

1283

Pamphilia's Labyrinth

A paper presented to the Sphex Club of Lynchburg
January 19, 2006

By Carolyn Wilkerson Bell

Carolyn Wilkerson Bell first came to Lynchburg in the early 1960s to attend Randolph-Macon Woman's College. Six years after graduating from R-MWC, she joined the college's English Department, from which she will retire in the spring after thirty-five years of teaching. Carolyn volunteers at Daily Bread and at the Legacy Museum of African American History, and she continues to work on a history of R-MWC that covers the period between 1950 and the college's centennial in 1993. She changed the date of her Sphex Club paper so that she would be free to travel to Portland, Maine, with her husband, Alex, to greet their first grandchild, due to arrive on February 1.

Pamphilia's Labyrinth

Carolyn Wilkerson Bell
19 January 2006

* * *

In this strange labyrinth, how shall I turn?
Ways are on all sides, while the way, I miss;
If to the right hand, there, in love I burn;
Let me go forward, therein danger is;
If to the left, suspicion hinders bliss;
Let me turn back, shame cries I ought return,
Nor faint, though crosses with my fortunes kiss;
Standstill is harder, although sure to mourn;
Thus, let me take the right or left hand way,
Go forward, or stand still, or back retire,
I must these doubts endure without allay
Or help, but travail find for my best hire;
Yet that which most my troubled sense doth move
Is to leave all and take the thread of love.

In this strange labyrinth, how shall I turn?

My dictionary defines a labyrinth as “an intricate structure of interconnecting passages through which it is difficult to find one’s way; a maze” (“Labyrinth,” *American*). We have all heard of the most famous labyrinth, the legendary maze constructed by the great artificer Daedalus as a prison for the Minotaur, a monster who was half man, half bull. Young Athenians, women and men alike, were sacrificed to the Minotaur until Theseus, the king of Athens, killed him. Theseus made his way safely into the labyrinth and back out again by following a thread given to him by Ariadne.

In gardening, a labyrinth is a complicated arrangement of pathways either enclosed by thick parallel hedges, or, as in the renowned labyrinth at Versailles, separated by blocks of

shrubbery sometimes called “wildernesses.” The effect of a garden labyrinth is to bewilder the visitor who is trying to find the way to the sculpture or fountain or bench at the center, and then to further bewilder the visitor as she or he tries to find the way out (“Labyrinth,” *Encyclopedia*). The labyrinth was a favored device in Elizabethan and Jacobean gardens and also in Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry, where it served as a metaphor for the emotional complexities of love (Roberts, Introduction 128). The sonnet, which was the preferred verse form during those periods, was also sometimes compared to a labyrinth because of its intricate structure (Waller, *Sidney* 218).

Tonight I propose that we enter together the “strange labyrinth” referred to in the sonnet with which I began. I am not an expert on this sonnet, having read it for the first time only a few months ago, nor am I a specialist in the period during which the sonnet was written. But I can promise you that after wandering around in bewilderment, we will reach the center of our labyrinth—though only if we, in the words of the sonnet’s last line, “leave all and take the thread of love.”

Ways are on all sides. . . .

.....

If to the right hand, there, in love I burn

The thread of love takes us first to one of the most famous literary families of the English Renaissance, the wealthy and aristocratic Sidneys, whose seat was Penshurst Place, in Kent. The author of our sonnet, Mary Wroth, was part of this family. She was born Mary Sidney, probably in 1587. Her mother was Lady Barbara Gamage (1562-1621), an heiress who was first cousin to Sir Walter Raleigh. Barbara Gamage Sidney had eleven children,

only six of whom lived to adulthood. Mary was her eldest child and one of six daughters. Barbara Sidney was attentive to the education of her daughters as well her sons; as one contemporary noted, “she sees them well taught, and brought up in learning and qualities fitt for their birth and condition” (qtd. in Roberts, Introduction 5). Young Mary was said to be “very forward in her learning, writing, and other exercises she is put to, as dawncing and the virginals” (qtd. in Roberts, Introduction 8). (A virginal is a small harpsichord.) In Renaissance England, aristocratic women like the Sidneys had exceptional access to education (Gilbert and Gubar 1), and as a result, they often served as literary patrons, as did Barbara Sidney and other women in her circle.

Mary's fond father—and he was fond, though often away from his family, as his loving letters attest—was Sir Robert Sidney (1563-1626), a poet and courtier who eventually gained the title earl of Leicester for his service to the crown. As a poet, Robert Sidney produced several dozen songs, elegies, and translations (Roberts, Introduction 7); he also wrote a sonnet sequence (Waller, *Sidney* 141). As a young courtier, Robert Sidney served Queen Elizabeth I as governor of Flushing, in the Netherlands. He assumed this post after the death of his more famous older brother, Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), the writer-translator-courtier-soldier-diplomat with whose brief life and brilliant reputation originated the adulatory epithet “Renaissance Man.” Besides serving Queen Elizabeth in the Lowlands until he died at thirty-two of infection from a battle wound, Sir Philip Sidney wrote the first prose romance in English, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1581-84), named in honor of his sister; the prose romance was the literary predecessor of the genre we now call the novel. Sir Philip Sidney also wrote the first piece of literary

criticism in English, *The Defense of Poesy* (1595), and one of the first sonnet sequences in English, *Astrophil and Stella* (1580; published 1591).

The situation of *Astrophil and Stella* is suggested by its name: *stella* is Latin for “star,” *astro* is Greek for “star,” and *phil* is from the Greek *philos*, which means “beloved” or “loving”; *phil* also, of course, represents the name “Philip.” Thus the literary persona of Mary Wroth’s Uncle Philip is that he is a star-lover: he loves Stella who, in the best tradition of courtly love, is out of his reach because she is married to someone else. If we search our mental files for some memory of Sir Philip Sidney’s poetry, we may come across “My true love hath my heart, and I have his” (Hebel 1208), and we may also be able to retrieve some of the more famous lines from *Astrophil and Stella*, for example, the end of the first sonnet in Sidney’s sequence, a line I commend to any SpheX Club member who may be suffering from writer’s block: “Fool, said my muse to me, look in your heart and write!” Or perhaps we remember one of Astrophil’s compliments to Stella’s beauty, the sonnet that begins with a question: “When Nature made her chief work, Stella’s eyes, / In color black why wrapped she beams so bright?” Or we might recall the sonnet that ends the sequence, the one that begins, “Leave me, O Love, that reachest but to dust, / And thou my mind aspire to higher things.” From our study of English literature we might even remember that these attributes of Philip Sidney’s sonnet sequence—extravagant praise of the beloved woman’s physical beauty, her indifference to the suffering of the frustrated poet-lover, and his eventual turning away from human love—are all among the conventions of Petrarchan poetry. We call the conventions “Petrarchan” because they originated in the 14th century Italian poet Petrarch’s sonnets to

