been sold and bought back by the bookseller Ellis Morgan, as the following note suggests: “26° Junii 1635. At ye returne of this Booke I will repay 4s 6d per me Ellis Morgan” (qtd. in Brayman Hackel 218).¹²⁴ This means that this particular copy of the *Urania* probably had several readers around 1635, but it also reminds us that these readers left no identifiable traces of their own, i.e. that we would have no knowledge of these readers if it were not for the existence of this financial record.

Just as readers would have engaged with texts differently depending on who owned them, their attitudes and reactions to texts would have been shaped by the texts’ material form. As Chartier in “Reading Matter and ‘Popular’ Reading” insists,

we need to recall that the form in which a text is presented for reading also plays a part in the construction of meaning. Versions of the ‘same’ literal text are not the ‘same’ when the physical support that transmits it to readers, listeners or spectators varies. (275)

Thus, readers would not have approached an expensive folio with printed marginalia in the same way as an unbound quarto because, as Grafton suggests, the material form of books also conferred authority and value to the text itself—value both in an economic and in a cultural or intellectual sense (193, 204). Brayman Hackel for example remarks that “Greene’s *Arcadia* [or *Menaphon*] never made the telling transition from quarto to folio” (150), and Sharpe and Zwicker find it “hardly surprising that the aspiring laureate, Ben Jonson, determined to publish his works as a folio,” which, in contrast to the “cheap” and “ephemeral quarto” they

¹²³ For an extreme example of such engagement see Sherman’s discussion of two annotators’ duelling manicules (10).

¹²⁴ Brayman Hackel interprets this note as a record of “an informal system of lending” (218) and as proof of readers’ “resourcefulness in gaining access to” a book that might “have been hard to come by in 1635” (218 n82). However, as Henry Woudhuysen helpfully pointed out to me, according to the *STC* (Vol. 3), Ellis Morgan was a bookseller with a shop in Little Britain and thus presumably had a financial interest in the buying and reselling of books. I would therefore read the note rather as an indication of the work’s material value in the second-hand book-trade. To compare, Roberts cites about ten shillings as the price of a copy of the *Urania* sold in Edinburgh in December 1621 (“Textual Introduction” cv).

describe as “stately” and “destined for the gentleman’s library” (5).¹²⁵ Moreover, as the example of Machiavelli has already indicated, different book formats influenced in what settings books were or could be read—outside or inside, on one’s lap or on a table or desk—and hence the likelihood of their being annotated. In addition, it needs to be remembered that texts encountered by early modern readers were not necessarily printed at all but might be more or less complete and accurate manuscript transcriptions of works.¹²⁶ Sidney’s *Old Arcadia*, for example, only circulated in manuscript copies, as Katherine Duncan-Jones points out in her introduction (viii), and his letter to his sister prefacing the text describes a form of manuscript circulation, too, when he claims that the work was “done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest by sheets sent unto you as fast as they were done” (OA 3). By this account, the Countess of Pembroke’s first reading of the *Arcadia* would have been episodic without access to the entire text, a circumstance which obviously affects the reception of a text and encourages creative interaction.

As well as engaging with a text orally in various communal settings of reading, early modern readers frequently responded to texts by writing. In *Reading Material* Brayman Hackel devotes one chapter to readers’ written reactions to Sidney’s *Arcadia* and Greene’s *Arcadia or Menaphon*,¹²⁷ both in the form of annotations to the text and commonplace books (137-195), that is, separate books in which early modern readers copied out passages from the original, usually organising the quotes in different preset categories according to Erasmus’

¹²⁵ However, as Sharpe points out, “Big did not always mean better, nor fit all occasions” (46). Smaller book formats might be chosen on purpose for specific works to make them portable and “invoke intimacy” (Sharpe 47), and Lori Humphrey Newcomb in *Reading Popular Romance* states that “some fashionable works of light reading appeared in octavo” (282 n4).

¹²⁶ Brayman Hackel assumes that “more early modern people could read print than script. And even those readers literate in both media may have approached them differently” (31).

¹²⁷ As Brayman Hackel highlights, the *Arcadia* was signalled as “worthy of readerly attention” (150) by its format and textual apparatus (150). The 1590 quarto edition of the *Arcadia* contained chapter summaries, the 1613 folio edition line numbers and folio editions from 1655 onwards included indices (cf. Brayman Hackel 150, 167, 173). After the quarto edition of 1590, there were twelve folio editions of the *Arcadia* between 1593 and 1674 (Brayman Hackel). According to Brayman Hackel, the frequency of annotations “place[s] Sidney’s *Arcadia* among the distinctly untrifling categories of books most regularly annotated during the period: religious polemics, law, medicine, estate management” (159). In contrast, extant copies of Robert Greene’s *Arcadia or Menaphon* “bear sparse, if any, readers’ marks” (157), and she concludes that “quarto prose fictions do not seem to have often inspired the type of reading accompanied by annotations” (157).

model in *De Copia* (cf. Brayman Hackel 145-146). This practice, according to Erasmus “has the double advantage of fixing what you have read more firmly in your mind, and getting you into the habit of using the riches supplied by your reading” (qtd. in Brayman Hackel 145). Put differently, early modern commonplace book compilers used literary texts to enrich their own writing or correspondence, following both the humanist ideal that reading should be applied and made useful (Grafton 199) and the classical model according to which, as Jane P. Tompkins explains in “The Reader in History,” the study of earlier authors [...] primarily served the improvement of one’s own writing (203-204).

Brayman Hackel classifies readers’ annotations in three categories according to what they reveal about readers’ uses of books:¹²⁸

Marks of active reading (deictics, underlining, summaries, cross-references, queries), to which I refer loosely as marginalia, suggest that the book is to be engaged, digested, and re-read. Marks of ownership (signatures, shelf marks, proprietary verses) distinguish a book as a physical object, to be protected, catalogued, inventoried, and valued. Marks of recording (debts, marriages, births, accounts) seem to reside somewhere in between: like ownership marks, they suggest that the book has physical value; like readers’ marks, they convey that the book is a site of information. For each of these three kinds of notes, the book takes on a different role: as intellectual process, as valued object, and as available paper. (138)

Although all types of marks provide useful information for the recovery of readerly practices, as Brayman Hackel asserts (138-139), the “Marks of active reading” are of most interest with regard to readers’ processing of texts. On the basis of her analysis of the annotations to 151, that is, about half of the extant copies of Sidney’s *Arcadia* from before 1700, and including two elaborate indices (158, 169-175), Brayman Hackel identifies the following tendencies among early modern readers: they often sign their books (159-161), they distinguish between prose and verse (162), and they display “an attention to plot and character, a regard for textual accuracy, and a sensitivity to classical references” (162).¹²⁹ Furthermore, they seem to have

¹²⁸ Sherman proposes an alternative categorization of marginalia developed by Carl James Grindley, who distinguishes between annotations that have no apparent relation to the text or book, annotations that “exist within a context associated with that of the book” (15) and notes that are related to the text in the book (15-17).

¹²⁹ This attention to classical references is probably indicative of the status early modern readers accorded to the *Arcadia* and not necessarily a reading strategy applied to romances in general—or at least not to works like Greene’s *Arcadia or Menaphon*, that is, to what has been called popular romance, in contrast to Sidney’s

approached the text in a linear way, at least when they prepare it for rereading by adding finding notes or indices (165, 171). Later rereadings of the same text, or the reading of an already annotated text, might be far less linear as the frequent presence of finding notes implies, i.e. readers might prefer to follow just one plot strand in a work with several plot strands or to reread especially memorable or edifying passages, given that “In some cases,” as Brayman Hackel states, “an attention to style is evident when a reader expands a finding note to include an assessment of the narrative or makes it more general to suit situations outside *Arcadia*” (164). Surprisingly, the commonplace books analysed by Brayman Hackel also indicate that early modern readers approached the *Arcadia* in a linear manner. This relativises Beal’s claim in “Notions in Garrison” that the keeping of a commonplace book shapes the reading process because the text is regarded as a storehouse of useful material to be extrapolated “for purposes of selective recording and memorizing” (137) rather than as an entity. In contrast, Brayman Hackel’s findings suggest that “compilers of commonplace books do maintain a sense of plot, order, and context even when they seem to decontextualize passages most radically” (146). In other words, these readers did not read the text through the preset didactic categories and instead used the text itself as organising principle. Together with the circumstance that early modern readers went to the trouble of providing finding notes or even indices for editions of complex works like the *Arcadia* that lacked printed paratexts of the kind, this shows that they were not a priori daunted by narrative and structural complexity. Indeed, in contrast to Salzman’s “wearied” (*Reading* 76) modern reader, they perhaps rather enjoyed the intricacies, abundance, variety and endlessness such texts offered as a challenge, for which they were well “equipped” thanks to reading practices that trained them to be both “editor and exegete” (11), as Sharpe and Zwicker remark.

aristocratic romance. See Newcomb’s discussion of the construction of Greene’s romances as popular literature (18-22).

Since Brayman Hackel's findings are based on the evidence of annotations to Sidney's *Arcadia* and Greene's *Arcadia or Menaphon*, it seems plausible to assume that early modern readers would have applied similar practices to other romances. Indeed, some of the annotation habits described by Brayman Hackel can be found in a number of the extant twenty-nine copies of the *Urania*, which suggests that the *Urania* had readers that approached the text with some of the same strategies.¹³⁰ Apart from the information about the provenance of the surviving copies, there is no reliable evidence as to how widespread Wroth's readership was, both geographically and socially. Yet since the *Urania* was published as a folio, it would have represented a considerable investment for early modern readers,¹³¹ which suggests a middle or upper class readership. Given the book's material value, it is not surprising that it was repeatedly signed, both by seventeenth-century and later readers, as Roberts' description of the copies of the *Urania* shows. The UCLA copy "contains [the] signature of Mary Plumley, 1663" (I.663),¹³² the copy of David Evans, now owned by Anne Shaver, bears the inscription "Benjamin Holder his Booke Given to him by M^r Joseph Persevall ye 11th of September 1673" (I.663), and the second copy of the Folger Shakespeare Library features the note by Ellis Morgan from 1635 cited above—to mention only those marks of ownership that Roberts identifies as dating from the seventeenth century. Not included in Roberts' list are the two signatures of the book collector William Davenport (1) and his initials (*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 48) or the seventeenth-century signatures of Francis Redish (217 sig. 2F) and

¹³⁰ In what follows I cover some of the same ground as in Orgis, "'[A] story very well woorth reading': Why Early Modern Readers Valued Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*." In this article I focus above all on seventeenth-century annotations and discuss the conclusions added to copies of the *Urania* and William Davenport's marginalia in more detail. Except for the five 1621 copies of the *Urania* that I have examined personally (i.e. the two copies at the British Library, the copy at Lambeth Palace Library and the two copies at the Bodleian Library), my analysis of readerly annotations to the *Urania* is largely based on Roberts' information about the different *Urania* copies in the "Textual Apparatus" of her modern edition (I.663-664). One of these twenty-nine copies—I have not found out which one—was apparently sold at an auction on April 19 in 2007 for \$60'000 by Swann, and the copy owned by Victor Skretkowicz was sold by Maggs in 2010.

¹³¹ Cf. footnote 124 for a comment on the approximate price at which the *Urania* was originally sold.

¹³² Susan Light in "Reading Romances: The Handwritten Ending of Mary Wroth's *Urania* in the UCLA Library Copy" gives her name as Plumley and specifies that her signature is "on the first page of the second book" (189). She also mentions a further signature on the last page of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, which reads R. de Milles (191).

Madam Mary Redish Junior (sig. 2Ov, 403) to be found in the copy owned by the late Dr Bent Juel-Jensen,¹³³ which is now in the Bodleian Library.¹³⁴ When discussing women readers of romance, Carrell (82) and Hackett (*Women* 9, 183) both draw attention to the inscription “Dorothy Long her book” repeated three times at the end of the copy that now belongs to the Louisiana State University.¹³⁵ Whereas Davenporte was almost an exact contemporary of Wroth, who might have acquired the *Urania* when it was first published, Dorothy Long, who lived from 1621 to 1710, was presumably not the first owner of that particular copy even though earlier owners did not leave any traces. Further late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century owners identified by Roberts, who, however, did not sign their books are Robert Dormer, Baron of Wynge and ward of Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, former owner of the Newberry Library copy, and the family of the London printer Thomas James, whose widow donated a copy of the *Urania* to Sion College in 1711 (I.664), now to be found at Lambeth Palace Library. It is tempting to speculate that the Newberry copy owned by Robert Dormer, who, in 1625, married Anne Sophia Herbert, the daughter of Philip Herbert and his first wife Susan de Vere, might once have been “the” Countess of Montgomery’s *Urania*, that is, the copy of Susan de Vere, the dedicatee of the work’s title.¹³⁶ This would mean that the Countess of Montgomery was a traditional reader as far as marginal annotations are concerned, since Roberts makes no mention of any annotations in this copy

¹³³ Juel-Jensen was also the owner of Davenporte’s copy of John Harington’s translation of *Orlando Furioso* (cf. Roberts I.663). This book is now owned by Professor Stephen Orgel.

¹³⁴ None of these signatures are dated, but William Davenporte lived from 1584 to 1655, and the other two signatures are in secretary hand as well and thus very probably date from the seventeenth century too.

¹³⁵ Together with that of Benjamin Holder, Dorothy Long’s signature is perhaps the most typical early modern signature that can be found in the various copies of the *Urania*, given Snook’s findings in her survey of female signatures in books (16-21) and the numerous similar examples cited by Brayman Hackel, such as “Frances Wolfreston her book” (204), “Elizabeth Pride her book given her [...]” (161), “George PRID his book” (161) or “Abigail Chetwoode her Booke” (205), etc. (217-219).

¹³⁶ See also Parker’s *Proportional Form* for a discussion of the question whether the Dormer copy might be more authoritative than other copies of the folio (136).

and, as Brayman Hackel illustrates, women were not encouraged to annotate their books (204-205).¹³⁷

Readers of the *Urania* left not only marks of ownership, but also proof of careful reading. Thus, the UCLA copy has “some pen-and-ink corrections, including a handwritten conclusion” (I.663), and Roberts mentions other readers’ emendations of the puzzling ending of the printed *Urania*. The first copy of the British Library, once part of the Bridgewater library and then George III’s library, “has a period inserted before the final ‘And’ (p. 558), with the conjunction cancelled in black ink” (I.663). The copy of the Library of Congress “contains a reader’s concluding poem written in pencil” (I.663), and in the New York University copy, the “final ‘and’ on p. 558 is erased, and [a] period inserted in ink” (I.664).¹³⁸ It is of course not clear when these corrections and additions were inserted except for the handwritten ending in the copy of the UCLA, which Susan Light in “Reading Romances” identifies as a “mid-seventeenth-century italic hand” (189) although not that of Mary Plumley or of the second owner of this copy mentioned by Light, R. de Milles (191). Yet the very presence of such marks and additions to the text implies that the readers in question read the *Urania* all the way to the end and in two cases supplied the conclusion that they found lacking.

Other readers annotated the margins of their copies, the most extensive annotator being the already mentioned William Davenport in the copy owned by the late Juel-Jensen. Davenport repeatedly inserted short summaries in the margins and/or what Roberts calls “evaluative notes” (I.717 n15.39-40), as for example when he qualifies the portrait of

¹³⁷ It seems intriguing that Lady Anne Clifford, who married Philip Herbert in 1630 after Susan de Vere’s death in 1629, never mentions reading the *Urania*, in contrast with Sidney’s *Arcadia*, for instance, which she read more than once (Brayman Hackel 228). If the Newberry copy was indeed Susan de Vere’s copy and passed on to her daughter Anne at her death or before, this might explain at least to some extent why Clifford never refers to Wroth’s work.

¹³⁸ All of Roberts’ page numbers refer to the facsimile edition of the *Urania*. See also her remarks on the various endings in her “Textual introduction” (I.cxvi), Renée Pigeon’s transcription of the two handwritten conclusions in “Manuscript Notations in an Unrecorded Copy of Lady Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Mountgomeries Urania*” and Light’s discussion in “Reading Romances.”

Lycencia as a “[rig]ht description off an ill [wo]man *and* lasciuious” (516),¹³⁹ or when he remarks with regard to the story of the Cephalonian lovers that “[Lea]ndrus heere relates [an] excellent and [p]retye storye•/ off [con]stancie in the first [ch]oise off Loue./” (34). Thus Davenport’s annotations at once function as finding notes and illustrate his critical reading of the text. His assumption of the role of a critic corresponds to Sir Philip Sidney’s injunction to his friend Edward Denny (1547-1600) in a letter dated 22 May 1580 “to note what you conceave of that you reed” (qtd. in Osborn 540)—advice that is in a manner put into practice by Edward Denny’s nephew, Lord Edward Denny,¹⁴⁰ in his correspondence with Wroth, when he characterises the episode in which the story of Sirelius occurs as “one of the weakest and unworthiest passages of your booke” (*Poems* 238).

Roberts also lists “some seventeenth-century annotations” in the copy formerly owned by David Evans, but only includes two of them in her notes on the *Urania*, one of them characterising the description of the Cephalonian lady’s reaction to her lover’s death as “a very fine passage” (I.721 n44.16) and the other calling the Throne of Love “a most incomparable story” (I.722 n47.32-33). The University of Texas copy also “includes several marginal annotations: ‘many distressed and at last blessed’ (p. 1); ‘The tale of Perissus’ (p. 4), ‘the end of the tale of Perissus’ (p. 15)” (I.664). Roberts does not indicate the date of these annotations, but they look like the traces of a reader who, in terms of annotations, at least made his or her way until the end of Perissus’ story.¹⁴¹ The Winchester College copy, finally, seems to contain only one annotation—again Roberts does not give any date for it—namely “‘Pamphilia self’ (p. 31)” (I.664), curiously singling out the character of Pamphilia on a page

¹³⁹ The emendations in square brackets are mine since Davenport’s marginalia were unfortunately cropped. The page numbers in parenthetical references are those of the original 1621 edition.

¹⁴⁰ According to the entry “Denny, Sir Anthony” in the *ODNB* (Vol. 15, 831-832), Lord Edward Denny (1569-1637) was the son of Sir Henry Denny, who was the eldest son of Sir Anthony Denny (1501-1549). Sir Philip Sidney’s friend Sir Edward Denny (1547-1600) was the fifth son of Sir Anthony Denny and thus Henry Denny’s younger brother and Lord Edward Denny’s uncle (cf. *ODNB* Vol. 15, “Denny, Sir Edward” 834-835). Duncan-Jones mistakenly conflates the two Edwards in her review of Roberts’ edition of *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (565), and Hannay in *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth* erroneously presents them as father and son (236).

¹⁴¹ It is not quite clear from Roberts’ information whether these annotations continue or whether the “several” annotations consist only of the three cited ones.

where she is merely evoked in the comparison of Antissia's beauty to the surpassing beauty of "the incomparable Lady Pamphilia, Sister to the noble Prince Parselius" (I.i.37) but does not appear herself. It could be speculated that this reader did not read attentively enough and erroneously thought that the lady described was Pamphilia rather than Antissia, who is only named on top of the following page. Alternatively, this reader might for some reason have known about the importance of Pamphilia in the romance and noted her very first mention in the text.

Perhaps the most attentive marks of active reading, as Brayman Hackel calls them (138), in all the copies of the *Urania* are those by an extraordinary reader of the work, that is, Wroth herself, in the copy owned by Charlotte Kohler, containing Wroth's "authorial pen-and-ink corrections" ("Textual Introduction" I.cxii).¹⁴² This copy, according to Roberts in her "Textual Introduction," might have been either a presentation copy or a copy for Wroth's own use (I.cxiii), which implies, of course, that Wroth's annotation of her own text cannot be taken as representative of early modern readers' annotation habits in general. Indeed, Wroth did not like William Davenporte write finding notes or highlight special passages to help readers navigate the text, but focused on correcting and/or improving the printed text. Roberts describes the corrections as follows:

Wroth follows the practice of most seventeenth-century authors in inserting her alterations in the margin, although she occasionally writes over the text to insert a missing letter, word, or punctuation.

[...]

Wroth's handwritten changes throughout the rest of her prose romance [in contrast to her corrections of the poems] may be divided into four major categories: (1) the correction of purely typographical errors; (2) the correction of printer's misreading of the manuscript copy [...]; (3) the correction of grammatical errors; (4) the substantive revision of longer passages in the text. [...] In general, Wroth seems to have concentrated her attention on identifying those passages where a reader might not immediately detect the presence of error. (I.cxiii-cxiv)

¹⁴² Charlotte Kohler later presented her copy to Josephine A. Roberts. It is now held by the University of Pennsylvania library. The discussion that follows is based on Roberts' listing of Wroth's authorial corrections in the modern edition of the first part of the *Urania*.

Roberts thus distinguishes the types of corrections that Wroth introduces, observing that Wroth does not consistently correct minor mistakes of the printer, but focuses instead on instances that might create confusion or misunderstandings (I.cxiv).

Another approach to Wroth's corrections would be to consider their unequal distribution over the whole work. First of all, there is a notable increase of authorial corrections from book one (6) to book two (9), book three (27) and book four (33). Secondly, these corrections are increasingly limited to a restricted number of folio pages or passages. Thus, the six corrections in book one are on six different folio pages, whereas the thirty-three corrections of the fourth book are distributed over seventeen folio pages. The pattern of distribution becomes even more striking if one remarks that eleven out of these seventeen pages are contiguous with another page which contains one or more corrections. It appears therefore that Wroth not only concentrated on correcting mistakes that might result in misunderstandings, but that she also seems to have given more and more attention to selected passages in the course of her reading.

The last twenty pages of the folio are especially marked by a large number of corrections—twenty-four out of the thirty-three in the whole of book four—including both minor corrections like the insertion of commas and Wroth's most substantial correction, that is, the rewriting of three lines so that their sense changes completely (I.iv.637).¹⁴³ These twenty pages cover some of the adventures that take place in England, featuring the Duke of Florentine's unhappy love for the allegedly autobiographical forest lady, and the unhappy loves of Leurenus, Prince of Venice, and his beloved Celina, as well as Amphilanthus' return to Pamphilia at the very end of the first part. The circumstance that the last twenty pages of the romance contain four times as many corrections as the first book of course raises the question of the state of the manuscript used by the printers for the ending of the first part. As

¹⁴³ Out of the seventy-five corrections, sixteen are corrections of punctuation, in one case combined with the correction of a verb tense, all the others are corrections of one or more words in the text.

an inspection of the manuscript continuation of the *Urania* shows,¹⁴⁴ Wroth habitually corrected her own writing not only at the moment of writing but also retrospectively. Scholars like Roberts (I.cxi) and Hannay (*MSLW* 264) have come to different conclusions concerning the nature of this continuation since it looks at times as if it were a fair copy with few or no corrections and pieces of prose and verse written in the same hand without visible interruptions, whereas other pages are quite heavily corrected and uneven in terms of handwriting. This suggests that the surviving manuscript was perhaps a first copy of foul papers but still a working copy for Wroth rather than a fair copy to be circulated. If Roberts' assumption that the dangling "And" with which the first part of the *Urania* ends was indeed a misinterpreted catchword for the "And" with which the manuscript continuation opens (I.cxi),¹⁴⁵ this would imply that for the ending of the printed *Urania* the printers worked with the same type of manuscript as has survived for the second part, or, put differently, that the manuscript continuation of the second part is in fact the continuation of the manuscript that the printers worked with.¹⁴⁶ If one speculates further that the printers might have had a more carefully reworked fair copy for earlier parts of the romance, this might well explain why Wroth found more to correct towards the end of the printed volume.

Apart from the last twenty pages of the printed romance, other episodes that received greater attention from Wroth are the passage in which, during a visit from Amphilanthus and Antissia, Pamphilia confesses her love to Amphilanthus in book two (I.ii.318-321), the episode of Pastora (I.iii.414-420)—also thought to be autobiographical—and the story of Leonius and Veralinda (I.iii.423-436), which rewrites an episode of Sidney's *Arcadia*, in book

¹⁴⁴ I would like to thank Helen Hackett for lending me her microfilm of the manuscript continuation held at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

¹⁴⁵ There are several instances in the manuscript continuation where Wroth puts a catchword at the end of a page or a bifolio, but she does not consistently do so.

¹⁴⁶ The bifolio sheets of the manuscript continuation are consistently numbered, starting with "foll 1, lib 1," which at first sight would make such a hypothesis improbable. However, I agree with Hannay that Wroth might have numbered the first three bifolio sheets retrospectively (*MSLW* 264). However, from the fourth bifolio sheet onwards, the lines of Wroth's writing frequently slope around the page numbers in the top hand right corner, suggesting that from there on, Wroth numbered the pages before writing on them contrary to Hannay's assumption.

three, as well as the adventures of the Dukes of Wertenberg and Brunswick in book four (I.iv.604-623).¹⁴⁷ Four of the passages revised more intensively by Wroth include corrections of poetry—overall fourteen out of the seventy-five corrections distributed over the whole text are corrections of poetry—but the majority concern the prose text. It is striking to consider that all of these more heavily corrected passages concern episodes that are relatively closely linked to Wroth’s family or her own biography. It is as if Wroth had singled out these episodes and proofread them to make sure that they were printed accurately, with her corrections ranging from the insertion and replacement of entire words and single letters to the insertion of commas. This might indicate the importance of these selected episodes to Wroth herself if the copy was for her own use, or, if Wroth was preparing a presentation copy, it might indicate the interest somebody else—possibly from among Wroth’s family or friends—might have taken in these episodes. In any case, Roberts’ assumption that Wroth concentrated primarily on correcting “those passages where a reader might not immediately detect the presence of error” (I.cxiii-cxiv) is not entirely convincing. I would suggest rather that Wroth did not proofread all of the *Urania* with equal attention and that the reason she concentrated more on some passages than others had to do with the content of the passages and not primarily with the kind of errors she found. Finally, it needs to be mentioned that, as in the New York University copy and the first copy of the British Library, the ending in the Kohler copy is altered, i.e. “the dangling conjunction ‘And’ has been carefully scratched out, but the semi-colon remains” (I.cxvi). However, because this correction “does not involve the use of ink (as in the case of Wroth’s other corrections),” Roberts adds, “It is impossible to know whether Wroth is responsible for this change” (I.cxvi), which could be of later date.

In conclusion, although there are no copies of the *Urania* that contain inserted indices like some of the *Arcadias* discussed by Brayman Hackel, and no quotes of the *Urania* have

¹⁴⁷ Wroth would have known of the 1610 visit to England by the historical Duke of Brunswick and the Duke of Württemberg since the latter was a personal acquaintance of Wroth’s father, as Roberts indicates (I.793 n587.42).

been found in commonplace books so far, there is clear evidence that the copies of the *Urania* were valued sufficiently by their owners to be claimed, passed on and carefully read until the end or even prepared for rereading or someone else's reading, as Davenport's annotations suggest. The marginal annotations by Davenport and the seventeenth-century reader of the Evans copy also demonstrate that Wroth's gift of storytelling was valued by her contemporaries and that at least Davenport appreciated Wroth's depiction of striking characters, especially when they were female and transgressive.¹⁴⁸ Thus, while Roberts insists that "The meticulous care which [Wroth] devoted to the task [of correction] is one reflection of her determined dedication to authorship, even in the face of her society's hostile reception" (I.cxviii), the surviving marginalia suggest that the reception of the *Urania* might after all have been far less hostile than Denny's and Chamberlain's reactions to its publication imply.

The lack of negative or critical annotations in the surviving copies of the *Urania* could also indicate that the early modern readers of Wroth's work complied with the "prescriptive" (Brayman Hackel 117) guidance that they encountered in the paratexts of other books. Discussing both preliminary material and printed marginalia, Brayman Hackel argues convincingly that the former was used to shape readers' general attitude to texts while the latter aimed at limiting readers' interpretations of texts in a more detailed manner during the reading process (86, 90) or even, as Sharpe and Zwicker suggest in connection with the Geneva Bible, "serve[d] [...] to prevent readers from glossing on their own" (29 n20). As a consequence, the textual apparatus surrounding early modern texts serves as a distorted mirror of contemporary reading practices, insofar as it delineates an ideal readerly approach from the point of view of publishers and authors and censures other readerly interventions. Consequently, such paratextual material can provide some information about early modern

¹⁴⁸ Cf. my more detailed discussion of Davenport's annotations in "'[A] story very well woorth reading': Why Early Modern Readers Valued Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*". For the popularity of the early modern "prose character" (79) and especially the collection of such characters in Sir Thomas Overbury's *A Wife*, see Newcomb (89-94).

reading practices if we assume that it responds to and also shapes such practices. Yet it needs to be interpreted with caution since the preliminaries and margins are also spaces that can be manipulated to publicise texts, as the elaborate example of Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar* shows. Indeed, the proliferation of prefatory material and hence readers' familiarity with it allows writers to appropriate such text types as prefaces, dedications or letters to the reader for their own personal and not necessarily serious purposes as Wilson's discussion of the paratexts in Anthony Munday's translation of the Iberian romances illustrates. Brayman Hackel also suggests this possibility when stating that "the sheer profusion of preliminaries could border on parody" (102), and Sharpe and Zwicker mention a "new self-consciousness about textual strategies and relations" that arises in "the age of print" (4). In *Reading Revolutions* Sharpe describes the "sophisticated techniques" with which paratexts were used as "a game among writers, printers and publishers, and readers" that "had a serious dimension" insofar as it was aimed at "gain[ing] control of the processes of constructing values" (44). Sharpe even refers to early modern preliminaries that imply books without prefaces were harder to sell,¹⁴⁹ and he therefore warns against taking preliminary material "at face value" (56-57 n302).

Early modern preliminaries display a number of strategies, according to Brayman Hackel (101-125), that "pushed [readers] towards a single reading posture of sympathy, pliability, and friendliness" (69).¹⁵⁰ First of all they fashion the reader in their address as "gentle"—as opposed to a "vulgar" reader—"with 'gentle' shifting from a description marking class status

¹⁴⁹ Sharpe quotes the preface to Nathaniel Field's *A Woman in a Weathercock* (1612) and the epistle to the reader in J. Wells' *Poems upon Divers Occasions* (1667). In both texts the writer pretends that the prefatory material is requested by the "saleman" or "stationer" respectively to satisfy the expectations and demands of the readers and hence to guarantee a more favourable reception of the book.

¹⁵⁰ Probably due to the aim of her study, Brayman Hackel does not discuss ironic appropriations of prefatory material by authors or publishers although she gives one example of a "tongue-in-cheek" address to a bookseller providing a list of people that should not buy the book (86-87). This shows that statements that overtly aim at restricting a text's readership and sending away "bad" readers (Brayman Hackel 122-124) may well be intended to produce the opposite effect.

to a prescription framing readers' behavior" (Brayman Hackel 71).¹⁵¹ Following this invocation of an ideal reader, preliminaries often outline a set of reading strategies with which readers should or should not approach the text in question. To quote Brayman Hackel, "the basic task required of the gentle reader is the ability and willingness to perceive the 'best' meaning when confronted with multiple interpretations of a text" (118). To do so, readers were encouraged to ask for help from more skilled readers (Brayman Hackel 118), to avoid "hasty, fragmentary readings," which "were considered 'parciall' readings, both incomplete and biased" and therefore "a danger to the text and its author" (Brayman Hackel 119). Moreover, readers were advised to read texts not only thoroughly but to reread them like the Bible (Brayman Hackel 119-120). They were also asked to judge texts "indifferently," i.e. without bias, which was seen as a method of "sheltering" texts from undue criticism, putting the reader into a protector role resembling that of the patron to whom a text is dedicated (Brayman Hackel 120-122). Last but not least, as Dobranski mentions, readers were often expected to collaborate actively with writers and publishers to establish the "best" meaning of the text by correcting it according to errata lists that were sometimes printed in books (106-107). Dobranski thus contends that "the convention of including a list of errata encouraged readers to approach printed texts as something not entirely complete, something in which readers should participate" (107).

The guidance furnished by texts' preliminaries was frequently complemented or continued in marginalia,¹⁵² as Brayman Hackel notes (86), whether printed or elaborately handwritten by someone with authority as in the case of one of the annotated copies of Sidney's *Arcadia* that she discusses (168-174). Marginalia, Brayman Hackel explains, attempt

¹⁵¹ Other descriptive adjectives were used interchangeably like for instance "discreete," "Impartial," "Judicial" (Dobranski 106) or "courteous" (Brayman Hackel 116), and Sharpe notes the frequent addresses to "Christian" and "understanding" readers in dedications (54).

¹⁵² Brayman Hackel guesses that "perhaps as many as half of all early-seventeenth-century books contained printed marginalia, with an even higher figure for folio volumes" (130). There were however "genres that did not elicit many marginalia" (127), such as sonnet sequences, essays and drama (127).

to determine readers' interpretation of texts by providing "finding notes, cross-references, and glosses of foreign words and classical names" (131-132) that "narrow the meaning" (133) and "often carry out the project of the prefaces to focus the gentle reader's attention on the author's 'best' or 'honestest' meaning" (133). This has led Paul Saenger and Michael Heinlen in "Incunable Description" to describe the effect of printed marginalia as preventing active readerly interaction with texts (251-255). Brayman Hackel, however, thinks that, like preliminaries, marginalia also open up a space for deviant reading and, by their very attempt to enforce certain ways of readings, make alternatives available (127, 135-136).¹⁵³ Yet, marginalia certainly shaped early modern readers' practices to an extent: Grafton, for instance, states that trained humanist readers were especially sensitive to intertextual allusions and rhetoric (198), a sensitivity that is furthered and reflected by marginal cross-references or evaluative annotations.

The prescriptive guidance for readers in preliminaries and marginalia reveals a number of early modern assumptions about reading practices and their consequences. First of all, the reception and interpretation of texts mattered because of the power that books supposedly exerted over readers. As Brayman Hackel formulates it, "The dangers in reading reside for early moderns in the power granted to this activity" (78), which might result in the physical, moral and spiritual corruption of readers and therefore calls for the supervision of "all but the most elite readers" (78). This view of texts, traditionally rehearsed both in attacks regarding the danger of literature and defences stressing its utility, goes back to Plato, of course, and classical belief in the performative power of language, as Tompkins insists (204).¹⁵⁴ In the Renaissance, Tompkins continues, literature was—due to the patronage system—primarily thought of as functional, i.e. it was assessed on the basis of what it would do for the producer

¹⁵³ Brayman Hackel discusses especially the danger of readers' navigating through texts by means of marginalia to select choice passages rather than carefully reading the entire text from beginning to end (135-136).

¹⁵⁴ For an extended discussion of the transformative power attributed to reading in the early modern period and the importance of readers' physical and emotional response to texts especially in relation to romance and issues of religion, see Werth, *The Fabulous Dark Cloister* (97-102, 135-137, 139-140, 142-144).

or recipient (207-209). While Tompkins might be overstating her point in order to emphasise the differences between modern and Renaissance reader responses to texts, this functional aspect of literature is clearly important and foregrounds the performativity attributed to reading as well as writing.

Yet, reading was not only dangerous for readers, but also potentially threatening to authors and publishers because, as Raven, Small and Tadmor remark, there was “a clear recognition that—once in the hand of the individual reader—the respectful reception of the written word was far from guaranteed” (14). Considering that “it was not readers but authors who were held responsible for subversive ‘meanings’” (43) as Sharpe notes, it is not surprising that many preliminaries simultaneously seek to promote and control the reading of texts. However, as Dobranksi puts it when discussing particularly idiosyncratic readerly annotations, early modern writers and publishers “could not have anticipated, let alone controlled, how their readers read books” (113) given the variety of readers and reading practices. Still, the various types of early modern readers’ annotations that Brayman Hackel collected in her study suggest that some readers at least were receptive to the didactic agenda of paratexts, even if, as she observes, “According to many early modern accounts, too many readers skimmed, sampled, and abandoned books rather than perusing and digesting them” (118-119). Readers who, like William Davenport, annotate their books are obviously attentive readers. Finding notes imply careful rereading of books and cross-references to other works mark texts as serious objects of study. Evaluative remarks show that readers assumed the authority to make judgements about a text’s value, both with regard to its content and stylistic quality. Signatures and further marks of ownership, to use Brayman Hackel’s term (138), express the value that books had for their owners, and commonplace books qualify them as useful repositories of knowledge and instruction.

2.3 Reading Romance

As the foregoing discussion of the extant twenty-nine copies of the *Urania* has shown, there is evidence that some readers apparently enjoyed the book and found it worth reading, without necessarily engaging in the *roman-à-clef* reading strategies that Salzman suggests were the primary means adopted by early modern readers to approach Wroth's work (*Reading* 76). Apparently, these particular readers did not so much approach the *Urania* as a *roman à clef*, i.e. with the assumption that they were supposed to decode veiled historical, political and personal references, but rather brought different expectations to the text. Culler's claim quoted at the beginning of the chapter that readers do not read works of literature in a void but relate them to their knowledge of other works applies to early modern readers as well, of course, and, I would argue, the primary "grid" through which and against which early modern readers approached new works of literature was their knowledge of generic conventions.

As Culler and after him Rabinowitz and Fludernik underline, genre functions as a framework that guides one's reading process and "reading experience" (*Natural* 44). "A genre," Culler claims, "is a conventional function of language, a particular relation to the world which serves as norm or expectation to guide the reader in his [sic] encounter with the text" (*Structuralist Poetics* 159). Identifying a work as belonging to a certain genre, Rabinowitz explains, means defining an intertextual background against which it is read (71) and hence greatly influences readers' expectations (116, 176), prompting them to apply genre-specific reading strategies to the text (103, 139, 156, 177). Rabinowitz therefore emphasises the function of genres as "ready-made strategies for reading" (177), describing genre "as preformed bundles of operations performed by readers in order to recover the meanings of texts, rather than as sets of features found in the texts themselves" (177). Culler provides a similar definition of genre when he proposes that

an account of genres should be an attempt to define the classes which have been functional in the processes of reading and writing, the sets of expectations which have enabled readers

to naturalize texts and give them a relation to the world or, if one prefers to look at it in another way, the possible functions of language which were available to writers at any given period. (*Structuralist Poetics* 159)

Culler and Rabinowitz thus see genre not only as “a taxonomic class” (159), but as a combination of strategies to which both writers and readers have recourse. Moreover, they highlight the crucial role of readers’ expectations in the process of making sense of a text and point out that the kind of expectations “activated” by a text depends greatly on notions of genre (Rabinowitz 113, 116). Expectations, Rabinowitz adds, also influence readers’ evaluation of a work because “if too many of these activated expectations are ignored, readers may find the results dull or chaotic” (113). This implies that readers’ expectations are of importance to writers, too, and are consciously or unconsciously taken into account when writers engage in a dialogue with a tradition—especially if they seek to undermine that tradition in a playful or critical way.¹⁵⁵

If genre provides reading guidelines, it needs to be stressed that individual genres are not fixed static entities but to some extent time and culture specific, as Culler indicates when calling genre “the possible functions of language which were available to writers at any given period” (159). Moreover, seeing genre as a framework for reading presupposes that readers have already acquired knowledge of “generic models” in a process that Fludernik calls “literary acculturation” (*Natural* 44). These “generic models” serve as reference points with regard both to the content of literary works and their formal characteristics.¹⁵⁶ As far as the romance genre is concerned, the main problem that Cooper identifies for modern readers is our comparative ignorance of romance conventions (2)—contrary to early modern readers of Shakespeare’s generation, who were “brought up on an extended range of medieval romances in more or less their original forms, and [...] therefore had access to the full range of their

¹⁵⁵ Cf. also Rabinowitz (58).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. also Fredric Jameson’s statement concerning the role of genre in “Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre:” “The point of such a model is not, of course, to formulate a structure rigidly applicable to all of its possible exemplars, but rather to construct a norm in terms of which even deviations may be read in a meaningful way” (149).

generic codings and intertextuality” (23). When it comes to fiction, the genres that spring to mind most readily nowadays are the novel or short story, I suspect. Yet, Zurcher points out that in early modern England “romance was a genre that [...] was understood to be functionally synonymous with narrative fiction itself” (3), which means that the modern ignorance of romance conventions observed by Cooper is all the more problematic. When analysing the narrative structures of works like Wroth’s *Urania*, it is thus necessary to adopt a diachronic perspective to understand how such works engage with the literary traditions of the time. In other words, one needs to acquire a reading competence based on the study of generic conventions in their historical context.¹⁵⁷ Hence, the remaining part of this section will discuss important generic traits of romance and conclude with a brief overview of the probable expectations Wroth’s contemporary readers brought to her text.

The generic term applied to the *Urania* most often is romance.¹⁵⁸ Romance is certainly the predominant genre of Wroth’s work, but it should not be overlooked that the *Urania* also contains features of the epic genre, as well as episodes that undermine the generic conventions of romance and epic or that present characteristics of fabliau or allegorical moments.¹⁵⁹ Romance is a genre that critics have approached and tried to define from various angles. Given the complexity of the issue, I will not attempt to give an exhaustive survey of the various critical approaches to romance or of the types of romance from different time periods that critics distinguish. Rather I shall concentrate on discussing a number of key concepts recurring across different types of romance that will, on the one hand, be relevant to the analysis of Wroth’s work and, on the other, outline with what kind of expectations early

¹⁵⁷ Jameson argues for a similar approach when he proposes that genre criticism should be based on three variables, i.e. the individual work of literature, its generic context within or against which the work defines itself and the historical context (“Magical Narratives” 153, 157-158).

¹⁵⁸ Julian D. Lethbridge in his paper on romance is the only critic I know who emphatically does not categorise the *Urania* as a romance. According to Lethbridge, Wroth’s concern for plotting does not correspond to what he identifies as the defining characteristics of romance. See also note 169. Cavanagh in “Endless Love: Narrative Technique in the *Urania*” proposes that Wroth’s work shares qualities of both romance and the novel.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Orgis, “Telling Tales.”

modern readers would have approached a work like the *Urania*—expectations that are to some extent visualised by the frontispiece, as I have argued at the beginning of this study.

When trying to define romance, it is important that there is in fact considerable critical debate as to what kind of literary category romance is and whether it even constitutes a genre. Traditionally, as Gillian Beer notes in *The Romance*, romance has been listed as a genre and has more often than not been opposed to the epic or the novel (4, 9-10). This idea, however, has been questioned by several critics because of the ways in which the forms of romances have varied over the centuries and also because the term romance has been applied to works like Shakespeare's late plays and Harlequin Mills & Boon novels alike.¹⁶⁰ It is telling in this respect that *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* does not start the entry on romance with a general definition, but specifies first what the term designated when it came into use in France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, namely "works of fiction" written mostly in verse and later increasingly in prose as well (758). Likewise, introductory guides to romance, such as those by Beer and Fuchs, do not so much discuss romance in general as in relation to time periods. Thus, they distinguish, for instance, between "Greek Romance" (Fuchs 22), or what Margaret Doody in *The True Story of the Novel* has called the "ancient novel" (qtd. in Fuchs 34), that is, works like *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus or Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*, and the medieval chivalric romance exemplified by the works of Chrétien de Troyes. Or, in the early modern period, they differentiate romances in the tradition of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* from the popular Spanish and Portuguese romances, such as the *Amadis* and *Palmerin* cycles, on the one hand, and from the tradition of pastoral romance going back to Montemayor's *Diana* and Sannazaro's *Arcadia* on the other.¹⁶¹ While these distinctions between romance types of different historical periods are certainly helpful

¹⁶⁰ For a critical discussion of the retrospective use of the term romance for Shakespeare's later plays see Fuchs (4-5, 93-98) and Newcomb (13-14).

¹⁶¹ In the subsequent discussion I will specify to what kind of romance critics refer if they do not address the romance genre in general.

to describe and place individual texts more precisely in relation to other works, they also raise the question to what extent it is useful to think of romance in general as a genre.

Rather than treating romance as a genre, Frye, for example, in his *Anatomy of Criticism* has defined romance as one of five “fictional modes” that can be distinguished from each other by the extent of the “hero’s power of action” (33),¹⁶² which in the case of romance Frye describes as follows:

If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established. (33)

According to Fuchs, this approach to romance has the advantage that it “expands romance from a particular genre into a more general type of literary production” (5). Yet, in another essay in *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye also categorises romance as one of four “*mythoi*” or “generic plots,” that is, one of four “narrative categories broader than, or logically prior to, the ordinary literary genres,” also described as “narrative pregeneric elements of literature” (162).¹⁶³ This categorisation of romance is based on archetypal plots, i.e. the series of adventures organised in a quest, rather than the “hero’s power of action” (186-187). Frye’s reliance “on an archetypal idea of literature” is criticized by Fuchs, however, because, she claims, it reverts to the idea that “all texts fall into one category or another, and exhibit certain inherent characteristics” (7), so that the notion of genres would simply be replaced by a broader way of rigid categorisation.

¹⁶² The four other fictional modes are “*myth*,” “the *high mimetic mode*,” “the *low mimetic mode*” and “the *ironic mode*” (33-34).

¹⁶³ The other three *mythoi* are comedy, tragedy, and irony and satire (162).

Fredric Jameson in “Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre” likewise criticises Frye’s approach and proposes the following definition of romance:¹⁶⁴

[...] in the case of romance, it would seem that this genre is dependent for its emergence on the availability of a code of good and evil which is formulated in a magical, rather than a purely ethical, sense. This code finds its expression in the vision of higher and lower realms in conflict, yet it does not seem inconsistent to suggest that it is itself dependent on a kind of historical coexistence within the social order itself between two distinct moments of socioeconomic development. Romance as a form thus expresses a transitional moment, yet one of a very special type: its contemporaries must feel their society torn between past and future in such a way that the alternatives are grasped as hostile but somehow unrelated worlds. (158)

To Jameson it is not the nature of the hero that is central to romance but the dichotomy between good and evil articulated in terms of magic. In addition, he insists on the historical embeddedness of romance, with the genre arising from and responding to a particular historical situation of transition.¹⁶⁵ Hence Jameson is less interested in the persisting features of romance that Frye relies on for his archetypal theory of genres. Instead, he underlines the development of romance and its adaptation to new historical circumstances (161), claiming that

generic affiliations, and the systematic deviation from them, provide clues which lead us back to the concrete historical situation of the individual text itself, and allow us to read its structure as ideology, as a socially symbolic act, as a protopolitical response to a historical dilemma. (157)

Thus, Jameson emphasises what he calls “the ideological nature of form” (161) and favours a historical materialist approach to romance that combines a synchronic and a diachronic perspective (159-160), noting also that an individual work may present features of more than one genre (151).

Like Jameson, Fuchs highlights the historical development of romance and addresses the problem of texts that are difficult to categorise in terms of genre. Her aim is to develop an approach to romance that makes it possible to analyse the development of the genre over the

¹⁶⁴ Jameson further elaborates his views on genre and romance in his chapter “Magical Narratives: On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism” (103-150) in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*.

¹⁶⁵ For a commentary on Jameson’s approach to romance and its function “to obscure or formalize impulses towards rivalry,” be that “inter- or intragenerational” (62) rivalry, see Zurcher, *Seventeenth-Century English Romance* (62-63).

centuries (9) and to deal with “hybrid texts, or those which seem to include moments of romance” (7). Hence she suggests combining both structuralist and post-structuralist approaches, exemplified by Frye and Patricia A. Parker,¹⁶⁶ and defines “romance as a literary and textual *strategy*” (9). She gives the following reasons for her choice:

Under this definition, the term describes a concatenation of both narratological elements and literary topoi, including idealization, the marvelous, narrative delay, wandering, and obscured identity, that [...] both pose a quest and complicate it. I find this the most useful notion of romance because it accounts for the greatest number of instances, allowing us to address the occurrence of romance within texts that are clearly classified as some other genre and incorporating the hybridization and malleability that [...] are such key elements of romance. The instrumental notion of romance as a recurrent textual strategy allows us to recognize its many manifestations and transformations throughout literary history [...] . But it also allows us to deconstruct the many oppositions set up by literary history, such as romance versus epic or romance versus novel. These become more complicated once we identify the presence of romance within its ostensible opposites. (9)

While Fuchs’ definition of romance has the advantage of providing a tool for analysis that can be used for any work regardless of its genre, it also implies the problematic question of how to classify such works as the *Urania* if the term romance no longer designates a category. In other words, although Fuchs’ proposal helps to trace, compare and contrast romance strategies in works “throughout literary history,” thus valorising the concept of romance, it also complicates matters with regard to the classification of works because genre definitions are replaced by comparative descriptions of individual works. To give an example, Fuchs claims that with respect to the texts labelled “Greek romance,” for instance, “identifying the similarities and continuities among these texts” makes more sense “than stressing their differences” (31). To do so, she continues, it is frequently necessary to “suspend the category of genre as organizing principle, and replace it with a smaller-scale set of elements, identifiable as *romance strategies* within texts that might belong to any number of genres” (31). Put differently, Fuchs highlights the romance strategies these texts have in common and circumvents the difficulty of categorising them by not attempting to do so at all.

¹⁶⁶ Fuchs especially draws on Parker’s notion of dilation as developed in *Inescapable Romance*, which I will discuss further below.

Cooper in *The English Romance in Time* chooses a less radical but in some ways similar approach to romance. Referring to the work of Hans Robert Jauss and Jameson,¹⁶⁷ she notes that “a shared understanding between author and reader is the crucial feature of generic definition” (8) and envisages genre “as a lineage or a family of texts” (8) in which individual works can be recognised by their “family resemblance” (8).¹⁶⁸ Such family resemblance is the result of shared features, but, Cooper insists, “no single one is essential for definition or recognition taken individually” (9). Hence, two works may both be considered romances even if they differ in some of their features and works that are not judged to be romances may still contain certain romance features (Cooper 9). Cooper, then, refers to common romance features while Fuchs terms these characteristics romance strategies, but both note that such features or strategies are not solely restricted to works categorised as romances. In contrast, when it comes to categorisation, Cooper does not go as far as Fuchs but retains the notion of romance as designating a group of works, basing her definition on a tacit agreement between authors and readers as to the nature of a text rather than on a rigid set of attributes.¹⁶⁹

The above discussion shows that whereas the understanding of the term romance varies considerably, most critics agree on a number of characteristics that are typical of romance. This in turn implies, as Cooper’s definition of romance indicates, that these features are also what readers expect to find in a work they consider to be a romance. Some of these romance characteristics have already been mentioned in the various quotations cited above, and they concern both the content and the formal structures of romance. Thus, Frye observes that the

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetics of Reception* (22-24, 79, 88-89) and Jameson, “Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre” (135).

¹⁶⁸ Cooper adopts the comparison of genre to a family from Alastair Fowler’s *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (v).

¹⁶⁹ Contrary to Cooper’s moderate revision of Fuchs’ approach, Lethbridge in his as yet unpublished work on romance proposes a radical restriction of the use of the term romance. According to Lethbridge, the romance genre only comprises medieval works that contain unmotivated gaps, loose ends or unexplained marvels because he regards such weak motivation on the level of plot as the hallmark of true romances (21). This innovative and interesting approach to the problem of defining the romance genre has the consequence however, that one would need to find new generic categories for works that are generally termed romances, such as Greek or early modern romances like Heliodorus’ *Ethiopica*, Sidney’s *Arcadia* or Wroth’s *Urania*. I thank Julian Lethbridge for sharing his work with me.

world of romance accommodates the marvellous as an integral part of its universe and features a hero who is human but can perform deeds that exceed what is, normally, humanly possible (33). Other vital elements of romance put forward by Frye are the concept of the quest and the importance of adventure (*Anatomy of Criticism* 186-187)—both elements which, of course, influence the subject matter of romances as well as their narrative form.

Fuchs enumerates some typical romance features, too, namely “idealization, the marvelous, narrative delay, wandering, and obscured identity,” as well as “hybridization and malleability” (9), that is, romance’s ability to infiltrate, one might say, different kinds of texts and to adapt to new circumstances over time. Further significant strategies of romance, as Fuchs points out in connection with “Greek romance,” are “the importance of revelations, returns, and restorations and [...] the doubling or flashbacks of the narratives themselves,” which result in a “circularity of the narrative” (36). Moreover, Fuchs notes that romance “privileg[es] a certain content,” namely “occluded and subsequently revealed identities, idealized protagonists, marvels and monsters, tasks and tests,” and she also highlights the centrality of “eros,” which “can function either as an impediment to the quest,” thereby causing narrative delay, “or as its very goal” (36).

Cooper’s list of common romance features covers most of the characteristics mentioned above, but insists on the importance of the romance heroine and notes the genre’s focus on “the individual hero’s inward thoughts, feelings, and aspirations” and on the issue of “human perfectibility within a social context” (10). With regard to “outward form,” Cooper describes romances as “predominantly fictional narratives of some amplitude about particular individuals” (9) in order to distinguish the genre from other types of texts like ballads or allegory (10). Beer, finally, adds the following “properties” of romance (10):

a certain withdrawal from their own societies on the part of both reader and romance hero, profuse sensuous detail, simplified characters (often with a suggestion of allegorical significance), [...] a complex and prolonged succession of incidents usually without a single climax, a happy ending, amplitude of proportions, a strongly enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply. (10)

Of particular interest in this list are the structural characteristics Beer enumerates, that is, the complex concatenation of episodes, the absence of a “single climax” and the length of romances, given that especially the first and second of these characteristics gave rise to the early negative critical evaluations of the *Urania*.

That romances tend to be lengthy, as Cooper and Beer indicate, is mainly due to the concept of narrative delay that Fuchs outlines, drawing on the notion of dilation popularised by Parker’s *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (9). Romance, according to Parker, “is characterized primarily as a form which simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end, objective, or object” (4).¹⁷⁰ Thus narrative delay, as Fuchs observes in connection with classical romance, not only postpones resolution to create suspense as it is often the case in novels, for instance, but becomes “the very sourc[e] of the narrative” (22) because it results in the multiplication of intervening events and stories. Narrative delay can be achieved in different ways, the two most frequent in romance being the use of an episodic narrative structure and the practice of what critics call interlace. The use of an episodic structure allows the author to postpone the conclusion by introducing new adventures and dramatic or marvellous reversals whenever the narrative seems close, or at least closer, to a conclusion. This procedure is further refined by the technique of interlace,¹⁷¹ that is, “the interlacing of multiple characters and plot lines” (54), as Fuchs explains, which was practised especially in medieval romances.¹⁷² As more and more characters are introduced in a romance, the narrative also starts to focus on the adventures and exploits of characters other than the protagonists, with the result that there exist several “plot lines” (54), as Fuchs calls them. Romance scholars have used several expressions to designate these plot lines: Beer talks of “interlacing stories,” for instance (21), and Eugène Vinaver in *The Rise of*

¹⁷⁰ For a critical view of Parker’s description of romance cf. the work of Lethbridge.

¹⁷¹ Beer uses the French term “entrelacement” (21).

¹⁷² Both these strategies are frequently exploited in modern genre literature like for instance so-called Harlequin or Mills & Boon romances and soap operas, as Fuchs observes (124-130). See also Hackett’s discussion of modern versus early modern romance (20-32) in *Women and Romance Fiction*.

Romance variously refers to “themes,” “threads” or “strands” (71, 77, 128). As mentioned previously, in the present study the term narrative strands will be used.

The technique of interlace has consequences for both the form and content of romances:¹⁷³ Vinaver, comparing the interlace technique in literature to Romanesque ornamental art, points out the potentially endless texts it can produce, texts that have “no single beginning and no single end” because “each initial adventure can be extended into the past and each final adventure into the future by a further lengthening of the narrative threads,” so that “the reader loses every sense of limitation in time or space” (76). The technique of interlace, thus, clearly does not result in the kind of unity advocated by Aristotle in his *Poetics* (57-65, 115-117), as Vinaver underlines (72-73). Yet, Vinaver claims, it produces coherent texts all the same because “no single section” of such works “is self-contained,” they are all interwoven “like the fabric of matting or tapestry” (71-72). The practice of interlace, according to Vinaver, is based, on the one hand, on the “classical doctrine of *amplificatio*,” which usually “in medieval rhetoric is [...] synonymous with *dilatatio*,” i. e. a “horizontal” extension of the text, and, on the other hand, on “the scholastic principle *manifestatio*” (68, 74-75). *Amplificatio*, as Vinaver states, was a common feature of medieval rhetoric and favours “expansion and diversity” rather than “monocentric unity” (74-76). In other words, what to modern critics and readers may seem problematic, namely the copiousness and prolixity of romance, was appreciated at the time the medieval romances were written.

The practice of *manifestatio* has a similar effect to *amplificatio* in that it lengthens the text and makes it more complex, but it does so for another reason: Vinaver describes the function of *manifestatio* as follows:

Thirteenth-century prose writers [...] wanted to make the narrative more meaningful by giving it a ‘causal’ perspective; but the method they adopted was a typically thirteenth-century one, paralleled in several other aspects of late medieval thought and imagination. It consisted less in explaining the action in so many words than in forging significant and

¹⁷³ The following discussion of interlace is mostly based on Vinaver’s and other critics’ analysis of medieval romance.

tangible links between originally independent episodes; it aimed at establishing, or at least suggesting, relationships between hitherto unrelated themes; (68)

Vinaver's statement implies that what might at first seem a random accumulation of episodes and a disorderly jumping back and forth between various narrative strands should in fact be considered as a highly complex but organized whole. Matilda Bruckner in "The Shape of Romance in Medieval France" makes a similar point in her remark that "Interlacing not only achieves narrative goals of creating suspense or handling multiple lines of plot; it offers a potential commentary on the characters, episodes, or narrative segments juxtaposed and woven together" (24-25). Thus, "Interlace (formal causality) displaces motivation (logical causality)" and "becomes the structural device that organizes disparate episodic narratives" (57), as Fuchs puts it. Beer, in this context, has recourse to the term "polyphonic narrative," proposed by C. S. Lewis in "The English Prose *Morte*" (13), and finds it "an apt metaphor for romance narration where very varied characters and episodes move freely while at the same time being interwoven to compose a congruent whole," just as in polyphony "various voices move in apparent independence [...] though fitting together harmonically" (20).

However, while the practice of interlace may produce harmonious texts, such narratives are "usually without a single climax" (10), as Beer notes, because there exists the continual possibility of further amplification. Fuchs talks of a "disorienting flatness" of the narrative, "with no privileging of one episode over another" (56), which incidentally describes another aspect romance was criticised for, namely its lack of depth or centre. Beer states that "to understand the romance method we have to abandon the critical metaphors of perspective (with its suggestion of far and near) or depth (with its suggestion that what is deepest is most significant)" (20-21). Vinaver goes a step further by claiming that the authors of such "*acentric* composition[s]" (72), as he calls them, did not intend the reader to experience their texts as a progression from a fixed beginning to a middle and ending, but rather expected the reader, ideally, to retain everything that happens in order to see the larger patterns in which

the various events unfold (76, 83). The practice of interlace, therefore, apart from offering multiple versions and variations of events, topics and conflicts, also has the function to create an impression of simultaneity.

Given the length and complex narrative structure of medieval romances, it is not surprising that modern readers may experience difficulties or feel confused when reading such texts. Vinaver suggests that in order to enjoy reading romances, one must do away with “the traditional belief that simplicity is a virtue and complexity a fault,” that “any ‘good’ piece of writing [must] be structurally transparent and [...] develop [...] along a straight line with a minimum of deviation” (70-71). The ideal reader of romances, according to Vinaver, is one that has an “infallible” memory and that finds “the exercise of such a memory [...] in itself a pleasurable pursuit which carries with it its own reward” (83). Yet, Vinaver also admits that the structure of medieval romances is so complex that it “presupposed in the reader and the writer an unusual discipline of mind and a span of attention which even in the thirteenth century could not have been the privilege of many” (93). Moreover, not all the medieval romances correspond to the ideal form of interlace in which everything is connected with everything, as Vinaver remarks (93-94). Especially from the fourteenth century on, he adds, there came into existence a “less rigorous and less rational tradition [...] which deliberately created an impression of confusion and emphasized the vagaries of knight-errantry, the pell-mell of odd adventures distractedly following one another” (93-94). He calls this tradition “disconnected ‘fine-fabling,’” which “For many readers of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance” seems to have been “a genuine source of delight” (94). Thus, although no longer applied rigorously, the technique of interlace was not abandoned after the Middle Ages as the works by Ariosto, Spenser and also Sidney show. In fact, Fuchs observes, interlace “is consistently exploited by writers, from the Renaissance romance-epic to the twentieth century comic book and other popular genres” (57).

Vinaver's mention of readers' "delight" in romance touches on a delicate issue concerning fiction in general and early modern romance in particular. Early modern romance, like romance in general, is difficult to capture since it was at a crossroads of literary traditions and existed in a variety of types, forming what Werth terms a "hybrid genre" (6, cf. also 8-9). Sue P. Starke in *The Heroines of English Pastoral Romance* puts this as follows: "The romance genre in the Renaissance is known for its mixed properties: its associations are both high and low, martial and erotic, masculine and feminine, humorous and heroic" (1). She then goes on to distinguish between "medieval chivalric" romance and pastoral romance, influenced by Greek romances from the fifth century (1). Steve Mentz in *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England* makes a similar kind of distinction between what he describes as medieval episodic chivalric romance and Elizabethan romance influenced by the model of Heliodorus' *Ethiopica* (12-15). These broad distinctions could in turn be split up to single out fashions provoked by individual works like Lyly's *Euphues* and Sidney's *Arcadia* or to differentiate between native English medieval romances, Arthurian romances and the translations of Spanish and Portuguese chivalric romances like the *Amadis* or *Palmerin* cycles, for instance—all of which were available during the early modern period.

Of Protean appearance, early modern romance is also at the centre of an ongoing debate about the value and legitimacy of literature in general.¹⁷⁴ The definition of romance in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* states that romance "is principally a form of entertainment. It may also be didactic but this is usually incidental" (758).¹⁷⁵ By associating romance primarily with Horace's *dulce* rather than his *utile*, the definition goes counter to early modern authors' traditional justification for writing fiction and pinpoints the ground on which romance reading was most frequently attacked. Romance was seen as too

¹⁷⁴ As Werth remarks, "in post-Reformation England, 'romance' as a designation of generic kind slipped from critical use, not to reemerge until the mid-seventeenth century," with the result that "no sixteenth-century definition exists" and the term is not used to categorise works of a specific kind (8).

¹⁷⁵ For an in-depth analysis of romance's preoccupation with teaching, see Jeff Dolven *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance*.

delightful and apt to divert readers from more edifying study or, even worse, to lead young and especially female readers morally astray.¹⁷⁶ As Parker explains in *Literary Fat Ladies*, the very form of romance, i.e. its typically digressive character, was viewed negatively if not “kept within the horizon of ending, mastery, and control” (14) that David Quint in *Epic and Empire* sees as the hallmark of epic (9, 33). Moreover, Parker adds, romance was regarded as gendered and associated with female figures of enchantment (10), the female body (10), female speech (21-23) and “unbridled sexuality” (26). In addition, Werth points out, romance was widely suspected of transmitting a Catholic heritage due to its recourse to the supernatural and its proximity to popular saints’ lives (4). Against this background, attacks against romance, designating the genre as dangerous, debased and old-fashioned, come as no surprise and form a tradition of their own. Yet, as Lori Humphrey Newcomb argues convincingly in *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England*, they also become part of a powerful discourse used by people involved in the print market to present their own products—Newcomb mentions the newly fashionable “prose character”—as elite works in opposition to ‘popular’ literature for uneducated lower class people (79). In other words, associating romances with lower class or female readers in fact constructs these texts as “degraded” popular reading material (79, 96).

Romance’s popularity throughout the centuries is generally agreed on by critics. Although it has changed over time, Fuchs judges that “Romance continues to be a powerful cultural force” (100) today, and romance strategies are found in such different types of fiction as “Science fiction, fantasy, spy stories, the Western, and a host of other genres” (128). Yet, despite, or as Fuchs claims, because of its popularity, romance came to be “marginalized as popular” or “low” literature, at the very moment “that it achieve[d] its broad popularity via print circulation” (97). In *The Secular Scripture*, Frye also comments on the low status of

¹⁷⁶ For a discussion of the recurrent early modern representation of female readers as especially prone to succumb to the seduction of romance see Werth (5, 135-137, 144).

romance in criticism, relating it to romance's "curiously proletarian status as a form" (23). Drawing on Newcomb's analysis of the commodification of *Pandosto* in *Reading Popular Romance*, Fuchs makes a similar point to Frye when she states that romance in the Renaissance "becomes, in a sense, the first mass genre, purveying quantities of prose to a literate but relatively uneducated audience in search of comforting familiarity" (79). The expression "relatively uneducated audience" suggests a middle or lower class readership,¹⁷⁷ but, as Fuchs later makes clear (98), it also includes what Salzman calls "The female reading public" (*English* 111), which was often explicitly addressed and widely associated with romance reading.¹⁷⁸ As Newcomb's study shows, however, romance readership was by no means restricted to the lower class or women in particular, but the projection of such a readership served as a means to deflect anxieties over a growing literate "pleasure-reading audience" (95) on certain types of texts (79-80, 95).

If the popularity of romance and the alleged class and gender of its readership are perhaps the main motor for the "marginalization of romance as a lesser form" (Fuchs 97), Fuchs' previous statement implicitly proposes a further possible reason for the low reputation of romance, namely its repetitious character. Fuchs characterises the readership of romance as an "audience in search of comforting familiarity" (79). This familiarity is achieved thanks to the constant repetition of a "central set of topoi: a historically and often geographically remote setting, the mysterious origins of the hero, separation and reunion, disguise and recognition, magic and enchantments" (79). In other words, the typical romance features enumerated previously are used as stock patterns and motifs, with the result that romance can be criticized for being predictable and formulaic. Yet, Fuchs suspects that it might be due precisely to "their rote repetition and predictability [that] chivalric romances became inordinately

¹⁷⁷ Mentz observes that authors addressed "their audience in terms that are neither purely elite nor popular" (18) and therefore adapts Janice Radway's term "middlebrow" to characterise romance readers in the early modern period.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Hackett's discussion of actual and projected female romance readership in *Women and Romance Fiction* (4-19).

popular” (80). However, Cooper’s detailed study of romance memes, i.e. especially long-lived and productive motifs (3), reveals that the charge of repetitiousness and “predictability” raised by Fuchs is only partly justified. Tracing the development of the quest meme (45-105) and the motif of the unjustly accused female character (269-323), for instance, Cooper shows that the meaning of these memes and their use by different authors change over time, reflecting changes of social, political or religious context (4). If the pleasure of recognition and familiarity is one reason for romance’s popularity, another might be readers’ awareness of romance’s engagement with prevailing discourses of the time and of the way in which writers adapt stock patterns and motifs to address topical issues.

Indeed, echoing Jameson, Fuchs insists that romance, though idealizing, often “reflects ideological conflicts, and addresses the precise historical context out of which it emerges” in a “skeptical” way, which includes the use of irony (40). Beer concurs, noting that while romance can offer “relief” (8) from reality by presenting a world apart, the accusation that it is therefore “escapist” (9) and seduces the reader into “a kind of fairy world which will unfit him (or more frequently her) for common life” (14) is overly simplistic since “romance rarely attempts to dislodge our hold on reality completely,” but is “implicitly instructive” (9) through its use of idealization.¹⁷⁹ Nandini Das in *Renaissance Romance* insists on the importance of romance in the development of early modern prose fiction as it offered writers like Sidney, Greene and Wroth an “imaginative space” in which to address the latent generational conflicts in early modern society (159, 3-7), and Salzman underlines how romance in the seventeenth century managed to reflect on such important political events as the Civil War (*English* 112-113).¹⁸⁰ Hence, romance can function both as a nostalgic “wish-fulfilment dream” (*Anatomy of Criticism* 186), to quote Frye, and as an idealized touchstone

¹⁷⁹ Compare also Cooper’s statement that “early romance insisted on its social relevance, and it was always rooted in a recognizable this-worldly society, even if voyages to exotic lands or the Otherworld were allowed” (8).

¹⁸⁰ Zurcher notes a general tendency of romance towards the *roman à clef* in the seventeenth century (*Seventeenth-Century English Romance* 8-9).

challenging and criticising reality (Fuchs 7, 40). However, while romance allows the reader to be critical of reality, it demands one's "wholehearted involvement" in the events related and a readiness to "inhabit the world offered" (8), as Beer emphasises. Readers who fail to accept the romance world on its own terms, she continues, will find it boring and the events that take place absurd (8, 14). Cooper insists even more strongly on the need for an "engaged reception of romance" (13) since romances were often "designed not just for reading but for discussion" (12) and "audiences expected to respond actively to them" (13).

