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Three Sonneteers: Sidney, Spenser, Wroth

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Abstract

The sonnet has been an enduring form which has remained popular with poets throughout the centuries. The origins of the form dates to Francesco Petrarch who is regarded to be the “father” of the sonnet. After the form reached its maturity in Italy, it was exported to Europe and nearly all European poets experimented with it. Renaissance England was introduced to the sonnet by Wyatt and it remained a popular and powerful poetic form for over a century. This article deals with three sonneteers experimented with sonnet sequences within the confines of its strict structure. The two poets studied are Sir Philip Sidney and his sequence *Astrophel and Stella*, and Edmund Spenser and his *Amoretti*. Sidney and Spenser are better known sonneteers, but the third poet in the context of this study has remained more obscure. Even though Lady Mary Wroth was celebrated by the poets of her age, her oeuvre as a poet has drawn attention only in the past few decades, particularly her experimentation with the reversal of traditional gender roles in her sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilantus*. Overall, this study deals with the ways in which these three sonneteers explore the emotions of the human heart in the confines of the strict sonnet form.

Keywords: Renaissance, poetry, sonnet, Sidney, Spenser, Wroth

Üç Sone Yazarı: Sidney, Spenser, Wroth

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Özet

Sone formu yüzyıllar boyu şairler tarafından kullanılan kalıcı bir form olmuştur. Sonenin başlangıcı bu formun “babası” olarak görülen İtalyan şair Francesco Petrarch’a dayanır. İtalya’da olgunlaşan sone formu Avrupa’ya ihraç edilmiş ve neredeyse bütün Avrupalı şairler tarafından kullanılmıştır. Sone Rönesans İngilteresi’ne Wyatt tarafından tanıtılmış, yüzyıl kadar bir süre önde gelen kuvvetli bir şiirsel form olarak kalmıştır. Bu makale dar kalıplı bir form olan sone ile denemeler yapan üç şair üzerinedir. Bu şairlerden ikisi ve eserleri, Sir Philip Sidney (*Astrophel ile Stella*) ve Edmund Spenser (*Amoretti*), daha iyi bilinen şair ve eserlerdir. Ancak Lady Mary Wroth yaşadığı dönemde iyi bilinen bir şair olmasına rağmen ancak son yıllarda dikkat çekmiştir. Özellikle geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini sorguladığı *Pamphilia ve Amphilantus* başlıklı eseri önem kazanmıştır. Genel olarak düşünüldüğünde, bu makale üç Rönesans şairinin insan kalbine ait duyguları sonenin dar kalıpları içerisinde inceleyişlerini ele almaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Rönesans, şiir, sone, Sidney, Spenser, Wroth

English Renaissance saw the flowering of the sonnet form as sonneteers were willing to experiment within the confines of its strict structure. This paper explores three of these sonneteers. Two of them, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, are better known and studied whereas the third, Lady Mary Wroth began to receive attention in the past decades, even though she was celebrated by the leading poets of her age.

1 Sir Philip Sidney: *Astrophel and Stella*

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) is one of the most important Renaissance poets of England. As a fine example of the Renaissance ideal of aristocracy, he is considered to be the model of the perfect Renaissance man. A courtier in Queen Elizabeth's court, he was the embodiment of the medieval virtues of the knight, the lover, and the scholar who was well experienced in courtly love. Such a background inevitably informed his passion for literature and learning. He became even a more famous hero after his death in 1586, as he died after sacrificing the last of his water supply to a dying soldier after the Battle of Zutphen.

Sidney was the first English poet to write an important sonnet sequence - a number of sonnets with a common idea uniting them. The originator was Petrarch whose *Canzoniere*, written about his love for Laura, serves as the model for Sydney's *Astrophel and Stella*. The sequence of 108 sonnets and 11 songs is believed to be autobiographical and it chronicles Sir Philip Sidney's love for his Stella, Penelope Devereux. She was betrothed to Sidney when she was young, but then married Lord Rich.

