

## *Sidney Journal*

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## **Preliminary**

### **Editor's Note: Special Issue on Romance**

This issue is dedicated to Victor Skretkowicz, who has been struggling bravely and with inspirational cheerfulness of spirit with the debilitating condition of ALS. The essays in this issue are drawn from a conference entitled "Romance" given in his honor and sponsored by the University of Dundee on October 5-6, 2007. We thank Chris Murray, Marion Wynne-Davies, and others for their role in putting on that conference. At that time, Helen Vincent presented Victor with the Jean Robertson Achievement Award for Sidney Studies. It seems only fitting to introduce this issue with Helen's eloquent remarks.

## HELEN VINCENT

A Tribute to Victor Skretkowicz: The Jean Robertson Lifetime Achievement Award for Sidney Studies.

It is highly appropriate that the first recipient of an award named after the editor of the *Old Arcadia* should be the editor of the *New Arcadia*.

It is impossible to condense a lifetime of achievement into a short speech, and it has indeed been a career which, in spite of such other activities as editing Florence Nightingale's letters and co-ordinating the *Dictionary of the Scottish Tongue*, has been devoted to promoting the Sidney cause. Victor is one of a generation of scholars whose dedication saw the establishment of a Sidney Society and a *Sidney Journal*, and a regular programme of conference sessions, so that Philip Sidney's place in the Renaissance literary canon has been assured and the other members of his family will be given due attention.

Rather than list all his achievements in chronological order – which would take too long – I'm going to talk about the different ways in which Victor has so greatly enhanced our understanding of the field. First, through his commitment to the texts: his 1987 edition of the *New Arcadia* is a monumental achievement which people like me, who have never known Sidney studies without it, almost cannot appreciate. To take this complex text, of which no holograph survives, subject to so much control by such concerned friends as the Countess of Pembroke and Fulke Greville, and to steer through the additions and deletions of the earliest surviving

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versions and deal with it according to the rigorous standards of textual criticism established by William Ringler and Jean Robertson – to cut through all of this and produce a clear text which has become the bedrock of so much modern criticism and research is a great work.

But Victor's commitment is not just to Philip Sidney: it extends to the other members of this remarkable family. In particular, the Sidney family contained some of the most notable women writers of the early modern period – Mary Sidney and Mary Wroth. Our own age has seen the increasing rediscovery of early modern women writers, and Victor has constantly supported the development of this field, treating women authors as writers on equal terms with men. So in terms of his commitment to the texts and to the authors, Victor deserves this award. But what he has done for Sidney studies transcends this in a way which no Research Assessment Exercise will ever capture.

Victor was one of the early enthusiasts in the formation of the Sidney Society, and international relations in the field were immeasurably helped by his great personal friendship with Gerry Rubio, an early editor of the *Sidney Journal*, which ensured that there was a regular transatlantic Sidneian dialogue.

Victor has been a keen participant in the conferences through which networks of Sidney scholars have developed, and his role as eager questioner, respondent, and critic, honestly disagreeing when necessary, and – a far more rare quality – kindly and constructively critical – has helped to advance Sidney studies over many years. Here I must acknowledge my own personal debt: it was at a conference on the Sidney family organised by Victor here at Dundee in 1996 that I gave my very first presentation at an academic conference, and both then and at other gatherings I have been inspired and enlightened by Victor's interest and advice, and watched him extend the same help to other new scholars.

And it is these qualities of encouragement and enthusiasm with which I would like to end. Victor's passionate commitment to Sidney studies has benefited us all – as an academic community, as individual scholars, and last but not least, as friends.

## **A Poetics of Romance**

ARTHUR F. KINNEY

*University of Massachusetts-Amherst*

The last extant poem of John Skelton, loyal Catholic priest and poet laureate under Henry VIII, was written in 1528. Entitled “A Replycacion,” it was an attack on two Cambridge students, Thomas Bilney and Thomas Arthur, who had recently been declared guilty of Lutheran heresy and required to abjure publicly and then to bear faggots to Paul’s Cross on the Feast of the Conception, 8 December 1527, as a visible sign of their recantation. Both had been members of an active circle in Cambridge dubbed “Little Germany.” Bilney, their leader, had in fact been licensed to preach throughout the whole diocese of Ely, neighboring Cambridgeshire, in 1525; by 1527, he was also preaching in and around London, this time neighboring Skelton who was then living in sanctuary in Westminster. Bilney opposed two beliefs Skelton especially cherished—the veneration of saints (including the Blessed Virgin) and the practice of pilgrimages, both central to Skelton’s poetry as well. The two young men were tried by an ecclesiastical tribunal that sat from 27 November to 7 December 1527 in the chapter house at Westminster and at the London residence of the Bishop of Norwich, Bishop Nikke. The punning title of Skelton’s poem, “A Replycacion,” holds five possible meanings: it is the reply of the plaintiff to the plea of the defendant; the rejoinder to the heretics on the behalf of the poet (and the faith he embodied); a repetition of the poet’s defense of beliefs he had proclaimed in a lifetime of writing poems; reverberations of Church doctrine; and a bringing together, a summing up, of the place of the sacraments and the work of the poet in the service of faith, justice, and truth. For Skelton the adherents of “Little Germany” had gathered frequently at the Three Cranes in the Vintry, Cambridge, to discuss ideas and to drink in ways that mocked the sacrament of the Eucharist, Bilney in particular sitting in his chair as a mockery of the bishop sitting on his throne, but without robes or mitre.

True to his lifelong practice of grounding all his poems in liturgical forms and scriptural references—poetry as figural art—Skelton noted in disgust “Howe yong scholers now-a-dayes embalmed with the flyblowen blast of the moche vayneglorious pipplyng wynde,” the phrase “flyblowen blast” taking his audience directly to Psalm 77 as the poem’s foundation:

Attend, O my people, to the law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter propositions from the beginning.

How great things have we heard and know, and our fathers have told us....

That they may put their hope in God and may not forget the works of God: and may seek his commandments.

That they may not become like their fathers, a perverse and exasperating generation.

A generation that set not their heart aright: and whose spirit was not faithful to God....

And they turned back and tempted God: and he grieved the holy one of Israel.

They remembered not his hand, in the day that he redeemed them from the hand of him that afflicted them:

How he wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Tanis.

And he turned their rivers into blood, and their showers that they might not drink.

He sent amongst them divers sorts of flies, which devoured them: and frogs which destroyed them.

And he gave up their fruits to the blast, and their labours to the locust.<sup>1</sup>

The “flyblowen blast” of the Cambridge youth, then, embodied the Lord’s own retaliation according to the Psalmist and their failure to recognize this exposed their ignorance of the very scripture they meant to foreground.

This was a typical Skeltonic technique. But so were Skeltonics, those dimeters and trimeters cascading down the page that, filled with rhyme, were easy for parishioners and readers to remember even as their rhythms were an imitation of Gregorian

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<sup>1</sup> *Sarum Missal in English*, trans. Frederick E. Warren (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray and Co., Ltd., 1913), 1-3, 7-8, 41-6.

chant, long a staple of worship in Holy Mother Church. When Skelton turns to this form of verse in “A Replycacion,” that part meant as mnemonic and so unforgettable, he changes to a more positive statement that can serve as his own poetics:

... there is a spyrituall,  
 And a mysteriall,  
 And a mysticall  
 Effecte energiall,  
 As Grekes do it call,  
 Of suche an industry,  
 And suche a pregnancy  
 Of hevenly inspyracion  
 In laureate creacyon,  
 Of poetes commendation,  
 That of divyne myseracion  
 God maketh his habytacion  
 In poetes whiche excelles,  
 And sojourns with them and dwelles.  
 By whose inflammacion  
 Of spyrituall instygacion  
 And divine inspyracion  
 We are kindled in suche facyon  
 With hete of the Holy Gost,  
 Which is God of myghtes most,  
 That he our penne doth lede,  
 And maketh in us such spede  
 That forthwith we must nede  
 With penne and ynke procede.<sup>2</sup>

In her recent study of the poet, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority*, Jane Griffiths reminds us that inspiration—what inspires the poet—“shares an etymological root with both ‘spirit’ and ‘spirare,’ to breathe: to be inspired [therefore] is to be filled with the breath of God and in turn to breathe forth his word.”<sup>3</sup> In Skelton’s lines here, “hevenly inspyracion” becomes “divine inspyracion,” the only word repeated in this passage, and meant to overpass “laureate creacyon” and “poetes commendation.” Skelton thus elevates both poetry and the poet—deliberately giving himself

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<sup>2</sup> *The Works of John Skelton*, ed. Robert S. Kinsman, ll. 3655-88. I worked from his MS; he died before he could publish his text.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Defining the Liberty to Speak* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 156.

(because of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost) more authority even than the abbot or bishop who tried the two young heretics. From Skelton's elevated perspective, he is interceding in the lives of Thomas Bilney and Thomas Arthur much as the Virgin Mary acts as intercessor for those who have remained faithful to her. In fact, this is the lesson of the Feast of the Conception, and Skelton draws on the Sequence for the Mass of that feast day to underscore the purpose of his poem:

O how happy, O how fair;  
 sweet to us, to God how dear,  
     hath this conception been!  
 Misery now is at an end,  
 mercy doth on earth descend,  
     for sorrow joy is seen.  
 A mother her new offspring bears,  
 from a new star new sun appears,  
     new grace doth all inspire;  
 The mother bears the generator,  
 the creature brings for the creator,  
     the daughter bears the sire.

And by denying the act of God that saved mankind, Bilney and Arthur deny not only the Blessed Virgin but Christ (and God's power) as well. Heresy, Skelton warns, is inseparable from damnation, while the intercession of the poets mirrors the possibility of heavenly intercession. Poetry, then, can be salvational, too, for Skelton.

Skelton, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was a fiercely loyal Catholic whose faith consistently put him at odds with the Bishop, the Archbishop, and finally Cardinal Thomas Wolsey whose immorality and betrayal of Holy Mother Church was equally heretical: hence Skelton's refuge in the sanctuary of Westminster. At the other end of the sixteenth century, an avowed recusant poet wrote a pamphlet-length tribute to the Virgin Mary in 1596: *Prosopopeia Containing the Teares of the holy, blessed, and sanctified Marie, the Mother of GOD*, "an intense religious rhapsody,"<sup>4</sup> according to N. Burton Paradise, on Luke 2:35: "*And moreouer, the swords shall pearce thy soule, that the thoughts of many hearts may be opened*" (A2) in which he promises that:

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<sup>4</sup> N. Burton Paradise, *Thomas Lodge: The History of an Elizabethan* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1931), 125.



In meditating with Marie, you shall finde Iesus: in knowing Christs sufferance, you shall be inflamed in his loue: in bearing his wordes, you shal partake his wisdome, which who inioineth, leaueth the world as transitorie, and seeketh after heauen for immortalitie. Heereon Augustine exclaimeth, Vnhappie is he that knoweth all things, & knoweth thee not: blessed is he that knoweth thee to despise all things. (A6<sup>v</sup>-A7)

We do not know precisely when or why Thomas Lodge, the son of two very devout Protestant parents, converted to Catholicism during the reign of Elizabeth I, but it seems likely to have been in the heavily Catholic atmosphere of Trinity College, Oxford. What is clear is that it was religion, as Edward Tenney has it, that “excited his imagination, and moved him to compose much of his best prose and poetry.”<sup>5</sup> The conversion was probably sometime before 1582, however, when Stephen Gosson, in replying to Lodge’s defense of plays in *Playes Confuted in Fiue Actions* in 1582 argues, according to the title-page, “that they are not to be suffred in a Christian common weale, by the waye both the Cauils of Thomas Lodge, and the Play of Playes” and dedicating this fulsome response to Lodge to Sir Francis Walsingham, the Queen’s chief intelligencer and prosecutor of Catholics. To the contrary, Lodge dedicated his own books throughout his career to possible patrons who were known Catholics: the Countess of Derby, the Countess of Cumberland, the Hare family; and he published books with his Catholic brother-in-law Edward White. On a voyage to the New World with Sir Thomas Cavendish, he stayed in a Jesuit monastery from 26 December 1591 to 3 February 1592, reading many of the books there; his own library contained a number of Catholic books including *The Flowers of Lodowicke of Granada*, a volume he brought back from Brazil and eventually translated and published in 1601. In addition, the Bodleian Library now has a manuscript of *Doctrina Christaãna lingua Brosilica*, an elementary textbook of Catholic doctrine designed for missionaries that is signed “Ex dono Thomae Lodge D. M. Oxoniensis qui sua manu e Brasilia deduxit.” His Catholic faith hounded him. In 1597, he left England for Avignon, where he studied medicine in a school located near the papal palace. He received his diploma the next year but stayed abroad to practice

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Andrews Tenney, *Thomas Lodge*. Cornell Studies in English (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1935), 104.

until 1600. He returned to England for a few months, and married Jane Aldred, a Catholic who had formerly married a double agent for Walsingham and the pope. He went into exile again. In 1602 he returned to England and tended to the sick and dying of the plague of 1603, risking his own life daily; but in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, after which Catholics were prohibited from practicing medicine, he went abroad again, this time to doctor Irish troops fighting in the service of Spain. Once again he returned to England in 1609, the Royal College of Physicians granting him the right to practice in 1610. Lodge's life was, therefore, much less settled than Skelton's, but both shared an enduring loyalty to Holy Mother Church that was instrumental to their poetry and their poetics.

Just as scripture was the allusive subtext behind Skelton's "Replycacion," Catholicism is the subtext too at the conclusion of *Rosalynde* (1590) where the protagonist's rebirth turns her magical promise into a miraculous presence, and metamorphoses a holiday into a holy day. Tying this Elizabethan romance to the pastoral mode and allowing the Reformation to have colored our expectations, we have lost sight of Lodge's language which carefully insists on a religious orientation in the poetics of a recusant author whose presentation must nevertheless be considerably subdued. In Lodge's hands, events are figural, leaning towards a Catholic view (and values) of iconicity. Thus, *Rosalynde*, he writes, is a figure of "grace," and the effect of her reappearance on others is likened to conversion.