Laura. Petrarchan poetic conventions became influential all over Europe before English writers got hold of them, and some of the conventions, especially those for describing women's faces and bodies, remain alive today. The English poet Edmund Spenser used Petrarchan conventions to praise the beauty of his beloved in his sonnet sequence, called *Amoretti*, and Shakespeare famously reversed Petrarchan conventions in the sonnet that begins "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun." What we need to hold on to as we proceed through the labyrinth is that in all these sonnet sequences we see the beloved woman only through the eyes of the suffering poet-lover. She is a decorated and decorative object, remote, indifferent, even cruel. If she speaks, as, for example, Stella does, she speaks only words assigned to her by the poet whose creation she is. In Sir Philip Sidney's sequence and in others by male writers of the period, the woman has no subjectivity; that is, she is not the doer of the action or the speaker of the sentence. And she has no agency; that is, she has no means or mode of acting. In short, she has no voice of her own.

Nearly as well known as Sir Robert Sidney's brother the learned and literary Sir Philip Sidney was their learned and literary sister, Lady Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke (1562-1621), to whom, as I have already mentioned, Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* was dedicated. Yet another high-born woman married to a high-born man, Mary Sidney Herbert had four children; the eldest, a son named William, we are going to encounter again. In her early teens (1575-77) Mary Sidney was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth, and after her marriage to Henry Herbert, second earl of Pembroke, Mary Sidney Herbert became an important patron of poets. Her home, Wilton House, near

Salisbury, was a gathering place for writers and intellectuals, including not only her brother Philip but also the poet Samuel Daniel, who tutored the countess's sons, and the chemist Adrian Gilbert, half-brother to Sir Walter Raleigh; Gilbert had a laboratory in the house (Gilbert and Gubar 30). The 17th-century diarist John Aubrey wrote that "Wilton House was like a college, there were so many learned and ingenious persons" who gathered there (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 30)—a Jacobean predecessor to this august gathering, perhaps. A minor 17th century poet (William Browne of Tavistock), wrote a famous short poem "On the Death of Marie, Countess of Pembroke (1621)" in which he described Mary Sidney Herbert as "fair, and learned, and good," and also identified her by her important male relatives: she was "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother" (Witherspoon 806).

Mary Sidney Herbert was unusually well educated even for an aristocratic woman of her time: she knew Latin, French, and Italian; she seems also to have known a little Greek and some Hebrew; and, in the finest tradition of Renaissance humanism, she was well versed in classical rhetoric and literature (Hannay, "Mary"). She wrote tribute poems to Queen Elizabeth and, after his untimely death, to her brother Philip; if she wrote any other original poetry, it has not survived. She is remembered today not only for her patronage of important male writers but also for her beautifully crafted translations of the Psalms; these verse translations, being religious, were considered appropriate work for a woman. Her brother Sir Philip had begun this project, and at his death she took up at Psalm 44 and completed translations of the remaining 107 Psalms. Her translations are remarkable for the variety of stanzas she uses: not a repeated form in the lot (Hannay, "Mary"). Mary

Sidney Herbert seems to have been especially fond of her young niece and namesake—our poet, Mary Wroth—who was probably her goddaughter (Roberts, Introduction 15), and the two spent a good deal of time together when Aunt Mary was writing her translations of the Psalms and overseeing publication of her late brother's work (Hannay, "Your" 22-23). In terms we might use, Mary Sidney Herbert was her niece's literary mentor.

Thus Mary Wroth—the woman whose persona, in the sonnet that is our focal point, is struggling to find her way through the labyrinth—came by her literary interests honestly; indeed, she seems to have been quite well aware that as a writer she was working in the family business. The title page of the book that she eventually published—or that somebody else published without her permission—referred both to her uncle Philip Sidney and her aunt Mary Sidney Herbert, thus making plain her literary lineage. With her fine education and high status, with the memory of her famous uncle and the living examples of her poetry-writing father and aunt before her, Mary Wroth seems to have been destined to become a poet. But in her day, the woman who wished to write original poetry had to defy conventions both social and literary. As a writer, Mary Wroth had no female predecessors, and furthermore, the forms that were ready to hand—the sonnet and the prose romance—had previously been used only by male writers. Nevertheless, Mary Wroth did write, and she became known for her writing. In the only surviving portrait of her as an adult, dating from about 1620, she holds an archlute symbolizing her dedication to all the arts (Roberts, Introduction 7, n. 12).

Now that we have reached that enormous archlute, where will the "thread of love" take us next?

Let me go forward, therein danger is

Early in her life, Mary Sidney Wroth performed in courtly entertainments. She danced for Queen Elizabeth at Penshurst and at court (Roberts, Introduction 9), and after James I came to the throne in 1603, Lady Mary and eleven other court ladies, including Queen Anne herself, painted their faces and arms black to perform in *The Masque of Blackness* and in its sequel, *The Masque of Beauty* (Roberts, Introduction 12-13). These court masques were entertainments that combined poetic drama, music, song, and dance with elaborate costuming and stage spectacle. The players were members of the court who wore masks to perform and then at the end took their masks off for dancing that included the audience (Abrams 153).

Mary Wroth's participation in these masques tells us that for a time she was in favor at court. Her status depended on the men to whom she was connected—her father and, after her marriage, her husband, Sir Robert Wroth (1576-1614). Lady Mary Sidney was married to Sir Robert Wroth when she was seventeen. Her father being a little short of money at the time, he called on his sister Mary's son, William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke, for a loan to supplement his daughter's dowry to the tune of a thousand pounds (Roberts, Introduction 24), a third of the total (Hannay, "'Your'" 23). The marriage of Lady Mary Sidney and Sir Robert Wroth, like most between aristocratic men and women of the period, was arranged for financial benefit. In this case, the powerful Sidneys gained

wealth from a "prosperous but socially inferior" son-in-law (Waller, "Mary" 50). Letters from Mary Wroth's father to his wife suggest that the marriage of Robert and Mary Wroth did not have an auspicious beginning, though it is not clear exactly what the problem between the newlyweds was (Roberts, Introduction 11-12; Waller, "Mary" 41-42).

