

A Crown as “A Speaking Picture”:
Interspersed Images in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*

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Abstract

Lady Mary Wroth’s sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, contains a group of sonnets entitled, “A Crowne of Sonnets Dedicated to Love.” This crown is written in an Italian poetic form in which the last line of each stanza is succeeded by the first line of the following stanza, giving it a very complicated structure. As the title suggests, it represents a crown which is dedicated to Cupid, yet it further evokes the images of a labyrinth or miniature painting due to its complexity and intricacy. It is well known that Wroth was influenced by her uncle, Sir Philip Sidney, and in *Crowne*, she specifically adapted his poetic ideas to create her poetic style. In this paper, I attempt to confirm the images portrayed in the crown of sonnets as “a speaking picture,” considering the circumstances surrounding the speaker, Pamphilia.

I. Introduction

Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1651/3) was acknowledged as the first woman to publish a complete sonnet sequence in England. In the reign of James I, “obedience,” “chastity,” and “silence” were regarded as the three virtues of women in society, which meant that the custom of writing poetry by women was much less common. In addition, when she published her sonnet sequence in 1621, the popularity of sonnets had ended.¹ Nevertheless, she dared to write sonnets in this era because of the influence of her uncle, Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), who could be recognized as one of the initiators of the sonnet trend. Wroth published a prose romance, *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (1621), which is apparently named after *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (1593), written by Sidney. Wroth’s sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (1621), was published accompanying *Urania*, with some embedded sonnets. As

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¹ According to Michael Spiller, it is estimated that the sonnets were most frequently written and prevalent from 1580 to 1600 (83).

with *Urania*, the title of her sonnet sequence reflects an awareness of Sidney's sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*, which is an explicit statement of Wroth's intention to compose as a member of the Sidney family.² It must have been significant that a woman wrote and published her work using a form of sonnet that was no longer prevalent at the time; in addition, the act of "writing" itself was not generally accepted for women. However, this did not mean that women never wrote during this period. A sister of Philip's, Mary Sidney Herbert (1561-1621), who was involved in translating Psalms, and edited and posthumously published his works, was one of Sidney's successors. According to Margaret Hannay, Mary Sidney taught Wroth that "women writers" were not oxymorons; that is, the act of "writing" is naturally permissible for women, leading Wroth to write not only as a woman, but also as a member of the Sidney family with a consciousness of "poetic authority."³ Furthermore, Mary Sidney was a model for the Queen of Naples in *Urania*, indicating that she was intimately involved in Wroth's composition.⁴

Moreover, Wroth was the first woman in England to write sonnets spoken by a female character. A man heartbroken by his love for an absent or unattainable woman is a conventional figure in Petrarchan rhetoric. While male poets usually articulate sonnets, both male and female characters have their own voices to perform narrative roles in prose romance.⁵ In addition, women were ardent readers of romance, to which genre writing was the most familiar.⁶ For female authors, therefore, prose romance was a suitable genre that allowed women to have voices and reflect on their own lives. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, appended to *Urania*, is constructed of sonnets and songs, in the form of a female character named Pamphilia (which means "all-loving"), who also appears in *Urania*, addressing a male character named Amphilanthus (means "a lover of two"). In *Urania*, referring to the male-dominated ideology represented by patriarchy, it is shown that men excel more than women in "inconstancie."⁷ As Tina Krontiris argues, Wroth criticizes it not by dismissing conventional ideals and models of women but by utilizing and modifying them.⁸

In contrast to Pamphilia, Amphilanthus is presented as a flirtatious man, as evidenced by his name. Whereas the figure of the woman is portrayed in sonnets written by male poets,

² Tom Parker insists that Wroth perpetuated the tradition of the Sidney family to keep the sonnet sequence alive after the period of the sonnet trend passed (131).

³ Hannay, "Your virtuous and learned Aunt," p. 16.

⁴ As much as the Queen of Naples is a mother of Amphilanthus, Mary Sidney Herbert is the mother of Wroth's cousin, William Herbert, who is considered as a model for Amphilanthus. *Urania* is such a so-called "roman à clef," a fiction based on the fact.

⁵ Eckerle, *Romancing the Self*, p. 57.

⁶ Quilligan, *Incest and Agency*, p. 164.

⁷ Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, p. 317.

⁸ Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices*, p. 133.

Amphilanthus is continually absent from Pamphilia owing to his inconstancy; consequently, there is no description of him in the sequence. Eschewing the idealization of the beloved and praise of his physical attractiveness used by conventional sonneteers, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* emphasizes the feelings and devotion of the female lover. William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, regarded as a model for Amphilanthus, was a notoriously fickle man who was also known for being involved in a love triangle with Wroth and Queen Anne.⁹ After the death of her husband Robert Wroth in 1614, Wroth bore two illegitimate children by Pembroke. Due to this scandal and the financial situation following her husband’s death, her social status declined. It is evident that Wroth was writing by 1613, but these circumstances provided the impetus for further writing.¹⁰