*Garismond* seeing his daughter, rose from his seat & fel vpon her necke, vuttering the passions of his ioy in watry plaints driuen into such an extasie of content, that hee could not vtter one word. At this sight ... *Rosader* was both amazed and ioyfull.<sup>6</sup>

"An extasie of content"; "both amazed and ioyfull": these are conventional religious paradoxes of the time. *Rosalynde*'s relinquishment, too, is constructed to position itself as a rebirth: she unites father and daughter (and so family) and three pairs of lovers (and so marriages) to start, as it were, new lives. As with the more holy Resurrection, this renews by healing ruptures. But it is not Christ whom Lodge names. Wishing instead to show the

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde* (London, 1590), R3<sup>v</sup>. All citations from this work taken from this edition.

power of those capable of belief and faith to transform themselves so as to be reborn, Lodge introduces the pagan figure of Christ in the phoenix. This is choric: Sir John was the first “Phenix” for Lodge (B1<sup>v</sup>); Montanus is recast as the “Phoenix” (E4-F1) and now, at the last, the word is applied to Rosalynde (H3). Her ability to transform herself allows her to transform them in turn, and beyond that to teach others by example how to transform themselves. All dichotomies disappear—the familial, political, social, and class conflicts; the antitheses between court and country, envy and love, ambition and sacrifice, art and nature, idea and act. The multiple and divisive are unified, made One.

Taught by Rosalynde to look beyond and behind events, we can see how carefully Lodge has alluded to the Old Testament, as Skelton did, and the events they anticipate for the New Testament. The opening story of Saladyne and Rosader, the conflict that set the romance in motion, hews closely to the paradigmatic subtext in Cain and Abel.

But vnto Kain and his offrings he had no regarde:  
wherefore Kain was exceeding wroth, & and his countenance  
fel downe.

Then the Lord said vnto Kain, Why art thou wroth? and  
why is thy countenance cast downe?

If thou do wel, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou  
doest not well, sinne lieth at the dore: also vnto thee his desire  
*shal be subiect*, and thou shalt rule ouer him.

Then Kain spake to Habel his brother. And when they  
were in the field, Kain rose vp against Habel his brother, and  
slewe him.

Then the Lord said vnto Kain, Where is Habel thy  
brother? Who answered, I cā not tel. Am I my brothers  
keper?

Againe he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy  
brothers blood cryeth vnto me from the grounde.

Now therefore thou art cursed from the earth, which hath  
opened her mouth to receiue thy brothers blood from thine  
hand.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 2<sup>v</sup>, Genesis 4: 5-11. All citations will be from this edition.

An annotation to the seventh verse, the verse in which Cain slays Abel, refers specifically to the issue of primogeniture, one which affects Rosader (as in life, in fact, it affected Thomas Lodge, the youngest son of his family): “The dignitie of ye first borne is giuen to Kain ouer Habel.” This rupture of brotherhood lays the foundation for Christ’s great commandment which is redeemed in the spiritual fraternity urged in Galatians 5:13-16:

For brethren, ye haue bene called vnto libertie: onely vse not your libertie as an occasion vnto the flesh, but by loue serue one another.

For all the Law is fulfilled in one worde, which is this, Thou shalt loue thy neighbor as thy self.

If ye byte and deuoure one another, take hede lest ye be consumed one of another.

Then I say, walk in the Spirit, and ye shal not fulfill the lustes of the flesh.

This alignment of romance with scriptural text shows how a deep impulse of Lodge’s art was anagogic: the story of Rosader’s struggle with Saladyne, his conventional courtship with Ganymede, and his final union suggest likewise Augustine’s three Catholic ages of history—*ante legem*, *sub lege*, and *sub gratia*, the states of nature, law, and grace.<sup>8</sup>

Lodge’s continuation, if not culmination, of a Catholic poetics for romance in *Rosalynde* that is akin to the Catholic poetics Skelton forged in Henrician poetry was deliberate and consistent. As early as 1578, Lodge had written in his youthful “Defence of Poetry” that if anyone should

enquire of Cassiodorus, he will say that all the beginning of Poetrye proceeded from the Scripture. Paulinus, tho the Byshop of Nelanum, yet voutsafe[th] the name of a Poet; and Ambrose, tho he be a patriarke in Mediolanum, loueth versifing. ... Reade ouer Lactantius, his prooffe is by poetry; and Paul voutsafeth to ouerlooke Epimenides: let the Apostle preach at Athens, he disdaineth not of Aratus authorite. It is a pretye sentence, yet not so pretty as pithy, *Poeta nascibur, Orator fit*: as who should say, Poetrye

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<sup>8</sup> Augustine, “Of the Holy Trinity,” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, Mass.: Henrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999), III, 4-5.

commeth from aboue, from the heauenly seate of a glorious God, vnto an excellent creature man; an Orator is but made by exercise.<sup>9</sup>

Further on, he says still more conclusively, “I reson not that al poets are holy, but I affirme that poetry is a heauenly gift, a perfit gift, then which I know not greater plesure.”<sup>10</sup> This philosophical confluence with Skelton gives to both Sidney and Skelton a figural poetics that can be further aligned to the poetics that Lodge uses, throughout the 1590’s, as the basis for writing romance.

Skelton and Lodge can speak the same language, and a language commonly in use among writers of the sixteenth century, because the two trajectories they insist upon—inspiration coming down from above, transcendence rising up from the earthly—fit so neatly into other schemes made popular by the humanists; it does, as we shall see, nicely predict the dissimilar Protestant poetics of an author such as Sidney. George Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) thus begins by defining poetry as an “art not only of making, but also of imitation. And this science in his perfection can not grow but by some diuine instinct—the Platonicks call it *furor*” before explaining later at greater length, “arte is not only an aide and coadutor to nature in all her actions but an alterer of them, and in some sort of surmounter of her skill, so as by meanes of it her owne effects shall appeare more beautifull or straunge and miraculous.”<sup>11</sup> Three years earlier, in 1586, William Webbe had argued in *A Discourse of English Poetrie* that “the beginning of it, as appeareth by *Plato*, was of a virtuous and most deuout purpose,” but then broadens and flattens out the “beginning” of a poetics that includes romance by acknowledging that

This opinion shall you finde confirmed throughout the whole workes of *Plato* and *Aristotle*: and that such was the estimation of this Poetry at those times, that they supposed all wisdome and knowledge to be included mystically in that diuine instinction wherewith they thought their *Vates* to be inspired. Wherevpon, throughout the noble workes of those most excellent Philosophers before named, are the

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Lodge, “Defence of Poetry,” in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G.W. Smith. 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1904), I, 71.

<sup>10</sup> Lodge, “Defense,” in *Elizabethan*, I, 75.

<sup>11</sup> George Puttenham, “The Arte of English Poesie,” in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, II, 3, 188.

authorities of Poets very often alledged. And *Cicero* in his *Tusculane* questions is of that minde, that a Poet cannot expresse verses aboundantly, sufficiently, and fully, neither his eloquence can flowe pleasauntly, or his wordes sounde well and plenteously, without celestiall instinction: which Poets themselues doo very often and gladlie witnes of themselues, as namely *Ouid* in *6 Fasto: Est deus in nobis; agitante calescimus illo, etc.* Wherevnto I doubt not equally to adioyne the authoritye of our late famous English Poet who wrote the *Sheepheards Calender*, where, lamenting the decay of Poetry at these dayes, saith most sweetly to the same:

Then make thee winges of thine aspiring wytt,  
And, whence thou camest, flye back to heauen  
apace, etc.<sup>12</sup>

The reference is to the advice given to Cuddy in the October eclogue. Here Piers suggest the divine status of poetry as a means of fending off criticism; E.K. adds in the argument that

In Cuddy is set out the perfect pattern of a poet which, finding no maintenance of his state and studies, complaineth of the contempt of poetry and the causes thereof: specially having been in all ages ... of singular account and honour, and being indeed so worthy and commendable an art—or, rather, no art but a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both, and poured into the wit by a certain *enthousiasmos* and celestial inspiration.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the configurations of shepherd and sheep common in Spenser's *Calendar* and pastoral generally was especially conducive to—and strongly suggestive of—what Skelton had first introduced as both inspiration and transcendence, a kind of religious poetics that could easily—and did easily—accommodate romance. Robert Greene's contemporary romances, often ending

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<sup>12</sup> William Webbe, "A Discourse of English Poetrie," in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, I, 231-2.

<sup>13</sup> Edmund Spenser, "The Shepheardes Calendar," "October," in *Selected Shorter Poems*, ed. Douglas Brooks-Davies (London: Longman, 1995), 159. Quoted in Griffiths, *John Skelton*, 145.

in surprising turns of events, themselves seemingly miraculous in nature, while drawing on Greek works such as the *Aethiopian Historie* of Heliodorus (translated in English by Thomas Underdowne in 1577) goes back to its own classical source rediscovered by the humanist: a first-century essay dubbed “on the sublime” and attributed to Longinus. The “effect of genius,” this treatise maintains,

is not to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves. Invariably what inspires wonder casts a spell upon us and is always superior to what is merely convincing and pleasing. For our convictions are usually under our own control, while such passages exercise an irresistible power of mastery and get the upper hand with every ember of the audience.

Again inventive skill and the due disposal and marshalling of facts do not show themselves in one or two touches: they gradually emerge from the whole tissue of the composition, while, on the other hand, a well-timed flash of sublimity scatters everything before it like a bolt of lightning and reveals the full power of the speaker at a single stroke.<sup>14</sup>

This is the true meaning of the Feast of the Conception, of intercession; the restoration of Rosalynde; as well as Greene’s Pandosto recognizing in the face of his daughter Fawnia the resurrection of his own lost wife. The point I am making, then, is not just that a poetics of romance depends upon a double trajectory of inspiration and transcendence, crossing at a creative if abstract chiasmus, but that at the moment in which these lines intersect there is a dazzling flash of recognition. Built on as a preparation of faith and a willingness to believe and accept, the kind of Catholic poetics which Skelton employs helps us to see more clearly, and not through the glass darkly, that split second when romance is realized. It is a distinctly Renaissance form of romance, too, quite distinct from the chivalric romance that had characterized a substantially different medieval poetics of romance.

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<sup>14</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 1.4, as trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe for the Loeb Classical Library (New York, 1927), 125.

It is that transcendent, momentary flash, that abrupt illumination, that, for all of the anthology of sources pasted together in his *Apology for Poetry*, Sidney is missing. On the face of it, that hardly seems to be so. Early on he writes:

Neyther let it be deemed too sawcie a comparison to ballance the highest poynt of mans wit with the efficacie of Nature: but rather give right honor to the heauenly Maker of that maker, who, hauing made man to his owne likenes, set him beyond and ouer all the workes of that second nature, which in nothing hee sheweth so much as in Poetrie, when with the force of a diuine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing her dooings, with no small argument to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of *Adam*: sith our erected wit maketh vs know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth vs from reaching vnto it.<sup>15</sup>

If wit were translated into spirit, then this would sound like Skelton. Sidney comes ever closer to Skelton when he adds:

The chiefe both in antiquitie and excellencie were they that did imitate the inconceiuable excellencies of GOD. Such were *Dauid* in his Psalmes, *Salomon* in his song of Songs, in his Ecclesiastes, and Prouerbs, *Moses* and *Debora* in theyr Hymnes, and the writer of *Iob*; which, beside other, the learned *Emanuel Tremelius* and *Franciscus Iunius* doe entitle the poetically part of the Scripture. Against these none will speake that hath the holie Ghost in due holy reuerence. (I, 158)

Sidney may sound like Skelton because, while he traces such ideas from secular sources, the ideas are like Holy Mother Church, Roman for him in their origin.

Among the Romans a Poet was called *Vates*, which is as much a Diuiner, a Fore-seer, or Prophet, as by his conioyned words *Vaticinium* and *Caticinari* is

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<sup>15</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, "An Apologie for Poetrie," in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, I, 157. All quotations from this work will be taken from this edition.



manifest; so heauenly a title did that excellent people bestow vpon this hart-rauishing knowledge....and may not I presume a little further, to shew the reasonableness of this worde *Vates*? And say that the holy *Dauids* Psalmes are a diuine Poem? If I doo, I shall not do it without the testimonie of great learned men, bout auncient and moderne: but euen the name Psalmes will speake for mee, which, being interpreted, is nothing but songes. Then that it is fully written in meeter, as all Hebricians agree, although the rules be not yet fully found. Lastly and principally, his handeling his prophecy, which is meerely poetical. For what els is the awaking his musicall instruments; the often and free changing of persons; his notable *Prosopopeias*, when he maketh you, as it were, see God comming in his Maiestie. (I, 154-5)

Sidney's mind is wonderfully knowledgeable and fertile and perhaps anxiously inclusive and synthetic, for he would fuse a Platonic sense of the immaterial and transcendent—"God comming in his Maiestie"—with the concrete and local. He would fuse Platonic conceptions with Aristotelian *mimesis*, bringing God not only clambering down to earth but under the direction of the poet. Thus the poet is for Sidney, again, and again, not a seer but a maker, not a prophet but one who feigns, who makes by making up. The poet for Sidney is not Skelton's idea of an outlet for heavenly inspiration but, rather, one who creates by imitation. The poet is not only one who acts as a conduit but one who ranges freely through the zodiac of his own wit. That is why he is easily led into a digression on poets like Chaucer and examples like *Gorboduc* where, in the course of his *Apology*, human accomplishments displace holy transmissions. The plain truth, that Sidney comes to realize but does not tell us, is that Plato and Aristotle do not make fully companionate bedfellows. And faced with this dilemma that fundamentally disjoins his *Apology* and threatens to undermine it, for Skelton would never be content with Aristotelian *mimesis* nor would Lodge, his conclusion, or more properly his *peroratio*, is witty and self-mocking:

I coniure you all that haue had the euill lucke to reade this incke-wasting toy of mine, euen in the name of the nyne Muses. ... To beleeeue, with me, that there are many misteries contained in Poetrie, which of

purpose were written darkely, leas by prophane wits it should bee abused. To beleeeue, with *Landin[o]*, that they are so beloued of the Gods that whatsoeuer they write proceeds of a diuine fury. Lastly, to beleeeue themselves, when they tell you they will make you immortall by their verses.

Thus doing, your name shal flourish in the Printers shoppes; thus doing, you shall bee of kinne to many a poeticall Preface; thus doing, you shall be most fayre, most ritch, most wise, most all; you shall dwell vpon Superlatiues. (I, 205-6)

Rather than provide that sudden shock of disclosure, Sidney's *Apology* circles back to its beginning where "the fertlnes of the Italian wit" of John Pietro Pugliano at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor

sought to enrich our mindes with the contemplations therein which hee thought most precious...Hee sayd, Souldiours were the noblest estate of mankinde, and horsemen the noblest of the Souldiours. Hee sayde they were the Maisters of warre, and ornaments of peace; speedy goers, and strong abiders; triumphers both in Camps and Courts. ... Skill of gouernment was but a Pedanteria in comparison. (I, 150)

Sidney adds that if he had not been careful, "I think he would have perswaded mee to haue wished my selfe a horse," even punning on his own name *Philip*. The mockery is meant to distract us, to paste over a fundamental fracture in his theory which even the likes of Gosson had avoided. Calling in the end on morality rather than inspiration or imitation, Sidney's apology falters into compromise.

