



ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

FEMALE ROLES REVISITED IN LADY MARY WROTH'S *PAMPHILIA TO AMPHILANTHUS*

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Abstract

Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1653) was an English noblewoman and one of the significant literary figures of the English Renaissance. She is renowned for her works, namely, *Love's Victory* (c. 1620), *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), and *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (1621). In *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Lady Mary Wroth challenges the patriarchal ideology that excludes women both as sonneteers and lovers who are able to express their love in Petrarchan sonnet tradition. The dominant tradition centralizes the male lovers and marginalizes women as idealized silent beloveds. Thus, it transforms female characters into docile objects to be loved by their male lovers. In order to confront the misogynistic treatment of these concepts of female author and lover in the sonnet tradition, Lady Mary Wroth writes within and against the sonnet tradition and manipulates the masculine genre to insert the female voice into it. First, she assumes submissive roles the dominant tradition appropriates. She negotiates these roles and accordingly manipulates them to her own advantage. Her contestation and later manipulation of these traditional roles create opportunities to resist the oppression she faces by rewriting the disempowering tradition. Hence, she subverts the limited roles of female characters in the dynamics of sonnet tradition by employing specific strategies. In this regard, this article analyzes Lady Mary Wroth's strategies of subversion of the conventional roles for female characters in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* and explores Wroth's poetic innovations that challenge the gendered concept of the male poet in the sonnet tradition.

Key Words: Lady Mary Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Renaissance poetry, Sonnet tradition, Female poet

LADY MARY WROTH'UN *PAMPHILIA*'DAN *AMPHILANTHUS*'A BAŞLIKLİ ESERİNDE KADIN ROLLERİNİN YENİDEN ELE ALINIŞI

Öz

Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1653) bir İngiliz asilzadesi ve İngiliz Rönesansı'nın önemli edebi figürlerinden biridir. Lady Mary Wroth Aşkın Zaferi (*Love's Victory*) (c. 1620), Montgomery'nin Urania Kontesi (*The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*) (1621) ve Pamphilia'dan Amphilanthus'a (*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*) (1621) başlıklı eserleriyle tanınır. *Pamphilia'dan Amphilanthus'a* başlıklı eserinde Lady Mary Wroth kadınları hem şair hem de aşklarını Petrarca sone geleneği çerçevesinde ifade edebilen âşık olarak dışlayan ataerkil ideolojiye meydan okur. Egemen gelenek erkek âşıkları merkezileştirirken kadınları idealize edilmiş sessiz sevgililer olarak marjinalleştirir. Böylece kadın karakterleri erkek âşıkları tarafından sevicecek uysal nesnelere dönüştürür. Lady Mary Wroth, sone geleneğinde kadın yazar ve âşık kavramlarının antifeminist muamelesine karşı koymak için, hem sone geleneği dahilinde hem de ona karşı yazar ve eril türü manipüle ederek ona kadın sesini dahil eder. İlk olarak, egemen geleneğin benimsediği itaatkâr rolleri üstlenir. Bu rolleri tartışır ve akabinde güçsüzleştirilen geleneği yeniden yazarak bunları kendi yararına olacak şekilde manipüle eder. Bu geleneksel rollere karşı mücadelesi ve daha sonra bu rolleri manipülasyonu karşılaştığı baskıya direnmek için fırsatlar yaratır. Dolayısıyla, belirli stratejiler kullanarak kadın karakterlerin sınırlı rollerini sone geleneğinin dinamikleri içinde altüst eder. Bu bağlamda, bu makale *Pamphilia'dan Amphilanthus'a* başlıklı eserde Lady Mary Wroth'un kadın karakterlere biçilen geleneksel rolleri yıkma stratejilerini incelemektedir ve Wroth'un sone geleneğindeki cinsiyetçi erkek şair kavramına meydan okuyan şiirsel yeniliklerini araştırmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Lady Mary Wroth, *Pamphilia'dan Amphilanthus'a*, Rönesans şiiri, Sone geleneği, Kadın şair