As Fulke Greville regards Sidney as “a generall Maecenas of Learning” to be “a true modell of Wroth,” his influence is interspersed in Wroth’s works.¹¹ Josephine A. Roberts suggests that Wroth “retained her identification as a member of the Sidney family,” citing her coat of arms, which is mentioned in Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*.¹² Nichole Pohl insists that *Urania* is “a continuation and negotiation” of *Arcadia*.¹³ Gavin Alexander similarly compares sonnet 47 in *Astrophel and Stella* with sonnet 14 [P16] in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, demonstrating that Wroth begins the sonnet by echoing Philip’s question and concludes by reversing his logic, indicating Wroth’s response to Philip.¹⁴ Wroth’s lyrics appear to be rare, both in her handwriting and in books printed before her death, including a 1621 edition with corrections in her own handwriting. Throughout her manuscript, fermesses are inserted, a symbol that resembles an “S” with a slash added like “\$,” indicating an initial of Sidney.¹⁵ The symbol serves as a kind of autograph, with the effect of ornamenting each page of the sonnet sequence visually too. It is not only the images associated with the words but also the actual pictorial elements in her work.

In *An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney insists that poetry is “an art of imitation” and calls it “a speaking picture.”¹⁶ The ancient Roman poet Horace, in his *Ars Poetica*, described the similarities between poetry and painting, as evidenced by his famous assertion that “ut pictura poesis.” His poetics would have had a considerable influence on later poets, including Philip

⁹ For details about Wroth’s personal life, see Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*.

¹⁰ Joshua Sylvester’s *Lachrima Lachrimarum*, published in 1613, includes a poem praising Wroth as a Sidney’s successor.

¹¹ Greville, *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, p. 33.

¹² Roberts (ed.), *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, p. 11.

¹³ Pohl, *Women, Space, and Utopia*, p. 23.

¹⁴ Alexander, *Writing after Sidney*, p. 291.

¹⁵ Bell (ed.), *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print*, p. 4.

¹⁶ Sidney, *Micellaneous Prose*, pp. 79-80.

Sidney. Summarizing the major literary theories of Plato, Aristotle, and others along with Horatius, Sidney's discussion of the correct poet is *An Apology for Poetry*, and Stephen Gosson's attack on poetry in *Schoole of Abuse* was an inciting factor. Sidney authored the book with the intention of responding to attacks on Plato and later poets. Sidney remarks that the virtues, vices, and passions offered by the poet "so in their own natural seats laid to the view, that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them" (86). He follows this approach in the first sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella* in which he suggests to "looke in thy heart and write" (l. 14). In contrast, Wroth opens her sonnet sequence with the dream vision. In this sonnet, Venus and Cupid emerge as substitutes for her beloved, illustrating that she fell in love because of their conduct, thereby compelling her to write the sonnets. With vivid descriptions of the vision she experienced in her dream and the successive development of the scene, this sonnet is an appropriate opening to her sonnet sequence in the Sidney lineage.

It was inevitable for Wroth, affected by Sidney, that *Urania*, which alludes to her relationship with Pembroke, would be supplemented by poems imitating reality. In her sonnet sequence, a "Crowne," which is also used by Philip and Robert Sidney, is inserted. A "Crowne" or *corona* is an Italian poetic form in which the last line of either a sonnet or stanza serves as the first line of the next.¹⁷ Philip Sidney embedded a corona consisting of ten dizains in the Fourth Eclogues of *Old Arcadia*.¹⁸ Robert Sidney inserted an incomplete corona, which praises a beloved, in his sonnet sequence. Wroth's corona, entitled "A Crowne of Sonnets Dedicated to Love" succeeds in drawing a structural circle with its characteristics, presenting the image of a crown to Cupid both in words and in sight. The corona, inserted into the sequence as an expression of infinite admiration for Cupid, is additionally an embodiment of endless lamentation.

In this paper, I examine the diverse images developed by Wroth's corona, focusing on "captivity," "subjectivity," and "privacy" surrounding Pamphilia. According to Arthur F. Marotti, the sonnet sequence is a public genre that circulates widely.¹⁹ The place of women in the early modern family was dominated by their relationship with the relative autonomy and power of men because of the social custom that women were to be possessed by men.²⁰ Wroth inherited the authority of poetry from her uncle and father, allowing her to make her private inventions public. Therefore, her authorship brought her from private to public. Whereas for men, their

¹⁷ Roberts, p. 127.

¹⁸ A dizain is a verse composed of ten lines. In *Old Arcadia*, the corona is composed of a conversation between Strephon and Klaius concerning their heartbreak.

¹⁹ Marotti, "'Love is not Love,'" p. 399.

²⁰ Waller, *The Sidney Family Romance*, p. 96.

place was the public center of the house, the place for women was often private: the garden, the bedroom, and the closet.²¹ As long as women are dominated by men, they are relegated to private spaces. In *Urania*, a private space such as a forest or bedroom serves as a place for Pamphilia to express herself in poetry. Considering that it reflects *Urania*, the corona embedded in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* embraces images of the labyrinth, crown, and miniature, each of which is connected to Pamphilia’s captivity, the establishment of a subject who writes, and the preservation of secrecy. I will attempt to confirm the images that are depicted by words through Wroth’s corona, like “a speaking picture.”

II. Escaping from the “labourinth”: Pamphilia in captivity

The corona in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is literally attributed to the image of a labyrinth. The first sonnet in her corona opens with the line: “In this strange labourinth how shall I turn?”²² The spelling “labourinth” emphasizes the imagery of the labyrinth as one that must be passed through with great “labour.” The term “labyrinth” is sometimes thought to be derived from *labor intus*, referring to the struggle of those who are inside it to make their way through.²³ This labyrinth is expressed in the first sonnet included in the corona.