This is, in a way, unexpected from someone who can be wise as well as merely clever. Perhaps he was at some level unconscious of what he had said: the *Apology*, written in response to Gosson in 1579 or 1580, came at a time when his own strong Puritan leanings caused him to write a letter of protest to the Queen lest she marry a Catholic and make him a close ally of his uncle, Leicester, the leader of the right on the Queen's Privy Council. If so, battling the sacraments and liturgies of a discredited Holy Mother Church, he held even the Roman sense of *vates*, at some deep level, with a degree of suspicion. If so, he recovered quickly enough, in the *Old Arcadia* which may (or may not) have been resurrected itself to conclude *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*

of 1593. There the cousins Pyrocles and Musidorus live through a dark night of the soul after Pyrocles' father Euarchus condemns them and repudiates their excuse of love in the death of Basilius. That night in prison—presumably their final night in their vale of tears—they have that inspired moment of hope for themselves and for each other. “Voide of sensible memory, or memoratiue passion,” Sidney writes, speaking for them, “we shall not see the colours, but lifes of all things that haue bene or can be: and shall (as I hope) knowe our friendship, though exempt from the earthly cares of friendship, hauing both vnited it, and our selues, in that high and heauenly loue of the vnquenchable light,”<sup>16</sup> embodied conduits of just that heavenly inspiration Skelton and Lodge assigned to their art. The next morning

*Euarchus* that felt his owne miserie more then they, and yet loued goodnesse more than himselfe, with such a sad assured behauior as Cato killed himselfe withal, when he had heard of the vttermost of that their speech tended vnto: he commaunded againe they should be caried away, rising vp from the seate (which he would much rather haue wished should haue bene his graue) and looking who would take the charge, whereto euerie one was exceeding backward (Rr1<sup>v</sup>).

And then comes the flash of illumination.

But as this pitifull matter was entring into, those that were next the Dukes bodie, might heare from vnder the veluet wherewith he was couered, a great voice of groning. Whereat euerie man astonished (and their spirits appalled with these former miseries, apt to take any strange conceit) when they might perfectly perceiue the bodie stirre. Then some began to feare spirits, some to looke for a miracle, most to imagine they knew not what. But *Philanax* and *Kalander*, whose eyes honest loue (though to diuerse parties) held most attentiu, leapt to the table, and putting off the veluet couer, might plainly discerne, with as

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<sup>16</sup> *The Countess of Pembrokes Arcadia* (London, 1598), PPI<sup>r</sup>. All quotations from this work will be taken from this edition and inserted parenthetically in the text.

much wonder as gladness, that the Duke had lived.  
(Rr1<sup>v</sup>).

By relying entirely on human law and human reason, both Euarchus and Philanax put all their trust and belief into what their senses have told them, to the limitations of human knowledge. But in their dark night in the prison, Pyrocles and Musidorus have gone beyond human knowledge and are prepared now, as Euarchus and Philanax are not, for the wondrous miracle of Basilius' recovery, a resurrection that shatters mere case-hardened law. Euarchus, locating constancy in self-certainty and human understanding only, has no capacity for such wonders whereas Pyrocles and Musidorus, transcending human limitations through love (as Gynecia, Pamela, and Philoclea transcend actuality through prayer and Basilius transcends it through prophecy) *are* prepared. The Puritan Sidney's Basilius is exacting in his analogy to the Catholic Lodge's Rosalynde. The extraordinary gift of the genre of romance, then, is that it can accommodate both classical and Christian resources and abide Catholics and Protestants alike. No other genre of the Renaissance was so adept (unless we think of Spenserian lyric) and none, including that lyric, so ranging, so penetrating, and so provocative.

In *A Fig for Momus* (1595), Thomas Lodge establishes as his theme, "To trauell on to true felicitie."<sup>17</sup> Epistle 5 is addressed to a fellow Protestant poet, Michael Drayton, and goes like this:

Oh let that holy flame, that heauenly light,  
That led old *Abrahams* race in darkesome night:  
Oh let that star, which shining neuer ceast  
To guide the Sages of balme-breathing East,  
Conduct they Muse vnto that loftie pitch,  
Which may thy style with praises more enrich. (H3)

That is the poetics of romance.

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Lodge, *A Fig for Momus* (London, 1595), E4.

## Philip Sidney and the Idea of Romance

ROBERT E. STILLMAN  
*University of Tennessee, Knoxville*

Romance (the making of golden-world fictions) is what Philip Sidney liberates from history by waging “a civil war among the Muses.”<sup>1</sup> That war is waged within the core arguments of his *Defence of Poesy* in characteristic Sidneian style, ironically and irenically. Controversy among disciplines—rival muses contend for the prize of best targeting the scope of learning—is dispelled by the near-magical transmutation of difference. Philosophy and history are not so much defeated by their rival poetry as they are absorbed and transformed. Seizing upon the “Idea” from the one and the “example” from the other, and mending each as he melds both, Sidney pronounces poetry, in its cosmopolitan inclusiveness, monarch over all the muses.<sup>2</sup> Not a corpse in sight: Sidneian irony in the service of irenicism. My argument, briefly put, is that the inclusiveness of Sidney’s resolution to this disciplinary warfare is crucial to comprehending the romance of his romance—both his poetics in the *Defence* and his practice in the *Arcadias*. It is crucial because that irenic resolution (silly war among mere muses as it seems) reflects as it enables the principled inclusiveness of his public commitments, pious and political.

History might help to turn this quick byplay with critical abstractions into a point with a purpose. In November of 1579, there was an exchange of correspondence between two of Philip Sidney’s most intimate intellectual companions. That exchange took shape most importantly in a letter written to Hubert Languet

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<sup>1</sup> *An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (Edinburgh: Nelson and Sons, 1965), 96. All further quotations from the *Defence* will be cited parenthetically in the text by page number. I hasten to identify “romance” (in this argument) as the making of golden-world fictions in order to clarify a generic marker foreign to Sidney’s critical vocabulary in terms that are intelligible from his poetics.

<sup>2</sup> I capitalize Sidney’s word “Idea[s]” here and elsewhere in relation to the *Defence* because it is a term of art, whose precise meaning is subject to definition as the argument proceeds. Ideas are exemplified—made substantial in poetry—as notable images of virtue and vice. For an extended study of Sidney’s “Idea,” see my essay, “The Scope of Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy*: The New Hermeneutics and Early Modern Poetics,” *English Literary Renaissance* 32 (2002): 355-85.

(Sidney's paternally and passionately devoted mentor during his years of travel on the Continent) by Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (Sidney's brilliantly accomplished role model and friend).<sup>3</sup> Mornay's letter has elicited few remarks from Sidney scholars, in spite of its telling commentary on the dicey business of Francis, the Duke of Anjou's wooing of Queen Elizabeth I and poor John Stubbs's reduction to a pun—he lost his hand for having publicly opposed the marriage—and in spite of the letter's still more telling reflections about what Sidney calls in the *Defence* the war among the muses: his prosecution of hermeneutic combat against the disciplinary claims of history and philosophy as serving sciences, rivals among species of knowledge more *and* less fit for service to the cause.<sup>4</sup> My argument begins, then, by redressing that inattention.

Languet and Mornay are names readily familiar to Sidney scholars—Languet as the counselor chiefly responsible for Sidney's political training in the cause of Reformed Christianity, and Mornay as the probable exponent of the century's most famous (and infamous) defense of tyrannomachy, his *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, with its legitimation of violence against what Reformers generally regarded as the chief threat to their cause, sovereigns seduced by Tridentine Catholicism.<sup>5</sup> Beyond those familiar portraits, the letter affords an instructive reminder about what is less frequently recalled by Sidney scholars: the pair's distinctive intellectual identities as humanists, scholars trained in the *studia humanitatis*.<sup>6</sup> By the late 1570s, as the author of the *Remonstrance* and the *Traicté de l'Eglise*, Mornay had already

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<sup>3</sup> Lettre... à M. Languet, 15 November, 1579, *Mémoires et correspondance de Duplessis-Mornay* (Paris: Treuttel and Wurtz, 1824-25), II, 80-8.

<sup>4</sup> For a concise account of the complex political events surrounding the publication of Stubbs's work and the circulation of Sidney's letter, see Peter Beal, "Philip Sidney's Letter to Queen Elizabeth and that 'False Knave' Alexander Dicsone," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700* 11 (January 2002), 1-51.

<sup>5</sup> For scholarly introductions to both, see Beatrice Nicollier-de Weck, *Hubert Languet (1518-1581), un réseau politique international de Melanchthon à Guillaume d'Orange* (Geneva: Droz, 1995) and Roger Kuin, "Sir Philip Sidney's Model of the Statesman," *Reformation* 4 (1999), 93-117.

<sup>6</sup> I use the term "humanist" in the specific sense recovered by Paul Oskar Kristeller in reference to the *studia humanitatis*, the study of grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy—especially in Latin and Greek: "Renaissance humanism was not as such a philosophical tendency or system, but rather a cultural and educational program," *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic and Humanist Strains* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 10. See also Ton Hoenselaars's introduction to *Challenging Humanism: Essays in Honor of Dominic Baker-Smith*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars and Arthur F. Kinney (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005).

established himself as one of the Huguenots' most adept polemicists and most philosophically astute apologists. By contrast, Languet never published a book under his own name, but as Beatrice Nicollier-de Weck's still-too-neglected biography makes clear, he was widely regarded as among the most distinguished humanists of his day, partly because of his expertise in history (in his early years he labored on the *Magdeburg Centuries*), and partly because of his extraordinary service as a facilitator of correspondence among the elites of the Reformed north and his close companionship with several of the Reformers' most influential printers, including Andreas Wechel. In turn, Languet was responsible for the publication of a variety of books absolutely central to Sidney's career. It was Languet who guided through Wechel's publishing house Joachim Camerarius's translation of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, with its celebration of that hero Cyrus, idealized prince and godly liberator, who became the single most frequently cited exemplar of virtuous action in Sidney's *Defence*.<sup>7</sup> It was Languet, too, who urged the Latin translation and republication of Mornay's *De la verité* as the *De veritate religionis Christianae*, the single most comprehensive expression of those religious beliefs central to Sidney's ecumenically inclusive piety; and it was Languet to whom the Latin text was dedicated after his death in 1581.<sup>8</sup> And whether or not he had a hand in the book's authorship (and that authorship is still a matter of dispute), it was from Languet that the anti-tyrannical, natural law politics of the *Vindiciae* descended as a conceptual inheritance to the twin Philips, Mornay and Sidney.<sup>9</sup> Languet's labors as a humanist mattered to a wide network (Nicollier de Weck's "réseau") among the educated elite of northern Europe, and they mattered especially to Philip Sidney.

Within this correspondence of November 1579, then, Languet and Mornay write not only as politically minded proponents devoted to the success of the Reformed cause, but also

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<sup>7</sup> *Xenophontis Atheniensis de Cyri Regis Persarum Vita atque Disciplina, Libri VIII* (Paris: Andreas Wechel, 1572). For a study of Wechel's publishing house, see R. J. W. Evans's *The Wechel Presses: Humanism and Calvinism in Central Europe, 1572-1627* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> *De veritate religionis Christianae liber...Gallice primum conscriptus, Latine versus, nunc autem ab eodem accuratissime correctus* (Lugduni Batavorum: Christopher Plantin, 1587; 1st publ., 1581).

<sup>9</sup> See Hugues Daussy's recent political biography, *Les Huguenots et Le Roi: Le combat politique de Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, 1572-1600* (Geneva: Droz, 2002). For Languet's shaping power over the young Mornay, see 52-6, and 149, where Daussy summarizes their shared political principles.

as humanists committed (each with his own distinctive preference) to the muse of history and philosophy as vehicles for the success of that cause. It would be easy to mistake the letter's commentary on Stubbs's fate as a digression, appearing late in the letter as it does, almost as an afterthought. Stubbs was clearly one of "les nôtres," one of our own, to use Languet's frequent locution. His fate in opposing Elizabeth's marriage by publishing the *Gaping Gulph*, a rant fulminating against the impiety of the proposal, was (just as clearly) horrifying to his co-religionists on the Continent. Sidney himself had also written to oppose the marriage to Anjou, but he did so in safer, more private, chaste and chastening prose.<sup>10</sup> Stubbs was clearly allied to the common cause, then. Yet, most clearly of all, the publication of Stubbs's text was something that Mornay and Languet regarded as undesirable, even as an embarrassment: "car les libelles fameux ne se doivent pas ainsi mettre a tous les jours" (because notorious pamphlets should not in this manner be spread abroad).<sup>11</sup> It is the rhetorical excess of Stubbs's polemical discourse that troubled Mornay, and that he could readily assume Languet would abhor in turn. The *Gaping Gulph* dedicates itself to the incendiary proposition that Elizabeth's marriage to a French Catholic is a sin, and that "the high sin of a highest magistrate, done and avowed in open sun, [shall] kindle the wrath of God and set fire on church and commonweal."<sup>12</sup> Stubbs's xenophobia played badly for the Burgundian Languet and the Frenchman Mornay, as did what had become, quite literally, the out-of-court biblicism of his over-heated rhetorical fulminations.

When Mornay turns late in his letter to Languet to comment upon Stubbs's *Gaping Gulph*, the shift in topics is apparent rather than real. The point of mentioning Stubbs is to illustrate the perils of partisanship, the mismanagement of ideas in a culture where polemicism could only exacerbate the very confessional divisions whose proliferation militated against the

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<sup>10</sup> Sidney's moment of indulgence in his "Letter to the Queen" as he sneers at that Jezebel of France, Catherine de Medici, highlights by contrast the chaste—rhetorically restrained—natural law argumentation of the prose at large.

<sup>11</sup> Lettre ... à M. Languet, *Mémoires*, II, 83. Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 114 notes the opposition to Stubbs's tract (as "an imprudent act of provocation") within Languet's circle, but does not question the reasons for it.

<sup>12</sup> *John Stubbs's Gaping Gulf with Letters and Other Relevant Documents*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 20.



triumph of the church.<sup>13</sup> The matter of Stubbs's partisanship is no digression, then—and attention to his fate not a simple piece of noteworthy news to report. Read from beginning to end, Mornay's letter to Languet has one principal issue to explore: how to devise a pragmatic—an eloquent and politically serviceable—means of writing that might enable the restoration of the true church, and his commentary about Stubbs is a fully apt illustration of the argument at large.

