



THE POEMS OF
Lady Mary Wroth



Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by

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Pamphilia to Amphilanthus

A SONNET SEQUENCE

I.

- [P1] When nights black mantle could most darknes prove,
And sleepe deaths Image did my senceses hie
From knowledg of my self, then thoughts did move
Swifter then those most swiftnes need require:
5 In sleepe, a Chariot drawne by wing'd desire
I sawe: wher sate bright Venus Queene of love,
And att her feete her sonne, still adding fire
To burning hearts which she did hold above,
Butt one hart flaming more then all the rest
10 The goddess held, and putt itt to my brest,
Deare sonne, now shut sayd she: thus must wee winn;
Hee her obay'd, and martir'd my poore hart,
I, waking hop'd as dreames itt would depart
Yett since: O mee: a lover I have binn.

1-4. The dream-vision of Venus and Cupid recalls the opening of Petrarch's *Trionfe d'Amore*, in which the narrator experiences a vision of love's conquest. See Ernest Hatch Wilkins (trans.), *The Triumphs of Petrarch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 5-6. On the popularity of Petrarch's *Trionfi*, see Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 112-20.

2. senceses: "senses" in the 1621 text hie: hire

5. Venus was traditionally represented as drawn in a chariot by doves: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIV, 597. See also AS 79.4: "Which, coupling Doves, guides *Venus*' chariot right."

8-9. Lady Mary Wroth also describes Venus holding a flaming heart in the symbolic episode (l. i. p. 39) illustrated on the title page of the *Urania*.

12. The murder of the heart, a traditional conceit of the sonneteers, was used by Desportes, *Diane*, I, 6; Drayton, *Idea*, 2; and Sir Philip Sidney, AS 20.

- Must I bee still while itt my strength devowres
And captive leads mee prisoner, bound, unfree?
- 5 Love first shall leave mens phant'sies to them free,
Desire shall quench loves flames, spring hate sweet showres,
Love shall loose all his darts, have sight, and see
His shame, and wishings hinder happy howres;
- Why should wee nott loves purblind charmes resist?
- 10 Must wee bee servile, doing what hee list?
Noe, seeke some hoste to harbour thee: I fly
- Thy babish trickes, and freedome doe profess;
Butt Ô my hurt, makes my lost hart confess
I love, and must: So farwell liberty.

9. purblind: totally or quite blind

14. Loss of liberty was a favorite *topos* of the sonneteers from the time of Petrarch's *Rime* 97, "Ahi, bella liberta": Janet G. Scott, *Les Sonnets Elisabethains* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1929), 305. See AS 2 and 47 (which also begins with a question and involves a sudden reversal in the concluding couplet).

14.

- [P16] Am I thus conquer'd? have I lost the powers
That to withstand, which joy's to ruin mee?

22.

- [P25] Like to the Indians, scorched with the sunne,
 The sunn which they doe as theyr God adore
 Soe ame I us'd by love, for ever more
 I worship him, less favors have I wunn,
- 5 Better are they who thus to blacknes runn,
And soe can only whitenes want deplore
 Then I who pale, and white ame with griefs store,
 Nor can have hope, butt to see hopes undunn;
- Beesids theyr sacrifices receavd's in sight
 10 Of theyr chose sainte: Mine hid as worthles rite;
 Grant mee to see wher I my offrings give,
- Then lett mee weare the marke of Cupids might
 In hart as they in skin of Phoebus light
 Nott ceasing offrings to love while I Live.

5. The reference to the black Indian recalls Lady Mary's participation in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1606). See C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (eds.), *The Works of Ben Jonson* (11 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), VII, 161-202.

9. receavd's: received is

35.

[P40] Faulce hope which feeds butt to destroy, and spill
 What itt first breeds; unaturall to the birth
 Of thine owne wombe; conceaving butt to kill,
 And plenty gives to make the greater dearth,

5 Soe Tirants doe who faulsly ruling earth
 Outwardly grace them, and with profitts fill
 Advance those who appointed are to death
 To make theyr greater falle to please theyr will.