If to the right hand, ther, in love I burne;
Lett me gor forward, therin danger is;
If to the left, suspition hinders bliss,
Lett mee turn back, shame cries I ought returne (P77, ll. 3-6)²⁴

This depiction causes the reader to look in the direction indicated by the speaker Pamphilia and imagine how the labyrinth appears. Although there are many paths in the labyrinth, regardless of where it leads, difficulties will be encountered. Despite where she turns, hardships await Pamphilia in all directions, reinforcing her perception of an impending peril as she wanders into the labyrinth. Unable to stand still in the labyrinth for a long time, she determines to follow “the thread of love (l. 14)” to proceed. Pamphilia believes that “the thread of love (l. 14)” will lead her to “the soules content (P78, l. 2),” which indicates the attainment of not physical, earthly

²¹ Pohl, p. 9.

²² All quotations from Wroth’s sonnets are from Josephine Roberts, ed., *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*.

²³ Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, p. 147.

²⁴ The notation “P...” indicates the consecutive number of poems including songs in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. That is, “P77” signifies that sonnet 1 in the corona is the seventy-seven of all the sonnets and songs in the sequence.

love, but spiritual, heavenly love.

The image of the labyrinth, because of its complexity, offered sonneteers an appropriate metaphor for conflicts of love. Robert Sidney used “the maze” to show the poet-lover’s resistance against constraints in Pastoral 9.²⁵ Petrarch, as Cipolla insists, uses the labyrinth as an emblem to represent love, which is treated as an embodiment of the conflict within his soul in *Canzoniere*.²⁶ The majority of the labyrinthine imagery used in literary works is the mythological motif of the Cretan labyrinth. Daedalus built the renowned Cretan labyrinth under the order of Minos, in which the Minotaur was imprisoned. Since the Minotaur was the child of Minos’ wife, Pasiphae, with a bull, he was hidden in the inextricable labyrinth and kept from the public. This meant that the Minotaur was considered a representation of lust and sin. Just as the Cretan labyrinth that confines the Minotaur serves as a prison, a labyrinth has the function of depicting “captivity.”²⁷ Furthermore, the labyrinth can also indicate captivity of the poet’s mind, and his desire is held captive in his mind without reaching the beloved; that is, there is a suggestion under the circumstances that all Pamphilia is allowed to attempt in the labyrinth is to follow the thread of love, instead of expressing her own desire. While each sonnet included in the corona is once concluded with 14 lines, the images contained therein are intermittently connected to the next sonnet. Wandering through the labyrinth presented in the first sonnet in the corona, Pamphilia contemplates love in subsequent sonnets. It is “chaste thoughts (P78, l. 5)” that guide her to “good which ill from us remove (l. 5)” by following the thread of love. The images of the labyrinth linger intermittently until she reaches the end.

Pamphilia’s quest through the labyrinth was also suggested by the rhyme scheme. The first sonnet in the corona uses the Petrarchan sonnet rhyme scheme (ababbacdcdee), but the following sonnet [P78] has a final couplet rhyming with the same sound as lines 9 and 11, thereby having an ababbacdcdec rhyme scheme. The end rhyme, which does not follow a conventional pattern, implies how Pamphilia wanders through the labyrinth, repeatedly taking an identical passage. While the rhyme scheme can be discerned to some extent in these two sonnets, the third sonnet [P79] is monorhymed with four words: “might,” “white,” “light,” and “requite.” Additionally, Sir Philip Sidney inserted a monorhyme in *Old Arcadia* employing the two words, “light,” and “might,” so that Wroth certainly kept his sonnet in mind. Her refusal to follow convention gives the sonnet an impression of chaos while simultaneously presenting regularity by placing the four words in the same order from the first to the final line. There is another point of concern regarding the rhyme scheme of the sonnets within the corona: the final

²⁵ Croft (ed), *The Poems of Robert Sidney*, p. 231.

²⁶ Cipolla, “Labyrinthine Imagery in Petrarch,” p. 267.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

couplet of sonnet 5 [P81] and sonnet 6 [P82] both rhyme with “love” and “prove.” Since the last line of each sonnet is connected to the first line of the following sonnet, proceeding to sonnet 6 naturally leads to sonnet 7, but the reader must stop there and return to sonnet 5 to review its rhyme. This sequence of moves by the reader corresponds to Pamphilia wandering through the labyrinth presented in the first sonnet of the corona.

Pamphilia’s wandering through the labyrinth demonstrates not only her physical confinement in a closed space but also her psychological suppression. As mentioned above, the Cretan labyrinth served as a prison to hide the Minotaur, a figure of lust and sin. The imprisonment of the Minotaur in a winding labyrinth is like the wicked human heart which is intertwined with unspeakable desires.²⁸ The love Pamphilia displays in the second sonnet of the corona is sacred, without physical desire.²⁹ In sonnet 9 [P85], Venus, the mother of Cupid, is described as “lasivious.”