Mornay's criticisms of the *Gaping Gulf* exemplify the awareness among Sidney's closest friends of a public domain inside which the circulation of texts—in manuscript as in print—carries a persuasive, even a determinative power to influence events in the larger realm of international politics. Ideas matter in an ideological world and correspondingly, how one chooses among modes and methods for articulating ideas became a subject of considered reflection within this body of politically active, rhetorically astute intellectuals. Mornay's letter itself begins as a response to a letter from Languet urging him to write a history of the Christian religion that would have “pour principale matiere et *per se* la restauration de la vraie relligion en nos temps, apres tant de confusions dont l'ignorance des siecles precedens l'avoit remplie” (for its principal matter and purpose the restoration of the true religion in our times, after such great confusions with which ignorance had so filled the preceding ages).<sup>14</sup> What the mentor Languet wanted from his pupil Mornay—as a reflection of his own politics of intellectualism, his epistemic optimism about the power of ideas to shape minds, and therefore events—was a more comprehensive version of Johann Sleidan's phenomenally popular history of the wars of the Smalkaldan League.<sup>15</sup> Mornay, however, refused to write that history, as he explains in detail, because (he argues) of the impossibility while narrating events and their causes of appearing both truthful and unbiased. Captive to the truth of a foolish world (as Sidney would say), imprisoned by mere contingency, the historian-like Sleidan is dismissable as the

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<sup>13</sup> R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550-1750* (New York: Routledge, 1989) is a useful introduction to the politics of the “Confessional Age.” For the question of a “public domain” in Elizabethan England, see Peter Lake and Michael Questier, “Puritans, Papists, and the ‘Public Sphere’ in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context,” *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (September 2000), 587-627, esp. 589-90, 623-5.

<sup>14</sup> Lettre de M. Duplessis à M. Languet, 15 November 1579 in *Mémoires*, II, 81.

<sup>15</sup> On Sleidan's politics and popularity, see Thomas A. Brady, *The Politics of the Reformation in Germany: Jacob Sturm (1489-1553) of Strasbourg* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997).

polemical partisan “par plusieurs de passion” (by an excess of passion). Historians fare no better than polemical hacks like Stubbs, Mornay replies in polite, but pointedly oppositional prose. To bring about “the restoration of the true religion,” Mornay writes, one must remedy passion by speaking the truth without blazoning one’s own colors—without waving the flag of one’s own confessional identity.<sup>16</sup> Amidst a crisis of cultural warfare, contaminating the body politic by impassioned books, against the historian Languet, Mornay argues by example for the chaste and chastening superiority of philosophy—an argument embodied in the philosophically reasoned piety of the *De veritate* and the conceptually sophisticated politics of the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*. Once more that piety and those politics mirror the logic of Sidneian poetics, as a species of philosophical argument, which at the very moment that it enables the logic of romance (as I will show) finds its own philosophical power subsumed by a muse claiming superior authority. But to make that point about poetry’s triumph over philosophy in the *Defence* is to race too quickly to the end of a war whose beginnings require more attention still. Mornay’s philosophy was so enabling to the romance logic of Sidney’s poetics because both have in common a perception of cultural crisis as a crisis of discourse, and because both have recourse to what might be termed (seriously and playfully) a dual-directioned, retro-Platonic, textual machine—a discursive trampoline of the piously political, if you like, whose design to leap from history to Ideas is calculated from the first to enable a leap back into history.<sup>17</sup> This is an argument that requires some clarification.

The pseudonymous Cono Superantius prefaces the *Vindiciae*’s account of those duties that bind prince and people by locating the source of those reciprocal duties, as the twin constants of the argument’s unfolding, in “God and nature.”<sup>18</sup> From these

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<sup>16</sup> Lettre ... à M. Languet, *Mémoires*, II, 81.

<sup>17</sup> For Sidney as a “retro-Platonist,” see William Craft, *The Labyrinth of Desire: Invention and Culture in the Work of Sir Philip Sidney* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1994). I would argue that a “retro-Platonist”—a Platonist determined to put the Idea into historical service—is no true Platonist at all. For Sidney’s transformation of Plato’s mimesis into a different poetics, see John C. Ulreich’s “‘The Poets Only Deliver’: Sidney’s Conception of Mimesis,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 15 (1982): 67-84.

<sup>18</sup> *Vindiciae, contra tyrannos: or concerning the legitimate power of a prince over the people, and of the people over a prince*, trans. George Garrett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 11. All citations to this work will be included parenthetically within the text. The best introduction to political philosophy in the northern Renaissance is Quentin Skinner’s *The Foundations of Modern Political*

constants, Mornay derives his twofold analysis of the origins of kingship. Kingship is considered both as a covenant and as a contract, in relation to divine law and to natural law, depending on the *summa*, the main aim or scope of those questions raised about it. Mornay's proceeding, then, is that of the philosopher, not the historian. His analysis of origins is logical, not factual. First, kingship is analyzed as a covenant established among God, prince, and people, which delimits popular obedience in respect to princely abrogations of divine law; and second, he analyzes kingship as that contract established between the prince and the people, which fixes the conditions under which tyrants can be resisted and the duty of foreign princes to intervene on behalf of "pure religion" and the oppressed. The logical connection that binds covenant to contract—that demands a necessary connection between the divine and the human—is the philosophical interpretation of natural law that informs Mornay's argumentative matter. In his Christian Aristotelianism, "law is a mind, or rather, a gathered multitude of minds. For the mind is a particle of the divine breath, and he who obeys the law is seen to obey God and, in a certain way, to make God his judge" (98). Scriptural arguments about the covenant among God, prince and people (Questions One and Two) are underwritten consistently by reference to classical moral philosophy and contemporary history. In turn, political arguments about the contract between prince and people (Questions Three and Four) are persistently supported by biblical interpretations and by patristic and scholastic authorities. As the Preface proclaims, Mornay's double "method of teaching," by proceeding from "causes and major propositions" to "effects and consequences," renders kingship

visible and comprehensible, as if ascending through certain degrees to the peak (*ad summa*) so that in the manner of geometers—whom he seems to have wanted to imitate in this matter—from a point he draws a line, from the line a plane, and from the plane he constitutes a solid. (10)

This is the mathematics of monarchy, a visual hermeneutics of kingly law and duty.

Mornay's philosophical sophistication in applying natural law theory against tyranny is best displayed in a core passage from his third *quaestio*'s analysis of "What the Purpose of Kings Is." He layers text upon text in characteristic humanist fashion, moving from a brief citation of Aesop's fable about the horse who allows himself to be mounted for defense against a boar; to Augustine's reflections on the charitable economy of the natural household, in which husbands command wives, and parents children, not with "arrogance," but "with compassion in providing"; to Seneca's description of the golden age, which featured "wise men" acting as kings to protect the weak from the strong and to rule "out of duty [officium], not ... regality [regnum]"; to Cicero's account about the genesis of kingship from "conflicts ... about the ownership of things [among] citizens"; to the demand of "the people of God" in I Samuel viii for a king who would insure "that indeed right should be done to all equitably" (92-4). Sacred and secular, philosophical and poetic, erudite and popular literature are assembled in a highly allusive, compact fashion accommodating traditional authorities for a presentist political purpose. All these assembled authorities authorize the destruction of tyrants who defy that single natural law illustrated comprehensively: "the one purpose of command is the people's welfare" (93).

When Mornay considers "the purpose of kings," he does so without reference to contemporary political debates or political disasters—no St. Bartholomew's Day massacres are brought into view—and he writes, too, without reference to theological or religious differences. Law, divine and natural, chastens the tyranny of self-love and self-loving sovereigns, as the "perfect image of the governance of kingdoms ... a legitimate, chaste, and blameless matron without ... excessive adornment" (8). The perfect kingdom, then, is a Lucretia purged of the ravages of Tarquinius Superbus, and the perfect political hero, Lucius Junius Brutus—Tarquin's nemesis and the chief tyrannicidal namesake of the *Vindiciae*'s pseudonymous author, Stephanus Junius Brutus.

Liberated from history and from those passions that contaminate the realm of events, Mornay is set free amidst the golden age speculations of Senecan philosophy and the Augustinian vision of a natural economy to render true "kingship"—the Idea of kingship as it should be, not as it is—"visible and comprehensible" to the reader. (Intimations of the *Defence*!) It hardly needs arguing, of course, that this chaste retreat from history, party-political controversy, and confessional wrangling is driven by a desire to engage with history. Mornay's *Vindiciae* is a vehicle for liberating the oppressed, both a call to

arms to the faithful and an appeal to moderates on both sides of the confessional divide for the toleration that would obviate the necessity of that call. It is a calculated, strategic, and brilliant response to the new politics of confessionalism that dominated Europe—interventionist discourse (romantic philosophy, if you will) rescuing Ideas from mere ideology. The trampoline leap from history is sprung from the particulars of his historical place, and designed from the start to intervene against the tyranny ravaging that very history from which it springs.

Place matters to Sidney's poetic ruminations on romancing. Placement matters in Sidney's location of Lucretia as the *Defence's* first illustration of Sidney's complex argument about imitation, poetry's chastening of history's tyrants, and its chaste undoing of the tyranny of history. The placement of that exemplary history, then, is rhetorically significant just as its conjunction of historical event and poetic-making appears characteristically purposeful. As the rape of Lucretia marked the genesis of Rome's freedom from tyranny—it was the historical occasion motivating Brutus to extinguish the line of Tarquin—that rape secures in Sidney's text the foundation for a detailed account of how the "right poet" writes. While historically Lucretia's story marks the beginning of the Roman republic, here poetically in the *Defence* her story marks the moment of genesis for an argumentatively telling illustration of how mimesis operates.<sup>19</sup>

Adopting as an analogy the practice of "the more excellent" painter who avoids merely counterfeiting "such faces as are set before" him, Sidney illustrates how mimesis ought to work by asking his readers to extrapolate an ideal poetic practice from the example of the painter (102). Set free from history (unlike those historical and philosophical poets confined "within the fold of the proposed subject"), the right poet ranges with "no law but wit ... into the divine consideration of what may be and should be," portraying a Lucretia similarly free from historical constraint (102). She is represented not as she appeared in life, but as the "outward beauty" of her chastity (102). Her chastity is the "Idea" from which the speaking picture is made, a universal whose reality is guaranteed by the access of the erected wit to truths that transcend the always corrupt, always mutable world of historical events. In Sidney's version of the story, Lucretia is liberated twice,

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<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed study of Sidney's use of the Lucretia story in the *Defence* and its relationship to his anti-tyrannical politics, see my essay "The Truths of a Slippery World: Poetry and History in Sidney's *Defence*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 (2002), 1287-1319.

both times by the agency of her own virtue. In one instance, her chastity frees her from the tyranny of Tarquin (“when she punished in herself another’s fault”) and in a second instance, that chastity frees her from the tyranny of historical verisimilitude (when the speaking picture declines to copy her body in order to imitate her virtue) [102]. So often when Sidney writes about poetic action in idealizing terms, he does so with figures of the chaste body: in the portrait of Lucretia, in the repetition of Agrippa’s tale about the divided body politic, and in the complementary stories of David’s lust for Bathsheba’s body and Nathan’s healing fiction. The chastening of the body—its government, its discipline, and its purgation—goes hand-in-hand with Sidney’s desire to liberate history from tyranny.<sup>20</sup> It joins hands too with Sidney’s desire to chasten the discourse of the public domain, to free Ideas from contamination by tyrannical passions.

Placement matters, too—to move from poetics to poetry—in that first of the *Arcadias*, where Lalus’s chaste marriage to Kala (poet-boy Lalus wins beauty-girl Kala from history-chump Histor), as the matter of third book’s Eclogues, placed right at the heart of the romance’s five books. And at the heart of the heart of those Eclogues is Philisides’s own beast fable, with its “highest notes” to godliness raised, its jump concord between wit and will in the mind, emblemizing (Sidney style) what Mornay would script as *quaesti*—a politics of intellectualism indeed. Sidney’s fictive double Philisides recounts a musical fable that he reports to have learned from “old Languet,” whom he calls affectionately “the shepherd best swift Ister knew.” As fictions multiply inside fictions, with Sidney writing about Philisides performing a song remembered from the teacher of his youth, paradoxically the poem moves closer to the world of actual events.

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<sup>20</sup> Chastity is always a political issue, and lends itself to various interpretations. From the perspective of Stephanie H. Jed, *Chaste Thinking: The Rape of Lucrece and the Birth of Humanism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), Sidney’s grounding of his poetics upon the rape of Lucrece illustrates the oppressive desire of patriarchal culture to control women’s bodies. By contrast, Debora Shuger, “Castigating Livy: The Rape of Lucretia and *The Old Arcadia*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998), 526-48 has argued that the story highlights greater contemporary fears about the control of male bodies, specifically the dangerous bodily desires of young aristocrats. Shuger’s larger point—that Sidney elevates poetry (and his poetic heroes) above the law—complements my own argument concerning the operation of providential law at the romance’s conclusion, *Sidney’s Poetic Justice: The Old Arcadia, Its Eclogues, and Renaissance Pastoral Traditions* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press; London, 1986), 175-228. Sidney’s Cupid seems not very discriminating about gender distinctions.

Philisides attributes to him both his piety and his moral education:<sup>21</sup>

He said the music best thilke powers pleased  
Was jump concord between our wit and will,  
Where highest notes to godliness are raised,  
And lowest sink not down to jot of ill.  
With old true tales he wont mine ears to fill:  
How shepherds did of yore, how now, they thrive,  
Spoiling their flock, or while twixt them they strive.

Principles of faculty psychology secure the foundation of Philisides' political fable about the origins of monarchy: the concord between wit and will that Languet praises as a tenet of natural law (and he is "shepherd best" because he best knows the laws of nature) corresponds exactly to the balance celebrated between sovereign and subjects in the state. When that concord is violated with the emergence of self-loving sovereigns who "think all things ... made them to please," golden-world harmony is untuned by brazen-world tyranny. The same division between wit and will that motivates Sidney's aggressively optimistic poetics in the *Defence* achieves in his beast fable an explicitly political focus: Philisides ends by counseling his "poor beasts" either "in patience [to] bide your hell, Or know your strengths, and then you shall do well" (257, 259). There is no real mystery about Philisides' advice or Sidney's meaning. His *Arcadias* take for granted, as readily as his *Defence*, the necessity and virtue of tyrannicide. What matters here to the present argument is the clarification that the beast fable supplies about the relationship among those rival humanists at the center of Sidney's intellectual circle.