The delights held in store by the romance world are matched by the more formal pleasures of reading that romance promises its readers. Vinaver describes one aspect of the pleasure afforded by medieval romance as follows:

An awe-inspiring, but strangely satisfying sense of a vast design of a continuous and constantly unfolding panorama stretching as far into the past as into the future—such are the things that hold the reader spell-bound as he [sic] progresses through these interwoven 'branches' and themes. (91-92)

Vinaver thus highlights the pleasure of tracing the intricate structure of romance, of discovering connections, parallels and contrasts that organise the interlaced narrative. Beer compares this exploration of romance to that of a complex maze, with the difference, however, that it does "not provoke the disagreeable anxiety of a maze" because most romances typically "have a happy ending" (29),¹⁸¹ that is, romances may look like a "multicursal maze," but eventually turn out to be more like a "unicursal, Daedalian or Cretan-type labyrinth" (Senn 102).¹⁸²

While romance can be appreciated for its overall structure, it is also entertaining because it proposes a variety of stories to the reader—Vinaver's "fine-fabling"—and, moreover, these episodes may or may not serve as moral exempla. Referring to Sidney's qualified praise for

¹⁸¹ As Cooper persuasively argues in connection with Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," the strong generic expectation of a happy ending renders the effect of an unhappy outcome all the more powerful (373). Thus, the tragic conclusion of Shakespeare's *Othello* or *King Lear*, invoking respectively the romance memes of the falsely accused wife and the restoration of the rightful heir, might have come as quite a surprise for an early modern audience—all the more so for the *Lear* story since earlier versions of it in fact end happily (Cooper 398, 406).

¹⁸² Cf. the discussion of different types of labyrinths in section 1.1 "The Frontispiece" (16) above.

Amadis on moral grounds in his *Defence of Poesie*, Beer estimates that in the Elizabethan period, “an age which saw literature as a form of activity, the story world of the romances was delighted in for its variety and for the great range of human behaviour exhibited” (35). Yet, while romance certainly lends itself to didactic purposes due to its variety of episodes, it can also be valued in terms of structure, as Salzman demonstrates with regard to French heroic romance. He speaks of “a satisfying baroque structure” of “unity-in-variety” due to the “varied sub-plots” that are “bound up with the main action” (*English* 187). Fuchs, too, indirectly comments on the aspect of variety in romance when discussing the *Ethiopica*, whose “movement” she describes as “twofold” (27):

even as the lovers Theagenes and Charicleia progress through a seemingly endless series of adventures such as capture, betrayal, repeated battles, and so forth, the narrative *regresses* to establish the origins of the mysterious heroine, which are not fully confirmed until the end of the text. In order to sustain the suspense, Heliodorus employs a complex narrative structure that multiplies the flashbacks of the *Odyssey*. Several characters provide partial accounts of Charicleia’s history, their narrations framed within each other like Russian dolls. (27)

The reading process of romance in general seems to be similarly “twofold.” On the one hand, there is the diverting episodic structure, featuring many adventures, reversals and returns that are enjoyed one after the other. On the other hand, there is the growing understanding of the narrative’s slowly unfolding structure, which takes the reader back and forth between what is read at the moment and what is already known. Salzman comments on this phenomenon when discussing the structure of French heroic romance:

The narrative is pulled back towards the past, and the reader must concentrate in order to keep track of the complex temporal levels of the proliferating histories. However, connections between the histories become apparent as the romance proceeds, and this increasing sense of cohesion counteracts the initial impression of numerous disparate narratives. (*English* 189)

Like Fuchs, Salzman thus distinguishes two movements of the narrative, the progressive succession of episodes, and what he calls an inward movement, i.e. Fuchs’ regression, that is, the growing transparency of the overall structure of the text due to the accumulation of information (189). To conclude, romance offers the reader both short-term entertainment

thanks to its episodic nature and long-term pleasure due to its intricate structure, which, in addition to the reasons mentioned above, might to some extent account for the immense popularity of its various guises throughout history.

By establishing major generic features of romance in general and of early modern romance in particular, the foregoing discussion has also outlined the probable expectations of experienced romance readers.¹⁸³ Mentz states that “Readers of early modern fiction should expect schematic and allegorical structures, be suspicious of apparent irrelevance and inconsistency, and discern behind discontinuity and multiple narratives formal patterns and intellectual consistency” (12). In other words, early modern writers expected their readers to be familiar with typical romance characteristics like complex narrative structures, the use of interlace and narrative delay, the proliferation of characters, stories and events or the recurrence of reversals, revelations and repetitive structures. Judging by the success of Sidney’s *Arcadia* or the Spanish and Portuguese romance cycles, early modern readers were not daunted by length, and were familiar with romance conventions, such as the quest structure that resulted in extensive travelling or the intervention of supernatural powers, for example. In addition, as Mentz suggests in his remark, early modern readers were attuned to the mirroring function of multiple narrative strands and prepared to receive fictional texts on more than one level of interpretation, that is, as delightful tales of adventure and passion on the one hand, and as coded moral or political commentary on the other. One important literary work that clearly presupposes these abilities in its readers is Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, of course, which invites both an allegorical and a political reading. Another important text in this

¹⁸³ It should not be forgotten of course that “Not every [early modern] reader came to his or her text with a full command of the complex codes of classical or modern genres and rhetorics” (10), and even the readers that did “followed generic prescription neither homogeneously nor slavishly” (10) as Sharpe and Zwicker usefully remind us.

respect is Barclay's *Argenis*, exemplifying the popularity of the *roman à clef* in the 1620s.¹⁸⁴ As the letter of George Manners, the seventh Earl of Rutland, to Wroth shows, readers continued the practice of reading texts as *romans à clef* well after the publication and translation of *Argenis*. In his letter dated 1640, he writes:

Callinge to remembrance the favour you once did me in the sight of a Manuscrip you shewed me in your study And heere meetinge with your Urania I make bold to send this enclosed and begg a favor from you that I may read with more delight. If you please to interprete unto me the names as heere I have begunn them, wherein you shall much oblige me. (*Poems* 244-245)

It could be argued that the reason George Manners—unlike other early modern readers—persists in reading the *Urania* as a *roman à clef* is due to his acquaintance with Wroth's family since he is distantly related to her and therefore in a privileged position to recognise the family members portrayed in her text.¹⁸⁵ In any case, his letter indicates that this reading strategy was still an established practice towards the middle of the seventeenth century.

Romance's concern with ideals and politics favours the recourse to allegorical strategies or a tendency towards the *roman à clef*. Yet, early modern romance readers were also alert to romance's incorporation of other genres or narrative modes, as practised by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*, which combines romance with epic features as well as including the fabliau-like story of Hellenore and Malbecco. Furthermore, characters like Paridell or the Squire of Dames ironically question the elevated ideals of epic and romance, thus introducing a comic vein that depends for its effect on the readers' familiarity with the generic conventions of epic and romance. In the case of Hellenore and Paridell, Spenser moreover relies on early modern readers' knowledge and recognition of classical and intertextual allusions to add a further layer of meaning to his text. Paris' abduction of Helen leading to the fall of Troy becomes the background against which the affair of Hellenore and Paridell is played out, conferring

¹⁸⁴ Hannay believes that the timing of the work's publication in 1621 was partly responsible for the negative reactions of Denny and Chamberlain, arguing that after the publication of Barclay's *Argenis*, "first readers of the print edition of *Urania* were [...] primed [...] for sharp political satire" (*MSLW* 234).

¹⁸⁵ Hannay thinks that Wroth actually showed George Manners such a *clavis* in her study (*MSLW* 234), but Roberts' assumption that he is referring to the text of the *Urania*—either the published first or unpublished second part (*Poems* 29)—seems more likely to me.

significance on Spenser's departures from the traditional version of events. In addition, the invocation of the source highlights Spenser's original treatment of the story and provides the reader with the pleasure of recognising the original and tracing its adaptation.

Like Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Wroth's *Urania* engages with the expectations of its readers. In true romance fashion, the *Urania* delights readers with beautiful virtuous heroines, heroic male protagonists, chivalric quests, exploits and display, passionate love stories and spectacular marvels. Moreover, Wroth encourages an active response by providing opportunities for debate and by employing strategies of the *roman à clef* or allegory that invite readers to think beyond the fictional narrative. From a formal perspective, too, the *Urania* can be said to fulfil romance readers' expectations. The myriad stories certainly answer a craving for variety while at the same time reflecting on predominant themes and contributing to the overarching patterns of the text. Yet, like Spenser or Sidney for that matter, Wroth also challenges generic expectations and creates a truly idiosyncratic work. In the following detailed analysis of the narrative structures of the *Urania* and its recurring themes and plots, I will illustrate how Wroth adopts and plays with generic romance conventions for her own purposes: to fashion her readers, to shape her text, to achieve specific narrative effects and to address social, political and personal concerns.

3 Structural Techniques of Guidance in the *Urania*

Reading is an activity that is not only difficult to trace and reconstruct, but also hard to control, especially if it takes place in private. Authors' authority over the reading and interpretation of their works is restricted, and the many preliminaries voicing concern over readers' practices indicate early modern writers' awareness of the reader's power over a text, as Sharpe remarks in *Reading Revolutions* (40). Brayman Hackel sees printed marginalia as an attempt to extend control over the reading process (69, 86, 90, 127-135). Another less explicit method to direct readers is to provide guidance within texts themselves. In accordance with text types, such guidance can be encoded in a variety of ways, reaching from overt didactic moralising to the use of subtle irony. In fictional narratives, narrators and narratees play an important role in this respect, mediating not only a story to readers but also models of reading and interpreting that readers can accept, reject or modify. As the foregoing discussion has shown, however, the romance genre also strongly relies on structural features to direct its readers. Mirroring narratives, digression and interlacement all provide opportunities to orient and refine readers' interpretations as well as to question and relativise them. The same is true for the time frame and spatial settings of narratives, which can open up a critical distance between readers and what is represented in the text, changing readers' perspective through means of temporal and spatial displacement. As following sections will illustrate, Wroth makes use of all of the above strategies. The narrator in Wroth's romance is of prime importance as a guide and reflector figure for the reader, as is the narratee inscribed in the text. The complex interplay of narrative levels, strands and voices offers readers the pleasure of variety while engaging them in a process of reflection and continual re-evaluation, thus reproducing textually, so to speak, the labyrinthine twisting paths of the frontispiece. The flexible time frame of the *Urania* as well as the multiple spatial settings and displacements

allow Wroth to address issues in their development over time and to play on the oppositions between present and past, near and far, familiar and foreign, realistic and fantastic.

3.1 *The Narrator*

In structuralist terminology, the main narrator of the *Urania* can be described as an extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator.¹⁸⁶ While not obtrusive, the narrator is certainly involved and frequently comments on the events in the story and characters' emotions. As Hackett remarks, the gender of the narrator is not discernible although the narrator seems to sympathize more often with women and repeatedly points out weaknesses and questionable behaviour in male characters, which might imply a female narrator (“‘Yet tell me some such fiction’” 50).¹⁸⁷ Yet, there are also numerous incidents when the narrator expresses pity and sympathy for male characters and censures female ones. An instance of censure of both men and women can be found in the third book, for example, when Polarchos re-encounters his earlier beloved, the Princess of Rhodes, who had slighted and imprisoned him but now asks for forgiveness. The narrator comments on Polarchos' cold answer to her entreaties as follows:

Could there bee such cruelty imagined against such a Suiter? none but cruell man could doe it, and yet was not hee to be blam'd, for what punishment could bee sufficient to bee inflicted upon a woman, that not only left loving, but hated to that extremity: none can be enough; and yet surely shee now beares the greatest this world can let her know. (I.iii.413)

The narrator accuses Polarchos of “cruelty” and presents him as a representative of “cruel man” in general, but at the same time Polarchos is excused for his actions. Likewise, the case

¹⁸⁶ For general observations valid for both parts, examples will be quoted indifferently from both part I and II.

¹⁸⁷ Susanne Fendler in “Questioning the Knight's Quest” finds that “The extradiegetic narrator sides with the point of view of the female characters in this text” (294) and therefore concludes that the narrator “may be called a female voice” (294). Fendler acknowledges that the “narrator does not uncritically side with women” (294), but, she insists, “the narrator distances herself from knightly quests, and questions their necessity and sense, since they are fulfilled sometimes not at all and sometimes only with difficulty” (295). While I agree that the irony of the narrator is repeatedly directed at the moral failings of male protagonists in the *Urania*, I think that Fendler overstates the narrator's criticism of male characters' “chivalric ideals” as “anachronistic, sometimes even ridiculous” (302).

of the Princess of Rhodes is generalised and the narrator simultaneously condemns and pities her, making it difficult to decide if the narrator favours one sex over the other.¹⁸⁸

Since a narrator is by definition a textual construct and gender is obviously an important issue in the first English romance written by a woman, the ideal would be to refer to the narrator as a neuter. Yet, as the use of the pronoun “it” for the narrator tends to be disconcerting and confusing, the narrator in the *Urania* will be referred to as “she,” even though the narrator’s gender cannot conclusively be identified. This practice is in accordance with Susan Lanser’s rule, which Manfred Jahn in *Narratology* formulates as follows: “In the absence of any text-internal clues as to the narrator’s sex, use the pronoun appropriate to the author’s sex; i.e., assume that the narrator is male if the author is male, and that the narrator is female if the author is female, respectively” (N3.1.3.).¹⁸⁹ Lanser derived this rule from her discussion of how readers attribute gender to narrators in the absence of clear textual indications (*Introduction* 106). In the case of early modern readers—as opposed to readers of Jeannette Winterson’s *Written on the Body*, that is, Lanser’s test case—it seems plausible to assume that, insofar as they perceived a narrator as a stable lifelike persona,¹⁹⁰ they would, for reasons of tradition, have expected a romance narrator to be male rather than female. Although explicitly female first person narrators exist in early modern verse narratives in the female complaint, mirror or epistle tradition,¹⁹¹ for example, there are to my knowledge no

¹⁸⁸ Davenporte interestingly underlined the passage “for what punishment could bee sufficient to bee inflicted upon a woman, that not only left loving, but hated to that extremity” (354) but not the censure of Polarchos or men in general.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. also Fludernik’s discussion of the terminological difficulties posed by narrators of uncertain gender (*‘Natural’* 359-361).

¹⁹⁰ The seventeenth-century handwritten conclusion of the UCLA copy of the *Urania*, “So my history has an End” (558), seems to support the idea that early modern readers visualised the narrator as an actual person or storyteller rather than an abstract construct. For an interesting discussion of the perception of narrators and narrative voices before the early modern period, see Klitgård, Ebbe. “The Encoding of Subjectivity in Chaucer’s ‘The Wife of Bath’s Tale’ and ‘The Pardoner’s Tale.’” *Narrative Developments from Chaucer to Defoe*. Eds. Gerd Bayer and Ebbe Klitgård. London: Routledge, 2011. 25-39.

¹⁹¹ Consider for instance Thomas Churchyard’s “The Tragedy of Shore’s Wife” and Michael Drayton’s *Matilda The Fair and Chaste Daughter of the Lord Robert Fitzwater*, as well as Ovid’s *Heroides* translated by Turberville and Drayton’s *England’s Heroicall Epistles*. I am grateful to Anna Swärdh for providing me with this detailed information about narrators in the female complaint, mirror and epistle tradition.

early modern romances with explicitly female extradiegetic narrators.¹⁹² The repeated invocations of “fair ladies” as the narratees of Sidney’s *Old Arcadia* give the impression that its narrator is distinctly male, for instance, and although these “fair ladies” all but disappear in the *New Arcadia* (*Gender and Authorship* 72, 76),¹⁹³ readers would probably still gender this less obtrusive narrator as male. In the medieval romance tradition there are no female narrators either, possibly excepting the *Lais* of Marie de France. In fact, as Fuchs notes, narrators of medieval romances often appear to be clerks, which results in an ironic tension between the narrative voice and the chivalric subject matter (40).

Not only was there no tradition of female narrators, but there was, of course, also no tradition of female authors of romances before Wroth. This means that if Lanser’s observation of how readers gender narrators is applicable to the early modern period as well, there would have been no need for early modern readers to pause over a narrator’s gender before the publication of the *Urania*.¹⁹⁴ According to Fludernik, the strict theoretical separation of narrator and author is indeed questionable with regard to early modern works that explicitly construct the narrator as an eyewitness, whose authority, Fludernik argues, derives from the real-life existence of the author, as in the case of Aphra Behn’s *Oronooko* for example (*‘Natural’* 164). Wroth’s narrator does not present herself as an historical eyewitness of past events, but rather as a reporter of ongoing happenings that she sometimes comments on with interjections in the present tense even though the events are related in the past tense. Still, it seems reasonable to suppose that Wroth’s text had the potential to unsettle early modern readers’ default construction of the narrator’s gender.

¹⁹² In contrast, there are intradiegetic female narrators in romances telling inset narratives, like for example Philoclea or Mopsa in the *Arcadia*.

¹⁹³ Lamb notes that one of the fifteen references to “fair ladies” in the OA reappears in the NA “in a passage added from the *Old Arcadia*” (*Gender and Authorship* 252 n2).

¹⁹⁴ In the case of Tyler’s translation of the *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood* the question of the narrator’s gender would not have arisen either since the text is expressly advertised as the translation of a male author’s work.

The tension between the expectation of a male narrative voice and the author's gender is to some extent defused by the gender-neutral characteristics of the narrator. The absence of textual indications concerning the narrator's gender makes it possible for readers I would argue to envisage the narrator as either male or female. Moreover, it allows for both a male and female reader to embody the voice of the narrator when he or she is reading the text out loud to an audience. Indeed, William Davenport's annotations to the *Urania* support my hypothesis, as Davenport three times refers to the narrator as "he" in his marginal comments, noting for instance that "he retournes to th[e exe=]cution of this storie [of] Antissius at the•58• [page]" (49). This remark is opposite the narrator's explicit announcement, "I will leaue him [Antissius' helper Allimarlus], and goe againe to *Parselius*" (49), which indicates beyond reasonable doubt that Davenport's "he" refers to the narrator, especially since Davenport also underlined this narratorial intervention. Thus, William Davenport for one thought of the narrator as male, notwithstanding the prominent heralding of the author's identity on the frontispiece.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, it seems that he retained this conception of the narrator throughout the romance, as his other two similar marginal annotations can be found at the beginning and towards the end of the romance.¹⁹⁶

Whether the lack of concrete indices as to the narrator's gender is due to a deliberate, possibly proto-feminist, decision by Wroth is difficult to ascertain. Assuming that Wroth's work grew out of her friendship with its dedicatee, Susan Herbert, and was partly shaped in response to an intimate audience, as Wroth wrote episodes and read them out loud to her friend or a small circle of family and friends,¹⁹⁷ one could also argue that for this first audience and the author herself, the narrator was obviously gendered as female because

¹⁹⁵ This, one might say, traditional attribution of male gender to the narrator appears to fit in well with Davenport's patriarchal attitude towards Wroth's male and female characters, which I discuss at length in "[A] story very well woorth reading".

¹⁹⁶ They read "he returnes to Per[issus] and Lymena at f[olio] . 69. page" (15) and "he shewes how ye [Emperor] : Amphy: was [enc]haunted &:" (494).

¹⁹⁷ Hannay envisages a similar origin and development of Wroth's work, arguing that some parts of the first part have a "collaborative feel" (*MSLW* 231) and that the family would have enjoyed dramatised versions of family anecdotes and perhaps even suggested ideas or developments (*MSLW* 231).

embodied by Wroth's or perhaps Susan Herbert's reading voice. In other words, Wroth might have failed to gender her narrator because the question simply did not occur to her as the narrator's fictional and the author's real voice fused in a way that parallels the easy fluctuation between fictional narrative, (auto)biographical account and *roman à clef* that characterizes the *Urania*.

Whether deliberate or not, this gender-neutrality has consequences concerning the narrator's moral authority and her position with respect to the work's characters. It allows the narrator to judge character's emotions and actions with more authority and creates a certain critical distance between narrator and characters that contrasts with the frequent sympathetic identification with the protagonists' sufferings—a tension which Wroth repeatedly exploits to create irony, as will be illustrated below. Moreover, since the narrator is not explicitly assigned a male or female gender, she appears less obviously biased in favour of male or female characters, with the result that the condemnation of male characters' actions, as well as the condemnation or defence of female characters, acquires more weight. Thus, introduced as a gender-neutral narratorial voice that might well be constructed as male, the narrator, by example, repetition and evaluative comments, gradually outlines an idiosyncratic set of values in the *Urania* that would not necessarily be expected of a male narrator.

By circumscribing a certain position and attitude towards characters and events, the narrator effectively becomes a reference figure for readers and implicitly proposes a distinct approach to the text. This function of the narrator, which Genette terms ideological and which will be discussed in more detail below, should be seen in a wider framework of narratorial guidance. Indeed, the narrator of the *Urania* provides different types of guidance although within the text these are often fused, with the result that more obvious guiding remarks may orient readers in more than one way. In other words, as the following analysis of typical short but crucial narratorial interventions will illustrate, Wroth constantly combines the various

narratorial functions Genette distinguishes to guide readers through her work and at the same time shape their attitude towards it. This strategy is all the more effective given the complexity of the romance with its repeated changes of narrative strands, levels, voices and the spatial and chronological movements. By contrast, the voice of the narrator remains constant throughout the text and hence serves as the primary point of reference for readers. Addressing the importance of romance narrators, Beer states that, as readers, “We have to depend entirely on the narrator of the romance: he [sic] remakes the rules of what is possible, what impossible” (8). This observation is certainly valid for the narrator of the *Urania*, as she strings story to story.

Due to the narrative structures of Wroth’s romance, one of the crucial functions of the narrator is to provide transitions from one narrative level to another or between different narrative strands on the same narrative level. Considering the frequency of such transitions in the *Urania*, the narrator’s guidance is often necessary, especially in the case of the sometimes abrupt moves from one narrative strand to another. Changes of narrative level appear generally less problematic by comparison, but they are also potentially confusing because of the physical layout of the text. The original printed edition of 1621 contains no quotation marks, which makes it imperative to mark transitions between different narrative levels by another means, all the more so since paragraph divisions—although they occur relatively often—do not regularly coincide with the beginning of inset tales.¹⁹⁸ Hence, the narrator’s remarks that announce the beginning and sometimes also ending of embedded stories take over the function of such typographical signs as quotations marks or paragraph breaks.

In general, the narrator gives the reader several indications that a change of narrative level is taking place, as can be seen in the following example, quoted from the 1621 edition in

¹⁹⁸ In the Newberry manuscript of the second part the problem is further accentuated by the complete absence of visually distinct paragraphs. Wroth only uses two punctuation marks consistently: the comma to denote commas as well as full stops, exclamation or question marks, and the semi-colon, sometimes followed by a virgule, to indicate larger breaks in the text. In very rare cases the editors also identified a question mark, as for instance in II.ii.375 line 29 (cf. “Textual Notes” II.465).

order to illustrate the importance of these indications in view of the absent quotation marks and paragraph breaks:

As they came towards Corinth they met a Lady much distressed, complaining of a Knight that had abused her, *Philarchos* was willing to ayde her, and so demanding what the matter was, she thus told it vnto him, (demaunding, and being satisfied who he was) I am saide she Wife to a Knight married against my will vnto him by my brothers command, [...]. (I.iii.350 F)

First of all, the narrator reports *Philarchos*' request to hear from the lady what has happened to her, which prepares the reader for the following explanatory story. Such requests, frequently voiced directly by characters or reported by the narrator, commonly initiate the relation of tales, unless, as happens less often, a character begins to tell her/his story of her/his own accord. A second indication given by the main narrator is the sentence "she thus told it vnto him," containing the deictic "thus," which points at the immediately subsequent beginning of the embedded tale. This use of "thus" is typical and occurs again and again in the romance, together with similar expressions like "in this manner" (I.iii.406) or "with these like words" (I.ii.334). Finally, the use of the deictics is complemented by a last indication that helps the reader to identify the beginning of an inset narrative, namely the narrator's interjection "saide she" right after the beginning of the lady's tale. Such narratorial interjections consisting of a pronoun and a reporting verb appear not only at the beginning of embedded stories, but sometimes also during the stories if these are interrupted by other characters' questions and comments, thus making it easier for readers to keep track of who is speaking.

While not all the signposts provided by the narrator in this instance are present at every occurrence of an inset tale, there is always at least one such indication to alert the reader of a change of narrative level. Endings of embedded tales, on the other hand, are not always marked, although there is frequently a comment by either the narrator or a character, be it the intradiegetic narrator or a character listening to her/him, that signals the change of narrative

level.¹⁹⁹ If the main narrator marks the end of an inset story, she usually does so either by explicitly stating that the inset narration has come to an end or by noting the audience's reaction to the embedded narrative. Subordinate clauses like "When he had concluded" (I.i.24) or "This sweet discourse ended" (I.ii.258) constitute examples of the first method. In an unusually elaborate instance of this type, the narrator even uses a striking image that fuses oral and written storytelling and presents it as an embodied practice when she states of Steriamus that "Having finished his tale, his eies flowed againe with teares, as if it were their office to give the full stop of his discourse" (I.i.70). When it comes to the audience's reactions, these can obviously vary a great deal, ranging from a simple expression of thanks, as in "Leandrus thank'd him for his discourse" (I.i.104), to a multitude of emotional responses. Thus, "The King smil'd to heare his discourse" (I.i.138), "Pamphilia gave great attention to it" (I.ii.229), "The King, and Amphilanthus much pittied, and admired the Lady, who had related this story" (I.ii.283), or even "Then did every one adjudge the old Prince to no lesse then death" (I.ii.233) are sentences which by describing the audience's reaction indicate to the reader that the change back to the intradiegetic level of the text has taken place. In addition to such signposts at the beginning and ending of inset stories, some are also punctuated by short conversations or questions that serve as reminders of the fact that a character is speaking. Thus, towards the end of his narrative, the Romanian knight Allimarlus is interrupted by Parselius, who asks a question to which Allimarlus then replies. The insertion of "'But I pray sir,' said Parselius" reminds readers both of who is speaking and who is listening to the story, and the continuation of Allimarlus' tale is signalled by the words "said he" (I.i.40).

Just as the narrator helps the reader by ensuring smooth transitions between different narrative levels, she is also of vital importance as a guide with regard to the many shifts

¹⁹⁹ Cf. also the discussion in section 3.3.1 "Narrative Levels" (171-173) below.

between narrative strands. The term narrative strands refers to the division of the intradiegetic level into different intradiegetic narratives focusing on various protagonists, or, as Salzman describes this technique in the *Urania*, “the narrative moves from one group of [characters] to another” (*English* 141). As mentioned in the discussion of the romance genre, critics have proposed a variety of terms for this phenomenon common to romance, but in order to avoid confusion, I will consistently use the term narrative strand adapted from Vinaver (128). A typical intervention of the narrator to signal a change of narrative strand can be illustrated by the following passage, which describes the army of the Princes in the middle of arranging their troops to conquer Albania and then moves to the situation of Pamphilia, back home:

Then were the horse likewise divided, and the hills given them, so as on hills, and in the valleyes, the enemy was answered with forces.

But now it is time to leave these affaires to Mars, and let his Mistris have her part awhile who alwayes, and at all times hath some share in businesses, Pamphilia in her owne Country contented, because shee thought safe in the happinesse of her love, though tormented with the burthen of absence, one day walked into a Parke she had adjoyning to her Court; (I.ii.317)

Very common in this intervention are the narrator’s words “But now,” which announce a change of narrative strand. Thus, one reads in the third book, for example, “But now Leonius must be spoken of” (I.iii.422) or in the second part “Butt now, mee thinkes, Excellent Pamphilia is to bee remembred” (II.i.107). In general, the narrator’s transitions contain some reference to time, like the “now” in the previous examples or the expression “being time” in the following quote: “in this voyage they shall be left, being time for Bellamiras journey to be spoken of” (I.iii.479). It is not entirely clear if the time reference is to be understood with regard to the time the reader spends reading the romance or the chronology of events within the romance. Alternatively, one could imagine that these time expressions reflect the interventions or reactions of the romance’s first intimate readers or listeners and their requests for the end of this or that story or the reappearance of certain characters. In any case, the time references give the reader the impression that the transition from one narrative strand to another is made for some cogent reason and that the succession of narrated events is not

random but consciously structured by the narrator. This structuring function of the narrator is what Genette calls the “fonction de régie” (262) or directive function.

As Genette explains, the directive function also comprehends comments on parallels, contrasts or causes and consequences in a narrative (262). This is the case in the *Urania* as well, although comments of this kind by the narrator are often not explicit, that is, the narrator does not especially underline the oppositional or consequential relation of the two narrative strands in question. Still, there are narratorial remarks on contrasts or other logical and thematic relations between narrative strands. One instance in which the narrator points out a contrast is at the beginning of the second part, when the narrative moves from a hunting excursion of Perissus and Limena to the Duke of Saxony’s arrival in Austria:

and with all content they [Perissus, Limena and their company] return’d, living and loving in all hapines.

Soe did nott the poore Duke of Saxony, for hee going to bring the happy hopefull newes of the Emperours returne, passed very safely till hee came into the skirts of the Germaine Empire and into Austria itt self, wher hee found the Country in great busines and turmoile, a rebellion beeing falen out (II.i.12)

The “Soe did not” of the narrator establishes a link between the two events that relies both on a contrast and a parallel: The parallel consists of the homeward movement that the characters in both narrative strands have in common, and the contrast resides in their different emotional state, as well as in the opposition of Perissus’ tranquil and peaceful Sicily and the “turmoile” in Austria.

Such a move from one narrative strand to another by means of contrasts creates an impression of variety and, assuming that romance “is principally a form of entertainment” (758), to recall the definition in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, thus fulfils romance readers’ expectations in this respect. The procedure of opposing narrative strands can already be noticed in the move from Mars to Venus, cited earlier, that is, the transition from war to love. As in the case of Perissus and Limena and the Duke of Saxony, there is a complete change of subject matter and thence variety with regard to the

types of stories related. Considering the importance of variety and its effects on the overall structure and the reading of romance in general, the *Urania* appears typical in this respect. As the previous examples of contrasts between narrative strands as well as the quick succession of adventures and stories indicate, Wroth seems to have designed her romance so as to provide the reader with a great amount of variety.

However, as noted before, transitions between narrative strands can also be effected through parallels, as in the following example in the first book, in which the narrative moves from Parselius to Pamphilia:

Parselius in his journey travelled with great paine of mind, the like sufferd Pamphilia, who all this while continued her Love, and life in Morea, who by loves force was, it seemed, transform'd into the same passion; (I.i.90)

The parallel that facilitates the transition in this case resides in the emotional state that the two protagonists mentioned share, unlike in the extract cited above where it marked a contrast. The fact that in both of these examples the emotional state of the protagonists serves as a link between narrative strands is no coincidence. Whether highlighted by the narrator or not, the transitions from one narrative focus to another very often feature contrasting or parallel emotions of different characters, which illustrates the prominence of emotions and emotional involvement in the *Urania* mentioned earlier. Yet transitions are not only organised around characters' feelings, as a parallel of a different kind later in the first book shows, which juxtaposes the thunderous "storme" of Parselius' passions to the beating of "Drums" in preparation of Albania's liberation, aligning thus the metaphorical rolling of thunder with the actual sound of drums (I.i.154).

Transitions that are based on causal or consequential relations between narrative strands are quite common as well, but, again, often not especially highlighted by the narrator. Whenever groups split up, for instance, this can lead to changes of narrative strands, especially if one party stays behind for various reasons. Thus, Rosindy in the first book comes to the rescue of Leandrus, who has been serving as a focal point at that moment, and becomes

the focus of the new narrative strand when he leaves the wounded Leandrus behind to recover (I.i.107). Or, in a similar example, Urania, whose narrative strand opens the romance, is left imprisoned in the Throne of Love enchantment, and the narrative moves on to Parselius' subsequent adventures (I.i.50).

Another type of situation that occurs more than once and generally leads to a transition as a matter of consequence is when one of the protagonists sends a message to another one. The narrative then usually follows the message directly, which entails a change of narrative strand from the sender to the receiver. Hence, when Leandrus is dying and sends a letter to Pamphilia, there is an immediate transition to Pamphilia, as the following sentence shows: "These [letter and a ring] he gave in charge to Leonius to send her, which hee did, coming to her one morning, after she had endured a sad and unquiet night" (I.iii.464). Similarly, invitations sent to someone are followed by a change of narrative strand, as when, in the second part, the King of Candia invites the whole of the Morean court and especially Amphilanthus. The moment the ambassador is sent to the Morean court, readers find themselves in Morea, watching the ambassador's arrival (II.i.58-59). As noted before, these transitions, which, unlike the ones caused by groups splitting up, also entail an instant change of scene, are not explicitly advertised by the narrator, yet thanks to the linking element of the message, the logical nature of the transition is obvious. In fact, knowing the receiver of the message in question, the reader is already thinking of both sender and receiver and thus prepared for the ensuing move from one narrative strand to another.

Not all the transitions between narrative strands are brought about so smoothly; there are also instances in which the move from one strand to another is unexpected, not commented on by the narrator and therefore appears unmotivated and rather abrupt. A good example of such an unannounced change of narrative strand is the transition from Pamphilia welcoming

Rosindy at the Morean court to Amphilanthus, who is about to cast his sister Urania from the rock of St. Maura, as he was commanded to do:

back they [Pamphilia and Limena] went together, and with much content met the King Rosindy and his companion in the Hall, where the King and all the Court were assembled, joy plentifully disposing it selfe to every one. Amphilanthus holding his course towards St. Maura was thither brought safely, and speedily, then going to the Rocke, he tooke Urania in his armes using these words. (I.ii.230)

Unlike the previous examples, there is no intervention of the narrator, no reference to time, no “but,” not even a new paragraph, which only follows after the above quote to mark the beginning of Amphilanthus’ speech.²⁰⁰ Only the name Amphilanthus and the reader’s knowledge of the fact that Amphilanthus left the Morean court a while earlier makes the sudden transition comprehensible. Two reasons might be proposed for the absence of any narratorial comment: on the one hand, the return of Pamphilia and Limena to court, as it were, ends Pamphilia’s reception of inset tales and brings her narrative strand to a momentary halt, so that it is not entirely surprising that a transition to another narrative strand occurs. On the other hand, Amphilanthus’ task to cast Urania from the rock of St. Maura has already been announced earlier, and his and Urania’s departure is related before the narrative turns to Pamphilia. Hence, it is unlikely that the reader experiences great difficulties in remembering this previous information, which then makes the sudden return to Amphilanthus and Urania appear less disconcerting. Moreover, one could even regard Pamphilia’s listening to Alarina and Limena’s tale as an interlude creating suspense, given the fact that Urania’s fall from the cliff of St. Maura is a dramatic turning point in the romance. In addition, Alarina’s account of how she was cured from her infatuation by a healing water (I.ii.223-224) prefigures Urania’s subsequent experience.

²⁰⁰ One can of course not exclude that the absence of a paragraph break is due to the printer’s intervention, but given the lack of visual paragraphs in the manuscript continuation—as opposed to Wroth’s occasional use of virgules, presumably to indicate such breaks—it does not seem very probable that the printers disregarded paragraph breaks in their copy text in order to save space. In any case, the page in question (I.ii.192 F) does not seem especially cramped compared to others.

If one considers two other transitions which are equally unmarked by any narratorial comment, one observes that, as in the example discussed above, there is no danger of the reader's not being able to bridge the abrupt move from one to another narrative strand. In the first instance, the reader witnesses Amphilanthus and Ollorandus' departure, which is followed by Pamphilia's return to her country and a description of her pastimes, before the narrative turns back without any forewarning to "The two brave Companions holding on their way" (I.ii.267). Even though their names are only mentioned some lines later, the fact that the reader has only just seen them depart makes it clear that the "two companions" have to be Amphilanthus and Ollorandus. Thus, the narrator's acknowledgement of transitions can at times be dispensed with if it is sufficiently clear who the focal point of the new narrative strand is and what is about to happen.

Yet, at the end of the second book, there is a transition from Urania to Nereana, a character encountered at the beginning of the book and not since referred to, which is not commented on by the narrator either. While the change of narrative strand is not completely unprepared due to the formulaic statement describing Philistella and Urania's life and the visual space created by the paragraph break, the mention of Nereana comes very unexpectedly and is not accounted for in any way, as can be seen in the following quotation:

"[...] my deere Urania," said the other, "let our most private thoughts be to each other plaine and open, secrecie to all others held, and only love, and we, know what we think." Thus they did live and love, and love, and live.

Nereana still remaining in Cicely, now growne as humble, as before proud, and ashamed as before scorning, living in a Cave alone, and feeding on hearbs, roots, and milke of Goats which fed on those rocks: (I.ii.334)

Having not met Nereana for well over a hundred pages, her sudden reappearance might confuse readers and certainly challenges their memory. However, although the narrator does not announce or explain the transition to Nereana, she still helps the reader remember the character and her plight by opposing her present humbled state to her former arrogance. In other words, the narrator here provides no link to guide the reader from one narrative strand to

another, but instead offers information that establishes a link between the earlier and the later appearance of Nereana. This link is further strengthened when shortly afterwards, upon meeting Perissus, Nereana relates her own adventures, providing the reader thus with all the information necessary to understand the subsequent events.

Like the narrator's comments on transitions between narrative strands, information of this kind facilitates the reading of the romance and performs a cohesive function, connecting single episodes into on-going stories. Examples like the one of Nereana cited above, in which a character recalls previously related events at length, are seldom,²⁰¹ but there are frequent instances in which the narrator updates the reader with information and explanations. Often, these reminders are very short and coincide with the transition between narrative strands, as in the following example:

But heere wee have longe stayd; therefor wee must a while leave this court in all hapines and content, and a little accompany some of the other knights, among which number Dolorindus must bee the first. After hee had given his promise to Antissius to carry his mad wyfe Antissia to St. Maura, hee by degrees wrought soe farr with her, covering his designe with poetically inventions, as to finde out some ancient reliques of the Gods, left beehind them while they sejournd on earthe, [thus inciting Antissia to agree to a journey] (II.i.49)

The narrator here moves from the Morean court to that of Dolorindus and, after announcing the transition with the words "But heere wee have longe stayd; therefor wee must a while leave this court," explains to the reader how Dolorindus manages to make Antissia agree to go on a journey with him. The information provided recalls what the reader already knows, namely Antissia's madness and Dolorindus' promise to follow Antissius' advice to take Antissia to St. Maura to "wash away her follys" (II.i.41).

In addition to reminding the reader of previous events, the narrator sometimes fills in what the reader has presumably 'missed' in the meantime by attending to another character's adventures. This is for instance the case when the narrative returns to Amphilanthus and the narrator comments on his prolonged stay in Candia (today's Crete):

²⁰¹ Other examples would be Parselius' account of his involvement with Urania and Dalinea (I.i.152-154) or Antissia's retelling of her water cure on Delos to the Queen of Bulgaria (II.ii.251-253).

But now itt is time to speake of the bravest Emperour, who all this while wee have left in Creete; the kings that went with him having all return'd, and in search for their allyes and children. Amphilanthus [...], having stayd long in Candia, lulled in the sweet delights of an infectious Queene, and more, of a furious ill-nature'd Queene if not observ'd as she pleased, att last by the same angelicall spiritts which most communly governd and protected him, hee had som warnings and punishments threatned if hee stayd in that ill (and wurst of ill) lyfe. Wher upon doubtfull, knowing her wicked disposi[ti]on [editors' square brackets], the daungers hee had run into, lead by Vaine love (ore indeed, more truly to speake itt, wicked desire), hee grew penitent, and that made him see his fault. Then wanting advise and faithfull creatures about him, which she had rid himm of, and hee till then never mist, extreame sad hee grew (II.i.131)

Readers gather important information from the passage above: they learn of Amphilanthus' affair with the Queen of Candia, of his return to reason, his want of true counsellors and friends, and of the measures the Queen has taken to separate him from such trusty friends and helpers. It may be that readers were supposed already to know some of this apparently new information at this point in the narrative given that one bifolio sheet in the manuscript continuation is missing, which presumably would have related the beginning of Amphilanthus' affair with the Queen of Candia. Yet, the relatively elaborate account of Amphilanthus' return to his senses and of his isolation suggests that this is new information indeed, presented in the form of a summary, since pure reminders of previous events are usually less detailed. In any case, whether the narrator's description of Amphilanthus' situation fills a gap in the narrative or whether its purpose is to recall earlier happenings, the passage above proves the importance of the narrator and her explanatory remarks: despite the complete loss of a crucial bifolio sheet, corresponding to four pages, it is possible to follow and understand what has happened to Amphilanthus thanks to the narrator's interventions.

Yet, the protagonists are not all active and experience adventures while other narrative strands are foregrounded. Some protagonists simply stay at home, especially in the second part of the romance when most of the couples are married and have their own country to govern. Thus, when Parselius is met again at the beginning of the second book in the second part, he is described as "having binn long lulled in the sweetest armes of his most chaste and vertuous love and wife, Dalinea" (II.ii.202). The absence of more detailed information implies

that Parselius has not accomplished any feats worth mentioning in the interim, and the time Parselius has passed governing Achaea with Dalinea therefore remains a blank for the reader. At times, such blanks are rendered plausible beforehand because the character in question has been ‘stuck’ somewhere due for example to captivity, infatuation, or an enchantment. As mentioned earlier, Polarchos, for instance, is imprisoned by the Princess of Rhodes when he returns to her and is then left in captivity until Amphilanthus stops in Rhodes and frees him (I.ii.240, I.iii.339-340). Polarchos’ state is then recalled as follows:

This was a happy thought [Amphilanthus’ plan to go ask Polarchos to accompany him] for that poore Prince, who all this while continued in the Iron Cage weather-beaten, and almost starved by the crueltie and ingratitude, of his once best, and only beloved. When the King [Amphilanthus] landed, he demanded of one that hee met, where Polarchos was; he being of a good nature (though a Rodian) answered,

“Alas Sir,” said hee, “where hee hath been ever since his returne from Greece, in an Iron tower prisoner.” (I.iii.339)

As can be observed, there is no additional information given about any activities because his captivity forces Polarchos to be inactive. Instead, the narrator reminds the reader of Polarchos’ suffering and miserable present state, as well as of the previous events that have led to his captivity by referring to “the crueltie and ingratitude, of his once best, and only beloved.”

Such updates are not only located immediately after transitions between narrative strands, but are also found in other places. Thus, Rosindy’s fame is recalled, for example, just before the narrative moves on from Parselius to Amphilanthus because it is contrasted to Parselius’ temporary withdrawal from the chivalric centre stage (I.i.128). Likewise, a reminder of Steriamus’ passion for Pamphilia is integrated into a description of Amphilanthus’ entertaining of his newly found sister Urania and his love Pamphilia (I.ii.192). Finally, information that does not refer back to earlier events, but brings the reader up to date with events that the narrative has not shown does not necessarily coincide with transitions between narrative strands either. When Philarchos defends Orilena’s claim to the throne of Mytilene

(today's Lesbos), for instance, Antissius arrives just in time to support him in battle, and his timely arrival is explained in reported speech only afterwards:

Then did the young Romanian King [Antissius] take leave, first telling how he came unto that place, which was by chance; for leaving the Morean Court, upon the coming of the happy newes of Victorious Rosindy, hee desired to returne for his owne Countrie, and there would raise more men (but as he travelld, he would still inquire of Parselius and Philarchos, whom he long'd to meete,) and goe himselfe to succour and redeeme Albania [...](I.ii.211)

The reader learns from this passage what Antissius has been up to after Rosindy's victory in Macedonia, while at the same time being reminded of important recent events, i.e. Rosindy's success, and impending future plans, namely the project to free Albania from usurpers. This quotation thus nicely illustrates the important cohesive function such information has, creating a network of links between events and circumstances that helps readers keep their bearings despite the proliferation of characters and adventures.

As this last example shows, information and explanations establishing links between events may not only be retrospective, as in the other updates mentioned so far, but can also consist of prospective information given to the reader by the narrator. The following is an example of such a prospective update in the form of an announcement:

but how shee [Nereana] was imprisoned in the same place she had made her sisters abode, attended on but by one Jaylor, fed neatly, and poorely to keepe downe her fancy, told still shee was mad, and threatned to bee used accordingly, if shee raved, accused of fury, and that made the cause to satisfie the people, who ignorant enough, had sufficient cause to believe it, seeing her passions, which though naturall to her, yet appeared to their capacities meere lunaticke actions; how these things proceeded and increased, after some time was expired, shall bee related. (I.ii.338)

In this passage, the reader receives quite detailed information about the fate awaiting Nereana, the Princess of Stalamina (today's Lemnos), even though the narrator announces that these events will only be "related" later on. In fact, all the details given here, such as Nereana's only being attended by one jailor, will not be referred to again by the narrator. Instead, Nereana's captivity will be recalled with the sentence "Nereana was left in miserable state, imprison'd in a Towre, locked up in conceit of maddnesse, and made a poore, imagined distracted creature where she was absolute Princesse" (I.iii.495) when she appears again

roughly 150 pages later. Subsequently the text explains her reestablishment on the throne, without giving any more details about her imprisonment. Hence, the prolepsis announcing Nereana's fate ends up replacing the actual recounting of that fate and becomes a mini-narrative in its own right, which exemplifies the strong tendency in the text to narrativize every kind of news that can be turned into a story.

However, there are also prolepses that are not transformed into tales, such as the following hint on the narrator's part concerning the future love relation between Urania and Steriamus when, in the scene mentioned earlier, Amphilanthus describes Steriamus' love for Pamphilia to Urania and Pamphilia:

but when hee spake of Steriamus, his finding him and his passions, he did it so pretily, as neither could procure too much favor for him, nor offend her [Pamphilia] with telling it, yet still did she hasten the end of those discourses, which he no whit dislikt; but Urania desired stil to heare more particularly of him, as if she had then known what fortune they were to have together; (I.ii.192)

This scene occurs shortly after Urania has been told that she will be happy with someone other than Parselius, so it is not difficult for the reader to guess that Urania's new love and future husband will be Steriamus. Consequently, the reader is not surprised to see Steriamus become Urania's knight forty pages later although it takes another thirty pages until Steriamus actually woos Urania and is accepted by her.

Whereas linking various narrative strands or providing retrospective updates and prospective information reinforce the romance's cohesion with regard to plot, the narrator also contributes towards the unity of the text by making emotional comments, which corresponds to what Genette calls the testimonial function of the narrator (262). Closely related to the testimonial is the ideological function mentioned above, which consists in pronouncing narratorial judgements with regard to the happenings and characters in a narrative (262-263). In the *Urania*, the narrator's reactions to the events on the intradiegetic level, which for the most part are formulated as rhetorical questions or addressed directly to the characters, conflate Genette's testimonial and ideological functions and place the romance in a unified

emotional and moral frame, thus inviting readers to adopt a specific attitude towards the text. Unlike in medieval romances, in which, as Fuchs explains, there is a significant class difference between the narrator, “speak[ing] for a class of authors who were most often clerks,” and the aristocratic characters described, there seems to be no equivalent “distance between [a] clerkly narrator and [...] chivalric protagonists” in the *Urania*, no tension between “scholarly” and chivalric values that might “resul[t] in a pronounced irony” (40). On the contrary, the narrator seems to be part of the aristocratic world described and, generally, her attitude towards the protagonists is one of great sympathy that persists even though there are instances in which the narrator condemns individual characters’ actions or attitudes implicitly or explicitly, as the following example illustrates:

Oh Ollorandus, what misfortune now befalleth thee? What Witchcraft made thee forget thy vowe, and Melissea’s command? Thy friend was carefuller of thee, and with more constancy accomplish’d thy desire, how hast thou abandon’d him in greatest neede? (I.ii.285)

This quotation shows how involved the narrator is in the adventures and affairs of the protagonists. Although Ollorandus is implicitly reproved for not having stayed at his friend’s side as he should have done, he is not simply blamed but partially excused because he is in fact tricked into leaving Amphilanthus. Above all, however, Ollorandus is pitied beforehand in view of the consequence his neglect will have, namely the near-death of his friend, for which Ollorandus “curse[s] himselfe” as soon as he witnesses it (I.ii.286). Thus, the narrator simultaneously expresses censure, sympathy and a great deal of anxiety as the repeated use of questions shows, thereby heightening the suspense and preparing the reader for the nearly fatal ambush on Amphilanthus.

Repeatedly, the narrator appears so involved that the reader gets the impression she would like to intervene and protect the protagonists, as will be even more obvious in the next quote. Through this continual readiness to sympathise with the protagonists’ joys and troubles and the general emphasis on compassion noted by Figueroa Dorrego in both Montemayor’s *Diana* and Wroth’s work (269), the narrator seems to invite the reader to read the adventures

of the princes and princesses in a spirit of compassion and to identify with their triumphs and sufferings.²⁰² Indeed, the narrator's recurring professions of sympathy and pity as well as the characters' mostly similar reactions to each other's experiences suggest that taking part in someone else's suffering is regarded as valuable or even pleasurable.²⁰³ Such an idea seems to recall Sidney's concept, detailed in his *Defence of Poesie* and inherited from Aristotle, that fiction should delight readers and move them emotionally in order to make them imitate and adhere to virtuous behaviour (90-91).

Yet, if the narrator offers the reader the position of a compassionate observer, she also intimates that while worthy of sympathy, the protagonists are not perfect and should also be judged at times rather than imitated. Not even Amphilanthus, the uncontested hero of the romance, escapes criticism. On the contrary, the narrator, addressing Amphilanthus directly, even offers him well-meant if ultimately futile advice:

Amphilanthus I pittie thee, who for all noble parts oughtest to be admired, and art revered of all, being matchlesse in all vertues, except thy love; for inconstancy, was, and is the onely touch thou hast, yet can I not say, but thou art constant to love; for never art thou out of love, but variety is thy staine, yet least is that blame of any, were not perill to ensue, plots laid to destroy thee, yet wilt thou passe them all, and be thy selfe; Women are ominous to thee, shunne them, and love her firmly who onely loveth thee. (I.iii.362)

Like the passage directed at Ollorandus, the comment addressed to Amphilanthus blends commiseration and censure: commiseration due to Antissia's plans to have Amphilanthus killed out of disappointed love, censure because Amphilanthus never remains true to his beloved and is ultimately responsible himself for Antissia's wish for revenge. Even more than in Ollorandus' case the attitude of the narrator appears sophisticated, at the same time accusing and excusing Amphilanthus' shortcomings, which indicates the narrator's bias in favour of the protagonists in general and Amphilanthus in particular. The final sentences of

²⁰² Cavanagh makes a similar point when she states in "Endless Love" that "Wroth uses emotional exuberance to engage her audience as she keeps her characters moving onward in their complex lives" and that both characters and readers are "prompted to join in with the emotional whirlwinds they encounter, however melodramatic these episodes may become" (91).

²⁰³ One could also argue that the narrator's personal investment in the romance's events and characters encourages readers to decipher the text in a personal manner, i.e. to treat the work as a topical *roman à clef*.

the narrator are just as contradictory, asserting on the one hand that Amphilanthus will survive and remain himself, and hence inconstant, while at the same time admonishing him to remain constant to Pamphilia. The contradiction in the narrator's prophecy and advice testifies once more to her concern for the protagonists, which even leads to what seems like wishful thinking on her part.²⁰⁴

However, in spite of reacting emotionally to the protagonists' troubles and joys and despite her condemnation of shortcomings such as inconstancy, ungratefulness, vanity or exaggerated pride, the narrator is neither overly sentimental nor moralistic. This is due to another facet of the narrator's persona that also finds expression in the above quote, namely the narrator's use of irony. The narrator's observation "yet can I not say, but thou art constant to love; for never art thou out of love" is clearly ironic since it implicitly criticises Amphilanthus' tendency to fall in love with every beautiful woman he meets while, on the surface, it appears to attenuate Amphilanthus' infidelity by highlighting his constancy to love.²⁰⁵ This example of narratorial irony shows that, as stated above, irony in the *Urania* is not the result of conflicting clerkly and chivalric values, but the consequence of the inability of protagonists to live up to the moral ideals valorised within the romance. The presence of irony in this instance inevitably raises the question if other comments of the narrator are also to be understood ironically. Indeed, the assertion that inconstancy is the "least [...] blame of any, were not perill to ensue" appears to be too lenient in a work that sets up the constant heroine Pamphilia as the most virtuous of women. Consequently, the narrator's ready excuse of Amphilanthus should perhaps not be taken completely at face value. As Cooper notes,

²⁰⁴ Fludernik describes such narratorial behaviour as a metalepsis on the discourse-level, occurring "when the narrator projects him/herself (at least empathetically) towards the level of the characters and becomes involved in what happens, as if s/he were standing there in the flesh" (*Introduction* 100). The most extreme example in the *Urania* occurs in the following sentence, when the narrator identifies herself through the pronouns "our" and "us" with the allied forces that are to free Albania: "But Plamergus gathered his spirits together, and so drew his men into the heart of the straights, where he could compell them to fight, and most wrong our men, not being able to goe above three in front; besides his horse he placed on the side of the hills, most advantagiously for them, but harmefull to us" (I.ii.316).

²⁰⁵ Hackett, quoting this narratorial remark in *Women and Romance Fiction*, qualifies it as "affectionate, but nonetheless barbed mockery" (177).

romance shows a general “concern with ideals, especially secular ideals, and with human perfectibility within a social context” (10). However, as she continues, “Even if perfection is not achieved, even if the hero in some way fails or the ending is not happy, the ideals themselves are not therefore treated with cynicism” (10). The same applies to the *Urania*, where human frailty is the butt of the narrator’s irony rather than romance ideals.

The narrator’s use of irony in the previous quote is not exceptional as the following example shows, which also comments on male inconstancy:

O rare constancie in man, can non of you remaine steddy to the end? Yet blame nott all, for sum may, and doe, but soe fewe, as they can hardly make a summ. This is nessessary, and therfor Selarinus is the more blameles. (II.i.6)

In this case, the irony is more overt, given the wordplay on “sum” and “summ,” that is, some and sum, and the wholesale excuse of Selarinus’ inconstancy which borders on the absurd, even if inconstancy is once declared to be men’s “naturall infirmitie” (I.iii.440) by a female character. The fact that only few men manage to remain constant obviously provides no logical reason for the narrator to call this state of affairs “nessessary,” especially considering the narrator’s continued pity of women’s suffering caused by their inconstant lovers. Consequently, the assertion of Selarinus’ blamelessness, which is based on the previous declaration, becomes equally ridiculous, so that the reader is again confronted with an explicit justification of a character that, as in the example of Amphilanthus, turns out to hide implicit criticism.

The recurrent use of irony evidently undermines the apparent straightforwardness of the narrator’s moral judgements. One could even go as far as to doubt the professed benevolence of the narrator or suspect Wroth to have constructed an overly benign narrator as a façade for her severe criticism and ridicule of the characters and her exposure of the moral issues at stake. Indeed, the text does present the reader with a paradoxical situation since, on the one hand, the compassion of the narrator invites the reader to experience the text emotionally at

face value and to identify with the characters, while, on the other hand, the presence of irony requires the reader to keep a certain distance in order to recognize what is being ridiculed.

Despite this paradoxical situation, it seems too far-fetched to dispense completely with the idea of sympathy and compassion as a valid and valued approach to the text. The romance abounds with characters sympathising with others, an attitude which is always depicted as noble and not treated ironically. Indeed, even characters who are presented as ridiculous, such as Antissia when she falsely believes Amphilanthus to be in love with her, receive a certain amount of compassion, both from other characters and from the narrator (I.ii.319-320, 324). This implies that the narrator's sympathetic and ironical attitude should be accepted as co-existing and equally valid, neither attitude blotting out the other and each being endorsed in turn. The consequence of such a co-existence of apparently conflicting attitudes obviously increases the difficulty of the reader's task. Yet, the resulting complexity of the text also has the effect of enriching the *Urania*, allowing for less clear-cut moral statements, more nuanced interpretations and more possibilities to approach topics both in a serious and a humorous mode. Moreover, the simultaneous presence of sympathy and irony need not necessarily be regarded as a contradiction. They can also be seen as informing each other and heightening each other's respective value, resulting in compassion that is not blind to faults and criticism that is not devoid of sympathy.²⁰⁶

The implication that Wroth is interested in multiple perspectives rather than a single normative viewpoint is also supported by the fact that while the narrator makes recurring comments of a moral nature, many discussions of characters' behaviour and attitudes take place in conversations between characters on the intradiegetic level, which illustrates Genette's remark that the ideological function of the narrator can also be conferred on characters (263-264). As an example, Pamphilia's behaviour, which is never questioned by

²⁰⁶ For an alternative assessment of the narrator's criticism and judgements see Fendler, "Questioning the Knight's Quest."

the extradiegetic narrator, is challenged or even criticised by other protagonists—not in order to denigrate Pamphilia’s status or excellence, but expressly out of concern for her well-being.²⁰⁷ Hence, sympathy and criticism, again, concur rather than exclude each other, and the tone of compassion, both sincere and at times informed by irony, set by the main narrator provides not only a kind of frame for the romance, but pervades the whole work.

The narrator’s sophisticated stance of critical sympathy clearly functions as a model, not only for the characters within the romance but also for its readers.²⁰⁸ While Wroth cannot, of course, control her readers’ reactions to the text, the recurrent narratorial comments expressing both sympathy and censure serve to shape the readers’ attitude to the narrative. As their main reference point in the complex romance, the narrator is indeed a powerful tool to orient the text’s readers. Yet, although the narrator is a pervasive presence in the text and could hence be described as an overt narrator in Seymour Chatman’s terms (33, 197-211), she cannot be called obtrusive as narrators of later novels like *Tom Jones* or *Tristram Shandy* are, for example. This is mainly because the narrator more often addresses characters within the text than an extradiegetic narratee. Thus, the narrator appears to be absorbed by the events she relates and oriented inwardly towards the intradiegetic level, rather than towards a narratee on the extradiegetic level and by extension the reader. As a consequence, narratorial comments do not appear openly didactic but rather shape readers by indirection, silently inviting them to share the narrator’s attitude to events and characters. In addition, neither comments addressed to the narratee nor those directed at characters are specially foregrounded or of great length,

²⁰⁷ Cf. especially the often quoted debate concerning constancy between Urania and Pamphilia, during which Urania explicitly chides Pamphilia because she worries about her health (I.iii.467-471).

²⁰⁸ Richard Helgerson in *The Elizabethan Prodigals* makes a similar observation concerning the narrator of the *Arcadia*. However, whereas in the *Arcadia*, according to Helgerson, “the narrator manipulates his readers into sharing the guilt and the awareness of guilt” (136) of the protagonists through his profession of sympathy towards them, this is not the case in the *Urania* I would claim. Helgerson claims that at the end of Sidney’s work the narrator “sides quite unreservedly with Evarchus” (139), thus judging not only the young princes, but also, implicitly, the readers who have taken pleasure in their exploits. In contrast, in the *Urania* there is no such changing of sides with regard to the narrator’s sympathy.

as the following address to Polarchos illustrates when he is imprisoned by the Princess of Rhodes:

Poore Polarchos, into what affliction art thou brought? how will thy friends lament thy misfortune, and redresse thy wrongs, if they may attaine but the knowledge of it? but thus thou must yet continue tortured for thy too great goodnesse. (I.ii.240)

As this quote shows, the narrator's comments resemble asides more than extended commentaries like those made, for example, by Henry Fielding's narrator at the beginning of each book in *Tom Jones*. In contrast, longer discussions of values and moral standards appear more often in characters' dialogues than in narratorial comments.²⁰⁹ Thus Wroth is able to approach issues from more than one perspective without having the narrator impose her opinions too strongly on the reader.

Just as the narrator does not draw attention to her ideological function, she does not foreground her narrative function either—arguably the most vital function of a narrator, in the *Urania* or any other narrative. Narration in the *Urania*, that is, fulfilling what Genette calls the “fonction narrative” (261), is taken for granted and generally not addressed by the narrator. Thus the tone of the handwritten ending added to the UCLA copy of the *Urania* by a seventeenth-century reader seems jarring when it concludes with the sentence “So my history has an End” (558). This sentence, usurping the narrator's voice, appears discordant in the way it objectifies the narrative. Wroth's narrator does not so much present the events she relates as a “history” that is already past when it is told, but rather poses as a mediator of ongoing events, it seems, subordinating telling to experiencing—even to the point of humorously collapsing the temporal gap between story events and the act of narration when she remarks “Butt wee must nott dally with the story; they [Amphilanthus, Urania and Selarina] are wett” (II.i.173).

²⁰⁹ See, for instance, the discussions concerning first vs. second love (I.ii.330-334) and constancy (I.iii.467-71) in the first part and those about singing (II.i.29-32), constancy (II.i.110-12), melancholy (II.ii.228) and poetry (II.ii.232) in the second part.

If one occasionally does find short references to the act of narration, they can generally be divided into two types. The first is the kind of linking remark already discussed, which states that the narrator is about to move on to another protagonist. The second type is less a comment on the act of narrating than an emphatic declaration of the narrator's inability to describe a particular situation or rather emotion. An elaborate example can be found at the beginning of the second part, when Pamphilia and Amphilanthus visit the Queen of Naples and are welcomed by her:²¹⁰

Shall I presume to express the Joye, the wellcome, the all, that rare Queene showed and felt, seeing her deerest sonn and with him her hault self Pamphilia? Noe, I dare nott; nay, I can nott. Therfor I leave itt to such (if any such ther bee) to relate itt; express itt I ame sure they can nott. Therfor in plaine relation I say they mett; the Queen blessed them both, as truly hers, and as hers they lived a while with her in truest delight and comfort. (II.i.1)

Whereas the narrator's pose of modesty, employing the rhetorical figure called *recusatio*,²¹¹ and the idea of emotions that cannot be represented are familiar techniques used to signify the intensity of the feelings depicted, it is interesting to note the self-assurance with which the narrator implies that she cannot be surpassed by anybody else. While pretending to leave the account of the reunion to other, presumably superior, narrators, these narrators are called into question before they ever materialize in the text. To make sense, the "Therfor I leave itt to such [...] to relate itt" should be followed by a relative sentence defining the narrators, but Wroth's narrator omits this definition, immediately denying such narrators' existence and their ability. The main narrator thus appears sure of herself and has a confident and authoritative relation to her narration: She does not seriously question her own abilities, never hesitates, never gets lost or refers to the complexity of the narrative, and she does not overtly reflect on her own manner of narrating, except in relatively rare remarks like the one above.

This relative silence concerning narration does not, however, mean that the activity of storytelling is not valued in the *Urania*. On the contrary, as repeated narratorial comments on

²¹⁰ Cf. also II.i.88 or II.ii.316-317 for other examples.

²¹¹ Peter L. Smith in "Poetic Tensions in the Horatian *Recusatio*" defines *recusatio* as the refusal of "intractable or uncongenial themes for alleged reasons of inability, disinclination, or humility" (56).

characters' storytelling abilities indicate, good narration is considered an art and praised as such. Indeed there seem to be virtually no bad storytellers in the *Urania*. Rosindy's account of Antissia's madness, for example, is commented on as follows by the narrator:

They all smiled to heere this strange relation, butt most itt contented them because told by the most worthy and temperate Prince living, and the discreetest from all kinde of follis. Amphilanthus was mightely taken with the story, beeing so neatly discoursed and certainly well sett out by Rosindy, soe thinking in requitall to make some relation of one of his traviels, they were called in to the Court to super [...]. (II.i.36)

Rosindy is explicitly praised for his skilfully structured narration which affects and pleases the audience. In contrast, the narrator does not seem concerned with Horace's *utile* since she does not commend the narrative in terms of didactic value although a number of moral lessons could be drawn from Antissia's madness. Instead, such moral judgement is left in this case to the characters, who react to Rosindy's account according to their different personalities.

Personality, it seems, also plays an important role with regard to storytelling abilities in Wroth's romance since the pleasure the audience derives from Rosindy's story is directly linked to his positive character traits. Hence, storytelling in the *Urania* is not only valued, but it is also personal and revealing, both with regard to content when characters tell their own story and with respect to the manner of telling. Antissia for instance is implicitly criticised for being too eager to tell others about her own problems and adventures as the following quote shows:

This made the Queene of Bullgaria urge againe to have the beeginning, and soe all, beeing covetous to lose noe thing seeming soe likely rare. Which Antissia quickly graunted, willing for the most part to heere her self speake, and thinking all others like her self (which was no partiall dealing), of her minde, to admire her selfe. Soe she thus beegann: (II.ii.250-251)

As so often in the *Urania*, the narrator does not directly condemn a character for his/her flaws, but the inserted remark "which was no partiall dealing" clearly introduces an ironic tone that alerts the reader and exposes Antissia's self-centredness as the questionable motivation for her readiness to tell her tale. In contrast to Antissia, Pastora is too modest and discreet to relate her love story in full to Steriamus, who "got knowledge of [this] by peeces

from her who would not complaine, nor tell the story her selfe for feare of misconstruction of the hearers” (I.iii.420). As is to be expected, the audience reacts differently to the two instances of storytelling: whereas Steriamus is eager to hear Pastora’s story (I.iii.416), the Queen of Bulgaria hides her slightly critical reaction, smiling at Antissia, but “couler[ing] itt with much admiring att her story and pittie of her misadventure” (II.ii.253).

The recurring short remarks concerning characters’ storytelling outline a number of expectations with regard to storytelling. Firstly, storytelling is considered as an art and the effect of a narrative depends as much on its form, i.e. its style and structure, as on its content. Thus Amphilanthus, after hearing Drusio relate his and his beloved’s adventures, “was exceedingly well pleased with the discourse and the oddnes of the adventure” (II.ii.376). Secondly, a story should be moving and procure the audience pleasure, whether in the form of amusement, distraction, wonder or in the experience of sympathy or pity. Thirdly, as the description of Rosindy implies, storytelling should be governed by a sense of decorum. Rosindy’s temperance and discretion, the text suggests, inform his narration and therefore make it more pleasing to the audience. Moreover, these qualities prevent him from using the story as a means of boastful self-display in the manner of Antissia, even though storytelling clearly functions as a form of self-performance in the text. Hence it is no surprise that Pamphilia is said to relate her political troubles with invading neighbours “modestly” (II.ii.257) and that the daughter of the Duke of Sabbro and Licus is ashamed to report Andromarko’s extravagant praise of herself (II.ii.412-414).

These characteristics of storytelling in the *Urania*—attention to form and content, an emphasis on Horace’s *dulce* and the respect of a sense of decorum—inform the main narrator’s practice of narration too, I would argue, although the narrator does not reflect upon her own storytelling in these terms, as we have seen. The discussion of the various types of transitions from one narrative strand to another has already indicated the importance of

variety in Wroth's text and the narrator's awareness of how different narrative strands parallel or oppose each other. This attention to content and the careful assembly of stories of differing contents to a larger picture will become even more evident in the following chapter on recurring themes and plots. With regard to form or perhaps rather style, the narrator's protestations of not being able to express overwhelming emotions adequately manifest the importance of style and expression doing justice to what is portrayed. Moreover, as several quotations have shown, the narrator makes recurring use of wordplay or stylistic figures like hyperbole to create irony, which again emphasises the idea that storytelling is an art requiring verbal skill.

The notion that storytelling should affect the audience on a personal and emotional level corresponds well to the involved tone of the narrator. As outlined above, the narrator's emotional involvement serves as a model for the narratee and, by extension, the reader, creating the impression that this kind of attitude or reception of stories is a given and hence also that it is a matter of course that stories have an affective impact on the audience. As in the example of Rosindy, this affective impact of the narrator's storytelling seems to outweigh the didactic function of narration that served as Sidney's justification for fiction in his *Defence*, despite the narrator's repeated moral judgements of characters and their actions. This is due to the 'inward' orientation of such criticism, which is specific, directed towards the characters rather than the narratee and therefore does not appear lecturing to readers in the way that general moralising narratorial remarks would. Thus, Wroth's text once more works by indirection, as characters' practice of storytelling reflects on that of the narrator, whose attitude in turn reflects what is expected of the text's readers.

The third characteristic expected of storytellers—a sense of decorum—comes most to the fore with respect to the narrator when she provides information about sexual relations between protagonists. There are several bedroom scenes in the *Urania*, which, while not

explicitly mentioning sexual intercourse, make it sufficiently clear that it is feared, intended or even accomplished. In the fourth book, for instance, the narrator relates the bawdy tale of Lyncencia, who has an affair with two men at the same time (I.iv.625), and in the third book, Polarchos' reluctance to leave his lusty mistress' bed is commented on quite openly by the narrator, as the following extract shows:

She loth to part with him as being the last time of enjoying, her soule foretelling some harme: but being so ill, not able to tell her any good to her selfe, or to prevent hurt, was only troubled; he as willing to stay for the same reason of being the last, for she was pleasing; but when he rose and put on his mantle and other cloaths, he againe sat down on the bed, and taking her hand kiss'd it, she tooke him in her armes and kiss'd him,

"Farewell deare Lady," said hee.