Whatever the difficulties at the outset of their marriage, the couple seems to have settled into a relationship that was amicable enough, perhaps because they were often apart. The two were not well matched. Lady Mary Wroth was learned and courtly, while Sir Robert Wroth's "place and pleasure," according to one of his contemporaries, was to spend time at his country home, Loughton Hall, in Essex, where he "[kept] many Hounds for Hare and Deare, and Spaniels for land and water" (qtd. in Roberts, Introduction 12). At Loughton, Wroth entertained hunting parties that sometimes included the king (Roberts, Introduction 10-11). Lady Mary's friend the poet and playwright Ben Jonson thought her "unworthily married on a Jealous husband" (qtd. in Roberts, Introduction 17), and contemporary scholars have described Wroth as a "wastrel, spendthrift, drunkard, and womanizer" (Butler and Jokinen). Nevertheless, the will he made only a month before his death showed affection toward his wife of ten years. In addition to forgiving the unpaid balance of her dowry (Waller, *Sidney* 120) and leaving her a thousand pounds and "all her books and furniture of her studdye and closet," he referred to her as his "deere and loving wife" whose "sincere love, loyaltie, virtuous conversation and behavioure towards me, have deserved a farre better recompense, yf the care of satisfying my debts and supporting my house would have permitted the same" (qtd. in Roberts, Introduction 23). As this language suggests, Wroth's estate was encumbered by debts amounting to twenty-three

thousand pounds. The Wroths' only child, a boy named James, was born a month before his father died but lived only a little more than two years before he, too, died. The estate was entailed away from his mother, so at twenty-nine Mary Wroth was a childless widow who owned no property, had lost favor at court, and owed a great deal of money in the form of debts inherited from her husband. She spent much of her widowhood involved in legal maneuvering connected with these debts (Waller, *Sidney* 121).

Mary Wroth's loss of favor at court was probably connected to her scandalous relationship with her first cousin, William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke. Scholars cannot determine exactly when or on what basis the cousins took up with each other. Mary had known her cousin Pembroke, as he is usually called, all her life. The son of her Aunt Mary Sidney Herbert, he was seventeen when she was born (Hannay, "Your," 20-21), and the cousins' families were close. Pembroke seems to have viewed Mary's father, his uncle, as a surrogate parent (Waller, *Sidney* 75-76). There was constant visiting back and forth between the Sidneys' home in Kent and the Herberts' home in Wiltshire, and both families often stayed at the Herberts' town house, Baynards Castle, when they were in London. As we have already seen, it was Pembroke who supplemented Mary's dowry at the time of her marriage to Robert Wroth. Like so many courtiers the author of a sonnet sequence, Pembroke quickly rose through the ranks of the Jacobean court to hold the titles of lord chamberlain, lord controller, and lord chancellor (Waller, *Sidney* 81, 89), in this last position supervising almost two thousand people (Waller, *Sidney* 89). As a member of King James's Privy Council (Roberts, *Critical* xliv), Pembroke was an ambitious and successful "court bureaucrat" (Waller, *Sidney* 65), with fewer than a dozen social

superiors (Waller, *Sidney* 82). According to one scholar, he and other courtiers were constantly “hunting, singing, flirting, and quarreling”; they spent their days in “a succession of interlocking games and sports, tournaments, visits, dinners, negotiating dynastic marriages and the acquisition of land and political power” (Waller, *Sidney* 82).

In court circles Pembroke was known to be, in the words of his 17th century biographer, “immoderately given to women” (qtd. in Waller, “Mary” 50). As a young man, he caused a scandal in Queen Elizabeth’s court when his affair with maid-of-honor Mary Fitton resulted in her becoming pregnant with his child. When Pembroke refused to marry her, the queen imprisoned him for a month and then banished him from the court (the child was stillborn) (Roberts, *Critical* lxxxiii). Pembroke did not return to royal favor until the accession of James I. At about the same time that Mary Sidney married Robert Wroth, Pembroke married Lady Mary Talbot. As Mary Wroth’s had been, Pembroke’s marriage was financially motivated; his biographer wrote that Pembroke “paid much too dear for his wife’s fortune, by taking her person into the bargain” (qtd. in Roberts, *Introduction* 24). The uncongenial marriage seems only to have encouraged Pembroke in extra-marital romantic alliances. According to his biographer, it was not so much physical beauty that attracted him to a woman as it was “those advantages of the mind, as manifested an extraordinary wit, and spirit, and knowledge, and administered great pleasure in the conversation” (qtd. in Roberts, *Introduction* 24).

Was it Lady Mary Wroth’s advantages of the mind—her wit and spirit and knowledge—that drew her cousin Pembroke to her? Did Pembroke, as a man, a much older man, and a

member of her family, force himself upon his cousin? Did she resist? Did she submit, and then fall in love? Were the cousins passionately involved with each other even before their marriages to others? Did the early difficulty in the Wroths' marriage and the long delay in Mary's childbearing reflect if not a sexual liaison with her cousin, then at least a deep emotional attachment to him? How long, and under what circumstances, and with whose knowledge and complicity, did the cousins' passionate relationship continue? Was the relationship in fact continuous, or did it recur? Whatever the case, during the period of her early widowhood (Waller, "Mary" 46), Wroth and Pembroke had two illegitimate children, a son William and a daughter Katherine (Roberts, Introduction 24). Although the Sidneys and Herberts managed to conceal the existence of these children, at least in the public record, for nearly three hundred years (Waller, *Sidney* 122), the two families apparently cared for them, provided for them financially, and helped them to find places as they grew to maturity (Waller, "Mary" 52). Young William died without marrying, but Katherine did marry, and there is some evidence that she became the mother of Aphra Behn (Waller, *Sidney* 19), the first Englishwoman to earn her living by writing.

Lady Mary Sidney Wroth and William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke, were thus, in the words of one scholar, "cousins, lovers, writers, and parents" (Waller, "Mary" 36) – dangerous and labyrinthine liaisons indeed. The evidence suggests that Mary Wroth, in defiance of convention, willingly followed the thread of love into this labyrinth. Certainly, she, and not Pembroke, bore the shame of their children's out-of-wedlock births. As one male courtier wrote to another, "Here is a whispering of a Lady that hath ben a widow above seven yeares; though she had lately two children. . . . I must not name

her though she be saide to be learned and in print" (qtd. in Roberts, Critical lxxiv). In the eyes of her contemporaries, Mary Wroth's children and her writing were equally illegitimate.

In this strange labyrinth, how shall I turn?

.....

If to the left, suspicion hinders bliss

Wandering in the labyrinth as we have been, we have taken two turns. The first, a turn to the right, led us toward warm family love: an attentive mother, a fond if distant father, a mentoring aunt. Our second direction, straight ahead, took us toward the dangers of uncongenial marriage, illicit passion, and illegitimacy. Now we will make a left turn, our sonnet reminding us (in line five) that if we go to the left, we will encounter suspicion. Suspicion, and worse, is exactly what Lady Mary Wroth faced when, in 1621, her book, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, appeared in print. As the title indicates, the book was dedicated to Susan de Vere, Countess of Montgomery, who was Mary Wroth's closest friend and her lover Pembroke's sister-in-law; Susan was married to Pembroke's younger brother Philip.