Thus shadow they theyr wicked vile intent
 10 Coulering evill with a show of good
 While in faire shows theyr malice soe is spent;
 Hope kills the hart, and tirants shed the blood.

For hope deluding brings us to the pride
 Of our desires the farder downe to slide.

2-3. The image of miscarriage aptly describes the deceptions of Hope, which "feeds butt to destroy."

- 5 Bred in my brest, when fires of love are free
 To use that part to theyr best pleasing will,
 And now impossible itt is to kill
 The heat soe great wher Love his strength doth see.

Mine eyes can scarce sustaine the flames my hart

- 10 Doth trust in them my passions to impart,
 And languishingly strive to show my love;

My breath nott able is to breathe least part
 Of that increasing fuell of my smart;
Yett love I will till I butt ashes prove.

Pamphilia.

12–14. The conclusion resembles that of Sir Robert Sidney in Sonnet 9.12–14:
 I yealde, I love, to yow, then erst, I burn,
 More hott, more pure, like wood oft warme before
 But to yow burnt to dust, kan burn no more.

14. May N. Paulissen first noted the possibility of a pun on the name "will," but she was unable to identify the person: "The Love Sonnets of Lady Mary Wroth: A Critical Introduction" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Houston, 1976), 48, 152. Many of the Elizabethan sonneteers, such as Sidney, Drayton, and Shakespeare, used the device of the embedded name, and in this case the poet may be alluding to her lover, William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke. If so, here is one of the very few places in which the identification of Amphilanthus is made explicit. To conclude the first section of sonnets (P1–55), Lady Mary Wroth signed the name "Pamphilia" immediately below this poem.

48.

- [P55] How like a fire doth love increase in mee,
 The longer that itt lasts, the stronger still,
 The greater purer, brighter, and doth fill
 Noe eye with wunder more, then hopes still bee

A Crowne of Sonetts dedicated to Love

[P77-90]

The Crowne, or *corona*, was an Italian poetic form in which the last line of either a sonnet or stanza served as the first line of the next. The number of sonnets (stanzas) could vary, from seven to as many as fourteen: see Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (Rev. ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 106. One of the best continental examples is the "Corona di Madriali" by Tasso, which appeared in *Rime per Lucrezia Bendidio*, ed. Bruno Maier, in *Opere*, 175 (5 vols.; Milan: Rizzoli Editore, 1963), I, 335-38. Tasso's *corona*, written probably in 1561-62, consisted of twelve madrigals linked together in praise of the lady, called Laura. The *corona* could be used to condemn as well as praise; Annibale Caro wrote a vituperative *corona* of nine sonnets, in which he attacked one of his enemies: *Opere*, ed. Vittorio Turi (Bari, Italy, 1912), I, 161-65.

Sir Philip Sidney included in the *Old Arcadia* one of the first examples of the *corona* in English, in which he linked ten dizains (Ringler, *OA* 72). Sidney called attention to his use of this intricate poetic form in the *Old Arcadia* by describing it as "that kinde of verse, which is called the Crowne." In the final version of *Delia* (1594), Samuel Daniel linked together five sonnets in his collection: Alexander Grosart (ed.), *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel* (4 vols.; London: privately printed, 1885), 34-38. George Chapman later used the form of the *corona* in his "A Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy," which consisted of ten linked sonnets and was published in 1595 with *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*: Phyllis B. Bartlett (ed.), *Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941), 83-86. John Donne also employed the form in "La Corona," a collection of seven linked sonnets, written probably in 1607: Helen Gardner (ed.), *The Divine Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), 1-5.