"My better selfe," cry'd she, "farewell." (I.iii.405-406)

The use of the verb "enjoying" and the fact that Polarchos has to rise, "put on his mantle and other cloaths" clearly indicates a sexual relation, as does the woman's freely offered embrace. Thus, with respect to some characters' sexual encounters, especially those of minor characters, the narrator spells out explicitly, though decorously, what the exact nature of the characters' relationship is. However, when it comes to the main protagonists and especially the relation between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, the narrator is more reticent. From what she discloses, the closest bodily contact of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus consists in some embraces and kisses, two of which notably take place after Pamphilia has married Rodomandro (I.ii.320, I.iv.565, II.i.45, II.ii.262, II.ii.283). A typical example of such a kiss follows Amphilanthus' marriage proposal to Pamphilia when he "clasp[s] her in his armes, presuming then more then ever hee had dun beefore ore she had permitted, boldly kissing her" (II.i.45). Immediately after their secret marriage, however, no further allusion to physical contact is made, and their relation is described as follows: "After the Contract ther was les outward cerimony butt more truly felt hapines then beefore: now appeering like one an others, without feare, their countenances shooing a blessed content in assured injoying" (II.i.45). In conjunction with the description of the "blessed content" visible in the lovers' faces, "injoying" in this sentence seems to refer to long sought for peace of mind rather than

physical enjoying as in the case of Polarchos' lusty lady. Thus, the reader is never quite sure if Pamphilia and Amphilanthus do have a sexual relation or not, and Margaret A. Witten-Hannah for example describes Pamphilia as a virgin until her marriage to Rodomandro, noting that "the queen's relationship with Amphilanthus is always described in oddly formal terms when viewed in the light of his amorous reputation" (250).²¹² Moreover, Witten-Hannah speculates that once the queen is married to Rodomandro, "and probably for ever, the relationship between Amphilanthus and Pamphilia is to remain Platonic, harking back to the world of courtly love" (258).

Yet the *Faire Designe*, the mysterious young knight who appears in the manuscript continuation, strangely resembles Amphilanthus (II.ii.384) and could possibly be his and Pamphilia's son.²¹³ Moreover, as Barbara K. Lewalski remarks, on the occasion of Pamphilia and Rodomandro's wedding, "the Queen of Naples, who helps to dress her [Pamphilia], leaves her hair bound up, not loose and flowing as was customary for virgin brides; by that gesture both aunt and niece imply that the earlier private marriage to Amphilanthus was consummated" (288). Consequently, the reader wonders retrospectively whether the embraces and/or kisses mentioned by the narrator should metonymically be understood to stand for sexual intercourse.²¹⁴ Towards the very end of the romance, when Pamphilia, Amphilanthus

²¹² Interestingly, Rickman also thinks that the secret marriage of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus is not "consummated" (156) despite the focus of her study.

²¹³ Melissea at one point tells Parselius "examine the lyfe you have lead, and itt may bee you may that way knowe himm as soone as any" (II.ii.323), but I do not think this means that Parselius is his father, especially since Melissea says no when Parselius asks her if it will be his son's fate to end the last enchantment (II.ii.322). If Amphilanthus is the *Faire Designe*'s father, his mother, theoretically, could also be one of Amphilanthus' mistresses from the first part, that is, for example Lucenia or Musalina. Yet, given that Lucenia is only recalled once in connection with dissembling flattery (II.i.32), well before the first mention of the *Faire Designe* (II.i.174), and Musalina does not reappear at all in the second part, this hypothesis seems less likely. On the other hand, one could argue that Andromarko's mother likewise does not make an appearance in the second part and that it is only on the basis of two allusions to her (II.ii. 289, 414) that readers infer her to be the lusty mistress of Polachos mentioned above.

²¹⁴ I am not entirely convinced by Rickman's argument that the scenes of kissing are simply a reflection of "tolerated and quite normal" (160) behaviour and that "kissing does not seem to 'count' as a breach of the marriage vows," that is, that "women who kiss and embrace their lovers are still considered chaste and virtuous" (160). Rickman concludes that "Spouses appear to draw the line at nightly visits to the lady's chambers" (160) and interprets Wroth's text as "suggest[ing] that noblemen and noblewomen in Jacobean England may have had significant leeway in acceptable and 'chaste' physical contacts" (160-161). Although Rickman repeatedly

and Rodomandro seem to live in a curious *ménage à trois*, there is a reference by the narrator, indicating that Pamphilia and Rodomandro sleep in separate rooms that are not very close to each other since Amphilanthus reaches her room more quickly than Rodomandro when there is a disturbance at night (II.ii.405). Although Pamphilia is at the time supposedly following Leutissia's advice that she and Amphilanthus should "injoye one an other hapily, and the more hapily in chaste loves" (II.ii.379), this arrangement of bedrooms might hint at more intimacy between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus than is acknowledged in the romance. Yet, at this point in the romance, the Faire Designe is already a young knight, which means that if Pamphilia and Amphilanthus are assumed to be his parents, they must have had a sexual relation at a much earlier stage in the romance, the exact moment being hard to pinpoint, however, due to the vague time indications given by the narrator.

The omission of detailed information concerning Pamphilia and Amphilanthus' love relation can plausibly be ascribed to the demands of decorum. Moreover, the narrator's reticence seems correlated with the status of the protagonists in question. Whereas the sexual fervour and satisfaction at "having full content" (I.iv.625) of the minor and, as her name implies, morally questionable character Lycencia are presented explicitly in the text, the same is not the case for noble characters that are generally presented as virtuous and exemplary. Tellingly, when Philarchos in the second part surprises a woman in bed, spends most of the night kissing her, before protesting his loyalty to Orilena and chiding her for having fallen in love with him (II.i.124-131), his character appears in a much more dubious light than in the first part, and this is mostly due to the explicit and titillating representation of Philarchos' desires and temptation. To use different styles in connection with characters of different status is in keeping with Aristotle's "concept of decorum," that is, as Heather Dubrow puts it in *Genre*, "the notion that certain subjects require appropriate forms and styles" (48). Thus, the

stresses the importance of handling illicit affairs discreetly in the early modern period and even notes that Wroth "appears reluctant to mention sex directly" and "often depicts those actions in an indirect way" (161), she does not take this into account when interpreting the kissing scenes.

narrator could be said to apply her sense of decorum by adopting varying degrees of explicitness.²¹⁵

The circumstance that the narrator withholds crucial information like the *Faire Designe's* origin or the nature of the relation between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus might lead one to describe her as unreliable. Moreover, the narrator of the *Urania* is certainly not objective or neutral since she sympathises with characters and reflects on the events in terms of moral values. In other words, some of the main characteristics of the narrator seem to correspond to what Rimmon-Kenan identifies as the three “main sources of unreliability,” that is, a “narrator’s limited knowledge, his [sic] personal involvement, and his problematic value-scheme” (100). Yet, on the other hand, to term the narrator unreliable would not, I presume, correspond to the reading experience of modern or early modern readers. Since the narrator does not foreground the act of narration or put into question her authority as a storyteller, she appears trustworthy, and her predictions and explanations do not contradict the events of the narrative. Moreover, her concern for the protagonists or her moral standards do not change, so that there are no conflicting values that might disorient readers, even though the narrator repeatedly makes use of irony in her moral judgements.

The intuition that the narrator of the *Urania* is reliable even though she withholds information and is biased in favour of the protagonists suggests that the concept of reliability needs to be reconsidered in a historical and generic context.²¹⁶ Thus, the narrator’s varying degrees of disclosure with respect to different types of characters is in keeping with the historical literary notion of decorum, as described above. Wroth probably complies with early

²¹⁵ Rickman also discusses the episode of Philarchos (161-162) and notes the varying degrees of explicitness with which sexual affairs are represented (161-163), but she does not systematically reflect on this issue from a generic or stylistic perspective.

²¹⁶ Vera Nünning makes the same claim in “*Unreliable narration* und die historische Variabilität von Werten und Normen” when she states the following: “Nur wenn man die historische Variabilität von Sinnstiftung berücksichtigt und jeweils angibt, welche Normen als Maßstab für Unzuverlässigkeitsurteile dienen, kann die Analyse von *unreliable narration* zu nachvollziehbaren Ergebnissen kommen” (283). (Approximate translation: The analysis of unreliable narration can only lead to comprehensible results if one takes into account the historical variability of the creation of meaning and if one indicates what norms form the standard against which narration is judged to be unreliable.)

modern readers' expectations in this respect, making a stylistic distinction between a heroic mode and more bawdy fabliau-like episodes. In addition, Wroth not only takes into account this general awareness that different genres require matching styles, but she also relies on particular romance conventions in her treatment of the Faire Designe. Engaged in a quest for his own identity and place in society, the Faire Designe clearly corresponds to a well-known romance protagonist, generally called the fair unknown. As Cooper writes, "The fair unknown, *le bel inconnu* or *le beau desconnu*, is most often a young man who undertakes a series of adventures in quest of his family identity" (332), and is hence the protagonist of a "family romance, where rediscovery and reconciliation of parents and children constitute the recovered equilibrium of the happy ending" (333). English romances, Cooper adds further, "often incorporate the descent of the crown as an issue" (333), which also seems to be the case for the Faire Designe, who is presumably destined to save and marry the Sophia and to be Amphilanthus' successor as Emperor. While, as Cooper explains, the fair unknown need not be a foundling whose origin is kept from the reader, his own ignorance and the mysteriousness of his origin are of importance because they are signifiers of his valour, which, somewhat tautologically, proves his "high lineage" (331-332). Applied to the *Urania*, this circular logic makes of the Faire Designe a potential means to legitimate the relation between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus retrospectively by its result.²¹⁷ Despite the presence of five witnesses at Pamphilia's and Amphilanthus' private marriage, the world at large in the romance remains ignorant of this contract and its possible consummation, which the recognition of the Faire Designe as Pamphilia's and Amphilanthus' son would necessarily render public but also justify given his chivalric exploits that ensure political stability.

²¹⁷ A similar logic seems to be at work in the handwritten ending by a seventeenth-century reader in the UCLA copy of the 1621 *Urania*. The reader envisages a happy marriage for Pamphilia and Amphilanthus "blessed with sons & Daughters, being rightly possessed of their Parents vertues which have since shone in their illustrious progeny" (558). While the birth of virtuous children and "illustrious progeny" can be read as an indication of the parents' excelling virtues, the expression "blessed with" also suggests the idea that the birth of this offspring is a sign that God condones the marriage, i.e. that it is legitimate. For further discussion of this conclusion see Light, "Reading Romances" and my article "[A] story very well woorth reading."

Readers of the *Urania* are placed in a slightly privileged position since they are aware of the secret marriage, yet the narrator's remarks are too vague for readers to know for sure whether the marriage is consummated. Thanks to this vagueness, the appearance of the Faire Designe activates the readers' generic expectations with regard to this fair unknown, making them guess at his origin and the kind of ending the romance moves towards. At the same time the readers—together with the world at large within the romance—form the target of the circular logic that the romance conventions surrounding the fair unknown entail. In other words, having witnessed the Faire Designe's knightly valour and prowess, readers are more likely to condone the circumstances of his origin.

Finally, apart from serving romance conventions, the narrator's reticence might also be informed by the *roman-à-clef* dimension of the *Urania*. After all, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus can be read as representations of Wroth herself and William Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke, who would presumably not have been eager to publicise their affair even though there are no historical records indicating that their relation and the birth of their two illegitimate children gave rise to a scandal.²¹⁸ Indeed, in an interesting parallel to the Faire Designe's case in the *Urania*, the few surviving biographical records that testify to Wroth's affair with her cousin all concern their illegitimate children and Pembroke's fatherhood, but do not specifically address Wroth's and Pembroke's relation as such.²¹⁹ Thus, two family records refer to the children as Pembroke's "base son" and "natural Children" (*MSLW* 282-

²¹⁸ In her study Rickman even states that "Of all the cases of illicit sex investigated in this book, the affair between Herbert and Mary stands out as the having caused the least outward trouble for those involved and their families, friends, and allies" (168). Rickman attributes this to the couple's discretion, Wroth's widowhood and the absence of any legal consequences due to questions of inheritance (141, 199). Moreover, Wroth had married according to her family's wishes, produced an heir and thus "fulfilled her duty as a noblewoman" (167), and she enjoyed the support of her family connections (Rickman 167-168). For discussions of the surviving historical documents concerning Wroth's life see Roberts (*Poems* 24-26), Rickman (141-172), and Hannay (*MSLW* 251-252, 279-280, 282-289, 293-297).

²¹⁹ Hannay argues that Denny's verse attack "Yet common oysters such as thine gape wide/And take in pearls or worse at every tide" might have been a first allusion to Wroth's affair with Pembroke, especially if read in conjunction with his allusion to the stoning of adulterous women in one of his subsequent letters (*MSLW* 238, 240). Even if this was the case, however, the accusation remains implicit and Denny seems primarily interested in turning Wroth's own text against herself since the image of the "oyster" that he uses is from the Sirelius episode, where Wroth emphasises the chastity of a female character by comparing the likelihood of there being any fault in her to the likelihood of finding "Pearles in ordinary Oysters" (I.iv.516).

283), but no further comment is made on Wroth's and Pembroke's relation or their marital status, for example. This is certainly due to the genealogical orientation of these documents of the Herbert family. Yet even Chamberlain's gossipy remark to Dudley Carleton concerning a widow's illicit affair in 1624 does not entirely reveal the identity of the culprit but rather describes her in a way that has led Roberts (I.lxxiv) and Hannay (*MSLW* 251) to believe that this is a reference to the birth of Wroth's illegitimate children. Chamberlain writes: "Here is a whispering of a Lady that hath been a widow above seven years, though she had lately two children at a birth. I must not name her though she be said to be learned and in print" (575).²²⁰ This precise and yet opaque comment by Chamberlain suggests that the narrator's reticence with regard to Pamphilia's and Amphilanthus' relationship might also conform to a more general historical norm of discretion with regard to writing about what might have been discussed more explicitly in oral gossip.²²¹

To summarise, readers are faced by a narrator that is extradiegetic but more often oriented towards intradiegetic characters than the extradiegetic narratee, a narrator that is both active and passive, overt and covert, and, though reliable, not necessarily explicit. Throughout, the narrator remains curiously gender-neutral, which contrasts with the recurrent discussions of men and women's faults and virtues within the romance. Likewise, the narrator does not draw attention to herself and her directive function, although she actively guides the reader through the maze of stories, forging links of chronology, analogy, opposition or

²²⁰ As Roberts notes, Wroth had been a widow for ten years by 1624, which is why she was not thought to be the person described by the scholar who first discussed this remark by Chamberlain (I.lxxiv, n15). However, Roberts contends, Wroth is the only candidate in 1624 that matches all the other elements of the description, and she was also an acquaintance of Dudley Carleton, making it more likely that he would have correctly identified her on the basis of Chamberlain's indications (I.lxxiv n15).

²²¹ In her study Rickman argues that "the Elizabethan nobility considered illicit sex as something that should be handled very discreetly" (68) and that this attitude persisted in the Jacobean period, i.e. that "that the Elizabethan and Jacobean nobility operated under a sort of 'don't ask, don't tell' moral" (202). Rickman illustrates her claim by discussing several illicit affairs among the nobility, showing that especially under James I affairs that were handled discreetly like that of Wroth and Herbert caused no great stir even if it resulted in illegitimate children (83, 91, 141, 168, 202). Thus, the long-standing affair between Penelope Rich and Charles Blount only became scandalous, according to Rickman, once the couple tried to legalise it by marrying after Penelope Rich's divorce, but not while she was still married and performing her wifely duties to Robert Rich (111-112, 130, 139, 202).

consequence between different narrative levels and strands and connecting events through retrospective and prospective information. In contrast to her unobtrusive directions, the narrator's emotional involvement with events and characters is strikingly overt. Yet, due to the narrator's orientation towards the protagonists within the romance and also her characteristic use of irony, the ideological work of the narrator is not prominent, i.e. her emotional and moral assessment of characters and events does not appear indoctrinating. Hence, the narrator's shaping of the reader could be described as a kind of insinuation, influencing the reader by example rather than by an openly didactic stance. Moreover, criteria of what constitutes good storytelling, such as attention to style, emotional impact and decorum, are established in an equally indirect manner via the narrator's remarks on characters' storytelling rather than on her own. Thus, the narrator of the *Urania* functions as an important tool for Wroth to draw readers into the text's emotional universe and invites them to assume the role of understanding and sympathetic listeners who partake of the characters' joys and suffering without however being uncritical or naïvely blind to their shortcomings. This is further corroborated by the way in which Wroth constructs the romance's narratee, as the following section will show.

3.2 The Narratee

As outlined in the discussion of narratological concepts, every narrator implies and addresses a narratee that may be more or less perceptible in a text. If the narrator of the *Urania* remains elusive in certain respects, this is generally the case of the narratee, aptly described as passive and covert. Indeed, the extradiegetic narratee in the *Urania* is barely present in the text and hardly ever explicitly addressed. In some isolated instances, traces of a narratee can be found, but they do not define the narratee in any way. For instance, in the sentence "Imagine how brave a Prince he [Steriamus] now is, and what joy this would be to his Urania, to see her

Steriamus command five Kings, besides innumerable Princes, Dukes, Earls, and valiant Knights” (I.ii.315), only a simple imperative evokes the presence of an addressee. At other times, the narrator refers to the narratee simply as “you” when recalling previous information, as, for example, in the following sentence: “Her sister, as you heard, went to try the Inchantment” (I.iii.495). There are no further indications as to what kind of ‘you’ the narrator addresses, and most of the time the narratee is only addressed implicitly in passive constructions, as in “Butt now, mee thinkes, Excellent Pamphilia is to bee remembred” (II.i.107), or in rhetorical questions like the following: “How can one better leave a man then in his highest pointe of hapines, to returne to him againe, to the consummating of itt?” (II.i.106). There are also instances in which the narrator uses the pronoun ‘we’ when intervening, as the following quote illustrates: “Wher wee must leave them [the Faire Designe and Andromarko] for a while, and come to som other of our younge gallants” (II.ii.331). It seems probable that this ‘we’ includes the narratee, rather than being an editorial or royal ‘we’ designating only the narrator. This inclusive ‘we’ projects a complicit relation between narrator and narratee, suggesting that they share the same sympathetic and intimate relation to the diegesis and its protagonists,²²² as the possessive “our” encodes the benevolent concern that the narratee is assumed to feel for the young knights while at the same time slightly distancing narrator and narratee from the text by placing them in a position of superiority with regard to the events and protagonists. Thus, the ‘we’ aligns the narratee with the narrator, but it still gives no concrete clue as to what kind of narratee is addressed.

As mentioned in the discussion of narratological concepts, Genette argues that the less present the narratee is in a story, the easier it is for readers to put themselves into the

²²² This sense of (confused) intimacy is also expressed in the following curiously metaleptic statement: “The other eleven Princes that came with Amphilanthus into Pamphilia, and were as Polarchos hath told you scatterd, and devided in the Desart” (I.iv.584). This recapitulation by the narrator implies that Polarchos has previously taken over the role of the narrator, i.e. addressed the narratee directly. However, when Polarchos says “we lost sight of him [Amphilanthus], and all (as if led by severall Spirits) are scatterd and lost” (I.iv.583), this information is addressed to Pamphilia and not the narratee, which confuses the discourse boundaries between intradiegetic character and extradiegetic narratee even further.

narratee's position and feel directly addressed by a text (266). In other words, the position of the narratee becomes a sort of blank space that can be occupied by readers. This argument seems particularly fitting in the case of the *Urania* and its extradiegetic narratee, defined in general neither in terms of gender nor number. In other words, apart from two exceptions, a single male or female reader may just as easily identify with the narratee as an audience of mixed gender, listening to the work read out loud. There are, as far as I can ascertain, only three instances in the whole of Wroth's work in which a more concrete audience is addressed by the extradiegetic narrator. To what extent this particular audience—plural in all cases, gendered in two—coincides with the indefinite narratee described above is not clear. The first example consists of a narratorial remark combined with an appeal to the audience's emotional experience: "What a perplexitie this was to him [i.e. to Amphilanthus because although incognito he is justly accused of breach of faith], judge bravest lovers" (I.ii.301). The audience or at least part of the audience is here addressed as a group competent to understand or even share Amphilanthus' perplexity because they are lovers themselves. In the second example, explaining how the princesses of Rhodes, Samos and Stalamina try the enchantment of the Theater of Love, the narrator remarks that "they had servants or lovers as you men call them, who by their mistresses favours aspired to hope of winning" (I.iii.413). This comment, explicitly addressed to "you men," evokes an audience that consists at least partly of men, and it also disassociates the narrator from those men, implying that she is either a woman or a different kind of man. The final example is a warning to women after Celina has fallen in love with Rossalea's beloved notwithstanding her previous spurning of "Love that blind Devill" (I.iv.640). The narrator exclaims, "let never woman (especially hereafter) be so bold to contest, nay contemne so powerfull a godhead [i.e. Love]" (I.iv.644). In this case, the addressed audience is not explicit as in the above comment, but the warning seems to make most sense if directed at an audience of women. These three comments, then, combined with

the vague ‘you’ and ‘we’ used for the narratee, appear to indicate that it is perhaps most appropriate to envisage the narratee of the *Urania* as a plural audience of mixed gender rather than as a single person. If the assumption is correct that a mixed circle of family and family friends was the first audience for Wroth’s romance, the fictional narratee could be considered as a reflection of that historical group.

On the one hand, picturing the narratee as representing a group of Wroth’s friends and family renders the concept more concrete because the audience is at least defined in terms of social status. Yet, on the other hand, it makes it vaguer, too, because it fractures the unity of the concept, replacing the notion of a singular narratee with that of a plural and hence potentially heterogenous audience, meaning that the blank space readers are invited to occupy does not necessarily correspond to a stable and unified stance. Thus, the narratee remains an entity that is hard to circumscribe. Moreover, it retains its inclusive quality compared for example to the more narrowly delineated aristocratic female audience that Sidney’s narrator addresses as “fair” or “worthy ladies” in the *Old Arcadia*.²²³ This aspect of inclusiveness, I would argue, also speaks against associating the narratee too closely with one historical reader only, such as William Herbert, who is speculated to be the sole addressee of the romance’s second part by Elizabeth Spiller in *Reading and the History of Race in the Renaissance* (160-163), or, more plausibly perhaps, the dedicatee of the *Urania*, Susan Herbert, the Countess of Montgomery. By analogy with Lanser’s rule concerning the gendering of narrators, one might decide to refer to an indeterminate narratee as she or he depending on the sex of the dedicatee if there is one. However, in the case of the *Urania*, this seems counter-intuitive—not only

²²³ Cf. Lamb in *Gender and Authorship* (72, 75-80). It goes without saying that Sidney’s inscription of a group of female narratees in the *Old Arcadia* does not imply that he was necessarily writing for an exclusive female audience. On the contrary, as Hackett’s lucid discussion of addresses to female readers in *Women and Romance Fiction* makes clear, this gendered conception of the narratee might have made the text especially attractive to male readers (11-12).

because of the explicit address to men quoted above, but also because of the variety of critical attitudes present in the text and oriented, it appears, towards both men and women.²²⁴

Similar reasons, I would say, speak against the possible hypothesis that the *Urania* should be read like a private journal where narrator and narratee might be described as textual constructions of the author's self. Carrell identifies the recurring versions of Pamphilia's story that are presumably informed by Wroth's own experiences as a "ghostly ur-tale" (94) and interprets Wroth's writing as a bid for control over the "outcomes of her nearly infinite variations on the single basic (basically factual) plot of unrequited constancy that so enthralls her" (90). Thus Carrell indirectly implies that Wroth is writing and rewriting these stories for herself since she is the one interested in reshaping this ur-tale in what Carrell calls a "magic mirror of romance" in her title.²²⁵ Waller's psychoanalytic approach to Wroth's writing in *The Sidney Family Romance* likewise could lead to such a hypothesis. Yet, although they are striking due to their recurrence, episodes that present variations of Pamphilia's fate only occupy slightly more than fifty pages, i.e. about five percent of Wroth's approximately thousand-page romance, and they are restricted to the published part.²²⁶ Moreover, if, with regard to these stories, it might be to some extent appropriate to read them as instances of self-representation that Wroth primarily addresses to herself, this is not the case for the *Urania* in general. The style of Wroth's writing is in no way confessional in tone or reminiscent of an intimate journal entry. On the contrary, the narrator in her asides clearly assumes the posture of a reporter of events to an audience. This impression is supported from

²²⁴ Taking into account the *roman-à-clef* aspect of the *Urania*, it might be possible to envisage the criticism of men and women in the text in terms of petty gossip exchanged between two women friends, i.e. Wroth and Susan Herbert, but this idea is at odds with the stance of critical sympathy professed by the narrator, as well as with the fictional dimension of Wroth's work.

²²⁵ Cf. also Carrell's identification of Pamphilia and Wroth as "the two primary women in the layered audience" (100).

²²⁶ The inset tales in question are those of Alarina (I.ii.217-224), Alena (I.ii.226-229), the fishing lady (I.ii.291-294), Bellamira (I.iii.379-389), a sad lady (I.iii.437-439), Cilandrus (I.iii.476-478), Dorolina (I.iii.492), Lindamira (I.iii.499-502), an angry lady (I.iv.510-512), Pelarina (I.iv.528-533), Lisia (I.iv.559-562), Mirasilva (I.iv.576-579), Elyna (I.iv.589-590, 596-600) and a British widow (I.iv.631-634). Carrell's shorter list of episodes (99-100) is not exhaustive.

within the text, where everything is ultimately heard or read by someone, even secret or hidden letters, poems and stories.²²⁷ The same is true of the “ur-tale” versions which are variously narrated to male and female characters, making it seem probable that even in these most autobiographical parts of the *Urania*, Wroth is intent on presenting herself or versions of herself and her experiences to a wider audience than only herself. Indeed, the *roman-à-clef* aspect of the romance per se requires the presence of an audience ready to recognize to whom and what the fictional text alludes.

If Wroth really modelled her narratee on an intimate audience of family and friends, it might come as a surprise that she did not identify this audience more explicitly. However, as with the narrator, one could argue that if the *Urania* was primarily a performance text read out loud after it was first written, the actual presence of the audience would make such specification unnecessary. Moreover, given the *roman-à-clef* dimension of the romance, it seems much more exciting to recognise oneself or other people represented in a fictional tale than to be directly addressed by the narrator. Indeed, were the narrator to speak to a more concrete narratee or a variety of specified narratees, Wroth’s work would appear much more didactic in nature, and readers other than the ones represented by the narratee/s could less readily project themselves into the narratee position. Considering how the narrator shapes readers by indirection, an openly didactic work was obviously not what Wroth was interested in. Yet the narrator’s emotional involvement and the idea that one of the aims of storytelling is to move the audience clearly imply that Wroth’s text is supposed to fashion readers. This suggests that Wroth’s preference of such an indeterminate and hence inclusive narratee is not innocent. On the contrary, it is functional because it provides the necessary blank space for readers to occupy if they adopt the narrator’s model of critical sympathy for the work’s

²²⁷ Consider for example the discovery of Pamphilia’s love poems shut up in a closet (I.ii.320) or engraved on a tree (I.i.93-95), the revelation of Urania’s and Veralinda’s origin in a magic book (I.iii.455-456) or the disclosure of Forsandurus’ treachery (II.ii.386-389).

protagonists, and it counterbalances the potentially distancing effect of the numerous intradiegetic narratees in the *Urania* (cf. Genette 266).

For reasons of terminological clarity, I will continue to refer to the concept of the extradiegetic narratee in the singular. However, in view of the foregoing discussion I would suggest that this narratee should not be envisaged as an individual, but rather as an ideal sympathetic community of both sexes:²²⁸ a community that encompasses Wroth's first audience of family and friends insofar as it aspires to courteousness as an expression of its social standing,²²⁹ but a community, too, that readers outside the Sidney-Herbert clan can identify with if they share its ideals. Indeed, I would claim that readers who let themselves be drawn into Wroth's work are instructed in the ideals on which this sympathetic community is based, albeit by indirection since the narratee does not function as an active model that can be imitated. In the *Old Arcadia*, as Lamb shows, Sidney's narrator outlines his audience's attitude through asides, assuming the complicity, forgiveness and compassion of the "fair ladies" he addresses (*Gender and Authorship* 77-80). The *Urania* is more indirect since it is only by means of reflection on the behaviour of intradiegetic narratees that the ideal attitude of the extradiegetic narratee can be inferred, as the following analysis of Pamphilia's reactions to various characters' tales and speeches will illustrate.

The most significant characteristic of Pamphilia's reaction is the absence of any outspoken criticism, even if the extradiegetic narrator makes clear that she does not agree with the attitudes professed by another character. Thus, when her friend Antissia by mistake reveals that the grievances of a British lady that she supposedly relates are in fact her own, Pamphilia pretends not to notice and only smiles (I.ii.324). When Nereana questions her about

²²⁸ In *The Fabulous Dark Cloister*, Werth claims that in the *Urania* Wroth "proposes that [...] there exists the necessity of building a readerly community that might check and balance individual interpretation" (133). This conception of a plural audience and its active reception of stories comes close to my view of the extradiegetic narratee and also of the functioning of audiences within the romance.

²²⁹ See also Lamb's observation in "The Biopolitics of Romance" that high social standing of characters is revealed through their elaborate speech (170).

Steriamus' feelings for her, Pamphilia "blushed, both with modesty, and anger," but she covers these feelings with an exaggerated politeness that leaves Nereana "nettled" because she understands that Pamphilia disapproves of her behaviour but cannot "in her judgement finde fault openly with" Pamphilia's words (I.ii.194). When her brother Philarchos generalises about women, finally, Pamphilia clothes her criticism in irony and teases him that he hardly knows what he is talking about (II.i.125). In all three cases, Pamphilia allows her interlocutor to save face through her discreet reactions, even while expressing various degrees of criticism.

Pamphilia's attitude of discretion can also be observed in a number of situations where she chooses to be silent and only communicates through facial expression or speaks to herself. Antissia's accusation of falsehood, for example, enrages her "bloud" so much that it "boldly shewd it self in her face with thretning anger" (I.i.112). Yet, Pamphilia does not reprove Antissia verbally—with the result that Antissia misreads Pamphilia's "blush" as a sign of "guiltines" because "mistrust which is most times built upon falshood, gaines greatest assurance from the falsest grounds" (I.i.112), as the narrator judgingly remarks. When the seer and sage Melissea foretells Pamphilia's unhappiness in love, Pamphilia likewise remains silent and "onely sigh'd, and turnd her blushing face unto the window" (I.ii.190), thus hiding her feelings from the other protagonists. Similarly, she does not comment publicly on Limena's invented tale of an unhappy female lover, but "gave great attention to it, and the more because her last adventure, and this discourse did somewhat neere concurre, as ending in misfortune" (I.ii.229). Speaking to herself, Pamphilia draws conclusions for her own fate from Limena's story and sheds silent tears as the only outward expression of her affliction—tears, which Limena answers with her own silent tears to express her grief for Pamphilia's sorrow (I.ii.229). In all three instances, Pamphilia responds emotionally and bodily rather than verbally. However, these physical reactions are not ungoverned, even though they signal the

extent to which Pamphilia is affected. Pamphilia remains discreet and in control of herself, shielding her brother, for instance, when she does not respond to Antissia's false accusation or hiding her own sorrows from the world at large.

Apart from the attitude of discreet silence, the above examples also suggest three further qualities of good narratees: they should not be blinded by prejudice or their own feelings like Antissia, they should be attentive and apply what they hear to themselves like Pamphilia, and they should be sympathetic like Limena rather than nosy. The first point, articulated in the narrator's judgement of Antissia, is reminiscent of early modern preliminaries, which, recognising readers' power over a text's meaning, ask them not to approach the text in a biased manner (cf. Brayman Hackel 120-122), but "to perceive the 'best' meaning when confronted with multiple interpretations" (118), as Brayman Hackel puts it. Antissia's misreading thus provides another example of how Wroth shapes her readers by indirection: there is no need for a preliminary letter to the reader, it seems, if the "bad" reader is showcased in the text itself, proven wrong and duly criticised.²³⁰ Also the second and third quality of ideal narratees correspond largely to the presentation of "good" readers in early modern preliminaries. These argue for the educational value of texts on the one hand, thus encouraging readers to draw instruction for their own profit from them, and, on the other hand, they circumscribe the ideal reader as "gentle" and "understanding."

However, if ideal readers in the *Urania* are sympathetic, they need not be uncritical. In a scene of what could be described as supreme self-irony,²³¹ Wroth has Pamphilia throw away a book she is reading, which, portraying a loving lady left for another by her inconstant lover, functions as a material mise en abyme of Pamphilia's fate and the *Urania* itself. Pamphilia,

²³⁰ Werth argues that Antissia represents the stereotypical and endangered female reader posited by early modern attacks on romance, that is, a reader "who is incapable of disciplined reading and whose overly passionate, mimetic engagement with romance texts and conventions confirms antiromance clichés" (135) and results in "habitual misreading" (137).

²³¹ See also Hackett's discussion of the "instances [in which] Wroth participates in the disparagement of romance which was commonplace by the 1620s" (175) in *Women and Romance Fiction*. Two alternative and contrasting analyses of this scene are provided by Sanchez (135-136) and Werth (152).

who for once is happy and confident, criticises “storyes, and every writer” for misrepresenting love “according to their various fancies” (I.ii.317) and prefers her own experience of love to bookish authority. Although Pamphilia is subsequently proven wrong, her critical attitude and claim to authority are not criticised or ridiculed in any way by the narrator, suggesting that a “good” reader’s critical stance is legitimate. Indeed, the report of Antissia’s madness in the second part again presents Pamphilia as a critical narratee, whose reaction to the tale is both more sympathetic and more complex than that of other characters. When Antissius breaks out into a spiteful tirade against his aunt, Pamphilia points to his lack of courteousness with the remark “You are some thing curst [...] to your Aunte” (II.i.34). And while all the other protagonists only seem amused with regard to the content and pleased with the form of Rosindy’s report, Pamphilia is “nott satisfied with the story of Antissias misfortune” and of two minds, that is “griev’d for her beecause once her companion, otherwise considering the danger she wowl’d have had Amphilanthus in, Judicially judged itt butt a Just revenge and punushment on her” (II.i.40).²³² Pamphilia’s reactions in this instance are an example of applied courteousness and sympathy, but also proof of her discerning and critical mind. Typically, however, after she has inquired further into Antissia’s case, her last remark is an expression of pity: “‘Truly,’ sayd Pamphilia, ‘I lament for her’” (II.i.41).

Pamphilia’s complex response to Antissia’s case stands in marked contrast to her negative characterisation of echo, “who to each noise doth yeeld an equall grace” (I.ii.318). Echo, in this description, appears as the opposite of an ideal narratee. Although Urania praises echo at the beginning of the romance, she does so explicitly because in her situation, she experiences the reflection of her own sorrows as a compassionate response (I.i.2). In other cases, Pamphilia’s remark implies, echo’s uncritical response might be far less adequate and, above all, echo by definition lacks the discretion of remaining silent, as Pamphilia points out

²³² Pamphilia’s perception of Antissia’s madness as just punishment refers to the episode in which Antissia, out of revenge and jealousy for being forsaken by Amphilanthus, attempts to have Amphilanthus murdered by Antissius or Dolorindus (I.iii.356-358, 393-394).

(I.ii.318). Discretion, then, remains the foremost quality of an ideal narratee, and Pamphilia is not the only character in the *Urania* to practice it. Several critics have remarked on Dorolina's reaction to Pamphilia's tale of Lindamira, "which shee thought was some thing more exactly related then a fixion, yet her discretion taught her to be no Inquisitor" (I.iii.505).²³³ Likewise, Perissus' discreet silence has been noted when he recognises a cipher on a tree "yet because it was Pamphilias hee would not knowe it" (I.iii.490). But also the Queen of Naples makes proof of discretion when she tries to find out why Pamphilia is unhappy: "oft she was about to urge her, but againe she let it passe, purposing by circumstance rather then plaine dealing to worke it out of her, or by some other to gaine the knowledge" (I.iii.457). Thus, the Queen of Naples tries to avoid vexing Pamphilia and despite their intimacy does not confront her, preferring rather to discern the cause of her sorrow from circumstantial evidence or somebody else's report. Amphilanthus, too, chooses a strategy of indirection when, after having read her love poems, he taxes Pamphilia with feigning instead of asking her directly whether she is in love (I.ii.320). Such indirection, the text implies, is just as efficient in terms of communication as more explicit verbal interaction: Pamphilia admits to be in love, and rather than any explicit declaration of love it is her silence when Amphilanthus embraces her that reveals who she is in love with (I.ii.320).

Hackett proposes that this attitude of discretion and silence is the behaviour Wroth expected from her readers with regard to the text's allusions to real events and people ("Yet tell me some such fiction'" 62).²³⁴ My textual analysis supports and enlarges Hackett's claim. The discreet behaviour and courteousness of Wroth's intradiegetic narratees and fictional readers outline such courteous discretion as the most important characteristic of an ideal narratee and hence as the model attitude that readers who project themselves into the position

²³³ See for example Hackett *Women and Romance Fiction* (161-162) or Snook (155-167).

²³⁴ Hackett further contends that the scandal following the publication of the *Urania* shows that contemporary readers did not conform to this ideal attitude (62). My analysis of early modern readers' reactions to the *Urania* in "[A] story very well woorth readinge" complicates this assumption by Hackett, indicating that Denny's and Chamberlain's outspoken attacks on Wroth's work were not necessarily typical early modern reactions.

of the extradiegetic narratee should embrace—not only with regard to the *roman-à-clef* aspects of the *Urania* but with respect to the entire text. According to the *Urania*, an ideal narratee, and by extension an ideal reader, can thus be described as sympathetic, serious, discerning, critical and reticent, thereby quite closely resembling the “gentle” reader outlined in early modern preliminaries.

3.3 Narrative Levels and Strands

The attempt to shape one’s “gentle” reader via such models within the text as the extradiegetic narrator and narratee appears relatively straightforward—even if it is carried out in such an indirect and discreet way as is the case in the *Urania*—because it relies on mechanisms of identification, assessment and valorisation, as well as appealing to readers’ emotions. Yet, the reading of a text can also be influenced in what might be described as more mechanical ways through a work’s narrative structures and patterns. As has been outlined in the previous chapter, the romance genre, for example, favours a double movement: forward on the one hand, as adventure follows adventure, and backward or inward, on the other, since embedded narratives reveal more and more about the past or about the relations between individual characters and events. In other words, romance typically progresses by means of digression, and major concerns of the text are enriched because reflected or supplemented in interpolated stories. These structural particularities necessarily shape the reading practices of readers who are willing to engage with such a text, prompting them to pay attention both to the work’s episodic variety and its thematic reflection on overarching issues.

To some extent, the narrative structures of the *Urania* correspond to this general description of how romances demand to be read, but, as the discussion of its critical reception has shown, Wroth’s work has more often than not received negative criticism for its complex structure. This, I would argue, is due to Wroth’s handling of narrative levels and strands in her

romance, which no study of the *Urania* has analysed in detail so far. In what follows, I will therefore propose an extended analysis of how the *Urania* works structurally in order to outline in what ways it challenges readers and how its structures affect one's reading experience. A longer text passage situated at the beginning of the first book of part one (I.i.32-45) will serve to illustrate the work's frequent transitions between narrative levels,²³⁵ and an overview of the entire first book of part one will help to sketch Wroth's management of different narrative strands. The findings of these analyses will then allow me to trace the further structural development of the text in part one.

For the purpose of my analysis I will assume that the division of the first part into four books is on the whole authorial, perhaps with the exception of the ending of the fourth book.²³⁶ I am aware that such an assumption is somewhat problematic in view of the abrupt ending of the fourth book and the absence of any manuscript version of the first part that could throw light on this issue. As Fludernik points out, the division of texts into units like chapters or books was sometimes due to printers rather than authors and did not always serve a clear structuring purpose other than to reduce "the text into bite-sized pieces for the reader" (*Introduction* 24). However, an analysis of Wroth's handling of narrative levels and strands in the individual books renders the developments and changes of Wroth's structuring methods more easily visible and comparable, within the frame of the first part only as well as with regard to a comparison of the first and second part.²³⁷ Moreover, a book-by-book analysis also corresponds to the experience of both early modern and modern readers who, except possibly for Wroth's intimate friends and relatives, were/are necessarily confronted with the book structure of the published *Urania*.

²³⁵ For a detailed discussion of the same passage from a generic point of view see Orgis, "Telling Tales" (118-124).

²³⁶ See my remarks on this issue in section 2.2 "Early Modern Reading Practices" above.

²³⁷ The ending of book one of the manuscript continuation is of course authorial, but this need not imply that Wroth is also responsible for the book divisions of part one. It might just as well be that Wroth, referring to the continuation as "the secound part of the Countess of Mountgomeries Urania" (II.ii.190) and to the printed book as "the first parte of this history" (II.ii.301), took over the printer's practice of dividing the first part into books.

3.3.1 Narrative Levels

The *Urania* starts in *medias res* with the eponymous heroine lamenting her ignorance concerning her origin. Subsequently, Urania meets and is informed about several other protagonists of the romance, and the extract to be discussed begins when a number of these protagonists are brought together fortuitously in spite of, or rather thanks to, two encounters with pirates. Apart from Urania, whose identity as the sister of Amphilanthus is only suspected as yet, the protagonists in question are Parselius, one of Pamphilia's brothers, the two Albanian princes, Steriamus and Selarinus, and their sister Selarina. These characters are captured by the pirate Sandringal, who is in turn attacked and killed by a black knight from another pirate ship. The black knight turns out to be Leandrus, the prince of Achaea and a friend of Parselius. In the general reconciliation that follows, two fighting prisoners are discovered, one of whom is a Romanian called Allimarlus. He asks for permission to justify his fighting and starts telling of his adventures, which entails a transfer from the heterodiegetic extradiegetic narrator to a homodiegetic intradiegetic one.

Although the reason Allimarlus gives for becoming a narrator is his aim to justify his behaviour, he only addresses this issue at the very end of his narrative, or rather narratives in the plural. Instead, he continues the story of the misfortunes of the Romanian King and his children, Antissius and Antissia—the first part of which has been told to the protagonists earlier by the pirate Sandringal. Apart from relating the fate of the Romanian royal children and Antissia in particular, Allimarlus' narrative also includes two inset tales of characters that he has met during his search for Antissia, that is, these are embedded tales within an embedded tale, or put technically, they are on the hypo-hypodiegetic level of the text. The first is the story of an ex-Duke of Morea and the second the account of a servant concerning the abduction and rescue of the Romanian princess. When Allimarlus has finally charged his opponent with defamation and thus justified his attack, the extradiegetic narrator takes over

again and describes the punishment of the defamer. As soon as the punishment has been meted out, however, Allimarlus asks Leandrus to tell his own story, with the result that there is again a switch to a homodiegetic intradiegetic narrator, namely the Achaean prince Leandrus. Like Allimarlus, Leandrus relates his own adventures that have led to his capture by a pirate ship, and his tale contains an inset narrative, too, namely that of an unfortunate lover whom Leandrus had met at a wedding feast in Cephalonia during his own search for Antissia. Again, when Leandrus has finished, the extradiegetic narrator returns to the fore, and, after some information about Amphilanthus' whereabouts given by his squire, she relates how the group of princes and princesses sets sail for Italy.

The extract summarised above is in important respects typical of the way Wroth's text moves from one narrative level to another and introduces narrators on the different levels. However, it also contains some features, to be presented later on, that are less frequently found in the *Urania*. Schematically, the extract could be represented as follows:

Extradiegetic level	Intradiegetic level	Hypodiegetic level	Hypo-hypodiegetic level
The narrator	relates the fight between two men. One of them, Allimarlus, Allimarlus	relates the misfortunes of the Romanian royal family and his search for Antissia, during which he meets an ex-duke of Morea who relates Amphilanthus' rescue of Antissia from two servants. The surviving servant	relates the loss and restoration of his power. relates Antissia's abduction by two evil half-brothers.

The narrator	Allimarlus	relates his attempt to return to Romania, his capture and fight with another man.	relates the story of his tragic love.
	relates the punishment of Allimarlus' opponent. Upon Allimarlus' request, Leandrus	relates his search for Antissia. The unfortunate lover he encounters	
The narrator	Leandrus	relates the lover's death and his own subsequent shipwreck and capture by pirates.	
	relates the inquiries about Amphilanthus' whereabouts and the continuation of the characters' journey.		

fig. 2: Narrative Levels in the *Urania* (I.i.32-45)

The table above reveals two striking characteristics of the romance: the constant change of narrative levels and the narrative's inward orientation, that is, the embedding of stories within stories or, in technical terms, the movement towards the intradiegetic and hypodiegetic level. Within fifteen pages, one can count ten changes of narrative level, and in the same space six different narratives are told, one on the intradiegetic, two on the hypodiegetic and three on the hypo-hypodiegetic level.²³⁸ What is typical about this distribution of narrative activity is the exchange of information by way of narration that takes place between the characters on the intradiegetic level. Whenever protagonists meet other characters in the *Urania*, whether new characters or protagonists that have not been talked of for a while, they are very likely to relate their experiences and are often invited to do so. Hence, it is also typical that, as in this

²³⁸ The interrupted narratives of Allimarlus and Leandrus are for simplicity's sake counted as one narrative each, although one could argue that they should be counted as several smaller narratives since they treat widely different events.

extract, narrated events are frequently situated on the hypodiegetic level and told by characters rather than the extradiegetic narrator.

Indeed, one of the main functions of hypodiegetic tales is to fill in gaps on the intradiegetic level, that is to inform the characters in the romance, and indirectly the reader too, about past events. Many of the narratives on the hypodiegetic level therefore correspond to the first type of hypodiegetic narratives described by Genette, which maintain a relation of causality to the main narrative (242-243). However, there are also inset tales that illustrate the other two types of hypodiegetic narratives Genette mentions. Bellamira's story, told by herself, for example, is strongly reminiscent of Pamphilia's story told by the extradiegetic narrator. Thus, a relation of resemblance between the two narratives is established, the one reflecting on the other. Indeed, Bellamira's story comes close to a *mise en abyme*, differing only in some details from Pamphilia's experiences. In other cases, the resemblances between inset tales and intradiegetic narrative are not so great, but there is frequently a thematic relation between the two. Finally, some of the hypodiegetic narratives also conform to the third type mentioned by Genette; that is, they are narratives told for the sake of storytelling and to pass the time more agreeably, as for example in the third book of the first part, when Pamphilia tells the Queen of Naples the story and verse of Nicholarus to divert her (I.iii.366-371). Two further examples can be found in the second part, when Philarchos relates his adventures in the first book (II.i.117-131) "to pas the time in somm more pleasing delight then the continuall busy and undelightfull thing called busines" (II.i.117), or in the second book, when the four kings, Selarinus, Dolorindus, Claramundo and the king of Bulgaria, meet in a garden to tell each other their adventures (II.ii.245-250). In such communal situations stories are exchanged like gifts, so that one story generates another. It is therefore not surprising that after Rosindy's storytelling at the beginning of part two, the delighted Amphilanthus intends to tell a story of his own "in requitall" (II.i.36). In summary then, the purposes of

hypodiegetic tales in the *Urania* are to inform characters and readers, to mirror and contrast parallel narratives or to divert and reward an audience, and they are elicited by protagonists who ask other characters for news, for their personal stories or for true or fictional storytelling.

Telling one's own story is an important activity in the *Urania* and explains another typical feature of the passage in question, namely the preference of homodiegetic narrators over heterodiegetic ones, except on the extradiegetic level. In other words, although characters may relate events concerning other protagonists, they usually do so because they have witnessed or have been involved in these events. Moreover, the narration of other protagonists' adventures is frequently integrated into the characters' relation of their own stories, which means they are not only homodiegetic, but also autodiegetic narrators. This is generally true of independent characters that have their own story to tell,²³⁹ even for hypodiegetic narrators like, for example, the ex-Duke of Morea, whose story instead of being retold or summarised is literally quoted by Allimarlus in the ex-Duke's own words, thus turning the ex-Duke into yet another autodiegetic narrator.²⁴⁰ The characters in the *Urania* thus form a community of storytellers, and telling one's own story is at once an act of self-representation, of communication and a means of social and emotional interaction with others.²⁴¹

²³⁹ There are protagonists who at times act as heterodiegetic narrators. However, there are only two instances in which the stories told are truly unrelated to the characters themselves, namely when Pamphilia relates Nicholarus' courting of a lady mentioned above (I.iii.366-368) and when Limena tells Pamphilia the fictional tale of Alena (I.ii.226-229). Otherwise, the heterodiegetic tales told by protagonists either concern close friends or their beloved, and thus indirectly themselves, as for example when Procatus relates his friend's misfortunes (I.iv.515-517), or they turn out to be fictionalized accounts of the protagonists' own experiences, as in Antissia's account of the fate of a British lady (I.ii.322-324) and Pamphilia's tale of Lindamira (I.iii.499-502). With regard to the latter two accounts critics have commented on the narrators' seemingly inadvertent slips from third to first person narrative, revealing the actual intention of the characters in question to relate their own experiences without acknowledging them as such—a practice which a minor character in the romance calls “an ordinary course in such businesses” (I.iii.440). It has to be added that these slips are also noted by the characters' audience, who politely disregard them, however, in order not to disconcert the characters.

²⁴⁰ For a generic discussion of the ex-Duke's tale as an example of Wroth's use of the *roman-à-clef* mode, see Orgis, “Telling Tales” (121-122).

²⁴¹ It might be that this feature of the *Urania* to some extent reflects Wroth's experiences at the Jacobean court or, conversely, that it envisions an alternative community to that at court.

Regarded from a realistic point of view, Allimarus' ventriloquizing of the ex-Duke's story appears highly questionable and casts doubts on Allimarus' reliability as a narrator, despite his claim that among all of the ex-Duke's "adventures" his life-story is the "one I best remember" (I.i.34). However, in the romance itself Allimarus' reliability is not compromised in any way: neither the extradiegetic narrator nor the intradiegetic audience of Allimarus remark on the improbability of his capacity to report the ex-Duke's story verbatim in the first person. This technique of Wroth's—which can also be found in Montemayor's *Diana*,²⁴² but has no exact equivalent in Sidney's *Arcadia*,²⁴³ for example—creates the temporary illusion that the ex-Duke is present in the same way as the protagonists of the *Urania*, even though he never makes an appearance on the intradiegetic level. In other words, narration in the *Urania* is not fettered by concerns of verisimilitude that figure prominently and playfully in the prefaces of later novels like *Moll Flanders*, for instance. Moreover, through this special technique, the difference between the hypo- and the hypo-hypodiegetic level is minimised, or rather, the hierarchical relation between these levels, suggested by Genette's terminology, is in fact effaced. Thus readers are liable to forget the hierarchical relation between Allimarus' own story and that of the ex-Duke, experiencing them as a succession of stories rather than as a framing and a framed narrative because conjuring up the ex-Duke as a speaking presence gives his tale greater immediacy and hence counteracts the distancing effect of situating the story in a story within a story. Likewise, the temporal distance that logically exists between

²⁴² I am thankful to Mary Ellen Lamb for pointing this out to me and for suggesting that Wroth might have adopted this technique from continental romance.

²⁴³ Sidney's intradiegetic narrators never tell another character's story in the first person and there are no tales on the hypo-hypodiegetic level. The closest Sidney comes to Wroth's technique in the *Old Arcadia* is in the eclogues, when Histor recites Plangus' verse complaint with Boulon's replies (OA 129-134), "varying his voice according to the diversity of the persons" (OA 129). In the *New Arcadia*, Sidney makes use of letters to introduce the voice of absent characters, as for example in the case of Philanax's letter to Basilius (NA 80-82). The only passage that seems in certain ways comparable to Wroth's practice occurs when Musidorus reports his wooing of Pamela to Pyrocles, thereby citing his own speeches and those of Pamela and Mopsa, as well as quoting his narration of his own fortunes (NA 221-234). Contrary to the example from the *Urania* however, Musidorus is here quoting his own earlier speech rather than another character's, which seems less problematic in terms of reliability although it still appears awkward from a realistic viewpoint that Musidorus' set speeches are recounted verbatim to Pyrocles and thus indirectly addressed to him.

the ex-Duke's tale and that of Allimarlus goes unnoticed because with the introduction of the ex-Duke's story in the first person, Wroth needs have no recourse to the past perfect, which in a third person narration of the ex-Duke's experiences would have indicated their anteriority at least in the initial introductory sentences.²⁴⁴

Making the ex-Duke an autodiegetic narrator thus has considerable narratological effects, but it can also be read as an indication of his tale's intrinsic worth as a story. Allimarlus explicitly comments that the tale is "in truth worthy of note" (I.i.34), and it seems no coincidence that the only hypodiegetic narrator who does not relate his own story is a servant (I.i.38-39). Minor functional characters, that is, squires or servants, do not have the privilege of relating their own adventures. Instead, their main function is to inform the characters they are met by, as well as the reader, about other protagonists. A comparison between Allimarlus' narrative and that of the servant he meets illustrates this point: Allimarlus recounts meeting Amphilanthus and witnessing his rescue of Antissia, thus providing his audience with information about two protagonists, but he does so by integrating these events into the narrative of his own search for Antissia. The servant on the other hand, although a homodiegetic narrator as well, functions only as a witness to the evil deeds of his master and is not at the centre of his account.

The preference of homo- and especially autodiegetic narrators over heterodiegetic ones on the intra- and hypodiegetic levels influences the effect that the narrated events produce on the fictional audience and by extension the reader. Because the narrators have personally experienced the adventures they relate, they appear more emotionally involved when retelling them, which, as in the ex-Duke's case, gives their first person accounts an aspect of greater immediacy. Emotional comments of narrators, as for example professions of sympathy, pity

²⁴⁴ Wroth only uses one past perfect form in Allimarlus' introduction of the story when he states that "we thus continued, the old man [i.e. the ex-Duke] passing away the time with good discourse, which made the way seeme shorter, telling me many adventures which had befallne him in his youth, having led the life that most brave spirits use" (I.i.34). For a discussion of the frequency and use of the past perfect in early modern narratives in general and Aphra Behn in particular, see Fludernik *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (132-147).

or joy, appear more authentic, and the impact of the narratives on the audience is more direct. Put differently, intradiegetic narrators appear more subjective, which also means however that, due to their limited horizon and personal involvement, they are to some extent less authoritative than the extradiegetic omniscient narrator. Their stories then, can also be taken as exempla that are potentially subject to debate among (aural) readers.²⁴⁵ The analyses of the extradiegetic narrator and narratee of the *Urania* have shown how Wroth attempts to elicit active critical and compassionate responses from her readers. The introduction of a multitude of autodiegetic narrators on the intradiegetic level further supports this endeavour to create a sense of immediacy and to stimulate readers intellectually and emotionally.

On a stylistical level, Wroth's frequent and extended use of direct speech also creates an impression of immediacy. While indirect discourse is relatively seldom and free indirect discourse only rarely found,²⁴⁶ Wroth's romance abounds with direct discourse in the form of inset tales or also extended conversations. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the one from the other, which is yet another typical characteristic of the *Urania* that can be illustrated by the extract under discussion. Consider the following account of Amphilanthus' whereabouts and activities given by Amphilanthus' squire to the company assembled on the pirate ship:

"I parted from him in a great storme, having been in Germany sent thither with an army from the Pope to assist the Emperour against the Duke of Saxony, who was slaine by his hand, and for this act was by the Emperour and the other Princes made King of the Romans, having protected the Empire against such an enemy; since till now never having heard newes of him: but he ment to seeke still for you [Parselius], and therefore left Germany, and in the Meditteran sea, my selfe, ship, and all my Lords treasure was taken by this Pirat, whom your [Parselius'] valour hath destroyed." (I.i.45)

²⁴⁵ For a discussion of the *Urania* in the context of literary salons or circles see Campbell, "'Foolish Sport,' 'Delightful Games,' and 'Sweet Discourse': Intertextuality and the Inscription of Literary Circle Ritual in Sidney's *Arcadia*, Wroth's *Urania*, and Weamys's *Continuation of the Arcadia*." Campbell observes that "Sidney, Wroth, and Weamys write stories that prolong the dialogic play of the salons" (64) and discusses especially the tradition of the *questioni d'amore* and what she sees as "Wroth's engagement with issues from the *querelle*" (81), i.e. the "controversy over women" (66).

²⁴⁶ A telling example of indirect discourse is Polarchos' account of Amphilanthus' loss (I.iv.582-583), which suddenly moves from indirect discourse into direct discourse without any warning. With regard to free indirect discourse, Fludernik observes that although it can be found more often from the fifteenth century on, "until Aphra Behn and, later, the eighteenth-century novel, free indirect discourse is used primarily as a means to represent spoken utterances" (*Introduction* 113) rather than thoughts.

According to Rimmon-Kenan's proposal that "narratives usually consist of more than one" event (3), i.e. of "a *succession* of events" (2, italics in the original), the squire's account can be classified as a narrative of its own. There are clearly several events succeeding each other, namely the Pope's sending of Amphilanthus to Germany, Amphilanthus' help in the Emperor's fight against the Duke of Saxony, his being named King of the Romans, his search for Parselius, his being lost in a storm and the squire's capture by pirates. Thus, strictly adhering to Rimmon-Kenan's narratological definition, one would have to add the squire to the list of intradiegetic narrators and consider his information as yet another hypodiegetic tale. On the other hand, one can also argue that the squire is involved in a conversation, giving an explanation that consists of various elements rather than acting as a true storyteller. The problem of classification is obvious: if one decides to regard the squire as a narrator in the same way that Allimarlus and Leandrus figure as narrators in the discussed extract, the narrative structure of the romance becomes even more complex since such mini-narratives are frequent in conversations between characters. By classifying such explanations like the squire's as a reply in a conversation, however, one does not quite do justice to the clearly narrative nature of the explanation. All in all, it is probably more practical to treat such mini-narratives in the frame of conversations, while noting that conversations in the *Urania* very frequently tend to develop into acts of narration, be they short as in the case of the squire or extended as in those of Allimarlus and Leandrus.

To recapitulate, the typical characteristics of the extract discussed so far are the great importance of intradiegetic narrators in the *Urania*, the preference of homodiegetic and especially autodiegetic narrators over heterodiegetic ones regardless of any concerns of verisimilitude, the frequent use of direct discourse and the tendency of conversations to turn into smaller or larger narratives. As has been mentioned above, such extended conversations or inset narratives were not set off typographically in the 1621 publication, which contains no

quotation marks and whose paragraphs often do not coincide with changes of narrative level. Instead, the change of narrative level is marked within the text, and the importance of the extradiegetic narrator to smooth over such transitions has already been discussed. However, it is not only the main narrator that provides signposts to indicate a change of narrative level. The intra- and hypodiegetic narrators provide similar guidance for the reader, especially with regard to changes from the hypo- back to the intradiegetic level or between the hypo- and the hypo-hypodiegetic level. Just as the extradiegetic narrator announces Allimarlus' story with the words "while the other began his story thus" (I.i.32), Allimarlus introduces the hypo-hypodiegetic tale of the ex-Duke as "(being his owne story, the place where we then were producing it), it was this, and in truth worthy of note" (I.i.34). And, like the narrator, too, Allimarlus inserts a clarifying "said he" when the ex-Duke begins with the words "'Whatsoever I now, faire Knight,' said he, 'appeare to be, know I am in birth quite contrary'" (I.i.34).

Sometimes, not only the beginning of hypo- or hypodiegetic tales is signalled, but also the ending of the inset narratives is marked—both on the level of the framed narrative and/or on the level of the framing narrative. Consider for instance the ending of Allimarlus' narrative:

but to put mee quite out of patience, hee [Allimarlus' opponent] went on, giving vilder, and more curst speeches of my owne Lord: this made mee strike him, and so wee fell together so close, as one or both had dyed for it, had not the company parted us; and after wee had againe gon to it, but that this ship came and tooke us, and so made us Prisoners to save our lives. But now Sirs, if you doe not justice, you wrong your selves, in not revenging so great an injurie done to the bravest Princes. (I.i.40)

The most striking indication in the text that Allimarlus has finished his account is certainly his move from narration in the past to the direct address "But now Sirs" in the present, with the words "But" and "now" emphasising the transition and preparing the reader for Parselius' reply. In addition, the concluding "and so" and the paradoxical statement "made us Prisoners to save our lives" give further closure to Allimarlus' inset tale. Hence, there is no need for any

explicit comment of the extradiegetic narrator that Allimarlus' narrative has ended, and the text continues directly with the words "Parselius replide" (I.i.40).

In the case of the servant's story embedded within Allimarlus' narrative, the transition from the hypo-hypodiegetic level back to the hypodiegetic level is signalled on both levels, i.e. by the servant at the end of his tale and by Allimarlus when he takes over again:

Then grew a strife for the first enjoying of her, so farre it proceeded, as from words they fell to blowes, and so in short time to this conclusion: for they fighting, wee [servants] following our Masters example, followed them in death likewise all but my self, and I now at your mercy. He had but concluded his storie, when I pulling of my helmet, kneeling downe to the Princesse, told her who I was [...]. (I.i.32 F)

The move from the hypo-hypo- to the hypodiegetic level is potentially more confusing for (aural) readers because in both cases the narrators are homodiegetic narrators so that there is no switch from first to third person narration. It is thus helpful that in addition to the servant's use of the word "conclusion" and his formulaic ending "and I now at your mercy,"²⁴⁷ Allimarlus also signposts the ending of the servant's account with the words "He had but concluded his storie." This phrase effectively replaces the missing quotation marks and paragraph break in the 1621 publication, differentiating the servant's "I" from that of Allimarlus and clarifying the temporal relation between the framed and the framing story.

In contrast to these typical aspects, there are also a few less typical ones that can be found in the extract, the first of which is the frequency of hypodiegetic narrators and thus hypo-hypodiegetic tales. In fact, the three hypo-hypodiegetic tales mentioned here are the only ones of their kind in the first book of the first part, and an analysis of the subsequent books reveals that hypo-hypodiegetic tales are very rare indeed.²⁴⁸ This means that, contrary to the impression given by the table above, the bulk of the narrated action takes place on the

²⁴⁷ These final words of the servant are typical insofar as narrators of inset stories often conclude their narratives by referring to themselves, to the consequences of their story and/or to the present situation. Compare for example the ending of Limena's account of her suffering, "and here have you now your faithfull Love Limena" (I.i.88), which recalls her own name, includes the "now" also used by the servant and expresses the same gesture of handing over to a "you" as the servant's conclusion.

²⁴⁸ Overall, there are eight hypo-hypodiegetic tales and they are distributed over the whole of the romance as follows: three in I.i. and I.ii., and one each in I.iv. and II.i.

intradiegetic and hypodiegetic level. What is also rather untypical is the relative length of Allimarus' and Leandrus' stories and the fact that they tell their adventures directly after each other. Allimarus' narrative for instance lasts for about four pages if one does not count the hypo-hypodiegetic tales it contains and Leandrus' narrative spans about three pages without the inset lover's tale. Although there are hypodiegetic narratives that are longer than the ones mentioned, the longest ones amounting to nearly ten pages, this is seldom the case.²⁴⁹ More often, such narratives are even shorter than those of Allimarus and Leandrus, namely only one or two pages. This difference in length and also the contiguity of Allimarus' and Leandrus' embedded tales can be explained by the location of the extract near the beginning of the romance. Since the *Urania* starts *in medias res*, readers need to be informed about various characters and their history. This is achieved by way of storytelling, i.e. through extended analepses, rather than through narratorial comments, which explains why characters turn into intradiegetic narrators very frequently at the beginning of the romance. Once readers know the protagonists and have witnessed some of their adventures, so to speak, there is less need for such information in the form of embedded tales. Thus, whereas in the chosen extract two new characters, Allimarus and Leandrus, both have to introduce themselves and their concerns, it is more usual in the *Urania* to have one protagonist who is known meet a new character who then tells her/his story, so that there is only one hypodiegetic narrative at a time.

As a result, hypodiegetic narratives are generally separated from each other by some events or adventures narrated on the intradiegetic level, unless the inset stories have an immediate relation to each other, such as the one being the continuation or the counterpart of the other. These stretches of intradiegetic narrative intervening between hypodiegetic tales are

²⁴⁹ Moreover, such long narratives can be split up into individual shorter parts by conversations. Perissus' exceptionally long hypodiegetic narrative of about twelve pages (I.i.4-18) at the beginning of the *Urania*, for instance, is interrupted twice by conversations between him and Urania (I.i.11, 14-16). Another example of a long inset narrative that is interrupted more than once is Philarchos' in the second part (II.i.117-131).

not regular and vary from one page to twenty or more. Yet, despite this variation, the recurring switch of narrative levels takes on an apparent regularity, contributing to the romance's rhythmical structure. Indeed, the frequency and length of hypodiegetic narratives have a considerable influence on the narrative speed as perceived by the reader. The more frequent and longer these retrospective inset tales are, the more slowly the narrative on the intradiegetic level seems to advance. If such inset tales are absent, on the other hand, the progress of the intradiegetic narrative appears to be faster. Hence, hypodiegetic narratives are of structural importance in the *Urania* also apart from their immediate functions since they affect the rhythm and speed of the narrative.

A final narratological aspect important to the romance but missing in the extract under discussion is the switch from one narrative strand to another. The moving back and forth between narrative strands is caused by the fact that the protagonists set out on adventures either in small groups or on their own, thus making it impossible for the extradiegetic narrator to relate all their adventures at the same time. Consequently, the narrative "moves," in Salzman's words, from protagonist to protagonist, as the characters keep on meeting and leaving each other. Referring back to the analysed extract, there is no such switch to another narrative strand because at the beginning of the romance, a first set of protagonists are introduced as they meet each other. Shortly after the passage, however, the characters that appear in the extract happen upon the first enchantment in the romance, called the Throne of Love, which causes the company to split up and thereby initiates the interlace structure mentioned by Salzman. The focus of the narrative is no longer Urania, who remains enchanted in Cyprus for the rest of the first book; instead it switches to Parselius and later to other protagonists. Wroth's handling of this complex method of narration and the impact of interlacing narrative strands on the narrative structure of the *Urania*—and hence one's reading experience of the text—is the focus of the following section.

3.3.2 Narrative Strands

As explained above, the presence of several narrative strands is due to the multitude of characters whose adventures are narrated. Because the protagonists do not always remain together and experience the same events, the narrator necessarily has to take turns to relate what happens to the protagonists. This means that some characters are left waiting somewhere, as for example Urania when she is enchanted in the Throne of Love.²⁵⁰ Others are left wandering about without being mentioned for a long time until they are met again by other protagonists. Consequently, readers have to remember the stories of these temporarily absent characters in addition to all the events of the narrative strand they are following at that moment because they know that the absent characters will in time make their reappearance either as the focus of a narrative strand or as characters met by other protagonists. This task is complicated by the fact that the adventures of the protagonists parallel each other, with the result that there are always both resemblances and differences between the individual protagonists' experiences.²⁵¹

The sheer multitude of characters as well as of narrators in the *Urania* is indeed a challenge for readers, as Salzman noted (*English* 141). Yet, whether it indeed results in the text's becoming "increasingly fragmented" due to the lack of "a firm structure" (141), as Salzman claims, remains to be seen. What is certainly true is that the repeated interruption of the various narrative strands diminishes the sense of moving towards a definite goal. Even if the various strands actually progress toward such long-term goals as the breaking of enchantments and marriage, both short- and long-term goals announced by the narrative are continually deferred due to the interlacement structure of the text. Or, if these goals are

²⁵⁰ The reverse could be argued as well, i.e. that a transition to another narrative strand is requisite because the previous narrative focus has been immobilised for a certain reason. However, this only holds true in some cases, and the majority of transitions are not thus motivated.

²⁵¹ It should be noted that the inset tales obviously add yet another level of reflection to the already existing resemblances and differences between the protagonists' adventures. Yet, whereas the protagonists are recurring characters and should be distinguished by the reader, the narrators of hypo- and hypo-hypodiegetic tales need not necessarily be remembered, unlike their stories, of course, since, for the most part, they appear once only.

reached by certain protagonists, something is sure to have happened in another narrative strand that forces all the important characters to continue their travels and to pursue a new goal. At the beginning of the third book, for example, the princes have virtually all found a princess and freed Albania as planned in the first book so that nothing remains to be done but to return to Morea to get married, it seems. However, in the meantime, the Princesses have decided to go boating on the sea (I.iii.371) and as a result have been imprisoned in “as magnificent a Theater, as Art could frame” (I.iii.373), that is, in the enchantment called the Theatre of Love. Thus, the interlace of narrative strands is responsible for continually producing further loose ends that lead characters on and require readers to remember different protagonists’ whereabouts and aims.