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. (P85, ll. 9-14)

Pamphilia highlights an error in identifying the lust Venus represents with love. It is suggested that Venus was given the image of Pasiphae to generate the lust that should be imprisoned as a “monster,” or Minotaur. Considering lust as vice, Pamphilia, who regards reason as true love, is bound to submit completely to Cupid. Cupid, whose name means “desire” in Latin, is also known as the god of love and lust, akin to Venus. However, in this sonnet, Pamphilia asserts that lust should not be identified with love. She dissociates love from lust, thereby keeping Cupid, whom she calls “Love,” away from lust. In other words, Cupid is portrayed as a god of chastity, in contrast with the “lasivious” Venus in this sonnet. Pamphilia, therefore, is prevented from even showing desire by Cupid. Her situation here suggests a circumstance in which women are restricted in their speech and conduct by virtues enforced by men in practice. Waller asserted that Wroth employed the term “labyrinth” to indicate the inevitable domination of women by men and to express “a fantasy of autonomy by women.”³⁰ Pamphilia’s labyrinth simultaneously

²⁸ Doob, p. 150.

²⁹ Roberts suggests that this sonnet has the religious imagery found in Robert Sidney’s sonnet 4 (p. 129).

³⁰ Waller, p. 127.

expresses “unspeakable desires” and “desires to speak.”

The word “ambages” is often used to describe labyrinths where there is often a circuitous route from the beginning to the center. It is linked to *ambo*, signifying “two” or “both,” and *ambiguitas*, signifying “equivocation,” by the root *ambi-*, which suggests a double possibility that characterizes many aspects of the labyrinth.³¹ *Amphi-*, the stem of the name “Amphilanthus,” also means “two,” “both,” “around,” with similar meanings to *ambi-*. As previously mentioned, the name “Amphilanthus” means “the lover of two,” which describes his nature. Therefore, his name, which has a stem that indicates almost the same meaning as “ambages,” is thought to have the image of a labyrinth that the word suggests, since the name implies an important meaning. If the image of the labyrinth is applied to Amphilanthus himself, it emphasizes Pamphilia’s conflict as she wanders, trapped by her love for him. Furthermore, there are no explicit portrayals of Amphilanthus in this sequence. This “ambiguity” of Amphilanthus’ presence echoes the “ambiguity” of not knowing whether Pamphilia can properly escape from the labyrinth. The absence of the beloved, which is a primary topic of petrarchism, commences with the first sonnet in Pamphilia to Amphilanthus. Moore suggests that this leads to the image of a labyrinth.³² The second sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella* opens with “Not at first sight, nor with a dribbed shot / Love gave the wound, which I breathe will bleed” (ll. 1-2). As Ringler indicates in his commentary of sonnet 2, it is “another declaration of independence from renaissance conventions, for most sonnet sequences from Petrarch onwards had dealt with love at first sight.”³³ Combining labyrinthine imagery, Wroth led her sonnets beyond the Renaissance tradition from which her uncle escaped.

While Pamphilia condemns lust and praises chastity to comprehend true love, her heart cannot follow it to the end. According to Susan Lauffer O’Hara, it is jealousy which feeds on sexual obsession with Amphilanthus that trapped Pamphilia in the labyrinth of love.³⁴ The last sonnet in the corona reveals that Cupid bestowed her heart on Amphilanthus. Pamphilia’s heart pays “faith untouch’d (l. 6),” and she has “pure thoughts (l. 6)” to exhibit her divine love. In sonnet 26 [P30], her heart is shown to have fled to Amphilanthus for the love she has for him. While Pamphilia has bestowed her heart upon him, Amphilanthus neither offers his own heart nor returns hers. This is indicative of his cruel attitude toward her, which leaves her in a helpless predicament with her heart entrapped. In this sonnet, his breast is portrayed as “the blest shrine (l. 4)” so that it is regarded as a sanctuary. Her heart, which lingers in the sacred place, mirrors

³¹ Doob, pp. 53-54.

³² Moore, “The Labyrinth as Style in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*,” p. 66.

³³ Ringler (ed), *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, p. 459.

³⁴ O’Hara, *The Theatricality of Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, p. 184.

that of Pamphilia, who wanders through the labyrinth to seek chastity. Her heart, captivated by Amphilanthus, is visualized through the presentation of the literal place of the labyrinth, which emphasizes its enclosed characteristics. In Book II of *Urania*, similarly to the sonnets, Pamphilia asks for help in the labyrinth.

Thus I live ore languish out som breath, I hope, and yett I feare more; I have confidence to love, and yett that is master'd with dispaire. In this strange labourinth, help and aide poore afflicted mee, most excellent Princes. I humb[l]y implore itt, and all the Gods and Goddesses of love I will procure to assist you for this kindnes to mee, except Cupid for hee is too wary, and to fleeting for my skill to deale with. (*Urania* II, 416)

Although she is trying to follow Cupid's thread to escape the labyrinth in the crown, it is mentioned here that she is unable to deal with him. As described in sonnet 5 [P81], one of the reasons she is trapped in the labyrinth is that Cupid is blind. Pamphilia succeeds in illustrating being trapped, both physically and mentally, through the complexity of the labyrinth.

III. Cupid and the crown: female as a writing subject

The imagery of Cupid changes depending on the situation in each sonnet in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. Typically, Cupid has a bow and arrows, but in the crown he has a thread to guide her. The first sonnet of the sequence opens with Pamphilia seeing Venus and Cupid in Pamphilia's dream at night.

