

"Pamphilia to Amphilanthus" in Manuscript and Print. Mary Wroth.

Ed. Ilona Bell and Steven W. May. *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. xx + 310 pp. \$49.95.

This remarkable edition at least partially solves a mystery that has frustrated sonnet lovers for many years. Why, many of us wondered, did Philip and Mary Sidney's talented and spirited niece Mary Wroth, who penned a swingeing and devastatingly funny answer ("Hirmophradite in sense, in Art a monster . . . Mainly thus prove yourself the drunken beast") to Edward Denny's attack on *Urania*, write a sonnet sequence as tortured, awkward, and inhibited as the *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* printed in 1621? Admittedly, times were changing and the sonnet fashion was nearing its end, but that fact did not provide a satisfying answer. Ilona Bell, with the invaluable editorial help of Steven May, shows us that the answer to the question lies in Wroth's own autograph manuscript, preserved in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. This manuscript was not unknown to earlier scholars: Josephine Roberts consulted it for her important 1983 edition of Wroth's poems. But she, like others, "failed to recognize the significant, substantive differences between the Folger manuscript and the 1621 printed text" (8). And the transcriptions in the 2012 online edition of Wroth's poetry by Paul Salzman also "do not reproduce all Wroth's multistage revisions, which can be decoded only by studying Wroth's handwriting, magnifying digital images of the manuscript, and meticulously scrutinizing one correction after another" (8).

What emerges is an earlier, more private version of the sonnet sequence that much more boldly reflects Wroth's long liaison with William Herbert, its vicissitudes, and its passions. A good deal (though not all) of the 1621 edition's inhibited awkwardness is thus revealed as deliberate bowdlerizing or self-censorship, required, she appears to have thought, for a text intended to reach a wider public. Bell and May have done a magnificently scrupulous job in editing first the full manuscript and then the 1621 version, showing the changes in detail. Combined with Bell's learned and lively introduction recounting, also in detail, the relationship underlying the text, the double edition gives us not only a truly remarkable early seventeenth-century sonnet sequence, but also a gripping story of love, marriage, and family relationships in the context of early Jacobean society.

The edition appears as volume 59 of the Toronto series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, which makes it available and affordable for classroom use; yet its quality also makes it indispensable for serious scholarship. It is not entirely without drawbacks, though, in relation to both functions. Undergraduates will find the footnotes to the texts useful as far as they go; but faced with what even in the MS is an often dense and convoluted style, they may wish that the notes had contained a fuller explication. Scholars, on the other hand, reading that "the encoded drama of love and joy

punctuated by periods of distrust, jealousy, and anger that unfolds in ‘Pamphilia to Amphilanthus’ is far too protracted and convoluted to unpack here” (49), may wonder, “if not here, where?” And while an early footnote thanks Anne Lake Prescott for calling to the editors’ attention a parallel between Wroth and her Continental counterparts (such as Louise Labé in France and Gaspara Stampa or Veronica Franco in Italy), this is nowhere followed up, which is a pity, as it would have provided illuminating context.

These minor criticisms, though, in no way detract from the enormous, and enormously significant, achievement of this edition. It once and for all affords Mary Wroth her deserved place as a major writer (and not just a major woman writer) in the line—at the end of the line—of English Renaissance sonnet sequences, with sonnets, and perhaps even more, some of the songs, that linger in the memory with the authority of true quality. It is an achievement for which we should all be grateful.

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Ascent: Philosophy and “Paradise Lost.” Tzachi Zamir.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. x + 204 pp. \$49.95.

In this challenging and perceptive book, Tzachi Zamir departs from the main, historical stream of Milton studies to offer a serious interdisciplinary inquiry into the distinctive nature of *Paradise Lost*. Zamir focuses on “the differences between philosophy and literature rather than their synergy” (1) through chapters structured as a dialogue between a philosopher and an explicitly religious poet engaged in a figurative climb up the mountain of the poem. Beginning “At the Base Camp” and ending “At the Summit,” Zamir leads readers through five climbs, each with a corresponding crossroad, corresponding to paired religious and philosophical themes. The process is open-ended. As Zamir reminds us at the outset, “Deciding who is right involves first committing to an epistemic paradigm. In the clash we will be visiting, however, it is the very choice of a paradigm that is under dispute” (18).

The “Base Camp” offers an extended discussion of “Imagining,” which enjoys “unique status . . . within religious poetry” (21). In *Paradise Lost*, as to the religious believer, imagining is synchronic, functioning as “a form of knowing” (23); hence, what the philosopher understands as metaphorical, the believer apprehends as literal. This distinction underlies all stages of the climb. The first stage pairs “Wisdom” (the climb) with “Knowledge” (the crossroad), showing how the philosopher understands knowledge as a possession of the mind, while Milton envisions it as hosting, through which the believer makes contact with God. The second juxtaposes “Meaningful Action” with “Purchase.” Meaningful action is experiential and involves vitality,