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to examine that Lady Mary Wroth negotiates women's position in the sonnet tradition and forms strategies to challenge the dominant ideologies disempowering women in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* could be analyzed within a wide range of theoretical frameworks. This paper makes use of the concept of rewriting in its analysis of the sonnet sequence and aims to offer a comprehensive study of Lady Mary Wroth's strategies of subverting patriarchal boundaries set by the sonnet tradition and other societal factors that disempower the women poets and banish them from the literary circles. To this end, the paper analyzes *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, the first sonnet sequence written by a woman poet, by discussing Lady Mary Wroth's innovations of particular patterns of the tradition such as the arrangement of her poems as a crown and the novel themes she employs in her work. The innovations and subversive themes Lady Wroth adopts in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* are explored as Lady Wroth's strategies to establish a female poetic subjectivity to insert her voice into a tradition that silences and marginalizes women as objects to be adored and idealized.

1. THE CONCEPT OF REWRITING AS REVISION AND SUBVERSION

Rewriting is generally defined as the process of writing an old text again. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it likewise: "Write (something) again so as to alter or improve it" (2022). This definition also explains the possible functions of the act of rewriting; that is, it may change the earlier work or improve it. Then, one can deduce from this definition that rewriting a text may offer alternative readings and present an improved interpretation of the former text. In fact, there may be a plenty of objectives of the rewritings: "there are manifestly many different intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question is as likely as the desire to pay tribute by copying" (Hutcheon, 2006: 7).

Therefore, on the one hand, some rewritings may aim to destroy the previous text. On the other hand, some may intend to appreciate the earlier text and pay homage to it.

Rewriting has been employed as a tool to expose the misrepresentations of the disempowered groups in the pre-existent texts. Hence, rewriters have the opportunity to revise the source text and correct these misrepresentations. Thus, as McClinton states in a different context, rewriting a text is considered “a task that simultaneously looks back into the past and forward into the future” (2001: xi). By this way, rewritings could be a means of resistance against the power holders for the unprivileged groups.

One of the unprivileged groups who were mostly misrepresented or unrepresented in the masculine literary tradition is women. In this regard, in her seminal article entitled “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision,” Adrienne Rich believes rewriting is such an important act that she defines it as an “act of survival” for women (1972: 18). That is, for Rich, “[r]evision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (1972: 18).

In spite of the fact that talking of feminism(s) in the early modern period in England is an anachronistic act, what Lady Mary Wroth does in her sonnet sequence can be deemed as rewriting with a feminist stance. She does not model her rewriting on an earlier text and does not rewrite a pre-existent text, yet it can be maintained that she rewrites the dynamics of a well-established tradition in a subversive manner. To be able to analyze her sonnets as rewriting, the conditions of the period she lived in, the concept of female authorship, and her familial issues need to be explained thoroughly.

2. LADY MARY WROTH’S LIFE, WORKS, AND POETIC CAREER

Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1653), the daughter of the poet Robert Sidney and the niece of Sir Philip Sidney and Lady Mary, Countess of Pembroke, who is generally considered the mentor of Wroth, is an extraordinary literary figure of the English Renaissance concerning her life including the scandalous relationship with her cousin and her productive literary career. She wrote in a variety of genres such as a play, sonnet, and prose fiction. Her oeuvre involves the first complete sonnet sequence written by a woman, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (1621), *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (1621), a prose romance, and a play titled *Love’s Victory* (c. 1620). Within the range of her works, it can be stated that she employs women as her main characters and the central topic of her literary pieces.

As Lady Mary Wroth was a member of one of the significant families of the time, Sidney family, she grew up in an atmosphere of literature and art. She enjoyed formal education at an age when most of the women did not have access to education. She was educated by private tutors at home. Thanks to her family connections, she was pretty familiar with the important figures of the literary circle, and she had the opportunity to have access to humanist and classical literature as well as the unpublished literary works of both Sir Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney (Bear and Bear, 1992: 2). She also participated in royal celebrations and some court masques, one of which was Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Blackness* thanks to which Jonson took an interest in her writing (Bear and Bear, 1992: 2). Jonson was so much influenced by her works that he honoured her with dedicating

The Alchemist to her, stating that he became “a better lover and a much better Poet” (qtd. in Bear and Bear, 1992: 2) thanks to her sonnets.