The Countess of Montgomery's Urania is the first prose romance written in English by a woman. Let me say right away that I have read very little of *Urania*, and I don't expect ever to read all of it. It is long—the first part alone runs to 660 pages of small print—and, like other prose romances, it is episodic and loosely constructed, rather than carefully plotted like most of the novels that are its descendants and that many of us now would choose to read for pleasure. The prose style of *Urania* is not inviting, either. The scholar

who edited it comments on its “long, syntactically complex sentences, with numerous subordinate clauses and participial constructions lacking finite verbs”; furthermore, Wroth sometimes “runs several sentences together to imitate the confusion of a character’s thoughts” (Roberts, *Critical* cxix). *Urania* is set in places unfamiliar to us now, although almost all can be located on a 17th century map of Asia and Greece (Roberts, *Critical* xliv). Its characters number over 300 (Roberts, *Critical* lxxi), and its plots have been described as “almost innumerable” (Waller, *Sidney* 249). Many of these plots involve women who have suffered disappointment in love because their fathers have married them off to the wrong man (Bear) or because their lovers are unfaithful; indeed, several of the female characters seem to be versions of Mary Wroth herself (Hughes 54). The protagonist of *Urania* is a woman named—you have probably figured it out by now—Pamphilia—hence the title of my paper. The name means “all-loving,” not in the sense of “loving every man she meets” but rather in the sense of “loving the same man constantly, all the time.” Pamphilia’s romantic partner is named Amphilanthus, meaning “lover of two” (think of “ambivalent,” “ambiguous,” and “ambidextrous”). In *Urania* Pamphilia and Amphilanthus are cousins whose love must remain a secret. Pamphilia is constant in her love; Amphilanthus is not. Both eventually marry others.

Urania is, thus, in many respects—though certainly not in all—autobiographical; one of its characters describes it as “Some thing more exactly related then a fixion” (qtd. in Waller, *Sidney* 246). The book includes a number of characters and incidents reflecting Wroth’s experiences at court; in other words, it is, in at least some respects, a *roman à clef*. When the book was published, the courtiers who found themselves and their doings

represented in it were not happy. One, Lord Denny, attacked Wroth in verse, calling her a "Hermophradite in show, in deed a monster" and suggesting that she "leave idle books alone / For wiser and worthy women have writte none" (qtd. by Miller and Waller 6). Denny's vicious attack on Wroth's writing did not stop at calling her a hermaphrodite and monster. He also cast aspersions on her sexual behavior in lines so nasty that I forbear to quote them for fear of embarrassing us all ("Common oysters such as thine gape wide / And take in pearles or worse at every tide" [qtd. in Hughes 55]). Mary Wroth answered Lord Denny's attack in verse that includes these lines: "Your spitefull words against a harmless booke / Shows that an ass much like the sire doth look... / Take this then now lett railing rimes alone / For wise and worthier men have written none" (qtd. in Hughes 55). This spirited poetic reply notwithstanding, Mary Wroth did agree to have *Urania* withdrawn from publication, but either she did not actually do so, or she was unsuccessful; the book remained in circulation. Eventually it fell into obscurity, since, having been written by a woman, it was deemed unworthy of reading or study. *Urania* did not resurface until the 1970s, when feminist scholars began rediscovering long-forgotten works by women; it became generally available only in the 1990s. *Urania's* protagonist Pamphilia has been of considerable interest to contemporary scholars, who tend to view her fidelity to the inconstant Amphilanthus as masochistic, even though Pamphilia herself characterizes her constancy as a virtue. Of course, the expectation of constancy in a woman was but one expression of the male dominance of the period, an expectation still familiar to us as the sexual double standard. Pamphilia internalizes the patriarchal requirement that she be constant in love, and her constancy constrains, confines, and controls her.

Let me turn back. . . .

Attached to the end of the first part of Mary Wroth's *Urania* is a sonnet sequence called *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. Its speaker is the same Pamphilia who is the protagonist of the prose romance. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is the first sonnet sequence written in English by a woman. While the vogue for sonnet sequences had pretty much passed by the time this one appeared (Waller, *Sidney* 191), it is truly remarkable to hear, for the first time in English literature, a woman's voice speaking of her own internal experience of love—speaking at length, and in detail, and in iambic pentameter lines rhymed according to the sonnet form. To put that statement another way, in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* the woman is, at last, granted subjectivity—she can speak as an “I,” as the grammatical subject, about her own emotions, and she can represent all the nuances of feeling, all the subtleties of mood, all the pains and trials and travails of love as she experiences them. This is a monumental development, not only in literary history but, more generally, in cultural history: Mary Wroth invented literary subjectivity for a female speaker. As Gary Waller explains the significance of this development, “Wroth is the first woman writer in English in whose work a habitually submerged, historically specific, but distinctively female discourse starts to emerge” (*Sidney* 109)

It will not surprise you to learn that in the sonnet sequence, as in the prose romance *Urania*, Pamphilia's experience in love is wretchedly unhappy. She is faithful to an unfaithful lover—Amphilanthus—to whom she is not married but whom she deeply loves. She urges constancy on Amphilanthus so that he will be worthy of her (Butler and

Jokinen). As in *Urania*, the faithless lover is identified with Pembroke on the basis of puns and wordplay on his given name, William, or Will. For example, one sonnet begins, "Deare cherish this, and with itt my soules will," and another sonnet, which deals with the consuming fire of love, ends with this line: "Yet love I will till I butt ashes prove" (qtd. in Waller, *Sidney* 200). Unlike Petrarchan poetry, Wroth's sonnet sequence does not include any representations of the beloved's physicality, nor is the beloved man idealized. Far from it: his infidelity is made explicit in his name, as is Pamphilia's jealousy of her rival.

For me the most remarkable section of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is a group of fourteen sonnets forming a corona, or crown of sonnets "dedicated to Love." A crown of sonnets is a linked series in which the last line of one sonnet becomes the first line of the following sonnet. Thus, the last line of the sonnet with which we began, "Is to leave all and take the thread of love," becomes the opening line of the next sonnet, and so on until the fourteenth sonnet in the corona, which ends with the line "In this strange labyrinth, how shall I turn?"—thus linking all fourteen sonnets in a circle that ends where it began: in the labyrinth. Now that we have been wandering around in this labyrinth for a while, you have surely begun to feel, as I have, two of its most prominent characteristics: enclosure and complexity.