Sidney scholars frequently remember the beast fable's explicit tribute to Languet, that singer of history's old true tales, and for good reason: one purpose of the tale is to render an authorial tribute from the student to the teacher as a unique event. Languet is the only contemporary ever explicitly named in Sidney's fiction. The fable itself, however—for all of its deeply meaningful debts to the this teller of old true tales—reads like a poetic revision of Mornay's philosophical "On the purpose of kings." Philisides's song is a fable about the creation of man, elected as king by a commonwealth of beasts against the advice of Jove, and his

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<sup>21</sup> *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (The Old Arcadia), ed. Jean Robertson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 255. All citations from this edition will be included parenthetically in the text.

subsequent descent into tyranny. As Mornay layers text upon text to explain the origins of kingship as philosophical prelude to sanctioning tyrannicide, so Sidney's song narrates a tale about the birth of kingly man as poetic justification for the same. Mornay begins his exposition with Aesop's tale of the horse and the bull, and ends with I Samuel viii. Sidney draws upon a different fable out of Aesop—the parliament of frogs—but chooses as his chief narrative vehicle the identical story from I Samuel viii.

At its very center, then, *The Old Arcadia* signals its commitment to concord in the mind, in the state, and among the muses—a syncretism of history and philosophy at the heart of Sidneian romance-making. And not a corpse in sight. While Languet's "true tales" provide the high notes—history in the service of godliness—philosophy supplies Sidneian romance with its liberating potential. As Mornay is set free amidst his philosophical ruminations upon Seneca and Augustine to render true "kingship"—the Idea of kingship as it should be—visible and comprehensible" to the reader, so Sidney labors to give that Idea of kingship substance in the poetic character of his fiction. In history, the Idea is always conditioned by the contaminating circumstances of an imperfect world of events. Phalaris dies quietly in bed, tyranny goes unchastened, and the brazen bull howls with the screams of the saints. In philosophy, Ideas remain abstractions, too remote and insubstantial either to achieve clarity or to carry affective force. Inside this same circle, it was that hot-Scot tyrannomachist, George Buchanan, who came closest to articulating explicitly the political problem motivating Sidney's image-making labors. Buchanan both insists philosophically upon the mimetic potency of the "Idea" of true kingship as it achieves conceptual representation ("in whose image so great a force is presented to the minds of his subjects"), and despairs historically about its realization ("in these corrupt times of ours; it is hard to find this magnanimity").<sup>22</sup>

Placement matters to Sidneian romancing—and places: the commonplaces or *loci communes* that fuel the making of golden worlds and flame into being as notable images of virtue and vice. For Sidney, epistemology is romance, and romance epistemology. With the eye of Ulysses, the cosmopolitan Sidney of the *Defence* travels everywhere, between human and sacred, classical and contemporary, English and continental letters,

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<sup>22</sup> *De jure regni apud Scotos*, trans. anon. (Philadelphia: 1766), 48-9. For a modern translation, see Charles Flinn Arrowood, *George Buchanan on the Powers of the Crown of Scotland* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1949).



between the refined Virgilian labors of pious Aeneas and the unrefined blind crowder singing the tale of Percy and Douglas; between poetic worthies who are Catholic and those who are Reformed, between Lutherans and Calvinists, and among those who resisted any confessional identification whatsoever, like the Emperor Maximilian II in whose Vienna the *Defence* is located or Michel de l'Hospital, chief among those worthies whom Sidney cites as a champion of poetry.<sup>23</sup> In matter as in manner, Sidney's cosmopolitanism refuses partisanship—the partisanship of a quirky self-pleasing English provinciality in literary style; the partisanship of theological debate among confessions; and the tyranny of self-loving sovereigns in the public domain.<sup>24</sup> There is freedom in scope because *noting* inclusively, freedom in the zodiac of the mind, is very much his point. Like a tour guide, Sidney constantly points our attention to what's "notable": whether that is Plato's "notable fable" of the Atlantic Island—good poet, that Plato, Sidney wryly notes—or David's "notable *prosopopeias*" of the divine—speaking pictures of God's majesty; or Plutarch's "notable testimonie of the abominable tyrant Pheraeus," his heart moved by poetry; or "notable examples" of moral painting, "as Abraham sacrificing" his son Isaac. The word "notable" occurs eleven times in the *Defence*.

There is a point to all this noting of all that is notable. When Sidney agrees with those "learned men who have so learnedly thought" that "in Nature we know it is well to doe well, and what is well and what is evil," he does so by appealing to a pious notion of natural law written in the heart of each human being that teaches, as a body of innate knowledge, truths that extend from basic tenets of moral philosophy to the recognition of the soul's immortality and the providence of God (113). This is precisely the sort of recognition that Sidney grants to his pagan princes in the fourth book of *The Old Arcadia*, as they contemplate their impending deaths. Such truths are called "notitiae," and they

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<sup>23</sup> For an extended discussion of Sidney's anti-confessional piety, see my essay "'Deadly Stinging Adders': Sidney's Piety, Philippism, and *The Defence of Poesy*," *Spenser Studies* 16 (2002): 231-69. Paula Sutter Fichtner writes extensively about Maximilian's ecumenical Christianity in her biography, *Emperor Maximilian II* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> For a study of Sidney's triumph over the first of the *Defence*'s partisans—the paradoxically pretentious Pugliano—see Anne Lake Prescott, "Tracing Astrophil's 'Coltish Gyres': Sidney and the Horses of Desire," *Renaissance Papers* (2005): 25-42. As Roger Kuin has commented in a private conversation, such cosmopolitanism meant also substituting for the provincialism of the secretary hand the reasonably elegant and international italic.

find expression in “notable images of virtues [and] vices,” oratorical “loci,” the powerful commonplaces of rhetorical practice inscribed within the mind (103). Sidney assumes a sort of Chomsky-like “deep grammar” of Ideas both animating in their innate potential and reanimated through the agency of fictions, or (to switch metaphors) an internet of the wit, hard wired, expansive, zodiacal in scope, whose pathways become traceable as notable images—the forcibleness of the poet’s fictions—lead us home, Ulysses-wise, to discover our own natures—to discover why and how that Maker made us. This is romance epistemology for the making of romance, a poetic rescuing of Ideas from ideology that must work, if only because philosophy and history cannot. The future, otherwise, belongs to Cecropia.

At the conclusion of a crucial consideration of the value of poetry relative to the value of history and philosophy, Sidney sounds a note of triumph by attributing to the poet “perfect picture[s],” whose perfection consists in their coupling of the philosopher’s “general notion” with the historian’s “particular example” (107). His purpose is transparent. Obviously, he is setting his opponents up for the argumentative kill, as he prepares to declare the syncretic superiority of poets who (beyond their rivals) can both teach *and* move. However, the rhetorical preparations are also revealing about the epistemological assumptions at work.

Proceeding to illustrate his point about how pictures teach more effectively than “wordish description,” Sidney cites as examples the superiority of paintings to instruct “a man that had never seen an elephant or rhinoceros” and visual models to clarify the architecture “of a gorgeous palace” (107). The emphasis falls squarely on the liveliness of visual presentation.<sup>25</sup> But Sidney’s language makes just as clear that the issue at hand is complicated by issues that supersede presentation. Philosophy “*replenisheth*” the memory “with many infallible grounds of wisdom”—concerning “virtue, vices, matters of public policy or private government,” he concedes [emphasis mine]. But the replenishing of memory is not sufficient for obtaining wisdom, Sidney adds; for wisdom is apt to lie “dark before the imaginative and judging power” unless “illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poetry” (107). Knowledge is better understood as representation than presentation—hence the vocabulary of replenishment, the

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<sup>25</sup> For a still useful account of Sidney’s visual epistemology, see Forrest G. Robinson, *The Shape of Things Known: Sidney’s Apology in its Philosophical Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

recourse to a language of concealment (wisdom lies dark) and disclosure (poetry illumines and figures forth).<sup>26</sup> Hence, too, the frequent recourse inside the *Defence* to the vocabulary of the “fore-conceit,” and its distinctive identification with the “Idea.” The “fore-conceit” of Sidney’s poetics comes be-fore, has priority in a double sense. The fore-conceit has priority both as the model that is prior to the poet’s figuring forth—the Idea of chastity that becomes Lucretia as she achieves visual embodiment, and also as the notion of chastity that is prior to the reader’s consciousness, as the natural seat upon which active virtue is built when the mind is instructed and moved by the Lucretia it sees—“all virtues, vices, and passions so in their own natural seats laid to the view, that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them” (108). When Sidney writes about “notions” of virtue and vice, he treats them as *notitiae* (innate ideas), which poetic images are best able to bring to consciousness. Meaning is not something separable from the poem—lodged in some transcendental order of Ideas veiled by textual symbols that require allegorical decoding. Meaning happens in the verbal dynamics of the poem itself, as sparks of truth are fanned into flames of knowledge, as speaking pictures give substance to Ideas innately unknowable apart from their exemplification. Beyond the historical circumstances that determine the necessity of its work—*tyrannus occidendus est* (the tyrant must be destroyed)—Sidneian romance *can* do its work because its epistemological foundations have a natural concord with the very nature of the mind.

I am in some danger here of seeming to argue for a truth scholars already know: that in Sidney’s romance-style, golden-world poetics triumphs in the wars of the muses, ironically and irenically, by reconciling the competing claims of its rivals, history and philosophy. This is also to admit that I am in some peril of justifying such a poor pitiful cause, without acknowledging my own long habit of underestimating the significance of those wars and why and how they matter to the triumph of Sidney’s muse—of

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<sup>26</sup> Sidney’s allegorizers misunderstand the place of concealment inside the dynamics of disclosure because of misunderstandings about the epistemological assumptions at play. Annabel Patterson, “‘Under Pretty Tales’: Intention in Sidney’s Arcadia,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 15.1 (Spring 1982), 6-14 claims that fears about censorship inspired the intentionally devised obscurity of the romance’s political expression. S.K.Heninger’s distinction between Spenser’s allegorical and Sidney’s exemplary poetics makes better sense; in the former, truth lies “behind the veil of words”; in the latter, it “inheres in the verbal system itself ... meaning is inseparable from the poem, integral to it,” *Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 274-5.

golden-world fiction-making celebrated as his culture's preeminent science, knowledge crucial to the government of the public domain. As scholars, we turn properly to Sidney's critically capacious readings in the history of romance to understand much of what matters to his *Arcadias*—to the steamy elegance of Sannazaro and Montemajor, to the savvy intelligence of a Gil Polo, or to the theatrical optics of that Greek romance tradition so crucial to its substantiation and whose importance for understanding Sidney, Victor Skretkowicz (among others) has labored so brilliantly to disclose.<sup>27</sup> For the genesis of Sidneian romance, however, for an intelligible estimation of its motive for being, the urgency of its design and the stylishly ludic engagement of its making, it is necessary also to remember places: the “commonplaces” of Sidney's rhetorical inheritance from his Philippist mentors—those “loci” of “notable” virtues and vices making epistemology romance and romance epistemology; and the place of its making amidst the conversations of his most intimate compatriots in the cause—Languet and Mornay, historian and philosopher—for whom (as for Sidney) confessional crisis signaled a crisis of public discourse, and disciplinary dispute, an argument among the piously and politically committed about how best—how most chastely—to remedy the body politic. Poetry comes from the arguments we have with ourselves—or so Yeats that Irishman thought. Poetics, in Sidney's case, derives from arguments that he had with his friends (actual or imaginary), arguments about mere wars among the muses, pursued urbanely but urgently, against the backdrop of real wars among confessions. There are no Tridentine Catholics in Arcadia, and neither are there Calvinists or Lutherans, much less English longbows or Spanish pikes. In the golden world of romance, partisan particulars are transformed to “notable images” of virtue and vice, historical actors to fictive exemplars, and mere ideology to Ideas of universal import. Poetry's inclusive, cosmopolitan mode of discourse complements as it enables the politics of Sidney's anti-confessional piety, and leaves at the triumphant climax of this war among the muses, ironically and irenically, not a corpse in sight.

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<sup>27</sup> See Victor Skretkowicz's forthcoming book, now in preparation at Manchester University Press, *European Erotic Romance: Philhellenic Protestantism, Renaissance Translation, and English Literary Politics*.

## **‘If an excellent man should err’: Philip Sidney and Stoical Virtue<sup>1</sup>**

RICHARD WOOD  
*Sheffield Hallam University*

In a letter written to Philip Sidney in 1574, Hubert Languet, Philip Sidney’s forward Protestant mentor, defends Guy du Faur de Pibrac’s public defence of the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre. In doing so, Languet rejects the harsh, apparently stoical, judgements of those who would brand Pibrac “among the wickedest of men” for this one error, preferring to reserve judgement.<sup>2</sup> He sets himself apart from those harsher judges who would choose martyrdom over living with the shame of defending such acts. Victor Skretkowicz has suggested that this shows a moral distinction between the senior Huguenot, Languet, and a “younger, more idealistic” group of Huguenots.<sup>3</sup> Building on Skretkowicz’s work, this article will address the question of whether it is possible to discern such a moral distinction in the later works of Philip Sidney himself. I argue that the *New Arcadia* in particular explores the tension between the positions adopted by Languet and the putative, “more idealistic” group. Sidney, through the character of Amphialus, stages a defeat of “an excellent man” who has erred (to paraphrase the author’s mentor). Nevertheless, I contend, Amphialus’s fall is attended by sufficient signs of his corrigibility to suggest that Languet’s influence persists. I also

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper given at the conference, “Romance: A Conference in honour of Victor Skretkowicz,” at the University of Dundee, October 5th-6th, 2007. It was a pleasure to honour Dr. Skretkowicz, and I wish to acknowledge the generous and helpful comments I received from Dr. Skretkowicz and my fellow participants. I would also like to thank the anonymous readers of the *Sidney Journal* for their useful suggestions for revision of an earlier version of this article.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Osborn, *Young Philip Sidney: 1572-1577* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 228; this is Osborn’s translation from Latin of Languet’s letter to Sidney.

<sup>3</sup> Victor Skretkowicz, “Mary Sidney Herbert’s *Antonius*, English Philhellenism and the Protestant Cause,” *Women’s Writing* 6.1 (March 1999): 11.

suggest that by reading the *New Arcadia* through the lens of Languet's anti-stoical ethos it is possible to unify other apparently distinct scholarly interpretations of Sidney's philosophical inheritance.