Lady Wroth’s marriage to Sir Robert Wroth was mainly depicted as an unhappy one. His death made Lady Mary Wroth’s miserable life even worse for the reason that her husband’s death left her with massive debt and a son who died very young (Hannay, *Mary Sidney*, 2010: 163). She also had two children whose father was her cousin William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Lady Mary Wroth’s extramarital relationship with her cousin influenced *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* substantially. It is highly probable that William Herbert is fictionalized in the persona of Amphilanthus. Her giving birth to two illegitimate children caused her banishment from the court circles. Despite her knowledge that her extramarital relationship and births without wedlock would make her life difficult, her pursuit of love and desire may be considered an indication of her fondness for autonomy and independent lifestyle. Despite her free spirit and fondness for her independence and arduous pursuit of her dreams, she was not able to break away from the gender expectations of her time. As she transgressed the allotted roles for women, she was harshly condemned by society and banished from specific circles because of her scandalous relationship with her cousin. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* had its share of arrows of criticism for including her illicit love for her cousin as the central theme of the sequence.

Lady Mary Wroth was also extraordinary in that she created a consciousness of authorship. She did not assess her gender as an obstacle to her literary career, and she published her works with her own name instead of fabricating a pseudonym, which was quite common among female authors and poets of her time. Indeed, Wroth gained self-confidence in the literary arena due to her family’s legacy since several members of the Sidney family were tightly connected to literature. As Hannay clarifies Wroth’s self-confidence as a female poet, “when Wroth began to write, she saw herself not merely as a woman, but as a Sidney woman with a clear sense of poetic authority in her lineage” (1991: 16). With the encouragement she attained from her family’s substantial legacy, Lady Mary Wroth transgressed the genres, which were allotted for female authors such as lyrics, translations, and religious writings (Hannay, 1991: 16). She also produced and published works in the masculine genres, and she employed female protagonists alternatively to the male ones (Hannay, 1991: 16; Lewalski, 1991: 17).

Her first romance in prose, titled *The Countesse of Mountgomerie’s Urania* was printed in 1620 or 1621. This romance narrates Pamphilia’s adventures, the Queen of Pamphilia and her lover Amphilanthus. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* including songs and sonnets was added at the end of the romance (Hannay, 2010: 230). Urania is the name of a character in Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*. So, she may have intended to continue Sidney’s incomplete romance as her aunt had finished his *Psalmes* (Hannay, 2010: 230). Her intention to write *Urania* cannot be known for certain, but it costs her much. Since people drew parallels between the adventures of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus and the plots in the Court of James, Lady Mary Wroth “was ordered to withdraw the book from sale, and it was never reprinted” (Bear and Bear, 1992: 2). The publication was considered a scandal and severely harmed Lady Mary Wroth’s already stained reputation.

The reason for Lady Wroth’s condemnation for publishing her work even without her knowledge is critically related to the Renaissance notion of a woman writer. Margaret W.

Ferguson, who analyzes the concept of woman as a writer in the Renaissance period thoroughly in her seminal chapter, maintains that the concepts of authorship were “unstable and complex” (1995: 143) throughout Medieval and Renaissance periods. Women’s relation to these “unstable and complex” concepts of authorship is even “eccentric,” and the phrases such as “woman writer” and/or “woman author” indicate that these concepts are sternly gendered (Ferguson, 1996: 145). Also, the phrase “woman writer” is contradictory according to the masculine and feminine code of behavior in the Renaissance period. According to the roles and behaviors attributed to each gender, women are expected to be silent, obedient, chaste, and meek. As publication is considered self-exposure, women cannot risk their reputation by publishing. Therefore, writing and publishing can only be masculine activities that immediately exclude women (as writers). As Ferguson further comments, the silence of women in literature is not accidental (1996: 153). The definition of writing as an exact masculine domain, which can only be occupied by male writers, reinforces the effects of such gendered notions. In Ferguson’s words, “pens were repeatedly likened to men’s weapons by international sex of writers who made their living by writing and teaching; and in English, the pun on “pen” and “penis” makes the metaphor of the pen as a weapon a particularly gendered concept” (1996: 152). Definitions of masculinity and femininity are constructed rigidly, and these sharp divisions are employed to exclude women writers from the literary arena systematically because of the idea that “[w]omen should use needles rather than pens” (Ferguson, 1996: 153). Areas such as philosophy and literature are considered “inappropriate” for women for “they may produce self-expression” (Clare, 1998: 38), and it may be “equated with self-exposure” (Pekşen Yakar, 2021: 199). Accordingly, it is perceived as “a kind of sexual self-display” (Mermin, 1990: 336), and women poets’ works are renounced. The exclusion of women from literature and philosophy is contradictory *per se* because humanist learning and tradition do address women as much as it does men. The humanist idea that women should also be taught to write does not necessarily mean women had sufficient intellectual capacity to write. Rather, it aims to control “a defective and potentially unruly sex” (Ferguson, 1996: 154). Therefore, women writers are considered “docile user[s] of the pen” who should be attentive to men’s instructions, and they are only allowed to copy men’s writings (Ferguson, 1996: 154).