Astrophel and Stella holds pride of place as the most influential of the English sonnet tradition following Shakespeare. It includes 108 sonnets and 11 songs. The sequence relates the courtly love affair between Astrophel and Stella and their relationship is readable in their names. When 'Astrophel' is divided into its syllables it can be seen that the word is an amalgam of 'astro' which is derived from the Greek word '*astron*' meaning star, and '*philos*' which can be translated as 'loving' or 'love'. 'Stella', on the other hand, is derived from the Latin word '*stella*' meaning 'star'.

Following the Petrarchan tradition, it is Astrophel who has the center stage throughout the sonnets. Although his unrequited love and his suffering are rendered in reference to Stella's chastity, cruelty and rejection of his love, the limelight is on Astrophel, in accordance with the Petrarchan tradition. His engaging persona governs the whole of the sequence and the reader is engaged with Astrophel's feelings and reactions rather than Stella's.

The opening sonnet of *Astrophel and Stella* introduces the reader to the process of and the motivation for the composition of the sonnet sequence.

I

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
 That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,
 Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
 Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,
 I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
 Studying inventions fine her wits to entertain,
 Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
 Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburn'd brain.
 But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;
 Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows;
 And other's feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.
 Thus great with child to speak and helpless in my throes,
 Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,
 "Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."

The poet creates the sonnet while he relates the challenges he had to face during the process. The very first line of the whole sonnet sequence identifies the location of Astrophel's love "in truth" and deals with his eagerness to express his true love in poetry. His motivation is to arouse the interest of the beloved so that she will take notice of the poet. He starts by studying the ancients and other poets before him, but to no avail. By doing so, the lover carefully establishes and follows a logical path, but finding that it will not lead him to his destination, he abandons it. He finds the source of his poetry only in his sincere heart devoted to loving Stella and all the frustrations that have been tormenting him disappear.

In this opening sonnet Sidney foreshadows that he will not always follow the ways of other poets, including Petrarch, as they do not always serve his purpose. In sonnet 15, he addresses his fellow poets and writes:

You that do dictionary's method bring
 Into your rimes, running in rattling rows;
 You that poor Petrarch's long deceased woes,
 With new-born sighs and denizen'd wit do sing,

Astrophel's ambivalence towards Petrarchan tradition is foregrounded in the second sonnet, too. According to the Petrarchan tradition the lover is supposed to be struck with love at first sight. He writes:

Not at first sight, nor with a dribbed shot,
 Love gave the wound which while I breathe will bleed:

But known worth did in mine of time proceed,
 Till by degrees it had full conquest got.
 I saw, and liked: I liked, but loved not;

Astrophel puts a distance between himself and traditional lovers. Love is not a sudden blow for him. He does not yield to it unresistingly. On the contrary, Stella does not make much of an impression on him at first. Instead, he is involved slowly as love gradually creeps up on Astrophel, which is against Petrarchan conventions. Even when he yields, he refers to his reservations when he mentions his “lost libertie” into which he was “forced”. The voice in the sonnet is controlled and cautious even resistant at times.

Astrophel’s anti-Petrarchan streak runs throughout the sequence. Although Stella never relents and remains unattainable to the end, there is a hint of her favors in the sequence. This is something that is unthinkable in Petrarch. Another difference between the two poets is that Sidney’s sonnets lack a sense of time. Petrarchan convention has meditations on the effects of time upon love, which are not used by Sidney (Antikacıoğlu 2007, 12). Hence, Astrophel remains ambivalent towards conventions, at times abandoning them, at others submitting to them like the use of the Petrarchan oxymorons in Sonnet VI “living deaths, deare wounds, fair stormes, and freeing fires”.

In his book *Sidney's Poetic Development* Rudenstine writes that Astrophel “begins his courtship of Stella by staking out a strong claim for his own genuine feeling and original poetry. His effort is not to reject the Petrarchan mode out of hand but to find a personal style of his own within its broad confines, a style that will transform or transmute the inherited language of love in such a way as to betray the sign of his own ‘inward touch’” and adds that “Astrophel must somehow discover his own voice for love, a style capable of expressing the powerful sincerity of his love”.¹ Astrophel, therefore is on a quest for his own unique voice within the tradition.