Butt one hart flaming more then all the rest
The goddess held, and putt itt to my brest,
Deare sonne, now shutt sayd she: thus must wee win;
Hee her obey'd, and martir'd my poore hart, (P1, ll. 9-12)

Commanded by his mother Venus, Cupid shoots the heart of Pamphilia. Here, the image of a mischievous Cupid carrying a bow and arrow and portrayed as a child is suggested. Paul Salzman asserts that a paradox lurks in tangled syntax: thought is free when the senses are withdrawn from self-knowledge in a death-like sleep state.³⁵ When Pamphilia is unconscious and not trapped in the labyrinth, even by Amphilanthus, this conventional

³⁵ Salzman, *Literary Culture in Jacobean England*, p. 114.

Petrarchan/Anacreontic Cupid emerges. Therefore, it is inevitable that Cupid in the corona differs from Cupid in sonnet 1 in terms of their nature. Elaine V. Beilin suggests that Wroth alludes to the familiar iconography of two Cupids, one representing sensual love and the other virtuous love, and Pamphilia “gains her release only by rejecting blind Cupid and by turning to praise the divine Cupid.”³⁶ The two Cupids, Eros and Anteros, are both presented as children with wings, one of which, Eros, representing sensual love, is usually blindfolded as a symbol of sin. An example of chaste Cupid is additionally shown in sonnet 35 in *Astrophil and Stella* as being “sworne page to Chastity.”³⁷ This Cupid, although not to Venus but to Chastity, is exhibited in his accompaniment to the female figure. In Wroth’s corona, it seems that Petrarchan/Anacreontic Cupid becomes chaste Cupid, the sovereign of the “brave court (P79)” once he is crowned. Heather Dubrow indicates that while a woman in Petrarchism is “an object to be investigated,” Wroth uses the crown of sonnets to rewrite this and create a situation in which she investigates “her own emotions and thus wrest agency from objectification.”³⁸ Wroth exploited the conventional Petrarchan Cupid by adapting it to women’s writing, which subverts the conventions that cause women to become objects.

The Cupid of chastity is related to the establishment of Pamphilia’s subjectivity as a female poet. Wroth, as Jane Kingsley-Smith remarks, avoids depicting the female body as penetrated by Cupid’s arrows.³⁹ Presenting the image of a heart flaming as Cupid shoots at her heart rather than her body, Pamphilia emphasizes the flame of divine love while refraining from any sign of erotic affection. The arrow head that is Wroth’s coat of arms is suggested by Cupid, for the arrow is his supposed arm. However, by displaying the vision of a flaming heart instead of a body being injured by the arrows of Cupid, Wroth applies the coat of arms she has inherited from her uncle to her own versification. Cupid is therefore a “profitt (= prophet) (P81, l. 14)” and a “Tuter (l. 14)” who shows her the proper ways in versification and in the labyrinth.⁴⁰ She was struggling to find a place for herself within the male-centered framework of literature, and found her way to present Cupid as such.

The thread of love in the labyrinth is the only recourse to lead Pamphilia to Amphilanthus, as well as a token of her constancy. The image of the Cretan labyrinth evokes the myth of Ariadne’s thread. In Robert Sidney’s Pastoral 9, Croft indicates that the story of Theseus and

³⁶ Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 237.

³⁷ Ringler, p. 182.

³⁸ Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 159.

³⁹ Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature and Culture*, p. 126.

⁴⁰ Ann Margaret Lange deciphers the word “descries” in line 11 of sonnet 5 [P81] as suggesting “scry,” hence Cupid is the very prophet who is blind yet has open eyes discerning “our hiddenest thoughts (205).”

Ariadne is suggested by “the saving thread” when the image of the maze appears.⁴¹ Furthermore, Wroth suggests Ariadne’s thread by demonstrating how “the thread of love” helps Pamphilia find her way. When Theseus entered the labyrinth to attack the Minotaur, Ariadne gave him a thread ball. Consequently, it is said that he tied the thread at the entrance, and after defeating the Minotaur in the heart of the labyrinth, he could escape by drawing the thread. The single thread, directing him through the labyrinth to the exit, is the only lifeline for Theseus. Likewise, Pamphilia is only led to “the soles content” by the thread of love. In the penultimate sonnet in the corona, she offers the crown to Cupid.

To thee then lord commander of all harts,
 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 bestow’d beefore. (P89, ll. 9-14)

Cupid is depicted as “lord commander of all harts,” “Ruller of owr affections” enough to have power over the heart, so that, by his will, Pamphilia’s heart was given to Amphilanthus. Therefore, she dedicates herself, except for her heart, to Cupid as a crown. She is simultaneously a crown to Cupid and a labyrinth. Pamphilia’s crown is, as Ann Margaret Lange points out, “the internal maze of her thoughts and feelings, which she seeks to understand, order, and control.”⁴² The single thread that binds her mind is constancy, leading to a heart devoted to Amphilanthus.