Scholar Mary Moore argues that these two attributes—enclosure and complexity—underscore Wroth's use of the tight form of the sonnet and the closed structure of the corona to convey themes related to gender. Here is what Moore says: "In poems by women—whether the 'author' is the fictive poet, Pamphilia, or Wroth herself—the tension

between form and syntax ... suggests the difficulty of fitting female erotic experience into forms created to suit the shapes of male erotic desire." The enclosure of the corona—and the labyrinth—reinforces another important trait of Wroth's sequence: the poetry is, in Moore's words, "relentlessly private," and this "fictional privacy . . . blurs [Wroth's] transgressive expression of erotic desire. Far from denying female subjectivity, Wroth depicts a female sense of self through the labyrinth—presenting a self that is isolated, enclosed, difficult, and complex." Wroth's syntactic effects, according to Moore, "communicate the strain of containing thoughts within the sonnet's form. . . . The sonnet's formal restrictions thus highlight constraint itself, difficulty in knowing, writing, and fitting the female textual body into a well-wrought urn designed to hold only male ashes. Labyrinthine syntax represents the poet's difficulty—and her craft." Moore's view of the corona emphasizes the way Mary Wroth turned to her advantage the problem she faced as a poet—how to use a form associated with male writers as a vehicle for female experience. In the closed, labyrinthine structure of the corona, Wroth's form and her content are perfectly matched and inextricably related in a manner that is at once strikingly innovative and quintessentially Elizabethan.

In case we are feeling claustrophobic—I know I am—let us follow line eight and stand still for a minute, still, in our standstill, holding the thread of love.

Standstill is harder, although sure to mourn

True scholars love their subjects. That statement certainly applies to Josephine Roberts, who was responsible for bringing the poetry and prose of Mary Wroth first to Renaissance specialists and eventually to a more general audience, that larger audience arriving by way of the poems' inclusion in such collections as *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*. Jo Roberts was born in Richmond, and after earning her Ph.D. in English at the University of Pennsylvania, she took a position at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Roberts' career took off at a time when scholars were just beginning to unearth long-buried literary works by women, works that had never before been considered worth studying. It was Roberts who in 1983 published, with a scholarly introduction and notes, *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, and it was also Roberts who in 1995 brought out, again with elaborate scholarly apparatus, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. These publications required the painstaking work of locating and collating rare manuscripts and printed editions in libraries and private collections, and then dealing with Wroth's difficult handwriting and idiosyncratic punctuation and syntax, these troubles being further complicated by Elizabethan spelling that has generously been described as "exuberant" (Hebel vi). One of Roberts' most exciting discoveries was a printed edition of *Urania* that belonged to Charlotte Kohler of Charlottesville; Kohler was the longtime editor of the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. The edition Kohler owned was remarkable because it included extensive corrections to the 1621 printed version of *Urania*, corrections made in Mary Wroth's own handwriting (Roberts, Critical x). Charlotte Kohler gave Roberts her copy, and when Roberts published her edition of *Urania*, she dedicated the book to Kohler (Hughes 56). Roberts then began work on a scholarly edition of the second part of *Urania*, of which there was only one manuscript copy.

Scholars love their subjects, and mothers love their children. Late in the summer of 1996, Josephine Roberts was driving east on Interstate 10 in Baton Rouge with her thirteen-year-old son John; they were on their way home from a meeting at LSU. As they approached the bridge over the Jefferson Highway, a pickup truck with a flatbed trailer hitched to the back was crossing the bridge in the opposite direction. The truck was going fast; the trailer rattled loose and headed for Roberts' car. In that one infinitesimal second before the crash, Josephine Roberts turned the steering wheel hard to the right. The loose trailer hit the driver's side. Her son, who was sitting in the front seat beside her, survived; she did not (Hughes 57). Josephine Roberts was 47 when she died. Two other scholars took up her unfinished work (Andrea 1). Published just six years ago, *The Second Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania* was dedicated to Roberts' husband and her son (Hughes 58).

* * *

Following the thread of love has taken us from the older generation of the Sidney family, Robert Sidney, Philip Sidney, and Mary Sidney Herbert; to Mary Wroth's relations with her husband, Robert Wroth, and with her cousin and lover, William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke; to Wroth's prose romance, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*; to the crown of sonnets within Wroth's sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*; to the pioneering work and tragic early death of feminist scholar Josephine Roberts. We are at last approaching the center of this labyrinth, and it is time to ask ourselves what we might find there: a minotaur? a fountain? a bench?

If the center of our labyrinth were to hold a minotaur, then that minotaur would surely be the patriarchy, the institutional structure of (white) male power and privilege that dominated the personal life of Mary Wroth, that demeaned and then suppressed her writing, and that has been challenged by the work of Josephine Roberts and other feminist scholars. Is this minotaur—the patriarchy—still alive? If it is, then it has certainly been weakened in the four centuries since Mary Wroth lived and wrote—weakened by women's access to education; weakened by the availability of safe, reliable contraception; weakened by women's participation in the labor force and the narrowing (though not the closing) of the gap between their wages and those of men; weakened, in short, by women's increasing economic, social, and political power. So if the center of our labyrinth were to hold a monster, a minotaur, could we—and would we—kill it?

Leaving that question aside, at least for the moment, let us consider another possible occupant of the labyrinth's center. Perhaps, rather than a minotaur, we might find instead a refreshing fountain beside a pleasant and comfortable bench. Here we could sit and engage in civil discourse about the great democratizing forces of the middle and late twentieth century, forces that have produced, among their many other consequences, the possibility of studying important literary figures like Mary Wroth. For Wroth is important, even though her writing was lost for so long. She is important because despite the obstacles she faced, she created work that lets us see the beginnings of that long trend in which we are still, I think, caught up: the discovery by women of subjectivity and agency, the exercise by women of their power to speak for themselves, and the creation,

by all of us, of a context in which women's voices are heard, respected, and taken seriously.

* * *

Before I ask for your comments and questions, and in the spirit of the other loving dedications I have mentioned tonight—to the Countess of Pembroke, to the Countess of Montgomery, to Charlotte Kohler, to Josephine Roberts' husband and son—I would like to dedicate "Pamphilia's Labyrinth" to two people: first, to my teacher, the late David Cornelius, with whom, as an undergraduate at Randolph-Macon, I first read the beautiful poetry and prose of the 16th and 17th centuries; and, second, to my dear friend Elizabeth Lipscomb, a Sweet Briar graduate, my colleague at Randolph-Macon for almost thirty years, and my own favorite Renaissance woman.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999.
- Andrea, Bernadette. "Review of Lady Mary Wroth, *The Second Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 7.2 (September 2001): 12.1-4. 9 Jan. 2006 <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/07-2/andrearev.htm>>.
- Bear, R.S. "Introduction." *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. Renaissance Editions. 1992. 7 Sept. 2005 <<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/mary.html>>.
- Butler, John, and Anniina Jokinen. "Lady Mary Wroth (1587?-1651?)." *Luminarium*. 1998-2003. 7 Sept. 2005 <<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/wroth/wrothbio.htm>>.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*. 2d ed. New York: Norton, 1996.
- Hannay, Margaret P. "Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke." <<http://www.siena.edu/hannay/MarySidney.htm>>.
- . "'Your virtuous and learned Aunt': The Countess of Pembroke as a Mentor to Mary Wroth." *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*. Ed. Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1991. 15-34.
- Hebel, J. William, et al., eds. *Tudor Poetry and Prose*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953.
- Hughes, Samuel. "Strange Labyrinth." *The Pennsylvania Gazette* 103.2 (2004): 52-58.
- "Labyrinth." *American Heritage Dictionary*. 4th ed. 2000.
- "Labyrinth." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 11th ed. 1911.