One of the best known sonnets in Sidney's sequence is Sonnet 31 in which the moon is personified also contributes to the search for a unique voice as Astrophel meditates:

With how sad step, Oh Moon, thou climb'st the skies!
 How silently, and with how wan a face!

The sonnet opens with an atmosphere of melancholy as the speaker projects his own sorrow and silence unto the moon. The gentle tone of the poem is quickly transformed in the following lines into anger and bitterness:

¹ Neil L. Rudenstine, *Sidney's Poetic Development* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 204, 219.

What, may it be that even in heavenly place
 That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?
 Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?
 Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
 Do they above love to be loved and yet
 Those lovers scorn whom that love that possess?
 Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?

In Sonnet 39, the speaker's reflection of his own mood continues as he addresses sleep and celebrates the all-embracing nature of it. Just as the sun shines on all, so is sleep a release for all:

Come sleep! Oh sleep, the certain knot of peace,
 The baiting place of wit, the balm of woe,
 The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
 The indifferent judge between the high and low.

Astrophel begs sleep to come so that he could find a way to reach his lover through dreams. This is how he turns his address to moon into a love poem for Stella when he tries to bribe sleep through access to the image of Stella.

The majority of sonnets in *Astrophel and Stella* are written in iambic pentameter, but there are some that are composed in alexandrines. Neither does Sidney always use the same rhyme scheme. At times the octave is the Petrarchan *abbaabba*, at other times it is *abababbab* or *ababbaba*. The sestet diverge from the tradition often as *cdcdde*. The poet almost always ends with a couplet on which the poem is balanced. This couplet is very un-Petrarchan and typically English.²

Astrophel and Stella can be seen as a kaleidoscope of human experience as it embraces:

the role of narcissism and gullibility in our dealings with others; angst-ridden debates about the legitimacy of erotic desire and, indeed, the business of putting pen to paper; how we may construct identity through the axes of suffering and victimization as well as those of personal achievement and ambition; the relationship between the demands of faith and our involvement in sexual politics; the ways in which we exploit the textual and philosophical inheritances from the

² David Daiches. *A Critical History of English Literature* vol.1 (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1970), 196.

past for our present needs; the competition between political, literary and erotic desire.³

In short, the sequence is a portrait of man. Sidney made the sonnet a vessel of expression for our moods. His reflective and emotional verse with personal voice and a constant sense of personal presence influenced English lyric poetry for generations to come.⁴ He set the fashion for the next century.

2 Edmund Spenser: Amoretti

C. S. Lewis judged that “Spenser was not one of the great sonneteers”, and there have been articles titled “An Apology for Spenser’s *Amoretti*” in which the value of the sequence is questioned.⁵ However, along with Sir Philip Sidney it was Edmund Spenser (1552-1598) who was extremely influential in the development of sonnet writing in England. Alexander Pope was a fan, too. He wrote: “Spenser has ever been a favourite poet to me: he is like a mistress, whose faults we see, but love her with them all”.⁶ Likewise, Charles Lamb coined the epithet ‘the poets’ poet’ to refer to Spenser.

Earlier Spenser had written his ‘Epithalamion’ in which he celebrated his marriage to Elizabeth Boyle. Whether *Amoretti* celebrates his love for her is not known for certain. In any case, the 89 sonnets of *Amoretti* explore the courtship of two lovers. However, unlike *Astrophel and Stella*, this time flesh and spirit are not in opposition because Spenser did not believe in the separation of body and soul. Hence, *Amoretti* is about a love that is attained, harmonizing heavenly and earthly love. The sonnets tell the story of the poet’s wooing of a mistress who at first rebuffed him, then relented and returned his love, and finally turned against him yet again.

The word ‘amoretti’ which means ‘little cupids’ in Italian can also be defined as “intimate little tokens of love made out of ancient materials deriving,

³ Andrew Hiscock, “The Renaissance, 1485-1660”, in *English Literature in Context*. ed. Paul Poplawski. 110-210. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 199-200.

⁴ Sösi Antikacıoğlu, *The Modern and Contemporary Sonnet in English*. (İstanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2007), 12-13.

⁵ Reed Way Dasenbrock, “The Petrarchan Context of Spenser’s *Amoretti*” . PMLA 100 no.1 (1985), 38.