3. LADY MARY WROTH’S TREATMENT OF FEMALE ROLES IN *PAMPHILIA TO AMPHILANTHUS*

In an age that excludes women (as writers) from the literary tradition and strategically includes them as the ideal, unattainable and *silent* ladies in literary texts, Lady Mary Wroth challenges the tradition from within. She adopts the traditional norms in her sonnet sequence and subverts them by including her innovative techniques and themes even though this results in her notorious reputation causing insults on her works and personality.

What makes Mary Wroth different from her contemporaries is the perspective she adopts and her acceptance of and challenge to the tradition simultaneously. As Roberts asserts,

Lady Mary Wroth’s contemporaries recognize that her verse belonged to the Petrarchan tradition and strongly identifies her as Sir Philip Sidney’s successor Despite early seventeenth century fashion of hard lines and metaphysical wit, Lady Mary chose to reach back to a much older poetic model. Although her

sonnet collection uses the voice of a female persona, the sequence contains many Elizabethan elements, especially in its structure, diction and imagery. (1983: 41)

Wroth as a skilful sonneteer follows the rules of Petrarchism conscientiously and later confronts the traditional rules since she is aware of the fact that she would be able to challenge Petrarchan discourse within the tradition. Her challenge begins with her choice of a speaker, Pamphilia, which means “all-loving” while Amphilanthus suggests “lover of two” (Bolam, 2003: 259). While Wroth characterizes Pamphilia as a constant and loyal lover, she attributes Amphilanthus the opposite values.

Evidently, Lady Mary Wroth follows her Sidney blood in her writing and primarily uses traditional Elizabethan elements in her works. At the same time, as Roberts notes, she introduces the female voice into the male tradition. Similar to what Sidney describes in the character of Astrophel, Wroth reflects Pamphilia’s “internal struggle between rebellion and submission to love” (1983: 46). Nonetheless, Sidney’s Stella is described as virtuous, but Wroth’s Pamphilia describes Amphilanthus as inconstant (Roberts, 1983: 46).

These concepts of constancy and inconstancy are the prevailing themes in Wroth’s sonnet sequence. In very general terms, as their names also suggest, constancy as a universal virtue is regarded as one of Pamphilia’s characteristics, yet Amphilanthus is defined as an inconstant lover (Bear and Bear 2, 1992: 5). Pamphilia is presented to the reader as the epitome of virtue and the embodiment of Griselda, who is deemed the universal symbol of virtue. Yet, Amphilanthus fails in this virtue. This discrepancy between the lover and the beloved, which constitutes the major plot of the sequence, has attracted academic attention. Academic analyses generally agree on the idea that Pamphilia is empowered with her identification with the theme of constancy. Nevertheless, Gary Waller believes that her association with the theme of constancy creates restraint on her (1993: 209). Waller states,

constancy seems to be a role forced upon a woman in a dangerous or determined environment, a defensive posture at best, an assigned and unavoidable role within an aggressively patriarchal situation at worst. In her constancy, Pamphilia has internalized the residual female role of possessing a “faith untouch’d, pure thoughts . . . where constancy bears sway” [...] and even the resignation of traditional religion. (1993: 209)