- Moore, Mary. "The Labyrinth as Style in 'Pamphilia to Amphilanthus.'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 38.1. 1 Jan. 1998. 7 Sept. 2005
<<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/6586/moore.html?20057>>.
- Roberts, Josephine. Critical Introduction. *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. By Mary Wroth. Ed. Roberts. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, Vol. 140. Binghamton, New York: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, SUNY, 1995.
- . Introduction. *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*. Ed. Roberts. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983.
- Waller, Gary. "Mary Wroth and the Sidney Family Romance: Gender Construction in Early Modern England." In *Reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Miller and Waller, 35-63.
- . *The Sidney Family Romance: Mary Wroth, William Herbert, and the Early Modern Construction of Gender*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1993.
- Witherspoon, Alexander M., and Frank J. Warnke, eds. *Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry*. 2d ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.
- Wroth, Lady Mary. *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Ed. Josephine A. Roberts. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, Vol. 140. Binghamton, New York: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, SUNY, 1995.
- . *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*. Ed. Josephine A. Roberts. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983.

Works Consulted

- Drabble, Margaret, ed. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. 5th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.
- Fienberg, Nona. "Mary Wroth and the Invention of Female Poetic Subjectivity." *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*. Ed. Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1991. 175-90.
- . "Mary Wroth's Poetics of the Self." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. 1 Jan. 2002. 7 Sept. 2005
<<http://www.geocities.com/katacheson/wrothfien.html?20057>>.
- Jones, Ann Rosalind. "Designing Women: The Self as Spectacle in Mary Wroth and Veronica Franco." In *Reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Miller and Waller, 135-53.
- Lamb, Mary Ellen. "Women Readers in Mary Wroth's *Urania*." In *Reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Miller and Waller, 210-27.
- Laws, Jennifer. "Gender and Genre in the Sonnet Sequences of Philip Sidney and Mary Wroth." *Deep South* 2.1 (1996). 7 Sept. 2005
<<http://www.otago.ac.nz/DeepSouth/vol2no1/laws.html>>.
- Masten, Jeff. "'Shall I turne blabb?': Circulation, Gender, and Subjectivity in Mary Wroth's Sonnets." In *Reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Miller and Waller, 67-87.
- Miller, Naomi J., and Gary Waller. "Introduction: Reading as Re-Vision." In *Reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Miller and Waller, 1-12.
- Weidemann, Heather L. "Theatricality and Female Identity in Mary Wroth's *Urania*." In *Reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Miller and Waller, 191-209.

Roberts, Josephine A. "'The Knott Never to Bee Untide': The Controversy Regarding Marriage in Mary Wroth's *Urania*." In *Reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Miller and Waller, 109-32.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. New York: Harbrace, 1929.

Wroth, Mary. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. Renaissance Editions. 1992. 7 Sept. 2005

<<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/mary.html>>.

Mary Wroth, Sonnet 77 [*First of the Corona*]

In this strange labyrinth, how shall I turn?
Ways are on all sides, while the way, I miss;
If to the right hand, there, in love I burn;
Let me go forward, therein danger is;
If to the left, suspicion hinders bliss; 5
Let me turn back, shame cries I ought return,
Nor faint, though crosses with my fortunes kiss;
Standstill is harder, although sure to mourn;
Thus, let me take the right or left hand way,
Go forward, or stand still, or back retire, 10
I must these doubts endure without allay
Or help, but travail find for my best hire;
Yet that which most my troubled sense doth move
Is to leave all and take the thread of love.

ly by a small mixed police force on the 1st of January 1890 to be inserted for administrative purposes in the company of the governor for the holding also the royal commission did not work petitions and protests from under the government of tered by a deputy governor vice.

as *Laburnum vulgare* (or of the pea family (Leguminosae) and "golden rain," since, Switzerland, southern long been cultivated as an ornamental tree and was introduced into colonists. Gerard records the names of anagrysis, p. 1239), but the date of its introduction is unknown. In 1790 it was introduced from *Laburnum anagyroides*, i.e. *arc-bois*, "the tree of the Gauls for bows." At the Maconnais, where the tree is very common, it is valued for its elasticity for half a century. It differs in the foliage, &c., such as the *lanceolatum*, *crispum*, &c.; variety of the most remarkable specimens, which bears three or four yellow flowers, others intermediate brick-red, others sterile, with malformed flowers. The yellow flowers of the bark of the tree, which is a vigorous shoot, became united by their base and subsequently in bearing both yellow and white blossoms of an intermediate result may be called a *Laburnum* and *anagyroides* properties. The roots of the same family as the roots of the hares and lily (*Gardener's Chronicle*), also are highly poisonous, and the flowers (*N.H.*, xvi. 31), which they visit for the sake of a dark reddish-brown color, which they give to the wood, which has been called false *laburnum*, the name of the wood, entirely or partly of chambers, and intricate and difficult. The word *laburnum* origin, while others say it is of a mine. Another Lydian or Carian word *laburnum* of *Hellenic Studies*, the Cretan labyrinth or the double-axe, the symbol

Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* xxxvi. 10, 91) mentions the following as the four famous labyrinths of antiquity.

1. The Egyptian: of which a description is given by Herodotus (ii. 148) and Strabo (xvii. 811). It was situated to the east of Lake Moeris, opposite the ancient site of Arsinoe or Crocodilopolis. According to Egyptologists, the word means "the temple at the entrance of the lake." According to Herodotus, the entire building, surrounded by a single wall, contained twelve courts and 3000 chambers, 1500 above and 1500 below ground. The roofs were wholly of stone, and the walls covered with sculpture. On one side stood a pyramid 40 orgyia, or about 243 ft. high. Herodotus himself went through the upper chambers, but was not permitted to visit those underground, which he was told contained the tombs of the kings who had built the labyrinth, and of the sacred crocodiles. Other ancient authorities considered that it was built as a place of meeting for the Egyptian nomes or political divisions; but it is more likely that it was intended for sepulchral purposes. It was the work of Amenemh III., of the 12th dynasty, who lived about 2300 B.C. It was first located by the Egyptologist Lepsius to the north of Hawara in the Fayum, and (in 1888) Flinders Petrie discovered its foundation, the extent of which is about 1000 ft. long by 800 ft. wide. Immediately to the north of it is the pyramid of Hawara, in which the mummies of the king and his daughter have been found (see W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Hawara, Biahmet, and Arsinoe*, 1889).