Perhaps the most immediate influence was Lady Mary Wroth's father, Sir Robert Sidney, who wrote an incomplete crown of sonnets, including four poems and a quatrain of the fifth: ff. 13^v-15. His *corona* was written in praise of a specific lady, whom he identified in the second sonnet by the first name only: "my first breath I had drawn, upon the day / Sacred to yow, blessed in yowr faire name" (ll. 10-11). Because he was born on November 19 (St. Elizabeth's day), his poem implied that the lady's name was Elizabeth: Kelliher and Duncan-Jones, "A Manuscript of Poems by Robert Sidney," 122. In the manuscript a note of explanation in Sir Robert Sidney's hand states, "The rest of the 13 sonnets doth want" (f. 15). Unlike her father, Lady Mary completed a larger *corona* in honor of a more universalized concept of love.

A crowne of Sonetts
dedicated to Love.

[P77] In this strang labourinth how shall I turne?

Wayes are on all sids while the way I miss:

If to the right hand, ther, in love I burne;

Lett mee goe forward, therin danger is;

5 If to the left, suspicion hinders bliss,

Lett mee turne back, shame cries I ought returne

Nor fainte though crosses with my fortunes kiss;
 Stand still is harder, although sure to mourne;
 Thus lett mee take the right, or left hand way;
 Goe forward, or stand still, or back retire;
 I must thes doubts indure with out allay
 Or help, butt traveile find for my best hire;
 Yett that which most my troubled sence doth move
 Is to leave all, and take the thread of love.

1. Petrarch included the image of the labyrinth of love in the *Rime*: "nel laberinto intrai; ne veggio ond'esca" (211, l. 14). Lisle John (*Elizabethan Sonnet Sequence*, 231) has recorded the subsequent use of the image of the labyrinth or maze. The image, which became popular with the English sonneteers, was employed by Thomas Watson in *Hekatompathia*, where he referred specifically to the "doubtful Labyrinth of Love" and in a preface to the poem explained the mythological allusion to Ariadne's rescue of Theseus from the Minotaur: "My Love is Past" (95), *Poems*, ed. Edward Arber (London: Constable, 1910), 131.

7. Nor: The author occasionally used nor, without including other negatives (*OED*, 3b).

12. traveile: The 1621 text used "travel," probably to insure the regularity of meter.

14. thread of love: See U35.15-21 for the myth of Ariadne and the thread. Sir Robert Sidney alluded to the same myth in his song Pastoral 9.41-44 (italics added):

So hee whose senses foild, no cure cowl'd breed
 In her faults, safety to his ruins fownd.
 Those the good Dolfin were, *the saving threed*,
 Which stayde the seas deep jawes, *the maze unwound*.

2.

[P78] Is to leave all, and take the thread of love
 Which line straite leads unto the soules content
 Wher choyse delights with pleasures wings doe move,
 And idle phant'sie never roome had lent,

5 When chaste thoughts guide us then ovr minds ar bent
 To take that good which ill from us remove,
 Light of true love, brings fruite which none repent
 Butt constant lovers seeke, and wish to prove;

10 Love is the shining starr of blessings light;
 The fervent fire of zeale, the roote of peace,
 The lasting lampe fed with the oyle of right;
 Image of fayth, and wombe for joyes increase.

Love is true vertu, and his ends delight;
 His flames ar joyes, his bands true lovers might.

10-12. The religious imagery resembles that of Sir Robert Sidney in Sonnet 4.5-8, which he designed as the introductory poem of his sequence:

True Vestale like, which with most holy care
 Preserve the sacred fyres, religiously
 I doe mantain, and that no end they try
 Of my best parts their subject I prepare.

A marginal note in the upper left-hand corner of the manuscript indicates the importance he attached to this poem: "This should be first" (f. 4^v).

3.

