

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print

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Volume 42, Number 3, Summer 2019

Situating Conciliarism in Early Modern Spanish Thought  
Situier conciliarisme dans la pensée espagnole de la première  
modernité

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1066402ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1066402ar>

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Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Logan, K. (2019). Review of [Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42(3), 271–272.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1066402ar>

**Wroth, Lady Mary.**

***Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print*. Ed. Ilona Bell. Texts by Steven W. May and Ilona Bell.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 59 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 523. Toronto: Iter Press / Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017. Pp. xx, 310 + 11 ill. ISBN 978-0-86698-579-6 (paperback) US\$49.95.

Published in 1621, the sonnet collection *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* appeared at the end of Lady Mary Wroth's romance *The Countesse of Mongomerie's Urania*. Until fairly recently, this print version was believed to be virtually identical to the known holographic manuscript comprising only the sonnets. In *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print*, which appears only to scratch the surface in terms of the implications of its findings, editor Ilona Bell demonstrates just how problematic this belief was. The issue of censorship is certainly discussed as a cause for Wroth's omission of a number of poems in her published work, material appearing in her handwritten manuscript, and the editing and revising of other poems in the collection for the print version. Bell presents convincing evidence to show how the changes Wroth made between personal manuscript and public print edition sanitized the work and broadened its appeal to the general public, and ensured a warm reception and acceptance.

Ilona Bell and Steven May not only present an edition of Wroth's original manuscript but also offer a revealing comparison with the more frequently studied 1621 print edition. With gracious and diplomatic explanations, Bell examines why earlier editions fall short in terms of providing any comparison between Wroth's manuscript and printed versions of the poems. She also shows how Wroth's own revisions reflected societal expectation, personal revelation, and circumstances of writing, editing, and publishing.

Although Wroth's sonnets were published in 1621, this edition advances the possibility that they were actually written about fifteen years prior. If such is the case, then Wroth was something of a pioneer, or at the very least, she was fully immersed in the newest forms of writing at the time; sonnet writing is said to have reached its peak in England with the publication of Shakespeare's sonnets in 1609. It is perhaps fitting that the cause for delay in their publication was love, or rather, the writer's inability to fully realize the love she felt and expressed so fully through her writing. As was common at the time, Mary

Sidney was forced into an arranged marriage, becoming Lady Mary Wroth, and it was only after the death of her husband that she was finally able to express more openly her feelings for her cousin, William Herbert, with whom she later had two children. This relationship could not be fully embraced, however, as Herbert was also married.

Bell provides the original holographic manuscript transcribed as closely as possible in text alongside the published 1621 edition of Wroth's sonnets. This presentation and Bell's editorial analysis provide a revealing picture of the clever ways in which Wroth crafted her sonnets so as to be beautiful, enjoyable to read, and cathartic for her, without however betraying any hint of her own feelings for a man who was not her husband—except perhaps to the man himself to whom these sonnets were addressed or, more specifically, about whose love the sonnets mused autobiographically. The sonnets were ultimately coded love letters, unable to be deciphered by anyone but their intended recipient.

Aside from the reproduction of both the holographic manuscript and the 1621 print edition, Bell's work is a densely packed treasure trove of insights, with around a quarter of the volume consisting of discussion and analysis in the form of a chaptered introduction. Bell discusses a full raft of aspects relevant to the sonnets, from Wroth's life and the context in which she was writing, to how and when the work was produced, its audience, and the author's intentions. There is lengthy discussion of the editorial process Wroth undertook, the way she and her work were received, its autobiographical elements, and the extraordinary way in which Wroth honed her work for print, managing to retain original meaning without bringing shame upon herself and her family. Finally, there is a detailed explanation of the way both manuscript and print have been reproduced in this volume, providing a very clear list of any corrections or revisions made, of which there are few thanks to Bell's desire to adhere as much as possible to the original work. The sense of importance attached to providing the reader with the original text cannot be understated; this is one of its great strengths and will serve to ensure this volume quickly becomes the primary authoritative text for any scholar working on Lady Mary Wroth. It will be of interest to those working in early modern literary studies, particularly those with an interest in women writers, feminist theory, and editorial analysis of work in the period covering the emergence of print.