Even though the image of the labyrinth is directly associated with the word in the sonnets, the word “crown” is obviously evocative of a “garland” made of flowers. In the fourteenth century, there were many iconographies of Cupid wearing crowns or garlands. This, as Kingsley-Smith specifies, stems from the depiction of Cupid wearing “the wreath of roses” in the *Roman de la Rose*.⁴³ Jennifer Munroe attributes Wroth’s crown to the laurel crown for herself to insist on poetic authority because this was awarded to the finest poet.⁴⁴ The laurel crown (or wreath) is recognized as belonging to the love of virtue, to whom Beilin identifies as Cupid in Wroth’s corona. In Ripa’s *Iconologia*, for example, “Love of Virtue (*Amor Virtutis*)” has the three laurel wreaths in his hands which indicate “the three cardinal moral virtues: Justice, Fortitude, and

⁴¹ Croft, p. 319.

⁴² Lange, *Writing the Way Out*, p. 198.

⁴³ Kingsley-Smith, p. 10.

⁴⁴ Munroe, *Gender and the Garden*, p. 116.

Temperance.”⁴⁵ Given the association of the laurel crown with the Love of Virtue, Cupid in Wroth’s crown suggests these three virtues instead of the three virtues of women (obedience, chastity, and silence) help create a place for women to write poetry.

As for the practice of writing, a crown also plays a crucial role throughout Wroth’s works. Song 1 [P7] is a pastoral in which Pamphilia sets herself as a shepherdess, wherein lies the allusion to the crown.

My end aprocheth neer
 Now willow must I weare
 My fortune soe will bee.
 With branches of this tree
 I’le dress my haples head
 Which shall my wittnes bee
 My hopes in love ar dead;
 My clothes imbroider’d all
 Shall bee with Gyrlands round
 Some scater’d, others bound
 Some ti’de, some like to fall. (P7, ll. 22-32)

Pamphilia indicates that she makes a crown out of a willow branch to wear; willow symbolizes the grief of disappointed love. In this song, “Gyrlands” not only visualizes the arrangement of patterns of flowers on her clothes but also suggests a crown composed of willow branches. Song 1 associates the image of the labyrinth with the garden labyrinth and the crown with the embroidery. Munroe compared the garden labyrinth, which gives visual order to a disorderly landscape, to embroidery, in which women decorate blank canvases, demonstrating that the presentation of a labyrinth is a suggestion of art appropriate for women.⁴⁶ In both artistic domains, she noted that women were undeniably able to create space for themselves as both creative and feminine subjects.⁴⁷ Not only does Pamphilia create her own space with her writing, but she also displays the crown as a symbol of sovereignty, scattering labyrinthine imagery throughout it. Each sonnet is tied together as a thread, drawing an intricate embroidery pattern to depict her constancy in words, similar to a picture. Pamphilia’s “Gyrlands,” “Some scater’d,

⁴⁵ Ripa, *Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery*, p. 80.

⁴⁶ Munroe, p. 111.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

others bound / Some ti'de, some like to fall,” therefore, indicates her sonnets itself. Namely, “Gyrlands,” or the crown, must embody her work.

Her willow crown demonstrates her lamentation while simultaneously leading her to a writing subject. Song 1 reflects Pamphilia’s behavior in *Urania* and outlines her writing. In the few subsequent lines of this song, she writes her verse on the bark of the willow, which she presents as her “booke.” The root of the willow is her bed, where she lies lamenting “inconstancy.” Book I of *Urania* depicts her writing in the woods.

Then taking knife, shee finished a Sonnet, which at other times shee had begunne to engrave in the barke of one of those fayre and straight Ashes, causing that sapp to accompany her teares for love, that for unkindnesse...And on the rootes, whereon she had laid her head, serving (though hard) for a pillow at that time, to uphold the richest World of wisdome in her sex, she writ this. (*Urania* I, 92-93)

She expresses her torments through verse in woods devoid of anyone, carving them into the bark. The woods provide her with a place to write, where she confirms her identity as a female writing subject. In the sonnet in this scene, she implores the “most straight and pleasant Tree” to “Beare part” with her and “imitate the Torments” of her smart, which cruel Cupid sends into her heart. She carves into the skin of the tree the “testament” that Cupid likewise engraved into her heart. Kathryn Pratt suggests that the tree which is “inscribed with wounds” becomes a domain that is ruled by Pamphilia then finally becomes Pamphilia herself.⁴⁸ She thus establishes herself as a writing subject, as well as her own autonomy. After engraving the bark with her verse, she goes to the brook to find a shady tree.

...whereinto she went, and sitting downe under a Willow, there anew began her complaints; pulling off those branches, sometimes putting them on her head: but remembering her selfe, she quickly threw them off, vowing how ever her chance was, not to carry the tokens of her losse openly on her browes, but rather weare them privately in her heart.
(*Urania* I, 93)

She puts on a garland made of willow branches; but she stops wearing it recalling that it is “the tokens of her losse.” She wears the willow branches “privately in her heart” because she refrains from showing her desire to others but insists on keeping it only in her heart. Like the labyrinth,

⁴⁸ Pratt, “‘Wounds still curelesse,’” p. 55.

the crown here serves to confine her feelings, whereby she writes them on the tree instead of being able to convey them directly. Consequently, Pamphilia's heart crowned heart symbolizes her being a writing subject.

IV. A miniature in a cabinet: the private space and the hidden heart

In *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Cupid has another essential role. Though he crowned himself to be the sovereign of the "brave court," Pamphilia distrusts and blames him in previous songs and sonnets, unable to fulfill her love for Amphilanthus. While she shows virtuous Cupid in the corona, Pamphilia suggests the opposite nature of Cupid, in a song that precedes the corona by three.