Victor Skretkowicz's essay discusses Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius* with reference to her other work, *A Discourse of Life and Death*. These translations of works by Robert Garnier and Philippe Duplessis-Mornay respectively were published together in 1592. For Skretkowicz, Mary's publication of such apparently divergent texts espouses a "Huguenot doctrine" which includes both Mornay's ethos (which is seen as exemplifying the "younger, more idealist" group) and the philosophy of her brother's older mentor. Skretkowicz emphasizes the differences between the two: Mornay's stoical philosophy "inspires a selfless flight to the end of life," an unwillingness to compromise to save oneself from martyrdom, while Languet "identifies a very practical need in the world of politics to tolerate personal failings," and is even prepared to excuse those who eschew martyrdom.<sup>4</sup> More broadly, despite their apparently diverging outlooks, the two men shared a great deal in terms of their philosophical and theological inheritances. Indeed, like Sidney, Mornay was a protégé of Languet, and although Skretkowicz notes that Mornay "was very much a Huguenot political reformer who led from the front" whereas Languet favoured "a politically realistic sense of tolerance and forgiveness," they both may be said to have been "Politiques."<sup>5</sup>

Whether fairly attributed or not, the moral distinction highlighted by Skretkowicz is exemplified by Languet's observations communicated to Philip Sidney in the letter of 1574. In the letter, Languet defends Guy du Faur de Pibrac's defence of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre on the grounds that "he [Pibrac] was compelled to ransom his life" with a letter defending the massacre. Languet goes on to quote a strongly stoical passage from Juvenal, in which one must "consider it the greatest sin to put breath before shame," before declaring:

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<sup>4</sup> Skretkowicz, "Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius*," 13-14.

<sup>5</sup> Skretkowicz, "Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius*," 10-11. Roger Kuin, "Sir Philip Sidney's Model of the Statesman," *Reformation* 4 (1999): 93-117 highlights parallels between the lives of Sidney and Mornay, not least their similar educations under the guidance of Hubert Languet. Kuin attributes these parallels to "this mutual relation to Languet" and, in turn, as will also become apparent below, Languet's relation to Philip Melancthon (102).

I am not a Stoic, and I do not believe that all faults are the same. Our party has this failing, that if an excellent man should err even in the smallest matter, they immediately class him among the wickedest of men. I am by nature and principle averse to judgements of this sort, and I know that many people criticize me for this.<sup>6</sup>

By 1590, when Mary Sidney Herbert came to translate the works of Garnier and Mornay, the “party” of French Huguenots and their English supporters to which Languet refers had endured, though it was missing several central characters such as Languet and Sidney themselves. Nevertheless, as Skretkowitz’s article attests, the moderate philosophy of Hubert Languet was still influential with Mary and her brother.

Hubert Languet died on 30 September 1581. Katherine Duncan-Jones observes, in her biography of Philip Sidney, that, prior to this date, Languet and Sidney “seem to have drifted apart.”<sup>7</sup> It is, however, as Duncan-Jones admits, difficult to gauge from their surviving correspondence whether this was indeed the case, and the apparent lack of correspondence during Languet’s last year may be explained by the loss of one letter-book rather than a waning of their friendship. Languet was in the habit of admonishing his protégé, not least during the period of Sidney’s relative retirement, when he was writing the first *Arcadia*. Nevertheless, such differences appear to have been in the nature of their bantering relationship and, as Richard C. McCoy notes, “the stance Sidney assumes in his letters ... is clearly designed to provoke such urgent and importunate moralizing.”<sup>8</sup> When Sidney came to revise the *Arcadia* (which might have been “as early as 1582” according to Skretkowitz), he, like his sister several years later, still retained many of the ideas expressed to him by his one-time tutor in letters and in person.<sup>9</sup> There is, however, plenty of room for debate as to what extent such ideas influenced Sidney’s literary works.

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<sup>6</sup> Osborn, *Young Philip Sidney*, 228.

<sup>7</sup> Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991), 217.

<sup>8</sup> Richard C. McCoy, *Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1979), 55.

<sup>9</sup> Victor Skretkowitz, “General Introduction” in Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, ed. Victor Skretkowitz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), xvii.

In addressing this issue, it is useful to note that Hubert Languet's moderate philosophy was itself an inheritance from his own tutor, Philip Melanchthon. Melanchthon was a key figure in the Lutheran Reformation, noted for his moderation and ecumenical inclusivity, whose works, as Robert Stillman notes, "were more often owned than those of any other reformed theologian."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in his letter to Sidney, Languet acknowledges Melanchthon as the source of his moderate views and refuses to compromise them:

Thus far I regret neither my teacher nor my principles, and shall not be led away from either by the criticisms of those who are naturally more captious or severe than I am.<sup>11</sup>

Stillman has elucidated the Melanchthonian nature of Sidney's *Defence*, wresting it from the problematic context of English Calvinism preferred in earlier accounts of Sidney's Protestant commitment.<sup>12</sup> Sidney's contact with Languet and other Melanchthonians among his mentor's circle exposed him to a peculiarly pragmatic form of Protestant piety.<sup>13</sup> As an apposite example of Philippist piety, Stillman's essay cites the funeral oration composed by Joannes Crato, another pupil of Melanchthon, following the death of the emperor Maximilian II. The oration, as Stillman attests, celebrates a ruler who is "the very embodiment of Philippist virtue, a Euarchus incarnate"; he is "the image of moderation ... who learned what imperial power is by understanding what human weakness is," and "who wished to manage political life by counsel rather than by force." In the terms of the *Defence of Poesy*, Maximilian may be said to be "a Cyrus by which to create many Cyruses."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Robert E. Stillman, "Deadly Stinging Adders: Sidney's Piety, Philippism, and the *Defence of Poesy*," *Spenser Studies* 16 (2002): 231. See also Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008). I am indebted to Stillman's work on Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* for guiding my research in this area.

<sup>11</sup> Osborn, *Young Philip Sidney*, 228.

<sup>12</sup> Stillman, "Deadly Stinging Adders" and *Philip Sidney*. Stillman's essay, 235-6 and 261n14, refers specifically to two earlier accounts: Andrew D. Weiner, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978) and Alan Sinfield, "Protestantism: Questions of Subjectivity and Control" in *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> These beliefs may be referred to as either "Melanchthonian" or "Philippist."

<sup>14</sup> Stillman, "Deadly Stinging Adders," 247-8.



Stillman's case, more specifically, for reading the *Defence of Poesy* as a text informed by Philippism rests on the correlation between a Sidneian poetics and a Melanchthonian piety that share a commitment to the "cooperative power of the [human] will."<sup>15</sup> Unlike the harsh limitation placed on human agency by Calvinist theology, Philippist belief allows the individual will greater freedom to "cooperate with God in securing salvation." This is reflected in the *Defence's* category of the "right poet," whose poetry has the power to move, to bridge the gap between "our erected wit" and our post-lapsarian "infected will." As Stillman notes, this movement is achieved, in part, through the poet's "power to impart (contemplatively) real self-knowledge—the enjoyment of our own divine essence." Ultimately, inspired to acts of virtue by the product of the poet's wit, the "infected will" may be restored to a "condition of goodness." This is, as Sidney writes, predicated on the condition that the readers of poetry "learn aright why and how that maker made him."<sup>16</sup> Despite this qualification, there remains the potential for human agency in the quest for liberation from sin. Clearly, a link has been established, by Stillman, between the Philippist philosophy of Hubert Languet and Philip Sidney's critical work, the *Defence of Poesy*. Moreover, Skretkowicz has identified the different strands of Huguenot thought at play in the work of Mary Sidney Herbert. In view of these precedents, the relationship between such ideas and Sidney's literary works, specifically the *New Arcadia*, appears to be worth examining. The potential attributed to the human will in Sidney's *Defence* also informs Hubert Languet's moderate, Philippist attitude to Pibrac's defence of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. I contend that the portrayal of Amphialus in the *New Arcadia* is similarly informed.

Amphialus is usually labelled the "anti-hero" of the *New Arcadia*. He is, as Skretkowicz notes, "relentlessly pilloried" with the use of "the formulaic epithet," "the courteous Amphialus."<sup>17</sup> The comparison with the pious Aeneas of Virgil's epic is made explicit, and is most often seen as ironic. While A. C. Hamilton writes that Amphialus's "actions outrage courtesy," he also betrays a degree of sympathy for the character when he adds, "Nothing

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<sup>15</sup> This and the following quotations are taken from Stillman, "Deadly Stinging Adders," 257, 245, 255.

<sup>16</sup> Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965; reprint, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), 101.

<sup>17</sup> Skretkowicz, "General Introduction," xxxvi.

turns out right for him.”<sup>18</sup> This sympathy, I argue, is not misplaced: there is plenty of textual evidence to suggest that Amphialus is not a wholly wicked character. Indeed, to believe that he may be considered “an excellent man,” a reader has only to turn to the testimony of Helen of Corinth in Book I of the revised romance:

Who is courteous, noble, liberal, but he that hath  
the example before his eyes of Amphialus? Where  
are all heroical parts, but in Amphialus? O  
Amphialus, I would thou were not so excellent; or  
I would I thought thee not so excellent; and yet  
would I not, that I would so.<sup>19</sup>

Helen clearly loves Amphialus, and it is, therefore, arguable that her opinion of him is unreliable. About to recount the history of their relationship to Musidorus, Helen is herself equivocal about her feelings for Amphialus. There is, however, much in Amphialus’s story to corroborate Helen’s judgement. His fight with his friend, Philoxenus, who is jealous of Helen’s love for him, ends in Philoxenus’s death, but it was a contest which Amphialus did not seek, and the mortal blow was an “unlucky” accident (64). Amphialus’s grief (made worse by the subsequent death of Timotheus) leads him to cast off his armour and run “into the thickest of woods, lamenting,” vowing hatred for Helen, “the cause of all this mischief” (65). Nevertheless, Helen’s knowledge of his antipathy towards her does not dampen her ardour, and her continued belief in his excellence reflects the contingent nature of the events that caused the enmity between them.

When, in Book II, Amphialus is led to see his cousin, Philoclea, bathing, he immediately falls in love himself, and a new sequence of unfortunate episodes is set in motion which occupies most of the incomplete third book of the *New Arcadia*. The book begins with the imprisonment of Philoclea, as well as her sister, Pamela, and Zelmane, by Cecropia, Amphialus’s mother. Cecropia intends to force either Philoclea or her sister to marry her son. She does not mind which one of his cousins her son marries, as her aim is to win control of her brother-in-law’s dukedom. Cecropia, unlike her son, is irredeemably wicked and, to reinforce

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<sup>18</sup> A. C. Hamilton, *Sir Philip Sidney: A Study of His Life and Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 139.

<sup>19</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, ed. Victor Skretkovicz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 61. All citations to this text will be from this edition and are parenthetically inserted in the text.

this, Sidney has her resort ultimately to torture and the use of profoundly atheistic arguments in her persuasion of the sisters. However, as Richard McCoy has observed, “Sidney ... takes pains to mitigate his male protagonist’s guilt by assigning much of the blame to a bad parent.”<sup>20</sup> From the outset of the captivity episode, Amphialus is portrayed as innocent in comparison with his mother:

Amphialus was but even then returned from far countries ... so as he was utterly ignorant of all his mother’s wicked devices—to which he would never have consented, being, like a rose out of a briar, an excellent son of an evil mother. (317)

Under Cecropia’s malign influence, but also motivated by the love first kindled at Philoclea’s bathing-place, Amphialus embarks on a violent rebellion against Philoclea’s father, who besieges the castle where both his daughters are held captive.

The name Amphialus, as A. C. Hamilton records, “signifies ‘between two seas’.” In accordance with this translation, Hamilton regards Amphialus as a divided character.<sup>21</sup> This is certainly reflected in the contrast between his reputed virtue and the mischief that befalls him. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that Amphialus is subject to the passive influence of Philoclea, and that he carries this into the martial combat that dominates Book III of the *New Arcadia*.<sup>22</sup> On such occasions, particularly before his contest with Musidorus disguised as the Forsaken Knight (403-5), Amphialus is divided between his love for Philoclea and his own self-defence. This echoes the internal conflict that hampered him when he unwillingly fought his friend, Philoxenus. Amphialus is repeatedly faced with similarly thorny choices, and he repeatedly puts breath before shame, much as Pibrac did over the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. In doing so, he rejects the “selfless flight to the end of life,” which disqualifies him as a figure representing a strictly stoical doctrine. This might be seen, particularly from the perspective of Languet’s putative opponents, as marking Amphialus’s story as a thoroughly negative exemplum, much like that of his mother. I, on the contrary, contend that he ought to be seen exactly as the narrative voice of the *New Arcadia*

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<sup>20</sup> McCoy, *Sir Philip Sidney*, 172-3.

<sup>21</sup> Hamilton, *Sir Philip Sidney*, 139.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Wood, “The representing of so strange a power in love’: Philip Sidney’s Legacy of Anti-factionalism,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 16.4 (October, 2007) 1-20 <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/si-16/woodsidn.htm>>.

describes him, “an excellent son of an evil mother.” This is to read Amphialus ‘aright,’ to be no more captious or severe than Hubert Languet. Such a conclusion, already sustained by the textual evidence presented above, is further reinforced by the scene in which Cecropia falls to her death. Here, Cecropia,

fearing [her son] would have stricken her ... went  
back so far till ere she were aware she overthrew  
herself from over the leads to receive her death’s  
kiss at the ground. (440)

Cecropia misreads her son’s intentions, as the narrative makes clear in parentheses: “though indeed he meant it not, but only intended to kill himself in her presence” (440). When the wicked Cecropia judges Amphialus to be “the wickedest of men,” the readers are challenged to use their own moderate, arguably Philippist, tendency and judge him differently. The less “captious or severe” judgement advocated by Languet stems from the potential within humanity to cooperate with God and achieve freedom from sin, as articulated in Melanchthon’s works. In the section of the *Loci communes* of 1555 (originally published in 1521) where Melanchthon discusses original sin, there is a clear emphasis on the light placed in man by God at creation and God’s renewal in humanity—after the Fall and the intercession of “the eternal Son of God”—of “his image and likeness.” For Melanchthon,

because nothing higher can be given than himself and this likeness of his characteristics, it is very clear that his love toward us was not a cold, indolent thought, as a Stoic might argue, but a genuine, earnest, burning love.<sup>23</sup>

The narrative of the *New Arcadia*, though incomplete, includes the fall of Amphialus. After his mother’s death, already severely wounded from combat, he bewails his miserable condition and catalogues his crimes, before stabbing himself with Philoclea’s knives. Beyond the help of ordinary surgeons, he is eventually carried away by Helen to the accompaniment of a song of lamentation from his people.<sup>24</sup> His fall certainly has the trappings

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<sup>23</sup> Melanchthon on *Christian Doctrine: Loci communes*, 1555, trans. Clyde L. Manschreck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 72-3.