[P79] His flames ar joyes, his bands true lovers might,
 Noe staine is ther butt pure, as purest white,
 Wher noe clowde can apeere to dimm his light,
 Nor spott defile, butt shame will soone requite,

5 Heere are affections, tri'de by loves just might
 As gold by fire, and black desernd by white,
 Error by truthe, and darknes knowne by light,
 Wher faith is vallwed for love to requite,

10 Please him, and serve him, glory in his might,
 And firme hee'll bee, as innoencye white,
 Cleere as th'ayre, warme as sunn beames, as day light,
 Just as truthe, constant as fate, joy'd to requite,

Then love obay, strive to observe his might,
 And bee in his brave court a glorious light.

1. Sir Philip Sidney's monorhymed sonnet, OA 42, used the same ending words: light, might.

6. desernd: "discern'd" in the 1621 text

14. In contrast to the Anacreontic Cupid (the figure of the small, mischievous boy) which had appeared earlier in the sonnet sequence, the speaker now turns to examine an opposed concept of Cupid as a noble monarch. References to the ruler Cupid in his Court of Love reappear throughout the *corona*: P80, P82, P85, P86, P89.

4.

[P80] And bee in his brave court a gloriouse light,
 Shine in the eyes of faith, and constancie,
 Maintaine the fires of love still burning bright
 Nott slightly sparkling butt light flaming bee

5 Never to slack till earth noe stars can see,
 Till Sunn, and Moone doe leave to us dark night,
 And secound Chaose once againe doe free
 Us, and the world from all devisions spite,

Till then, affections which his followers are

- 10 Gouverne our harts, and prove his powers gaine
 To taste this pleasing sting seek with all care
 For hapy smarting is itt with smale paine,

Such as although, itt pierce your tender hart
And burne, yett burning you will love the smart.

7. secound Chaoze: ultimate destruction of the world

5.

- [P81] And burne, yett burning you will love the smart,
 When you shall feele the weight of true desire,
 Soe pleasing, as you would nott wish your part
 Of burden should bee missing from that fire;
- 5 Butt faithfull and unfained heate aspire
 Which sinne abolisheth, and doth impart
 Saulves to all feare, with vertues which inspire
 Soules with devine love, which shows his chaste art,
- And guide hee is to joyings; open eyes
- 10 Hee hath to hapines, and best can learne
 Us means how to deserve, this hee describes,
 Who blind yett doth our hidenest thoughts deserne.

Thus wee may gaine since living in blest love
Hee may our profit, and our Tuter prove.

9. hee: Cupid

14. profit: a pun on profit (gain) and prophet (spelling used in the 1621 text)

6.

- [P82] Hee may our profit, and our Tuter prove
 In whom alone wee doe this power finde,
 To joine two harts as in one frame to move;
Two bodies, butt one soule to rule the minde;
- 5 Eyes which must care to one deere object bind
 Eares to each others speech as if above
 All els they sweet, and learned were; this kind
 Content of lovers wittniseth true love,
- Itt doth inrich the witts, and make you see
- 10 That in your self, which you knew nott before,
 Forcing you to admire such guifts should bee
 Hid from your knowledg, yett in you the store;

Millions of thes adorne the throne of Love,
 How blest bee they then, who his favours prove.

3. To joine two harts as in one: In *Poems Written by the Right Honorable William Earl of Pembroke* (1660), a lyric entitled, "On one heart made of two," is attributed to Pembroke: Gaby E. Onderwyzer (ed.), *Poems Written by the Right Honorable William Earl of Pembroke*, Augustan Reprint Society, no. 79 (Los Angeles: William A. Clark Memorial Library, 1959), 43-44.

4. Two bodies, butt one soule: For a survey of this Renaissance *topos*, see Laurens J. Mills, *One Soul in Bodies Twain* (Bloomington, Ind.: Principia Press, 1937).

14. prove: experience

7.