His desires have noe measure,
 Endless folly is his treasure,
 What hee promiseth hee breaketh
 Trust nott one word that hee speaketh; (P74, ll. 5-8)

Pamphilia is hurt by this "Endless folly" and her reason rejects it in P72. Therefore, Cupid is in conflict with reason, but sonnet 10 [P86] in corona illustrates thus: "Love in reason now doth putt his trust (P86, l. 2)." She is able to realize the nature of love in P75 and seeks to escape blind lust.

Love noe pittie hath of love
 Rather griefes then pleasures move,
 Soe though his delights are pritty
 To dwell in them would be pittie. (P75, ll. 13-16)

Pamphilia is aware that once she engenders lust as love in her heart, the "griefes" will exceed "pleasures." This song has five quatrains, with each word arranged in rhyming order ("love," "move," "pretty," and "pitty"), as if to indicate the order of her mind. Immediately afterward, she begs forgiveness from Cupid, declaring her crown to him in the sonnet before the opening of the corona.

O pardon, Cupid I confess my fault
 Then mercy grant mee in soe just a kind

For treason never lodged in my mind
 Against thy might soe much as in a thought,
 And now my folly I have deerly bought
 Nor could my soule least rest or quiett find
 Since rashnes did my thoughts to error bind
 Which now thy fury, and my harm hath wrought;
 I curse that thought, and hand which that first fram'd
 For which by thee I ame most justly blam'd,
 Butt now that hand shall guided bee aright,
 And give a crowne unto thy endless prayse
 Which shall thy glory, and thy greatnes raise
 More then these poore things could thy honor spite. (P76)

Pamphilia apologizes here for her previous harsh words toward Cupid which she thought to be her “fault.” She demonstrates that she once has composed her own “thoughts” and “hand,” which is “justly blam’d” by Cupid. Cupid guides her hand, which once made a fault, to bestow “a crowne” upon him. In other words, he enables her to write the crown (of sonnets) which follows. This resembles the (male) poet’s invocation of the Muse to allow him to write a poem. According to Kingsley-Smith, Wroth manages to insert herself into the male poetic tradition by regarding Cupid as the Muse who inspires and approves her portrayal of love.⁴⁹ In sonnet 7 [P83], Cupid not only proves to make a poet into a poet, but also a painter, who can draw his/her beloved “More lively, parfett, lasting, and more true / Then rarest woorkman” (P83, ll. 11-12).

Even if a poet writes a poem as if it were a painting, it is by no means inevitably an obvious depiction of his/her thoughts. It is the poetic practice of Philip Sidney to embody images with words while writing poems. In addressing sonnet 11 of *Astrophil and Stella*, Patricia Fumerton suggests that Sidney implies the small portrait, showing how the truth is hidden behind the ornaments, Stella’s appearance.⁵⁰ In this sonnet, Cupid is described as “boyish (l. 1),” who is only interested in her outward parts and never tries to get inside her heart. Furthermore, she refers to “Nature’s cabinet” in sonnet 12 which could enclose not only Stella’s outward parts but also her heart covered in her outward parts as if it proves the miniature cabinet⁵¹: an object depicted quite like a picture captures the viewer’s eyes with its beauty, yet it is extremely challenging to get inside. Fumerton interprets that showy rhetoric, or ornaments of the sonnets,

⁴⁹ Kingsley-Smith, p. 127.

⁵⁰ Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, p. 90.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

“only continues the game of gesturing inadequately toward inaccessible ‘true’ inwardness; it is itself only layer after layer of ornamental display.”⁵²

Sidney’s presentation of his poems reflects the Elizabethan style of publishing love poems. According to Fumerton, love poetry was “guardedly ‘published’ between intimates in private rooms,” “kept within these rooms in ornamental cabinets or boxes,” and “probably lay side by side in the decorative little boxes and cabinets that concealed Elizabethan valuables.”⁵³ Just as very few people can access a poem within the confines of a private room kept in an inner cabinet, it is quite laborious to understand the poet’s inner thoughts behind the ornamented words.

Such a way of publishing love poetry was also appropriate for women, who could not write publicly at the time. In *Urania*, Pamphilia takes pieces of paper on which she writes poems from her cabinet when she invites Amphilanthus into her room. As she is ashamed to show him the poem, he admires it, suspecting that it is not her true heart. While Amphilanthus mentions that Pamphilia’s love is “counterfeit (320),” she contradicts him, insisting that it is true that she loves him. Like an Elizabethan male poet, she conceals her thoughts behind the ornament of words, yet she is unable to keep them locked away from him and willingly reveals her heart to him. Amphilanthus is delighted to hear her thoughts, and then he sees “a little tablet” in the cabinet.