<sup>24</sup> This is termed the “fall,” not the “death,” of Amphialus since Helen of Corinth intends to test the ability of her surgeon to revive him. This surgeon’s extraordinary

of that of an epic hero, and he also, in his final words, betrays a deep self-awareness.<sup>25</sup> His condemnation of himself, prefaced with a cry of “Wretched Amphialus!” surpasses any reproof previously directed at the apparently “courteous” knight (441). It would be an overstatement to suggest that Amphialus has, through the contemplation of his own experiences, achieved the kind of “self-knowledge” necessary for him to be restored to a “condition of goodness.” Nevertheless, he may be seen to be beginning to cooperate with God in securing his own salvation. Certainly, in the figure of Amphialus, Sidney, the “right poet,” creates a corrigible character with the power to inspire such cooperation in his readers.

To accept such an interpretation of the character of Amphialus does not, however, preclude readers’ finding the influence of other, possibly contradictory, philosophies at play in the *New Arcadia*. Sidney’s romance is not a work conceived merely as a means of propagating Melanchthonian theology, nor any other system of beliefs. As Stillman puts it with reference to the *Old Arcadia*, Sidney is not “transmuting morally and religiously approved doctrines into sugar-coated fictions.”<sup>26</sup> In spite of Amphialus’s refusal of the path of a true Stoic, it is still possible that Sidney was inspired by Stoicism, as was his sister. Indeed, stoical philosophy is found elsewhere in the *New Arcadia*, particularly associated with Pamela and Philoclea during their captivity. Blair Worden, in *The Sound of Virtue*, identifies a neo-Stoic doctrine of fortitude as the dominant creed of the later books of the *Old Arcadia*, where Musidorus and Pyrocles are imprisoned and await their trial. This is seen, by Worden, to be a development from the romance’s earlier espousal of a “creed of action,” in which, according to Ciceronian principles, “virtue consists in

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skill is demonstrated in his transformation of Parthenia’s appearance (45). Amphialus’s “fall” and likely recovery echoes the language of injury (as opposed to that of devastation found in Calvin) applied to the Fall of Man in Melanchthon’s *Loci* and Sidney’s letters to Languet. See Stillman, “Deadly Stinging Adders,” 266, n.43 and *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet*, trans. Stuart A. Pears (London: William Pickering, 1845), 143-6.

<sup>25</sup> At the moment of his “death,” Amphialus is honoured by his people, “some throwing themselves upon the ground, some tearing their clothes and casting dust upon their heads, and some even wounding themselves and sprinkling their own blood in the air” (*New Arcadia*, 446). This is comparable with the lamentation for the death of Patroclus in the *Iliad*, trans. Richard Lattimore (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1951), xviii, 23-31.

<sup>26</sup> Robert E. Stillman, *Sidney’s Poetic Justice: The Old Arcadia, Its Eclogues, and Renaissance Pastoral Traditions* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986), 74.

action.”<sup>27</sup> Indeed, drawing on Fulke Greville’s “account of Sidney’s fiction,” he characterises the *New Arcadia* as even more wholeheartedly stoical in its ethos than the *Old Arcadia*, describing the sisters’ fidelity while imprisoned by Cecropia as “a feat of Stoic heroism.” More specifically, Pamela’s fortitude in the face of Cecropia’s persecution is the point “where Sidney’s narrative breaks wholly free of the earlier version,” and this passive form of Stoicism reaches its peak.<sup>28</sup>

This argument is persuasive, but also problematic if the *New Arcadia* were to be seen as dominated by a passive Stoicism. It is difficult to reconcile a passive ethos with the philosophy of Sidney’s party, including Mornay, a “political reformer who led from the front,” and Languet, who counselled Sidney against the hazards of inactivity.<sup>29</sup> Of course, the stoical strand of Sidney’s thought need not reside exclusively in the passive virtue of the *New Arcadia*’s female characters, and it ought to be remembered that Sidney was well capable of drawing such ideas from his own reading, unmediated by thinkers like Mornay and Languet.<sup>30</sup> An examination of the active or passive expression of virtue and the relationship of such virtue to stoical philosophy in the *Arcadias* reveals Sidney’s philosophical eclecticism. Several scholarly interpretations of Sidney’s romances are testament to this. I wish to suggest that by reading the *New Arcadia* through the lens of Languet’s anti-stoical ethos it is possible to unify these apparently distinct scholarly interpretations of Sidney’s philosophical inheritance.

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<sup>27</sup> Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney’s Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 33, 25.

<sup>28</sup> Worden, *Sound of Virtue*, 309, 364-5.

<sup>29</sup> Languet comments on Sidney’s “retirement” in a letter dated September 24, 1580; see Osborn, *Young Philip Sidney*, 504-5.

<sup>30</sup> Sidney’s education would have included extensive instruction in classical authors (see Malcolm William Wallace, *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915], 35-111). There is no shortage of stoical arguments among such texts, particularly in Seneca’s moral *sententiae* and Cicero’s *De Officiis*. Sidney recommended Tacitus to his brother Robert in a letter written in 1580 (*Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat, vol. 3 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962], 130-3), and the historian was a source of inspiration for another of Sidney’s correspondents, Justus Lipsius, whose *De Constantia* (1584) is a landmark work of early modern Neostoicism. For discussions of the importance of Stoicism to Sidney and the “Sidney circle,” see Joel B. Davis’s unpublished dissertation, “Renaissance Neostoicism and the Sidney Family Literary Discourse,” University of Oregon, 1999, and his article, “Multiple *Arcadias* and the Literary Quarrel between Fulke Greville and the Countess of Pembroke,” *Studies in Philology* 101.4 (Fall 2004): 401-30.

The contrast between the virtuous example offered by the character of Amphialus and that represented by Pyrocles and Musidorus together is examined by Nancy Lindheim. In what Lindheim terms the “Asia Minor paideia” of the *New Arcadia*, the princes undergo an “education in virtue.”<sup>31</sup> Their adventures are a portrait of virtue in action and, as such, approach the view of virtue implicit in the Aristotelian definition of Justice, also invoked by Lindheim in her discussion of the trial scene of the *Old Arcadia*: “complete virtue in the fullest sense, because it is the actual exercise of complete virtue.”<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, this high ideal is brought into question through its association with the character of Euarchus, whose actual justice (in the *Old Arcadia*) is pitiless and, as Lindheim notes, he is “*too much* the Stoic sage.”<sup>33</sup> The text makes plain his stoical command over his passions, and that “his mind ... hated evil in what colours soever he found it,”<sup>34</sup> but, as a consequence of such apparent virtues, he judges Gynecia wrongly. For Lindheim, Euarchus lacks Aristotelian “equity.” Defined by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*, the concept of equity sounds distinctly Melanchthonian in tone:

It is equity to pardon human failings, and to look to the lawgiver and not to the law; to the spirit and not to the letter; to the intention and not the action; to the whole and not to the part; to the character of the actor in the long run and not in the present moment.<sup>35</sup>

On these terms, Lindheim concludes that the *Arcadias* articulate “a view of experience” founded on an acute “sense of the *limitations* of reason, law, and virtue measured in a purely human context”; and the active pursuit of virtue by Sidney’s princes in Asia Minor and “the character of Amphialus as it is developed in the Captivity sequence” suggest the very same conclusion.<sup>36</sup> No matter how corrigible Amphialus may be, his actions do not amount to the exercise of virtue, but the *Arcadia*, it may be argued, encourages

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<sup>31</sup> Nancy Lindheim, *The Structures of Sidney's Arcadia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 161.

<sup>32</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, V.i.1129<sup>b</sup>30; cited in Lindheim, 161.

<sup>33</sup> Lindheim, *Structures*, 159; Lindheim's emphasis.

<sup>34</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. Jean Robertson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 382-3.

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.13.1374<sup>b</sup>; cited in Lindheim, *Structures*, 159.

<sup>36</sup> Lindheim, *Structures*, 161; the emphasis is mine.

its readers to judge him with equity and not with the apparent sagacity of the Stoic.<sup>37</sup>

Lindheim's broader project includes an elucidation of what she terms Sidney's "rhetoricism," which involves an emphasis on the Sophistic elements of Aristotelian thought represented in Renaissance humanism generally and the "structures" of Sidney's prose romance in particular.<sup>38</sup> She postulates a "revision [in the *New Arcadia*] towards Aristotle's ideas of what the good rhetorician will know." Such knowledge is related to the peculiarly Aristotelian concept of experience which informs Sidney's understanding of "education in virtue" outlined above. This is exemplified (in a negative fashion), for Lindheim, by the inadequacies of "knowledge of oneself and of others" demonstrated by Amphialus, Helen of Corinth and Cecropia.<sup>39</sup> Such a reading, though persuasive, leaves out the equity and "sense of the limitations of reason, law, and virtue," as well as any acknowledgement of the importance of "human context," that informs Lindheim's readings elsewhere in her thesis. Moreover, this is a denial of the peculiarly Sophistic aspects of the Aristotelian rhetoricism which Lindheim views as important to the reading of Sidney's *New Arcadia* and English Renaissance literature in general: an emphasis on "human will and choice, insisting on the way action is conditioned by circumstances and capable of ambiguous and conflicting interpretations."<sup>40</sup> I contend that such ideas are more compatible with a Philippist philosophy that also assigns an unusual freedom to the individual human will. Advocates of such a philosophy may also view Amphialus, Helen of Corinth and Cecropia as characters with varying degrees of self-knowledge and knowledge of others that could serve as instructive examples in the education in virtue of Sidney's readers.

Stillman, on the other hand, engages with Sidney's philosophical inheritance and argues that the *Old Arcadia* be

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<sup>37</sup> Like Lindheim, Arthur F. Kinney, "Sir Philip Sidney and the Uses of History," in *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture*, ed. Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 310-11 refers to Aristotle's definition of equity when he argues for "a kind of humanity that might instruct Euarachus if he could only know it."

<sup>38</sup> Lindheim draws on Nancy S. Struever's *The Language of History in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and Historical Consciousness in Florentine Humanism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).

<sup>39</sup> Lindheim, *Structures*, 60.

<sup>40</sup> Lindheim, *Structures*, 7; these ideas flow from a Sophistic epistemology that insists, contrary to the Idealism of Plato and Aristotle, that "only a world of flux and impurity exists" (Struever, *The Language of History*, 10).



termed a “Stoic pastoral.” Stillman’s case is based on Sidney’s adoption of “the principle that it is man’s nature, and therefore his moral duty, to follow the dictates of reason and virtue” derived from classical authors such as Aristotle, Cicero, Plutarch, and, as Stillman observes, “can appropriately be called ‘Stoic,’ since it is framed upon a concept that has been inextricably associated with the Stoics since the time of Cicero.” However, Stillman is keen to emphasize that Sidney is not a “philosophical Stoic.” That would involve the belief in, among other philosophical commitments, “the equal viciousness of all crimes,” which would, as I have shown above, go against the tenor of a Philippist ethos.<sup>41</sup> It is noteworthy that Sidney distanced himself from the school of Stoics in a letter to Hubert Languet of 1 March 1578 (at the time when Languet was counselling Sidney against passivity), in which he asks, “Do you not see that I am cleverly playing the stoic?”<sup>42</sup> Stillman sees Sidney employing (while not adhering to) philosophical stoicism as a “defense of retirement in a corrupt age.”<sup>43</sup> It is also possible to see Sidney “cleverly playing the stoic” in the philosophical (or, perhaps, more accurately termed “theological”) arguments of the *New Arcadia*.

During the captivity episode, in the face of Cecropia’s argument to persuade the princess to marry Amphialus (in which Cecropia expounds a peculiarly godless epistemology), Pamela produces a sustained case in refutation of her aunt’s atheism. Her method involves undermining the philosophical bases of Cecropia’s argument one by one. Early in her speech, Pamela challenges the notion that belief in God arose from human ignorance of the “causes of things”:

Nay, because we know that each effect hath a cause, that hath engendered a true and lively devotion; for this goodly work of which we are, and in which we live, hath not his being by chance (on which opinion it is beyond marvel by what chance any brain could stumble!)—for it be eternal

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<sup>41</sup> Stillman, *Sidney’s Poetic Justice*, 71. Stillman cites Cicero’s *De Officiis*: “quod summum bonum a Stoicis dicitur, convenienter naturae vivere, id habet hanc, ut opinor sententiam: cum virtute congruere semper.” See Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1913, 1961), 3.3.13; trans. 281.

<sup>42</sup> *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet*, 143.

<sup>43</sup> Stillman, *Sidney’s Poetic Justice*, 73.

as you would seem to conceive of it, eternity and chance are things insufferable together. (359-60)

This is an articulation of the cosmological (or “first cause”) argument for the existence of God, which is expressed most famously in the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas. It also appears in Aristotle, whose philosophy Aquinas sought to reconcile with Christian theology.<sup>44</sup> This leads onto a denial of chance, which “could never make all things of nothing,” or give rise to “perfect order, perfect beauty, perfect constancy” (360). To the suggestion of a haphazard “nature” as the origin of such things, Pamela retorts that “there must needs have been a wisdom which made them concur” (360-1) and that, in turn, any resort to an “universal nature” must include the qualities of “wisdom, goodness and providence,” or else be a further blasphemy (361). Essentially, this is the argument for the existence of God “from design” (the teleological argument), in which a divine wisdom can be inferred from the orderliness and beauty of the natural world, and has a long history including arguments from Aristotle.<sup>45</sup>

In an article discussing the philosophical and theological background to Pamela’s refutation, D. P. Walker asserts that Pamela, in resorting to the argument from design and its concomitant association of faith with nature, tackles her atheistic foe on the only common ground they have, that of “natural reason.”<sup>46</sup> Walker describes her “arguments against chance” as “a bewildering display of sophistry, achieved by sometimes using ‘chance’ as the opposite of intelligent purpose, and sometimes as the opposite of necessary order.” In so doing, “she is thus able to switch rapidly from chance—lack of purpose, which includes necessary order, to chance—randomness, which is a contrary of necessary order as well as of purpose.” Although he cites a partial precedent for such “sophistry” in the “Stoic ... part” of Cicero’s *De*

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<sup>44</sup> Ted Honderich, ed., *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 43-7.

<sup>45</sup> This argument also begins Philippe Duplessis-Mornay’s *De la Verité de la Religion Chrestienne*, the English translation of which has been partly attributed to Sidney. In the English version, the orderliness of the natural world “ought in all reason to make us all to understand, that in this great universall masse, there is a souveraine Spirite which maketh, moveth, and governeth all that wee see there.” See *A woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion ... Begunne to be translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney Knight, and at his request finished by Arthur Golding* (London, 1587), 2.