- [P83] How blest bee they then, who his favors prove
 A lyfe wherof the birth is just desire,
 Breeding sweet flame which hearts invite to move
 In thes lov'd eyes which kindle Cupids fire,
- 5 And nurse his longings with his thoughts intire,
 Fixt on the heat of wishes formd by love,
 Yett wheras fire distroys this doth aspire,
 Increase, and foster all delights above;
- Love will a painter make you, such, as you
- 10 Shall able bee to drawe your only deere
 More lively, parfett, lasting, and more true
 Then rarest woorkman, and to you more neere,
- Thes be the least, then all must needs confess
 Hee that shunns love doth love him self the less.

8.

- [P84] Hee that shunns love doth love him self the less
 And cursed hee whos spiritt nott admires
 The worth of love, wher endles blessednes
 Raines, and commands, maintained by heavnly fires
- 5 Made of vertu, join'de by truth, blowne by desires
 Strengthened by worth, renued by carefullnes
 Flaming in never changing thoughts, briers
 Of jelousie shall heere miss wellcomnes;
- Nor coldly pass in the pursuites of love
- 10 Like one longe frozen in a sea of ise,
 And yett butt chastly lett your passions move
 Noe thought from vertuouse love your minds intise.

Never to other ends your phant'sies place
Butt wher they may returne with honors grace.

9.

[P85] Butt wher they may returne with honors grace
Wher Venus follyes can noe harbour winn
Butt chased ar as worthles of the face
Or stile of love who hath lasivious binn.

5 Oure harts ar subject to her sunn; wher sinn
Never did dwell, or rest one minutes space;
What faults hee hath, in her, did still begin,
And from her brest hee suckd his fleeting pace,

10 If lust bee counted love t'is faulcely nam'd
By wikednes a fayrer gloss to sett
Upon that vice, which els makes men asham'd
In the owne frase to warrant butt begett

This childe for love, who ought like monster borne
Bee from the court of Love, and reason torne.

1-8. The distinction between Venus as the goddess of sensual love and her son as the god of "*l'amour du cœur*" follows the Court of Love tradition: Neilson, *Origins and Sources of the Court of Love*, 55. She developed further the contrast in P88 of the *corona*.

9-11. Shakespeare's Adonis contrasted love and lust in a similar fashion: "Love surfeits not, Lust like a glutton dies; / Love is all truth, Lust full of forged lies." *Venus and Adonis*, ll. 803-804.

5. sunn: "Sonne" in the 1621 text

12. In the owne: From the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, "the own" was often used in the sense of its own (*OED*).

12. frase: phrase

10.

[P86] Bee from the court of Love, and reason torne
For Love in reason now doth putt his trust,
Desert, and liking are together borne
Children of love, and reason parents just,

5 Reason adviser is, love ruler must
Bee of the state which crowne hee long hath worne
Yett soe as neither will in least mistrust
The government wher noe feare is of scorne,

10 Then reverence both theyr mights thus made of one,
Butt wantones, and all those errors shun,

Which wrongers bee, impostures, and alone
Maintainers of all follyes ill begunn;

Fruit of a sowre, and unwholsome ground
Unprofitably pleasing, and unsound.

3. Desert: merit

13. sowre: cold and wet, as a result of retaining stagnant moisture

11.

[P87] Unprofitably pleasing, and unsound
When heaven gave liberty to frayle dull earth
To bringe forth plenty that in ills abound
Which ripest yett doe bring a certaine dearth.

5 A timeles, and unseasonable birth
Planted in ill, in wurse time springing found,
Which hemlock like might feed a sick-witts mirth
Wher unruld vapors swimm in endles rounde,

10 Then joy wee nott in what wee ought to shun
Wher shady pleasures showe, butt true borne fires
Ar quite quench'd out, or by poore ashes wunn
Awhile to keepe those coole, and wann desires.

O noe lett love his glory have and might
Bee given to him who triumphs in his right.