Yet, this task is not quite as difficult as it may seem thanks to certain devices Wroth employs, such as the introduction of conversations or storytelling between characters and the explanations of the extradiegetic narrator. These devices are often used to remind readers of previous events or important facts. Moreover, while reading the *Urania*, readers soon discover that there often seem to be blanks in the various characters’ stories that are not filled in retrospectively. Perissus, for instance, who is seen leaving to search for Limena at the beginning of the romance (I.i.18), suddenly reappears almost seventy pages later when Limena is freed by Parselius without there being any information about what has happened to him in the meantime (I.i.85). As will be discussed in the next section, the temporal dimensions of the romance remain often vague and result in uncertain temporal relations between events that happen in two different narrative strands. As a consequence, such blanks do not seem problematic in the text. In fact, when there is a change from one narrative strand to another, time often virtually stands still for the protagonists that are absent from the new narrative strand. Sometimes this is rendered plausible by their being imprisoned or enchanted,

but there are also genuine blanks in the romance, which means that the amount of information readers have to remember is not quite as large as the interlace technique might suggest.

Still it is a challenge to keep track of so many characters at once, and Salzman's remark about the absence of a "firm structure" in the *Urania* needs to be discussed. In order to do so, I have provided a detailed overview of the first book of the first part, which illustrates the number and recurrence of narrative strands, indicating the protagonists who are the focus of each narrative strand on the intradiegetic level, as well as the characters that turn into intradiegetic and hypodiegetic narrators. As mentioned above, I use the term focus to designate the protagonist or group of protagonists whose adventures constitute the narrative strand in question. This does not mean that only the protagonist, or protagonists, who are the focus of the strand are present in the narrative or that they only encounter minor characters. In fact, a narrative strand focusing on one protagonist may feature other protagonists as well, but their movements are not followed by the narrative; they only appear when they meet or interact with the protagonist who is the focus of this particular narrative strand. Thus *Urania*, the first narrative focus, is joined by more and more protagonists like Perissus and Parselius, for instance. But when Perissus leaves her, his adventures are not followed because the text stays with *Urania*, who remains the narrative focus until she becomes enthralled in the Throne of Love enchantment. Once *Urania* is immobilised, there is a transition to a new narrative strand focusing on Parselius, as the table indicates:

First Book of the First Part

Intradiegetic Level: Focus of narrative strands	Intradiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators	Hypodiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators
Urania (I.i.1-50)	- Perissus (I.i.5-14, 16-18) - Urania (I.i.22-22) - Parselius (I.i.23-24) - King of Albania (I.i.24-25) - Sandrigall (I.i.29-31) - Allimarlus (I.i.32-34, 37-38, 39-40) - Leandrus (I.i.41-43, 44-45)	- Ex-Duke of Morea (I.i.34-37) - Servant of an evil half-brother (I.i.38-39) - Unfortunate Lover from Cephalonia (I.i.43-43)
Parselius (I.i.50-60)	- Seleucius (I.i.51-58)	
Amphilanthus (I.i.60-81)	- Steriamus (I.i.67-70) - Romanian Captain (I.i.71-75) - Ollorandus (I.i.78-80)	
Parselius (I.i.81-90)	- Limena (I.i.87-88)	
Pamphilia (I.i.90-101)		
Leandrus (I.i.101-107)	- Clarimatto (I.i.103-104)	
Rosindy (I.i.107-123)	- Rosindy (I.i.108-111) - False King of Negroponte/Lord of Sio (I.i.117-119)	
Parselius (I.i.123-128)		
Amphilanthus (I.i.128-142)	- Nainio (I.i.137-138)	
Pamphilia (I.i.142-149)		
Parselius (I.i.150-154)	- Parselius (I.i.152-154)	
Rosindy (I.i.154-160)		
Amphilanthus (I.i.160-174)		

fig. 3: I.i. Overview: Narrative Strands, Intra- and Hypodiegetic Narrators

Looking at this table, the first thing that becomes noticeable is the above-mentioned frequency of inset narratives at the beginning of the romance. In contrast to this multitude of

hypo- and hypo-hypodiegetic narratives, however, one notes that they are all situated on the same narrative strand that opens the romance and focuses on its eponymous heroine. There seems to be a certain balance between the frequency of moves from one narrative level to another and from one narrative strand to another. Whereas the first fifty pages of the book contain half of all of the changes of narrative levels, there is no change of narrative strand. The rest of the book on the other hand contains half as many inset tales compared to its length of roughly 120 pages, but frequent moves between different narrative strands. Wroth has thus limited the complexity of her text by reducing the number of transitions between either narrative levels or strands, so that these two potentially problematic aspects are kept in balance.

The second point rendered obvious by the table is that although there are twelve transitions between narrative strands within the book, there are in fact only six different strands that compose the first book. This in itself is not surprising since the technique of interlace consists of interweaving the stories of various protagonists, which means that the same narrative strands appear repeatedly. What comes as a surprise, however, is the relatively small number of different narrative strands when compared to the large number of characters introduced in the first book only. Again, it seems that Wroth, by restricting the number of strands to six, counteracts the confusion that might otherwise result from the proliferation of characters within the romance. Moreover, all the protagonists who, in their turn, become the focus of a narrative strand are introduced beforehand, with the exception of *Urania*, of course. In other words, before any character in the *Urania* becomes a focal point, s/he is introduced on the diegetic level or sometimes even relates her/his previous adventures in the form of a hypodiegetic narrative, as is the case of *Parselius* and *Leandrus*, for example.

A comparison of the length of the passages focusing on one protagonist reveals the absence of any regularity in this respect, the passages ranging from four or five pages to

twenty or more. The first narrative strand concentrating on Urania appears to be an exception with regard to its length, due to its position at the very beginning of the romance and the large number of inset tales it contains, as discussed earlier. The more usual length of passages focusing on the same protagonist/s seems to lie between four and twenty pages. It is worth noting that Amphilanthus' narrative strands are longer than those of other protagonists, with the result that he is the focus of just as much text as Urania. This suggests two important, if perhaps logical, points with regard to the structure of the romance. Firstly, the textual space accorded to the narrative strand of individual characters reflects their relative importance in the *Urania*. Thus, in the first book, virtually two thirds of the text deal with the fates of Urania and Amphilanthus, who, together with Pamphilia, are the most important characters in the romance. However, textual space can also mean number of appearances, as in the case of Parselius, who is an important character in the first book and is followed four times, even though only for shorter stretches of text at a time. Secondly, the fact that a character is the focus of a narrative strand turns her/him into a recurring protagonist, as opposed to the many characters who appear only once in the romance to relate their adventures or troubles in the form of a hypodiegetic narrative. Thus, the presence of narrative strands foregrounding various characters automatically directs readers' attention to the important characters and thereby shapes the text. Hence, the numerous narrative strands are not only a source of complexity and possibly confusion, but are also an important means to structure the romance.

A comparison of the first book with the other books of the first part shows that the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the table generally hold true for the second and third books, but not for the fourth book, which contains a number of structural peculiarities that will be discussed below. As in the first book, there appears to be a balance between the number of transitions between narrative levels and strands in the second and third books. In fact, the number of changes from one narrative strand to another and also the number of

protagonists serving as the focus of narrative strands increase from one book to the next, culminating in thirty-two transitions between strands within the third book. The number of hypo- and hypo-hypodiegetic narratives on the other hand decreases from seventeen in the first to thirteen in the third book.²⁵² This can be explained by the fact that the romance introduces more and more characters who play an important role in the text, with the result that there are more protagonists whose adventures have to be accounted for.²⁵³

However, the increase of different narrative strands is not exponential—on the contrary, there is surprisingly little variation concerning the number of new narrative strands introduced in books one to three. In the first book there are six different protagonists on whom the narrative focuses, in the second book seven new characters are added to these, and in the third book there are eight more protagonists who become the focus of narrative strands. In all the cases, the characters who become the focal point of a narrative strand have been introduced at least briefly earlier on, as for example Leonius, who is mentioned twice as resembling Urania (I.i.24, 170) and is seen departing in search of his sister and cousins (I.iii.376) before he later becomes an important focus of the narrative in the third book. Other new focuses of narrative strands are even much better known to the reader, as Perissus for instance, who is in fact the second character that appears in the *Urania*, but whose movements only start to be followed in their own right in the third book. It seems, then, as though with each book, Wroth deliberately augments the structural complexity of her text, and hence the challenge with which readers are confronted. On the other hand, one can argue that the increasing complexity is counterbalanced by the circumstance that readers' knowledge of the events, characters and relations increases as well the longer they read. Therefore, although it is understandable why

²⁵² For statistical information about the number of narrative strands and hypodiegetic narratives per book see the overviews of the other books in the appendix.

²⁵³ Yet another explanation for the balance between the number of transitions between narrative strands and narrative levels would be to argue that Wroth is not so much interested in a structural balance, but approaches the problem from the point of view of content, limiting the number of stories rather than the structural complexity. If one aim of a romance is to provide the reader with diversity, it is obvious that the more protagonists there are on the intradiegetic level between whose stories the extradiegetic narrator can move back and forth, the fewer inset stories are necessary to supply the wished for variety.

Salzman claims that “the reader is hard pressed to keep track of” the “characters and stories” (*English* 141), the proliferation of “characters and stories” is in fact neither random nor chaotic.

Still, even if detailed analysis reveals that there are underlying structures that counteract the danger of getting lost among the multitude of characters, the romance does appear “fragmented” (141), as Salzman states, which is probably due both to the frequency of transitions between narrative strands and, related to this, the relative brevity of the passages in between these transitions. Given that all the books in the first part are approximately the same length,²⁵⁴ it is obvious that with an increasing number of moves between narrative strands, the passages focusing on one or a group of protagonists generally become shorter. As a result, the reader has the impression that the speed of narration is accelerated, especially since there are fewer delaying moments, that is, retrospective hypodiegetic tales. The third book in particular is marked by this fragmentation of the narrative, which stands in opposition to the near equilibrium reached at the end of the book with the marriage of all the protagonists except Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, for whom too there is hope of a reunion.

This opposition between a narrative technique of fragmentation and the macrostructural plot development is already present in the first book although less acutely so. Both the first and the third book achieve partial closure thanks to the two enchantments,²⁵⁵ the Throne of Love and the Theatre of Love, which initiate a plot structure of convergence as more and more protagonists travel to the site of the enchantment and remain there until its resolution.²⁵⁶ As Fludernik observes, “Key points in the plot are reached when characters travel from one location to another, or converge in one place; in so doing they bring the separate plot strands

²⁵⁴ I.i.: 174 pages, I.ii.: 164 pages, I.iii.: 167 pages, I.iv.: 155 pages.

²⁵⁵ In this respect, the first and third book of the *Urania* structurally resemble books of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, in which closure is also achieved by the resolution of an enchantment, as for example Guyon’s destruction of the Bower of Bliss at the end of the second or Britomart’s release of Amoret at the end of the third book. In both works, the enchantments function as tests for the protagonists and have strongly symbolic and allegoric features, but rather than signifying final closure, they end episodes or stages that the protagonists have to overcome.

²⁵⁶ Salzman makes a similar observation when he states that magic “is used as a plot device in order to gather characters together and then scatter them again” (*English* 143).

together” (*Introduction* 44). This clearly applies to the *Urania*, where the breaking of the enchantment in the first book coincides with the reunion of family members and friends and in the third book leads to the reunion of the couples of lovers. The second book likewise initiates a structure of convergence with the war in Albania,²⁵⁷ but this is far less inclusive and prominent because it does not involve the female characters and the movement of convergence only begins towards the end of the second book and overlaps with the beginning of the third book. Moreover, the reunion of the male characters is short-lived and dissolves instantly once the female protagonists are enchanted in the Theatre of Love.

The first three books are thus all to some extent marked by overarching plots of convergence and reunion, which counterpoint the increasingly fragmented textual level of the narrative. The two trends, convergence versus fragmentation, necessarily inform each other so that one might describe the fragmentation of Wroth’s text as oriented towards a goal while at the same time calling into question the closure promised by the converging plot structure. These structural characteristics clearly place the *Urania* in the romance tradition, combining the goal-oriented quest structure with seemingly endless labyrinthine digression. It comes as no surprise then that none of the reunions in the first three books truly achieve closure. In the Throne of Love, a considerable number of protagonists fail to turn up at the enchantment, as they are left stranded somewhere else by the narrative, like Parselius or Steriamus for example. In the second and third book, the newly emerging couples are separated first by the war in Albania and then by the Theatre of Love. After the breaking of this second enchantment, a sudden equilibrium seems reached with the marriage of many couples towards the end of the third book. Yet, as mentioned above, the Theatre of Love fails to unite the most important couple of the romance, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, so that the overarching plot of reunion is again undone by textual fragmentation.

²⁵⁷ The war in Albania is in fact one of the first long-time goals announced in the *Urania* since Parselius at the very beginning of the romance promises the old King of Albania to help restore Steriamus to the throne (I.i.25) and later obtains support for the project from his father, the King of Morea (I.i.68).

Indeed, the very suddenness of the couples' marriages and the off-hand way in which they are announced and summarised by the narrator (I.iii.488-489) warns readers that these festivities constitute a background event to set off Pamphilia's sorrows rather than a climactic moment in the narrative. In other words, the ending of the third book frustrates the promise of closure that the Theatre of Love enchantment seems to offer and instead leads readers to expect a more satisfying resolution in the fourth book. This book, the last of the published first part of the romance, differs markedly from the others in terms of Wroth's handling of narrative strands—and by implication the danger of fragmentation—as the following analysis will show.

In contrast to the second and third books, the fourth book contains fewer transitions between narrative strands although there are still more than in the first book. Thus, one could expect the narrative complexity to decrease again, but this development is counteracted by two new difficulties. First, most narrative strands focus on couples or groups of characters, with at least one character among them who serves as a focal point for the first time. Second, unlike in previous books, about a third of these new focal points of narrative strands have at most been mentioned once, but not been properly introduced beforehand in the *Urania*. Moreover, these five characters that the reader meets in the fourth book for the first time are clearly secondary characters since they do not appear again in the continuation of the romance, and three of them are not even of royal origin. As a matter of fact, except Bellamira, who is not of royal descent, but an important recurring character because her story serves as a mirror image of Pamphilia's, these three noble characters, Peryneus, the Duke of Bavaria, the Duke of Florence and the Duke of Savoy, are, together with the Cauterino, the Duke of Brunswick and Dorileus, the Duke of Wertenberg, the only characters not of royal blood who become the focus of narrative strands. Consequently, the fourth book already differs in two important points from the previous ones. The first is the distribution of the intradiegetic

narrative on a maximum of different characters, with only Pamphilia and Amphilanthus as recurring protagonists, and the second the introduction of minor and hitherto unknown characters that serve as a narrative focus.

Yet, there is a further noteworthy difference between the fourth book and the first three. While there is only one hypo-hypodiegetic tale, which is not unusual, there are more hypodiegetic tales than in any other book—more even than in the first book with its comparatively small number of moves between narrative strands. All of these hypodiegetic narratives are related by different characters, which results in a maximum of diversity with regard to intradiegetic narrators. This is all the more so because, contrary to the other books, only one character figures both as the focus of a narrative strand and as an intradiegetic narrator. Hence, the fourth book breaks with the structural similarities between the first three books and confronts the reader with more new narrative focuses and intradiegetic narrators than any previous book.

Thanks to a new type of overarching plot structure, these structural differences result neither in complete fragmentation nor in chaos, as one might expect. In contrast to the other books, a clearly visible and rather rigid structure underlies the fourth book and shapes the narrative, keeping the proliferation in check. This structure could be described as a double fan structure, that is, a reversal of the movements of reunion present in the first and third book. Instead of having numerous characters converge in one geographical point, the fourth book is shaped by two subsequent fan-like outward movements from a centre.²⁵⁸ Moreover, these two fan structures are framed by the appearance of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, who are present at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the book.

The beginning of the book foreshadows a final reunion of the two protagonists but moves into the first fan structure before the tension is resolved. The first fan structure consists of the

²⁵⁸ See also the discussion of the protagonists' geographic displacements in section 3.4.2 "Settings and Spatial Displacements" below.

homeward journey of the seven newly married couples and the Queen of Bulgaria, who was present at the weddings in Morea. Each couple is followed in turn and meets an adventure or one or several characters that have a story to tell, which explains the frequency of hypodiegetic tales. When all the couples have arrived at home and are announced to “liv[e] the rest of their dayes in all happinesse and joy” (I.iv.512), the seemingly final reunion of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus takes place, only to result in the enchantment and disappearance of Amphilanthus. The loss of Amphilanthus leads to the second fan structure, which consists of the search for Amphilanthus initiated by eleven of his followers.²⁵⁹ Seven of these noblemen are followed in their endeavour to find Amphilanthus, but none of them succeeds. Instead, like the newly married couples, they meet either adventures or characters with a tale to tell. Finally, their search is ended by the news that Amphilanthus has been found again and the book ends with another reunion of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, the finality of which is, however, greatly undermined by the text’s breaking off in mid-sentence.

As this summary shows, the fourth book is very tightly structured, despite the unparalleled proliferation of stories and characters. However, closure continues to be deferred, at least for Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, who need to overcome yet another enchantment before they can be reunited at the end of the book. For the other couples, the fan structure does provide the closure that seems missing in the third book, by means of their homeward journeys. Considering that these journeys are achieved in the middle of the book, it becomes understandable why the second half of the book contains so many secondary characters functioning as the focus of narrative strands. As they are not recurring characters, it does not seem to matter much if they are left stranded somewhere in their search for Amphilanthus by the narrative, whereas it would seriously undermine the previously achieved

²⁵⁹ These “other eleven Princes that came with Amphilanthus into Pamphilia” are the Prince of Transilvania, Peryneus (the Duke of Bavaria), Cauterino (the Duke of Brunswick), Dorileus (the Duke of Wertenberg), Leurenus (the Prince of Venice), the Duke of Florence, the Duke of Savoy, the Duke of Burgundy, the Duke of Saxony, the Duke of Lorraine and the Duke of Millan.

closure if the search for Amphilanthus were carried out by the newly wedded male protagonists. With regard to Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, the recurrence of their narrative strands at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the book signals closure, too. The book even ends with the announcement of a kind of homeward journey undertaken by Pamphilia and Amphilanthus (I.iv.661), which recalls the concluding homeward journeys of the other protagonists. Still, the text ultimately fails to live up to the promise of closure because of the missing mention of marriage, i.e. the expected conclusion of traditional romances, and the abrupt ending of the text mentioned above.

To sum up, the analysis of the narrative structures in the first four books proves Salzman's description of the *Urania* to be only partly justified. He is certainly right to identify the proliferation of characters, narrators and narrative strands as a challenge for Wroth's readers. Yet, while the romance at a first glance may appear like an unstructured collection of narrative fragments, more detailed analysis reveals that readers are in fact guided by a number of structural patterns and mechanisms in their reading. First of all, the predominant choice of homodiegetic narrators on the intra- and hypodiegetic levels and the frequency of direct discourse continue the shaping of readers' attitude modelled on the compassionate but critical extradiegetic narrator and narratee. Readers are drawn in and directed from one narrative level to another by the numerous signposts Wroth artfully places in the text, so that they become used to the continual change of narrators. Moreover, the recurrence of both the transitions between narrative levels and the changes of narrative strands pace the reading experience, allowing Wroth to delay or accelerate the narrative and hence to create moments of tension or frustration. In addition, the recurrence of narrative strands automatically helps readers distinguish between more and less central characters, which counteracts the proliferation of characters that Salzman considers problematic. Similarly, the overarching plot structures that motivate the seemingly random transitions between narrative strands, that is, the movements

of convergence in the first three books and the double fan structure in the fourth, orient readers' attention towards the key moments in the text. In this way, the narrative structures of the *Urania* guide readers through the text while at the same time offering them a maximum of variety in terms of stories, events and characters. This entertaining variety in turn favours a type of reading that might be termed plural rather than linear. Indeed the very fragmentation that Salzman critically highlights invites readers to think about more than one story or narrative strand at a time and renders them sensitive to parallels and contrasts between individual characters' experiences.

This second type of reading complements the perhaps more straightforward reading for plot, illustrating that the *Urania*, like typical romances, demands a reading process that is twofold. However, whereas Salzman and Fuchs respectively distinguish between a forward and inward and a progressive and regressive movement of the narrative,²⁶⁰ this description does not quite seem to fit Wroth's work. Although some of the inset tales or transitions between narrative strands do furnish readers with information about past events or other characters that elucidate the relations between seemingly disparate events or characters in the narrative, many other embedded stories or adventures of protagonists seem gratuitous in terms of overall plot. From a thematic point of view however, these episodes are by no means irrelevant, as the detailed analysis of recurring plots and themes in the next chapter will demonstrate. Thus, the *Urania*, unlike the French heroic romances praised by Salzman, does not acquire depth by accumulating what might be called background information, but rather by inviting a continual re-evaluation of thematic issues. Hence, one might say that the *Urania* opposes a certain regressive movement to the episodic progress of the narrative, but at a thematic rather than temporal level, as the romance returns again and again to the same thematic concerns.

²⁶⁰ Cf. section 2.3 "Reading Romance" above.

3.4 Time Frame, Settings and Spatial Displacements

According to Vinaver, one consequence of the potentially endless extension of narrative that the interlace technique entails is that “the reader loses every sense of limitation in time or space” (76). This observation, on the one hand, aptly summarises the malleable time frame of the *Urania* and its proliferation of settings and spatial displacements and, on the other hand, indirectly suggests how the interlace technique challenges concepts like linear chronology or spatial distance. In the analysis of Wroth’s preference for autodiegetic narrators, I have already pointed out how this practice tends to efface chronological and spatial distance in favour of an effect of immediacy. At the same time, it is clear that the linear succession of events is continually interrupted by the many transitions between narrative levels or strands. The same is true of spatial unity, given that any change of narrative level or strand also signifies a change in location. In what follows, I shall analyse in more detail how the narrative structures of the *Urania* affect the temporal and spatial dimension of the work and how Wroth handles these challenges.

3.4.1 Time Frame

To start with the romance’s time frame, every inset tale and every transition between narrative strands interrupts the chronology of the diegesis and represents, in Genette’s terms, an anachrony (79), which means that the events in a narrative are not told in the order they take place. Most of the anachronies in the *Urania* are flashbacks, called analepses by Genette (82), which retrospectively narrate events that happened before the moment in the diegesis at which the telling occurs. Given that the *Urania* contains several narrative strands, the presence of anachronies in the text is inevitable since it cannot follow more than one strand at a time. Thus, there is often a need to catch up on events or characters’ adventures, which leads to the recurring presence of analepses in the romance. These analepses are for the most part internal,

that is, as Genette explains, their content can chronologically be situated within the time span covered by the diegesis (90). Exceptions are some of the narratives uncovering character's origins as well as the analepses situated at the beginning of the romance that go back further than Urania's discovery of her unknown origin, with which the romance opens. Such analepses are either external if chronologically, as Genette specifies, they are situated completely outside the time span of the diegesis, or mixed if their duration and the opening of the diegesis overlap (90-91).

Whereas it is possible to classify analepses in the *Urania* roughly as external, internal or mixed and to establish an approximate order of events, any attempt to determine a more exact temporal relation between individual analepses or between analepses and the events on the diegesis amounts to mere guesswork due to the vague time indications Wroth gives. Examples of such temporal references that illustrate the difficulties involved can be found in the two hypodiegetic tales of Allimarlus and Leandrus discussed earlier with regard to changes of narrative level. Both tales are mixed analepses since they have their origin in Antissia's kidnapping ten years before the opening of the romance and lead up to the moment of telling. This means that the two analepses necessarily overlap to a certain extent, given that Allimarlus and Leandrus eventually meet and exchange their stories. Since Allimarlus reports to have heard of Leandrus' presumed death before his own search for Antissia (I.i.33), readers understand that Leandrus' adventures in Cephalonia must have taken place before Allimarlus leaves Romania even though the Cephalonian adventure is related in full only after Allimarlus' account. Thus a vague chronological relation between the two inset tales can be established, but it proves impossible to give more detailed information about the temporal relation between the two narratives and the events on the intradiegetic level or between the two narratives themselves and about the duration of the adventures within the narratives.

Indeed, the first concrete time indications that Allimarlus gives are difficult to interpret both for semantic and syntactic reasons. Allimarlus explains that

The King one day after hee had banished his sonne Antissius the Court, and by her [his evil wife's] damnable counsell put such jealousie into his head, as hee now feared and hated him, that once was three parts of his joy. This and the losse of his other comfort Antissia, did so perplex him, as one day being at dinner, he began with teares to speake of Antissius [...].²⁶¹ (I.i.33)

The Romanian King's lamentations lead to Allimarlus' offer to search for Antissia and his departure on the same day. The expression "one day after" used by Allimarlus is ambiguous and could designate either the very day following Antissius' banishment or a day that occurs some time after this event, with the consequence that readers can identify a chronological order of events, but no exact temporal relation between individual happenings. The second "one day" is even more problematic in terms of meaning because it could either be a stylistic repetition of the previous "one day" and hence mean the same day or it could refer to another day again some days later. This uncertainty is reinforced by the awkward separation of the two sentences by a full stop, which makes the first sentence seem syntactically incomplete. The full stop is very likely to be the printer's rather than Wroth's punctuation, given Wroth's general use of commas both in place of commas and full stops in the manuscript continuation. It is not improbable then that Wroth conceived of the above quote as one long and digressive sentence, which would make it more likely that the second "one day" is a repetition and still refers to the same day after Antissius' punishment.²⁶²

The amount of time Allimarlus spends on his search is equally uncertain. The next time indication in the text refers to his arrival in Morea with the words, "Long time was I not landed in Greece, in that part called Morea, before I met an old man" (I.i.34). Travelling with this man, that is, the ex-Duke of Morea, Allimarlus states, "A prettie space we thus

²⁶¹ Note that the Romanian King's son Antissius is not the protagonist Antissius that I mention elsewhere, but in fact his father and brother to Antissia.

²⁶² A further possibility would of course be to attribute the repetition of "one day" to an oversight of Wroth's while writing or copying her text.

continued” (I.i.34). Allimarlus’ narrative is then interrupted by the ex-Duke’s inset tale until Allimarlus resumes his own narrative, relating that they came upon Antissia the evening of the same day the ex-Duke finished his tale (I.i.37). Allimarlus continues, “That night we rested there [at a merchant’s nearby], the next morning parted our selves” (I.i.40), and goes on to describe his embarking on a ship to Romania and his subsequent capture by pirates, without giving any further time references. As these examples show, the time indications in the text are neither extensive nor precise, so that the temporal relations between individual events remain vague.

The same is true for Leandrus’ narrative, which opens with the following sentence: “After I had left you most noble Parselius, I went to my owne countrie” (I.i.41). The word “After,” again, suggests a chronological order of events, but does not place the event in question at a precise moment in time. In Achaea Leandrus learns of Antissia’s kidnapping and decides to search for her:

then with my fathers consent I left Achaya, taking my way among the Greek Ilands, and passing the Archipelago. I left no Iland that had a league of land unsought, or unseene: then shipt I myself, and past into your Morea, so after I had seene all those places, I went againe to sea, resolving afterwards to take towards Italy [...]. (I.i.41)

Once more, it can be seen that time spans are not given a specific length. In fact, they seem to be of no length whatsoever and Leandrus’ inspection of each island is accomplished within half a line. His account continues in the same manner, “then” being the word used repeatedly to mark the temporal progress. After Leandrus’ adventure with the unfortunate lover at the wedding feast in Cephalonia, he seems to spend two days at a monastery since he there witnesses the death of the lady, which takes place “within two dayes” (I.i.44) after her unfortunate lover’s. Again “within few dayes after” (I.i.44) he exchanges his battered armour for that of the dead lover, giving thus rise to the rumour of his own death. “And then” (I.i.45) Leandrus embarks, suffers shipwreck and is taken aboard by the pirate ship which later—how much later is not indicated—attacks the pirate ship on which the other protagonists are.

The examples taken from the inset tales of Allimarlus and Leandrus clearly show that what is important in the romance is not an exact chronology of all the events that take place—the events in the *Urania* are not contained by a calendar of any sort—but a relative chronology between individual events.²⁶³ Hence, the text usually provides temporal references that allow readers to determine the order or, possibly, the simultaneity of individual events, but it seldom indicates exactly how much time passes between events. Especially journeys like Leandrus' from Achaea, south of Macedonia, via all of the Greek islands to Morea (today's Peloponnese) seem to be of no duration at all. It is indeed one of the characteristics of the *Urania* that the sense of distance, and with it the time it takes to cover distance, is not relevant despite the prominence of travelling in the romance. The protagonists repeatedly travel from Italy to Morea or from Morea to Pamphilia (in the south of today's Turkey) or even further from Pamphilia to England, without any indication of their journey lasting longer than a walk in a garden. On the contrary, walks in the garden are often dwelt upon in much more detail than many knights' journeys because these are moments when protagonists give vent to their emotions or tell stories. As a result, the reader loses all sense of duration even if there are at times some more precise temporal indications.

Although the romance opens “When the Spring began to appeare like the welcome messenger of Summer” (I.i.1), recalling thus the beginning of the *New Arcadia*,²⁶⁴ there seems to be no change of season throughout the romance. Likewise, although there are references to minutes, hours, days, months and years, as for instance when the princes agree to assemble in Morea to free Macedon or Albania in six months' time (I.i.60), the text does not give the impression that these time units form part of larger abstract system of time

²⁶³ To contrast the *Urania* with a fantastic lengthy narrative whose events are carefully scheduled with respect to a calendar, one might for example cite Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, in which every day is accounted for.

²⁶⁴ “It was in the time that the earth begins to put on her new apparel against the approach of her lover” (NA 61).

measurement like calendar years with fixed dates.²⁶⁵ Thus, there is no way of knowing when the six months agreed on by the princes are over, with the consequence that, despite the initial time indication, the announcement of the long-term goals to free Macedon or Albania does not render the time spans in the *Urania* any more measurable than Melissea's vague predictions of the future. Hence, the time frame of the *Urania* can be described as a malleable rather than a rigid frame, which obviously makes it easier for Wroth to accommodate the manifold adventures of the protagonists without apparent chronological inconsistencies.²⁶⁶ A second effect of this flexible time frame is that, thanks to the scarcity of time references, the events that are narrated do not appear distant in time to the readers. Previous analyses have shown how Wroth maximises the impression of immediacy in her text, which also seems to be the case with regard to the time frame of the *Urania*.

Whereas the vagueness of the romance's time frame is generally not problematic for readers, Wroth's strategy of dealing with time and chronology does reach its limits when larger time stretches such as several years are involved. Thus, the young Antissius is described as "a little boy" (I.i.50) when he is first met and can be no older than ten years since he was born after the loss of Antissia ten years before the opening of the romance (I.i.31). Yet, within months Antissius is restored to the throne of Romania (I.i.77), deemed old enough to receive knighthood (I.i.154) and soon after falls in love with Selarina (I.i.170). In other words, he somehow becomes indistinguishable from other young protagonists like Selarinus, for example, although the latter is described as a youth of "some seventeen yeares" at the opening of the romance, that is, he should be about seven years older than Antissius.

²⁶⁵ The *Urania* for example does not share any fixed days or holidays like the beginning of the new year or Christmas with the real world, nor does Wroth make any references to astrological constellations that might serve as time indications like Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* (III.i.57.8). The Romanian King Antissius observes his accession day with a yearly tournament (I.iii.396), which presupposes some kind of calendric system, but typically Wroth gives no further time indication that would allow this day to become a temporal reference point within the romance.

²⁶⁶ In the first part I have not noticed any chronological inconsistencies in Wroth's text. In the second part there are two episodes that are problematic in this respect. I will discuss these cases in section 3.5 "Published Part One vs. Manuscript Continuation Part Two" below.

The presence of time gaps or the unequal effects of passing time are never addressed in a self-conscious manner in the *Urania*. Nor does Wroth seem to have made any effort to smooth over these chronological problems, which become more pronounced in the second part, as my discussion in the last section of this chapter will show. This suggests that Wroth was not in any way worried by these temporal inconsistencies and confirms the impression that she was not interested in giving her work a realistic or factual time frame. When Salzman unfavourably compares medieval romance—to which he likens the *Urania*—to “Elizabethan romance” (*English* 5), i.e. works like Sidney’s *Arcadia*, he describes the former as a “seamless web of adventure” in which characters’ “adventures all occur in the present and are interwoven by the narrator” (*English* 4). That is, he highlights the presentness of the medieval knights’ adventures, opposing it to the extended analepses used in romances like the *Arcadia*. It appears then that Wroth’s handling of the time frame can to some extent be accounted for by generic tradition. Romance in general, as Vinaver’s quote at the beginning of this section proposes, does not aim at temporal precision although the opposition between past and present may be of importance.²⁶⁷ Moreover, the fantastical element of romance gives writers a certain liberty so that a barely eleven-year-old Antissius, who receives a knighthood, would probably not have disturbed early modern readers, given that romance heroes are exceptional by definition, as Frye stresses (*Anatomy of Criticism* 33). Moreover, early modern adepts of continental romances would have been used to the appearance of a young generation of outstanding knights from the *Amadis* or *Palmerin* cycles, and the offhand invitation of the narrator in the *Old Arcadia* that others write sequels featuring the protagonists’ offspring (361) bespeaks the familiarity of this tradition (361).

It follows then that by romance standards, Wroth’s *Urania* is by no means exceptional with regard to its time frame, just as it does not greatly differ from the *Arcadia* in this respect.

²⁶⁷ In *Renaissance Romance* Das emphasises romance’s power of negotiating “the relationship between the past and the present: between past genres, languages and traditions, and present needs and strategic responses” (5), and this perspective informs her analysis of Greene’s, Sidney’s and Wroth’s romances.

Like Wroth, Sidney relies upon relative rather than precise temporal relations. However, given the smaller dimension of the *Arcadia*, both in terms of the number of characters and of the time spans covered, Sidney does not encounter the same problems as Wroth. Where the two works do differ, however, is concerning the effects that are produced through this flexible time frame. In the *Arcadia* it seems to be the opposition between past and present that is foregrounded, as Sidney's heroes legitimate themselves through their past deeds, which stand in contrast to their awkward position and pursuits in the present. Wroth on the other hand, especially in the first part, maximises an effect of immediacy and presentness. To conclude, then, Wroth's handling of the time frame can be said to require slightly more than the usual "suspension of disbelief," especially from modern readers used to a more realistic depiction of time in novels. Yet like other structural aspects of the *Urania*, the romance's time frame is not just a given, but operative in shaping one's reading experience and attitude towards the text.

3.4.2 Settings and Spatial Displacements

Just as the time frame of the *Urania* flattens the perception of time passing in favour of what Salzman calls "the narrative present" (*English* 186), Wroth's representation of her protagonists' journeys effaces any realistic sense of distance, as has already been noted in connection with Leandrus' search for Antissia. As implied in Vinaver's observation that "the reader loses every sense of limitation in time or space" (76), there seems to be no place that is out of reach for the romance's protagonists, that is, for the male characters at least, and Amphilanthus' journey from Dalmatia, i.e. from today's Croatia, to Corinth receives no more textual space than the court's removal from Corinth in the north to Mantinea that lies more to the south of the Peloponnese (I.iii.488). Yet, whereas the time frame of the *Urania* is completely disjunct from the calendric system of Wroth's time and age except for sharing the same kinds of time units, this is not the case with regard to Wroth's choice of settings. Like

Sidney in the *Arcadia*, Wroth places the work's geographical centre in Greece. More precisely it coincides with the court of Morea, that is, today's Peloponnese, the home of Pamphilia and her siblings of the royal family of Morea. This family constitutes the narrative's centre of interest, together with Amphilanthus and Urania, who are as often to be found at the Morean court as in their native Italy. From this centre, the protagonists' journeys extend both west, as far as England, and east, as far as Tartaria (comprising today's China and part of India), towards which the focus of geographical attention shifts in the second part according to Gossett and Mueller (II.xxix-xxx). To the north, the universe of the *Urania* stretches as far as Lapland, the home of an evil necromancer who deposes and exiles the King of Denmark and the Queen of Norway (II.ii.329-331), and the most southerly location mentioned is Babylon.

The frequency and variety of geographical place names in Wroth's text indicate the extent of her geographical knowledge, and one could imagine her writing in a study that also contained Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* or Mercator's *Atlas*.²⁶⁸ Indeed, Sir Philip Sidney's advice to his friend Edward Denny (1547-1600) in 1580 to "provide your selfe of an Ortelius, that when you reed of any place, you may finde it out, & have it, as it were before your eyes" (qtd. in Osborn 539) and his order of a new Ortelius from Antwerp in 1586 (cf. Das 78 n47) make it appear likely that such geographical works would have been found in the libraries of Wilton or Penshurst even before Wroth's brother acquired "a Mercator Atlas" in 1621-22 (cf. Warkentin 334). Thus, the multitude of geographical names, that is, names of countries, regions, islands, cities, seas and some famous landmarks like the Hellespont or the Aetna, assure a correspondence between the world of romance and the real world that subtly prepares readers for the *roman-à-clef* aspect of the *Urania*. In other words, the referentiality of the romance's spatial universe makes it easier for readers to reflect on further possible

²⁶⁸ In her introduction to the first part Roberts notes that "it is possible to identify nearly all of the locations on Mercator's 1611 maps of Asia and Greece" and that "many (but not all) of her references may also be found" in Ortelius, "which had recently been translated into English" (I.xliv). Roberts further observes that "Wroth most frequently employs the Venetian place-names, many of which have been changed since the seventeenth century" (I.xliv).

correspondences between the work's fictional universe and the real world. It is striking in this context that the one European country that Wroth never mentions in the *Urania* is the Netherlands, despite the fact that she once accompanied her father and mother as a child when Robert Sidney was stationed in the Netherlands (*MSLW* 63). England's adversary in the struggle over the Netherlands, Spain, receives almost as little mention and is only represented by a character from Cadiz, whose name is Duardo and who, perhaps tellingly, is a dwarf (II.ii.238). Outside Europe the most notable blanks on the world map of the *Urania* are the Americas, as there is no mention of the New World whatsoever. This absence of the Americas, the focus on Eastern Europe and the relative neglect of Western Europe apart from Germany and Italy can be accounted for in several ways. Firstly, Cooper notes that medieval romances traditionally regarded the East as the land of the potentially marvellous (74) and that "There seems to have been no notable rush to incorporate the Americas into romance geography, perhaps because the genre was so tradition-dependent" (75). Moreover, Cooper adds, "writers were more likely to use the West as the setting for utopias rather than quest—a land of promise [...] rather than threat" (75). Yet, the focus on Eastern Europe not only marks the *Urania* as adhering to tradition in general, but also affiliates Wroth's work more particularly to Sidney's *Arcadia* and the model of the Greek romances like Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*, thus creating a more precise literary genealogy for the *Urania*. In addition, the romance's geography may indicate a shift of focus away from England's conflict with Spain after the peace treaty of 1604 and on to the conflicts in continental Europe that resulted in the Thirty Years' War. This shift coincides both with general political concerns of the time and the Sidney and Herbert connections to political and intellectual figures on the continent.²⁶⁹

Thus, Roberts emphasises the English Protestant concern over the marriage of James I's daughter, Elizabeth, to Frederick V, Elector Palatine, in 1613 and the exile of the couple from

²⁶⁹ Consider for instance Robert Sidney's personal acquaintance with the Duke of Württemberg (I.793 n587.42) or his journey to the Hague and Heidelberg accompanying Elizabeth and Frederick V (I.xl).

Bohemia in 1620 following James I's refusal to support Ferdinand's acceptance of the crown of Bohemia (I.xl-xlii). Moreover, one of the noblemen that escorted Elizabeth and Frederick from England to the Hague and Heidelberg was Robert Sidney (I.xl), which illustrates how the events in Continental Europe were probably both of political and personal interest to Wroth.²⁷⁰ This is also what Anne Clifford's remark on Wroth in her diary suggests when she notes that during a visit to Penshurst in 1617, "There was Lady Worth [sic] who told me a great deal of news from beyond sea" (77).²⁷¹

Given Wroth's knowledge of and interest in European geography and politics, it is not surprising that some settings in her work are more realistic than the settings in other romances, where, as Cooper emphasises, even settings that correspond to "real-world" locations, like for example Amadis' England, are in fact "described as *somewhere else*" (71).²⁷² Also a comparison of the *Urania* with Sidney's *Arcadia* reveals the former's realistic tendency in terms of setting: whereas Wroth's text, for instance, situates a number of events in well-known European cities like Prague, Vienna or London, the *Arcadia* features virtually no cities, but only courts. At the other end of the spectrum, however, the *Urania* also contains settings that are far more fantastic than anything encountered in Sidney's *Arcadia* and that rather resemble the marvels and enchantments found in the *Amadis* romances or Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The various types of settings that appear in the *Urania* could be categorised in different ways, but I would propose the following rough classification: named geographical sites, unnamed landscape sites, sites invested with human presence that are socially functional and sites or spaces of enchantment. These four categories are not necessarily exclusive, that is, certain settings might belong to more than one category, as for example the mobile Morean court, which is a human centre that fulfils social functions, but which sometimes also

²⁷⁰ According to Andrea in *Women and Islam* (30-52), Wroth's geographical and political interest included the conflicts between Christian Europe and "the expanding Ottoman empire" (30).

²⁷¹ There are two mentions of Wroth in Clifford's diary and both times spelt "Worth" rather than "Wroth" (75, 77).

²⁷² Cf. Fludernik's discussion of real world references in novels and the fictionality of settings (*Introduction* 42).

corresponds to a specific geographical site like Corinth. Likewise the Crowne of Stones, to be discussed in more detail below, is at once a site of enchantment housing the Hell of Deceit and a recognizable geographic landmark, i.e. Stonehenge near Wilton (cf. I.791-792 n581.31). Within these rough categories, further distinctions between the various settings might be made. Thus it is possible to distinguish secular from sacred, transitional from permanent, interior from exterior spaces, and settings could be situated on a continuum from more public to more private spaces. Furthermore, some of the settings correspond to traditional literary topoi or take on a symbolic character. And sometimes, as mentioned above, settings have a referential aspect and seem more realistic due to the way in which they are presented.

This mixture of settings, from known geographical locations to marvellous places of enchantments, would not have disturbed early modern readers. Commenting on the “eastern Mediterranean geography in Renaissance romances” in general and in Emanuel Ford’s *Ornatus and Artesia* (~1599) in particular, Goran V. Stanivukovic writes that “this topography suggests the exotic, a place in which miracles are possible and mysteries abound, while, at the same time, reminding readers of the current political and historical realities gripping this region” (31). The same seems true for the more extensive range of geographical settings in the *Urania*, which, like the eastern Mediterranean settings of *Ornatus and Artesia* discussed by Stanivukovic, invite more than one mode of reading. Thus the settings in Wroth’s work can generate meaning on several levels of interpretation. As Stanivukovic suggests, they can be read as signs of the “exotic” or as references to the “political and historical realities” of the locations in question. An example in the *Urania* that clearly accommodates both these ways of reading is Cyprus, the fantastic location of the first enchantment on the one hand and the historical site fought over by Christians and Muslims on the other, which, in the romance, turns into the site of a mass conversion to Christianity (I.i.170). To these two modes of reading I would add a symbolic mode, especially where

traditional literary topoi are concerned,²⁷³ and a reflective mode, i.e. the recognition that what is set in a foreign place might reflect on national issues. To give an example of the first mode, the forest into which Nereana strays (I.ii.196) should obviously not only be read as a real forest in which one can get lost, but also as a symbolic representation of Nereana's disturbed mind and her loss of an appropriate sense of self.²⁷⁴ Equally obvious examples of the second mode, i.e. settings that reflect on English issues, are harder to find, but perhaps the most prominent is the description of Candia, i.e. Crete, as split into a poorer northern and a "farr richer" (II.i.57) southern part, which clearly points to the identity of the excessively praised king of the northern part who will unite the two parts.²⁷⁵

The settings in the *Urania*, then, are not exceptional for their variety or for their mixture of the fantastic and the real. Some of the settings, however, are striking because of small realistic details in their description that one might expect in a travel or news report rather than a romance. A minor character's account of his arrival in Padua in the second part of the romance is an example:

I hasted away to Paddowa, and ther finding noe quiet to give ease to my most disquieted minde, all ther being in armes, the very studients taking part: tow such factions being a foote as the Church, Nobles, and gentlemen against the Communes. (II.ii.371)

The civil strife in Padua explicitly parallels the passionate feelings of Drusio, the character in question, after his beloved has rejected him, and the fighting that goes on is a welcome opportunity for him to lose his life honourably. Padua can thus be interpreted as a fictional setting that externalises Drusio's state of mind—a function which the location in Italy might have reinforced for early modern readers since Italy, especially in Jacobean tragedy,

²⁷³ As Cooper notes, such set locations like "a spring, a hermitage, a ford, a castle" are not usually geographically determined because it is not important where they are but rather that these are "places where things happen" (70).

²⁷⁴ Zurcher notes that "the sin that both Nereana and Allarina succumb to [...] is self-love" (*Seventeenth-Century English Romance* 47).

²⁷⁵ In contrast to this flattering portrayal of James I, the Queen of the southern part of Candia, who by analogy would stand for Elizabeth I, is presented in surprisingly negative terms as wanton, envious and manipulating (II.i.131-133). However, Lewalski does not identify the Queen of Candia as Elizabeth I, but speculates that this figure might "allude to Anne of Denmark" (284) like other jealous queens that appear in the first part of the romance (285).

frequently serves as the background for scenes of social and moral unrest and transgression. Yet, Wroth goes further in her portrayal of the city and adds information which for the purpose of Drusio's story or the narrative at large is superfluous, creating what Roland Barthes famously called "*un effet de réel*" (88). Above all the remark "the very students taking part" stands out awkwardly in a romance context, which normally does not feature students. On the one hand, the mention of the students reminds or informs readers that Padua is a university city, and, on the other, it seems to imply a comparison between this instance of civil strife involving students and others in which, presumably, students took no part. Considering how specific Wroth's identification of the two factions and the participation of the students is, it comes as no surprise that in an annotation the editors compare Wroth's description to a traveller's negative account of Padua from 1632 (II.542 n371.18).²⁷⁶ By introducing these realistic or seemingly realistic details, Wroth provokes modern and, I presume, early modern readers alike to suspect that this passage is more than a stereotypical representation of an unruly Italian city and hence to apply more than one reading mode to it. The modern annotation implicitly suggests Wroth's familiarity with travel writing and a possible influence of contemporary travel accounts on her own representation of Padua. Early modern readers might also have read the description as referring to the current situation in Padua, to events in Padua or other Italian cities that took place in the past or to topical events closer to home. In other words, the specificity of Wroth's depiction of Padua tantalises readers, without however—at least from a modern perspective—ultimately offering a key for interpretation.

²⁷⁶ Roberts, Mueller and Gossett propose 1620 as *terminus a quo* (II.xxi) and 1630 as the latest *terminus ad quem* (II.xxiii) for the *Urania*, which would predate Wroth's description of Padua to that of William Lithgow's travel account cited by the editors. Lithgow's work was reprinted repeatedly, but his earlier published versions from 1614, 1616 and 1623 only mention Padua as praiseworthy for its legal and medical faculties. The augmented 1632 version seems to be the first one containing the negative criticism of the city as a place of civil strife, where "Schollers [...] in the night commit many murders against their privat adversaries" (qtd. in II.542 n371.18).

Thus, the *roman-à-clef* aspect of the *Urania* is not only constituted through resemblances between fictional and historical figures or events, but also via the representation of the settings. This observation also informs Roberts' interpretation of the romance as a "counter-myth" to the "Bohemian disaster" (I.xlii) and hence as "a critique of the failures of James' original foreign policy of non-involvement" (I.xliv). While the Emperor Amphilanthus primarily shadows William Herbert and not James I, his successful intervention on behalf of the legitimate heir to Bohemia's crown (I.ii.269-271) is topical enough to suggest a critique of James I's lack of support for Frederick and Elizabeth. Since it is relatively common for romance heroes to help righteous heirs regain or preserve their throne, the setting of Amphilanthus' intervention is crucial in this case to provoke a *roman-à-clef* reading of the episode.

In addition to reflecting indirectly on English political concerns, the *Urania* also contains an actual excursion of three noblemen to England in book four of the first part, thus giving Wroth the opportunity to adopt a stranger's perspective on her own country. However, Wroth does not use this series of episodes to comment on topical political issues, but rather criticises English manners, while at the same time praising individual places and characters as exemplary. Voicing criticism of English politics in an English setting would arguably have been too blunt and dangerous an approach in an age when authors could be made liable for readers' interpretation of their texts (cf. Sharpe 43). Still, even though London, the court and the English King's progress receive uncritical praise for their "bravery, and sumptuosnesse," for their worthiness, courteousness and nobility (I.iv.653), the overall impression of England given by the noblemen's adventures remains ambivalent. Thus, the first sight that greets the travellers is one of beauty when "they perceived for their comforts, (as beauty is comfortable to all good eyes) the faire Rocks of Brittany, anciently called Albion" (I.iv.627). However, when "they landed neere a Cliffe of infinite height and danger if not knowne" (I.iv.627), this

first impression of beauty is immediately compromised by the mention of the danger the cliffs present for mariners. Likewise, the first town that the travellers pass is both “a very faire Towne, large” with stone houses and “not any way curiously built” because the houses are “low and ill cover’d” and hence appear “poore” (I.iv.627).²⁷⁷

This method of ambiguous presentation continues throughout the noblemen’s travels in England. “Brittany” and especially the southeast of England, i.e. the region in which the Sidney family home Penshurst is situated, are praised for having “the fairest Creatures in her of all women” (I.iv.627), yet the first women that the noblemen speak to are arrogant and rude (I.iv.628). The travellers fruitlessly search for hospitality in a noble manor where the master is absent (I.iv.627-629) and in an inn full of drunkards (I.iv.629). Also the people in general are “rude and churlish” (I.iv.627), and the only places where the foreigners are duly welcomed are in a nobleman’s house that Roberts suspects might represent Wroth’s home Loughton (I.798 n630.12) and at court (I.iv.653). The English landscape is marked by stretches of “Desart” that are “as wilde as any civill Country could bee” (I.iv.627) and make travelling difficult, by a limitless “Commune” (I.iv.630), full of sheep but scarcely inhabited, and by “Forrests and Chaces, anciently called the deserts of Brittany,” which provide no shelter unless they are “inclosed, and made like an orderly civill place” (I.iv.630).²⁷⁸ However, not everything in England is rough and wild as the following landscape description shows:

he [the Prince of Venice] found a most delectable Country, being a Forrest, and the daintiest of all those parts, seeming rather an exact piece of curiositie, then an habitation for wild Beasts, woods, plaines, corne grounds and delicate Springs, many brave dwellings, and faire and fine houses in abundance, so as they seemd as the Banqueting-houses to so many excellent Gardens: the Woods were not great, but pleasant, every field as it were fringed, and laced about with trees. (I.iv.638)

Yet, even a well-ordered and garden-like place as this, which seems to fulfil every criterion of a *locus amoenus*, soon becomes the scene of unhappy love, revenge, attempted murder and

²⁷⁷ Roberts suspects that the town in question might be Canterbury (I.797 n627.19) and the manor house the noblemen pass later on Cobham Hall (I.797 n627.36-37).

²⁷⁸ Notice the aristocratic perspective on the practice of enclosure this observation implies. This comes as no surprise given that Wroth’s husband was the King’s Royal Forester (*MSLW* 136) and as such involved in the enlargement of Theobalds Park, the King’s hunting grounds, by means of enclosure (*MSLW* 151).

manslaughter (I.iv.642-653). It comes as no surprise then that the last description of England also appears curiously ambivalent, since it makes “peace” responsible for the lack of adventures and knights in England, as peace has “with true honor and conquest, taken away those rude troubles, and travels” (I.iv.657). Thus, while presenting peace—and hence James I’s self-representation as a peacemaker—as truly honourable and a desirable political goal, Wroth also wily undermines this ideal and exposes it as an untenable state for romance.

Just like the short description of Padua, the settings in England are marked by realistic details that violate, or at least perturb, generic expectations. It is striking, for example, that in a text where—true to romance standards—geographic distances are no obstacle to what one might call instant-travel, Wroth bothers to indicate that the first town the noblemen reach is “twelve miles off [the coast], according to the reckoning of that Countrey” (I.iv.627). This precision strongly suggests that Wroth did in fact have a precise town in mind when she was writing, and the same applies, I would suggest, for her description of the idealised landscape, quoted above, which can be read as a gesture of homage to somebody’s country estate.²⁷⁹ Hence, through the inclusion of realistic indications and detailed descriptions, Wroth again provokes a mode of reading that treats the text as a *roman à clef*.

In addition, however, the tension between realistic details and romance conventions of idealism also generates irony, and the episodes in England contain some of the more scathingly humorous scenes in the romance.²⁸⁰ When the Duke of Florentine addresses the rude English ladies in an elaborately hyperbolic courteous speech, for instance, they simply walk away, “as who would say, by that time the Oration is done, wee will come againe, smiling on themselves and their uncivilnesse” (I.iv.629). While this incident explicitly

²⁷⁹ Roberts in her notes makes no proposition as to what place Wroth might have in mind. Penshurst might be a possible candidate given that there is “a house on the top of a Hill” (I.iv.639) from which Rossalea comes and that Penshurst lies on something of a slope.

²⁸⁰ Roberts comes to the same conclusion when she discusses the possible influence of *Don Quixote* on Wroth’s writing and claims that “the parody of chivalric romance becomes even greater” in the episodes set in England (I.xxiv). Hackett likewise notes the “satirical slant” of the England episodes and points out the “bathetic juxtapositions of romance ideals with quotidian realities” (*Women* 174).

demonstrates the unmannered nature of the English ladies, it also ironically deflates the Duke's extravagant rhetoric and highlights its inappropriateness to the situation. Even more humorous however is Wroth's depiction of an English inn, which deserves to be quoted at length:

When they came to the Inne, there they found a second or rather a perfect Hell, there were Knights and Squires, but all fellowes, and most fellow-like drunke: some were singing, some dancing, some quarrelling, others fidling, some calling for more drinke, in which they all like the burthen of a Song agreed, and called more. These Princes fell into this second misadventure, the first had too little curtesie [i.e. the welcome of the English ladies], this as farre exceeding in too much aboundance; for every one had a severall humour, and they must indure them all: but an advantage they had in this kinde, though to their losse of sleepe, for they being well on their way before their coming, a very little more satisfied them, and sent them to rest, some to bed, some under the tables, some on benches, one in the Garden on a Lavender bed, while the Princes againe tooke their horses and rid some miles further, and in the Desart in a most poore (but for quiet, rich) house, they spent the rest of the night [...]. (I.iv. 629)

The lively description of the inn is reminiscent of tavern or drinking scenes in Shakespeare plays and anticipates the dubious adventures that Fielding's protagonists, Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, experience in a similar environment. This setting is also unique in its kind in the *Urania*, and it clearly explodes the generic frame of romance.²⁸¹ Nowhere else in Wroth's work do her characters try to spend a night in an economic establishment offering accommodation and nowhere else do they seem so out of place. Based on what she sees as Wroth's recurring "satirical perspective toward the stock conventions of chivalric fiction" (I.xxii), Roberts describes the *Urania* as a "quixotic romance" (I.xxv), suggesting that Wroth had probably read and was influenced by Thomas Shelton's 1612 and 1620 translations of *Don Quixote*. This seems particularly cogent with respect to the episode of the inn since Wroth here relies on Cervantes' key source of irony: a profound incongruence of setting and character. With his idealised romantic notions, Don Quixote is continually out of place in his world, and, likewise, Wroth's three travellers in search of the lost, because enchanted, Emperor cannot cope in a realistic material environment. It comes as no surprise then that after they have, in true fairy-tale fashion, separated at a "tripartite divided way," swearing

²⁸¹ Cf. also my discussion of the mock-epic aspects of the *Urania* in "Telling Tales" p. 125-130.

“there within three Moneths to meete againe” (I.iv.629), none of them returns with any kind of gain and, on the contrary, only the wisest one among them leaves England without having sustained a loss (I.iv.657). Thus, the England of Wroth’s text is clearly past the age of romance and chivalry, except where the court is concerned. Only the court still practices and upholds chivalric values, which means, however, that, like the three travellers, this chivalric court seems oddly out of place in the England represented in the *Urania*.

If England in general is past chivalry, this does not preclude the use of romance as a rhetorical strategy to heighten the prestige of one’s family or individual family members. Wroth’s work incorporates both quixotic irony and romance self-aggrandisement without apparent contradiction. Whereas in the English episodes the quixotic strain predominates, another recognizably English setting, namely Stonehenge, serves to create a kind of family mythology for the Sidney and Herbert family. Significantly, the “Crowne of stones” (I.iv.654), as Stonehenge is referred to, is not situated in Wroth’s fictional England but in Pamphilia. Hence, Stonehenge escapes the ironical perspective cast on England and can function as a truly magic and mythic monument in the romance. Moreover, by situating Stonehenge in the realm of Pamphilia rather than the realm of Amphilanthus, Wroth seems to claim the place, and by extension the nearby Wilton, family home of the Herberts, as her own domain. As Cooper points out, “The romances most likely to name familiar places are those that serve a genealogical function, where the point of the text is to provide a founding legend for a known baronial seat” (71). The personal importance of Stonehenge to Wroth is clearly indicated in the romance since it is the site of the last enchantment in the first part, the Hell of Deceit, which, contrary to the previous enchantments, only tests Pamphilia and Amphilanthus but none of the other protagonists.²⁸² Hence, the site acquires symbolic meanings as the enchantment successively showcases Pamphilia’s constancy and devotion, Amphilanthus’

²⁸² Polarchos is the only other character who tries to enter the Hell of Deceit, but although—unlike Pamphilia—he manages to “passe the flames” due to “being unconstant,” he “could not come within reach of the Emperour” and afterwards remains on the site of the enchantment to guard Amphilanthus’ arms (I.iv.584).

fickleness and repentance and the ultimate triumph of their love over deceit and false appearances.²⁸³ Simultaneously, the enchantment also functions in the manner of a regional legend, explaining the presence and destruction of the stone ring. According to Wroth's text, the site has its origin in the malevolent magic of Musalina, one of Pamphilia's rivals for Amphilanthus' love, and is destroyed when Amphilanthus has returned to his senses (I.iv.661).²⁸⁴ Moreover, the enchantment associates the site with national and mythical literature. On the one hand, as several critics have mentioned, the Hell of Deceit strongly draws on the House of Busirane in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (Book III, canto 11-12),²⁸⁵ rewriting Britomart's rescue of Amoret in two different versions since Pamphilia and Amphilanthus experience the enchantment individually. On the other hand, Wroth invokes crucial elements from Arthurian legend in her account of the magic origin of Stonehenge: Amphilanthus, in his attempt to recover Pamphilia, smites one of the stones with his sword, which then like Excalibur remains in the stone until his return because he is the only one capable to recover it (I.iv.581, 661). Thus, Wroth presents Amphilanthus as a second Arthur and confers a heroic and legendary status on the site and by extension the Herbert family, their home, Wilton, and, especially, William Herbert, given that Amphilanthus is at least partly a fictionalised portrait of the third Earl of Pembroke.

²⁸³ For an interesting alternative analysis of the meaning of the enchantment see Lamb, "Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder." Lamb contends that the enchantment is "a visual illusion" rather than the "evocation of a psychological state" and that it could be read as symbolic of the *Urania* itself and the "fantasy" (251) it projects. However, Lamb does not address the implications of the setting of the enchantment, which, in my mind, relativise her reading of the episode.

²⁸⁴ Wroth's presentation of Stonehenge thus provides a direct response to the opening of sonnet 22 of Sidney's *Certain Sonnets*, which states that "Neere Wilton sweete, huge heapes of stones are found,/But so confusde, that neither any eye/Can count them just, nor reason reason trye,/What force brought them to so unlikely ground" (149).

²⁸⁵ Both Quilligan in "Lady Mary Wroth: Female Authority and the Family Romance" and Miller in "Lady Mary Wroth in the House of Busirane" consider the Hell of Deceit to be a conscious rewriting of Busirane's enchantment in Spenser. Quilligan points out that in Wroth's version a reversal of "moral values" takes place. According to Miller, the Hell of Deceit is profoundly concerned with the problem of closure and Wroth's "own vexed relation to her precursor texts" (121), that is, especially *The Faerie Queene* in this instance. Miller points out that already the House of Busirane is inconclusive given Spenser's rewriting of the ending of the third book (117, 115), and she claims that Wroth "reinscribes the provisional nature of the episode by rewriting it more than once" (115) and by ending it in a way that "recall[s] the unsettling and unsatisfactory nature of Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss at the end of book two of *The Faerie Queene*" (121).

In addition, Wroth's account of the origins and destruction of Stonehenge intervenes in a topical public discourse of the time. As Roberts mentions in her notes (I.791 n581.31), James I expressed interest in the monument during his visit to Wilton in 1620, which resulted in a treatise by Inigo Jones that ascribed Stonehenge to Roman antiquity due to the organisation and grandeur of the monument (66-71).²⁸⁶ This treatise with the title *The Most Notable Antiquity of Great Britain, Vulgarly Called Stone-Heng on Salisbry Plain Restored by Inigo Jones* was printed only in 1655 by John Webb and, according to Jones, contains "What mine opinion was then [i.e. in 1620], and what I have since collected in relation thereunto" (2). It explicitly connects the Herbert family to the monument and to King James I since Jones underlines that he received the task from James I after William Herbert took the initiative to send for him (1), and the printer John Webb dedicates the treatise to William's nephew, Philip Herbert (A3). By 1655, of course, both James I and William Herbert were long dead, but it seems plausible to assume that Jones presented an earlier version of this treatise to James I and probably William Herbert, too. I would further speculate that Wroth's use of Stonehenge as the setting for the Hell of Deceit was provoked either by the original inquiry of James I or by the treatise that resulted from it, and I would argue that Wroth's fictionalised treatment of the site could be read as a playful alternative to the proposition of Jones, making of William Herbert not only the guardian of Stonehenge but a hero of mythical status whose grandeur is reflected by that of the monument.

Concentrating on Wroth's representation of individual places, I have so far advocated four different modes of interpretation, that is, to read locations as signs of the exotic, as topical references, to treat them symbolically or to read them in a reflective manner. Taking into account the characters' geographical movements and especially their repeated returns to

²⁸⁶ In his reply to the treatise of Jones, Walter Charleton argued in 1663 that Stonehenge was built by the Danes, based on the presence of similar monuments in Denmark (Letter to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, fifth page). Cf. Walter Charleton, *Chorea Gigantum, or, The Most Famous Antiquity of Great-Britan [sic], Vulgarly Called Stone-Heng, Standing on Salisbury Plain, Restored to the Danes*. London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1663.

certain places suggests yet another approach to the multiple settings of the *Urania*. Just as the romance's protagonists are organised in terms of royal families, the settings can be divided into centres of convergence and what we might call outposts. Patterns of convergence and fan structures have already been discussed in relation to Wroth's organisation of narrative strands, as well as the necessarily spatial dimensions this organisation entails. Regarded from a more purely geographical point of view, it turns out that not only enchantments serve as the goals or triggers of patterns of convergence and dispersal, but that there are also other settings that function as centres of reunion. Foremost among them is the court of Morea, which serves as a recurrent gathering place for protagonists, both in the first and second part of the romance. The court is itself a mobile institution that is alternately located in Corinth, Mantinea, Arcadia or simply in Morea without any specification. Other such centres are the court in Italy, the home of Melissea on the island Delos and, later on, the court in Pamphilia and Albania. Curiously, Germany, where Amphilanthus is crowned Emperor (I.iii.463), and Vienna, where Amphilanthus finally establishes his wife (II.ii.367), do not constitute such meeting places for protagonists, which indicates that these places of convergence do not necessarily coincide with centres of political power, but could rather be described as affective centres or family seats.²⁸⁷ Thus, in the second part, Amphilanthus, King of Naples, King of the Romans and Emperor, is more often found in Prague or Buda with Ollorandus and Melasinda than in either Germany or Italy. Indeed, the protagonists' reunions at different courts may well be a translation of Wroth's own experiences into her fictional world. As Hannay details in her biography, the Sidney and Herbert family regularly transferred to a London residence—usually Baynard's castle—for part of the year (66), and there are also numerous records of the

²⁸⁷ Focusing on the interplay of place, time and remembrance, Alexander proposes a suggestive alternative approach to places that are visited more than once by characters, noting that by provoking "moments of recollection," "place is able temporarily to elide distance in time and bring the past to life in the present" (297). In other words, centres of convergence are not only affective centres because they are spatial family nodes, so to speak, but also because they are the scenes of past events and feelings that they recall. Alexander moreover extends his approach to the production of the *Urania* itself when he argues "that Wroth engages most closely and fruitfully with her uncle's fiction" (297-298) in the episode when Leonius comes to Arcadia, that is, "the place of Sidney's fiction" (298).

exchange of visits among family members and friends (cf. for example 134, 145, 148-149) i.e. the Sidneys stayed in Wilton (24-25, 148), William Herbert came to Penshurst (265), or he, Wroth's father Robert Sidney and her brother Robert were guests at Wroth's in Loughton, for instance (255).²⁸⁸ At moments, this practice of visiting friends or family even explicitly enters Wroth's romance, as for instance when Amphilanthus and Ollorandus, after arriving in Constantinople (I.iii.396), go to visit Musalina at her home in Neapolis close to Philippi in the east of Greece (I.iii.397), return again to Constantinople for Antissia's marriage, accompany Musalina back to Neapolis (I.iii.397), and then travel to Hungary to visit Melasinda (I.iii.422) before making for the Ionian islands where the Theatre of Love is situated (I.iii.422).²⁸⁹

In contrast to such unrealistic examples of instant-travel, other displacements of Wroth's characters seem much more credible when mapped out. Thus, it makes sense, for instance, that Amphilanthus, Ollorandus and Steriamus deliver Dolorindus on the island Sio, i.e. today's Chios, and stop on the island of Delos when they are travelling from Constantinople to Morea by ship, as Sio and Delos both lie on their way (I.i.128-132). Hence, as with the representation of places, the geographic displacements of characters are open to different modes of reading. From a generic point of view, the most typical travelling pattern to be expected in a romance is a circular there and back again journey, as Cooper notes (57-58), which parallels or symbolises the hero's development, i.e. with "geographical space standing for mental space" (Cooper 52). One glance at the protagonists' displacements in the *Urania*, even within the scope of one book only, suffices to understand that Wroth's work explodes this pattern with her proliferating cast of characters. Although certain protagonists' trajectories, as for example Rosindy's in the first book, constitute a typical quest pattern, the

²⁸⁸ See also Rickman (147, 150).

²⁸⁹ Incidentally, the location of Musalina's home in Neapolis and the identification of her husband as the Duke of Tenedos (I.iii.397) might point to Wroth's reading about the journeys of St. Paul since one of these leads Paul from Troas, opposite the island of Tenedos, to Neapolis (*KJ* Acts 16:10-12). If this is indeed the case, her appropriation of geographical information from biblical reading seems rather irreverent, given that Musalina is one of Pamphilia's rivals for Amphilanthus' love and even turns into an enchantress, orchestrating the Hell of Deceit (I.iv.656).

Urania as a whole lacks a unifying quest structure involving all of the protagonists. Therefore, whereas the story of Rosindy's maturation and conquest of Macedonia achieves closure thanks to its quest structure,²⁹⁰ this is not the case for larger units of the *Urania* since there are always protagonists that do not reach the short- or long-term goals set up by the narrative. This is illustrated by the protagonists' geographic displacements too, through the opposition between the numerous centres of convergence mentioned above and the isolated erring of individual protagonists, such as Parselius in book one of the first part. While most of the protagonists meet at the Throne of Love enchantment (I.i.161-174), which gives closure to this book, Parselius' misery drives him into hiding, and he ends up travelling to St. Maura in the company of the hermit Dettareus, where he is left until the beginning of the next book (I.i.151-154, I.ii.175). In this way the vacillation between centres of convergence and outposts maps out geographically the continual promise and delay of a final reunion or homecoming that would bring closure.