In the same boxe also he saw a little tablet lie, which, his unlooked for discourse had so surprised her, as shee had forgot to lay aside. He tooke it up, and looking in it, found her picture curiously drawne by the best hand of that time; her haire was downe, some part curld, some more plaine, as naturally it hung, of great length it seemd to bee, some of it comming up againe, shee held in her right hand, which also she held upon her heart, a wastcoate shee had of needle worke, wrought with those flowers she loved best. He beheld it a good space, at last shutting it up, told her, he must have that to carry with him to the field. She said, it was made for her sister. (*Urania* I, 320-21)

Pamphilia’s portrait exists in the cabinet with her poem. Since it is a beautiful and detailed portrait of her, Amphilanthus likes it and hopes to take it with him to the field. In this scene, despite her revealing her own heart, he is fascinated by her portrait. As Cupid is attracted only by Stella’s external beauty without getting to her heart, Amphilanthus never seeks the inner thoughts of Pamphilia. In some sonnets of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, it is explained that her

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

heart has not returned to her after Cupid gives it to Amphilanthus, reflecting his attitude of receiving it but not caring about it or giving his own heart back to her.

Pamphilia to Amphilanthus reflects the sequence of circumstances in which Pamphilia shows her own heart to Amphilanthus in *Urania*. A crown of sonnets is embedded in the latter part of the sequence, both in the manuscript and print. Amphilanthus needs to enter Pamphilia’s private room and open the cabinet to see the poems and a portrait inside it. As readers progress through the sonnets and songs of the sequence, they gradually step into her private space. The sonnet [P76] quoted above was inserted just before the corona. This sonnet opens with “O pardon, Cupid I confess my fault” (l. 1), and the speaker vows to “give a crowne unto thy endless prayse / Which shall thy glory, and thy greatnes raise” (ll. 12-13). Thus, a sonnet evocative of the invocation to Cupid is inserted before the corona, suggesting that the crown in his honor follows as if it were a complete piece of poetry.

A crown, written with artful skills, is ornamented by words and explicitly offers her constancy. It is comparable to a well-painted and embellished portrait. In the corona, the speaker follows Cupid as she loses her way, and the facets of love she possesses are portrayed. In the corona, compared to a labyrinth, Cupid’s “brave court” (P80, l. 1) exists. In that court, the love attained by Cupid’s might is metaphorically represented as a “fruite” (P78, l. 7), or “gold” (P79, l. 6) refined by fire, bringing visual imagery through pictorial depictions. As previously mentioned, the beloved of the speaker is coherently absent in the sonnet sequence and there is no direct address to him. Clarke asserts that “the suggestion of the outlines of an unfulfilled desire permits Pamphilia to sustain her constancy and reputation, not least by the illusion that the sonnet sequence is only shown to Amphilanthus.”⁵⁴ The speaker, who laments the absence of her beloved, justifies her desire for him in the enclosed figure of a crown dedicated to Cupid while secretly hiding her desire in her sonnet sequence. Therefore, it is conceivable that her corona could be read as both a poem and a portrait, kept carefully in the most interior of her private space.

The corona, carefully preserved in sequence, evokes a miniature painting. There is a similarity between sonnets and miniature paintings. It is the invisibility of the inner parts concealed by decorative ornaments. Fumerton remarked that miniature paintings represent secrecy.

Everything associated with miniature painting, in sum, suggests that its habit of public ornamentation kept, rather than told, private “secrets.” Bedrooms displayed closed

⁵⁴ Clarke, *The Politics of Early Modern Women’s Writing*, p. 218.

decorative cabinets; cabinets exhibited closed ivory boxes; boxes showed off covered or encased miniatures; and, when we finally set eyes on the limning itself, layers of ornamental colors and patterns show only the hiddenness of the heart. (84)

As Pamphilia's poems are kept in a cabinet, the miniature paintings are encased in multiple layers so that they do not present the heart of the artist. The attempt to conceal the inner "private" part by external "public" ornamentation is also found in Sidney's sonnets, like sonnet 11 of *Astrophil and Stella*. In corona, Pamphilia presents a labyrinthine image at the beginning, suggesting complicated layers of imagery. Due to the characteristics of the corona, readers walk through the ornamentation of words, halting and returning to Pamphilia. Readers, however, never see her heart, which is supposed to be with her, even if they wade through layers of ornamentation. Eventually, they encounter a line instead of her heart: "Except my hart which you bestow'd before (P89, l. 14)." That is, Pamphilia herself indicates that it is impossible for readers to view her heart. Combined with the labyrinthine imagery, her heart is artfully hidden and remains secret throughout, with the corona returning to the beginning. While meticulously portrayed as a miniature painting expressing her admiration for Cupid, her crown splendidly veils her heart.

V. Conclusion

Wroth created her own distinct compositions, applying the Petrarchan Convention and Sidney's versification practices. In particular, the crown of sonnets is an integral piece of her verse. Whereas her father, Robert Sidney, inserted an incomplete corona into a sonnet sequence, Wroth's corona forms a complete circle with multiple significations. Occasionally, it confounds readers as a labyrinth that confines Pamphilia to its structural complexities. In accordance with the title, in some cases, it symbolizes her subjectivity by being dedicated to Cupid, both as a crown and as Pamphilia herself. In other cases, with the ornamentation of words, it hides her mind as a miniature painting, treasured in a cabinet in her private room. Corona, composed of a series of successive images, is locked in a cabinet as a symbol of Pamphilia's constancy and only disclosed to intimates. In both writing and publicizing their writings, women still experienced constraints. When Wroth composed her poems, it remained challenging for a female writer to establish her identity as a writing subject. Pamphilia's crown functions as a private space for a female author in sequence, giving her the right to be a writing subject. It displays both things made public and private by words in continuous layers of images as "a speaking picture."

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