

Abstract

Mary Wroth is renowned as the first female poet to publish a complete sonnet sequence in England. In the time when she lived, “obedience,” “chastity,” and “silence” were the three virtues of women in a society where the custom of women writing poetry was uncommon, and furthermore, when she published her sonnet sequence in 1621, the popularity of sonnets was declining. In addition to the fact that the act of writing by women was not widely accepted, one of the reasons Wroth wrote and published her works using the sonnet form, which was no longer popular in the 16th century, could be attributed to the influence of her family, who were also poets.

This thesis demonstrates that Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* serves as an attempt not only to follow the legacy of the Sidney family, but also to establish her own literary identity and style. To explore this thesis, I establish the usage of corona within her sonnet sequence, provide readings of individual sonnets that illustrate particular ways of textual development, and examine the imagery of the circle as demonstrated throughout the sequence.

It consists of four chapters. The first chapter analyzes the corona used in two different genres, John Donne’s sonnets “La Corona” and Philip Sidney’s *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* to explore the characteristics of the corona form, which is essential in considering Wroth’s sonnet sequence. In the following chapter, I discuss Robert Sidney’s incomplete corona and Mary Wroth’s complete corona to analyze the association between theme and form in their works. In chapter III, I examine the female voice inherent in Philip Sidney’s sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* as a common reference to Wroth’s sequence. Chapter IV identifies Wroth’s experiments not only as a member of the Sidney

family, but also as a female poet, by examining three images developed in her corona: the labyrinth, the crown, and the miniatures.