As the above example of Parselius shows, Wroth also makes use of the technique mentioned by Cooper, that is, of translating mental or emotional states into geographic displacements. This becomes most obvious perhaps in the third book of the first part with regard to Amphilanthus' travelling.²⁹¹ From the moment Amphilanthus leaves Pamphilia at the beginning of the book, he travels erratically all over the region until he finally retraces his steps at the end of the book. This incessant and erratic travelling clearly mirrors Amphilanthus' gradual detachment and neglect of Pamphilia, and it is fitting that, lamenting Pamphilia's enchantment (I.iii.377) and later doubting her constancy (I.iii.386), Amphilanthus hides his identity under the name of "the Lost Man" (I.iii.377) and decides to "leave all government to him that can rule, shunning that, when I cannot rule my selfe" (I.iii.377).

²⁹⁰ The same is true for Philarchos' adventures in the second book for instance.

²⁹¹ Cavanagh discusses Amphilanthus' aimless and turbulent sea journeys in the first book of part two in similar terms (*Cherished* 108-110). She also comments on the ways in which Amphilanthus' and Parselius' suicidal moods are channelled into travel (*Cherished* 130-131, 137-139).

Amphilanthus in the third book is thus both literally and figuratively off track, failing both as a lover and as a ruler until he is crowned Emperor (I.iii.463) and finally recognises his fault towards Pamphilia (I.iii.497).

The idea of being incapable to govern oneself is also implicit in other protagonists' displacements, especially those that are provoked by forces beyond the protagonists' control, unlike Amphilanthus' journeying in the third book. From the beginning of the romance, characters that engage in sea journeys are regularly blown off course by storms. Cavanagh in *Cherished Torment* contends that these storms or winds are intimately correlated with characters' emotions and virtues, but also function as the means of fate to direct the course of events (93-94, 98, 102-105). Whereas Cavanagh's insistence on the pervasiveness of pathetic fallacy in the *Urania* is certainly well-founded, her suggestion that the wind supports virtuous and punishes faulty characters (98) seems not entirely convincing. Of course, as she notes (65, 156), transgressive characters like Nereana in the first and Antissia in the second part do not manage to reach St. Maura (I.ii.195, II.i.51), which can be read as a judgement on their shortcomings. Yet, while Nereana suffers isolation and want in the wake of the storm and is thus punished for her arrogance and transgressive behaviour (I.ii.196-201), Antissia is brought directly to Delos where she is cured from her follies by Melissea (II.i.52-54).²⁹² Moreover, the first protagonists to be blown off course by a storm are Urania and her companions, even though Urania is not a transgressive character like Antissia or Nereana (I.i.45-46). I would hence suggest that rather than reading storms as outright punishments, they should be understood as the representation of emotions that are in some way excessive. Thus, the storm that drives off Urania and her companions signals that her love for Parselius is misguided, which is further confirmed when Urania subsequently remains enchanted in the Throne of Love on Cyprus (I.i.49-50). Likewise, Nereana's passion for Steriamus is presumptuous and

²⁹² Cf. also Cavanagh's claim that Antissia's punishment continues even after her cure (*Cherished* 75). However, Antissia's capture by the giant is not due to wayward winds (II.ii.252).

excessive given that it incites her to follow him despite his rejection (I.ii.193-194); and the storm that blows Antissia off course arises in response to her “frenzies and distempers” (II.i.50) and Dolorindus’ angry reaction to her singing (II.i.51). Indeed, the text explicitly connects the storm with Dolorindus’ reaction, stating that “as if his angry words storming in him had had congruities with the seas and winds, a storme rose” (II.i.51),²⁹³ thus confirming once more the correlation between characters’ mental and emotional states and geographic displacements.

If one compares the journeying of male and female characters, one notes that their displacements are governed by different patterns. Cavanagh suggests that whereas male travel is condoned in the *Urania*, female journeys are considered transgressive (*Cherished* 77). As support for her argument she discusses the text’s valorisation of Melasinda for not leaving her country and opposes her to the examples of Nereana and Antissia (63). Both Nereana and Antissia, according to Cavanagh, do not live up to their political duties when they put their own interests before that of their countries, and this is expressed through and results in multiple separations: from their countries, from political power and from the self (64-77). While this analysis of three female characters’ travelling seems convincing in itself, it crucially neglects the examples of other female protagonists’ journeys. Thus, Pamphilia, who, unlike Nereana and Antissia, behaves responsibly both with regard to her political duties and when suffering from Amphilanthus’ neglect in Cavanagh’s opinion (76), is far more mobile than Melasinda.²⁹⁴ Moreover, staying in one’s country as a female monarch is no guarantee for security and peace in the *Urania*, as both Melasinda and Pamphilia experience political troubles when they respectively face insurrections and aggressions from other monarchs. On the contrary, the relatively immobile Melasinda seems considerably worse off than Pamphilia

²⁹³ Cavanagh also mentions an explanation of a storm in part two in which the storm is associated with Amphilanthus’ inner turmoil (*Cherished* 110).

²⁹⁴ See also Hackett’s comments on Nereana’s and Pamphilia’s travelling in “Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant?” (135-136).

in this respect, given that she has to consent to marry her political rival Rodolindus to prevent civil war in the first part (I.i.79-80) and physically falls into the hands of rebels in the second part (II.i.176-182). Pamphilia, in comparison, is never reduced to such dire circumstances, which, I would argue, is due to two reasons: her family connections and her active participation in a practice of social visiting. In terms of family, Pamphilia with her three brothers and two cousins is in a far more comfortable situation with regard to political and military support than the isolated Melasinda. Yet, contrary to Melasinda, Pamphilia also engages in social networking practices when she repeatedly visits her parents in Morea, her aunt in Naples, or her cousin Urania in Albania, and she also receives visitors such as Antissia, Veralinda or Philarchos in Pamphilia. This form of travelling, which, as mentioned above, very likely reflects the social experience of Wroth herself, is not considered as transgressive in the *Urania*, regardless whether it is practiced by male or female protagonists.²⁹⁵ The more romance-like forms of travelling, however, i.e. the pursuit of a quest or relatively uncontrolled wandering, are the privilege of male protagonists and are generally represented as transgressive in the text when practiced by female characters like Nereana.²⁹⁶ As a consequence, the itineraries of male characters are far more varied and larger in scope than those of female protagonists, who principally travel back and forth between their homes, the homes of friends and relatives, the home of the seer Melissea on Delos, and places of enchantment. In other words, they commute between these characteristic centres of convergence in the *Urania* and hence decisively contribute to their establishment. In conclusion then, it is not female travel in general that is transgressive in Wroth's text, but certain types of journeys to what I called outposts that are reserved for male characters. Yet, incidentally, the male protagonist whose travelling habits most closely resemble those of

²⁹⁵ See also Rickman's remark concerning Frances Villiers that as a noblewoman "she was supposed to be moving about from country to city and from estate to estate; and she was also supposed to give orders and directions. Action was built into her social status" (175).

²⁹⁶ For an example to the contrary—arguably the only one—see section 4.3 "Interpretative Freedom and Closure" below.

female protagonists like Pamphilia and Urania, namely Rosindy, is also the ruler whose realm proves the most stable and whose sphere of influence by the end of the *Urania* has become largest next to that of the Emperor Amphilanthus. This suggests that even for male characters, unrestricted romance travelling is not completely unproblematic.

A final distinctive pattern of geographic displacements in the *Urania* that needs to be addressed is the double fan structure of the fourth book in part one, which I described in the section on narrative strands.²⁹⁷ This double fan structure is immediately visible when the itineraries of the characters that serve as the narrative focus of the individual strands are mapped out. There is an outward movement from Mantinea, where the court of Morea sojourns, as the married couples travel homeward to their various countries, and a second outward movement occurs from Pamphilia, where Amphilanthus disappears due to the enchantment of the Hell of Deceit. No other book is so rigidly structured in terms of characters' geographic displacements, and the absence of confused spatial itineraries visually translates Wroth's renunciation of her usual technique of interlacement in this book. Indeed, the extent to which this book is structured differently from all of the other books makes one wonder if Wroth did not originally intend it to conclude her romance, possibly with a final reunion of all the protagonists in Morea to witness the marriage of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus after their reunion and journey to Naples. However, the beginning of the manuscript continuation, which, in the first bifolio, moves from Pamphilia and Amphilanthus' journey to Naples to the loss of Parselius' children without visible interruption in the handwriting, does not support the hypothesis that Wroth originally planned a conclusive ending to her romance but altered her plans to include a second generation once the first part was published. Still, it needs to be remembered that the fourth book of part one is clearly distinct from all the other books of the *Urania* in terms of its rigid organisation of narrative

²⁹⁷ Cf. 186-188.

structures and geographic displacements, with the consequence that it is also the book that raises most compellingly the expectation of closure on the part of the reader.

The clarity that marks Wroth's organisation of geographic displacements in the fourth book of the first part stands in stark contrast to the general lack of overarching patterns governing characters' movements in the whole of the *Urania*. Indeed, there is no overarching quest structure that would span across all of the romance. Instead, distinct travelling patterns of female visiting and male questing crystallize within the compass of the individual books, resulting in the presence of points of convergence and outposts. Thus the teleological perspective of a gradual expansion of the Western empire to the East becomes relegated to the background in the *Urania* despite the repeated mention of male protagonists' conquests or military interventions to quell political unrest from Vienna and Italy to Persia and Tartaria. Hence, settings and displacements in the *Urania* seem to signify most richly when considered on a smaller scale. In her analysis of Musidorus' and Pyrocles' wandering in the *New Arcadia*, Das concentrates on an overview of the protagonists' itineraries across Asia Minor and suggests that this overview of their zigzagging course is significant because it illustrates the protagonists' "purposeful indirection" (79) and challenges the ideal of adopting "a course as 'straight' as Euarchus [sic] virtue" (80). In the *Urania*, the confused itineraries of the many protagonists are less easily reduced to such general ideological interpretations. Rather, it is important to note Wroth's consistent use of geographical space and movement in space to convey characters' mental states in ways that recall Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Yet to read settings and displacements in a symbolic mode or in terms of pathetic fallacy are not the only ways of reading that the *Urania* invites, as the foregoing analysis has shown. Unlike *The Faerie Queene*, Wroth's text is just as much anchored in contemporary maps of Eastern Europe and Asia Minor as Sidney's *New Arcadia* is according to Das (77). This concrete geopolitical background of the *Urania*, which for a purely symbolic and allegorical reading of

space is not necessary, allows Wroth to suggest other modes of interpretation to her readers, most notably a *roman-à-clef* mode. The introduction of realistic details jars with the often fantastic character of Wroth's text and leads readers to look for topical references to events associated with the places depicted or to interpret events in foreign places as reflecting on national issues or family matters. At the same time, Wroth's focus on Eastern Europe and Asia as well as the effacing of any realistic sense of distance further the impression of a fantastic universe where enchantments can materialise out of thin air and healing waters cure love. It appears then that Wroth's representation of space and movement in space in the *Urania*, though often somewhat confusing if mapped out, decisively contributes to shaping readers' attitudes to the text, accentuating the need for readers to consider the text from more than one interpretive angle.

3.5 Published Part One vs. Manuscript Continuation Part Two

In my analysis of the narrative structures in the *Urania*, I have discussed the most notable formal characteristics of Wroth's text that can be found both in the published part and the manuscript continuation of the romance. However, several critics, like for instance Lewalski in her early study of the *Urania* or Hannay in her recent biography of Wroth, have commented on what they perceive to be differences between the two parts of Wroth's work. Thus, Lewalski states that in part two, "most of the stories are by and about the new major characters: the children of the principals in Part I" and that "Wroth recounts much more of the action directly, as omniscient narrator, and often employs a tone of irony and bantering wit" (282). Furthermore she adds that "The romance elements of Part II overlie a more realistic

world than that of Part I" (285). Hannay, adopting remarks by Cavanagh and Kinney, argues for a difference in artistic quality between the first and second parts:²⁹⁸

Judged as a polished literary work, Wroth's manuscript continuation of *Urania* is not completely successful. There are too many inconsistencies in what Cavanagh terms the "narrative morass" just before the abrupt end of the manuscript, although some narrative strands do approach closure (*Cherished Torment* 51, 217). There are too many characters who make unexplained exits and entrances. The story of the lost children is "frankly incoherent," as Kinney notes ("Beleeve this butt a fiction" 245-247), [...]. (MSLW 265)

Both Lewalski and Hannay address several structural characteristics in their comments on the manuscript continuation. Lewalski's more descriptive remarks note changes with regard both to the characters that serve as the focus of narrative strands and the increased presence of the main narrator, i.e. the balance between the intradiegetic and the hypodiegetic level of the narrative. In addition, she mentions the frequency of narratorial irony and vaguely speaks of a "more realistic world," without specifying the sources of this increased realism. Hannay's critique touches on other structural aspects, suggesting that the second part suffers from a lack of coherence caused by Wroth's handling of narrative strands, characters' geographic displacements and plotting. However, none of these assertions by Lewalski, Hannay and the critics Hannay cites are backed up by a detailed comparison of the narrative structures in the first and second parts of the romance. Rather, these statements reflect the different critics' intuitions and constitute an attempt to explain what features of part two are responsible for their different reading experience.²⁹⁹ In the remainder of this section I propose to revisit all the structural aspects covered so far, adopting a more comparative perspective in order to identify structural differences between the two parts of the *Urania*. As well as testing whether

²⁹⁸ For a discussion that goes counter Hannay's assessment of the the second part's artistic quality, see Lamb, "Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder." Lamb claims that "Rather than an artistic flaw, the disorder of Wroth's *Second Part* exposes the increasingly painful inadequacy of romance conventions to shadow the events occurring in the lives around her" (256). Thus, according to Lamb, "the *Second Part* represents a deliberate and masterly dismantling of the genre of romance" (249).

²⁹⁹ Two other critics who have analysed what in their opinion differentiates the two parts are Kinney in "Beleeve this butt a fiction" and Lamb in "Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder." However, their explanations of what Lamb calls "a pervading sense that something is amiss in this narrative world" (247) comment less on structural features than on the different representation of the authorial female voice and of romance marvels respectively.

Lewalski's and Hannay's comments are borne out by a detailed structural analysis, this section will therefore also serve as a summary and conclusion of the chapter as a whole.

The general characteristics and functions of the narrator do not differ from the first to the second part—nor do the standards by which storytelling is evaluated in the romance. The extradiegetic gender-neutral narrator remains the same, as do the various guiding functions she fulfills, her inward orientation towards the romance's protagonists and her stance of reticence and discretion. However, there is one notable difference between the two parts with respect to the narrator, namely her increased presence in the second part noted by Lewalski. An analysis of the amount of text consecrated to the intradiegetic, the hypodiegetic and the hypo-hypodiegetic level confirms the importance of the main narrator and illustrates to what extent she determines the course of the romance, even though readers may at first sight be more struck by the frequency of intradiegetic narrators.³⁰⁰ Indeed, the intradiegetic level makes up 69% of the first part of the *Urania*, the hypodiegetic level 28.6% and the hypo-hypodiegetic level 2.4%. In the second part, the amount of text told by the main narrator increases markedly, with the intradiegetic level occupying 82.9%, the hypodiegetic 16.9% and the hypo-hypodiegetic level only 0.2% of the text.³⁰¹ Lewalski is thus right in her judgement that the extradiegetic narrator is more prominent in part two. In addition, the hypodiegetic narratives are not only reduced with regard to the percentage of text they make up, but also with respect to their number. Whereas in the first part there is an inset tale, be it hypo- or hypo-hypodiegetic, per 9.3 pages of text, the ratio in the second part is one to 13.8 pages, indicating that there are longer stretches of text told by the extradiegetic narrator in between inset tales. As a consequence, the narrative appears to progress more quickly in part two,

³⁰⁰ For more information on my methods of analysis and their results see fig. 9 "The *Urania* in Figures" in the Appendix.

³⁰¹ This "shift between Part 1 and Part 2 in the ratio of primary to inset narrative" (294) is also noted by Alexander, who comments that whereas the first part "is constantly looking backwards, filling in the gaps in its past," the second part "seems more convinced of the reality of the world it has created—it is far less secondary, the product of Part 1 rather than of external forces" (294).

which is especially the case in the second book where the narrator brings many protagonists' adventures to a conclusion or near to a conclusion.

Concerning the transitions between narrative levels and strands, there seems to be no difference between the two parts except that the second part more consistently provides transitions between narrative strands than the first if one disregards the break in the manuscript continuation. Whereas links between narrative strands are sometimes lacking in the third and especially in the fourth book of the first part, practically all the transitions in the second part are commented on by the narrator. The lack of coherence that Hannay criticises in the second part is therefore not primarily due to Wroth's handling of narrative strands, or at least not due to the absence of transitions between strands. These links are all the more important, given that the second part introduces a considerable number of new narrative focal points, as will be discussed in more detail below. For the same reason, updates are crucial in the second part, and it is not surprising that many transitions are explained by the need to catch up on the various protagonists' adventures. Yet, in spite of the narrator's frequent reminders, the reader experiences difficulty in keeping track of some of the protagonists, in particular those of the younger generation. The adventures of the royal children are so sketchy, as Hannay says, that there are many blanks between the moment they are enchanted and the moment they reappear. These blanks are never filled in in detail, and the successive enchantments affecting the royal offspring also remain shady although some of the princes and princesses relate part of their adventures. The narrator's reminders then, even if supplemented by characters' explanations, are not sufficient to fill the blanks existing in the second part. Moreover, some of the narrator's retro- or prospective information even provokes confusion because it is inconsistent with other events the reader learns about. Thus, some of the chronological problems to be discussed below, as for example the announcement of Rodomandro's death followed by his immediate reappearance (II.ii.406-407), can be

accounted for by such erroneous or unclear updates. Still, in view of the work's size, such inconsistencies are rare, and occurring near the end of the romance, the problem of Rodomandro's death could obviously be a result of the unfinished state of the manuscript continuation.

With respect to the narrator's emotional and moral comments on the narrative, I see no difference between the first and the second parts and do not think, like Lewalski, that the manuscript continuation is especially marked by "a tone of irony and bantering wit." In my view, the narrator in both parts mixes sympathy and irony to achieve a balance of compassion and criticism. In the second part, there are some comments in which the narrator appears to be more explicitly critical than in the first part, as for instance when she condemns lust and inconstancy in connection with Amphilanthus' affair with the Queen of Candia:

Curst bee Vaine beauty, lewed desires, unchaste imbraces, while truth, true deserte, faithfull love, Constantcye (the rarest Vertue of Vertus) are cast of, cast of, forgotten, layd aside, nay lost for wantoness, lust and baseness. (II.i.59)

Here the narrator speaks out against vices without having recourse to irony and rhetorical questions, which is rather unusual. Yet, even though the narrator voices strong criticism of unfaithful lovers and implicitly of Amphilanthus, who is primarily concerned, the attitude of sympathy is retained and Amphilanthus is not censured. Hence, Lewalski's impression of a more critical and ironic vein in the second part is not primarily due to the narrator's comments. Rather, it stems from Wroth's exposure of "the limitations of the chivalric stance" (74) in the second part, as Salzman remarks in *Literary Culture in Jacobean England*. As Cavanagh details, Wroth's presentation of her ageing protagonists deflates their heroic qualities and results in considerable irony or even "unkind" humour in part two ("Romancing" 31).³⁰² The depiction of aging and failing knights is of course problematic per se for the

³⁰² For the same reason Hackett describes the second part as having "a general air of amused maturity and wry nostalgia" ("Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant?" 138).³⁰³ Kinney in "'Beleeve this butt a fiction'" offers an alternative interpretation, reading these instances of "comic realism" as "a kind of romance burn-out" (160), that is, "a growing impatience with that mode" (159) because "romance protocols are inadequate to her ends" (160).

romance genre, concerned, as Cooper underlines, with the idea of “perfectibility” (10). Wroth consciously exploits this source of irony and the expectation of ideal chivalric heroes that the genre raises,³⁰³ which might also explain Lewalski’s comment that “The romance elements of Part II overlies a more realistic world than that of Part I” (285).

Just as the extradiegetic narrator’s general characteristics and functions remain the same in the second part, so do those of the romance’s narratee, mentioned equally rarely in both parts. Thus the ideal of a compassionate, sympathetic, discreet and yet discerning attitude modelled on the extradiegetic narrator’s interventions and projected onto the narratee as well as, by extension, the readers of the *Urania*, pervades the whole of Wroth’s work. It comes therefore as no surprise that critics like Hackett and Edith Snook have sensed the importance of this particular stance and tried to deduce from it what Wroth’s own expectations were with regard to her readers or even the reception of women’s writing in general. I would situate my own take on this question of critical sympathy and discretion somewhere in between Hackett and Snook. Like Snook (156, 161), I think that Wroth is actively trying to shape her readers, even though by very indirect means, so that this attitude is rather an ideal she wishes to propagate than a reflection of her own expectations, as Hackett suggests (“Yet tell me some such fiction” 62). However, I do not see Wroth as breaking ground for women’s writing or women’s authority as writers in general, as Snook’s discussion suggests (147, 161, 166-167), but would argue that this ideal readerly attitude proposed by Wroth feeds into a more general model of courteous conduct that is applicable to social interaction, as well as to reading books in general or the *Urania* in particular.

According to Kinney, this “impatience” already lies behind the more satirical England episodes at the end of the first part (160).

³⁰³ Kinney in “Beleeve this butt a fiction” offers an alternative interpretation, reading these instances of “comic realism” as “a kind of romance burn-out” (160), that is, “a growing impatience with that mode” (159) because “romance protocols are inadequate to her ends” (160). According to Kinney, this “impatience” already lies behind the more satirical England episodes at the end of the first part (160).

Wroth's methods of structuring the text by means of narrative levels and strands are similar in both parts, too. The second part continues to switch from one narrative level to another at intervals, the preference for homodiegetic narrators and the tendency to narrativize conversations remain, and also the types of the inset tales included are the same. That is, all the three types illustrated in the section on narrative levels can be found: tales with an inherent link to the intradiegetic narrative, mirror tales or tales for the sake of storytelling. The majority of interpolated stories serve to explain the newly introduced characters' origins and fates, as suggested by Lewalski's claim that "most of the stories are by and about the new major characters" (282). However, I would add, Lewalski's designation "new major characters" and their equation with "the children of the principals in Part I" is somewhat misleading since, first, not all of these newly introduced characters are royal offspring and, second, although the protagonists of the younger generation are certainly of importance in part two, the dominant focus of Wroth's romance remains the original protagonists from part one.³⁰⁴

Where the second part differs from the first is, as has already been mentioned, with regard to the frequency with which changes of narrative level occur, especially if one considers the length of the two books in question. Beginning with the rarer hypo-hypodiegetic tales, one remarks that from rare they have become virtually non-existent in the second part, with only one example in the first book. This development continues the trend begun in the second half of the first part, which also contains only one hypo-hypodiegetic narrative. The fact that such tales within tales within the main narrative more or less cease to occur, suggests, as has been argued before, that Wroth might be counteracting the increasing complexity of the narrative on the intradiegetic level by reducing the number of moves from

³⁰⁴ An analysis of the amount of text focusing on the older and younger generation respectively in the second part shows that the romance clearly accords more textual space to the older generation. In terms of the number of pages concentrating on older or younger characters or featuring older or younger intradiegetic narrators, the ratio is roughly two to one in the first book of the second part and even three to one in the second book.

one narrative level to another. In other words, the more complex the main narrative, the fewer inset tales there are, with the result that the extradiegetic narrator receives more textual space, and hence importance, than intra- or even hypodiegetic narrators.

The hypothesis that Wroth contains the narrative's complexity by balancing the number of transitions between narrative levels and strands has been tested with respect to the first three books of the first part and proves equally apt with regard to the two books in the second part. They contain fifteen and sixteen inset tales respectively if the hypo-hypodiegetic story in the first book is added to the fourteen hypodiegetic tales. Compared to the length of the two books, this corresponds roughly to the thirteen inset tales in the third book of part one, which contains the highest number of transitions between narrative strands. As will be discussed in more detail below, there are not as many changes of narrative strands in the two books of the second part, yet especially the first book boasts enough structural complexities to necessitate a simplification of another narrative aspect. In fact, although the reduction of embedded tales certainly simplifies the reader's task, it cannot completely counterbalance the structural problems this book presents.

For the second book, on the other hand, the method seems successful in limiting the difficulties the reader faces, though it has to be admitted that this book is less problematic to begin with. One could even argue that, given its smaller number of different narrative focal points, the book could have contained more hypodiegetic or hypo-hypodiegetic stories without becoming structurally too complex for the reader. It may well be then that the main reason for the relative scarcity of inset tales in the last book of the romance is not so much its structural complexity, but the fact that the book is more concerned with bringing the various protagonists' stories on the intradiegetic level to a conclusion and therefore accelerates the narrative rhythm by eliminating analepses that slow the main narrative down. A similar effect

has also been observed in book three of the first part, although in that case, the acceleration is even more pronounced due to the greater number of transitions between narrative strands.

An analysis of the number of narrative strands and transitions per book in the second part does not yield results that are in any way striking at first sight. Although the number of transitions is rather high with twenty-five and twenty-eight within books one and two respectively, this can be explained by the fact that with 190 and 225 pages, these two books are twenty-five and sixty pages longer than the average book of the first part. Far more noteworthy than the number of transitions is the large number of focal points of the different narrative strands in the first book of the second part. Like the last book of the first part and contrary to all of the remaining books, book one of part two is exceptional because the number of different characters that serve as focal points exceeds the number of transitions between narrative strands. This means that there are not many characters that function as the focus of a narrative strand more than once, and if they do, they tend to reappear in differently combined groups of characters. What is more, a large number of characters serving as focal points are not known from the first part, but only appear in the second.

The discussion of the first part has shown that Wroth generally limits the number of new narrative focal points she adds from one book to the next. In the first part, the number of these additions grows from six to eight in the course of the first three books before it jumps to thirteen in the fourth, which, as has been shown, differs structurally from the others. In comparison, the two books of the second part add respectively thirteen and seven new focal points. Hence, a resemblance between the last book of the first and the first book of the second part suggests itself, whereas the final book of Wroth's work rather seems to return to the pattern of the first three books of the published part. As further analysis reveals, such a resemblance between I.iv. and II.i., on the one hand, and between I.i. to I.iii. and II.ii., on the

other, exists indeed and helps to illustrate what causes some of the difficulties readers face when reading the second part of the *Urania*, and especially the first book.

Apart from the greater number of focal points, a second aspect that distinguishes the fourth from the first three books of the first part is the fact that about a third of the new characters serving as narrative focus, namely five out of the thirteen, are not previously introduced, that is, they are never seen or mentioned before they appear in I.iv. Similarly in the first book of the second part many of the new focal points have never been encountered before. Indeed, the ratio is even twice as high as in I.iv., with ten out of the thirteen focuses not introduced to the reader beforehand. This fact already goes some way towards explaining readers' difficulties since, on top of all the characters that have already made their appearance, readers are abruptly confronted with new ones whose importance for the whole of the romance is difficult to gauge. In the last book of the published part, this problem is counteracted by the rigid fan-structure of the text, which contains all these new and previously not introduced focal points, that is, the noblemen searching for the lost Amphilanthus. Such a fan structure can also be found in the second part. It commences after the first third of the book, but unlike the fan structures in book four of part one, it is abandoned in midway and fails to counterbalance the proliferation of new and minor characters.

The reason for the failure of the fan structure may partly lie in the incomplete nature of the manuscript continuation. At a crucial moment, one bifolio sheet is missing from the manuscript (II.ii.60), removed later by family members of Wroth's or perhaps by the author herself according to Gossett and Mueller (II.xxv-xxvi). The missing pages are exactly those that would probably have initiated the fan structure by reporting the loss of the royal children and announcing the subsequent search for them by the various young knights in Morea at the time. As it is, readers are suddenly confronted with the new characters Clavarindo, Follietto and Denia after the break in the manuscript and with some references to searching knights and

to enchanted royal children. Only after a series of rather confusing adventures does Clavarindo reveal his identity and tell Clianté, and thus the readers, about the twelve knights sent out to search for the lost royal children (II.i.67-68).³⁰⁵

Yet the missing pages are not the only reason why the fan structure is a failure. Although, following Clavarindo's explanation, readers understand why the narrative turns to different young knights, these are difficult to identify or even differentiate because they are not only minor characters themselves, but also the offspring of minor characters that have rarely if ever appeared before. Hence, it is difficult to place the young knights within the framework of known protagonists or families. Moreover, whereas some of them are involved in quite extensive adventures and hence acquire a certain individual identity, six of them are referred to only twice,³⁰⁶ namely when they are imprisoned by the giant Lamurandus (II.i.106-7) and when they are released again by Amphilanthus—though by that time, they have been reduced to “four of the new knights of Morea” (II.i.186). Of all the young knights involved in the search, only the comic character Follietto appears again in the following book. Thus, contrary to the noblemen at the end of the published part, who after their mostly fruitless search for Amphilanthus all return to their homes to await the Emperor's return and orders there, the young knights of the manuscript continuation are left stranded somewhere or disappear as quickly as they have surfaced and hence probably belong to the characters whose “unexplained exits and entrances” (264) Hannay criticises.³⁰⁷

The first book of the second part then appears to be an unsuccessful combination of the structure of the first three books of part one, where most of the protagonists converge in a certain place, and of the fan structure in I.iv. At the beginning of the manuscript continuation,

³⁰⁵ Out of these twelve young knights, the following eleven are identified by name: Clavarindo, Follietto, Licandro, Lusandrino, Nummurandro, Lenulphus, Allsophebo, Dullclastrino, Doridelso, Doliandro and Chiniandro.

³⁰⁶ These are Lenulphus, Allsophebo, Dullclastrino, Doridelso, Doliandro and Chiniandro.

³⁰⁷ It should be noted that in book four of the first part too, it is rather difficult to identify all of the eleven noblemen searching for Amphilanthus. Only the adventures of seven of them are presented in the text. The others are merely identified in passing and not even necessarily in connection with the search for Amphilanthus. However, thanks to the clear structure of the book, this does not impede readers' comprehension of the text.

many of the protagonists from the first part gather in Morea, cherishing memories and exchanging news. So far, readers only face some chronological problems that will be discussed below and a syntactical uncertainty in the text which confuses the ship of the royal children with that of Antissia and Dolorindus (II.i.54). With the break in the manuscript after about a third of the book, however, the structure alters, and the second third is dominated by the young knights in search of the royal children. The last third resembles the beginning of the book, with various groups of protagonists ending up at Lindafillia's court, in Melasinda's realm or on Lamurandus' island. Although this last part is easier to follow again, all in all the first book of the second part seems to be the most inconsistent book of the romance with regard to the organization of narrative strands. This in turn results in problems of cohesion that hamper readers' comprehension of the text.

In the second book of the second part, the narrative structures pose fewer problems, even though the book does not appear particularly unified due to the numerous narrative transitions it contains. However, contrary to the first book, the number of different narrative focal points is smaller—only seven characters serve as a new focus and all of them are known to the reader beforehand. Moreover, most of the narrative strands in the second book are concerned with protagonists from the first part, especially Parselius and Selarinus. Indeed, the second book brings several protagonists' stories to a definite ending and seems bent on reaching a conclusion with regard to the relation between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, as well as the fates of the younger generation. With respect to the overall structure in which the narrative strands are arranged, the second book continues the pattern found at the ending of the first, with protagonists gathering in different courts, notably Ollorandus' court in Prague, that of Urania and Steriamus in Albania, the Tartarian and eventually the Morean court. Although this must of course remain a conjecture, one can assume that had the continuation been finished, the Faire Designe and Amphilanthus would have broken the enchantment guarding

Lindafillia, and the ultimate point of convergence of the protagonists, both of the younger and older generation, would then have been Lindafillia's court in Persia.³⁰⁸ In general, then, the second book reverts to the structure of the first three books of the first part rather than continuing the fan structure initiated in the last book of part one and abandoned again in the first book of the continuation. This return to the structure used in the first part does not assure cohesion per se, but it goes some way towards resolving some of the problems created by the constant structural changes in the previous book—all the more so because the last book focuses more consistently on the protagonists of the first part, regrouping them in different places or having them return to their respective courts. Thus, although it does not appear particularly unified, the final book of the romance is more cohesive than might have been expected for an unfinished text. I do not quite agree therefore with Hannay's assertion that the continuation suffers most from "too many inconsistencies in what Cavanagh terms the 'narrative morass' just before the abrupt end of the manuscript" (265), but would rather locate the most important structural problems of the second part in Wroth's inconsistent organisation of narrative strands in the first book of the continuation.

Another issue which presents readers with difficulties and which neither Lewalski nor Hannay mention explicitly is the time frame of the manuscript continuation. Although in general the time frame functions in the same way as in the first part and flexibly accommodates characters' adventures, readers are more often confronted with chronological problems in part two. Firstly, there are two chronological inconsistencies in the second book

³⁰⁸ My conjecture relies on what the narrative structures of the romance reveal about its projected ending. I am not trying to make an argument about whether Wroth intended to finish her work or purposely left off in mid-sentence. Lamb offers two intriguing discussions of why Wroth did not want or could not finish part two. In "Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder" she argues that the unfinished ending "point[s] to the gap between the anticipated father-son relationship of romance [between Amphilanthus and the Faire Designe] and the real-life father-son relationship [between William Herbert and his illegitimate son by Wroth] that never materialized" (256). Moreover, her discussion suggests that the ending should be read as an expression of Wroth's growing "sense of powerlessness over the real-life events surrounding her and members of her family" (254), that is, as an expression of "the contingency [...] of Wroth's [power] as author" (255). In "The Biopolitics of Romance" Lamb postulates that Wroth could not finish the romance because its inherent genealogical agenda that allows Wroth to represent herself as a Sidney, and thus to authorise her own writing, is fundamentally at odds with her maternal interest in the acknowledgment of her illegitimate son shadowed by the Faire Designe (167, 174, 188).

because the text gives different indications with regard to the protagonists' movements in time, so that they end up being apparently in two places at the same time. The first character concerned is Selarinus, whose erring from Lesbos to two different islands does not work out chronologically (II.i.186, II.ii.233), and the second character is Amphilionus, who attends Pamphilia's wedding in Morea (II.ii.276), when elsewhere in the text he is said to be recovering from his wounds in Perga and then held captive in a castle (II.ii.338). The mere presence of these inconsistencies is indicative of the complexity of the second part and possibly its unfinished nature, since it is not usual for Wroth to overlook such details. On the other hand, precisely because of this complexity, these two inconsistencies also go unnoticed more easily than they would in a structurally less complicated text. After all, to my knowledge, neither the editors nor any other scholars have so far commented on these chronological problems.

Whereas these inconsistencies can be regarded as rare slips that Wroth might have corrected later on, there are also other more fundamental chronological problems in the second part, namely the continual uncertainty as to how long the time spans between any two events are and the introduction of the royal children, that is, a second generation of protagonists.³⁰⁹ In the first part, age differences between individual characters can be overlooked relatively easily even though, as has been seen, Antissius magically transforms from a "little Boy" (I.i.50) into a knighted ruler and lover in a time span that does not seem to exceed the duration of Dalinea's pregnancy. In the second part, however, the age issue becomes much more problematic, given that not only three but four generations are involved and that some of the protagonists actually grow old and die. As a result, readers are faced with the confusing situation that not all of the characters seem to age at the same rate, that is, some

³⁰⁹ As Das notes, "Wroth makes only one direct reference to the actual passage of years between the two parts" (183 n29) when mentioning "the Prince of Transilvania, who longe beefore (as some twenty yeers), in the search of the Emperour when first mist [due to the enchantment of the Hell of Deceit] (as you may see in the first parte of this history), was taken prisoner by a Giant in the Adriattick sea" (II.ii.301).

protagonists like Amphilanthus or Polarchos remain vigorous,³¹⁰ equalling the exploits of the younger generation, while others like Ollorandus and Parselius grow old and die (II.ii.366-367, 402). Furthermore, the royal children that are first seen as small children—Candiana is even designated as a “new born” baby when she and her brother are enchanted (II.i.2)—suddenly reappear as young adults or adolescents although no indication of several years having past is given in the text.³¹¹ This in itself could be seen as a generic feature of romance, but it causes problems in this instance because the time gaps that are logically necessary for the new princes and princesses to come of age do not seem to affect the older protagonists in the same way.³¹² Thus, age discrepancies or rather discrepancies of ageing become more pronounced in the second part of the *Urania*.

Finally, not only the chronology of events and the intervening time spans cause problems, but also the various proleptic indications given in the text complicate rather than facilitate the reader’s task because they seem in conflict with what is actually told and the order in which it is told. The ending of Lindafillia’s enchantment by the Faire Designe, for instance, appears to be foretold by the main narrator in the context of Steriamus’ welcome of his successful young son Stervanus at the court of Albania:

Steriamus [...] giving order for a most solem and stately wellcome to bee prepared for thes brave knights [Stervanus, the Faire Designe and Andromarko] which were to com, who showld bee the wellcomest of all younge ones in the world, even equall to his eldest sonn [Floristello], who soone after arrived ther also, and beefore the other brave Princes went, all accompaning the faire Designe to end the miraculous inchantment. Whether all princes came to banquet, and triumph in the glory of the earths glory and his incomparable mistres, Lindafillia, the most rarely lovely and most Vertuously chaste Percian. (II.ii.366)

The narrator’s prolepsis suggests a clear chronology of events, that is, the arrival of Stervanus with his companions followed by the arrival of Floristello and the subsequent

³¹⁰ Towards the end of the romance Polarchos jokes about his advanced age and failing forces (II.ii.376), but this does not prevent him from fighting or accompanying Amphilanthus.

³¹¹ In addition, the number, names and respective age of Parselius’ lost children were revised by Wroth while working on the manuscript continuation and therefore seem somewhat unstable.

³¹² This problem has also been noted by Kinney when she notes that “one of them [the children], seen by Selarinus as a very small boy at the start of *Urania* II, is two hundred pages later admired as a noble youth in Tempe by Parselius, even though only a few months seem to have elapsed in the lives of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus in the interim” (“Beleeve this butt a fiction” 159).

departure of the Faire Designe with all the princes at the Albanian court to end Lindafillia's enchantment. Moreover, the announcement of Floristello's arrival at the Albanian court "soone after [...] and beefore the other brave Princes went" implies that these events are to take place in the near future. Yet at the end of the romance, Andromarko reappears alone on the island of Cyprus and informs Amphilanthus that the Faire Designe is looking for him due to "(beeing certainly informed by severall wisards, especially the sage Melissea), that the great Inchantment will nott bee concluded thes many yeeres" (II.ii.418), and then only with the assistance of Amphilanthus.

Equally confusing for readers is the already mentioned issue of Rodomandro's death, which is announced by the text, but followed by Rodomandro's immediate reappearance on the next page (II.ii.406-407). I suspect that contrary to Cavanagh's speculation, this confusion is neither due to a mistake on Wroth's part nor intended by her (*Cherished* 190), but rather a consequence of Wroth's ambivalent use of the time indication "now." After the account of Parselius' "Funeralles" (II.ii.406), the narrator describes the Queen of Morea's extended mourning for her son and her eventual death some three years later, followed by the King's decision to leave the rule of Morea to Rosindy and to spend the rest of his life in the company of Pamphilia, whom he finds widowed upon his arrival in Tartaria (II.ii.406). The King of Morea's decision to leave is announced by the following sentence in the text: "She [his wife] beeing gonn, and now noe ty of affection left, the good olde man resolved to goe and traviele in his old yeeres into Tartaria" (II.ii.406). The word "now" suggests to readers that, in narratological terms, the account of the Queen's mourning and death, the King's journey to Tartaria and the death of Rodomandro and soon after his and Pamphilia's son is a summary, that is, an account of events at an increased pace. As a consequence, when the narrator, after mentioning Pamphilia's mourning for her son, continues with the sentence, "Now all funeralls past, the stranger [Princes] returne, with this satisfaction of all truthe in love and gratefullnes

for the honor dunn to the Morean Court by their presence” (II.ii.406), it seems logical for readers that these “funeralls” refer to the death of the Queen of Morea, Rodomandro and Pamphilia’s son. However, I would propose that what we are dealing with in this passage is not a summary of events but an extended prolepsis,³¹³ meaning that “Now all funeralls past” refers in fact to Parselius’ “Funeralles” and signals the narrator’s return to the narrative present after a foreshadowing of events to come. In contrast, the earlier “now” in “She beeing gonn, and now noe ty of affection left” would then be synonymous to ‘thus’ or ‘as a consequence’ rather than situating the events in question in the narrative present. This hypothesis is supported by the description of the return of the princes “Now all funeralls past.” Firstly, this ties in with “the arivall of many brave princes, who came Volluntarily to condole the worlds loss in Parselius” (II.ii.405) mentioned earlier in the text, and, secondly, the wording “the honor dunn to the Morean Court by their presence” strongly suggests that these “funeralls” take place in Morea and not in Tartaria after the death of Rodomandro and Pamphilia’s son. Moreover, the homeward journey on which Pamphilia embarks in the company of Amphilanthus and Rodomandro after attending the “funeralls,” clearly leads from Morea through Greece to Constantinople and from there by way of a storm to Cyprus (II.ii.406-407).

To sum up, the vague chronological time frame of the romance that allows Wroth to accommodate the many adventures of the protagonists in the first part of the romance is not equally successfully applied in the second, as these examples of confusing prolepses show. As a consequence, the cohesion of the text suffers, and readers feel more easily lost. The time gaps render it difficult to trace and recognise the protagonists of the younger generation, and the varying pace at which the older protagonists age only adds to these difficulties. However, seen from another perspective, the introduction of the younger generation that complicates the

³¹³ Kinney in “‘Beleeve this butt a fiction’” also interprets Rodomandro’s death as a prolepsis, but sees it as an instance of “narrative doubleness” (161), which she reads as another indication that in the second part Wroth “undoes romance” (162).

time frame also has an enriching effect. While the continuation emphasizes the presentness and immediacy of events like part one, it also integrates a more pronounced forward and backward perspective than the first part. The original protagonists develop a certain nostalgia for their youthful exploits alongside a sense of proud confidence in the promise of the younger generation, and Wroth repeatedly stages encounters between the older protagonists and their sons, daughters, nephews and nieces—even literally opposing father and son in the case of Polarchos and Andromarko (II.ii.288-289). This opposition between the younger and older generation also brings into focus the development of certain older characters, as for example Rosindy, who develops from an ambitious combative youth to an ideal ruler and something of a bookworm. Thus, on the one hand, Wroth's foregrounding of the passing of time in the second part exposes the limitations of the work's time frame or could even be said to deconstruct it from within, but, on the other hand, it accounts for much of the intriguing realism that according to Lewalski and other critics characterises the manuscript continuation.³¹⁴

With regard to settings and spatial displacements, the second part of the *Urania* also becomes more complex than the first. Indeed, as Hannay's complaint of characters' "unexplained exits and entrances" (265) suggests, the impression of incoherence in the second part is to some extent due to the difficulties readers experience in following characters' journeys in space. Again and again, there are considerable gaps in characters' itineraries and some of the places that they travel to can only be mapped roughly or not at all. Thus, the islands of Lamurandus and Tomardo, where several characters are temporarily imprisoned in part two, must be somewhere between today's Greece and Turkey, but they are never identified as existing islands,³¹⁵ and it is even more difficult to place the castle where

³¹⁴ Cf. also Hannay (*MSLW* 265) and Cavanagh ("Romancing" 29-35).

³¹⁵ The same is true in the first part for the island on which the Theatre of Love enchantment takes place, but this is at least located in a precise region, i.e. "in the Gulfe of Venice, not farre from the mouth of the Gulfe of Lepanto" (I.iii.400), whereas all that is known of Lamurandus' island is that it is "in the mid-way [...] betweene

Rodomandro and the King of Denmark are held captive (II.ii.324). Especially the magically engineered displacements of the younger generation are too abrupt to trace in detail because the text does not provide sufficiently precise information about the enchanted children but often mentions groups of them rather than identifying the children involved. As a result it is not always discernible which children are enchanted where and there even seems to be contradictory information in the text. Thus, although only Trebisound and Candiana are shown to grow up in Lesbos (II.i.2-5), Floristello and his companions are later “directed ther toward the Ile of Lesbos, wher all the young princes were inchantid” (II.i.101-102), and Andromarko and Allamietto meet a “Damoysell who told [them] that she was informed” that the princesses “were in the Isle of Lesbos, inchantid butt under the care of the sage Melissea” (II.i.145). Yet, this information from hearsay seems to be wrong since at the end of the first book, Amphilanthus frees the children, who have been kidnapped and imprisoned by the giant Lamurandus on his unnamed island (II.i.189). Moreover, even the number of the children involved seems to vary. When they set out to Naples, there appear to be nine children: the “eldest daughter” and “second sunn” of Steriamus, Selarinus’ daughter called Philistella in memory of her mother, Parselius’ daughter “Candida,” who is elsewhere in the text named Candiana, Rosindy’s daughter and two sons,³¹⁶ and the daughter and son of Leonius (II.i.22-23). The children freed by Amphilanthus however, are said to be ten, not nine (II.i.186). These “internal contradictions” (II.xxviii), as the editors call them, and Wroth’s recurrent revisions of the manuscript continuation indicate the extent to which the number, identity and role of the royal children continued to develop and change as Wroth wrote the second part, which accounts for some of their “unexplained exits and entrances” (265) and hence readers’ problems to keep track of them. Candida’s name change to Candiana, for example, only

[Amphilanthus’] countries and Pamphilia” (II.i.189), i.e. between Italy and Pamphilia. There is even less information about Tomardo’s island, except that Selarinus, Antissia and Dolorindus are unaccountably led directly from the island to Celicia, a country in Asia Minor, without any mention of a boat (II.ii.239).

³¹⁶ Of these three children, the only one to be named is Mir(r)asindo (II.ii.353), which presumably explains why the editors do not include Rosindy’s daughter and second son in the genealogical chart they provide (II.552).

occurs towards the middle of the manuscript (II.ii.202), as does the alternative version of her story, i.e. that she should grow up in the company of her brother on Lesbos (II.ii.224-225) rather than with the group of children sent to Naples. Both of these changes lead to partial revisions of the manuscript, with the result that it contains two competing versions of Candida/Candiana's childhood,³¹⁷ which obviously complicates matters for readers.³¹⁸

Whereas the settings and characters' displacements in the manuscript continuation seem more disjointed, the principles informing the universe of the *Urania* do not change, and the same modes of reading can be applied to both parts of the romance. Indeed, with the increased presence of magic in the second part, Wroth's settings more frequently accommodate the exotic and marvellous, as several young princes have to fight monsters that might have sprung right out of the *Amadis* romances.³¹⁹ In contrast, the manuscript continuation also features strikingly homely scenes of protagonists engaged in storytelling, intimate conversations or the performance of songs—scenes likely to be informed by Wroth's own social experiences.³²⁰ This stretch between the fantastic and the ordinary is also expressed in the continued simultaneous presence of symbolic places or traditional romance topoi, such as fountains,

³¹⁷ It seems likely that Wroth would have corrected such inconsistencies and contradictions had she revised her work further. Both Wroth's corrections of the manuscript and her revisions in the Kohler copy of the published first part of the *Urania* illustrate that apart from minor spelling variants in names, Wroth aimed at consistency with regard to characters' identities. As Roberts details in her introduction to the first part of the romance, one of the minor characters introduced as Emilina, the Princess of Stiria, is later in the romance called Princess of Croatia by mistake, but "Wroth detected her error and twice [out of four times] inserted the name Stiria into the printed text" (I.cxv). Another example is Wroth's decision to change the names of Mutio and Curio to Drusio and Flavio in the manuscript continuation. Wroth subsequently attempted to correct every occurrence of Mutio and Curio in the text, but—not surprisingly given the crammed sheets—she overlooked a few instances (cf. for example II.ii.292).

³¹⁸ To make matters even worse, Lindavera, the daughter of Leonius, is also lost in a boat as a small child (II.i.96)—though not as a baby like Candiana (II.i.2-3)—and it might be that her story, which is never taken up again in the manuscript, is at the origin of the second version of Candiana's childhood. See also Das, *Renaissance Romance* (192 n44).

³¹⁹ Cf. Clavarindo's (II.i.69), Trebisound's (II.ii.320-321) and the Faire Designe's (II.ii.327-28) fights with monsters. Unlike the giants that imprison the royal children and various knights or the rebels and the necromancer that cause political uproar, these monsters are not animated by political and personal motives—that is, their hate for the Moreans or their craving for power, for instance—but appear out of nowhere and for no particular reason it seems other than to test their opponents.

³²⁰ Cf. for example Hannay's assertion that Pamphilia's singing of a poem written by Amphilanthus (II.i.30-32) "demonstrates the musical culture of the Sidney family" (*MSLW* 247).

islands, magic boats or gardens, and seemingly realistic settings like the bookshop in Prague (II.ii.290-291) or the description of Padua discussed in the previous section.

As for topical or reflective readings, one notes that in the second part the amount of political turmoil seems to increase rather than decrease, and there is a notable shift from the danger of aristocratic usurpation to that of popular rebellions led by self-appointed villainous leaders.³²¹ Thus, whereas the usurpation by the evil uncle of Lindafillia reproduces a scenario familiar from the first part, i.e. the legitimate succession is endangered by someone with a weaker claim on the throne, the more frequent cause of political unrest stems from popular rebellions, as, for instance, in the cases of Argos, Denmark, Hungary and Bohemia. Considering that Wroth presumably wrote the manuscript continuation between 1620 and 1630,³²² that is, in the first decade of the Thirty Years' War and after the deposition and exile of Frederick V and Elizabeth, the changed nature and origin of political instability comes as no surprise since it probably reflects political events of the time.

With regard to characters' travelling patterns there are, in general, also no marked differences between the first and the second part of the *Urania*. The male protagonists continue to engage in romance wandering in their search for the lost children, or they join their wives to visit friends and family, creating thus the characteristic patterns of convergence and dispersal. The correlation between protagonists' erring and their mental and emotional states becomes even more obvious with the examples of Selarinus, lost in his grief over Philistella's death, and the suicidal moods of Amphilanthus. Mapping out the protagonists' itineraries reveals the gradual shift to the East that occurs in the continuation. This shift is less pronounced than might be expected from the editors' introduction to part two (II.xxix-xxx) because although the universe of the *Urania* extends further to the East, eastern countries like

³²¹ For a more detailed discussion of the recurring plot of usurpation and its variants see section 4.1.2 "Conquering and Defending a Throne" below (especially 264-268).

³²² Hannay speculates that Wroth probably wrote the continuation in "the first half of that decade" since "the tale ends with Pamphilia going to live with her father, suggesting that the manuscript, or at least the surviving manuscript, was abandoned prior to her father's remarriage and then death in 1626" (*MSLW* 263).

Persia or Tartaria are often mentioned as destinations rather than featuring as settings for intradiegetic action. In the first book for example, except for isolated happenings in Hungary or Vienna, most of the action is concentrated on Morea or on countries east of Morea, with Mantinea and Corinth, Delos, Lamurandus' island and Pamphilia as the major centres of convergence. In this book, the East comes to Morea and Pamphilia in the person of Rodomandro from Tartaria, and only Rosindy actually travels to Persia. In the second book, there is a clearer shift to the East because apart from Albania, Prague, Morea and Pamphilia, Tartaria also becomes a centre of convergence once Pamphilia moves there and receives visits from friends and family. Moreover, there is no action in Italy, for example, and Amphilanthus also neglects Vienna and Germany in favour of Prague. Still, however, eastern settings like Persia and Tartaria are mentioned rather than shown, and the most important courts remain those of Albania, Morea and Pamphilia.

The one notable difference between the first published part and the manuscript continuation is the increased and seemingly random intervention of supernatural forces that direct characters' travelling in the form of magic boats, storms, flying chariots or clouds,³²³ and which split up and disperse rather than (re)unite groups of characters. As a result, it is more difficult, as stated above, to map out characters' itineraries, which confirms critics' impression that the second part is spatially less coherent.³²⁴ Moreover, whereas the Throne of

³²³ The flying chariots or descending clouds are obviously informed by the use of intricate stage machinery that was fashionable in plays and masques in the seventeenth century and which Wroth would have witnessed at court performances of masques. Who governs these boats, storms, chariots and clouds is not always made clear in the text although one receives the impression that Melissea is behind most of the magic or providential happenings in part two. Thus, Melissea twice appears in a flying chariot (II.i.112; II.ii.321) like the mysterious lady that anoints and helps Claramundo (II.ii.242, 254-255) or the one that takes Lindafillia with her (II.ii.268). However, even if these mysterious ladies are emissaries of Melissea, how and if their interventions fit into some greater scheme remains obscure. For a discussion of Melissea's first appearance in a flying chariot and characters' "refusal to wonder at Melissea's dramatic entrance" (252) see Lamb, "Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder."

³²⁴ Cavanagh argues in *Cherished Torment* that the increasing intervention of magic and fate in the second part has four aims, namely to "keep the children secure until adulthood" (199), to determine what couples will be formed among the Princes and Princesses of the younger generation (205), to prevent the characters from making similarly false choices with regard to partners as the protagonists of the first part made (203), and to ensure "a relatively seamless transfer of power" in the reigning families (195, 207). Yet, the actual impression that the representation of enchantments and magic or providential incidents in the second part has on readers is

Love and the Theatre of Love in the first part initiate patterns of convergence, this is not the case for the enchantment of the “unaccessible rock” (II.ii.282) in the second part, as the narrative breaks off before it is resolved. The Inaccessible Rock, as I will henceforth call this enchantment,³²⁵ is at first not localised (II.ii.268-269), but eventually descends out of the sky in Achaea:

The adventure was this: A mighty number of lights appeered in the sky; a strange-formed and built Castle appeering in the midst of thos lights, and in the Castle a most stately Tombe. This was seene apparantly, and truly beeheld by all eyes. Itt came att the first, extreame high; when neerer the Citty, itt stroped the lights of that brightnes and glory, as itt was impossible to discribe the extreame luster of them; then came lower, and soe by degrees desended, and settled in the midst of a most pleasant and delectable grove, adjoining to the Palac gardens, all of Ciprus trees, the dolefull remembrance of the poore, yett loving Ciparissus. Beefore that settled, a monsterous rock for mishapenes and ill-favourdnes came and placed itt self as to support the Castle, that appeerd like a dismall clowde dreadfull for the strangenes of the death-threatinge flames, furious yett frightfully black, and fiery, the dismallnes consisting in the coulers and fearfull flames, nott flashes, but sollid fires which made the people, unused to such businesse, gase and tremble. Then was the Tombe layd open by power undeserned, for noe ordinary, nor the rarest eyes cowlde distinguish that rarietie, nor cowlde speculation perfectly demonstrate to our Understanding the true essence of this wourke. Therfor leave itt as itt is: a miraculous wourcke nott for mortalls to presume to sift into. And time itt must bee of some continuance beefore the outward part, as the rinde, shalbee knowne. The shell and Curnell, as of an Amound, shall ly longe beefore quite discovered, and yett nott soe longe neither, for what is thrice three yeers? Then this wilbee finished, and the right one come to conclude all. (II.ii.318-319)

As this description indicates, the Inaccessible Rock resembles the enchantments of the first part in several aspects: the frightening flames recall those of the Hell of Deceit and Spenser’s House of Busirane, the strange castle is reminiscent of the magnificent Theatre of Love, and the setting of the enchantment similar to that of the Throne of Love “on a Hill” whose slopes are “made into delicate Gardens and Orchards” with “the further side [...] a fine and stately Wood” (I.i.47). Furthermore, like the Theatre of Love, the enchantment is to be resolved in

everything but that of an organising principle as the comments of other critics indicate. Lamb, for one, comments that “Melissea, and through her the author herself, conveys a sense of frenetic activity in the *Second Part* as she intervenes, or attempts to intervene, to prevent or at least to explain disasters in the lives of characters she loves,” which, Lamb argues, results in an “entirely new sense of the limitation of her powers” (“Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder” 254).

³²⁵ Since this enchantment is seldom discussed in criticism, there is no generally accepted name given to it. Wroth herself names it “the adventure of the unaccessible rock, for soe this new inchantment was called” and variously spells it “unaccessible” or “unaccessable” (II.ii.282, 355). The name ‘Inaccessible Rock’ is thus a modernization of Wroth’s designation, with the capitalization adopted for the sake of consistency, as all the other enchantments are usually capitalized in criticism.

two stages, as the text distinguishes between an outer “rinde” and a “Curnell” (II.ii.319),³²⁶ and the narrator adds that it “must bee the recepta[c]le [editor’s brackets] of all the worlds gallantry” (II.ii.319), suggesting that it should function as another centre of convergence. However, as stated above, this prospect of closure is undone by the text’s abrupt ending, and ultimately one can only speculate whether the Inaccessible Rock should indeed have concluded the *Urania*, bringing about a reunion of a great number of protagonists both of the younger and older generation, revealing the Faire Designe’s identity, preparing the way for marriages between the young princes and princesses and initiating a transfer of power from the parents to the royal children. This is all the more uncertain because readers do not receive an explanation by an authoritative figure or an inside perspective of the Inaccessible Rock—or the many other marvellous events in the second part for that matter—as they do for all of the enchantments of the first part. Thus, in contrast to the extended accounts of *Urania* and *Pamphilia*’s experiences in the Throne of Love or the Theatre of Love, for instance, all that *Mirasindo* reports after being released from the Inaccessible Rock is that he and his companions were “under charmes” (II.ii.355), and *Candiana* only describes the “devilish clowde” (II.ii.358) that separated her from her beloved.³²⁷ Again, one might speculate that this would have changed with *Amphilanthus* present at the resolution of the enchantment, which might then have been staged rather than reported given that the focus of the second part remains on the older rather than the younger generation. As it stands, however, the

³²⁶ For an interpretation of the two stages of the Theatre of Love see page 290. While the final resolution of the enchantment of the Inaccessible Rock is reserved for the Faire Designe supported by *Amphilanthus* (II.ii.323, 418), *Floristello* delivers *Mirasindo*, *Linderatszo*, *Candiana*, *Sellaminda* and presumably *Philistella* and *Amiana* from the “lower part” of the enchantment (II.ii.355).

³²⁷ Lamb astutely remarks that in the second part “the line between a textually sanctioned enchantment and the ‘charmes’ afflicting one who is merely ‘beewitched’ becomes increasingly difficult to discern” (“Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder” 253). However, I disagree with Lamb’s reading of the Inaccessible Rock as an enchantment that “take[s] on the sinister aspect of ‘charms’” (253). In my opinion, *Parselius*, who mourning for *Dalineia* lives next to the enchantment for a while is not “tormented by these wonders” (253) or brought to the brink of “self-alienation” because of them. Rather, the “charmes” that “master” (II.ii.319) *Parselius* are positive in nature since they counteract his “undesent sorrow” and move him to “part with her [*Dalineia*] to her funeral rights” (II.ii.319). Once again *Parselius* is unable to control his emotions, and, I would suggest, the “new world of wonders” in which he lives “in a strange, unknowing way of him self” (II.ii.319) should be read as an expression of his mental state.

enchantment of the Inaccessible Rock fails to structure the text in the same ways as the enchantments of the first part, and it also fails to form a parallel to Amphilanthus' release of the royal children from the giant Lamurandus at the end of the first book of part two. Moreover, by denying the characters within the text—and hence also the readers—an authoritative explanation of the Inaccessible Rock and other marvellous interventions, Wroth renders their interpretation far more difficult. The resulting bewildering effect of the marvels in the second part suggests, it seems to me, that the qualities and virtues they are designed to test most are faith in providence, endurance as opposed to despair, patience in the face of adversity and devotion to one's beloved or cause. Considering the political turmoil abroad and at home, Wroth's complicated financial situation as a widow, the birth of her illegitimate children as well as the deaths in her family during the time she presumably wrote the second part,³²⁸ one might speculate that this different treatment of marvels to some extent reflects her experience of reality as testing her own capacity of faith and patient endurance.

In conclusion it can be said that while the second part differs in various ways from the first, these differences are not the result of fundamental structural changes, or rather, the most fundamental structural change in the romance does not occur between the first and the second part, but between the third and fourth book of the first part, where, structurally speaking, Wroth seems to have wanted to give her romance a new direction. The second part of the romance, then, confronts the reader with a combination of narrative strategies already found in the first. This combination is not entirely successful and, as critics have noted, the second part appears less unified despite the increased prominence of the main narrator. Especially, the incomplete fan structure and the addition of many unknown new characters as narrative focal points in the first book of part two make the manuscript continuation seem more fragmented and chaotic, even though there are not significantly more transitions between

³²⁸ Wroth's sister Philip died in 1620, her aunt Mary Herbert and her mother Barbara Gamage in 1621 and her father in 1626.

narrative strands and the number of inset tales diminishes rather than augments, especially on the hypo-hypodiegetic level. Furthermore, the cohesion of the second part is weakened by chronological problems not present in the first, by the more frequent and fragmented intervention of supernatural powers that affect characters' whereabouts and itineraries, and the danger of fragmentation is further heightened by the crucial break in the manuscript. Consequently, the second part of the romance, although basically a continuation along the same lines, is structurally less cohesive and more challenging, to the point that readers, especially in the first book, may be genuinely confused and have to rely all the more on the guidance of the extradiegetic narrator. Yet, while a linear approach to the text, reading from the first to the last line, remains challenging, it has to be pointed out that the *Urania* inevitably entails another kind of approach as well: one based on the recurrence of themes and plot structures that will be investigated in the next chapter.

4 Repetition and Variation: Themes and Plots in the *Urania*

While narrative structures undoubtedly exert a great influence on the reading of the *Urania*, one should not neglect an equally important dimension of the romance, namely the themes and plots present in Wroth's text. In *English Prose Fiction* Salzman contrasts the "fragmented" narrative structure with the "thematic" unity of the *Urania*, centred on love, its consequences and effects, and, especially, the emotional suffering it often causes (141). Yet, while love is certainly one of the recurring and most important themes of the *Urania*, unfolded in a variety of plots that cover all the stages, consequences and effects of love, it is by far not the only concern in the romance as the following sections will show. On the intradiegetic level, the reader is confronted with a limited number of main themes, which can roughly be identified as questions of identity and royal succession as well as love. These three main themes are also taken up and elaborated in the frequent inset narratives, that is, on the hypodiegetic or hypo-hypodiegetic level. As a consequence, readers are faced with considerable repetition and variation—recalling the near-symmetrical doubling and tripling of buildings and gardens on the frontispiece—as these themes are explored both on the intradiegetic level and in embedded stories through a variety of plots that range from repetitive and almost identical sequences of events to widely different realisations of the main themes. Critics like Waller and Carrell have suggested psychological explanations for the recurrence of autobiographically informed plot patterns, speculating that Wroth's writing could "be described as neurotic displacement" ("Mary Wroth and the Sidney Family Romance" 53), to cite Waller. While I agree that Wroth was clearly interested in fictionalising her own experiences and repeatedly did so, her repetition of plots is not restricted to plots reflecting on her own life and, I would argue, goes beyond psychological compulsion. Therefore, it seems to me, Wroth's use of repetition should also be analysed more broadly as a narratological technique that is in keeping with the romance genre. The recurrence of certain

plots establishes them as dominant plot versions, but readers also find themselves continually called upon to re-interpret what they have read when plots are repeated with variations and when stories on different narrative levels mirror each other. In this process, readers are guided to a certain extent through the distribution of inset stories. Despite their seemingly random appearance, embedded tales effectively highlight certain aspects of themes—be it because they introduce them before they appear on the intradiegetic level, or because they reinforce them through what I will call a cluster effect, or because they function as counter-currents that set thematic aspects off and implicitly interrogate them by means of contrast. Hence, the maze of stories in Wroth's *Urania* offers a multifaceted approach to its themes, which at once serves to guide readers and challenges them to read the text critically.

4.1 Recurring Main Themes on the Intradiegetic Level

Each of the three basic themes of the *Urania*—identity, royal succession and love—is presented through a number of typical plots, so that reading the text resembles the experience of an on-going discussion that highlights different aspects of the themes or presents certain aspects from different perspectives. The experiences of most of the royal protagonists contribute in one way or another to the development of the three main themes, as protagonists' trajectories lead from the quest for a stable identity to the quest for a throne and a spouse—quests that can generally only be achieved after overcoming trials of love and enchantment. Hence, the romance's main themes can also be thought of as a kind of cycle, and they certainly overlap and inform each other to a certain extent. Issues of succession, for instance, depend on the revelation and/or acknowledgment of protagonists' identities, marriages may be a means of conquering a throne, and knowledge of one's identity or social status is a prerequisite for lovers' relationships to progress successfully from courtship to marriage. As protagonists move through this cycle of themes, readers develop a sense of

direction, begin to recognize typical plots and become increasingly aware of Wroth's constant repetition and variation of these plots, which invites active reflection on and comparison of alternative plot versions. This has two important consequences. Firstly, readers acquire a thematic frame of reference, which, overarching the whole of the *Urania*, provides a reassuring sense of familiarity and therefore counterbalances the fragmentation of individual protagonists' stories and the sometimes abrupt changes of narrative strands. Cavanagh makes a similar observation in "Endless Love" when she states the following:

Characters and readers similarly learn how to respond to key events and people in the text because of those they have previously encountered. Ultimately, therefore, the *Urania* often directs the reactions of its readers and its characters, although its narrative control is not always evident to those who encounter it. (91)

Cavanagh does not specify how exactly Wroth achieves this "narrative control," but mentions the importance of storytelling and repetition (91) in this learning process, which I would ascribe to the repetition of thematic plots. The second consequence of the continual repetition and variation of plots is to awaken readers' curiosity to find out not so much where protagonists are headed but how they will reach their goals. In other words, in contrast to minor characters that occur only once and are generally of less importance than the plots they come to exemplify, protagonists are not solely defined by the plots in which they figure, but rather by how their actions and attitudes differ from those of other similarly emplotted characters.

4.1.1 The Quest for Identity

The question of identity is the first issue readers are confronted with at the very beginning of the romance and one of the last the protagonists are concerned with at the end of the second part. Thus, protagonists' quest for their identity and the exploration of what factors constitute identity stretch over the entire text. In "Not much to be marked," Miller even claims that "This quest for female identity rather than romantic love underlies the fictive patterns of

Wroth's narrative" (127). While I think that Miller's focus on female identity is too narrow because it neglects both male protagonists' quest for identity and the other main themes that I have identified, her comment usefully highlights to what extent recurring themes may be perceived as structuring Wroth's romance. Moreover, Miller's remark also suggests that the notion of identity in Wroth's text is complex. Indeed, as the following overview of the most prominent plots dealing with identity will show, protagonists' identities are constructs of different factors, namely family and love relationships, social status,³²⁹ character traits or moral attitudes, gender roles and political destiny.³³⁰ It goes without saying that not all the many characters in the romance possess equally complex identities and personalities. Many characters can in fact be described as "flat," that is, as characters whose number of qualities is restricted and that "do not develop in the course of the action" (40), as Rimmon-Kenan explains. Yet, taken all together, the sum of the characters in the *Urania*—complementing, reflecting on and contrasting with each other in a kaleidoscopic fashion—make for a rich exploration of the issue of identity and suggest that it is primarily a social concept, that is, the protagonists' quest for identity in the *Urania* revolves not so much around the question of who they are as individuals, but rather what their legitimate place in society is.

The first protagonist to ponder this question is obviously Urania, whose complaint about not knowing who her real parents are opens the romance (I.i.1-2). Although readers are soon informed of her probable royal origin and her kinship to Amphilanthus and Leonius (I.i.23-24), Urania's identity is only confirmed by Melissea after the first enchantment, the Throne of Love (I.ii.190). The reason of her kidnapping is revealed even later (I.ii.232-233) and the account of her rescue deferred until the end of the second enchantment, the Theatre of Love (I.iii.455). As Cavanagh points out, the kidnapping or loss of children is a conventional

³²⁹ Rickman describes social status as "a mix of birth, wealth, and power" (176).