As seen in this quotation, Waller engages with the theme of constancy and analyzes it as a role generating a burden on woman. In sonnet 7, for instance, she is depicted as yearning for a loving heart, but nothing can satisfy her need. Yet, she still believes she is not powerful enough to give up her love:

No time, no roome, no thought, or writing can
Giue rest, or quiet to my louing heart,
Or can my memory or Phant’sie scan,
The measure of my still renewing smart.
Yet whould I not (deare Loue) thou shouldst depart,
But let my passions as they first began,
Rule, wounde, and please, it is thy choysesst Art,
To giue *disquiet*, which seemes ease to man. (1-8, italics mine)

To Pamphilia, Cupid can only cause “disquiet,” but the divine can give “glory,” which is regarded as a kind of relief from the erotic desire (Waller, 1993: 209):

When all alone, I thinke vpon thy paine,
How thou doest trauell our best selues to gaine,
Then houerly thy lessons I doe learne;
Thinke on thy *glory*, which shall still ascend,
Vntill the world come to a finall end,
And then shall we thy lasting powre dicerne. (9-14, italics mine)

In these lines, constancy is reflected not as a positive virtue to gain and maintain because it is mostly used as an agent of patriarchy to control women and manipulate them in accordance with men’s desire (Waller, 1993: 209).

3.1. Lady Mary Wroth’s Strategies of Writing Within and Against The Tradition

In most of the sonnets, Lady Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia describes how it is to be a woman writer, revealing the woman’s marginal place in the male literary tradition. Sonnet 38 thematizes woman writer’s inferior position in the tradition: “What pleasure can a banish’d creature haue/ In all the pastimes that inuented are/ By wit or learning? . . .” (1-3). She draws attention to the fact that all pastimes are invented by men for men. She defines her situation as banishment. Nonetheless, in sonnet 23, she makes use of her banishment or isolation to her own advantage and subverts them to a pastime activity in which she can engage with her poetic inventions:

When euery one to pleasing pastime hies
Some hunt, some hauke, some play, while some delight
In sweet discourse, and musicke shewes ioys might:
Yet I my thoughts doe farr aboue these prize.
The ioy which I take is, that free from eyes
I sit and wonder at this day-like night,
So to dispose themselues as voyd of right,
And leaue true pleasure for poore vanities.
When others hunt, my thoughts I haue in chase;
If hauke, my minde at wished end doth flye:
Discourse, I with my spirit talke and cry;
While others musicke choose as greatest grace.
O God say I, can thes fond pleasures moue,
Or musicke bee but in sweet thoughts of Loue? (1-14)

Pastimes of hunting, hawking, and playing do not contribute to her poetic invention, but “the pleasures of the inward self” enable her to compose her sonnets (Fienberg, 1991: 176). The third quatrain displays how she “invents” her own sonnets and how she establishes a kind of subjectivity: While the others hunt, she follows her thoughts (line 9). Rather than music, discourse, and hawking, she prioritizes her inward self and aims to improve it. The speaker of the sonnet praises her own “thoughts,” and only her thoughts and inward contemplation empower her and reward her with poetic authority. Nona Fienberg interprets the speaker’s prioritization of the

inward self and thoughts as liberating: “Such a re-evaluation of courtly values offers liberation” because “[i]nstead of being the object seen or spoken of, she declares herself “free from eyes” and discoursing with her spirit” (1991: 176). Thus, the speaker’s valuing and prioritization of her own inward and private world rather than the public (court in this sonnet) liberate her and provide her with time and space to “invent” her poems.