2. The Cretan: said to have been built by Daedalus on the plan of the Egyptian, and famous for its connexion with the legend of the Minotaur. It is doubtful whether it ever had any real existence and Diodorus Siculus says that in his time it had already disappeared. By the older writers it was placed near Cnossus, and is represented on coins of that city, but nothing corresponding to it has been found during the course of the recent excavations, unless the royal palace was meant. The rocks of Crete are full of winding caves, which gave the first idea of the legendary labyrinth. Later writers (for instance, Claudian, *De sexto Cons. Honorii*, 634) place it near Gortyna, and a set of winding passages and chambers close to that place is still pointed out as the labyrinth; these are, however, in reality ancient quarries.

3. The Lemnian: similar in construction to the Egyptian. Remains of it existed in the time of Pliny. Its chief feature was its 150 columns.

4. The Italian: a series of chambers in the lower part of the tomb of Porsena at Clusium. This tomb was 300 ft. square and 50 ft. high, and underneath it was a labyrinth, from which

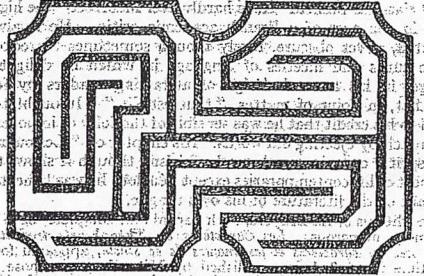


FIG. 1.—Labyrinth of London and Wise.

it was exceedingly difficult to find an exit without the assistance of a clew of thread. It has been maintained that this tomb is to be recognized in the mound named Poggio Gajella near Chiusi.

Lastly, Pliny (xxxvii. 19) applies the word to a rude drawing on the ground or pavement, to some extent anticipating the modern or garden maze.

On the Egyptian labyrinth see A. Wiedemann, *Agyptische Geschichte* (1884), p. 258, and his edition of the second book of Herodotus (1890); on the Cretan, C. Höck, *Kreta* (1823-1829), and

A. J. Evans in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*; on the subject generally, articles in Roscher's *Lexikon der Mythologie* and Daremberg and Saglio's *Dictionnaire des antiquités*.

In gardening, a labyrinth or *maze* means an intricate network of pathways enclosed by hedges or plantations, so that those

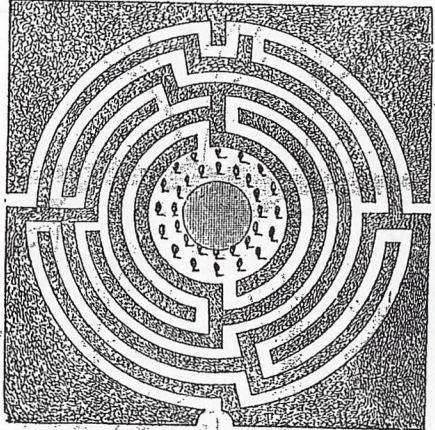


FIG. 2.—Labyrinth of Batty Langley.

who enter become bewildered in their efforts to find the centre or make their exit. It is a remnant of the old geometrical style of gardening. There are two methods of forming it. That which is perhaps the more common consists of walks, or alleys as they

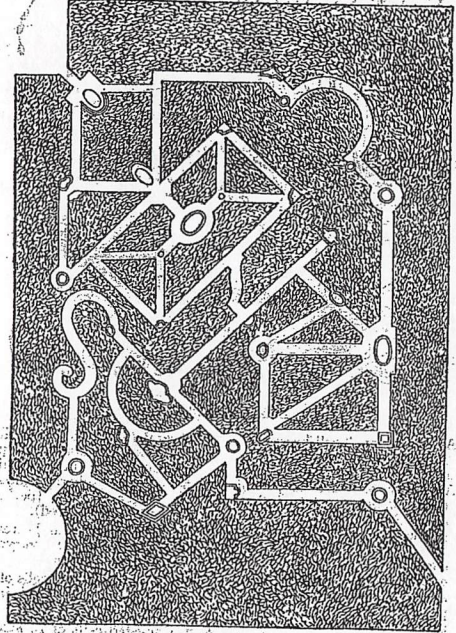


FIG. 3.—Labyrinth at Versailles.

were formerly called, laid out and kept to an equal width or nearly so by parallel hedges, which should be so close and thick that the eye cannot readily penetrate them. The task is to get

to the centre, which is, often raised, and generally contains a covered seat, a fountain, a statue or even a small group of trees. After reaching this point the next thing is to return to the entrance, when it is found that egress is as difficult as ingress. To every design of this sort there should be a key, but even those who know the key are apt to be perplexed. Sometimes the design consists of alleys only, as in fig. 1, published in 1706 by London and Wise. In such a case, when the farther end is reached, there only remains to travel back again. Of a more pretentious character was a design published by Switzer in 1742.



FIG. 4.—Maze at Hampton Court.

This is of octagonal form, with very numerous parallel hedges and paths, and six different entrances, whereof there is but one that leads to the centre, and that is attended with some difficulties and a great many stops. Some of the older designs for labyrinths, however, avoid this close parallelism of the alleys, which, though equally involved and intricate in their windings, are carried through blocks of thick planting, as shown in fig. 2, from a design published in 1728 by Batty Langley. These blocks of shrubbery have been called wildernesses. To this latter class belongs the celebrated labyrinth at Versailles (fig. 3), of which Switzer observes that it "is allowed by all to be the noblest of its kind in the world."

Whatever style be adopted, it is essential that there should be a thick healthy growth of the hedges or shrubberies that confine the wanderer. The trees used should be impenetrable to the eye, and so tall that no one can look over them; and the paths should be of gravel and well kept. The trees chiefly used for the hedges, and the best for the purpose, are the hornbeam among deciduous trees, or the yew among evergreens. The beech might be used instead of the hornbeam on suitable soil. The green holly might be planted