³³⁰ To some extent, my discussion of the nuanced representation of identity in Wroth's text resembles Rickman's account of the various "components" that constituted "a noblewoman's honor" (174) in her chapter on Frances Villiers (173-200).

romance motif (*Cherished* 196), and Urania is thus one of the typical lost heirs of romance, whose true origins are signalled by her extraordinary beauty and virtue, but who needs to be recognized and acknowledged in order to be able to assume her legitimate place in the social hierarchy. Although prominent in Wroth's romance, historically speaking this plot is relatively recent according to Cooper. It becomes fashionable in English romance from the 1580s on (335)—possibly another result of the influence of Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*—and results in such well-known heroines as Fawnia, Pastorella and Perdita. However, whereas in general, the lost female heir is of interest only if she is the sole surviving heir, as Cooper points out (336), this is not necessarily the case in Wroth.³³¹

Urania's case is closely paralleled by Veralinda's, whose identity is also determined by parentage and revealed at the end of the second enchantment.³³² In both instances, the revelation of the protagonists' identity results in their rise from the humble status of beautiful shepherdesses to that of princesses worthy of the love and admiration they inspire in the princes that court them. This rise in status is crucial for the protagonists' perception of their own identity, giving them a different outlook on life and opening up possibilities with regard to marriage. Although the romance does not address this issue at length, the reactions of both the male and female protagonists involved make clear that a marriage between a real shepherdess and a prince would be transgressive in Wroth's universe, especially for an elder son. Parselius, for instance, explicitly reflects on the conflict between social expectations and the demands and effects of his love:

all his content being in thinking on Urania; wishing from his soule shee were the lost Princesse, that then they might happily injoy; which wish by love was chid, since love was able in him to make her great enough, and those wishes were but to adde to that which ought

³³¹ Especially Urania, the first and arguably most important lost female protagonist, is not her parents' heir and never becomes so. Veralinda and Candiana, on the other hand, eventually inherit their parents' kingdom despite the existence of older brothers. Yet, whereas Veralinda's brothers mutually decimate themselves so that she does become the only heir left (I.iii.457), Candiana's older brother Trebisound does not die but, instead of inheriting the rule over Achaea, is destined to marry the Soldaness of Babylon (II.ii.322).

³³² For a close analysis of the revelation of Urania's and Veralinda's identity through their reading of their own stories, see Sarah Wall-Randell's "Reading the Book of the Self in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and Wroth's *Urania*."

to be so perfect, as it selfe should of it selfe be sufficient to make happines, which is the greatest greatnes. Then did he resolve, whatsoever she was, to make her his Wife; his Father, Country, Friend, and all must love Urania. Thus all must yeeld to her, or lose him already yeelded. (I.i.26)

Although Parselius is satisfied with Urania's worth due to his love for her, he knows perfectly that marrying a shepherdess like her goes against social norms and would inevitably cost him his own social status and future unless "Father, Country, [and] Friend" condone his transgression. Leonius likewise considers giving up his royal status for the profession of a shepherd in order to be Veralinda's equal (I.iii.425). The women too are acutely aware of the problem of social status, as Veralinda indicates by saying, "for how can I hope, that if I meet him, hee could fancy mee: he a Knight, I a poore Maide; he a Prince it may be and surely is" (I.iii.435). Family origin and social status then circumscribe protagonists' possibilities and expectations in the *Urania*, which is true for both parts of the text, as the plight of Urania's son, Floristello, shows in the continuation when he also falls in love with a shepherdess that in time turns out to be a princess. At least, as Das shrewdly points out, Floristello and Candiana profit from "narrative precedence" (1) when both of them reflect separately that, if Urania proved to be a princess, so might Candiana (II.i.92, 103-104).

It is not only female protagonists that engage in a quest for a place in society. The *Urania* also features male protagonists that illustrate what Cavanagh terms the importance of "finding one's 'name' and making a 'name' for oneself" (*Cherished* 196). In this plot, as Cavanagh's formulation suggests, identity is not merely revealed, but actively fashioned. Still, just as the identity of lost female heirs needs to be recognised and confirmed by someone of authority,³³³ the newly fashioned identity of the male protagonists needs to be acknowledged, generally by a father figure, in order to become valid. Thus, the young princes in this plot—often younger sons—are usually not ignorant of who they are, but are intent on proving their valour and

³³³ See for example Starke's discussion of Wroth's pastoral heroines in *The Heroines of English Pastoral Romance*. Starke identifies the "reunification of the foundling with her father" (6) as one of the crucial stages in the pastoral heroine's trajectory.

gaining recognition in their own right.³³⁴ To this end they may even temporarily hide their own identity. Rosindy, for instance, fights several monstrous knights incognito before revealing his identity to his father, who then approves of Rosindy's choice of bride and gives him the command of the Morean army that is to free her (I.i.119-123).³³⁵

The second part contains two interesting variations of this plot of a young prince proving that he is worthy of his place in society, namely the stories of Andromarko and the Faire Designe.³³⁶ Andromarko differs from the typical younger son figure in that he is the illegitimate son of Polarchos, born out of wedlock. When he learns who his father is, he challenges him to a duel, unhorses him and then reveals his identity. Polarchos subsequently acknowledges him as his son, conferring on Andromarko the status of a prince (II.ii.288-289). The romance thus seems to make the case that natural children, just as much as younger sons, deserve an important place in society if they can demonstrate their merit, i.e. if they have inherited their parents' valour and virtue. It goes without saying that Wroth, as the mother of two illegitimate children, had a personal stake in this argument, which she cleverly naturalises by employing "A standard motif in chivalric fiction," as the editors note, namely "the overthrow of the father by an unknown knight revealed as his son" (II.528 n289.20). Moreover, as Cooper points out, "romance, with its insistent concern with noble blood lines, is prepared to allow such [illegitimate] children within its remit even if it is *gentillesse* or prowess rather than territorial inheritance that is at issue" (328). Hence, the romance genre is the ideal and arguably most powerful medium at Wroth's time to advocate the acceptance of illegitimate children by their aristocratic family.³³⁷

³³⁴ For an extended discussion of the romance's concern with younger sons, see Mazzola's study *Favorite Sons*.

³³⁵ Other younger sons who set out to prove themselves are Ollorandus, Philarchos and Leonius in the first part and Stervanus in the second.

³³⁶ See also Lamb's discussion of the two characters in "The Biopolitics of Romance" (179-188).

³³⁷ Although legally parents and especially mothers of illegitimate children could be punished in the early modern period, this was usually not the case for the aristocracy or "people who could afford to take care of their illegitimate offspring" (Rickman 24). Moreover, even though illegitimate children were excluded "from title and inheritance," Rickman states that "In reality, illegitimate children did often inherit after their parents, but it required specific stipulation in wills and in some cases some very imaginative and astute legal wrangling" (24).

The example of the Faire Designe is special because, considered in the context of the *Urania*, it combines the plot of the female protagonist ignorant of her origins with that of the younger son establishing himself as worthy of his place in society. Thus, the trajectories of all the previous female and male protagonists in search of their identity seem to culminate in the Faire Designe, who, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, can in many ways be seen as an epitome of the very productive romance meme of the fair unknown,³³⁸ since he displays all the characteristics of this generic type listed by Cooper (331-340). He is ignorant of his own name and origin, but due to his “beauty, courtesy, and exceptional prowess” promises to be of “high lineage” (Cooper 332). He is the object of “divine endorsement” and the bearer of “supernatural signs” (Cooper 340), receiving his arms out of a cloud (II.ii.298) and having a cipher of the name of his future bride on his heart. His ordained quest for a bride with a corresponding cipher that will reveal his name (II.ii.297) is a “quest of his family identity” (Cooper 332), and his repeated rescues of other protagonists mark him out as a figure that will restore political equilibrium and bring closure in the form of a typical romance happy ending. Indeed, the second part ends with the message that the Faire Designe is searching for Amphilanthus, the father figure who knighted him (II.ii.297), with whom he will be able to break the spell that enchants Lindafillia, the Sophia and presumably future bride of the Faire Designe (II.ii.418). It can therefore be presumed that this final enchantment would also bring about the revelation of the Faire Designe’s identity, just as *Urania*’s and Veralinda’s origins are elucidated by enchantments in the first part.³³⁹ Hence, the Faire Designe’s search for his

The illegitimate son of Penelope Rich and Charles Blount even “received a title of his own when he was created earl of Newport in 1628” (Rickman 138).

³³⁸ From a historical perspective, the inverse seems to have been the case. Cooper suggests that the lost female heir is a later adaptation of the meme of the fair unknown and that “in the later years of romance” (332), young knights who hide their identity to prove their valour do so in awareness of the meme of the fair unknown (336-337).

³³⁹ Tellingly, the only major difference between the Faire Designe and the traditional romance fair unknown is that Wroth gives no information whatsoever about the Faire Designe’s upbringing. A fair unknown is often raised away from the court, be it by foster parents or one of his own parents (Cooper 332-333). Readers receive no such information concerning the Faire Designe in the *Urania*—presumably, one might argue, because this would have been revealed after the breaking of the enchantment at the end of the second part. However,

identity and place in society subsumes the various plots of protagonists' quests for their identity into an overarching pattern.

As the above discussion of several characters has shown, this pattern of young protagonists that are placed or place themselves outside courtly society features in both the first and the second part of the *Urania*. Likewise, in both parts the loss of children results in quests, that is, it moves kings, princes and devoted knights to search for the lost heirs. Yet there are certain differences between the two parts due to their narrative focus. In the first part, readers see more of the younger generation of protagonists, like Urania, which emphasises these protagonists' search for a place in society. In the second part, the younger generation of the first part has turned into parents, but the narrative focus largely stays with them, so that the search for their lost children is foregrounded, rather than the children's search for their identity.³⁴⁰ Moreover, whereas Urania and Veralinda in the first part are ignorant of their origin, the lost children in the second part are often aware of their royal identity.³⁴¹ However, they are still involved in a search for identity—not so much because they need to find out who their parents are, but rather in order to discover what their destiny holds in store for them and what social position will be theirs. Just as in the first part, the political situation in the second part is unstable, and it is not always evident who will inherit

considering Wroth's personal interest in the fate of illegitimate children and assuming that the Faire Designe at least partly stands for the son she bore her cousin, William Herbert, this gap in the biography of the Faire Designe almost appears like a plea on Wroth's part to her family readers to take care of her son in his youth, i.e. to step in and fill that gap. Indeed, the period during which critics think Wroth wrote the second part, i.e. roughly between 1620 and 1630, coincides with the birth of Wroth's illegitimate son—approximately in 1624 according to Hannay (*MSLW* 252)—and his first years of life. It is as if Wroth is promising her entourage through romance conventions that her son is destined for a brilliant career, but, at the same time, she is not yet able to tell how and by whom this son will be taken care of.

³⁴⁰ Lamb makes a similar claim when she states that "In a sense, the continuation replays the genealogical concerns of the Folio but with a renewed interest in the parents as they search and then find their lost children" ("The Biopolitics of Romance" 183).

³⁴¹ The case of Candiana and Trebisound in the second part seems contradictory, possibly due to Wroth's unfinished revisions or changes of plan. Although Trebisound knows where he is from and retells how he and his sister Candiana were lost, he seems ignorant of his royal identity (II.ii.224-226) and does not recognise his father Parselius (II.ii.224-227). Candiana, when lamenting that she might not be worthy of Floristello's love, seems equally ignorant of her origin (II.i.103-104), and she does not recognise Parselius either (II.ii.226). Later, however, after having been released from the enchantment of the "unaccessable rock" and directed to the Albanian court by Melissea (II.ii.355), Candiana presents herself as "Candiana, daughter to Parselius" (II.ii.355).

the rule over which country.³⁴² Because the lost children are doubly lost, being beyond the reach of their parents and uncertain of their destiny, great importance is attributed to their prophetic birthmarks, such as the *Faire Designe*'s cipher mentioned above. The search for identity of the young princes and princesses consists thus mainly in deciphering the signs and predictions that reveal to them who they will marry, over which country they will rule or what their name and origin are. Hence, the issue of identity in the second part is even more closely linked to mystery, supernatural enchantments and prophecy than in the first part. This is also visible in the repeated enchantments engineered by Melissea with her supernatural powers to protect the children. Already in the first part, enchantments are essential to the final revelation of identities and origins. In the second part, this is even more so, with the result that some of the princes and princesses hardly develop a distinct character and are difficult to tell apart. Consequently, it can be said that in the second part, questions of social status and political future become even more prominent than in the first part, where several protagonists are not only identified by their origin and social position, but also by their virtues or flaws.

The two characters that are most clearly distinguishable on the basis of the roles or virtues they represent are Urania and Pamphilia, whose moral attitudes are developed through their choices, attitudes and their behaviour. In other words, these two protagonists define themselves not only via their family and origin, but actively fashion their identity through their acts,³⁴³ and are hence configured in recurrent plots that showcase their virtuous behaviour. Thus, even before Urania's parentage is revealed, she forges an identity for herself, as Miller illustrates, namely that of a sympathetic listener, counsellor and helper who is able "to 'identify' with the losses suffered by others" ("Not much to be marked" 127). Urania

³⁴² The most obvious example here are Candiana and Trebisound. Candiana, although the daughter and younger child of Parselius, will inherit the throne of Achaea together with Urania's son Floristello, and Trebisound is destined to marry the Soldaness of Babylon and rule with her over her country instead (II.ii.322). Cf. also p. 270.

³⁴³ In this, Urania and Pamphilia to some extent resemble the young princes who set out to make a name for themselves, but as Wroth does not go in for female knights, women in her romance have to prove their worth more in the domain of good rule or self-rule than through armed combat.

repeatedly counsels other characters and advocates a stance of reasonable moderation, both in the first and second part of the romance, as for example when she cheers up her companions after a storm (I.i.46),³⁴⁴ when she chides Pamphilia for her self-destructive attitude (I.iii.458-459, 467-471), or when she twice prevents Amphilanthus from committing suicide (II.i.138-139, 172). Urania therefore comes to be associated with the notions of sympathy, reason, moderation and also with hope. Moreover, Urania's advice never goes unheard, and her reasonable, logical and hopeful arguments prove highly persuasive. Combining generous sympathy with critical common sense, Urania can also be seen as a further advocate of the attitude of critical sympathy that characterises the romance's main narrator. However, unlike the narrator, Urania generally does not have recourse to irony, but rather chides those she endeavours to help directly, proposes an alternative course of action and in this way helps them to overcome the stasis to which they have been reduced by their passions.³⁴⁵

Pamphilia's self-representation is marked less by acts than by her attitude towards love and towards her beloved Amphilanthus. After the first enchantment, Pamphilia comes to symbolise the virtue of constancy, as Elaine V. Beilin explains (214) in *Redeeming Eve*, with the statue of constancy "vanish[ing], as metamorphosing her self into her [Pamphilia's] breast" (I.i.169). Many critics such as Beilin, Figueroa Dorrego, Hackett, Tina Krontiris, Naomi J. Miller, Quilligan, Waller, Shaver or Zurcher have remarked on Pamphilia's self-definition as an unconditional constant lover. Approaching the text from a feminist and thus inherently modern perspective, most of them are interested in Wroth's representation of women or women's subjectivity, but their interpretation of Pamphilia's constancy differs

³⁴⁴ This scene might be modelled on the example of Aeneas when in book I of the *Aeneid* he similarly cheers up his companions after a storm. His speech of comfort is glossed as "Good comfort of a captaine" in the translation by Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne, and the second gloss on the same page reads: "Vnder the name of Aeneas, is described in Virgil the part of a perfect wise man and valiant captain if ye marke it" (sig. B3v).

³⁴⁵ Urania's role as a voice of reason and as a successful counsellor is widely accepted in Wroth criticism although critics have differed over the kind of model Urania represents. Werth, for instance, interprets Urania as a "godly reader of romance" (142), whose perspicacity allows her to read romance in a critical and fruitful way (142-151) and who, in contrast to Antissia, "come[s] to represent salutary reading practices, accessible to male and female readers alike" (142). Sanchez rather sees Urania as a model of political resistance to injustice and tyrannical oppression (127-128, 136-137).

radically. On the one hand, Shaver points out that Pamphilia's constancy can be seen as empowering because it gives Pamphilia superiority over the inconstant Amphilanthus (73-74), and, according to Hackett, it legitimates her writing as an expression of her private grief ("A book, and solitariness" 69-70). On the other hand, this unconditional constancy is limiting, since it puts Pamphilia in an essentially passive position, described as "masochistic" by Waller (*The Sidney Family Romance* 258) or "stasis" by Zurcher ("Pastoral, Temperance, and the Unitary Self" 108),³⁴⁶ with her happiness determined by the whims of her beloved. Sanchez goes even further in her reading of Pamphilia's relation to Amphilanthus as coded criticism of an overly submissive attitude of political subjects towards the absolutist ambitions of James I, claiming that Pamphilia, especially in first part, wilfully indulges and even enjoys the misery her exaggerated constancy entails (134-138, 140). While Sanchez' interesting controversial stance seems overly simplified because it entirely neglects Pamphilia's status in the romance as a monarch in her own right,³⁴⁷ it is true that in the first part, Pamphilia's resolve to remain constant intensifies and prolongs her grief over Amphilanthus' inconstancy. Resulting in restlessness and misery, Pamphilia's excessive grief wastes her youth and beauty and causes her to neglect her public duties, her duties to her family and friends and ultimately to herself until Urania calls her to reason (I.iii.458-463, 467-471). Yet, although absolute constancy can lead to excessive and hence harmful passion, as Urania criticises, on the whole, Pamphilia's constancy is clearly represented as admirable in Wroth's text.³⁴⁸ It might

³⁴⁶ For a more positive interpretation of this "stasis" see Quilligan's discussion of Pamphilia's constancy in her article "Lady Mary Wroth: Female Authority and the Family Romance" (270-271, 273-274). Zurcher offers an alternative discussion of the virtue of constancy in the context of Neostoicism (*Seventeenth-Century English Romance* 47-50, 69), emphasising the ambivalence of constancy as a virtue in the early modern period because it denoted both "a conventional feminine virtue" supposed to contain "women's sexual agency" and a political attitude, i.e. "Stoic constancy," which was suspect because considered "inimical to institutional authority" (49).

³⁴⁷ By focusing exclusively on the rhetoric of love as coded political discourse, Sanchez overlooks the explicitly political discourse present in the *Urania*, with the result that she does not distinguish between Pamphilia's more private passions and her public role or analyse how the two inform each other, which, in my view, would usefully nuance her arguments.

³⁴⁸ Consider for instance the first enchantment, the Throne of Love, which Sanchez fails to discuss in her study.

therefore make sense to interpret Pamphilia's adherence to constancy in terms of moral values rather than considering it as a potentially proto-feminist strategy.³⁴⁹

The second part presents a slightly different Pamphilia, who takes on a more active role in her relationship with Amphilanthus. However, her self-assertion is still based on negation since Pamphilia makes herself inaccessible and withdraws from communication. After having been united with Amphilanthus in a half-secret marriage and subsequently left for the Queen of Candia and the Princess of Slavonia, Pamphilia refuses to speak to Amphilanthus and eventually marries Rodomandro, thus putting "an official boundary between her and Amphilanthus" according to Hackett ("A book, and solitariness" 81). Amphilanthus, Hackett argues, experiences this vow of silence as "an erotic deprivation," and Pamphilia puts herself in the role of the cruel and inaccessible married mistress in the courtly tradition, laying claim to and realising "the dominance usually attributed to a mistress merely as compliment" (80, 83).³⁵⁰ However, although Pamphilia empowers herself by denying her person, she still holds on to her ideal of constancy and hence continues to suffer despite her more powerful self-image. Only once the intrigue that manoeuvred Amphilanthus into marrying the Princess of Slavonia is revealed, does Pamphilia follow Leutissia's advice to moderate herself (II.ii.378-380) and resumes speaking to Amphilanthus (II.ii.389). Hence, thanks to the moderating influence of Urania in the first and Leutissia in the second part, Pamphilia learns to contain and alleviate her self-destructive grief, although she continues to define herself in terms of her virtuous constant love to Amphilanthus.

Constancy is not only a virtue that concerns female characters in the *Urania*, it is also more than once presented as a virtue that men should possess but too often lack.³⁵¹ Although

³⁴⁹ See also Beilin's discussion of Pamphilia's constancy as a heroic virtue.

³⁵⁰ While I find Hackett's observation pertinent, it needs to be noted that the courtly love tradition is more often than not presented from a critical perspective in the *Urania*. Cf. section 4.1.3.1 "Courtship" below.

³⁵¹ A female character, for instance, says the following about men's inconstancy: "believe it, the kindest, lovingst, passionatest, worthiest, loveliest, valiantest, sweetest, and best man, will, and must change, not that he, it may bee, doth it purposely, but tis their naturall infirmitie, and cannot be helped. It was laid to our charge in

the romance valorises constancy mostly in the context of love relations through the recurrent plot of the abandoned constant female lover, I would suggest that it is also one of the hallmarks of a good ruler. Constancy implies the ability to govern one's own passions, to remain steadfast and to fulfil one's obligations towards one's country, and in this sense it is the moral value that qualifies Pamphilia as a good monarch and causes her to be "admired for a Masculine spirit" (I.iii.468), as Urania puts it, in a positive sense of the term. Indeed, once Pamphilia accepts Urania's advice to moderate her sorrow so that it does not impinge on her public duties, the text states that though she remains sad, "yet she lost not her selfe; for her government continued just and brave, like that Lady she was, wherein she shewed her heart was not to be stirr'd, though her private fortunes shooke round about her" (I.iii.484). Thus, in Pamphilia, constancy in love is doubled with the constancy of a good ruler.

If the quest for identity in the *Urania* means largely a quest for a place and role in society, it is only logical that this place and role subsequently become defining elements of protagonists' identities. Pamphilia, for one, is repeatedly defined and defines herself via her country, which she is named after (I.720, I.ii.300). For this reason, Beilin has compared Pamphilia to Elizabeth I, since both Queens use the argument of being married to their country to avoid marriage to a man (228). Consequently, Pamphilia's country becomes more and more assimilated to her body, and it is not surprising that the repeated threats of invasion are at the same time threats to Pamphilia's body, as Jocelyn Catty illustrates in her discussion of rape and forced marriage in the *Urania* in *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England* (213). In this respect, Pamphilia's case corresponds to that of medieval romance

times passed to bee false, and changing, but they who excell us in all perfections, would not for their honours sake, let us surpasse them in any one thing, though that, and now are much more perfect, and excellent in that then wee, so there is nothing left us, that they excel us not in, although in our greatest fault" (I.iii.440). Campbell notes that compared to the emblem tradition where emblems of "inconstancy or fickleness ususally depict female characters instead of male, [...] Wroth's readers must 'rethink' the traditional figures as Wroth replaces them with Amphilanthus in her tableaux" ("Writing Renaissance Emblems" 15).

heiresses, whose “loss,” in contrast to that of male heirs, “is more usually threatened than actual” (334), as Cooper argues:

The most typical situation in medieval romance is for the heiress to be faced with an undesired marriage to a deeply unsuitable husband, thereby threatening the transfer of her land to an alien, tyrannical, or even Saracen, lord—a loss to good or godly rule rather than to patrilinear succession. [...] She is embedded in the territory she has the capacity to bestow, and she and her citadel together are typically under siege; the assault is made equally on her lands and herself. (334)

Indeed, as in the general plot described by Cooper, all the invaders of Pamphilia send a letter before they attack the country, announcing their plan to marry Pamphilia by force if she does not agree to a marriage. This conflation of body, identity and territory, made explicit by Pamphilia’s name, also applies to other queens or heiresses confronted with the dangers of forced marriage and/or usurpation,³⁵² and it proves to be just as problematic as Pamphilia’s identification with constancy. It puts female protagonists into a vulnerable position in which their identity is threatened to be erased—this time not by self-abnegation, but due to external aggression.

Whereas external threats to one’s identity mostly concern female characters,³⁵³ the *Urania* presents female and male protagonists as susceptible to a loss of identity due to an internal crisis, that is, bouts of madness and overpowering passions. Clearly, the most prominent female examples of this type of plot are Nereana and Antissia, who are both temporarily overcome by madness due to their inability to control their excessive passions.³⁵⁴

³⁵² Meriana is saved from such a fate by Rosindy. Melasinda, who, as Cavanagh remarks, is inseparable from her country (*Cherished* 55), is forced to marry the usurper Rodolindus to assure peace in Hungary, and Lindafillia, the Sophia, has to be defended against her uncle by several protagonists. Orilena and Nereana are both temporarily supplanted by their younger sisters, and Antissia loses her status as inviolable princess when she is abducted by successive kidnappers and menaced with rape.

³⁵³ Although male protagonists may be temporarily imprisoned like Polarchos and Rodomandro, for instance, or in exile like the old King of Albania, their identities seem less compromised by such events than the identities of female characters.

³⁵⁴ Nereana is literally led astray by her “over-running-weedy” pride (I.ii.335), loses her way in a forest in Sicily, is attacked by a man who takes her for a goddess and dresses her in a fantastical outfit, so that combined with her insolent raging, she is no longer perceived as a queen by Philarchos, who meets her, but as a lunatic (I.ii.196-199). Antissia, on the other hand, repeatedly loses control over herself due to her excessive jealousy in the first part, and, in the second, she loses all self-restraint and comes to believe herself to be an inspired poet, while her husband Dolorindus, her nephew Antissius, and Rosindy regard her as mad. Only thanks to Melissea’s water cure does Antissia regain her sense of modesty and discretion, but even so she remains a fundamentally unstable

Interestingly, Catty argues that both Nereana and Antissia face a “crisis of identity” when they are cured from what (male) society perceives as their madness, rather than when they are in conflict with social norms (197-204). Moreover, she remarks that Antissia’s loss of self-restraint, contrary to Nereana’s madness, “is liberating, giving her a new linguistic freedom and, perhaps, freeing her from the condition of vulnerability to rape which characterises her when ‘sane’” (204). Catty’s observations highlight that identity in the *Urania* is a complex multifaceted issue. Finding, forging, losing and regaining one’s identity do not only involve questions of family ties, social status, political and personal destiny, as has been discussed, but also inevitably interact with social norms and so concern the consequences of characters’ conformity to or transgression of norms. Commenting on Wroth’s treatment of Antissia and Nereana, Catty thinks that she “does not come down categorically in favour of one model of female behaviour and experience above the others” (204), even though the text strongly suggests that the two characters need to be cured from their excesses of passion.

The same is true, however, for male protagonists like Parselius, Amphilanthus, Selarinus and Leonius when they are overcome by their emotions. Parselius for one continually oscillates between periods of complete self-assurance as a victorious prince and periods of despondency due to his inability to keep faith and deal with loss. In the latter periods, he is at odds with himself to the point of wanting to commit suicide in the first part (I.i.154), while in the second part, he temporarily assumes the habit of a hermit and “live[s] in a strange, unknowing way of him self” (II.ii.319).³⁵⁵ Similarly, Amphilanthus in the second part, several times falls prey to despair because of his breach of faith and has to be prevented twice from committing suicide (II.i.138-139, 172). In other words, both Parselius and Amphilanthus fail to live up to and hence lose their social and political identities as conquering heroes and rulers when they cannot come to terms with their personal losses or moral failures. Thus, like

character. See also Kinney’s discussion of Antissia in “‘Beleeve this butt a fiction’” (156-159). Like Kinney, other critics often discuss Antissia “as a foil to Pamphilia” (156).

³⁵⁵ See also footnote 327.

Antissia and Nereana, whose excesses infringe social norms, male protagonists lose their sense of self due to their lack of self-control and their failure to assume their responsibilities. Selarinus, like Parselius, proves unable to accept the loss of his wife, with the consequence that he loses himself, erring from one island to another in magic boats, and is twice ensnared by a female spirit that seduces him (II.i.6-10, II.ii.303-305).³⁵⁶ Another protagonist who needs to be restored to his “better and best sences againe” (II.i.158) is Leonius, who forgets his knightly duties and is bewitched by the linguistic skills of an ugly wanton woman who turns him into an idle “Carpett knigh[t],” as Steriamus terms him, (II.i.162). Tellingly, it is only when Steriamus—after provokingly insulting him—reminds Leonius that he is “brother to Amphilanthus and Urania” that Leonius “manfully and resolutely resolve[s] to leave this life [...] beehinde himm as sinn” (II.i.163, 164). This underlines once more the importance of the family to define and stabilise one’s identity, and it comes as no surprise that Parselius partly regains his knightly ways when he is united with his parents (II.ii.395-397),³⁵⁷ that Amphilanthus is saved from suicide by his sister or that Selarinus is lost when he refrains from visiting the parents of his dead wife (I.i.2).

Just as family identity is essential to protagonists’ identity, so are their often telling proper names, which reveal defining features of their persons. Especially the “[a]ll loving” (I.720 n37.36) Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, “the lover of two” (I.ii.300), are epitomized by their names. Yet the characteristics of many other protagonists or minor characters are also underlined or confirmed by their names.³⁵⁸ Sometimes, protagonists’ names are even partial anagrams, pointing to identities beyond the boundaries of the text and indicating that certain characters in the romance are at least partly modelled on or are meant to represent

³⁵⁶ See also Kinney’s discussion of this female spirit in “‘Beleeve this butt a fiction’” (153-155)

³⁵⁷ Once Parselius is recognised by his parents, “noe nay must bee sayd; his Pilgrims weeds must of, and hee bee Cavalier againe. His haire was trim’d and beard brought in order, and Parselius a gay courtiour again. All this must bee for his honor, and that in the highest degree since dunn to obey his father and deerest Mother, whos lyfe lay in his eyes” (II.ii.396).

³⁵⁸ Consider for instance the frequently miserable Dolorindus, “sorrowful” (I.729 n117.33), or the evil Vicianus, “Vicious one” (I.800 n645.13), to name only two further examples.

acquaintances or relatives of Wroth, albeit in a fictionalised way.³⁵⁹ A typical example of such a name is that of the protagonist Rosindy who, as Roberts notes, “may be based on Wroth’s younger brother Robert [Sidney] (1595-1677)” (I.729 n101.36). In addition, the *Urania*, like many other romances, features what Alastair Fowler in *Kinds of Literature* calls “the device of delayed naming,” which increases or highlights the “prominence and weight” (82) of names, as Fowler remarks.³⁶⁰ Apart from engaging readers’ curiosity and creating suspense at times, this practice of “delayed naming” can also be regarded as a further technique employed by Wroth to shape readers’ interpretation of the text since the telling names potentially confirm or redirect readers’ perception of a character’s defining traits.

If characters’ names are telling, so are the various pseudonyms or alternative names which some of the characters adopt at times. A number of male protagonists, for example, make incognito appearances—be it to prove themselves worthy of their true name and origin or to express their emotional predicament. Unlike their true names, however, the devices and pseudonyms that they bear at such occasions are temporary and—at least with regard to the inconstant Amphilanthus—subject to change. Thus, whereas other male protagonists only don a pseudonym once,³⁶¹ Amphilanthus variously appears as “The Knight of Love” (I.i.75), “the Shepherd knight” (I.i.167), “the Knight of the Cipher” (I.iii.339), “the Lost Man” (I.iii.376) and as “the Just in Hope” (I.iii.498). While male protagonists use pseudonyms to hide their identities or foreground their emotional state, name changes of female characters are

³⁵⁹ See also page 312. Evidently, as many critics have pointed out, a number of characters’ names and stories also reflect on Wroth’s own life, the romance thus negotiating not only the identity of the characters within the text, but also that of the text’s author. For a discussion of Wroth’s self-representation, see for example Carrell, “A Pack of Lies in a Looking Glass” or Lamb, “The Biopolitics of Romance.”

³⁶⁰ That the choice of names was indeed important to Wroth can also be gathered from an analysis of the manuscript continuation, in which Wroth repeatedly left blanks for characters’ names that she filled in retrospectively. Thus, also Wroth’s practice of naming was at times delayed, indicating that the choice of a fitting name completes and confirms rather than precedes the conception of her characters.

³⁶¹ Cf. for instance Dolorindus, who by the colours of his armour professes himself to be “the jealous Knight” (I.ii.239), or Steriamus, going by the name of “The true despis’d” (I.i.75).

indicative of more fundamental changes of identity.³⁶² Pelarina for instance adopts this name because she does not wish to reveal her true “name and Parentage” (I.iv.528), but the pseudonym she chooses also embodies the new identity as a penitent and forgiving pilgrim to which she aspires. Pastora, “by birth a great Lady” (I.iii.416),³⁶³ also has a name that reflects her choice of living in seclusion away from society, and Alarina explicitly states that when she became a nymph vowed to chastity, “my name I also changed with my life, from Alarina to Silviana” (I.ii.224). Thus, female characters’ adopted names announce their changed mode of life rather than their passions, but like male protagonists’ pseudonyms, such changes need not necessarily be permanent—Alarina ultimately becomes a shepherdess again and marries her first love, as Alarina (I.iii.482-483).

This last example illustrates once more that the *Urania* does not present identity as a one-dimensional concept or suggest a simple definition of a character’s identity. Rather, the pervasive search for identity manifests itself in a number of recurring plots that combine to generate a multifaceted approach to the issue. There are characters who do not know who they are and who have to find their family. There are those who know who they are but not what they are destined for. Others know who they are but need to be acknowledged or make a name for themselves; and still others have to defend or recover their identity in the face of adversity or as a consequence of personal instability. All these plots appear more than once, often in pairs, implicating the characters in a process of fashioning and distinguishing their identity through their (re)actions, (life) choices and attitudes, with the ultimate aim of social integration and self-positioning. This quest for a place in society—crucial to the conception of

³⁶² Candiana in the second part, appearing first as Doriany and later Clorina may be something of an exception to this observation, although it should be noted that with her name also the type of character that Candiana embodies changes slightly. Described as Doriany “a shepherdes” (II.i.92), she later reappears as “The Nimphe [...] Clorina” (II.ii.205)—as opposed to her identity as a princess, which she reassumes when naming herself “Candiana, daughter to Parselius” (II.ii.355).

³⁶³ Neither Pelarina’s nor Pastora’s true name is revealed in the text. However, Pastora is possibly identical with Silvarina, whose story she tells. Pastora’s episode is one of the instances in Wroth’s romance where character identities are blurred or seem to overlap.

identity in Wroth's work—is also at the heart of the following main theme to be discussed, that is, the issue of royal succession.

4.1.2 Conquering and Defending a Throne

Given that the *Urania* presents readers with as many as four generations of royal characters, it is only logical that the quest for a kingdom to rule over is a prominent theme in the romance. The first part traces the protagonists' endeavours as princes and princesses to inherit, gain or regain a kingdom of their own and become rulers. The second part sees the protagonists' children grow up to be their successors. Since only a few of the protagonists of the first part die in the second, their children have not actually stepped into their places when the second part breaks off. Yet it becomes increasingly clear who will inherit and rule over which kingdom, at least with regard to the more prominent young princes. Hence, readers witness two generations establishing themselves as future rulers of a kingdom, or even of an empire in Amphilanthus' case, and this process is played out through five typical plots, which can be summarised as follows: recovery of a kingdom after exile and/or usurpation, re-establishment of a queen on the throne after the defeat of a pretender to the throne and the queen's hand, accession to a throne via marriage, replacement of an unfit ruler and, finally, natural royal succession. All of these basic plots are present in several versions both in the first and second part of the romance. They are often linked with each other, and some protagonists are involved in more than one of them. Thus, like the quest for identity, the concern for royal succession pervades the entire text, and the multiple employment of the theme implicitly addresses the question of what constitutes a legitimate and good ruler.

The first succession plot is exemplified by the case of Steriamus, the son of the King of Albania. The King of Albania lives in exile with his three children, Steriamus, Sellarinus and Sellarina, as a consequence of meddling in a war between Achaea and Macedonia, which

allowed several usurpers to take over Albania and split it up between themselves (I.i.24). The King of Albania is too old and weak to reconquer his own country and dies once Parselius has promised to support Steriamus in his struggle to regain his kingdom (I.i.25). The conquest of Albania, then, is the first long-term project formed in the *Urania*, spanning the first three books of the romance, and it ends with the defeat of all the usurpers, after which Steriamus becomes king of all Albania. Steriamus' case is reflected in the first book by that of Antissius, the grandson of the King of Romania, whose father is exiled due to his evil stepmother's lust for power and later killed in an ambush on her behalf. Rescued by his great-uncle, Antissius enlists the support of other kings and princes, who help him regain his kingdom when a rebellion follows the death of the evil Queen of Romania (I.i.75-77). Hence, both campaigns end with a triumphant victory of the rightful rulers, that is, Steriamus and Antissius, who prove themselves worthy of being kings by their deeds in battle and their successful leadership. However, although their legitimacy, i.e. their birth right, is never doubted and in romance-fashion confirmed by their prowess in battle, the text underlines the necessity of manpower and potent alliances to establish a ruler securely on his or her throne.

In the second part of Wroth's work, one finds elements of the same plot, but they are seldom fleshed out in detail, and the text does not cover the fate of the concerned rulers from beginning to end. The King of Denmark, for instance, has to be rescued from an evil enchantment after he has been forced to hide in exile due to a rebellion among his people (II.ii.328-331), but the text does not present his or his children's re-establishment on the throne because they have to wait for "the help and assistance of the greatest prince by birth (but unknowne) that Christian world hath" (II.ii.329), that is, for the help of the *Faire Designe* (II.ii.331). Another prince, Claramundo, is met in the process of recovering his kingdom after a rebellion that has resulted in the murder of his father. However, readers never learn what sparked the rebellion, how Claramundo's father died or how Claramundo has

raised support for his cause (II.ii.240). Instead, readers encounter Claramundo when he already has an army that is larger than that of the rebels and is supported by many princes and kings, such as for example the King of Bulgaria (II.ii.241). Both the plight of the King of Denmark and of Claramundo contain elements like rebellion, murder, exile, the search for help and military conquest, which recognisably parallel the experiences of Steriamus and Antissius. Yet, whereas Steriamus' and Antissius' changing fortunes—their trajectory from prince to outcast to prince again and finally to king—are related in full, the fates of the King of Denmark and of Claramundo are only presented in excerpts, leaving it to the readers to supplement the missing bits and pieces of the plot. However, although less fleshed out, the stories of the King of Denmark and of Claramundo add one important variant to the basic plot of the first part, namely the danger emanating from popular rebellions. Indeed, what differs between the first and second part is the nature of the usurpers threatening legitimate rulers. Whereas in the first part, kings and queens are endangered by the ambition of individual pretenders to the throne, the monarchs in the second part are more often faced with rebellions instigated by ruthless subjects who threaten not only the ruler but question monarchy as an institution. As pointed out in connection with topical or reflective readings of the romance's settings,³⁶⁴ this may well reflect changing political concerns at the time the romance was composed—i.e. during the first decade of the Thirty Years' War when James I's conflict with parliament grew more acute.³⁶⁵ Alternatively, Wroth's introduction of rebelling subjects could be seen as reworkings of the episode in Sidney's *Arcadia* when a mob attacks Basilius' lodge (OA 111ff, NA 378ff)—with the difference that rebellions in the *Urania* have far more realistic and dire consequences and cannot be averted by an eloquent speech as in the *Arcadia*. Yet, like Pyrocles in the *Arcadia*, the *Urania* clearly presents such rebellions in a

³⁶⁴ Cf. section 3.4.2 "Settings and Spatial Displacements" (238) above.

³⁶⁵ For a detailed discussion of the dating of the manuscript continuation see the introductions of the first and second part by Roberts and Gossett and Mueller, respectively (I.xvii-xviii, II.xvii-xxiii).

negative light and asserts the legitimacy and superiority of monarchy (cf. II.ii.329-331) over what the King of Denmark calls “a meere Romaine slavery” (II.ii.331).

Whereas male heirs to the throne generally return from exile to claim their kingdom,³⁶⁶ female heirs are often subject to adversity within their realm when it comes to assert their rule after their fathers have died and they have been designated queen. All the queens in their own right, that is, female protagonists who inherit a kingdom from a male relative and do not become queen through marriage, are challenged at least once, if not more often, with regard to their authority and right to rule. As mentioned earlier, such challenges usually go hand in hand with the usurper’s intentions to marry the queen by force if she does not consent, in order to consolidate and legitimise his rule. Imprisoned or besieged by another potential heir to the throne or a neighbouring monarch, the queens send for help and engage one or several princes to defend them—among them often their lover or prospective husband. Thus, Meriana and Melasinda in the first part of the romance are respectively succoured by Rosindy and Ollorandus,³⁶⁷ while, in the second part, Pamphilia mainly engages the help of Amphilanthus, Rodomandro and her brother Philarchos. Lindafillia is protected by a number of monarchs, such as Rosindy, Ollorandus and Parselius, and Melasinda is rescued from rebels by Allimarlus. As the above discussion has shown, in the *Urania* both male and female monarchs are threatened by usurpation and rebellions, which they can only oppose successfully thanks to political alliances, i.e. the support of family and friends. However, unlike their male counterparts, female heirs to the throne are doubly endangered due to their gender as they risk losing both the sovereignty over their realm and their own body. Yet, although this means that queens ruling in their own right appear more vulnerable and are repeatedly in need of a strong champion like the typical romance damsel in distress, the legitimacy of female rule per se is

³⁶⁶ This is reminiscent of the typical romance plot of “the return of the heir from over the sea to claim his throne” (341) outlined by Cooper.

³⁶⁷ Unlike Rosindy however, Ollorandus cannot secure Melasinda’s throne for her by military means because he does not have an army at his disposal. See footnote 369.

never questioned in Wroth's work. To what extent this position is in keeping or at odds with early modern views of female rule is difficult to gauge since, as Phyllis Rackin points out in *Shakespeare and Women*, the scholarship that stresses male anxiety over female rule, for example, often neglects evidence of Elizabeth's popularity (29-33). It is possible, however, that the unequivocal representation of female rulers as legitimate might express what Claire Jowitt defines as "a sense of nostalgia for the reign and policies of Elizabeth I" (34).³⁶⁸

If usurpers who attack queens in order to become rulers themselves are represented as villains throughout the *Urania*, marriage, if based on love, figures as a less threatening version of the same plot and is an accepted means of acquiring a throne.³⁶⁹ Given that there are often several princes in a royal family, the younger sons must find a kingdom of their own if they want to become rulers since they usually do not inherit the realm of their father. To achieve this end the young princes have two possibilities open to them: either they replace a monarch that is unfit to rule his or her country, a plot that will be discussed later, or they marry the queen of a country and so become rulers through marriage. The princes thus secure for themselves what the usurpers strive for as well, that is, regal power legitimated by the union with the rightful heir to the throne. This can be seen very well in the case of Meriana. She is imprisoned by Clotorindus, "her neere Kinsman[,] keeping her thus, with intent to marry her, if he can gaine her consent; if not, so to hold her inclos'd during her life" (I.i.108). However, Meriana engages Rosindy to release her, promising to give herself to him if he prove worthy (I.i.110), with the result that Rosindy, the second son of the King of Morea, in the end succeeds where Clotorindus fails: he becomes Meriana's husband and king of Macedonia (I.i.160). Other younger sons who find a kingdom by finding a wife are

³⁶⁸ See also Hannay (*MSLW* 268).

³⁶⁹ Melasinda's case presents a curious example of realpolitik in this respect since her beloved Ollorandus lacks an army to support her and has to advise her to agree to her council's demand that she marry the pretender Rodolindus in order to avoid a civil war or exile (I.i.79-80). Fortunately for Melasinda, Rodolindus later dies after affronting Amphilanthus incognito in a joust, "leaving his delicate wife, as perfect and excellent a widdow" (I.ii.296).

Philarchos, who becomes prince of Mytilene, that is, Lesbos, by marrying Orilena, and Leonius, who marries Veralinda, the only remaining heir to the King of Phrygia. However, not only do younger sons become rulers through marriage in the *Urania*, but younger daughters also profit from marriage and become queens thanks to their husbands. Selarina becomes queen of Romania when she marries Antissius, Limena queen of Sicily when Perissus accedes to the throne of his uncle, Antissia queen of Negroponte at Dolorindus' side, and Philistella comes to rule over Epirus with Selarinus. Hence, both younger sons and daughters can advance to the status of rulers by means of marriage.

A further legitimate means for younger sons and daughters to become kings and queens is to replace an unfit ruler—a scenario that is carefully distinguished from usurpation in the *Urania*. Orilena's father, the Duke of Mytilene, for example, agrees to marry virtuous Orilena to a wicked flatterer in order to disinherit her and pass the island on to his younger and less worthy daughter Erinea, on whom he dotes (I.ii.201-202). When Philarchos successfully defends Orilena and, after marrying her, reproaches her father for his arbitrariness, the Duke agrees to “conferre that Iland [Mytilene/Lesbos] straight upon the new married couple, making him Prince of fruitfull Metelin, and other Ilands which were also his” (I.ii.211). The Duke, whose attempt to circumvent the ordinary course of succession has proved him unfit to rule, subsequently leaves with Erinea for Samos and is replaced by Philarchos and Orilena. Thus, the unfit ruler removes himself, with the consequence that, although there is a change in government, the protagonist replacing the ruler does not appear to be a usurper but a legitimate successor. The same is true for other unfit monarchs that are replaced: rather than being removed forcibly, they remove themselves, sometimes before and sometimes after having been attacked and defeated due to their arbitrary politics. One example is Olixia, the Queen of Epirus, who dies due to her own wilfulness after having been duped by Selarinus, whom she meant to oppose but with whom she had fallen in love after unknowingly

imprisoning him (I.ii.304-314). Like the Duke of Mytilene, Olixia removes herself, not because she admits her faults as Orilena's father does, but because she does not check her "ill nature and disposition of body and mind" and refuses to accept advice when she falls ill until it is too late (I.ii.314). As a consequence of her death, the kingdom of Epirus falls to Selarinus, whose claim is legitimated by the circumstances that "Epirus anciently belonged to the Kings of Albania" and that there are "none standing for the Crowne, nor heire being left of those, who unjustly held it" (I.ii.314). Selarinus, like Philarchos, does not appear, then, as a usurper, but as a worthier successor of an unfit ruler who could not govern her pride and her passions. This is also the case for Lusandrino, the nephew of the King of Corinth, who, in the second part, marries Mirlania, the princess of Argos, and replaces her father, the King of Argos. Although Lusandrino and his friend Nummurandro save both Mirilania and her parents from the leader of the rebels that have deposed the King of Argos, the King does not agree to a marriage between Lusandrino and Mirilania. Instead, he tries to imprison and kill the two knights out of fear of being replaced by a Morean, as he was foretold (II.i.89, 94). When the King of Argos persists in his "wayward and mad courses," he is defeated in battle, runs away and is killed by his own page after Lusandrino and Mirilania are proclaimed king and queen of Argos (II.i.98, 101). Again, the unreasonable and therefore bad ruler is responsible for his own removal and is succeeded by a protagonist that is proved more legitimate since he has shown himself worthy of the crown, has a legitimate claim to the throne through marriage and providential support in the form of a prophecy.

In contrast to younger sons and daughters, the eldest children of a monarch normally do not have to find a kingdom to rule elsewhere. Yet the *Urania* also contains two cases in which the eldest son does not inherit his father's realm, namely that of Parselius, the eldest son of the king of Morea, and that of his son, Trebisound. In a plot typical for a younger son, Parselius becomes king of Achaea thanks to his marriage to Dalinea, once her brother Leandrus has

died. Dying before his father, Parselius never inherits Morea, nor does his son, Trebisound. Indeed, Trebisound does not even inherit the kingdom of Achaea, but is destined to rule over the realm of his wife, the Soldaness of Babylon. This dispossession of Parselius and Trebisound is not for political reasons or because it is feared they would become bad kings like the unfit rulers discussed above. Rather, as Melissea expressly declares, it is due to Parselius' breach of faith when courting Urania that not Trebisound but "one of hers [Urania's children] shall have this throne [of Achaea] with your daughter, the true picture of your dearest Dalinea" (II.ii.322).³⁷⁰ In other words, Trebisound is punished for his father's inconstancy and consequently has to find a new kingdom, whereas Floristello, Urania's eldest son, is in a sense rewarded for her suffering by becoming King of Achaea thanks to his marriage to Parselius' daughter Candiana, in addition to inheriting the throne of Albania. Moreover, this arrangement that favours the younger daughter over the elder brother and installs Candiana on the throne can also be explained as a compensation for Dalinea's suffering when temporarily abandoned by Parselius since Candiana is described as a second version of Dalinea. Thus, a legitimate ruler in the *Urania* is a monarch capable of governing both the self and the realm, and the two are inextricably linked.

Unlike Parselius and Trebisound, other heirs to the throne in the *Urania* are never questioned but automatically succeed their dead father, uncle or brother in accordance with patriarchal norms. If this is the case, the text usually simply mentions the fact without going into detail concerning the previous ruler's death and the succession itself. Amphilanthus especially is a protagonist who incurs no trouble at all in this respect. First, he is made king of the Romans by the Emperor for his military desert (I.i.45), then he inherits his father's kingdom Naples (I.ii.304), and, finally, he is elected Emperor without any opposition from other competitors (I.iii.441). Other protagonists who also face no problems in acceding to

³⁷⁰ See also section 4.1.3.2 "Male Infidelity" below.

their respective thrones are Rosindy, who takes over the kingdom of Morea from his old father after the Queen of Morea's death (II.ii.406), Polarchos, who despite being an illegitimate son is suddenly referred to as King of Cyprus though the death of his father has not even been mentioned (II.ii.407), and Dalinea, who with her husband Parselius becomes ruler of Achaea after the death of her brother Leandrus (I.iii.463) and of her father (I.iii.489). Also Pamphilia and Ollorandus start their rule without major problems, Pamphilia inheriting the kingdom of Pamphilia from her uncle (I.i.100, I.ii.266) and Ollorandus following his father and elder brother on the throne (I.ii.267, 271).³⁷¹ All these characters, then—regardless of whether they are male or female—are represented as legitimate successors, whose right to rule is only questioned, if at all, by usurpers or rebels later on.

The five plots in which protagonists accede to their thrones thus at once set up recognizable patterns that facilitate readers' orientation within the text and outline what constitutes a legitimate successor or succession. Not surprisingly, legitimate heirs in the *Urania* coincide in general with the protagonists that have the best claim to the throne according to patriarchal norms, that is a father's eldest son or, in the absence of sons, the eldest daughter.³⁷² Yet, the examples outlined above, in which younger sons or daughters inherit the throne and/or legitimate heirs die before they become rulers, show Wroth's awareness that the issue of succession in general and royal succession in particular is fraught with uncertainty and complications. This awareness clearly resonates with Wroth's own family history—consider the early death of her uncle and her brother William (*MSLW* 165)—as well as with national history, notably, the premature death of Prince Henry in 1612.³⁷³ In

³⁷¹ Critics like Walker have commented on the symbolism of Pamphilia's "inherit[ing] her kingdom from her uncle, not her father" (170), just as Wroth as a writer seems to take up Sidney's literary inheritance by composing works of the same genres. See also Lamb, "The Biopolitics of Romance."

³⁷² In all of the royal families with sons and daughters, the eldest is a male rather than a female child, meaning that the patriarchal line of succession from father to son rather than an elder daughter is not questioned in any way in the *Urania*.

³⁷³ Prince Henry's death preceded that of William Sidney (1590-1612) by less than a month (*MSLW* 165) and Wroth would presumably have met Prince Henry personally when he visited Loughton in 1605 (Rickman 148 n38).

addition, the proliferation and importance of younger brothers in Wroth's universe highlighted by Elizabeth Mazzola in *Favorite Sons* (77) indicates that even if the *Urania* in general upholds the model of primogeniture, it also suggests that the model is potentially problematic, as it constrains younger sons and daughters to find a place in society by other means than inheritance.³⁷⁴ Wroth's romance world not only provides sufficient space and opportunities for the ambitions and needs of such younger children, but, through its idealising representation of these younger protagonists, it also implicitly legitimates their endeavours and showcases their merit. Inheritance on the grounds of primogeniture is therefore not the only viable path to a throne in the *Urania*, and younger protagonists become legitimate monarchs thanks to marriage or their own desert as illustrated above. However, as the examples of bad rulers show, a legitimate claim to a throne—whether based on primogeniture, marriage or desert—further needs to be sustained by good rule of one's self and one's realm to assure a successful reign. Otherwise even legitimate rulers may be reduced to a state where they have to step down and hand over their power to a fitter candidate—a scenario that Wroth carefully distinguishes from the two types of succession that are branded as utterly illegitimate in the *Urania*, that is, usurpation and rebellion. Finally, it needs to be noted that female rule in Wroth's work, although more often subject to threats of usurpation and rebellion, is represented as no less legitimate than male rule. It is however more limited than male rule because, if the legitimacy of female rulers is unquestioned in the *Urania*, so is a husband's right to take over the rule of his spouse's realm, as Meriana, “who gave precedence in place, and government to her husband” makes clear: “‘For,’ said she, ‘he won the kingdome by his sword, me by his love; both his, none but himselfe can here beare rule’” (I.ii.211).³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ Cf. also Mazzola's claim that the *Urania* exposes the predicament of younger brothers who “adventured precisely because they lacked homes, wealth, and a future” (83).

³⁷⁵ Skretkiewicz mentions this quote and further notes how “ruthlessly” Rosindy fortifies his and hence the Moreans' control over Macedonia (323-324).

4.1.3 Love Matters

While marriages in the *Urania* repeatedly have the effect of making either the husband or the wife a ruler over a kingdom, characters usually do not mention political ambition as a motive for marriage unless they are aggressive contenders for, or usurpers of a throne. Rather, as is to be expected in a romance, what matters to the protagonists is to win their beloved's affection. Love in all its facets—love at first sight, courtship, mutual love, disappointed love, infidelity, separation, reunion and marriage—is certainly a central concern of the work, although, as the previous sections have shown, it is not the only issue of importance or sole “thematic interest” that unifies the whole work, as Salzman suggests (*English* 141). Given that love is a vast and rather vague theme, I will group the discussion of its treatment in typical, recurring plots into three different subsections, addressing respectively the topics of courtship, male infidelity and marriage. With the exception perhaps of the ever inconstant Amphilanthus, protagonists that have fallen in love hope for their love to be returned and to result in marriage. Indeed, all the major protagonists of part one marry sooner or later, with the exception of Leandrus, who dies, Polarchos, who is jilted, and the sage Melissea, who has supernatural powers of foresight and acts as an independent agent protecting other protagonists. Before marrying, however, protagonists go through a period of courtship, and since the majority of them only marry at the end of the third book, the greater part of the published text depicts examples of courtship. In the second part the royal children engage in courtship and, more importantly, the extended courtship of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus is renewed due to the latter's infidelity. Like courtship, male infidelity, although more prominent on the hypodiegetic than on the intradiegetic level, plays an important structuring role in the *Urania*. Whereas courtship, as a preliminary stage that may lead to marriage, occurs at the beginning of a new relationship and envisages closure in the form of marriage, inconstancy postpones closure and calls for a new period of courtship that either initiates a new relationship or renews a disrupted one, as in the

case of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus. Thus, plots of courtship, infidelity and marriage succeed each other and propel the narrative forward.

4.1.3.1 Courtship

Courtship usually implies that a man is courting a woman, which is also the most common and certainly most acceptable case in the *Urania*. In this plot, male characters attempt to make their love known to their beloved while the female characters try to remain as discreet as possible, neither unduly encouraging their suitors, nor giving them reason to despair. Female characters in some cases confide in their closest friends, as Philistella and Urania do when their suitors are absent (I.ii.330-334), whereas male lovers sometimes ask friends and relatives of the beloved to intercede on their behalf, like Selarinus, for instance, who confesses his love for Philistella to her sister Pamphilia (I.ii.263). This strategy can also lead to ironic conflicts and misunderstandings, however, since Leandrus, enamoured of Pamphilia, then mistakes Selarinus for her lover when Selarinus is in fact speaking to her about Philistella. This in turn provokes Leandrus to ask Amphilanthus to urge his suit to Pamphilia, not knowing that Amphilanthus, too, is in love with Pamphilia (I.ii.263-364).

Another repeated courtship plot is the testing of the lover by the beloved who, in fairy-tale fashion, gives him a task to fulfil. Thus, Meriana promises her hand to Rosindy on the following conditions:

‘To assure me of your love, and you of pity, this is the course you must take; instantly leave this place, nor returne unto it, untill such time as your fame by your noble deeds may prove such, as shall make you worthy of my love; then returne, release mee with your owne hands; make me perfectly know, you are Prince Rosindy, and I wil give my self unto you.’ (I.i.110)

While in Rosindy’s case, who is as yet an untried knight travelling incognito, Meriana’s prudence seems justified, there are also examples in the *Urania* that illustrate the danger of abusing of such a practice. The Princess of Rhodes, for instance, who comes closest to the stereotype of a capricious and cruel mistress, refuses to marry Polarchos because she

considers him dishonoured for having been defeated by Amphilanthus (I.ii.238). Subsequently, Polarchos sets off on a tour through Greece and Italy, challenging and overcoming knights everywhere in the name of his beloved. Yet upon his return, instead of marrying him as promised, the Princess of Rhodes disdains Polarchos and has him imprisoned (I.ii.239-240).³⁷⁶ Even more problematic is Antissia's behaviour, who abuses Dolorindus' infatuation and despair to achieve her revenge on Amphilanthus, promising to accept Dolorindus' suit if he kills Amphilanthus (I.ii.315, 357). The text's condemnation of Antissia's request and the behaviour of the Princess of Rhodes indicates that Wroth critically distances her romance from the courtly love tradition with its—at least nominally—all powerful mistresses and abject male lovers.

Wroth takes up another well known plot, made popular by works like d'Urfé's *Astrée* or Sidney's *Arcadia*, that is, the plot of the male lover courting his beloved in disguise in order to have access to her person and feelings. In the case of Philarchos, this simply means that he does not reveal to his beloved Orilena, who has engaged him as her knight, that he is in fact the unknown man she has fallen in love with earlier on (I.ii.201). As a result, Philarchos can "freely [...] behol[d] her" and is "kindly [...] entertain[ed]" (I.ii.204) by her. Moreover, Orilena unwittingly confesses her love to him by telling him her story, and it is only once she has expressed her ardent love for him that Philarchos takes off his helmet to reveal himself (I.ii.204-205). Leonius, in his pursuit of Veralinda, goes to even more lengths to enjoy the company of his beloved. Following the advice of a shepherd, he disguises himself as the nymph Leonia to be near Veralinda (I.iii.431-432).³⁷⁷ Apart from learning that Veralinda loves him, Leonius, like Pyrocles in Sidney's *Arcadia*, profits from his disguise to have virtually unrestricted access to his beloved, enjoys her "embracement" and even manages to exchange kisses (I.iii.435). He reveals his identity only once he knows Veralinda to be a

³⁷⁶ This episode, of course, recalls the story of Phalantus and Artesia in Sidney's *New Arcadia* (154-168).

³⁷⁷ Starke offers an interesting, although not entirely convincing, discussion of the cross-dressed Leonius as a "new man" and "honorary pastoral heroine" (110) opposing Amphilanthus' failings (116-128).

princess, but, interestingly, his behaviour is not rebuked by her as he fears—the only one critical of his disguise seems to be his brother Amphilanthus (I.iii.456).³⁷⁸ Instead, Veralinda promises to marry him and confirms her love for him, saying that his keeping her company as Leonia has created an additional bond between them (I.iii.456). Thus, disguise and the concealment of one's identity in matters of love do not seem to be a major offence in the *Urania*—at least as long as they are not practiced with dishonest intentions.

However, the *Urania* also introduces two impostors that pretend to be princes and hide their true identity behind the reputation of existing protagonists, calling themselves Amphilanthus and Ollorandus. They resemble the characters of the false knights Braggadocchio and Trompart in the *Faerie Queene*, capitalizing on their assumed identity. The false Amphilanthus especially makes use of his counterpart's reputation to reach his own ends or cover his deeds. Thus, he seduces and then betrays and slanders Emilina, the princess of Stiria, who believes him to be the real Amphilanthus, and he kills the Prince of Carinthia who tries to revenge Emilina (I.ii.297-303, I.iii.356). These dubious feats, recounted in hypodiegetic tales, indicate the danger inherent in disguise. However, the behaviour of these two impostors does not only call into question knights' common practice of concealing their identities. The false Amphilanthus and Ollorandus also harm the reputations of their real counterparts, and, by extension, they seriously undermine the concept of chivalry, which strongly relies on such notions as honour, reputation and the assumption of knights' noble-mindedness. It is not surprising, therefore, that while their crimes are related in hypodiegetic narratives, the false Amphilanthus and Ollorandus meet their end on the intradiegetic level at the hands of Antissius and the young Prince of Carinthia, who by defeating the impostors prove their own excellence and reaffirm the values of chivalry. Moreover, it is significant that before they succeed, Dolorindus fails to overcome the false Amphilanthus, whom he mistakes

³⁷⁸ Unlike Euarchus in Sidney's *Old Arcadia* (351-353, 356), however, Amphilanthus admits Leonius' love for Veralinda as an excuse for his disguise.

for the real Amphilanthus and tries to kill according to the promise he has made to Antissia (I.iii.358). That Dolorindus does not recognize the impostor as such shows his blindness due to infatuation, and his defeat vis-à-vis the false Amphilanthus can be seen as a consequence of his own failure to abide by the chivalric code.

If male characters in the *Urania* are expected to comply with the laws of chivalry, female characters are supposed to assume a passive role in courtship in accordance with patriarchal norms. Indeed, female characters such as Nereana, Lucenia, and to some extent Antissia, who expose themselves in courtship, are generally not successful and are regarded critically by other characters within the romance. The text thus suggests that virtuous female protagonists should not follow their example, but rather emulate Pamphilia's exemplary discretion. However, although a character like Nereana, who vows to follow Steriamus "till she could win him" (I.ii.193) because he does not return her affection, is clearly ridiculed and punished for her forwardness and presumption, the comical episode when Parselius declares his love to Dalinea presents a more sympathetic view of women's involvement in courtship and exposes the limitations of exaggerated discretion or passivity. Indeed, Dalinea's dilemma is summed up as follows:

She [...] understood what hee would have her understand, nay, shee would answer his looks with as amorous ones of her part, as straightly, and lovingly would she hold his hand, but knowing modesty forbid, shee would sigh, and in her soule wish that he would once speake; but bashfulnesse with-held him, and woman modestie kept her silent; (I.i.125-126)

In order to comply with the ideals of modesty and discretion, Dalinea can only return the looks, gestures and eventually words that Parselius addresses to her, but she cannot initiate an exchange. As a consequence, she must have recourse to ambivalent language to signal to Parselius that he should declare his love, talking about turtle doves and lovers in general to prod him into wooing her openly (I.i.126). This results in a doubly amusing scene for readers, who thanks to their superior knowledge of the protagonists' feelings see through both Parselius' timid advances and Dalinea's coded encouragement. Luckily for her Parselius

understands her too, yet he is also quick to protest that “this [i.e. that he loves her] I would faine long since have said, but I feared your displeasure, nor had I now ventured, but that me thought you bid me bee bold, taking your discourse wholly to my selfe” (I.i.126-127). In other words, noting that Dalinea’s “discourse” was encouraging, he indirectly makes her responsible for having declared his love and hence for any “displeasure” his declaration might cause her. Tellingly, Dalinea’s reply to this is, “Then did you take it right [...] for I confesse” (I.i.127), signalling awareness of her transgression. Thus, Dalinea remains caught in a code of conduct that forbids her to take the initiative in love matters, even if she does so only indirectly.

As well as women that court men indiscreetly, the *Urania* also features several male protagonists that face rejection—although not because of any transgression but simply because their affection is not returned. Steriamus and Leandrus are typical examples of this plot—both unhappily in love with Pamphilia, who rejects their courtship. If male lovers court a female character unsuccessfully, they appear to take on the traditional role of the courtly lover, lamenting their fortune and pleading with the beloved for mercy. It is noteworthy, however, that, perhaps with the exception of the Princess of Rhodes, Wroth does not present any beloved female characters as living up to the capriciousness and cruelty they are traditionally accused of by courtly lovers. On the contrary, the focus is not only on the lover’s suffering from unrequited love, but also on the uncomfortable situation in which such courtship places the beloved woman: she has to keep her wooer at bay without offending him, she has to resist pressure from friends and parents, and at the same time she must remain discreet with regard to her own feelings. Moreover, whereas Steriamus can avoid Nereana’s aggressive wooing by simply leaving her island and fleeing her, female characters usually do not have this option to escape unwanted attention. Consequently, when courted first by Steriamus and later by Leandrus, Pamphilia has to resort to strategies of evasion and excuses

to avoid further pursuit. In Steriamus' case, she gives him signs of her displeasure that only he understands, so as not to humiliate him, and stops him from disclosing his love to her by surrounding herself with company (I.i.68-69). Pressed by Leandrus and her own father, she declares Elizabeth-like to be married to her country Pamphilia and therefore not eligible in marriage (I.ii.262). In both cases, however, Pamphilia takes pains not to offend her suitors any more than necessary. Her reaction to Rodomandro's suit in the second part also shows that Pamphilia does not correspond to the stereotype of the cruel and merciless beloved. When Rodomandro poses as a courtly lover, pleading that she might let him serve her, she answers: "Alas, my lord, [...] you who are soe fitt to commaund, why shold you stile your self a servant? Noe, my lord, you are borne to rule, and God forbid I should assume any such power over you" (II.ii.272). Thus, while male lovers in the romance repeatedly have recourse to the courtly love tradition when pleading their cause, Wroth replaces the stereotypical representation of the female beloved in this tradition by a much more nuanced portrayal of female figures, thereby giving them a voice that they are usually denied in courtly poetry.

4.1.3.2 Male Infidelity

Whereas male lovers run the risk of rejection when they declare their love, female lovers in the *Urania* suffer most from male infidelity. The following exchange between Dalinea and Parselius just before she implicitly invites him to declare his love presents in a nutshell some of the issues involved in the plot of the unfaithful male lover:

'Tis true,' said Dalinea, 'but more blessed are they [two turtle doves], if the story bee true, that they never change.'
 'Having once,' said he, 'made a perfect choice, none sure can after change.'
 'I never heard man accuse himself,' said she, 'but rather when he had runne into that fault, finde something amisse in his former love.' (I.i.126)

Parselius' protest that male constancy is guaranteed so to speak by the perfection of the beloved is exposed by Dalinea as hollow words that are easily turned into an excuse blaming

male infidelity on the imperfection of the mistress. Dalinea's acute observation is all the more poignant as Parselius, at this very moment, by wooing her, proves inconstant to his former beloved Urania, whom he had at one point described as "wholly made in perfectnesse" (I.i.26). Hence, the typical plot of male infidelity sees female lovers abandoned for other women and/or neglected by the continual absence of the male lover. Such betrayal may be followed by a reunion and then further infidelity on the part of the male lover. This underlines the helplessness of the female characters in such situations since they have no means of actively regaining their lost lovers without transgressing patriarchal norms but are reduced to waiting and hoping for a return of their lover's affection. However, as has been seen in the discussion of royal succession, at least in one instance male infidelity does not go unpunished. Parselius is eventually forgiven and released from his bond to Urania by the magical healing waters of St. Maura (I.ii.230-231) when, after seeing her fall from the cliff, he jumps in after her to die with her (I.ii.230). Yet his inconstancy is not forgotten but results in the disinheritance of his son Trebisound (II.ii.322), that is, the son conceived presumably while Parselius betrays Urania with Dalinea.³⁷⁹

The plot of the inconstant male lover is rather rare on the intradiegetic level of the narrative, occurring more often on the hypodiegetic level.³⁸⁰ Yet the few instances that there are, namely those of Urania and Parselius, and Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, are of great importance to the structure of the romance as a whole because male infidelity, in general, has a delaying effect: it postpones union and hence closure, calling for further episodes and adventures that contribute towards a reunion, which may, in turn, be delayed again due to a new betrayal. Especially where Pamphilia and Amphilanthus are concerned, the plot of repeated inconstancy is the prime means which provides the text with an overarching structure

³⁷⁹ When Dalinea comes to the court of Morea after Parselius abandoned her, the sex of her baby is not specified (I.ii.241-243). However, it is clear that of her two children Trebisound is the elder (II.i.2).

³⁸⁰ Cf. the respective discussion in section 4.2 "Supporting and Contrasting Narratives on the Hypodiegetic Level" below.

that spans not only the first part, but also creates a strong link between the two parts. Indeed, together with the expectation of a (re)union of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, which it continually counteracts and delays, the plot of male infidelity most clearly testifies to an overall design governing the whole of the *Urania*, from the beginning of the published part to the end of the manuscript continuation. To illustrate this, the recurrence of Amphilanthus' inconstancy needs to be traced in some more detail.