7. John Gerarde described the properties of hemlock, which is often grown in water: "It is one of the deadly poisons which killeth by its colde qualities, as Dioscorides writeth, saying, Hemlocke is a very evill, dangerous, hurtfull, and poisonous herbe," *The Herball or a Generall Historie of Plantes* (London: J. Norton, 1595), STC 11750, 904. Sir Robert Sidney alludes to hemlock in Song 22.1-3:

But alas why do yow nowrish
Poisnous weeds of colde despayre
In Loves garden...

12.

[P88] Bee given to him who triumphs in his right
Nor vading bee, butt like those blossoms fayre
Which fall for good, and lose theyr coulers bright
Yett dy nott, butt with fruite theyr loss repaire

5 Soe may love make you pale with loving care
When sweet injoying shall restore that light
More cleare in beauty then wee can compare
If nott to Venus in her chosen night,

And who soe give them selves in this deere kind

- 10 Thes hapinesses shall attend them still
To bee suplyd with joys, inrichd in mind
With treasures of content, and pleasures fill,

Thus love to bee devine doth heere apeere
Free from all fogs butt shining faire, and cleere.

13.

- [P89] Free from all fogs butt shining faire, and cleere
Wise in all good, and innoſent in ill
Wher holly friendship is eſteemed deere
With truth in love, and juſtice in our will,

- 5 In love theſ titles only have theyr fill
Of hapy lyfe maintainer, and the meere
Defence of right, the punniſher of ſkill,
And fraude; from whence directions doth apeere,

- To thee then lord commander of all harts,
10 Ruller of owr affections kinde, and juſt
Great King of Love, my ſoule from fained ſmarts
Or thought of change I offer to your truſt

This crowne, my ſelf, and all that I have more
Except my hart which you beetoſtowed beefore.

14.

- [P90] Except my hart which you beetoſtowed beefore,
And for a ſigne of conqueſt gave away
As worthleſſe to bee kept in your choiſe ſtore
Yett one more ſpotleſſe with you doth nott ſtay.

- 5 The tribute which my hart doth truly pay
Is faith untouch'd, pure thoughts diſcharge the ſcore
Of debts for mee, wher conſtancy bears ſway,
And rules as Lord, unharm'd by envyes ſore,

- Yett other miſchiefs faile nott to attend,
10 As enimies to you, my foes muſt bee;
Curſt jealousie doth all her forces bend
To my undoing; thus my harmes I ſee.

Soe though in Love I fervently doe burne,
In this ſtrange labourinth how ſhall I turne?

3. store: treasure

14. The final sonnet in the *corona* shows that despite the speaker's efforts to idealize passion, the base emotion of jealousy continues to exist. The image of entrapment in the labyrinth is hence appropriate to this exploration of the nature of love. In the Newberry MS of the second part of *Urania*, Lady Mary Wroth later repeated phrases from this poem: "I have confidence to love, and yett that is master'd with dispaire, In this strange labourinth, help, and aide poore afflicted mee" (II. ii. f. 61).

9.

[P103] My muse now hapy, lay thy self to rest,
 Sleepe in the quiett of a faithfull love,
 Write you noe more, butt lett thes phant'sies move
 Some other harts, wake nott to new unrest,

5 Butt if you study, bee those thoughts adrest
 To truth, which shall eternall goodnes prove;
 Injoying of true joye, the most, and best,
 The endles gaine which never will remove;

Leave the discourse of Venus, and her sunn

10 To young beeginers, and theyr brains inspire
 With storys of great love, and from that fire
 Gett heat to write the fortunes they have wunn,

And thus leave off, what's past showes you can love,
 Now lett your constancy your honor prove,

Pamphilia.

9. sunn: "sonne" in the 1621 text

13-14. See AS 70.13-14: "I give you here my band for truth of this, / Wise silence is best musicke unto blisse." According to the 1621 *Urania*, Pamphilia embodies the virtue of Constancy in the symbolic episode when she accepts the keys to the Throne of Love, "at which instant *Constancy* vanished, as metamorphosing her self into her breast" (l. i. 141).