⁶ John R. Jr. Elliott, ed. *The Prince of Poets: Essays on Edmund Spenser*. (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 13.

primarily, from Italy”.⁷ The sequence can be divided into three tokens of love in terms of thematic development. Sonnets 1 to 62 deal with unrequited love and the pursuit of the lady, sonnets 63 to 84 celebrate the lovers’ happiness, sonnets 85 to 88 deal with the lover’s brief separation, before their ultimate union in marriage.

The early sonnets of the sequence explore the speaker’s role and nature as a poet and establish his position in relation to Petrarchan tradition. In the very first sonnet he identifies himself as both lover and poet when he says:

Leaves, lines and rhymes, seek her to please alone,
Whom if ye please, I care for other none.

In sonnet 22 a religious tone is added to his stance. He writes:

There I to her as th’ author of my bliss,
Will build an altar to appease her ire.

Robert Kellogg argues that this triple identity (lover, poet and believer) is to be expected as “in its daily affairs our culture grants to three kinds of imagination (the Renaissance would have called them three kinds of madness) a special license to express their visions of things inaccessible to the sense of ordinary men. These three kinds of imagination are the artistic, the erotic, and the religious”.⁸

In sonnet XV Spenser employs his role as a poet and a lover through the use of conventional compliment to the lady. The poem starts with an echo of the spirit of travel and expansion:

Ye tradeful Merchants, that with weary toyle,
do seeke most pretious things to make your gain;
and both the Indias of their treasures spolie,
what needeth you to seeke so far in vaine?

⁷ Louis L. Martz, “The *Amoretti*: Most Goodly Temperature”, in *The Prince of Poets: Essays on Edmund Spenser*, ed. John R. Elliott, Jr. 121-138. (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 128.

⁸ Robert Kellogg, “Thought’s Astonishment and the Dark Conceits of Spenser’s *Amoretti*”, in *The Prince of Poets: Essays on Edmund Spenser*, ed. John R. Elliott, Jr. 139-151. (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 140.

The following two quatrains identify each part of the beloved's body as being more valuable than the riches of the east. However, it is the couplet which introduces a different idea with a surprising effect:

But that which fairest is, but few behold,
her mind adorned with virtues manifold.

This reference to the lady's mind is one of the many we will come across throughout *Amoretti*. Spencer's lady has a strong character, with her "deep wit" (Sonnet 43), "her gentle wit, and virtuous mind" (Sonnet 79), her "words so wise" (Sonnet 81). The picture that the poet draws is that of a woman who has a definite and attractive character. Compared to the ladies of other sonnet sequences Spencer's lady is not an unattainable saint but a woman who has been conceived more realistically. Most importantly, she is allowed to speak and act. In contrast with the Petrarchan tradition, Spencer also expressed his belief that married love was the combination of spiritual and carnal love, and that it is necessary for the continuation of mankind.⁹

A metaphorical marriage of the lover and the beloved takes place in sonnet 67 when the poet merges the identities of man and woman and uses a very conventional conceit of 'deer in the love hunting tradition':

Like as a huntsman, after weary chase,
Seeing the game from him escaped away,
Sits down to rest him in some shady place,
With panting hounds beguiled of their pray:

This typical Petrarchan comparison, however, is immediately rebuked and the sonnet reverses expectations in the second quatrain:

So, after long pursuit and vain assay,
When I all weary had the chase forsook,
The gentle dear returned the self-same way,
Thinking to quench her thirst at the next brook.

The reader expects the obvious parallel between the lover and the exhausted huntsman to dominate the next quatrain, too. However, this time power relations between the first-person narrator and his object of desire are turned upside down:

There she, beholding me with milder look,

⁹ Antikacıoğlu, *The Modern and Contemporary Sonnet in English*, 13.

Sought not to fly, but fearless still did bide:
 Till I in hand her yet half trembling took,
 And with her own goodwill her firmly tied.
 Strange thing, me seemed, to see a beast so wild,
 So goodly won, with her own will beguiled.