Amphilanthus repeatedly courts women and later leaves and forgets them. Especially in the first part of the romance, he woos four different women at various times, some even more than once. He also proves susceptible to snares laid for him, as when Musalina and Lucenia trick him to come back by means of the enchantment called the Hell of Deceit or when the Queen of Candia manoeuvres him into marriage in the second part. Amphilanthus' susceptibility to women's appeal is hinted at as soon as he appears for the first time in the romance in the hypodiegetic account of Allimarlus, who remarks that Amphilanthus' "heart was never but pitifull to faire Ladies" (I.i.39). At his next appearance, Amphilanthus demonstrates his readiness to fall in love himself when, "in charitie," he returns Antissia's love, considering it an act of "cruelty" not to do so (I.i.61). However, when he later confesses to Ollorandus to be in love, it is clearly not Antissia he speaks of but Pamphilia (I.i.80-81). Throughout the rest of the first part, Amphilanthus proves his volatility in matters of love by courting successively Lucenia (I.i.161-164), Pamphilia and his formerly beloved Musalina, with whom in Lucenia's company he attempts to end the enchantment of the Theatre of Love (I.iii.442) before returning to Pamphilia (I.iii.496). He is then once more separated from Pamphilia by the Hell of Deceit, with which Musalina and Lucenia lure Amphilanthus back (I.iv.575, 654-657), before his final reunion with Pamphilia at the end of the first part (I.iv.660-661). In the second part, Amphilanthus changes lovers less frequently, but his double inconstancy to Pamphilia appears of much more consequence because it constitutes a

breach of their marriage vows, exchanged in a secret wedding. Although freshly married to Pamphilia, Amphilanthus sets off to Candia, is seduced there by the “infectious” Queen of Candia and tricked into a second secret marriage to the Princess of Slavonia when the Queen of Candia and his former tutor Forsandurus convince him that Pamphilia has forsaken him and married Rodomandro (II.i.131-134).³⁸¹ For the rest of the second part, Amphilanthus neglects his second wife, the Princess of Slavonia, in his struggle to regain Pamphilia’s favour, and at the end of the romance, they are once more a couple—again at the expense of the Princess of Slavonia. However, given Amphilanthus’ repeated inconstancy, readers are left wondering whether this reunion is not as temporary as all the previous ones.

It is obvious that the development of the relation between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus with its progress and setbacks constitutes a major structuring element in the *Urania*. The repeated reunions and separations of the couple take on a rhythmic function in the course of the narrative, and the continual tension in their relation to each other provides the text with an element of suspense that takes readers through the whole work and keeps them doubting until the very last line of the manuscript continuation. Hence, paradoxically, the very instability of the relation between Amphilanthus and Pamphilia turns out to be a means of conferring a sense of continuity to the romance, while at the same time implying that, potentially, Wroth could have extended her romance indefinitely. This effect is heightened as the plot of male infidelity is doubled and prefigured in the relation between Urania and Parselius, and, as will be seen later, reflected in multiple hypodiegetic tales, especially that of Bellamira (I.iii.379-89).³⁸² Moreover, the false impostor Amphilanthus, as has been mentioned, not only takes credit for Amphilanthus’ numerous valorous deeds, but also imitates his inconstancy, gaining the love of Emilina, the princess of Stiria, and forsaking her afterwards.

³⁸¹ See Roberts for a discussion of the representation of William Herbert’s tutor Hugh Sanford under the name of Forsandurus (I.xcvi-xcviii).

³⁸² Alexander makes the astute observation that the “autobiographical elements in Part 2” are to be found rather on the intradiegetic level “in the central narrative of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, where in Part 1 they are displaced on to [sic] minor characters and inset narratives” (294 n28).

In addition, the development of Pamphilia's and Amphilanthus' relationship reveals an intricate overarching plot structure. This story arc rests on Melissea's prophecies in the first part, encompasses both the first and second part of the romance and welds them together. Melissea explicitly advises Amphilanthus to "beware of a treacherous servant" (I.i.140) and tells Pamphilia to beware of "woman kinde" (I.ii.190), foreshadowing thus both Amphilanthus' later breach of his marriage vows and his repeated inconstancy. While readers readily remember the latter warning whenever Amphilanthus proves inconstant, it is not until the second part that the full meaning of the prophecies becomes clear. The women Melissea predicts to be a danger for Pamphilia's happiness turn out to be not only Musalina and Lucenia in the first, but most importantly the Queen of Candia and the Princess of Slavonia in the second part, and the "treacherous servant" Melissea refers to is Amphilanthus' tutor Forsandurus, who intercepts Amphilanthus' and Pamphilia's letters (II.i.133, II.ii.387). Moreover, as pointed out earlier, Bellamira's fate, related on the hypodiegetic level, closely resembles Pamphilia's experiences in the manuscript continuation, and this parallel is implicitly announced in the text when Bellamira states that "if she [Pamphilia] were like mee, shee would bee much more pitifull" (I.iii.378).³⁸³ In view of this overarching plot of betrayal, Roberts' claim that "Lady Wroth drastically alters the design of the plot by overturning the expected marriage between the two leading figures, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, whose union was promised at the end of the 1621 version" ("Response to Jacobean Censorship" 128) does not seem to be justified. It is Pamphilia and Amphilanthus' secret marriage rather and Pamphilia's willingness to marry Rodomandro later on that come as a surprise, not the continued infidelity of Amphilanthus.

³⁸³ Ironically, Amphilanthus' reaction to this statement is to suggest that Pamphilia can "suffer no comparisons" (I.iii.378).

4.1.3.3 Marriage

Whereas the love relation between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus fails to result in a stable happy marriage, other couples are more successful in this respect. In general, one can distinguish between two basic marriage plots in the *Urania*. In the first, marriages are arranged against the desires of the characters to be married, and such marriages do not result in lasting and fulfilled relationships. The arranged marriages in the romance reflect on a practice that was still common in the early modern period, but “only in the upper ranks of society” (95), as Susan D. Amussen points out in “The Family and the Household,” that is, in families of Wroth’s own social class, intent on furthering their interest through politically and/or financially beneficial alliances.³⁸⁴ Yet in practice, Amussen continues, also among the aristocracy “most parents consulted their children before completing the arrangements for a marriage” (95). Thus, the unhappy results of arranged marriages in Wroth’s work seem to underline the desirability of such “negotiation between parents and children on the subject of marriage” (95), as Amussen puts it. The second and more successful marriage plot in the *Urania* is the traditional romance plot based on love, that is, two characters fall in love but have to overcome a number of obstacles before they can be joined in marriage. According to Amussen, in the early modern period “Marriage for love—which was assumed to be infatuation—was frowned on, but it was common knowledge that marriage without affection was a source of disaster” (95). In this sense, the obstacles facing the lovers in the *Urania* can be seen as tests to distinguish true love from mere infatuation. As the following discussion will show, the two basic plots concerning marriage (re)appear throughout the text in numerous variants, thus providing readers with a kaleidoscopic approach to the issue.

³⁸⁴ For a discussion of early modern marriage practices see also Roberts, ““The Knott Never to Bee Untide”” and Rickman (15-18). Wroth would have known examples of arranged marriages that resulted in stable unions like that of her aunt, the Countess of Pembroke, as well as examples that ended in scandal, like the marriages of Penelope Rich and Frances Villiers (cf. Rickman 111-139, 173-200).

As stated above, arranged marriages in the *Urania* are not successful, and the husbands of such couples have a striking tendency to die, leaving their wives free to form new unions with partners of their choice. In contrast to the similar outcome of all the arranged marriages, the agents responsible for them and the rationale behind them can greatly vary. Some matches are arranged by parents who choose the spouse of their child for various and at times selfish reasons. In this way, Limena's parents give her to her brutish husband Philargus because of his "powerfull command and meanes" (I.i.5), Orilena's father promises his daughter to a flattering gentleman in order to get rid of her and advance her younger sister as his successor (I.ii.201), and the parents of Antissia and Leandrus destine the two for each other when they are still children in token of the alliance between Romania and Achaea (I.i.30). In all three cases, the arranged marriages come to nothing: Philargus is killed by Parselius after torturing Limena (I.i.84-85), Orilena is successfully protected by Philarchos (I.ii.204-211), and Antissia and Leandrus both fall in love with other protagonists and never even meet or try to meet before Leandrus dies (I.iii.463).

As the case of Orilena indicates, politics and issues of succession also play a role in match-making. This is most notably the case with regard to Melasinda's marriage to Rodolindus, her cousin of illegitimate birth, which is arranged by mediators between the two parties and the people in order to avoid further civil war and to secure Melasinda's rule over Hungary (I.i.79-80). Fortunately for Melasinda and her beloved Ollorandus, Rodolindus soon dies after being wounded in a joust by Amphilanthus (I.ii.296). At the end of the second part, when Ollorandus has also died, there are attempts to arrange a marriage for Melasinda once more, to the widowed Parselius (II.ii.402). The text does not clarify who proposes the match, noting simply that "a mariage was propounded betweene Parselius and her [Melasinda]," but it is clear that Melasinda's response is only lukewarm since "a long treaty [...] of som tow yeere" follows the proposition, with the result that Parselius dies in the meantime (II.ii.402).

Thus, even an arranged second marriage between two widowed protagonists does not come off, and it is only after Parselius' death that Melasinda travels to the court of Morea to mourn over his death with the rest of his family (II.ii.403).

Another important arranged marriage is that of Amphilanthus and the Princess of Slavonia in the second part, brought about by the Queen of Candia and Amphilanthus' tutor Forsandurus to spite Pamphilia (II.i.131-134). As mentioned in the previous section, this match is far from a success. The wedding is kept secret, Amphilanthus immediately sends his new bride home to her father and later has to be summoned by the King and Queen of Slavonia to make the marriage public and consummate it (II.i.134-135, II.ii.323). The public second wedding ceremony is announced, but not described (II.ii.323-324, 331), and Amphilanthus' only further dealings with his wife that are mentioned in the text are his bringing her to Prague (II.ii.356) and then, after having "binn longe enough with his Empress" (II.ii.366), establishing her in Vienna with a "brave, stronge, and learned Counsell" since she is "noe states woeman, butt a Vertuous, good lady" (II.ii.367).

Whereas Amphilanthus is deceitfully manoeuvred into marrying, Pamphilia can be said to arrange her own marriage since she accepts Rodomandro's proposal without any outside pressure from parents, friends and relatives even though she is not in love with him (II.ii.274). Pamphilia never spells out why she decides to marry Rodomandro, but whatever the reason(s), her marriage cannot be called a success although it is a less dramatic failure than other arranged matches since Pamphilia esteems Rodomandro and loves him like a friend. If Rodomandro's function at Pamphilia's side is to render her kingdom and person less vulnerable to attack, as his offer to "serve [her] as a guard to keepe [her] from all harmes" (II.ii.272) would indicate, he fails to live up to this task as Catty points out (215). Despite the strength, skill with weapons and courage with which he is bestowed (II.i.46), he constantly has to be freed himself and needs help to deal with the political turmoil that later arises in

Pamphilia notwithstanding his presence. Another explanation of Pamphilia's marriage is suggested by Hackett, who, as cited above,³⁸⁵ describes the marriage as "an official boundary" that Pamphilia puts between Amphilanthus and herself, a boundary that "publicly announces her inaccessibility to him" and that surpasses her earlier decision not to speak to Amphilanthus any longer ("A book, and solitariness" 81). Catty goes even further, designating the marriage as a means for Pamphilia to "achiev[e] revenge on Amphilanthus for marrying someone else" (215). However, even though Pamphilia does punish Amphilanthus in the sense that she makes him suffer by marrying Rodomandro, she does not stop loving him and desiring his company. Fortunately, Pamphilia's marriage proves no real obstacle to the realisation of Leutissia's suggestion to "injoye [Amphilanthus] hapily, and the more hapily in chaste loves" (II.ii.379). Thus, once the machinations of the Queen of Candia and Forsandurus are revealed, Pamphilia, Amphilanthus and Rodomandro seem content to live in a sort of *ménage à trois* until Rodomandro's death. As mentioned earlier, it is not clear when exactly Rodomandro's death occurs, but it is striking that, like Philargus, Leandrus and Rodolindus, Rodomandro dies before his wife, making of Pamphilia another widow free to enjoy her lover's company.³⁸⁶

In contrast to the problematic arranged marriages, love matches are presented in a much more favourable light. Roberts argues that the *Urania* advocates what she calls "companionate marriages" instead of arranged matches and in particular supports "woman's quest for a truly companionate relationship" ("The Knott Never to Bee Untide" 128). Indeed, the few arranged matches are opposed to at least twice as many love marriages. However, while "companionate" matches prove more successful, they only come about once the prospective spouses have overcome one or several obstacles that test their love. These

³⁸⁵ Cf. section 4.1.1. "The Quest for Identity" (257) above.

³⁸⁶ See Hannay's biography *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth* or Roberts' biographical account (*Poems* 3-40) for parallel to Wroth's life and the death of her husband in 1614. For a discussion of the status and privileges of widows see Rickman (52).

obstacles can appear in the guise of enchantments as the following overview will show, but lovers can also be confronted with obstacles of a more realistic—if less symbolic—nature, such as the problem how to overcome a difference of social status, how to get a father's consent, how to resolve political troubles or how to manage personal character traits or misplaced affections that endanger a successful union.

The list of protagonists that have to overcome one or several enchantments before they can marry is long. Indeed, even couples like Selarina and Antissius or Philistella and Sellarinus, whose marriage is not otherwise opposed, are imprisoned in the Theatre of Love,³⁸⁷ with the result that their weddings only take place at the end of the third book and not directly after the Albanian campaign, as expected. One principle function of enchantments with regard to marriages is thus to delay them. Some protagonists like Pamphilia and Amphilanthus in the first part or Floristello and the Faire Designe in the second even have to overcome several or prolonged enchantments, which postpone the union with their beloved by several years. In addition to their delaying function, enchantments also have a symbolic importance and give readers insight into lovers' characters and their relations to each other. Thus, the Throne of Love illustrates the quality of Selarina's, Urania's and Pamphilia's love through their ability to gain access respectively to the towers of desire, love and constancy (I.i.48-50).³⁸⁸ In addition, the enchantment anticipates later events through the behaviour of the enchanted male protagonists: Parselius' infidelity and subsequent misery are prefigured when he forsakes Urania and afterwards laments his fortune, and Leandrus' inability to control his passions when he courts Pamphilia seems foreshadowed when he runs headlong into the sea

³⁸⁷ Salzman sees such imprisonment, which is common to every enchantment in the *Urania*, as a symbolic representation of "Women's vulnerability to the entrapment of love, and the passive role which they are forced to play in a heroic (masculine) world" (*English* 142). He does not however discuss the imprisonment of the male characters in the Theatre of Love enchantment.

³⁸⁸ See also Lamb's comment that the "overtly topical" function of the enchantments is "to educate readers in the value of constant love, and especially of her [Wroth's] own constant love for William Herbert" ("Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder" 249). Werth proposes an alternative interpretation of the Throne of Love by claiming that it symbolises "The dangers of succumbing to 'Passion'" (146), that is, of showing the emotional type of response that critics accused the romance genre of provoking, especially in female readers.

and needs to be rescued from drowning (I.i.49-51, 59). The second enchantment, the Theatre of Love, is equally revelatory. In a first stage it exposes the danger of love blinding the lover to reality and allowing for self-indulgence, flattery and even arrogance or vanity (I.iii.373). The second part of the enchantment reveals the orientation of the various lovers' affection by means of their seating arrangement (I.iii.421, 442-443). Finally, the ending of the enchantment discloses the identity and history of both Urania and Veralinda (I.iii.455-457), which enables them to marry the princes of their choice as their equals.³⁸⁹ The Hell of Deceit, the last enchantment in the first part, proves Amphilanthus' inability to remain faithful as opposed to Pamphilia's unconditional constancy and can be regarded as a summing up and a condensation of what readers have learnt about the two protagonists throughout the romance, even as it showcases the danger that deceit and falsehood represent for the lovers and hence foreshadows their more momentous separation in the second part. The enchantments in the second part, orchestrated by Melissea to protect the royal children, are not symbolically significant because the text provides no detailed inside view of them, and no account of how characters experience them. As a consequence, the enchantments of the second part do not problematize such issues as love, constancy, illusion and deceit or contribute to a more in-depth understanding of protagonists' character traits and the nature of their love, but rather simply test the perseverance of the young lovers. The element of frustration, inherent in all of the enchantments in the *Urania*, is accentuated by the fragmented representation of the magic happenings in the second part. Like the protagonists, readers are confronted with abrupt magical disappearances, unexplained providential interventions and vague or even conflicting information concerning the enchantment of the Inaccessible Rock.³⁹⁰ Hence, to a certain extent readers share the experience of confusion and frustration that the young protagonists

³⁸⁹ Lamb remarks that "the preoccupation of this enchantment turn genealogical" ("Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder" 250).

³⁹⁰ In "Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder" Lamb discusses Wroth's treatment of magic in the second part as an "'undoing' of the expected response of wonder" (247) that results in "an unravelling of romance at its emotional core" (252).

like Floristello and the Faire Designe have to overcome in order to be joined in marriage to their beloved. Due to the unfinished state of the *Urania*, the resolution of the enchantment of the Inaccessible Rock is projected but not realised, meaning that the marriages of the younger protagonists cannot come to pass within the scope of the manuscript continuation and the identity and social status the Faire Designe, which the enchantment might have revealed, remain obscure.³⁹¹

Cases where a difference in social status separates the lovers have already been discussed in the section on identity. Whereas for protagonists like Urania, Veralinda and Candiana this problem is resolved in true romance fashion with the revelation of their royal origin, the *Urania* also contains a curious couple that marry despite a real difference in social status, namely the King and Queen of Bulgaria. Significantly, it is the King of Bulgaria, rather than his wife, who is originally of lower status than his beloved, the “daughter, and sister to a mighty subject” of “princely stock” (II.ii.246). Still, he manages to marry her (II.ii.248), and when the previous King of Bulgaria dies, the people choose him to be their new king because they know he had been favoured by the old king and also thanks to his pleasing “beehaviour towards [the people] in the times of that Kings raigne” (II.ii.249). Tellingly, the new King of Bulgaria refuses the offer at first and afterwards accepts only in order to crown his wife, who, in contrast to him, “was most certainly borne to we[a]re [editors’ brackets]” one (II.ii.249). Although he professes himself “unfitt for such a charge” (II.ii.249), this rise in status obviously renders him the equal of his wife, retrospectively eliminating the problem of differing status. The King of Bulgaria is the only character in the *Urania* who experiences such a true rise of social status, suggesting that his case is extraordinary and not a model for ambitious men or women. In other words, in keeping with her aristocratic background, Wroth subscribes to what Cooper calls “the political fantasy of romance that high social rank is both

³⁹¹ Cf. Lamb, “Topicality and the Interrogation of Wonder” and “The Biopolitics of Romance.”

justified and discoverable through innate nobility even when that rank is occluded” (338). Although “prosperous lower gentry or even merchant families” might invoke this “conception of inherent nobility” to justify social rise through marriage by emphasising “*gentillesse* of character rather than descent” (339), as Cooper mentions, such aspirations towards social mobility are clearly not endorsed by the *Urania*.

Before marrying and becoming king, however, the King of Bulgaria faces another obstacle, that is, the obligation to get the consent of his beloved’s father to the marriage. Fathers in the *Urania* can be cruel or generous towards suitors or their own children, making it more or less difficult to obtain their consent. Yet, whatever their attitude, the text generally underlines the importance of asking for the father’s or at least the family’s approval before marrying, which seems in keeping with common early modern practice according to Amussen (95). The King of Bulgaria is initially refused like all the suitors before him but finally succeeds thanks to the intercession of a helpful lady (II.ii.247-248). Both Leandrus and Rodomandro ask the King of Morea to consent to their marrying Pamphilia, yet they do so with different attitudes. Whereas Leandrus hopes that the approval of her father, as well as that of her brothers and friends, will convince Pamphilia to change her mind and accept him (I.ii.261-262, 264), Rodomandro, although he asks for it, is pleased when he hears that the King’s consent is “fruitless” (II.ii.270) if it does not correspond to Pamphilia’s own desires. Perfectly illustrating the valorisation of love marriages over arranged ones in the *Urania*, Rodomandro is satisfied with the King’s answer “since without her liking hee would nott have had her to wronge her self, contrary to her affection, to bee forced, since force can never bee companionated with love” (II.ii.270). In the end, the consent of the beloved is thus more important than that of the father, but, as Wroth’s work makes clear, marrying without the father’s approval is risky and not advisable.

Several couples in the *Urania* take the risk of marrying secretly without the consent of the father, which invariably results in problematic situations. Indeed, as Roberts points out, the text provides a fascinating discussion of the practice of secret marriages, of their legitimacy and of the complications that may arise from such a practice (“‘The Knott Never to Bee Untide’” 127).³⁹² The secret marriage of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus is approved of by their closest friends but remains unknown to their parents or Pamphilia’s brothers, even though there is no indication in the text that they would object to such a union (II.i.45). As a consequence, when Amphilanthus leaves Pamphilia, neither his mother nor Pamphilia’s father or brothers force him to answer for his betrayal. In contrast, the King and Queen of Slavonia learn of Amphilanthus’ subsequent secret marriage to their daughter and can therefore intervene on her behalf by demanding the consummation of the marriage (II.ii.323-324). The vulnerability of women who consent to a secret marriage is also illustrated by the story of Dalinea, who, when left by Parselius, presents herself with her baby to the King of Morea, asking him to “redresse [her] harme” (I.ii.241) since it is his son who has forsaken her. The situation becomes even more awkward when Parselius, asked by his father if he has a child or is “married to any without [his] knowledge” (I.ii.242), at first denies the charge. Once he recognises Dalinea’s voice, however, he admits to the marriage and asks both his father and Dalinea’s brother Leandrus to forgive him (I.ii.243).³⁹³ They do so willingly, but it seems obvious that confronted with a *fait accompli*, they have little choice but to give their consent to the marriage retrospectively. Similarly, the Duke of Metelin is also forced to approve of the marriage of his daughter Orilena retrospectively, but unlike the King of Morea or Leandrus, he clearly voices his discontent:

³⁹² For the historic practice of secret marriages, see the discussion of *de praesenti* marriages by Roberts in “‘The Knott Never to Bee Untide’” (115-116) and Amussen (96).

³⁹³ The King of Achaea is “aged” (I.i.154) but still alive when Parselius marries Dalinea since he only dies shortly after Leandrus’ death (I.iii.489). However, he is not mentioned when the secret marriage is discovered, so that it is presumably Leandrus, who has the authority to give or refuse his consent to Dalinea’s marriage. This assumption is further supported by the circumstance that Dalinea too asks Leandrus to pardon her (I.ii.244).

What hath been done, I do confesse was hard, and most unjustly against mine owne child; but she hath married unknowne unto me, in that she hath done like offence; so set them just in sight, and hers the greater will appeare; yet since her choice is such, and where such worth is, as I truly speak, more cannot flourish in so tender yeares, I love her, and commend her: thus worth doth governe, where rule else would shew. (I.ii.211)

From the point of view of the father, Orilena's secret marriage, even though contracted in the face of impending death (I.ii.208, 210), is a greater offence than anything he has done. Indeed, the Duke does not even admit that he has done anything, but hides his actions in the passive formulation "What hath been done." This, however, includes promising Orilena to a suitor against her will, disinheriting her in favour of her younger daughter, giving his younger daughter leave to put a reward on the capture of her sister and besieging and nearly famishing Orilena, Philarchos and their supporters. Yet, all these deeds do not outweigh Orilena's "offence," which can only be forgiven on the grounds of her husband's worth, that is, the worth Philarchos ironically proves by defeating the Duke and all the champions of Orilena's younger sister. It follows that although secret marriages per se are not condemned in the text, the *Urania* repeatedly signals how problematic such marriages are in a patriarchal society where one's identity and place are to such an extent determined by the relation to one's family.

If neither the lovers' social status nor the consent of their parents poses problems, the obstacle lovers have to overcome might be of a political nature, that is, the female beloved needs to be rescued from some kind of aggressor. Thus, as mentioned above, Philarchos defends Orilena against her own father in order to re-establish her as the Duke's legitimate heir, and Rosindy and Ollorandus likewise fight to uphold the rights to the throne of Meriana and Melasinda respectively. Interestingly, all of the princes successfully free their beloved from danger or imprisonment, but none of them actively eliminates their opponents. Orilena's father abdicates and withdraws to Samos with Orilena's younger sister (I.ii.211). Clotorindus,

the contender for the throne of Macedonia, commits suicide (I.i.159),³⁹⁴ and Rodolindus, as stated above, succumbs to a wound from a joust soon after his marriage to Melasinda (I.ii.296, 329). As suggested in the previous section, what might be at stake here is the imperative to draw a clear distinction between wicked usurpers and rightful successors. Although censuring the Duke of Metelin, Clotorindus and Rodolindus, the text does not completely deny their claim to the throne, even if the Duke has proved an incapable ruler, Clotorindus is only the “next heir-male” (I.i.24) after Meriana and Rodolindus the illegitimate cousin of Melasinda. Hence, it appears that the task of Philarchos, Rosindy and Ollorandus is more delicate than it might seem at first sight, since they have to restore their beloved to her rightful place to make a union possible, but at the same time, they must preserve their moral integrity and not become suspect of homi- or even regicide. In addition, the princes’ reticence to revenge themselves and their beloved on their opponents can also be interpreted as a proof of their moral superiority. Philarchos has the defeated Duke “well guarded, and respected like himself” (I.ii.210), Rosindy “scorn[s] to touch” (I.i.159) Clotorindus when he is dead, and Ollorandus loves Melasinda so strongly that he is even ready to renounce her rather than to endanger her life and throne (I.i.79).³⁹⁵ Accordingly, political obstacles in the *Urania* do not only test lovers’ ability to save their damsel in distress through martial exploits, but also their moral integrity and diplomatic skills as future rulers.

In contrast to the external obstacles presented by fathers or rivals, which are generally overcome by the male lovers’ worth and prowess, obstacles proceeding from defining character traits of the lovers themselves seem much more difficult to eliminate. Thus, with regard to the relationship of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus what is striking at first is the comparative absence of obstacles to hinder their union, as Cavanagh points out (*Cherished*

³⁹⁴ Arguably, the description of Rosindy’s “rage” (I.i.159) in the text suggests that he would not have spared Clotorindus if given the chance to fight him, but Wroth’s grammatically incomplete sentence omits Rosindy’s intentions in this respect and runs on into the description of Clotorindus’ suicide (I.i.159).

³⁹⁵ Cavanagh remarks that it is in fact never explicitly mentioned whether Ollorandus and Melasinda do marry after Rodolindus’ death although they obviously form a couple and have a son in the second part (*Cherished* 58).

36).³⁹⁶ Until the enchantment of the Theatre of Love, there is no material obstacle that would render a match problematic, even if Pamphilia is courted by both Steriamus and Leandrus and Amphilanthus initially seems in love with Antissia. Hence, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus are essentially responsible themselves for not becoming a stable couple. The two protagonists' defining character traits make it difficult for them to approach each other and render a happy union between them highly improbable if not impossible.³⁹⁷ Due to Pamphilia's exemplary discretion, Amphilanthus remains uncertain of her love until the end of the second book (I.ii.320-321), and only a select few of Pamphilia's friends learn that she is in love with Amphilanthus during most of the first part.³⁹⁸ Amphilanthus, on the other hand, is known for his changing affections and forgetfulness and, if separated from Pamphilia, is prone to suspect similar inconstancy in her. Pamphilia's discretion is perpetuated by her problematic secret marriage to Amphilanthus in the second part. As indicated above, the text gives no reason for the secrecy surrounding their marriage, and the only explanation that critics like Roberts or Quilligan have suggested is that Pamphilia and Amphilanthus are first cousins. As Roberts explains, first cousin marriages were allowed in England at the time, but they were not frequent ("The Knott Never to Bee Untide" 121). Quilligan adds moreover that while "Statutes passed under Henry VIII had decreed first-cousin marriage to be licit in the Church of England," this was not the case in "the Catholic church and, more important, continental Protestant churches" ("Lady Mary Wroth: Female Authority and the Family Romance" 272). She therefore concludes that first-cousin marriage might not have seemed acceptable in the Sidney family with its "strong Protestant convictions" (272). However, in the romance itself,

³⁹⁶ I am here considering Pamphilia and Amphilanthus primarily as fictional characters and not as representations of Wroth and her cousin, William Herbert. It is clear, of course, that if Wroth—widowed by the time she was writing—intended to model the development of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus' love relation on her own experiences, their union needed to be deferred.

³⁹⁷ Skretkiewicz contextualises this observation when he states that "The emphatic personality difference dividing them absolutely opposes the instinctive erotic and intellectual compatibility that bonds and drives the characters in Greco-Roman erotic romance, and its derivatives" (278).

³⁹⁸ Waller, also commenting on the absence of "barriers" that separate the couple, characterises Pamphilia's secrecy as "gratuitous masochism" (*The Sidney Family Romance* 257-258).

there are no suggestions that a match between first cousins would not be socially and morally acceptable,³⁹⁹ as opposed to incestuous relations between brothers and sisters or between a father and a daughter, which are clearly censured, as will be seen in the following section.⁴⁰⁰ Hence, the gratuitous secrecy of the marriage—while in keeping with Pamphilia’s extreme discretion—functions foremost as a plot device that renders the subsequent marriage of Amphilanthus possible,⁴⁰¹ increasing thus the gravity of his betrayal compared to earlier instances of infidelity.

The second marriages to the Princess of Slavonia and Rodomandro come to represent a new obstacle, of course, that prevents a union between the two lovers. However, as the *Urania* prizes constancy in love relationships more highly than constancy in marriage, as Walker points out (187),⁴⁰² this obstacle, although serious, is not as impossible to overcome as might be assumed. What continues to prove a far greater problem are the protagonists’ respective character traits, that is, Amphilanthus’ inability to stay true to Pamphilia as well as his lack of trust in her and Pamphilia’s reserve, which causes her to desist from speaking to Amphilanthus after his breach of faith rather than to seek for a fuller explanation (II.ii.199). This situation is only unblocked by the interventions of the nymph Leutissia, who counsels Pamphilia to relent towards Amphilanthus (II.ii.378-380), and Forsandurus, who confesses to have helped the Queen of Candia deceive Amphilanthus (II.ii.386-387). Thus, the respective character traits of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus are not only responsible for keeping them

³⁹⁹ Compare also Quilligan’s discussion of this issue in footnote 32 to her article “The Constant Subject: Instability and Female Authority in Wroth’s *Urania* Poems” (334). Zurcher also addresses the issue in her analysis of endogamous, as opposed to exogamous, marriages in the *Urania* (*Seventeenth-Century English Romance* 75-81).

⁴⁰⁰ For further discussion of the episodes touching on the issue of incest, see section 4.2 “Supporting and Contrasting Narratives on the Hypodiegetic Level” (316-321) below.

⁴⁰¹ Legally, as Roberts explains, a so-called *de praesenti* marriage like that of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus was binding until one of the partners died or took up orders (“‘The Knott Never to Bee Untide’” 114). It is curious therefore that none of the characters that serve as witnesses at the marriage contests the legitimacy of Amphilanthus’ second marriage. Judging by Urania’s reproach that Amphilanthus is “unpardonably faulty and irreconsilably guilty of the rarest and perfectest love breaking that either heaven ore earth created and enjoyed, for the time itt lasted, and the wickedliest, and most barbarously broken, and lost” (II.i.140-141), it seems rather that she regards the contract between Amphilanthus and Pamphilia as null and void due to his second marriage.

⁴⁰² Cf. also Catty (232).

apart at the beginning of the text, but also render it difficult for them to overcome the outside obstacles that appear in the course of the romance, such as prolonged absence or malevolent plots.

Another couple whose union is hampered at least partly by the protagonists' character traits is that of Antissia and Dolorindus. Both of them suffer from excessive jealousy, which prevents them from controlling their emotions and causes them to behave in ways that the text does not condone. Antissia makes deliberate use of Dolorindus' love to try and revenge herself on Amphilanthus for having slighted her, and Dolorindus is so desperately in love that he is ready to betray his friendship and attempts to kill Amphilanthus in order to gain Antissia's hand in marriage (I.ii.315, I.iii.357). This undertaking fails, however, and their deeds separate the couple further from each other because of their feelings of guilt and remorse, as they blame both themselves and each other after their reprehensible acts (I.iii.360-361, 393, 396-397). The match between Dolorindus and Antissia only comes to pass thanks to Amphilanthus' intervention, since he forgives them both and orders Antissia to accept Dolorindus to make up for her attempts on his life (I.iii.397). Antissia and Dolorindus then get married, "she descreetly loving him, he doting of her" (I.iii.397). However, as is to be expected given all these initial difficulties, the union of Dolorindus and Antissia continues to be troubled in the second part of the romance. Antissia again loses control over herself, but this time it is her speech and writing rather than her emotions that run wild. Dolorindus, although repeatedly embarrassed and annoyed by his wife's behaviour and her appearance, does not reject or leave her, but seeks a means to cure her. This is achieved by Melissea, with a water cure that recalls Felicia's magical doings in Montemayor's *Diana*, as Roberts points out (I.xxvi). Tellingly, however, it is not only Antissia who needs to be treated, but also Dolorindus who receives a potion that causes partial forgetfulness (II.i.53). In this way, Melissea allows the couple to start over their relation at least partly; and although this cure

does not save the couple, especially Antissia, from more hardship, the two characters subsequently manage to control their passions so as not to endanger their union any more.⁴⁰³

Antissia and Dolorindus clearly form an exceptional couple in the universe of the *Urania* since their marriage is partly based on love and partly arranged by Amphilanthus. In addition, they belong to a small set of characters that do not fall in love with the right person from the beginning and need outside help to redirect their love in order to partake of a more fulfilled second relationship. The obstacle these characters have to overcome is thus a misplaced first affection and results in a plot variant that opposes the traditional topos of love at first sight. To reconcile this plot with the emphasis on constancy that has been noted by many critics,⁴⁰⁴ the text carefully distinguishes the change from a misplaced first, to a more successful second love and the examples of male infidelity discussed above. Such a redirecting of affections is therefore always justified by the betrayal or rejection that follows the misplaced first love, and it can only be achieved successfully with the help of a magic water cure.⁴⁰⁵ It is hence not surprising that Dolorindus and Antissia's relationship is so stormy since, unlike other protagonists in a similar situation in the first part, Antissia is not cured by the magic waters of St. Maura that cleanse unhappy lovers from their first love and so allow them to bestow their affection elsewhere, free from the influence of previous attachments. Thus, Urania and Parselius are both freed from their attachment to each other and only remember their relationship in an unemotional way (I.ii.230). Dolorindus is cleansed of his bitterness at being jilted by his previous beloved and Steriamus freed from his unrequited love to Pamphilia (I.ii.231). Consequently, Parselius can bestow his affection wholly on Delinea, Dolorindus

⁴⁰³ For alternative discussions of Antissia's water cure see Catty (201-204), Cavanagh (*Cherished* 72-76) and Werth (138-142).

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Walker for example (187).

⁴⁰⁵ In *The Fabulous Dark Cloister*, Werth develops the interesting if not entirely convincing argument that no water cure in Wroth's romance is completely successful (141-151) and that this "points the reader toward strategies beyond a magical water bath to govern the passions" (147), i.e. towards the necessity of engaging in "a process of salvation where true transformation of the inner being occurs through a process of telling stories, listening, offering advice, and interpreting aright" (149). In conclusion, Werth states that "Melissea's ultimately failed cures interrogate one tenet of romance's troubling penchant for the marvelous and supplement it instead with a cure grown out of a diligent reading practice" (150).

falls in love with Antissia, and Urania and Steriamus eventually become the most successful and stable couple in the romance. Despite the positive effects of the water cure on the protagonists concerned, Pamphilia—defined by her own unconditional constancy—does not completely approve, or rather cannot understand such a change of feelings, qualifying it as “strange varieties” and “waverings” when she witnesses Parselius’ reunion with Dalinea and Urania’s subsequent “welcom[ing]” of Dalinea (I.ii.244). Pamphilia’s position is not explicitly supported by the narrator and even criticised by Urania later on (I.iii.468-471), yet Urania also rates first love higher than second love when she regrets that she is unable to “present [Steriamus] with [her] first affection” (I.ii.265).⁴⁰⁶ Hence, readers are left to decide themselves whether unconditional constancy is more commendable than a reasonable and magically induced change of affections.

To conclude, the *Urania* confronts readers with numerous variants of two basic marriage plots, which in turn lead to a variety of more or less successful unions. This has attracted the attention of new historicist and feminist scholars interested in how the *Urania* reflects on what is known of early modern marriage practices and the position of women in this respect. Moreover, the romance’s extensive treatment of marriage sets it apart from other similar texts, which mostly do not deal with the married life of their protagonists, as Salzman remarks (*English* 141). The different plots leading to marriage can be distinguished by a number of oppositions. Most importantly, unhappy arranged marriages are opposed by happier ones based on freedom of choice. Furthermore, there is an opposition between public and secret marriages. Among the marriages based on choice, one finds additional distinctions as couples are faced with different kinds of problems: marvellous obstacles that test the protagonists, external obstacles due to family and/or power politics or obstacles grounded in the

⁴⁰⁶ Urania further tries to valorise her second love for Steriamus by telling him “I liked you before I loved the other [i.e. Parselius]” (I.ii.265). Steriamus in contrast is less troubled by the issue, as his subsequent reply shows: “‘Give mee this second,’ said hee, ‘which as the first I will esteeme, and cherish it; for a new created one it is, and so shall live in me, never more blessed then now, never truer shall any love be to one’” (I.ii.265).

protagonists themselves, i.e. their social status, defining character traits or misplaced first love. Through this variation of plots, the *Urania* simultaneously proposes an open and a closed discussion of marriage. Thus, the text leaves it up to the readers to judge when it is legitimate for lovers to marry without the consent of the bride's father, for instance, while at the same time signalling that fathers should envisage companionate rather than arranged marriages for their children. Such a balance between open debate and guided reading also results from Wroth's use and organisation of embedded tales as the following section will show.

4.2 Supporting and Contrasting Narratives on the Hypodiegetic Level

In his discussion of interlace, Vinaver extensively comments on the technique, aims and effects of interlace, but he restricts himself to the practice of interlacing narrative strands. As the analysis of the narrative structures of the *Urania* has shown, Wroth's work not only contains a great number of narrative strands, but also an exceptional multitude of hypodiegetic tales. Consequently, Wroth interlaces more than just narrative strands focusing on various characters: the interlace structure of her text is further complicated by the integration of all the inset tales that the characters of different narrative strands hear in between or in the course of their adventures and journeys. The previous sections have shown that Wroth enlarges on themes such as marriage by multiplying plot versions on the intradiegetic level, thus making use of interlace to juxtapose different treatments and developments of the same theme. If one analyses the content of the many hypodiegetic narratives, one notices that these are used to the same end, adding even more facets to the various themes. In other words, the inset tales take up the themes prominent on the

intradiegetic level, but often only deal with certain aspects due to their limited length.⁴⁰⁷ The following figure is an attempt to illustrate the number of embedded tales in relation to the topics they address and the book in which they appear:⁴⁰⁸

Topics	I.i.	I.ii.	I.iii.	I.iv.	II.i.	II.ii.	Total	Themes
lost children	5	1			5	5	16	The quest for identity
madness		1	1		1	1	4	
cure		3				1	4	
loss of status			2	5			7	
servitude						2	2	
usurpation	7	1	1	1	4	1	15	Conquering and defending a throne
exile	3	1			2	1	7	
rebellion					1	3	4	
forced marriage	6	2	1	2	2		13	Love matters
unhappy marriage	2		2	4	3		11	
happy marriage		1	1			1	3	
ménage à trois		1	1				2	
courtship					1	6	7	
unrequited love	1	5	3	1	3	5	18	
inconstancy	2	5	8	10	2	1	28	
lovers' reunion		1	1	2	1	1	6	
repentance				3		2	5	
revenge		1	2	3	2		8	
bedstory		1	2		1		4	
incest				1		1	2	
death and constancy				2	1		3	

fig. 4: Overview of Hypo- and Hypo-hypodiegetic Narratives

⁴⁰⁷ The topics on the basis of which the hypodiegetic tales will be categorised are organised so as to reflect their relation to the predominant themes discussed in the previous section since this will facilitate the analysis of the romance's narrative structure. It is clear that it would be possible to categorise the hypodiegetic tales according to other criteria. One could for example imagine a categorisation of the stories with regard to the moral flaws they thematize, such as jealousy, pride, hatred or envy. However, such a categorisation, although interesting in itself, does not particularly seem to elucidate the narrative principles that govern the *Urania* because it appears that individual books are centred on specific plot lines and motifs rather than on individual moral flaws, although, evidently, the two may sometimes be connected. In other words, unlike Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, whose books are governed by the representation of a certain virtue, the *Urania* relies more on the recurrence of plots, as this section will show.

⁴⁰⁸ A more detailed table indicating the narrators and page numbers of the tales, as well as the characters or places the narratives are about can be found in the appendix.

Tales that deal with more than one topic have been counted severally, the figures in each square indicating the number of tales concerned with a certain topic. The different shades—the darker the larger the number of tales—serve to visualise what topics are treated more frequently than others. The eight hypo-hypodiegetic tales that can be found in the romance have been included in this table since they also treat topics related to the themes on the intradiegetic level.

An analysis of the distribution of inset tales dealing with particular topics suggests that Wroth employs hypodiegetic tales as a further means to guide readers' attention and their reflection on predominant themes. Indeed, as the following book by book discussion will show, embedded tales in Wroth's work fulfil one or more of the following functions: they provide explanatory information; they act as mirrors to plots on the intradiegetic level; they emphasize central concerns of individual books; they introduce new perspectives or issues that run counter to prominent plot versions or thematic concerns; and they have an entertainment value that may also serve a didactic purpose. Some of these functions correspond to the effects achieved through interlacing narrative strands, and the inset tales are clearly an integral part of the web of cross-references created by the interlacing technique. Yet, they are more than that: more flexible because more independent and restricted than narrative strands, they allow Wroth to shape her work and complicate the meanings of its multiple stories and perspectives.

Whereas inset tales are frequently told by and deal with minor characters that appear only once, this is not the case in the first book, in which the majority of tales are related by protagonists. This is mainly because, in contrast to all the following books, the first book introduces the main concerns, characters and conditions of the world depicted in the *Urania* to the readers. As the table shows, the hypodiegetic tales in the first book focus mainly on four issues, namely lost children, exile, usurpation and forced marriage. With few exceptions, the

inset narratives present the protagonists and the political situation, thereby outlining the conflicts that dominate the development of the various narrative strands as well as the narrative direction of the first book. The function of the hypodiegetic level of narration is thus clearly supportive and explanatory. Moreover, the inset tales focus especially on problems of royal succession, which corresponds to the predominant concerns of the first book. Since the embedded narratives in the first book have an introductory function and mostly concern protagonists that play a major role in this book, this matching of topics and plots on the hypo- and intradiegetic level appears logical. Yet, there are also tales of minor characters that take up and reflect on the main plots. The Ex-Duke of Morea's narrative,⁴⁰⁹ for instance, can be read in connection with the danger of losing or giving away one's authority and power, that is, with the fear of usurpation and exile that is present throughout the first book. The Ex-Duke's story raises questions of rulership, examining indirectly what a good or bad ruler is or should be. In this way, the Ex-Duke mirrors the kings of Romania, Albania and Pantalaria, who also lose their power or become exiled. Similarly, the tale of the Cephalonian lovers, depicting the possible results of forced marriage, reflects on Limena's experiences and, by extension, on the suffering in store for Meriana and Melasinda, who are in danger of being married against their will to the usurpers of their crowns.

Apart from hypodiegetic narratives that reflect on the major plots of the first book, there are also some that introduce topics which only become important in later books. This is, for instance, the case for the two tales featuring unhappy marriages, a topic which gains prominence once most of the protagonists are married. Another example is Clarimatto's narrative, which illustrates the pain and dishonour caused by a lover's inconstancy and treachery. Indeed, the lady's inconstancy, in this case, literally kills Clarimatto, thus materialising the pain and suffering caused by the inconstant lover in the form of actual

⁴⁰⁹ For a topical discussion of this inset tale cf. Orgis, "Telling Tales" (121-122).

wounds. On the intradiegetic level, the issue of inconstancy is touched upon when Amphilanthus abandons Antissia, but represented in a much less dramatic manner since it is rather Antissia's excessive jealousy than Amphilanthus' inconstancy that incurs criticism. Yet, with Clarimatto's tale reflecting on Antissia's predicament, Wroth offers readers a more serious vantage point from which to view Amphilanthus' flaw. This more critical assessment of inconstancy is taken up again in Parselius' relation of his own unfaithfulness to Urania and recurs more and more often in the following books, culminating in a wealth of stories about inconstancy in the fourth book of the *Urania*.

Given the observations made so far with regard to the topics and distribution of the hypodiegetic tales in the first book, it appears that, on the one hand, the inset narratives are an integral part of the interlace structure in the *Urania* while, on the other, Wroth organises them in what might be termed 'clusters.' As we have seen, on the intradiegetic level, the various narrative strands interlace, thereby creating a web of cross-references as different versions of a limited number of plots reflect on each other. This interlace structure is extended to the hypodiegetic level since by taking up major issues the inset tales add yet another layer of reflection. In other words, the embedded tales become part of the web structure mentioned earlier and function as additional linking elements by continually recalling or prefiguring other versions of recurring issues or plots. In addition to enlarging the web of interlace in this manner, inset narratives serve as a means to emphasise certain issues—in the case of the first book the problems and politics of succession—as the accumulation of tales dealing with the topics of usurpation, exile, forced marriage and the abduction of heirs suggests. The embedded narratives treating these topics can thus be said to cluster around the protagonists' concerns over royal succession—with the term 'cluster' referring to both its biological and musical meaning, that is, to a dense growth of the same kind of flowers or fruit (cf. *OED*) and to musical "chords of which the constituents are a major or minor 2nd apart" (*The Concise*

Oxford Dictionary of Music). In other words, the first book features a cluster of inset tales insofar as these narratives address the same theme and occur in close proximity to each other while at the same time differing slightly from each other, foregrounding different aspects of the theme or plot variations, just as the tones composing a musical cluster are close but not identical to each other. As a result the issue of succession is presented in a particularly rich and varied manner and emerges as focal a point of the first book.

The topics of the embedded tales in the second book are generally more varied, that is, there is a greater number of different topics, and many of them only appear once in hypodiegetic tales. The few topics that do recur more than once in embedded narratives are: inconstancy, unrequited love, cures from love or madness and forced marriage. As in the first book, the inset tales take up the main plots found on the intradiegetic level, but the focus in the second book shifts from the issue of succession to that of suffering caused by love, as the cluster of hypodiegetic narratives dealing with inconstancy and unrequited love indicates. However, Wroth's clustering strategy appears less pronounced in the second book, which, from a thematic point of view, seems to be organised so as to develop and further pursue all the major issues introduced in the previous book. Thus, although there is a slight accumulation of inset tales treating certain topics, the technique of interlace appears more important than this clustering strategy, so that the second book of the *Urania* is more balanced as far as plots and topics are concerned. Problems of succession, for instance, are still touched upon although they are no longer as predominant as before. Conversely, the topics of inconstancy and unrequited love that appeared secondary in the first book gain in importance in the second, both on the intra- and hypodiegetic level.

It is worth noting that, apart from dealing with a more balanced variety of topics, the hypodiegetic narratives in the second book also introduce some new variants of possible outcomes for tales of unhappy love, some of them paralleling events on the intradiegetic level.

Sydelia's story (I.ii.275-283), for instance, exemplifies the possibility of enjoying a happy marriage with a second love after a first unhappy love. This might be seen as a good omen for the two new couples among the protagonists, i.e. Urania and Steriamus and Parselius and Dalinea, who come together after the first three are magically cured from their unhappy first love. Yet, Sydelia's narrative also illustrates the danger of hatred and jealousy that may arise between rival lovers and lead to treachery and death. The tale thereby not only provides a counterexample to the relatively harmless, because secret, rivalry between Steriamus and Amphilanthus in the first book, but it also takes up Leandrus' excessive jealousy in the second book, suggesting that his ill-founded attacks on his supposed rival Selarinus might have far more grievous consequences than they actually do. Moreover, Sydelia's tale of rivalry and revenge also prefigures Dolorindus' attempt to kill Amphilanthus in the following book, which shows once more how hypodiegetic tales contribute to Wroth's interlace structure.

Another interesting inset tale is Urania's account of the reunion of the two lovers Alanus and Liana after a series of trials that separated them from each other (I.ii.245-258). This embedded narrative, which contains two hypo-hypodiegetic tales as well, clearly resembles the story of Limena and Perissus, including such obstacles as forced marriage, deception, despair and madness, which the lovers have to overcome to be happily reunited in the end. Yet, while this account of Alanus and Liana's fortunes is not the first love story that has a happy ending, it is the first such story on the hypodiegetic level, and it initiates what might be called a marginal but consistent 'counter-current' to the many inset narratives dealing with unhappy love or inconstancy. Although the drift of hypodiegetic tales concerning love far more often tends towards an unhappy or even tragic ending, every book except the first contains one or two embedded narratives that run counter to this general current by depicting a happy reunion between lovers, sometimes followed by marriage. Hence the endurance and constancy of some characters are rewarded after all, despite the more frequent scenarios in

which female lovers especially are repeatedly abandoned or face death, whether their own or that of their lover.

Whereas Urania's account of the fate of Liana and Alanius relates the happy reunion of two lovers, the narrative of the fishing lady that Amphilanthus and Ollorandus meet features another positive solution to an unhappy love story (I.ii.291-294),⁴¹⁰ one that only appears three times in the whole romance but is of great importance, namely what would later be called a *ménage à trois* involving a wife, her husband and her lover. The term *ménage à trois*, for which there seems to be no English synonym, was first used in English in the second half of the nineteenth century according to the *OED*, that is, around the same time as it became used in French. Although there was no term for it, such "unorthodox living arrangements" apparently existed in the early modern period and, if handled discreetly, did not necessarily cause offence according to Rickman (83).⁴¹¹ In the *Urania*, the fishing lady and her beloved Laurimello are both married to other partners. However, after two years of unhappy marriage, the fishing lady and her husband come to a better understanding, with the result that the husband tolerates the presence of Laurimello in his house. The fishing lady and Laurimello can thus enjoy each other's company freely, though it is not quite clear if their love is chaste or not. In her note, Roberts suggests that the lady "defines chastity as faithfulness to her lover Laurimello rather than to her husband" since Laurimello is called "the sweete enjoyer of her free given joyes" (I.ii.295). Yet the text also allows for a different interpretation since the lady

⁴¹⁰ Roberts, in her index of characters, refers to this nameless female character as "Angler Woman" (I.806), but her social status is clearly that of a lady (cf. I.ii.290). Moreover, she is one of the various characters "indirectly based on Wroth's life" (I.lxxii n8), as Roberts remarks.

⁴¹¹ Rickman mentions the example of Anne Vavours, who "married a Mr. Finch" but "became the live-in mistress of Sir Henry Lee," who "paid Anne's husband an annual pension of twenty pounds" (35). In her function as Lee's mistress, Anne Vavasour even entertained Queen Anne (83). Another example cited by Rickman is the Clifford household where, on the occasion of James I's visit "Cumberland's lover performed the role as mistress of the household" rather than his wife because the couple was "estranged from each other" (83). Also Penelope Rich and Charles Blount seem to have had some kind of tacit arrangement in this respect since their affair lasted for over a decade and resulted in the birth of five children while Penelope Rich was still married to Robert Rich (Rickman 111, 130). To my knowledge the *Urania* contains no example of a *ménage à trois* of two women and man, and, apart from the beloved of the fishing lady, the minor character Distantes (I.iv.519-526) and, one might argue, Amphilanthus, married men in the *Urania* do not keep mistresses.

claims to “rule [her] affection by vertue” (I.ii.295). Indeed, the “he” who, according to the fishing lady, is “secure in [her] chastity” seems to be her husband rather than Laurimello, given that the pronoun following this quote clearly refers to the lady’s husband and not to her lover. Whatever the exact relation between the fishing lady and Laurimello, this depiction of a happy *ménage à trois* points forward to and mirrors Rodomandro’s willing toleration of Amphilanthus’ presence at the Tartarian court towards the end of the romance. The fishing lady’s tale therefore has an important foreshadowing function with regard to later developments of the love relation between the central pair in the *Urania*, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, at a moment when these two protagonists have not yet even revealed their love to each other.

Moreover, this inset narrative deserves attention because there is only one other short hypodiegetic tale that presents a similar arrangement between lovers and spouses, namely the account of the Queen of Bulgaria’s relation to her lover, the Prince of Iambolly (I.iii.399). This account, which occurs in the third book, is far less detailed; it only hints at the existence of a *ménage à trois*, which, however, seems to be confirmed by the repeated appearances of the Queen of Bulgaria in company of both her husband and lover. There are both differences and resemblances between the Queen of Bulgaria’s and the fishing lady’s situations. Both of them are described as chaste lovers although in both cases there is a doubt as to their exact relations to their lovers. In both cases, the husband and the lover seem to be on friendly terms, and the spouses feel a certain affection for each other. Yet, the marriage of the fishing lady is described as a true companionship after an initial period of quarrels whereas the relation between the King and Queen of Bulgaria is characterised both as more problematic and more intimate. The royal pair is reported to quarrel frequently in private if not in public, but it is also made clear that the King of Bulgaria is “infinitely fond of” his wife and dotes on her (I.iii.399). While the Queen of Bulgaria—constantly criticised for her excessive pride and

arrogance—certainly forms a great contrast to the exemplary protagonist Pamphilia, her marital situation nevertheless foreshadows that of Pamphilia to a certain extent, just as the story of the fishing lady does. Both queens have extremely devoted husbands, lovers that are noted for their inconstancy, and they manage to enjoy their lovers' presence despite being married. The fact that there are only three occurrences of a *ménage à trois* in the entire *Urania*, one on the intra- and two on the hypodiegetic level, suggests that Wroth did not consider such a solution to an unhappy love story very probable. On the other hand, taking into account the social position of women at Wroth's time,⁴¹² it appears remarkable that, instead of a traditional romance happy ending in marriage, she envisaged a *ménage à trois* for the romance's central protagonists. As many critics have pointed out, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus clearly bear autobiographic traits, which naturally provokes the question if Wroth actually experienced such a marital arrangement herself or if the depiction of a happy *ménage à trois* should be seen as an example of what Waller calls "wishfulfillment fantasy" (*The Sidney Family Romance* 128) in the *Urania*. However that may be, the depiction of the *ménage à trois* as a practice that permits a woman to enjoy her lover's presence despite being married and without suffering a loss of honour or reputation seems daring at a time when, as Rickman's study shows, such living arrangements depended on discretion and could easily result in scandal.⁴¹³

From a narratological point of view, the discussion of the inset tales of the fishing lady and the Queen of Bulgaria has shown again how Wroth uses hypodiegetic narratives to

⁴¹² Rickman points out that although illicit affairs were to a certain extent tolerated among the Jacobean nobility, "Early modern nobles made more negative comments about women who had sex outside of marriage, and the consequences for sexual offences were usually more severe for women than for men" (202). The same seems to have been true in Elizabethan times (Rickman 67). Rickman further observes that Wroth "also presents the dire consequences of female desire that resulted in extramarital sex" (163) and "points to the female sexual double bind," i.e. the circumstance that "women who acted on their sexual desire often landed in serious troubles, whereas men could act on their sexual desire with relative impunity" (161). However, Rickman also emphasizes the importance of social status and the support of family and friends in this respect (174, 176, 201, 203) and observes that in the case of Frances Villiers, for instance, her "crime of adultery was not serious enough for her to lose her worth and place as a noblewoman" (177).

⁴¹³ For an interesting discussion of the concept of early modern noblewomen's honour see Rickman's chapter on Frances Villiers (173-200).

accompany, recall or in this case herald developments on the intradiegetic level. Furthermore, it can be noted that the embedded tales are a source of variety, that is, although they inscribe themselves in a practice of repetition and variation, there are also tales that oppose each other or that propose radically new solutions to given conflicts. In his discussion of what he calls “rules of notice” (44), Rabinowitz points out that reading is necessarily a selective process and that readers pay special attention both to elements that are repeated (54) and to elements that “disrupt the continuity of the works in which they occur” (65). Wroth’s handling of inset narratives seems to rely on these mechanisms of notice, guiding readers to register both the repeated topics and plots of the embedded tales and the anomalous hypodiegetic narratives that I have termed counter-currents, i.e. tales like those of the fishing lady and the Queen of Bulgaria that subvert recurrent plot patterns and hence readers’ expectations.

This opposition between an accumulation of hypodiegetic narratives and marginal counter-currents is even more apparent in the third book with regard to the issue of inconstancy. The resulting cluster of tales about unfaithful lovers mirrors Amphilanthus’ forsaking of Pamphilia on the intradiegetic level. Otherwise, the third book takes up most of the recurring topics on the hypodiegetic level, thus featuring a variety of topics and continuing the interlace structure of the romance. However, the preoccupation with succession that marked the first book has largely disappeared and the issue of identity also plays a smaller role in the embedded narratives of the third book. Still, two hypodiegetic narratives introduce a new topic related to the theme of identity, namely the danger to lose one’s social status. As has been shown in the analysis of the various factors that constitute characters’ identity and self-perception, the knowledge of one’s social standing is of great importance since it determines what kind of society or family a character belongs to and what her/his prerogatives are. Yet, whereas on the intradiegetic level the protagonists concerned with such questions are of royal origin, in the hypodiegetic narratives they are noble men and women or their

descendents, and the tales focus above all on power relations at court, exposing how easily the favour of one's sovereign may be lost due to court intrigues and rumours.

The first of these two embedded narratives is the story of Lindamira (I.iii.444-448, 449-502), told by Pamphilia, who "faign[s] it to be written in a French Story" (I.iii.499). Yet, as the fickleness of Lindamira's lover is strongly reminiscent of Amphilanthus' lack of constancy, Dorolina, Pamphilia's narratee, suspects that Pamphilia has invented Lindamira's tale to conceal that she is in fact talking about her own grief. Dorolina's suspicion is supported by Pamphilia's explicit comparison of her fate to that of Lindamira, but otherwise the text does not further comment on Dorolina's guess (I.iii.501, 505). However, whereas Lindamira's sorrow and relation to her lover clearly parallel Pamphilia's, there is no such parallel when it comes to Lindamira's loss of status at court. Critics like Roberts assume that this part of Lindamira's story reflects Wroth's experience (I.777 n499.8-9ff) rather than mirroring Pamphilia's situation. Like Wroth, Lindamira has a privileged relation to the queen when at court, and like Wroth she ends up retiring from court. Moreover, Lindamira's father is called Bersindor, an obvious partial anagram of the name of Wroth's father, Robert Sidney, and Roberts suggests Lindamira might be a kind of anagram for Wroth herself, meaning beautiful Mary (I.777 n499.36). However, whereas many critics speculate that Wroth was forced to leave court due to her extramarital relation with Pembroke, her financial situation or even the publication of the *Urania*, Rickman claims that "this supposed grace has been vastly overemphasized and probably never occurred at all" (143).⁴¹⁴ Rickman argues that although Wroth appeared several times at court, her participation in masques was occasional and does not "necessarily imply a membership in the queen's inner circle" (147), meaning that "her apparent absence from court" after 1608 "need not have been due to any drastic event or

⁴¹⁴ See also Rickman (152-154, 157) and Hannay (*MSLW* 130-131).

scandal” (154).⁴¹⁵ In Lindamira’s case, the reason that she leaves court is because she loses the queen’s favour due to a court intrigue. A “malicious Lady” tells the queen out of envy that Lindamira is in love with the queen’s favourite, which provokes the queen’s jealousy. Lindamira only learns much later what exactly she is accused of and what has disgraced her in the queen’s eyes. She does not criticise the queen’s behaviour because it incidentally causes her to be united with her lover, but it is clear that Lindamira is treated unfairly, and Pamphilia condemns the queen’s jealousy as “base humor” (I.iii.501). This critical depiction of court, presented from the point of view of a courtier, as a place where mere hearsay suffices to force someone into exile is a new element in the romance, extending the criticism of unfit sovereigns to a more general criticism of court as a place of rumour, suspicion and intrigues.

Lindamira’s tale is paralleled by the narrative of a gentleman in mourning, met by Ollorandus (I.iii.444-448). Like Lindamira, he has a high standing at court, but loses his place to another courtier, whom he opposes because the courtier abuses his influence on the king to bring “many into the Kings displeasure” (I.iii.445). When, together with friends of his, he goes as far as taking up arms, the gentleman is imprisoned and sentenced to death as a traitor. He only escapes his execution thanks to the help of a faithful warden and his former beloved, whom he had abandoned for another woman. After his flight, during which his beloved dies, he is pardoned by the king, but subsequently retires from politics and dedicates his time to mourning his dead beloved. The gentleman’s tale criticises court-life less explicitly, but, conversely, shows more clearly the potential dangers of such a life, which depends directly on the sovereign’s favour. In both Lindamira’s and the gentleman’s narrative, inconstancy in love is doubled by examples of inconstancy on a political level, with the sovereigns mirroring unfaithful lovers in the way they grant or withdraw their favour. This observation leads to the hypothesis that tales about the loss of social standing should not only be read as social

⁴¹⁵ Viewed from this perspective, it also seems less surprising that Wroth participated in the 1619 funeral procession for Anne (cf. Rickman 152, *Poems* 27, *MSLW* xxx, 131).

criticism of the Jacobean court relegated to the hypodiegetic level so as to be less obtrusive, but also as reflecting on the issue of inconstancy in love since they implicitly compare the sovereign to the lover, who has the power to grant or withdraw his love.⁴¹⁶ In other words, the unfaithful lover, although morally at fault, is in a position of superior power compared to the constant lover, whose happiness depends on being loved.⁴¹⁷ Indeed, the reactions of slighted lovers and characters that have lost their sovereign's favour are quite similar, consisting mostly of retirement. Furthermore, regardless of whether a character is abandoned by a lover or a sovereign, this has a negative effect on her/his reputation, especially in the case of female characters. Given the status of women at Wroth's time, this seems to be quite realistic, as do the inset tales focusing on the precariousness of social standing and royal favour. Whether or not Wroth was, or thought herself, a victim of royal disfavour, the narratives dealing with this topic certainly have a highly realistic and critical aspect, and they become more numerous in the following book, which contains a total of five inset narratives paralleling those of *Lindamira* and the old gentleman, thus giving more weight to both the social criticism they convey and the implicit criticism of inconstant lovers.

Apart from the narratives focusing on court-life, the third book also contains another type of hypodiegetic tale that then becomes more prominent in the following book: it reintroduces tales concerned with unhappy marriages, a topic which, although present in the first, is not found in embedded narratives in the second book. The reappearance of tales about unhappy marriages forms a contrast to one of the major developments on the intradiegetic level, namely the marriage of most of the protagonists towards the end of the third book and the beginning of their married life in the fourth. Consequently, the experiences of minor

⁴¹⁶ Cf. also Quilligan's discussion of the use of Petrarchan discourse as a political discourse to encode "hierarchically organized power relations" in her article "The Constant Subject" (325-326). Zurcher in *Seventeenth-Century English Romance* provides an alternative political reading of inconstancy in the context of the early modern concept of self-interest, claiming that "inconstancy represented not moral vacuity where there should be principle but rather a drive toward Tacitean self-advantage" (44).

⁴¹⁷ Zurcher also considers the relation between inconstancy and power when she states that "the ability of Pamphilia's fickle lover, Amphilanthus, to pursue more than one woman at once, after all, is bound up with the fact that he is the most politically powerful person in the romance" (*Seventeenth-Century English Romance* 45).

characters relativize the conjugal happiness of the protagonists, while at the same time setting it off as ideal. Thus, Wroth once more makes use of the hypodiegetic level to establish a counter-current, but this time with the difference that the inset tales oppose events and developments on the intradiegetic level rather than on the hypodiegetic level. Moreover, whereas the counter-currents observed in the second book were hopeful, the hypodiegetic tales in the third book are critical in tone. They seem to serve as warnings against a naïve belief in fairy-tale-like happy endings and hence implicitly undermine romance conventions.

The opposition between an idealistic depiction of married or loving couples' happiness and a stark vision of suffering caused by unhappy love becomes even more pronounced in the fourth book, in which the number of hypodiegetic tales about inconstancy culminates. Moreover, there are several other embedded narratives dealing with unhappy or tragic love: stories of death, revenge and repentance, as well as tales of forced or otherwise unhappy marriages. Only two tales form a positive counter-current, namely those of Curardinus and Belizia (I.iv.555-558, 652-652). These two tales have a better outcome than the others, but only after the characters concerned have suffered from great difficulties or sorrows. The audience for all these sad hypodiegetic narratives are either the happily married couples on their way home or the knights searching for Amphilanthus. The tales can thus effectively be seen as reminders or warnings for both the protagonists and the readers, forcibly pointing out that happy endings to love stories or marriages should not be taken for granted. One might even say that the hypodiegetic level undermines the intradiegetic level in the fourth book, questioning the finality of the happy resolutions reached at the end of the first part. This is especially true for the reunion of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus at the very end of the fourth book: Amphilanthus' inconstancy in the Hell of Deceit bears out the almost obsessive insistence on men's inability to remain true in the book's hypodiegetic narratives, with the

result that Amphilanthus' final vow of constancy appears more than doubtful, even though he protests to have changed (I.iv.660).

Among the often dark and sad embedded tales of the fourth book, one treats a topic that is hardly ever addressed explicitly in the *Urania*, although it continually hovers in the background. The story relates the fate of Distantes' children who, ignorant that they are in fact half-brother and -sister, fall in love with each other and would like to marry (I.iv.519-526). The problem of incest, implicitly evoked by a number of love relationships between cousins, is here openly thematised.⁴¹⁸ Contrary to the relationships between cousins, concerning which the text never raises any objections or reservations, the union of Distantes' children is presented as completely out of the question. Neither the mother, Distantes' mistress, who learns of their desire to marry and reveals their blood relation to them, nor the lovers themselves ever question this verdict or consider transgressing the social norms that render their union impossible. Nevertheless, the lovers cannot stop loving each other and separately leave their homes, ending up in the same desert-like place, "where they continued some short space" (I.iv.525) before they both die at the same moment. Contrasting the pair to Ovid's Caunus and Byblis, the text insists that both "Lovers were chaste and pure after the secret was disclos'd," even when they lived in the same place away from society. For "They saw each other, and bewail'd their chance, but to favour each other, [they] came no neerer then through those bushes to behold their wofull selves, as in Mooneshine glimmering, and as colde" (I.iv.525). Moreover, the lovers' bodies are "by divine providence kept safe" until they are found and buried by Distantes (I.iv.525-526). The couple's incestuous love is hence presented as a tragic accident for which they are not responsible. Readers are invited to pity the lovers' fate, and even death is described as merciful when it releases them from their sorrows. Yet, not only tragic circumstances are to blame for the lovers' incestuous relation: Distantes and

⁴¹⁸ For an extended discussion of incest in the early modern period as well as an analysis of the story of Distantes' children, see Zurcher, *Seventeenth-Century English Romance* (70-75).

his mistress are also responsible for it because they have engaged in an affair despite being married to other partners, with the result that Distantes' mistress is pregnant at the same time as his wife, who dies in childbirth. The two children are brought up together by Distantes and his mistress, but are not aware that they share the same father. Upon discovering their love, the mother severely blames herself for the lovers' misfortune, and immediately after revealing their blood relation to them she dies, thus expiating her fault (I.iv.524). While Distantes' mistress takes all the blame on herself, she is not explicitly accused in the text, but rather presented as a character that should be pitied along with the lovers. Consequently, this inset tale offers a peculiarly ambiguous representation of incest: on the one hand, it is clear that incestuous relations are inadmissible, and, on the other hand, all the characters involved are shown to be pitiable victims rather than transgressive figures. In death, the lovers are even reunited and buried in a single coffin, made out of the cypress tree beneath which they have died. In addition, Distantes has a "stately and sumptuous" tomb built in their honour, which, guarded by a family of caretakers, is said to be "the richest Tombe of Love in the world" (I.iv.526). The love of Distantes' children for each other seems to be condoned then and continues to be admired and pitied even after their death, as Parselius and Dalinea's "large allowance to the place to maintaine lights for ever over them [the lovers]" (I.iv.526) proves. Even the fact that the lovers' incestuous relation is due to a severe transgression, namely adultery, does not taint them, nor does it lead to an explicit criticism of either Distantes' or his mistress' deeds.⁴¹⁹ One could argue that the mistress' death and Distantes' loss of his children constitute their punishment, but this interpretation is not proposed by the text, which abstains from any moral commentary whatsoever. It seems as if with this tale Wroth were claiming

⁴¹⁹ This absence of moral condemnation seems in keeping with the relatively tolerant attitude towards illicit affairs among the nobility under James I that Rickman describes. See also footnote 221. Legally adultery in the early modern period was defined as an illicit affair between a married woman and a man regardless of his married status, as Rickman explains (23, 59). Married men committed fornication rather than adultery if they had an affair with a woman, unless that woman was married too (23, 59). Puritans advocated that men and women should be held equally responsible for illicit affairs and punished more severely, as Rickman observes (22-24), but their "reform attempts" (22) in this direction remained unsuccessful until the act of 1650 that sentenced adulterers to death, but "was only rarely enforced" (24, see also 180-181).

that even an incestuous love can be regarded as noble and, above all, tragic if the lovers enter the relationship unknowingly, truly love each other and do not give in to their desires, i.e. do not seek to consummate their love. In a note, Roberts suggests that the story of *Distantes*' children could be seen as autobiographic to a certain extent, given that Wroth had two illegitimate children by William Herbert, who "also had at least one or possibly two sons by his wife, Mary Talbot" (I.781 n524.11-12). Roberts is convinced that the inset narrative "has its psychological genesis in Wroth's own brooding over the fate of her natural children by Pembroke" (I.781 n524.11-12).⁴²⁰ It could then be read as a 'what if' conjecture based on circumstances in Wroth's own life. Whether this is indeed the case cannot be proved, but, whatever circumstances gave rise to the tale, the absence of moralising judgments or condemnations in Wroth's presentation of an incestuous relationship remains intriguing.