Another equally important point is that the sonnet sequence, both a public and a courtly genre, conveys “social, political, and economic suits in the language of love” (Marotti, 1982: 399). In this respect, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* “seems to contest the place of a female speaker within that “public” tradition of Petrarchan verse” (Masten, 1991: 70). In the first sonnet, a dream vision, Pamphilia sees that Venus puts a burning heart in her breast, through which Pamphilia attains the authority as a Petrarchan speaker:

I saw; where sate bright *Venus* Queene of Loue
And at her feete her Sonne, still adding Fire
To burning hearts, which she did hold aboue,
But one heart flaming more then all the rest,
The Goddess held, and put it to my breast. (6-10)

As mentioned above, Lady Mary Wroth follows Petrarchan tradition in her sonnets. Similarly in this sonnet, she uses Petrarchan conceit of a “burning heart” (8), yet she changes it. The lover and the speaker of the sonnet is not a man, but a woman. As can be gathered from the very first sonnet, this sequence both employs the themes and technical achievements of the dominant sonnet tradition and also reacts against it. Her sequence displays how Lady Mary Wroth challenges women’s status in the Petrarchan discourse of love: “I waking hop’d as dreames it would depart/Yet since, O me, a Lover I haue beene” (13-14). In this sonnet, she claims herself as a sonneteer and approves her female authorship.

Lady Mary Wroth contests the women’s silent or *silenced* place in Petrarchan tradition with the persona of Pamphilia and creates herself a place as a sonneteer through the very tradition she refutes. However, this sequence does not seek any publicity; on the contrary, it is a “withdrawal from public signification” (Masten, 1991: 70). Privacy in her sonnets is suggested through familiar images of darkness, night, and sleep. However, the insertion of a heart to the breast of Pamphilia carries utmost importance as this heart symbolizes her authority as a sonneteer, and it may demonstrate the movement towards the inward:

The heart transplant . . . a recurrent image in the English tradition of Petrarchanism, but the insertion it signifies, the movement inward at this inaugural moment, recurs throughout the sequence as a withdrawal into an interiorized corporeal space: “now shut sayd she . . .” (Roberts qtd. in Masten, 1991: 70)

In Sonnet 22, Pamphilia likens herself to Indians: “Like the Indians scorched with the Sunne,/The Sunne which they doe as their God adore” (lines 1-2). However, Pamphilia prefers to “. . . weare the marke of Cupids might/ In hart as they in skin of Phoebus light,/Not ceasing offerings to Loue while I lieu” (lines 12-14). The sonnet sequence displays the gradual movement to the private and the withdrawal to the interiorized space. The sonnets, thus, express “a refusal

to speak in the public” rather than “the exhibitionist voice of traditional Petrarchan discourse” (Masten, 1991: 69).

In addition, while comparing herself to the Indians, the speaker of the sonnet 22 thematizes female authorship again. In fact, it is important to note that “Wroth stands out as an author who prioritiz[es] the topics in relation to women” (Aydoğdu Çelik, 2019: 36). It is not extraordinary for her to frequently employ the theme of female authorship. In the sonnet 22, due to “the marke” she carries, she acknowledges Cupid’s power and compares it to the rituals of Indians. Yet, she acknowledges that her worship merely results in “hopes vndone” (line 8):

Like to the Indians scorched with the Sunne,
The Sunne which they doe as their God adore:
So am I vs’d by Loue, for euermore
I worship him, lesse fauors haue I wonne.
Better are they who thus to blacknesse run,
And so can onely whitenesse want deplore:
[Then] I who pale and white am with griefes store,
Nor can haue hope, but to see hopes vndone. (lines 1-8)

The speaker believes that she receives less favour, and Indians’ reward is more satisfactory. She complains that at least “theyr sacrifices receav’ds in sight” (line 9) but hers must be “hid as worthless rite” (line 10). Wroth’s pun on her name “worth/wroth” and on her writing “rite/write,” signify “the intimate entanglement of the activity of writing and the creation of female subjectivity” (Fienberg, 1991: 187-188).

Furthermore, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* contains songs, which are strategically scattered among sonnets, most of which provide the transition among sonnets. In them, the speaker creates a community in which women read, write, and support each other’s works. In the songs, Venus, Night, Time, Fortune, Folly, and Philomela appear as authorities from mythology, allegory, and philosophy (Fienberg, 1991: 188). Due to the medium of songs used in the sonnet sequence, she asserts the female voice once more in a utopical vision by using these female figures as authorities. In her utopical community described in the songs, women empower each other and support their own poetic creativity and voices.