The reader cannot help but ask: Who is the hunter, who is the hunted? It is not “the gentle dear” who is “half-trembling”, but the hunter. As Henderson argues “The sonnet alters convention by mingling the two parties grammatically and thereby merging their sensibilities. ... *Amoretti* 67 is fascinated by doubling and gender-bending, tensions between masculine action and passive receptivity to the good, between courtly love schema and the intimacy of marital love, and between female chastity (so fetishized in this period) and fully realized sexuality”.¹⁰

So far, it has been argued that the poet’s view of love in *Amoretti* deviates from the traditional Petrarchan sonnets. Even so; the sequence is still bound by the convention as the poet goes through the required suffering.

Another Petrarchan theme employed by Spenser is that of the poet rendering his beloved immortal by his verse, as in sonnet 75:

One day I wrote her name upon the strand
 But came the waves and washed it away:
 Again I wrote it with a second hand,
 But came the tide, and made my pains his pray.
 Vain man, said she, that does in vain assay
 A mortal thing so to immortalize!
 For I my self shall like to this decay,
 And eek my name be wiped out likewise.
 Not so (quod I) let baser things devise
 To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
 My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,
 And in the heavens write your glorious name;
 Where, whenas death shall all the world subdue,
 Our love shall live, and later life renew.

While the lady repeatedly talks about the futility of trying to go against death, the poet does not agree with her. He argues that he can conquer mutability and that he can control the effects of time through his art. Fickleness of future will

¹⁰ Diana E. Henderson, “The Sonnet, Subjectivity and Gender.” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*. eds. A.D. Cousins and Peter Howarth.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 386.

not be able to touch them. Constancy will be achieved through his art as the poet eternalizes his beloved in his poetry.

This dichotomy of change versus being free of change is a theme that Spenser explored in his poetry. The whole poem grows out of the first quatrain which presents in simple language the timeless situation of a man in love writing a woman's name in the sand and watching the waves erase it. The second quatrain introduces the lady and she unexpectedly speaks and reminds the poet of her mutability. The third quatrain introduces the idea of immortality through poetry. The whole argument is brought to a conclusion with the final couplet. Each quatrain rises to a higher sphere of meaning than the preceding one. The second and third quatrains spiral up out of the first and the conclusion rises even higher. The transcendence to a universal idea rather than being limited by a subjective emotional response is a feature of the *Amoretti* that gives the series one kind of unity.¹¹

With regards to form, Spenser devised his own version of sonnet called Spenserian sonnet which is more restricting compared to its Petrarchan predecessor as it is made up of interlacing rhymes *abab bcbc cdcd*, and a concluding rhyming couplet of *ee*.

3 Lady Mary Wroth: Pamphilia to Amphilanthus

In a sonnet signed with the note 'To the noble Lady, the Lady Mary Wroth', Ben Jonson wrote "I ... / Since I exscribe your sonnets, am become / A better lover and much better poet' (Bolam 2003, 257). The poem was dedicated to the first Englishwoman to publish an original complete sonnet sequence. Wroth's range of writing was very wide and she is also thought to be the first woman to write a dramatic comedy titled *Love's Victory*.

In 1621 Wroth's controversial 558 page prose romance, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, appeared with an appendix of separately numbered, 48 page sequence of sonnets and songs, entitled *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. 'Pamphilia', the fictional writer of the sonnet sequence and 'Amphilanthus', her inconstant lover who first appear as characters in *Urania*, and there are examples of their poetry in it. These sonnets are linked to the prose romance but even so they can be read separately by themselves.¹² The published sequence contained 83 sonnets and 20 songs. There is a single complete

¹¹ Waldo F. McNeir, "An Apology for Spenser's *Amoretti*", in *Essential Articles for the Study of Edmond Spenser*, ed. A.C.Hamilton, 524-533. (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972), 528-9.

¹² Robyn Bolam, "The Heart of the Labyrinth: Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*", in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 257.

manuscript, neatly copied in Wroth's own hand, which is now kept at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Lady Mary Wroth (1586 or 7-1653) was born Mary Sidney. She belonged to a prominent literary family, known for its patronage of the arts. Sir Philip Sidney was her uncle and she was inevitably influenced by his works, particularly *Astrophel and Stella*. She was educated informally with household tutors under the guidance of her mother. In 1604 she married Sir Robert Wroth. He never shared his wife's love of reading and writing and they were never happy as their temperaments were fundamentally different. By 1613 she had begun her writing career. In 1614 her husband died leaving her with massive debts. Although she was briefly famous, the scandal caused by her prose romance meant that she fell out of favour and not much is known of her later years.