In the only other inset tale that deals with incest, the situation is completely different. In the second book of the manuscript continuation, Leutissia relates the story of her tragic love to Amarintus, who, together with his mother and sister, is killed by his father, Demonarus (II.ii.310-312). Demonarus, as his name indicates, is a thoroughly wicked character, who lusts after his own daughter, Lydia, and attempts to rape her, even trying to enlist the help of his wife to reach his goal. When Lydia and her mother resist him and try to flee, he pursues and attacks them, thereby also killing his son, who, though unarmed, tries to defend them. Only Leutissia manages to escape, who, after witnessing the murders, is transformed into a nymph in a fountain. In this tale, then, the incestuous relation, or rather the threat of incest, concerns a father and his daughter, and not a half-brother and -sister. Furthermore, Demonarus knowingly tries to enter into an incestuous relation with his daughter, wantonly transgressing

⁴²⁰ A more prominent early modern concern than the danger of a romantic involvement between legitimate and illegitimate siblings was the question of illegitimate children's right to inheritance. Wroth would have known of several cases where illegitimate children or parents of illegitimate children were involved in legal disputes over inheritance. Rickman mentions the examples of the illegitimate son of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester (50-51, 77), and the children of Charles Blount and Penelope Rich (134-139). Neither case corresponds exactly to that in Wroth's story since the son of Robert Dudley did not have siblings and the illegitimate children of Penelope Rich shared the mother rather than father with their siblings.

social norms against the will of the rest of his family. Not surprisingly, Demonarus is severely judged in the text. Even his suicide after killing his family is presented as an act of mad rashness rather than as a sign of repentance (II.ii.312). The *Urania* thus offers two completely different tales about incest, foregrounding, as it seems, the aspect of knowing volition as the criterion that renders characters innocent or guilty. Distantes' children, who know nothing of their blood relation and who refrain from consummating their love relationship once they know the truth, are represented as a pair of tragic and admirable lovers. In Demonarus' case, on the other hand, his attempt to engage knowingly in an incestuous relationship with his daughter is depicted as an example of demonic, sinful and unnatural lust.

As mentioned earlier, there is only a tenuous connection between the topic of incest in these embedded tales and events on the intradiegetic level. The only time the issue of incest is explicitly evoked on the intradiegetic level is towards the end of the second part when Trebisound is relieved to learn that the Soldaness of Babylon, whom he loves, is not his lost sister Candiana (II.ii.322). Although the text does not clarify why Trebisound should mistake the Soldaness for the sister that he supposedly grew up with,⁴²¹ from a structural point of view it makes sense that it is precisely Trebisound, who should have cause to voice such concerns, since he is the son of Parselius and Dalinea, who found the tomb of Distantes' children. Trebisound's remark recalls the tragic fate of Distantes' children, which then serves as a contrast to his own case, underlining how lucky he is by comparison. Apart from Trebisound's invocation of the threat of incest, the issue is not thematised on the intradiegetic level. This is especially striking with regard to the cousin lovers Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, whose blood relationship in no way seems to taint their love relation, render it unacceptable or even constitute an obstacle to marriage.⁴²² By completely disregarding the fact that unions between cousins were problematic and forbidden until the sixteenth century, Wroth either

⁴²¹ Cf. footnote 341 in section 4.1.1 "The Quest for Identity" above.

⁴²² See the discussion of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus' marriage in section 4.1.3.3 "Marriage" (296) above.

seems to suggest that a love relationship between cousins was no longer a delicate issue at her time or that it should not be considered as such.⁴²³ This implies that the embedded tales addressing incest are not meant to reflect on Pamphilia and Amphilanthus' relationship, but rather serve a different purpose.

Unlike most of the tales discussed so far, I would argue that the hypodiegetic narratives about incest are only loosely connected to events on the intradiegetic level and that—in spite or because of the tragic and horrifying events they depict—they should primarily be regarded as elements of variation and didactic entertainment. Both narratives allude to Ovidian tales, that is, they rewrite the story of Caunus and Byblis and of Myrrha respectively. Yet, whereas in Ovid the female figures, Byblis and Myrrha, yield to unnatural desires and initiate their incestuous relations to their brother and father respectively, the female characters in Wroth's romance are exemplary and victims rather than agents. Thus, the innocent mutual love of Distantes' children and their renunciation of transgressive desire replace Byblis' active but futile attempts to seduce her brother. And where Myrrha enlists the help of her nurse to consummate her desire for her father, Lydia and her mother do everything they can to prevent Demonarus' advances. By means of these inversions, Wroth turns the two Ovidian tales about female lust into narratives about male and female lovers' suffering and virtuous conduct even at the cost of death. As a result, the two inset narratives function in several ways. On a general level they complement the varied representation of unhappy love relations in the romance, while touching on the theme of incest that fuels several Jacobean tragedies, notably *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *Women Beware Women* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Simultaneously, by producing counter versions of Ovid's original tales, Wroth displays both her erudition and her confidence as a writer. Considered in their concrete textual environment, the two embedded

⁴²³ It is interesting to note that whereas brothers and sisters often foreground their family relation when addressing each other in the text, it is exceptional that Amphilanthus twice calls Pamphilia his cousin in the second part (II.i.28-29). This circumstance can be interpreted in various ways. Wroth might be downplaying the family ties of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus to emphasise their exceptional love relationship, for example, but she might also be intent on rendering their union less problematic.

narratives might serve as contrasts to the love relationships of the protagonists that listen to the stories; i.e. they set off the happiness of Parselius and Dalinea as opposed to the fate of Distantes' children and relativise Pamphilia's suffering in comparison to Leutissia's experiences. Above all, however, the tales feature characters that are models of steadfastness, constancy and moral integrity, and they provoke the narratees', and by extension the readers', pity for these characters. In other words they put into practice the precept elaborated by Sidney in his *Defence of Poesie* that fiction should both "delight" and "move" (90) readers to virtuous behaviour.

Moving from the first to the second part of the *Urania*, one observes a striking difference between the ending of the first and the beginning of the second part with regard to the topics addressed by the hypodiegetic narratives. Whereas the last book of the first part strongly focuses on inconstancy and unhappy love relationships, the beginning of the second part presents a more balanced treatment of topics, bringing back to the fore issues of identity and succession. The group of inset tales concerning love matters is still larger than groups dealing with other plots of the intradiegetic level, but compared to the ending of the first part, the number of tales that present unhappy love relationships is almost halved, and only two of them thematise inconstancy—compared to ten at the end of the first part. Hence, there is no such strong clustering effect as in the previous book, but a general impression of balanced variety. The same goes for the second book of part two, which contains similar numbers of inset tales for all the three main themes as the first book of the second part although one notices a slight increase of narratives concerned with questions of identity.

The return to the issue of identity in the first book of the second part recalls the beginning of the romance, which emphasises questions of identity and, by extension, royal succession. Yet, while the hypodiegetic tales in the first part of the *Urania* take up and mirror the main concerns on the intradiegetic level, this is not the case in the second part, which introduces a

new generation of characters, that is, the protagonists' offspring, the royal children. At the beginning of Wroth's romance, the hypodiegetic tales dealing with the fortune of lost children are generally about the intradiegetic protagonists themselves, introducing the protagonists and their history to the readers. In contrast, the hypodiegetic accounts of the children's disappearance in the first book of the second part do not have an introductory function, but they are exchanged like news among various characters. As a result the first book of the second part of the romance seems to focus less on the experiences of the lost children than on the problems of the protagonists known from the first part and a few of their older sons to find and identify the children. To a certain extent this seems due to the young age of the lost children because once they have grown into characters of their own right in the second book of part two, three of them, Trebisound (II.ii.224-226), Mirasindo (II.ii.355-356) and Candiana (II.ii.357-358), relate their own experiences. Consequently, the embedded narratives concerning lost children in the second part both parallel the beginning of the *Urania*, and, in the first book of part two, add a further facet to the issue of identity by foregrounding the perspective of the parents or knights searching for the lost children.

Something similar happens with regard to the problems of usurpation and forced marriage. Again the interpolated tales show a resemblance to those found at the beginning of the romance, but they are told from another perspective. In the first part, the intradiegetic narrators of tales addressing problems like usurpation and forced marriage are generally characters that sympathise with or want to help the protagonists affected. Thus, Meriana's story, for instance, is related by the exiled King of Albania (I.24-25), i.e. a sympathiser since he experienced similar troubles and his realm borders on Meriana's, and by Rosindy (I.i.108-111), who is in love with Meriana and wants to rescue her. Consequently, readers receive an external view of the situation. In contrast, in the second part of the romance such narratives about the danger of losing one's throne or being forced to marry are more often told by the

characters that are directly concerned by the problems. Hence, young princesses like Mirilania (II.i.85-86) or Lindafillia (II.i.169-170) voice their grievances themselves and therefore have more agency with regard to their own fate than for instance Meriana and Melasinda in the first part. In the second book of part two, narratives about usurpation and forced marriage all but disappear and are replaced by tales about dangerous rebellions. As discussed in the section “Conquering and Defending a Throne,” the second part of the *Urania* introduces popular rebellions as a new kind of political turmoil caused by leader-figures that are in no way related to the legitimate rulers of the country in question. This development on the intradiegetic level is mirrored by the introduction of hypodiegetic narratives addressing the same topic—one in the first book and three in the second book of part two, indicating an increasing concern with political stability and the threat of insurrection.

Another topic that is newly introduced on the hypodiegetic level in the second part is that of courtship, which may or may not lead to a happy marriage. Again, where there is one example of a narrative portraying courtship in the first book, there are several in the second book, so that the motif becomes more prominent towards the end of the romance. In the first part, the theme of courtship is of importance only on the intradiegetic level and is not mirrored in embedded tales. By contrast, in the second part the inset narratives reflect on the formation of new couples among the younger generation of princes and princesses, showing both successful and unhappy examples of courtship. Parallel to this concern with courtship one notes the return of hypodiegetic tales that focus on the danger of being rejected by one’s beloved. As in the case of courtship, the frequency of such tales increases in the second book of part two, which again underlines the growing importance of the love relations between the characters of the younger generation. Moreover, the motifs of courtship and rejection on the hypodiegetic level also resonate with the unstable relationship between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus.

These examples show once more that embedded narratives on the hypodiegetic level closely interact with plots on the intradiegetic level. They extend the interlace structure of the text, that is, they are bound up in a net of cross-references and continually elaborate, oppose, contrast, vary, mirror and reflect on either intradiegetic plots or other hypodiegetic tales. In particular, they repeatedly emphasise plots found on the intradiegetic level or they establish counter-currents to them by providing alternative versions of plots, which can both be more critical or more positive than the intradiegetic variants. Hence, hypodiegetic narratives constitute a vital part of the work's narrative structure. On the one hand, they increase the impression of a tightly knit web, on the other, they serve as a source of variety since they allow Wroth to introduce, in passing, concerns that might be problematic on the intradiegetic level, such as the issue of incest discussed above. Thus, the embedded tales in the *Urania* enrich the text, adding further layers of meaning to the plots on the intradiegetic level and engaging readers in a continual process of (re)interpretation. This process will be explored in more detail in the following discussion of two secondary characters' adventures in relation to the recurring main themes and the predominant topics and concerns surrounding the episode.

4.3 Interpretative Freedom and Closure

The repetition and variation of themes and plots in the *Urania* recurrently provide readers—early modern and modern readers alike, I would argue—with moments of recognition and moments of hesitation. The multiplication of stories dealing with the same themes or of unfolding similar plots promotes an active reading process, prompting readers continually to remember and reconsider stories that they have already read. Thus readers are shaped and guided, which raises the question of the extent to which readers' interpretation of the text is determined, i.e. whether they are free to interpret the text critically or if the role of the readers is more like that of learners asked to assimilate specific conclusions proposed by the text.

Moreover, one may speculate about the relation of interpretations to early modern readers' experience of reality,⁴²⁴ that is, to what extent Wroth's text offers realistic responses to social or political issues or engages in a utopian discourse concerned with personal wishfulfilment or fantastic what-if-speculation. Building on my foregoing discussion of the romance's recurring themes and supporting and contrasting inset tales, I will address these questions by proposing a reading of a specific episode of the *Urania*.

The episode in question is the story of Drusio and Isabella in book two of the manuscript continuation (II.ii.283-286, 289-293, 368-376).⁴²⁵ It is related in three parts that are situated on the intradiegetic level for the present events and on the hypodiegetic level for two extended analepses. The adventures of Drusio and Isabella may be summarised as follows:⁴²⁶ Polarchos meets a young man called Lusio in the forest, who asks for protection from an approaching unnamed gentleman, claiming that he intends to harm him because of his base intentions towards Lusio's kinswoman Isabella. The gentleman protests his innocence, but Lusio remains doubtful. They both join Polarchos on his way to Prague, Lusio serving as Polarchos' squire. In a bookshop in Prague Lusio faints at the sight of a bookseller, who turns out to be Drusio. Because the unnamed gentleman insists on bringing Lusio to Polarchos himself, a fight breaks out during which Drusio kills the gentleman, crying out that he has thus avenged Isabella. Drusio and Lusio are both taken to prison and await Amphilanthus' judgment. As beds are scarce, they have to share a bed, and Drusio begins to relate his unhappy love story. He and his best friend Flavio fell in love with the two sisters Cordelia and Isabella. However, Cordelia loved Flavio rather than Drusio and Isabella favoured Drusio instead of Flavio.

⁴²⁴ Rickman claims, for instance, that the "more nuanced stories are very interesting depictions of pragmatic solutions to the pressures of dynastic, arranged marriages on emotional freedom" (160).

⁴²⁵ To my knowledge, the only other critic to discuss this tale is Hackett in "Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant?" (136-138).

⁴²⁶ The story was quite heavily revised by Wroth, with the result that the manuscript contains some inconsistencies, as for example unchanged names—Drusio was originally called Musio or Mutio, for instance. Moreover, the two accounts of the fight with the unnamed gentleman in the bookshop in Prague seem contradictory, i.e. in the first account it seems that only Drusio is involved, whereas in the second one the gentleman attacks Drusio's master (cf. II.ii.290-291, 372).

Drusio's storytelling is interrupted by the arrival of Amphilanthus in Prague, and Drusio and Lusio are not mentioned any more until Polarchos and Amphilanthus meet them in Transilvania about eighty pages later. Lusio is now revealed to be Isabella, who had disguised herself as a man. Drusio retells his unhappy love story to Polarchos and Amphilanthus, explaining that he and Flavio were rejected and sent away by the two sisters, but that after his departure Isabella followed in search of him and was in danger of being raped by the unnamed gentleman when Polarchos found her disguised as Lusio. Drusio then continues their story, telling of their chance encounter in Prague, their release from prison due to a general pardon, their capture by pirates, subsequent separation and their meeting again when fighting on opposite sides in a civil war. Drusio recounts how Lusio charged him with ingratitude towards Isabella and finally revealed himself to be Isabella when Drusio repented his former love for Cordelia and swore that he now only loved Isabella. Amphilanthus and Polarchos are very pleased by the outcome of the adventure, and Amphilanthus takes Drusio into his service, sending the couple ahead to Italy.

The story of Drusio and Isabella reads like a miniature romance, including such elements common to romance as a quest, the intervention of pirates, the separation of lovers, cross-dressing, endangered chastity, an inadvertent fight between the protagonists and a happy ending with the promise of marriage. Yet, if Drusio and Isabella recall Heliodorus' Theagenes and Chariclea, their story is nonetheless distinctly Wrothian in its focus on the themes of courtship and (in)constancy. Thus, the story takes up and interrogates earlier courtship plots, such as male lovers' adoption of the role of a courtly lover, the testing of the male lover and the spurned female lover's active pursuit of her beloved. Readers that remember the fates of characters like Dolorindus, Antissia and Nereana may well be sceptical of this story's outcome, as the courtly love model seldom proves successful in the *Urania*, the testing of male lovers is repeatedly depicted as dangerous and actively courting women are punished

rather than rewarded. However, while the tale of Drusio and Isabella confirms the first two of these assumptions, Isabella does not share Nereana's fate even if she has her share of suffering before the happy ending. Hence, Wroth nuances her representation of women's active courtship and invites readers to debate in what ways Isabella's case differs from that of Nereana.

Both Isabella and Nereana go in search of a man that has spurned them because he is in love with someone else. Both women are endangered and suffer due to their active wooing—Nereana when she gets lost in the Sicilian forest, falls into the hands of the mad Alanius and is humbled through the hardship of living in the wild (I.ii.196-200), Isabella when she is threatened by rape, imprisoned, captured by pirates and pressed into service in a civil war. Thirdly, both women do not seem to have parents, and their only mentioned relative is a sister. Where the two characters differ, however, is in their status and in their general attitude: Nereana is the reigning princess of Stalamine and proud and disdainful, while Isabella is a lady from Florence and seems more humble and patient. These oppositions open the field for different possible interpretations. Readers might conclude that Nereana's pursuit of her beloved is more condemnable than Isabella's because Nereana has a duty towards her realm and a duty as a role model,⁴²⁷ whereas Isabella is rather a private person, whose absence or misbehaviour does not imperil Florence. Another interpretation might be that it is not Nereana's pursuit of Steriamus that is punished—although Pamphilia clearly thinks such behaviour on the part of a princess unseemly (I.ii.194)—but her arrogance and pride, i.e. her moral flaws.⁴²⁸ A third possible conclusion might be that Isabella is just as much at fault as Nereana and simply incredibly lucky to escape the adventure relatively unharmed. There are no indications in the text that would point towards any one of these interpretations, and

⁴²⁷ This idea is suggested by Cavanagh in *Cherished Torment* (64-77).

⁴²⁸ Hackett's suggestion that "Nereana's misconduct is in openly announcing herself to be travelling in quest of a man, and in failing to disguise herself and embrace suffering in order to do so" ("Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant?" 136) does not seem entirely convincing.

readers are ultimately free how to interpret Isabella's possibly scandalous success. However, what the text clearly exposes is the danger involved in active female courtship. In this respect then readers are guided to a conclusion and there seems little freedom of interpretation.

With regard to (in)constancy, the second major theme in the story of Drusio and Isabella, Wroth also proposes an alternative view compared to the frequent denunciation of male inconstancy as opposed to female constancy in the *Urania*. Whereas Isabella remains constant in her love for Drusio, he eventually comes to love Isabella rather than her sister Cordelia. However, unlike other male characters, Drusio is never criticised for his inconstancy, which, on the contrary, is presented as a positive change, as if by falling in love with Isabella Drusio has come to his senses.⁴²⁹ Thus, Wroth again introduces an alternative plot which interrogates earlier emplotments of this theme and invites readers to reflect on the differences between Drusio's case and that of other male lovers. The main contrast between Drusio and other lovers is of course that his original love for Cordelia is rejected, meaning that his case resembles that of Steriamus rather than Amphilanthus. Drusio hence figures among the few characters in the *Urania* that become happy with their second rather than their first love.

Considering that love at first sight is a standard motif in romance, Wroth's inclusion of couples that do not at first fall in love with the right partner adds a realistic touch to the text and suggests that the multiplication of plot variants around a specific theme also allows for an engagement with real-life problems, such as cases of one-sided affection. In such circumstances, Drusio's story seems to imply, remaining constant to one's first love is unreasonable or even destructive.⁴³⁰ However, while a change of affections in such a case is acceptable, it remains suspicious compared to the romance norms of ideal love at first sight and absolute constancy. Moreover, unlike the protagonists Steriamus, Urania, Parselius and

⁴²⁹ Hackett's description of Isabella as "Having been abandoned by her lover, Drusio" ("Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant?" 136) mistakenly suggests that Drusio is another example of an inconstant male lover modelled on the example of Amphilanthus.

⁴³⁰ Thus, neither Flavio nor Cordelia reappear in Wroth's text, which might imply that Flavio's constancy leads to his loss in the desert and perpetuates Cordelia's unhappiness.

Dolorindus, the minor character Drusio does not undergo a magic cure that cleanses him of his first love. Instead, Drusio's change of affections occurs outside the actual narration and is neither discussed nor explained. In other words, although Wroth seems to acknowledge that realistically it does not make sense to remain constant when faced with rejection or betrayal, she appears reluctant to argue this case, almost hiding, one might say, Drusio's inconstancy in an ellipsis. Furthermore, Wroth also downplays Drusio's inconstancy through the revision of his name: whereas Mutio or Musio, the character's original name, highlights his change of affection due to its resemblance to the Latin verb "mutare," meaning "to move or change," Drusio, an adaptation of the Roman family name Drusus (II.528 n292.5) does not.⁴³¹

Finally, the text also passes over another kind of inconstancy without any comment, namely the behaviour of Isabella towards her suitor Flavio. Although Isabella promises Flavio to marry him if he "remaine unknowne ore seene of any companye for one whole yeere" in "the greatest and wildest desart" (II.ii.370), she does not keep her word but "soddainly resolved, nott Venturing to attend the fates, and Flavioes returne att yeeres end, stole privately away" (II.ii.371) to find Drusio. Isabella is thus little better than the Princess of Rhodes, for example, who tests and spurns Polarchos, but she incurs no criticism.⁴³² It is as if the threat of having to marry without love excuses or outweighs Isabella's breaking of her promise. In any case, as with regard to her active courtship, the responsibility for judging Isabella's behaviour is ultimately left to the readers since the text does not resolve the conflict between Isabella's resemblance to problematic transgressive female characters and the text's positive depiction of her person and success.

While reading the story of Drusio and Isabella thematically provokes a critical reflection on the themes of courtship and (in)constancy, reading it in the context of the final book of the

⁴³¹ Drusio's name is thus geographically meaningful, linking the character to his native country Italy.

⁴³² Isabella's escape is related by Drusio, who refers to her as "This, O this most deere Creature" (II.ii.371) in this context. It makes sense that Drusio does not criticise Isabella's decision since he profits from it, but there are also no interventions of the narrator or of Amphilanthus and Polarchos that would question Isabella's behaviour.

manuscript continuation brings other aspects to the fore. The story of Drusio and Isabella figures not only among several inset tales concerned with courtship and the danger of rejection, thus reflecting on the younger protagonists' search for spouses, it also provides an optimistic counter-current, holding up the prospect of lovers' repentance, reunion and a happy ending. Indeed, Drusio and Isabella's final reunion seems to hold out the promise of a happy ending to the romance as a whole, an ending that would see the young protagonists happily married. Moreover, placed immediately before Amphilanthus' journey to the court of Albania, where he is reunited with Pamphilia, Drusio's account of his and Isabella's separation and reunion clearly foreshadows the subsequent reconciliation of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus. Like Drusio, Amphilanthus is repentant, desperate (II.ii.383) and finally forgiven, that is, succoured by his partner (II.ii.389-390). Furthermore, Isabella's revelation of her true identity is paralleled by Pamphilia's proof of her constancy, i.e. her true identity, when she hands Amphilanthus the cabinet containing his and her letters that Amphilanthus' tutor Forsandurus had withheld to further the intrigue of the Queen of Candia and the Queen of Slavonia (II.ii.388-389). Also, Isabella's problematic agency acquires additional significance if read in opposition to Pamphilia's extreme discretion and passive silence. The intrigue that has separated Amphilanthus and Pamphilia is only discovered when Pamphilia overcomes her passive reclusion—underlined by her hurting leg that immobilises her physically after a hawking excursion (II.ii.386)—and lets herself be carried to the dying Forsandurus. It is thus Pamphilia's readiness to act, i.e. to hear Forsandurus' confession and afterwards to send for Amphilanthus (II.ii.386-388), that makes the reconciliation with Amphilanthus possible, just as Isabella's agency ultimately leads to her reunion with Drusio.⁴³³ This comparison, in turn, puts Isabella's pursuit of Drusio into a better light,

⁴³³ For a different interpretation of Pamphilia's leg injury and the scene when she hands the cabinet to Amphilanthus see Kinney "“Beleeve this butt a fiction”" (161-162) and Cavanagh ("Romancing" 34-35).

suggesting that although her actions might be extravagant, some form of female agency is necessary to ensure happiness in love.

Apart from foreshadowing the development of the love relationships of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus and the younger protagonists in general, the story of Drusio and Isabella also contributes to the impression of increasing political instability pervading the second part of the *Urania*. Indeed, Drusio's account of his suffering and his separation from the disguised Isabella features not only one but two instances of civil strife in Italy. The curious mention of the participation of students in the fighting in Padua (II.ii.371) has already been discussed in connection with the *effets de réel* that the text of the *Urania* sometimes provokes.⁴³⁴ The second instance of civil unrest Drusio that mentions also takes place in Italy but is less clearly localised. It opposes "the Nobilitie" (II.ii.373), for which Isabella fights, to "the Communes" (II.ii.373), which press Drusio into their service. Drusio explicitly condemns the strife, referring to it as "unlucky warrs" and commenting that "'Sivile' they were termed, butt certainly they are the bloodiest, the unnaturallest, and most uncivilly cruell of any [wars]" (II.ii.373). As has been mentioned before, the emphasis in the manuscript continuation shifts from the danger of usurpation to that of popular rebellion, and Drusio's account provides the perspective of "privat and little-counted-of people" (II.ii.373) on such civil unrest, as he refers to himself and Isabella. His condemnation of civil strife supports the view put forward by the protagonists threatened by rebellions, namely that such rebellions are against nature since they attack monarchy, the only legitimate form of government in the *Urania*. Thus, by invoking the threat of insurrection, the story of Drusio and Isabella implicitly points out the importance of finding and establishing the lost royal children in order to ensure future peace and political stability.

⁴³⁴ Cf. section 3.4.2 "Settings and Spatial Displacements" above.

In contrast to these serious political moments in Drusio's account, his and Isabella's adventures also offer considerable entertainment. From the beginning readers are confronted with the mystery of Isabella's identity and the question of how truthful the gentleman is that joins her and Polarchos. That Lusio is concealing his true identity is clear from the beginning because readers are told that to avoid being recognized by the gentleman that arrives Lusio is "counterfetting his voice, and looking downe, least his eyes might beetray him" (II.ii.284). Lusio's fear that if he was recognized the gentleman might "satisfy his desires longe since threatned" (II.ii.284) and Lusio's repeated mention of Isabella allow readers to speculate that Lusio might be Isabella in disguise. Moreover, that there is more to Lusio than he acknowledges is also hinted at by his name. The editors gloss Lusio as a "Form of Lucius" (II.528 n290.34), which derives from "lux" i.e. light, but an equally if not more convincing interpretation of the name would be to understand it literally since "lusio" is a Latin noun meaning "game" and derives from the verb "ludere," meaning "to play" but also "to act" and "to deceive." In other words, the name Isabella assumes alerts readers with some notion of Latin that Lusio's (male) identity is pretence. However, the text constantly refers to Lusio by male pronouns and does not reveal his true identity until Drusio and Isabella are met by Polarchos and Amphilanthus. Indeed, Wroth carefully corrected three pronoun references to Isabella from "she" to "he" (II.ii.284.38, 290.10-11), indicating that while she thought of Lusio as a woman when writing, she deliberately kept readers doubting.⁴³⁵ Readers are thus kept in suspense, and this suspense is further heightened when the story of Drusio and Isabella is suddenly interrupted at the very moment when readers expect that Drusio's disclosure of his and Isabella's unhappy love will lead to the revelation of Lusio's true identity and to an

⁴³⁵ Wroth's decision to refer to the cross-dressed Isabella by male pronouns might have been inspired by Sidney's use of female pronouns to refer to the cross-dressed Pyrocles in the *Arcadia*. However, Wroth adopts Sidney's technique for a completely different purpose given that readers of the *Arcadia* know the true identity of the disguised Pyrocles, which is not the case for Lusio. Thus, where Sidney's use of female pronouns for Pyrocles creates humour and possibly doubts about the moral soundness of disguise and the danger of effeminacy, Wroth's use of male pronouns for Isabella denies privileged information to readers, putting them into the same position of ignorance as Polarchos and Drusio when they are deceived by Isabella's disguise.

explanation for Lusio's fainting at the sight of Drusio in the bookshop. Hence Wroth in turn creates mystery, raises expectations and frustrates them, involving readers in speculation and drawing them on.

In addition, Wroth varies the mood of the story. Starting out as a typical knightly adventure occasioned by a chance meeting, the tone of the story changes abruptly when Lusio accuses the unnamed gentleman of robbery and intended rape. In reply, the gentleman's protestations, which move but do not entirely convince Lusio, read like a conduct book, outlining the behaviour of an ideal unselfish lover and condemning any form of violence towards women (II.ii.284-285). The story then acquires a comic or even slightly bawdy touch when the "honest-desembling" gentleman, as the text terms him, presses Lusio "to ly with him" (II.ii.289), seemingly to allow Lusio to profit from his better lodging. Lusio's polite denial of the offer constitutes another hint for readers that Lusio might be a woman in disguise—a hint that is further accentuated when Lusio has to share a bed with Drusio in prison (II.ii.291-292). The insistence in the text that "This must bee" and that there was no possibility "att all" of "refusing" (II.ii.292) the jailor's order suggests that Lusio's sharing of a bed with a man in general and Drusio in particular might have potentially bawdy or titillating implications. This, in turn, invites speculation on the part of the readers about what might happen if, while in bed, Drusio discovered, or Isabella revealed her true identity. Indeed, seen retrospectively, the entire story of Drusio and Isabella could be seen as an exercise in speculation, proposing one answer to the question "what if" two men and two women were unhappily in love with each other while at the same time suggesting other outcomes and provoking readers to imagine further scenarios. As the foregoing discussion has shown, this speculation stretches from more realistic assumptions—for example the danger and exposure Isabella risks when travelling on her own—to instances of wishful thinking, as when Isabella's radical agency is rewarded. Hence Wroth's text allows for different forms of

readerly engagement, inviting critical debate as well as identification with the suffering lovers or simply gratifying readers' taste for a fanciful dramatic tale, as for example in the moments of pure melodrama when Isabella and Drusio face each other incognito in a military skirmish.

A final pleasure provided by Wroth's text is that of intertextual play since the story of Drusio and Isabella can be read as a rewriting of an episode from Sidney's *New Arcadia*.⁴³⁶ In Sidney's text, when Pyrocles and Musidorus are imprisoned by Andromana at the Iberian court, they are freed by Palladius on behalf of Zelmane, the daughter of Plexirtus, because she has fallen in love with Pyrocles (350-355). During the escape, Palladius, himself in love with Zelmane, dies in a fight, but Zelmane joins Pyrocles and Musidorus in male disguise, becoming Pyrocles' page under the name of Daiphantus (356, 359-360).⁴³⁷ Soon after Zelmane becomes ill and eventually dies due to the "shame and sorrow" (364) occasioned by the wickedness of her father Plexirtus and her fear that Pyrocles might despise her for her father's sake (364-367). She reveals her true identity to Pyrocles and Musidorus before her death, asking them to help Plexirtus despite his wickedness and to take on the names of Daiphantus and Palladius when returning to Greece (366-367). The two princes comply with Zelmane's dying wishes, and when Pyrocles later cross-dresses as an amazon, he calls himself Zelmane. The story of Drusio and Isabella rewrites a number of elements from this episode in *New Arcadia*. Where Sidney has one couple of unhappy lovers suffering from unrequited love, i.e. Palladius and Zelmane, Wroth adds another couple to create an unhappy circle of lovers. Both Zelmane and Isabella follow their beloved and serve as pages although their health suffers from the hard work. Yet, whereas Zelmane dies in Pyrocles' arms after having revealed her identity, Isabella only faints at the sight of Drusio and again when he holds her,

⁴³⁶ Campbell states that the "intertextual debates that arise when their texts [i.e. the *Arcadia*, the *Urania* and the continuation of the *Arcadia* by Anna Weamys] are read in tandem" constitutes "an intertextual extension of the salong ritual" (82).

⁴³⁷ See also Hackett's discussion of this episode in "Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant?" (136). Hackett also stresses Zelmane's anxiety that her behaviour might be considered "immodest" and concludes that "The narrative contends with the assumption that a cross-dressing female traveller is immodest and light," but Zelmane still needs to atone for her agency through death and "through emphasis on her self-abasement and sacrifice" (135).

but she does not reveal her identity until much later when she is sure that he now loves her. Both Sidney and Wroth make the most of the melodramatic scenes they present, such as Zelmane's death and the fight between Isabella and Drusio, provoking readers' sympathy and compassion. However, their treatment of the cross-dressed female character differs markedly. Zelmane's love for the protagonist Pyrocles comes to nothing, and one of her greatest concerns when dying is that Pyrocles might find her cross-dressing immodest (365-366). Zelmane is at pains to justify her behaviour as a proof of her love for Pyrocles since otherwise, she implies, "put[ting] off the apparel of a woman" equals putting off the "modesty" (365) of woman. Isabella, on the other hand, does not voice such qualms. Indeed, she never justifies her disguise, and none of the male characters involved tax her with immodesty. On the contrary, Polarchos even commends "her excellent love and hasardess obtaining her best and choisest desirs," and he jokes that it is good that he did not recognise Isabella to be a woman because, as he says, "truly such beauty would have tempted mee shrewdly" (II.ii.376). The characters' attitude towards female cross-dressing seems thus much more relaxed in Wroth's text, allowing even for the kind of bawdy humour and irony that in Sidney's text appears in relation to Pyrocles' cross-dressing, but not Zelmane's.⁴³⁸ Hence, Wroth not only rewrites Zelmane's tragic death into a happy ending, but also seems to be revisiting her uncle's text tongue-in-cheek.

Reading the story of Drusio and Isabella in relation to the recurring main themes and the supporting and contrasting inset tales in the *Urania* is an active process and reveals the different kinds of readerly engagement that the text encourages. Indeed, the continual process of reflection provoked by stories dealing with the same themes and with similar plots implies that the text is, in Cooper's words, "designed not just for reading but for discussion" (12). While the repetition of certain ideas like the importance of constancy in love, for instance,

⁴³⁸ For two alternative discussions of the frequency of early modern cross-dressing and its social implications, see Jean E. Howard, "Cross-dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England" and David Cressy, "Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England."

sets standards within the romance, the variation of plots opens the field for debate and the critical evaluation of characters, actions and concepts. Thus, although constancy comes across as the central value in the *Urania*, stories like that of Drusio and Isabella contribute to an ongoing negotiation of the ideal of constancy and its limits. Hence, on the one hand, Wroth's text reinforces certain ideas that readers seem expected to adopt through repetition, but, on the other hand, because of the proliferation and variation of the stories the ultimate responsibility of interpretation and evaluation is delegated to the readers—be that an individual reader or a reading community—prompting the kind of “engaged reception of romance” (13) that Cooper describes. Moreover, Wroth also engenders discussion by opposing moments of varying degrees of realism. The contrast between realistic scenes, scenes that seem the result of wishful thinking or hypothetical what-if-speculation and scenes embedded in romance tradition leads to an interrogation of social and political norms and realities. In addition, this contrast enhances the effect of variety of Wroth's text. Readers are entertained by moments of mystery, speculation, fantasy, drama, intertextual play, and sometimes, in inset tales, they might even come across topical references or the representation of more delicate issues. The *Urania* therefore caters both for readers attracted by episodic variety—what Vinaver describes as “disconnected ‘fine-fabling’” that delighted “readers of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance” (94)—and for Vinaver's ideal romance readers with their “infallible” (83) memory of everything they have read.

5 Conclusion

The enticement of short-term entertainment and an invitation to long-term commitment are alluringly visualised by the frontispiece of the *Urania*. Indeed, my initial suggestion to read the frontispiece like a manual of instruction for readers is borne out by the historically and generically contextualised analysis of both the structural and content-related narrative techniques of guidance in the *Urania*. Some of the reading strategies or attitudes that the frontispiece implies and the romance calls for would have appeared self-evident to most early modern readers—if perhaps less so to most modern readers. Thus, without an appreciation of the ornate—whether the ornate architecture of the frontispiece, Wroth’s elaborate style of writing or the complexity of the work’s narrative structures—it is difficult to enjoy reading the *Urania*. The studies of book historians suggest that early modern readers were not daunted by complex works but rather enjoyed disentangling intricate plots, following the adventures of individual characters and reading highly rhetorical speeches. In addition to their taste for, or habit of such active readerly engagement, early modern readers were also well equipped to read Wroth’s work thanks to their familiarity with the romance genre. The recognition of generic markers, such as the statue of Cupid or the flaming heart held by the statue of Venus on the frontispiece, raises concrete expectations with regard to a work’s form and content and predisposes readers to apply specific reading modes to the text. These reading modes can be multiple—the flaming heart for instance may be read as a sign of secular or spiritual passion—and may be applied alternately or even simultaneously to the text, as, for example, in the case of settings in the *Urania* with their the multiple levels of meaning.

Not only were early modern readers used to the adoption of different reading modes, they also engaged in widely different reading practices, as book historians have shown. Among these practices, reading out loud in a communal setting is probably what modern readers do least often—in contrast to the many scenes of communal storytelling in the *Urania*. Reading

out loud to a communal audience also implies that the reception of what is read is not passive and silent but results in some form of active engagement and speech, i.e. in reflection, conversation or debate—visualised perhaps by the engaged conversation in which the two figures on the frontispiece approaching the bridge seem to be involved. A readiness for debate and critical reflection is certainly encouraged by Wroth's work, both through the representation of such practices within the *Urania* and through the romance's structural characteristics of multiplication, repetition and variation that seem prefigured by the gardens, columns and buildings that mirror and oppose each other on the frontispiece. However, while the text provides ample room for critical reflection, it also propagates a benevolent readerly attitude that early modern readers would have been familiar with from the prefatory material that frequently accompanied books at the time. Like the "gentle" readers of the preliminaries, the text implies, the ideal readers of the *Urania* are attentive, unbiased and discreet in their judgments and criticism, adopting a sympathetic rather than an overly critical perspective. Such courteous readers are invited to share in the complicity of the narrator with the romance's royal protagonists and are subsumed, through the undefined narratee, in the aristocratic world depicted in Wroth's work and exemplified by the figures on the frontispiece. The narrator especially serves as a model to readers in this respect through her attitude of critical sympathy that expresses itself in her idiosyncratic reconciliation of emotional involvement and intellectual lucidity. As the arch of the frontispiece places viewers in the position of a voyeur and frames their view of the marvellous world beyond, the narrator of the romance repeatedly creates a critical distance by her ironic or amused remarks, while simultaneously guiding readers through the labyrinthine text and providing a unified perspective on the narrative. Yet the narrator, like the arch, also invites readers to enter this marvellous universe, to partake of the characters' joys and suffering and to explore the

different perspectives offered by the turns and twists of bending paths, by the repetition and variation of recurring themes and plots.

Analysing the *Urania* by means of narratological concepts has proven useful to elucidate Wroth's structural techniques and to interrogate subjective impressions of the work's narrative complexity from a firmer ground. Yet my study has also highlighted the need to rethink some of the narratological concepts and investigate them more methodically with respect to early modern literature. Most importantly discussions of the narrator and the narratee need to take into account the historical and generic context of the work in question. The clear-cut separation of the author from the construct of the narrator does not seem to correspond to the early modern perception of narrators. Instead, it seems, the narrative voice is intentionally conflated with the author's voice by early modern writers—within the fictional text but also through the means of preliminaries, such as dedications or letters to the readers. As a result the narrator becomes a persona of the author, making it difficult to separate the two completely. Moreover, the circumstance that early modern authors could be held responsible for readers' interpretations of their work also supports such an identification of author and narrator. Yet, at the same time, there is a playful side to this persona of the author when the narrative voice makes use of irony, since the efficacy of the irony partly depends on the conflation of author and narrator but also renders it ambiguous. In other words, the narrative voice draws its authority from the real-life author but may also make use of it for playful purposes. In Wroth's case, this ambiguous conflation of author and narrator is further accentuated by the *roman-à-clef* aspects of her romance.

Other features of early modern narrators also call for a historical and generic contextualisation and more extended narratological studies focused on early modern fictional texts. Thus, the question of a narrator's gender in the early modern period is complicated by the widely propagated patriarchal norms, the relatively small number of female authors and

the issue of class prerogatives. Cultural and generic norms also relativise the modern narratological concept of the narrator's reliability since the narrator's withholding of information may be due to norms of propriety and decorum or to generic traditions—as is the case in crime novels, too—and therefore does not necessarily compromise readers' perception of the narrator's reliability. With regard to the narratee, it is above all the conception of the narratee in the singular that poses problem. This does not correspond to the common early modern practice of communal reading, nor does it adequately reflect the explicitly plural audiences that some early modern texts address. Moreover, the projection of a narratee in the singular also implies a certain type of reception that seems to preclude communal discussion and debate.

Other narratological concepts that need to be applied critically to early modern texts are the distinction between narrative levels and the conceptualisation of time and space. While for analytical purposes it may be helpful to conceive of narrative levels in hierarchical terms or, alternatively, in terms of frame and framed narratives, this approach does not fully capture the effects that Wroth, for one, achieves by her use of inset tales. This is to a large extent due to generic conventions, that is, in this case, romance features such as interlacement. Romance conventions also undermine common narratological approaches to the representation of time and space. Combined with the toleration of the marvellous, the intricate narrative structures of romances in general and Wroth's work in particular undercut any unified or coherent framework of time and space. Put differently, the disregard of chronological precision and order or notions of duration and distance becomes the norm rather than the exception, thus compromising the usefulness of standard narratological tools of analysis and pointing to the need for alternative narratological models to make sense of the flexible timeframe and the proliferation of spaces, narrative strands and levels that early modern romance allows for.

Apart from testing the usefulness and limitations of narratological concepts when applied to a text like the *Urania*, my study has also outlined various characteristics of Wroth's work that illustrate her engagement with the romance tradition she worked in, with the historical context in which she wrote as well as her innovative approach to narrative form and structures. While the *Urania* upholds chivalric ideals in general, it does not simply replicate all the stock motifs of romance. Wroth's awareness of romance memes but also the creative liberty she takes with them are signalled by the way in which she combines traditional foundling and lost heir plots in the story of the Faire Designe for her own personal agenda. Other romance elements like love at first sight or the traditional happy ending combined with marriage receive nuanced and at times critical treatment in the *Urania*, as does the Petrarchan love discourse and the male-female power relations it presupposes. Most fundamentally, however, Wroth recurrently incorporates conflicts between the marvellous world of romance and a more familiar and realistic world, creating an ironic undercurrent but also opening a space for serious reflection and discussion. Thus, she invokes romance memes like the questing wandering knight, for example, while at the same time engaging in an exploration of the (contemporary) acceptability and importance of various forms of travelling through the romance techniques of interlacement, repetition and variation. Wroth hence engages with a number of political and social issues in her work, offering a complex satirical perspective on early modern England, for instance, or depicting potential dangers to the institution of monarchy. Striking in this respect too are Wroth's interest in the fate of younger sons and daughters, her support for consensual marriage negotiations within and between families, her portrayal of women's difficulties when faced with unwanted marriage proposals or male infidelity, as well as her unequivocal representation of female rulers as legitimate.

Whereas the repetition of dominant plots signals the general position readers should adopt with regard to these issues, they enjoy considerable freedom when it comes to the

interpretation of particular episodes. This is, on the one hand, due to Wroth's complex practice of interlacement, with which she experiments, arranging multiple narrative strands in patterns of convergence or fan-like structures. On the other hand, it is the result of Wroth's subtle indirect fashioning of readers—through the work's narrative techniques of guidance in general and the undefined narratee and ungendered narrator in particular. The distinct voice of the narrator in the *Urania* invites readers to adopt a stance of critical sympathy that encourages an engaged and discerning interpretation of the artistically structured proliferation of stories in the *Urania*.

6 Appendix

6.1 Overview of Narrative Strands, Intra- and Hypodiegetic Narrators

6.1.1 Second Book of the First Part

Intradiegetic Level: Focus of narrative strands	Intradiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators	Hypodiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators
Pamphilia and Amphilanthus (I.ii.175-175)		
Parselius (I.ii.175-180)	- Dettareus (I.ii.176-180)	
Steriamus (I.ii.180-189)	- Dolorindus (I.ii.182-189)	
Pamphilia, Amphilanthus and Urania (I.ii.189-195)	- Amphilanthus (I.ii.192- 193)	
Nereana (I.ii.195-201)		
Philarchos (I.ii.201-211)	- Orilena (I.ii.201-202)	
Leandrus (I.ii.211-211)		
Urania and Amphilanthus (I.ii.211-212)		
Pamphilia (I.ii.212-230)	- Alarina (I.ii.217-224) - Limena (I.ii.226-229)	
Urania and Amphilanthus (I.ii.230-237)	- Prince of Styria (I.ii.232- 233)	
Polarchos (I.ii.237-240)	- Polarchos (I.ii.237-238)	
Pamphilia, Amphilanthus and Urania (I.ii.240-266)	- Urania (I.ii.245-247, 253- 256, 257-258)	- Liana (I.ii.246-253) - Alanius (I.ii.256-257)
Pamphilia (I.ii.266-266)		
Amphilanthus and Ollorandus (I.ii.267-296)	- Sydelia (I.ii.275-283) - Fishing Lady (I.ii.291- 294)	
Amphilanthus (I.ii.296-304)	- Emilina's lady in waiting (I.ii.297-298)	
Selarinus (I.ii.304-314)		
Steriamus, Dolorindus and the other Princes in the army (I.ii.314-317)		

Pamphilia (I.ii.317-329)	- Antissia (I.ii.321-322)	- British Lady (I.ii.322-324)
Ollorandus (I.ii.329-329)		
Urania (I.ii.329-334)	- Urania (I.ii.331-333)	
Nereana (I.ii.334-338)	- Nereana (I.ii.334-335)	

fig. 5: I.ii. Overview: Narrative Strands, Intra- and Hypodiegetic Narrators

6.1.2 Third Book of the First Part

Intradiegetic Level: Focus of narrative strands	Intradiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators	Hypodiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators
Amphilanthus (I.iii.339-355)	- Earl's third son (I.iii.344-345) - First knight (I.iii.346-347)	
Perissus (I.iii.355-356)		
Antissia, Dolorindus, Antissius (I.iii.356-363)		
Pamphilia (I.iii.363-373)	- Pamphilia (I.iii.366-371)	
Princes (I.iii.373-374)		
Amphilanthus (I.iii.374-397)	- Bellamira (I.iii.379-381, 382-386)	
Rosindy and Polarchos (I.iii.397-408)	- Ex-servant of the Bulgarian Queen (I.iii.399-399) - Strange knight (I.iii.401-402) - Parselius (I.iii.406-407)	
Perissus and Philarchos (I.iii.408-410)	- Unfortunate lady (I.iii.408-409)	
Rosindy and Selarinus (I.iii.410-412)		
Polarchos (I.iii.412-413)		
Princes and Princesses (I.iii.413-414)		
Steriamus (I.iii.414-421)		
Perissus (I.iii.421-422)		
Amphilanthus (I.iii.422-422)		
Leonius (I.iii.422-436)		
Amphilanthus (I.iii.436-443)	- Sad lady (I.iii.437-439)	
Ollorandus (I.iii.443-454)	- Old gentleman (I.iii.444-448)	
Veralinda (I.iii.454-457)		

Amphilanthus (I.iii.457-457)		
Pamphilia (I.iii.457-463)		
Amphilanthus (I.iii.463-463)		
Leandrus (I.iii.463-464)		
Pamphilia (I.iii.464-471)		
Leonius (I.iii.471-479)	- Cilandrus (I.iii.476-478)	
Pamphilia (I.iii.479-479)		
Bellamira (I.iii.479-480)		
Pamphilia (I.iii.480-484)		
Leonius (I.iii.484-485)		
Amphilanthus (I.iii.485-489)		
Queen of Naples, Perissus and Limena (I.iii.489-495)	- Dorolina (I.iii.492-492)	
Nereana (I.iii.495-496)		
Amphilanthus (I.iii.496-498)		
Pamphilia (I.iii.498-505)	- Pamphilia (I.iii.499-502)	

fig. 6: I.iii. Overview: Narrative Strands, Intra- and Hypodiegetic Narrators

6.1.3 Fourth Book of the First Part

Intradiegetic Level: Focus of narrative strands	Intradiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators	Hypodiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators
Amphilanthus (I.iv.506-509)		
Urania, Steriamus, Selarinus and Philistella (I.iv.509-512)	- Angry lady (I.iv.510-512)	
Selarinus and Philistella (I.iv.512-512)		
Selarina and Antissius (I.iv.512-518)	- Procatus (I.iv.515-517)	
Dalineia and Parselius (I.iv.518-526)	- Old man (I.iv.519-526)	
Rosindy, Meriana and Perselina (I.iv.526-534)	- Pelarina (I.iv.528-533)	
Philarchos and Orilena (I.iv.534-541)	- Lady with dog (I.iv.536- 540)	
Queen of Bulgaria (I.iv.541-553)	- Prince of Thiques (I.iv.545-546, 548-549, 549-552)	- Allimarlus' lover (I.iv.546-548)
Veralinda and Leonius (I.iv.553-565)	- Curardinus (I.iv.555-557, 558-558) - Lisia (I.iv.559-562) - Leader of the mad women (I.iv.563-565)	
Pamphilia and Amphilanthus (I.iv.565-575)	- Sildurino (I.iv.571-574)	
Pamphilia (I.iv.575-584)	- Mirasilva (I.iv.576-579)	
Prince of Transilvania (I.iv.584-587)	- Maid of the Princess of Lycia (I.iv.585-586)	
Peryneus (I.iv.587-601)	- Peryneus (I.iv.589-590, 596-600) - Alarinus (I.iv.591-596)	
Cauterino and Dorileus (I.iv.601-626)	- Lycencia (I.iv.610-610)	
Leurenus, the Duke of Florence and the Duke of Savoy (I.iv.626-629)		
Duke of Florence (I.iv.629-638)	- Lame knight (I.iv.631- 634)	

Leurenus (I.iv.638-657)	- Vicianus (I.iv.645-646) - Belizia (I.iv.652-652) - Squire of the Duke of Burgundy (I.iv.654-657)	
Amphilanthus (I.iv.657-659)		
Pamphilia and Amphilanthus (I.iv.659-661)		

fig. 7: I.iv. Overview: Narrative Strands, Intra- and Hypodiegetic Narrators

6.1.4 First Book of the Second Part

Intradiegetic Level: Focus of narrative strands	Intradiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators	Hypodiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators
Pamphilia and Amphilanthus (II.i.1-1)		
Selarinus (II.i.1-10)	- Spirit (II.i.9-10)	
Perissus and Limena (II.i.10-12)		
Limandro (II.i.12-22)	- Limandro (II.i.14-18, 19-21)	
Urania and Steriamus (II.i.22-23)		
Pamphilia, Amphilanthus, Kings and Queens (II.i.23-41)	- King of Morea (II.i.26-27) - Rosindy (II.i.33-35) - Fancy (II.i.38-39)	
Pamphilia, Amphilanthus and Rodomandro (II.i.41-49)		
Dolorindus and Antissia (II.i.49-54)		
Princes and Princesses (II.i.54-54)		
Dolorindus and Antissia (II.i.54-57)		
King of Candia (II.i.57-58)		
Amphilanthus (II.i.58-60)		
Break in the manuscript	Break in the manuscript	Break in the manuscript
Clavarindo, Follietto and Denia (II.i.60-62)		
Clavarindo (II.i.62-64)		
Clavarindo and Clianté (II.i.64-73)	- Clavarindo (II.i.67-70) - Clianté (II.i.70-71)	
Licandro (II.i.73-81)		
Lusandrino and Nummurandro (II.i.81-91)	- Mirilania (II.i.85-86)	
Floristello (II.i.91-106)	- Queen of Argos (II.i.93-95)	
Lenulphus (II.i.106-107)		

Pamphilia (II.i.107-131)	- Philarchos (II.i.117-122, 123-127, 128-131)	- Lady in bed (II.i.127- 128)
Amphilanthus (II.i.131-146)		
Steriamus (II.i.146-166)	- Lady of Robollo (II.i.150-151)	
Rosindy (II.i.166-171)	- Lindafillia (II.i.169-170)	
Urania, Selarina and Amphilanthus (II.i.171-175)		
Antissius and Allimarlus (II.i.175-182)		
Amphilanthus (II.i.182-190)	- Dorilea (II.i.187-188) - Lamurandus' wife (II.i.188-190)	

fig. 8: II.i. Overview: Narrative Strands, Intra- and Hypodiegetic Narrators

6.1.5 Second Book of the Second Part

Intradiegetic Level: Focus of narrative strands	Intradiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators	Hypodiegetic Level: Characters who turn into narrators
Amphilanthus (II.ii.193-202)		
Parselius (II.ii.202-233)	- Lamprino (II.ii.208-211) - Amicles (II.ii.218-220) - Follietto (II.ii.222-223) - Trebisound (II.ii.224-226) - Parismeria (II.ii.229-230)	
Selarinus (II.ii.233-256)	- Duardo (II.ii.238-238) - King of Bulgaria (II.ii.246-250) - Antissia (II.ii.251-253)	
Amphilanthus (II.ii.256-268)	- Pamphilia (II.ii.257-259)	
Lindafillia (II.ii.268-269)		
Steriamus and Leonius (II.ii.269-270)		
Pamphilia (II.ii.270-283)		
Polarchos (II.ii.283-293)	- Drusio (II.ii.292-293)	
Amphilanthus (II.ii.293-302)		
Selarinus (II.ii.303-305)		
Urania and Steriamus (II.ii.305-306)		
Pamphilia (II.ii.306-315)	- Leutissia (II.ii.310-313)	
Parismeria (II.ii.315-317)		
Parselius (II.ii.317-323)		
Amphilanthus (II.ii.323-324)		
The Faire Designe (II.ii.324-331)	- King of Denmark (II.ii.329-331)	
Floristello (II.ii.331-334)		
Verolindo (II.ii.334-342)		
Parselius (II.ii.342-351)		

Pamphilia (II.ii.351-366)	- Mirasindo (II.ii.355-356) - Candiana (II.ii.357-358)	
The Faire Designe (II.ii.366-366)		
Amphilanthus (II.ii.366-367)		
Rodomandro (II.ii.367-367)		
Amphilanthus (II.ii.367-394)	- Drusio (II.ii.369-376)	
Parselius (II.ii.394-397)		
Selarinus (II.ii.397-401)		
Melasinda (II.ii.401-402)		
Parselius and the King and Queen of Morea (II.ii.402-406)		
Pamphilia and Amphilanthus (II.ii.406-417)	- Daughter of the Duke of Sabbro and Licus (II.ii.411-413, 414-416)	

fig. 9: II.ii. Overview: Narrative Strands, Intra- and Hypodiegetic Narrators

6.2 The *Urania* in Figures

Books	Length ⁴³⁹	Number ⁴⁴⁰ of Narrative Strands/ Different Narrative Strands	Recurrence ⁴⁴¹ of Characters/Number of Different Characters Serving as the Focus of Narrative Strands		Amount ⁴⁴² of Intradiegetic Narrative			Number ⁴⁴³ of Hypodiegetic Narrators/Different Narrators			Amount of Hypodiegetic Narrative			Number of Hypo-hypodiegetic Narrators/ Different Narrators			Amount of Hypo-hypodiegetic Narrative		
			Female characters	Male characters	Total	Narrative strands with a female focus	Narrative strands with a male focus	Total	Female Narrators	Male Narrators	Total	Female Narration	Male Narration	Total	Female Narrators	Male Narrators	Total	Female Narration	Male Narration
I.i.	174	13/6	3/2	10/4	118	38	81	17/16	2/2	15/14	51	2	49	3/3	0/0	3/3	5	0	5
I.ii.	164	21/16	13/3	18/10	108	55	80	15/14	10/9	5/5	47	33	14	3/3	2/2	1/1	9	8	1
I.iii.	167	33/18	13/8	28/13	135	42	100	13/12	6/5	7/7	32	21	11	0/0	0/0	0/0	0	0	0
I.iv.	155	19/17	13/10	21/15	94	36	83	19/19	9/9	10/10	59	22	37	1/1	1/1	0/0	2	2	0
Total I	660	86/42⁴⁴⁴	42/16	77/21	455	171	344	64/58	27/23	37/35	189	78	111	7/7	3/3	4/4	16	10	6
II.i.	190	26/23	14/8	30/20	155	56	144	14/14	9/9	5/5	34	10	24	1/1	1/1	0/0	1	1	0
II.ii.	225	29/15	8/5	26/12	187	46	153	16/15	5/5	11/10	38	12	26	0/0	0/0	0/0	0	0	0
Total II	415	55/33	22/12	56/27	342	102	297	30/29	14/14	16/15	72	22	50	1/1	1/1	0/0	1	1	0
Total	1075	141/66	64/22	133/37	797	273	641	94/84	41/35	53/49	261	100	161	8/8	4/4	4/4	17	11	6

fig. 10: The *Urania* in Figures

⁴³⁹ All the statistical information in this table is based on the modern editions of the *Urania*, edited by Roberts, Gossett and Mueller.

⁴⁴⁰ Number indications give first the total number of narrative strands followed after the slash by the number of narrative strands with a different focus. If the focus of a narrative strand consists of a group of characters, say two characters for example, this strand is counted as a different strand from the narrative strand focusing on these characters individually.

⁴⁴¹ If a narrative strand focuses on a group of characters, each character has been counted individually. As a result, the added up numbers for female and male characters do not necessarily equal the number of narrative strands.

⁴⁴² In general the amount of narrative is indicated in pages and is approximate. Where the focus of a narrative strand consists of a mixed pair/group of characters, the number of pages have been added to both the narrative strands with a female and male focus, with the result that the amounts of narrative with a female and male focus do not necessarily add up to the total.

⁴⁴³ Number indications give first the number of narrators followed after the slash by the number of different narrators.

⁴⁴⁴ The total number of different narrative strands is not the sum of the indication for the individual books, but the total number of different strands considering all of part one or two respectively. The same is true for the final total which takes into account the whole of the *Urania*.

6.3 Overview of Hypodiegetic (-) and Hypo-hypodiegetic (+) Narratives:

Detailed Version Indicating the Narrator and the Subject of the Narrative if the Narrator Does not Tell Her/His Own Story

Topics	I.i.	I.ii.	I.iii.	I.iv.	II.i.	II.ii.	Themes
lost children	-Urania (I.i.22-22) -Parselius: Urania (I.i.23-24) -Sandrigall: Antissia (I.i.29-31) -Allimarlus: Antissia (I.i.32-34, 37-38, 39-40) +Servant of an evil half-brother: Antissia (I.i.38-39)	-Prince of Styria: Urania (I.ii.232-233)			-Spirit: children of the King of Tartaria's daughter (II.i.9-10) -Clavarindo: royal children (II.i.67-70) -Clanté: Philistella jr. (II.i.70-71) -Philarchos: royal children (II.i.117-122, 123-127, 128-131) -Dorilea: royal children (II.i.187-188)	-Amicles: Candiana and Trebisound (II.ii.218-220) -Follietto: Candiana and Trebisound (II.ii.222-223) -Trebisound (II.ii.224-226) -Mirasindo: royal children (II.ii.355-356) -Candiana (II.ii.357-358)	The quest for identity
madness		+Alanius (I.ii.256-257)	-Pamphilia: Nicholarus (I.iii.366-371)		-Rosindy: Antissia (II.i.33-35)	-Antissia (II.ii.251-253)	
cure		+Alanius (I.ii.256-257) -Urania (I.ii.331-333) -Nereana (I.ii.334-335)				-Antissia (II.ii.251-253)	
loss of status			-Old gentleman (I.iii.444-448) -Pamphilia: Lindamira (I.iii.499-502)	-Lady with dog (I.iv.536-540) -Curardinus (I.iv.555-557, 558-558) -Lisia (I.iv.559-562) -Mirasilva: Sildurino's family (I.iv.576-579) -Peryneus: Elyna (I.iv.589-590, 596-600)			
servitude						-Lamprino (II.ii.208-211) -Duardo (II.ii.238-238)	

usurpation	-King of Albania: Macedonia (I.i.24-25) +Ex-Duke of Morea (I.i.34-37) -Seleucius: Romania (I.i.51-58) -Romanian Captain: Romania (I.i.71-75) -Ollorandus: Hungary (I.i.78-80) -Rosindy: Macedonia (I.i.108-111) -False King of Negroponte/Lord of Sio (I.i.117-119)	-Orilena (I.ii.201-202)	-First knight: Albania (I.iii.346-347)	-Alarinus: Myra (I.iv.591-596)	-Spirit: Phrygia (II.i.9-10) -Clavarindo: Thessaly (II.i.67-70) -Queen of Argos: Argos (II.i.93-95) -Lindafillia: Tartaria (II.i.169-170)	-Pamphilia (II.ii.257-259)	Conquering and defending a throne
exile	-Urania: King of Pantalaria (I.i.22-22) -King of Albania (I.i.24-25) -Nainio (I.i.137-138)	-Orilena (I.ii.201-202)			-Spirit: daughter of the King of Tartaria (II.i.9-10) -Clavarindo (II.i.67-70)	-Pamphilia (II.ii.257-259)	
rebellion					-Mirilania: Argos (II.i.85-86)	-Lamprino: king of Tempe (II.ii.208-211) -King of Denmark (II.ii.329-331) -Drusio: Padua, Italy (II.ii.369-376)	
forced marriage	-Perissus: Limena (I.i.5-14, 16-18) -King of Albania: Meriana (I.i.24-25) -Leandrus: lovers in Cephalonia (I.i.41-43, 44-45) +Unfortunate Lover from Cephalonia (I.i.43-43) -Ollorandus: Melasinda (I.i.78-80) -Limena (I.i.87-88) -Rosindy: Meriana (I.i.108-111)	-Orilena (I.ii.201-202) +Liana (I.ii.246-253)	-Unfortunate lady (I.iii.408-409)	-Maid of the Princess of Lycia (I.iv.585-586) -Alarinus: Myra (I.iv.591-596)	-Mirilania (II.i.85-86) -Lindafillia (II.i.169-170)		Love matters
unhappy marriage	-Perissus: Limena (I.i.5-14, 16-18) -Limena (I.i.87-88)		-Unfortunate lady (I.iii.408-409) -Pamphilia: Lindamira (I.iii.499-502)	-Procatus: Sirelius (I.iv.515-517) -Curardinus (I.iv.555-557, 558-558) -Lisia (I.iv.559-562) -Lycencia (I.iv.610-610)	-Limandro: Celia (II.i.14-18, 19-21) -Fancy (II.i.38-39) -Queen of Argos (II.i.93-95)		

	happy marriage		-Sydelia (I.ii.275-283)	-Earl's third son (I.iii.344-345)			-King of Bulgaria (II.ii.246-250)	Love matters
	ménage à trois		-Fishing Lady (I.ii.291-294)	-Ex-servant of the Bulgarian Queen: Queen of Bulgaria (I.iii.399-399)				
	courtship/ love					+Lady in bed (II.i.127-128)	-Lamprino (II.ii.208-211) -Parismeria (II.ii.229-230) -King of Bulgaria (II.ii.246-250) -Drusio (II.ii.292-293) -Drusio (II.ii.369-376) -Daughter of the Duke of Sabbro and Licus (II.ii.411-413, 414-416)	
	unrequited/ rejected love	-Steriamus (I.i.67-70)	-Dolorindus (I.ii.182-189) -Amphilanthus: Nereana (I.ii.192-193) -Polarchos (I.ii.237-238) -Sydelia: Terichillus (I.ii.275-283) -Nereana (I.ii.334-335)	-Pamphilia: Nicholarus (I.iii.366-371) -Strange knight: lady who hates Parselius (I.iii.401-402) -Parselius: lady who hates Parselius (I.iii.406-407)	-Vicianus (I.iv.645-646)	-King of Morea: Prince of Corinth (II.i.26-27) -Philarchos: Lady in bed (II.i.117-122, 123-127, 128-131) +Lady in bed (II.i.127-128)	-Lamprino (II.ii.208-211) -Drusio (II.ii.292-293) -Candiana (II.ii.357-358) -Drusio (II.ii.369-376) -Daughter of the Duke of Sabbro and Licus (II.ii.411-413, 414-416)	
	inconstancy	-Clarimatto (I.i.103-104) -Parselius (I.i.152-154)	-Alarina (I.ii.217-224) -Limena: Alena (I.ii.226-229) -Emilina's lady in waiting: Emilina (I.ii.297-298) -Antissia (I.ii.321-322) +British Lady (I.ii.322-324)	-Pamphilia: Nicholarus (I.iii.366-371) -Bellamira (I.iii.379-381, 382-386) -Unfortunate lady (I.iii.408-409) -Sad lady (I.iii.437-439) -Old gentleman (I.iii.444-448) -Cilandrus: a lady (I.iii.476-478) -Dorolina (I.iii.492-492) -Pamphilia: Lindamira (I.iii.499-502)	-Angry lady (I.iv.510-512) -Pelarina (I.iv.528-533) -Lady with dog (I.iv.536-540) -Prince of Thiques: Princess of Rhodes, Allimarlus' lover, Prince of Thiques (I.iv.545-546, 548-549, 549-552) +Allimarlus' lover (I.iv.546-548) -Leader of the mad women (I.iv.563-565) -Sildurino: Mirasilva (I.iv.571-574) -Mirasilva (I.iv.576-579) -Lame knight: Lady in Britain (I.iv.631-634) -Squire of the Duke of	-Fancy (II.i.38-39) -Philarchos (II.i.117-122, 123-127, 128-131)	-Drusio (II.ii.369-376)	

				Burgundy: Pamphilia and Amphilanthus (I.iv.654-657)			Love matters
lovers' reunion		-Urania: Alanius and Liana (I.ii.245-247, 253-256, 257-258)	-Earl's third son (I.iii.344-345)	-Curardinus (I.iv.555-557, 558-558) -Belizia (I.iv.652-652)	-Limandro: Celia and Salamino (II.i.14-18, 19-21)	-Drusio: Drusio and Isabella (II.ii.369-376)	
repentence				-Prince of Thiques: Princess of Rhodes (I.iv.545-546, 548-549, 549-552) -Curardinus (I.iv.555-557, 558-558) -Sildurino (I.iv.571-574)		-Drusio (II.ii.369-376) -Daughter of the Duke of Sabbro and Licus (II.ii.411-413, 414-416)	
revenge		-Sydelia: Terichillus (I.ii.275-283)	-Strange knight: lady who hates Parselius (I.iii.401-402) -Parselius: lady who hates Parselius (I.iii.406-407)	-Prince of Thiques (I.iv.545-546, 548-549, 549-552) -Leader of the mad women (I.iv.563-565) -Vicianus (I.iv.645-646)	-Dorilea: Lamurandus (II.i.187-188) -Lamurandus' wife: Lamurandus (II.i.188-190)		
bedstory		-Dettareus (I.ii.176-180)	-Pamphilia: Nicholarus (I.iii.366-371) -Parselius: lady who hates Parselius (I.iii.406-407)		-Philarchos (II.i.117-122, 123-127, 128-131)		
incest				-Old man: Distantes' children (I.iv.519-526)		-Leutissia: Demonarus (II.ii.310-313)	
death and constancy	-Perissus: Limena (I.i.5-14, 16-18) -Leandrus: lovers in Cephalonia (I.i.41-43, 44-45)	-Sydelia: Antonarus' lady (I.ii.275-283)	-Old gentleman: his first love (I.iii.444-448)	-Peryneus: Elyna (I.iv.589-590, 596-600) -Alarinus: Myra (I.iv.591-596)	-Lady of Robollo (II.i.150-151)		

fig. 11: Overview of Hypo- and Hypo-hypodiegetic Narratives: Detailed Version

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