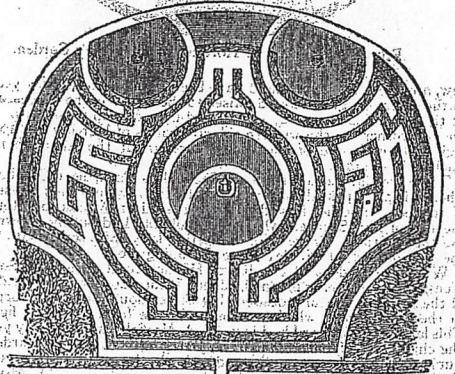
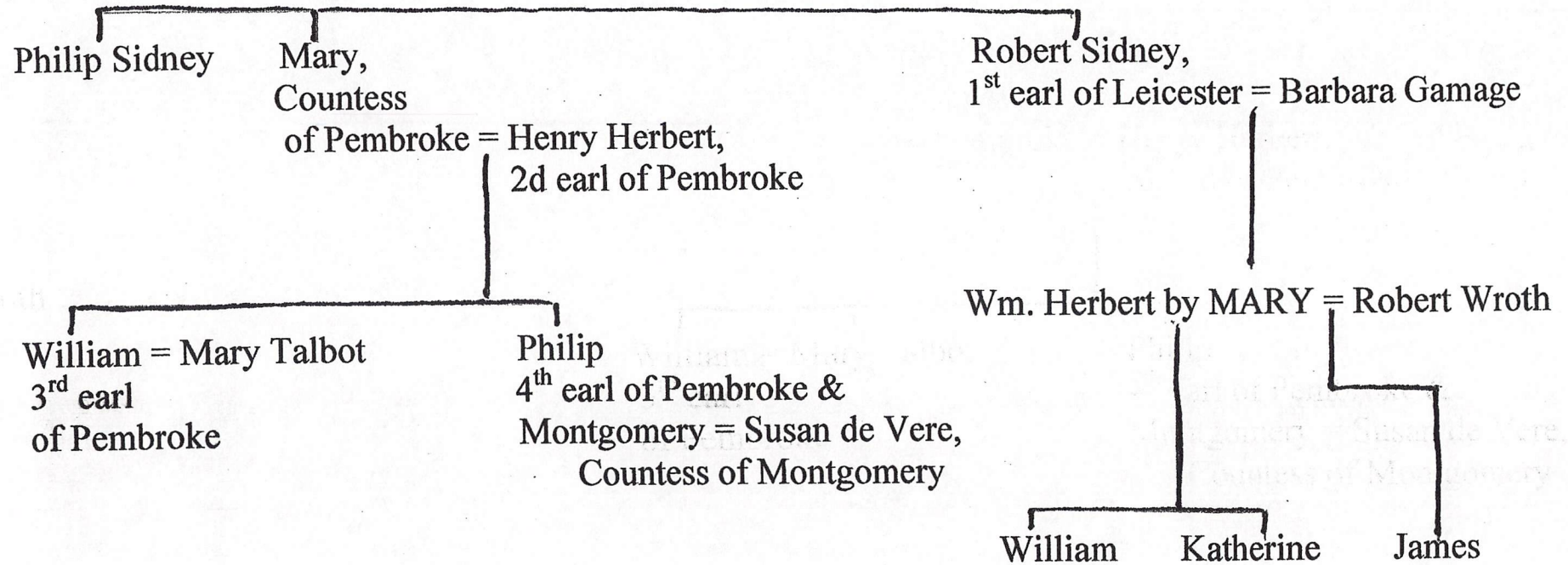


FIG. 5.—Maze at Somerleyton Hall.

as an evergreen with very good results, and so might the American arbor vitae if the natural soil presented no obstacle. The ground must be well prepared, so as to give the trees a good start, and a mulching of manure during the early years of their growth would be of much advantage. They must be kept trimmed or clipped, especially in their earlier stages; trimming with the knife is much to be preferred to clipping with shears. Any plants getting much in advance of the rest should be topped, and the whole kept to some 4 ft. or 5 ft. in height until the lower parts are well thickened, when it may be allowed to acquire the allotted height by moderate annual increments. In cutting, the hedge (as indeed all hedges) should be

The Sidney and Herbert Families



Adapted from *The First Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* by Lady Mary Wroth. Ed. Josephine A. Roberts. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, Vol. 140. Binghamton, New York: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, SUNY, 1995. c-ci.

Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, Sonnet

When nature made her chief work, Stella's eyes,
 In color black why wrapped she beams so bright?
 Would she in beamy black, like painter wise,
 Frame daintiest luster mixed of shades and light?
 Or did she else that sober hue devise
 In object best to knit and strength our sight,
 Lest, if no veil these brave gleams did disguise,
 They, sunlike, should more dazzle than delight?
 Or would she her miraculous power show,
 That, whereas black seems beauty's contrary,
 She even in black doth make all beauties flow?
 Both so, and thus—she, minding Love should be
 Placed ever there, gave him this mourning weed
 To honor all their deaths who for her bleed.

Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti*, Sonnet 64

(notice Spenser's imitation of Song of Solomon 4:10-16)

Coming to kisse her lyps (such grace I found)
 Me seemd I smelt a gardin of sweet flowers
 That dainty odours from them threw around
 For damzaels fit to decke their lovers bowres.
 Her lips did smell lyke unto gillyflowers,¹
 Her ruddy cheeks like unto roses red;
 Her snowy browes lyke budded bellamoures,²
 Her lovely eyes like pincks but newly spred,
 Her goodly bosome lyke a strawberry bed,
 Her neck lyke to a bounch of collambynes;
 Her brest lyke lillyes ere theyre leaves be shed,
 Her nipples lyke yong blossomd jessemynes.³
 Such fragrant flowers doe give most odorous smell,
 But her sweet odour did them all excel.

¹ carnations
² bellflowers
³ jasmines

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
 Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
 If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
 If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
 I have seen roses damasked,⁴ red and white,
 But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
 And in some perfumes there is more delight
 Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
 I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
 That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
 I grant I never saw a goddess go;⁵
 My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
 And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
 As any she belied⁶ with false compare.

⁴ variegated

⁵ walk

⁶ misrepresented

Mary Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Sonnet 90 [*Fourteenth of the Corona*]

Except my heart, which you bestowed before,
 And for a sign of Conquest gave away
 As worthless to be kept in your choice store;
 Yet one more spotless with you doth not stay.
 The tribute which my heart doth truly pay,
 Is faith untouched, pure thoughts discharge the score
 Of debts for me, where Constancy bears sway,
 And rules as Lord, unharmed by Envies sore,
 Yet other mischiefs fail not to attend,
 As enemies to you, my foes must be,
 Cursed Jealousy doth all her forces bend
 To my undoing, thus my harms I see.
 So though in Love I fervently do burn,
 In this strange Labyrinth how shall I turn?

William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke. Miniature by Isaac Oliver, dated 1611. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. (Actual size: 5.3 x 4.3 cm.)



Lady Mary Wroth with an archlute. Reproduced with the permission of Viscount De L'Isle from his collection at Penshurst Place, Tonbridge, Kent.

Isian Herbert, countess of Montgomery, as Thomyris, queen of Scythia in the *Masque of Queens* (1609). Drawing by Inigo Jones. Reproduced by permission of the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees, Devonshire Collection.