Wroth's choice of names for her protagonists mirrors her uncles' sequence. 'Pamphilia' means 'all-loving' in Greek, whereas 'Amphilanthus' who is her unfaithful lover and cousin, means 'lover of two'. The collection describes the desire felt by Pamphilia for Amphilanthus and, just as it was discussed in the previous sections, it can be read in biographical terms by referring to Wroth's passionate relationship with her married and philandering cousin William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. As a young widow she had two children by him.

Whether it is intentional or not, in some sonnets Wroth follows the practice of punning in her own name as Wroth / worth. For example in Sonnet 8 of the third part of the sequence titled 'Crown of Sonnets' we read:

He that shuns love doth love himself the less
And cursed he whose spirit not admires
The worth of love, where endless blessedness
Reigns, and commands, maintained by heavenly fires
Made of virtue, joined by truth, blown by desires
Strengthened by worth.

In this sonnet the persona is meditating upon the role love plays in the development of the self. As the name Pamphilia suggests, to love is to be loved and love brings self-esteem.¹³

The sonnet sequence clearly belongs to Pamphilia and her musings about her love. Amphilanthus is rarely addressed and is never physically present. Hence, the helpless lover is not the traditional male. Neither is the object of desire has got anything to do with the conventional Petrarchan beloved. Unlike the figures of beloved in Sidney and Spenser, Amphilanthus is never given a voice. He is introduced only as the object of her desire. Although Pamphilia

¹³ Bolam, "The Heart of the Labyrinth", 260.

does not use the traditional blazons to describe the physical attributes of Amphilanthus, when she does have the need to talk about his eyes, for instance, she refers to his eyes as "two stars of heaven". She pulls the Petrarchan trope inside out when she uses such clichés in reference to a man.¹⁴

Wroth becomes "the first English writer to reverse the traditional gender roles of lover and beloved in a complete sonnet collection".¹⁵ In her sequence Pamphilia is not the unobtainable and depersonified object of the male poet. This time it is the lady who desires and expresses this desire in a voice of her own. In Wroth's hands she is transformed from a "breaker into a maker of songs".¹⁶

Wroth's most memorable images are those that she creates through figurative language like the following lines depicting the drama of rejection in Sonnet 22.

Like to the Indians scorched with the sun,
The sun which they do as their God adore
So am I us'd by love, for ever more
I worship him, less favours I have won.

A favourite image for Wroth is that of labyrinths. By the end of the sequence, after the speaker has tried every other way to win her beloved, she cannot find a way out of the metaphorical labyrinth of love. Therefore, she opts for a spiritual move upward out of the labyrinth. Her final resolution is declared in the last sonnet as follows:

Leave the discourse of Venus and her son
To young beginners, and their brains inspire
With stories of great Love, and from that fire,
Get heat to write the fortunes they have won.

The woman transformed herself during her quest and became an inspiration for other writers and lovers. The new muse is a woman's poetic art, rather than the

¹⁴ Bolam, "The Heart of the Labyrinth", 261.

¹⁵ Naomi J. Miller, "Rewriting Lyric Fiction: The Role of the Lady in Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*," in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*. Ed. Anne M. Hasselkom and Betty S. Travitsky. (Amherst: Massachusetts UP, 1990), 295.

¹⁶ Ibid., 298.

woman herself.¹⁷ She gives up her unattainable muse in favour of another which promises so much more.

One of the best definitions of a sonnet is that it is “a little poem with a big heart”.¹⁸ Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser and Lady Mary Wroth are three sonneteers who explored the emotions of the human heart in the confines of the little poem.

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¹⁷ Bolam, “The Heart of the Labyrinth”, 265.

¹⁸ A.D.Cousins and Peter Howarth, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to The Sonnet*, 46.

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