3.2. Crown Poems as the Symbol of Wroth’s Poetic Achievement

Another important detail about and a technical achievement of the sonnet sequence is Lady Mary Wroth’s crown poems. According to Miller’s definition,

corona circles back upon itself with questioning couplet of the fourteenth sonnet: “Soe though in Love I fervently doe burne,/In this strange labourinth how shall I turn?” (90). The question in the fourteenth line of the fourteenth sonnet echoes the question in the first line of the first sonnet, completing the circle only to continue it. (1996: 158)

To put it simply, a corona of sonnets is a circle in which each sonnet begins with the last line of the previous sonnet, and this circle is completed by the last sonnet going back to the first line of the first sonnet. In her poetic crown, Wroth “both appropriate[s] and transform[s] the

discursive techniques of her father's and uncle's poetic crowns" (Miller, 1996: 158). Moreover, the complex continuity of crown poems and the labyrinth image she employs in the sequence may suggest Lady Mary Wroth's endless struggles to establish a reputation for herself as a woman sonneteer (Miller, 1996: 158). Indeed, the crown poems denote a crown that Lady Mary Wroth crafted for her struggles, efforts, and achievements as a woman poet of her time.

CONCLUSION

In the English Renaissance period, which is marked by the Petrarchan sonnet tradition, Lady Mary Wroth claims a space for herself as a female sonneteer. The Petrarchan tradition prioritizes male lover over the female. While the male lover is able to express his emotions and experiences, the lady is only described as a passive object to be loved by the male lover. The male lover is the speaker of the sonnets and is free to articulate his love, peace, anger, and jealousy. However, the female lover remains silent, and her perspective is not given.

Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, a sonnet sequence, is also written within the dominant Petrarchan convention. She makes use of the traditional patterns and themes of the tradition. Nevertheless, Lady Wroth rewrites the dominant Petrarchan tradition's prioritization of the male lover and appoints Pamphilia, the female character, as the lover. In this manner, Lady Wroth as a female sonneteer gives voice to the female lover in this dominant masculine tradition. She both uses the conventions of Petrarchan tradition in her sonnets and also reacts against it within the convention by rewriting the roles of lover in the sonnet tradition.

To be able to confront the dominant convention, Lady Mary Wroth forms quite a few strategies, one of which is the use of her isolation. As she recounts in the sonnets in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, she does not follow common pastime activities and becomes isolated from her friends. Yet, she does not complain at her isolation; on the contrary, she makes use of it as an effective tool to find her own poetic voice. She transforms her isolation into an advantage to discover her poetic voice, and thanks to her isolation, she improves her female poetic voice.

In her isolation depicted in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, she also creates herself a literary space in which she establishes poetic authority for herself, and thereby she is able to subvert and rewrite the traditional themes disempowering the female lover. In this instance, she subverts the theme of constancy. Constancy is mostly given as a male virtue, and fickleness is a label put upon the women. However, Lady Wroth assigns the theme of constancy to Pamphilia, the female lover, instead of Amphilanthus, the male lover.

In conclusion, Lady Mary Wroth, a significant female literary figure of English Renaissance, both writes within and against the dominant Petrarchan sonnet tradition, which presents limited roles for female characters. In this context, Lady Wroth uses her position as a female sonneteer in the tradition and writes sonnets, the speaker of which is Pamphilia, a female lover. She rewrites the traditional motifs and themes used in the sonnets in a subversive manner and innovates them so as to liberate women from the limitations enforced by the tradition in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*.

Çıkar Çatışması Bildirimi

Yazar, bu makalenin araştırılması, yazarlığı ve yayımlanmasına ilişkin herhangi bir potansiyel çıkar çatışması beyan etmemiştir.

Destek/Finansman Bilgileri

Yazar, bu makalenin araştırılması, yazarlığı ve yayımlanması için herhangi bir finansal destek almamıştır.

Etik Beyan / Ethical Statement: Bu çalışmada bilimsel araştırma ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ayrıca çalışma boyunca yararlanılan eserlerin tamamının kaynakçada verildiği beyan olunur. Bu araştırma için etik kurul iznine ihtiyaç yoktur.

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