<sup>46</sup> D. P. Walker, “Ways of Dealing with Atheists: A Background to Pamela’s Refutation of Cecropia,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 17.2 (1955): 269.

*Natura Deorum*, Walker sees no other purpose to the princess's stance than theological expediency.<sup>47</sup> Pamela is pragmatically opposing the irredeemable Cecropia with a defensive brand of theology, one that obviates Cecropia's response, but is not necessarily sincerely held. Walker identifies two groups of Christians: one group (including Philippe Duplessis-Mornay) that "have some hope of converting atheists," and another that "have purely protective aims." Pamela's refutation of Cecropia is characterized by Walker as belonging to the latter, "less liberal" theology, held by Montaigne among others, that "emphasize[s] grace at the expense of free will."<sup>48</sup> This contrasts starkly with my "liberal" reading of the "fall" of Cecropia's son, Amphialus. Nevertheless, Walker's case that Pamela belongs to the second group of Christians rests on Pamela's confession to Cecropia that "I speak to you without any hope of fruit in so rotten a heart" (359), and it is perhaps a step too far to align her refutation of Cecropia with the less liberal party. It is possible to argue that Pamela's arguments are not merely a result of theological pragmatism, but a resort to nature in which nature is equated with reason and virtue as part of a stoic pastoral philosophy akin to that identified by Stillman in the *Old Arcadia*. Walker's sourcing of the ideas in a stoic text and Pamela's "display of sophistry" provide strong clues to their shared origin in Sidney's rhetoricism. Moreover, through Pamela's defensive arguments in this passage, Sidney is again demonstrating his knowledge of philosophical stoicism without advocating it.

To conclude, Victor Skretkowicz has shown that Mary Sidney Herbert was influenced by the Huguenot thinkers, Hubert Languet and Philippe Duplessis-Mornay. In doing so, he has drawn attention to a moral distinction, based on Languet's (and Mornay's) humanistic and theological inheritance from Philip Melanchthon that, I contend, is of significance for reading Philip Sidney's *New Arcadia*. This thesis, that of a Philippist *Arcadia*, has the potential to unify several apparently distinct readings. It may also resolve the problematic association of Sidney with a passive stoicism in the work of critics like Blair Worden. Through the

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<sup>47</sup> Walker, "Ways of Dealing," 271-2.

<sup>48</sup> Walker, "Ways of Dealing," 265-7. Justus Lipsius, in his classic work of sixteenth-century Neostoicism, *De Constantia* (available in Latin from 1584), emphasises God's will with little, if any, suggestion of human cooperation, but retains the possibility of the conversion of God's foes. Sidney differs from Lipsius in allowing greater scope for human will; see Justus Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie*, trans. Sir John Stradling (1594), II, vii, 76.

passive virtue of Pamela and the less-than virtuous actions of Amphialus, Sidney is able to use his familiarity with stoical thought to advocate a liberal philosophy that incorporates the Philippism of Languet, the rhetoricism of Aristotle and his own "stoic pastoral."

**“THE WEB OF HIS STORY”:  
NARRATING MISO’S POEM AND MOPSA’S TALE IN  
BOOK 2 OF THE NEW ARCADIA**

ALEX DAVIS  
*University of St. Andrews*

Even more than most stories are, the second book of Sir Philip Sidney’s revised “New” *Arcadia* is a story composed of other stories.<sup>1</sup> Although it ends in violent scenes dealing with the Arcadian rebellion, for the greater part of the book the main line of Sidney’s plot is set aside in favour of a rich texture of inset tales and reminiscence devoted to bringing the reader up to date with the pre-history of the princes Pyrocles and Musidorus. Accounts by Musidorus, by Philoclea, by Pamela, Pyrocles and Basilus in turn present episodes from the princes’ travels through Asia Minor, and much of the pleasure of the narrative comes from the structural ingenuity with which each thread is first spun out and then cut off as another takes its place, the movement between these different strands maintaining suspense and interest whilst they slowly knit together and Sidney’s intricately detailed backstory takes its gradual shape in the reader’s mind. The tone is courtly, the subject matter elevated, and the language, on the whole, elaborately ornamental.

At the very heart of this narrative tapestry, though—at the virtual dead centre of book 2—there lies a flaw, or an anomaly; at any rate a narrative section wildly dissimilar in character to those that surround it. When the Arcadian women and Pyrocles (disguised as the Amazon Zelmane) go to bathe in the river Ladon,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, ed. Victor Skretkowitz (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1987). Further references appear in the main body of the text. This article was originally presented as a paper at the conference on “Romance” held in Dr Skretkowitz’s honour at the University of Dundee, October 2007, and I should like to take this opportunity to record my gratitude for the extraordinary scholarship embodied in his edition. My opening sentence is itself an adaptation, from John Crowley’s *Aegypt* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1987), “Author’s Note.”

the scene seems set for further tale-telling along the lines already established, as Philoclea relates the life of the Lydian Queen Erona. But she is interrupted—and not, this time, in favour of a new courtly voice. Instead, we get two contributions from the lower-class women: firstly a diatribe against love offered by the uncouth Miso, and then a tale of romance told by Mopsa. These two narratives stand alone. They are intimately linked to each other, but differ from the other inset tales in book 2 in neither picking up previously established narrative threads, nor in having theirs so picked up. Their content may echo themes canvassed in other sections of the *Arcadia*, but at the level of plot they are utterly isolated from the rest of Sidney's text. They are shorter than, and stylistically distinct from, the graceful, literary tales that surround them, just as Mopsa and Miso are understood to be socially and morally distinct from their aristocratic charges. Finally, and uniquely among Sidney's inset narratives in this book, Mopsa's story is understood to be fictional within the world of Sidney's fiction, rather than dealing with notionally real events that happened to notionally real characters at some time in the past.<sup>2</sup> Both tales and tellers seem to stand as things apart.

And yet they necessarily cannot exist completely independent of the larger verbal texture of which they are a part. The question then is: what relationship *do* these episodes bear to the *Arcadia* as a whole? In one of the few detailed accounts of them, Clare Kinney has suggested they may have an interrogatory character. "Miso and Mopsa's parodic fictions," she writes, "subvert the more canonical narratives of desire that frame them, and suggest that Sidney's revisions of his original manuscript have engendered within the exfoliating *New Arcadia* a self-reflexive counter-plot."<sup>3</sup> Without taking anything away from Kinney's analysis, my interest here lies in pursuing this question of self-

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<sup>2</sup> See Mary Ellen Lamb, "Old Wives' Tales, George Peele, and Narrative Abjection," *Critical Survey* 14:1 (2002): 39.

<sup>3</sup> Clare Kinney, "On the Margins of Romance, at the Heart of the Matter: Revisionary Fabulation in Sidney's *New Arcadia*," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 21:2 (1991): 143. Other, brief, discussions include: Walter R. Davis, *A Map of Arcadia: Sidney's Romance in its Tradition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), 123; Thelma Greenfield, *The Eye of Judgement: Reading the New Arcadia* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1982), 60; Norman K. Farmer, *Poetry and the Visual Arts in Renaissance England* (Austin: The University of Texas, Austin, 1984), 15-16; and Julie A. Eckerle, "Urania's Example: The Female Storyteller in Early Modern Romance," in *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*, ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Karen Bamford (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008): 27; Elizabeth Porges Watson, "Folklore in Arcadia: Mopsa's 'Tale of the old cut' re-cut and set," *Sidney Journal* 16:2 (1998), 3-15.

reflexivity a little further than she does. I will be arguing that Miso's narration and Mopsa's tale possess a curiously self-referential force in relation to Sidney's work, offering the basis for a meditation on, and sometimes a model for, the *Arcadia's* treatment of popular culture; its mediation of issues of class and gender; its distinctive narrative style; and its peculiar presentation of history. In so doing, I will argue, these episodes also reflect their creator's image back to himself as if in a distorting mirror, in a uniquely disobliging and even grotesque form.

The storytelling at Ladon starts with the tale of Erona, which Miso interrupts. Provoked by the youngsters' incessant "tittle-tattling of Cupid," she decides to tell them "what a good old woman told me, what an old wise man told her, what a great learned clerk told him, and gave it him in writing"—and which she, Miso, in turn has written down in her "prayer book." It is the book that is of particular interest here, as Miso goes on to explain how she came by it. She was a girl of twenty-seven, when that "good old woman" called her into her house. "I see a number of lads love you," she notes, and so the time has come to warn Miso off love:

She brought me into a corner, where there was painted a foul fiend, I trow, for he had a pair of horns like a bull, his feet cloven, as many eyes upon his body as my grey mare hath dapples, and for all the world so placed. This monster sat like a hangman on a pair of gallows. In his right hand he was painted holding a crown of laurel, in his left hand a purse of money; and out of his mouth hung a lace, of two fair pictures of a man and a woman; and such a countenance he showed, as if he would persuade folks by those allurements to come thither and be hanged. (211)

This is Cupid. "Therefore," the old woman warns, "do what thou list with all those fellows, one after another ... But, upon my charge, never love none of them." The young Miso is incredulous: "Could such a thing come from the belly of fair Venus?" Maybe not; but the world is mistaken about Love's parentage. In fact, "his mother was a cow, and the false Argus his father," and the old woman has a book to prove it: the prayer-book. And this time we get what seems to be a slightly different account of its provenance: "a great maker of ballets had given [it] to an old painter, who (for a little pleasure) had bestowed both book and picture on her"—that is, on the old woman, who then hands the book on to Miso (211).

The book itself offers verses in dispraise of Cupid, beginning “Poor Painters oft with silly poets join / To fill the world with strange but vain conceits” (212). Poets and painters represent Cupid as “A naked god, young, blind, with arrows two,” but in fact he is the son of Argus and Io:

... an old false knave he is,  
By Argus got on Io, then a cow:  
What time, for her, Juno her Jove did miss,  
And charge of her to Argus did allow.  
    Mercury killed his false sire for this act,  
    His dam, a beast, was pardoned beastly fact.

Furthermore, he doesn’t look anything like the artists imagine:

Yet bears he still his parents’ stately gifts,  
A horned head, cloven feet, and thousand eyes,  
Some gazing still, some winking wily shifts,  
With long large ears, where never rumour dies.  
    His horned head doth seem the heav’n to spite:  
    His cloven foot doth never tread aright. (212)

The poem therefore offers essentially the same picture as that displayed in the corner of the old woman’s house.<sup>4</sup>

This is a slightly confusing episode even when not being abridged for summary, mainly because everything it in appears twice. One might note in particular the complicated account of the provenance of the “prayer-book.” Has the text it contains been bequeathed from a great clerk to a wise old man, and from the wise old man to a “good” old woman, and from that good old woman to the arguably rather less good Miso; or was the book passed from the ballad maker to the painter and from the painter to the old woman? When we get Miso’s poem itself, it may be something of a surprise to discover that it has survived uncontaminated by the chain of multiple and ambiguous transmissions that landed it in her care. Given its elegant and finished quality, it may look far more like the product of a “great learned clerk” than of a “great maker of ballads,” although the chapter heading in the 1590 edition of the *Arcadia*, in which it first appeared, refers to “Miso. *Her old-wiues*

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<sup>4</sup> This is a poem relocated from the *Old Arcadia*. See *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. Jean Robertson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 65-6.



*tale, and ballad against Cupid.*"<sup>5</sup> The episode certainly displays an ambivalence reminiscent of other examples from the tradition of invoking "old wives' tales" in early modern literature.<sup>6</sup> But the dual character ascribed to the poem, compounded by the ambiguity about its history of ownership, serves to alert us to the larger point. This is an episode structured on a principle of almost obsessive internal repetition. We get the conjunction of painters and poets, twice: first the ballad-maker who bequeaths the book to the painter, and then the opening line of the poem within that book, "Poor Painters oft with silly poets join." We get the pictorial description of Love, twice, first in the painting and then in the poem. Even within the poem there are two descriptions of Love—first the iconographers' version, and then the "real" one. And we get the account of the poem's derivation, twice.

But this is also an account that is threaded through with nagging, fractional differences, as with the poem's multiple provenances. Although the episode seems to be organised in terms of a structure of repetition or reduplication, the copies it contains are not always perfect ones: one Love is not like another; this account of where the poem came from differs from that one; and so on. It is noticeable that the characteristic mode of thought in this narrative is, whether literally or analogically, genealogical; we read of Love's ancestry, of the provenance of the book, of old and young women. We might therefore plausibly account for the episode's repetitions-with-difference in terms of an idea of corruption, or that of the signal that decays over time. But, again, the genealogies invoked here are rarely totally straightforward or linear. Instead, what we have is often a doubling of temporalities, one folded over the other to slightly uncanny effect. We get two admonitory old women, the one telling the story and the one within it. We have the young woman in the story and the young women listening to it; also the old woman telling the story and the old women her audience will one day be: as Miso warns the princesses, "whatsoever you think of me, you will one day be as I am" (210). And, finally, there is the doubling of the then-young Miso onto her now-young and as-yet enthusiastic-for-love daughter, Mopsa, whose tale follows, and in which the themes of Miso's narrative reappear in modified form.

Following Miso's intervention, Zelmane actually attempts to return to the earlier account of Erona. However, it has been

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<sup>5</sup> *The Covntess of Pembrokes Arcadia* (London: William Ponsonbie, 1590), Y2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Ellen Lamb, *The Popular Culture of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Jonson* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 45-62.

decided that the group should draw lots for the privilege of telling the next story. Mopsa wins, and begins without further ado:

“In time past,” said she, “there was a king (the mightiest man in all his country), that had by his wife the fairest daughter that ever did eat pap. Now this king did keep a great house, that everybody might come and take their meat freely. So, one day, as his daughter was sitting in her window playing upon a harp, as sweet as any rose, and combing her head with a comb all of precious stones, there came in a knight into the court upon a goodly horse—one, hair of gold; and the other, of silver. And so, the knight, casting up his eyes to the window, did fall into such love with her that he grew not worth the bread he eat; till many a sorry day going over his head, with daily diligence and grisly groans he won her affection, so that they agreed to run away together. And so, in May, when all true hearts rejoice, they stole out of the castle without staying so much as for their breakfast. Now, forsooth, as they went together, often all to-kissing one another, the knight told her he was brought up among the water-nymphs, who had so bewitched him that if he were ever asked his name he must presently vanish away; and therefore charged her upon his blessing that she never ask him what he was, nor whether he would. And so, a great while she kept his commandment; till once, passing through a cruel wilderness, as dark as pitch, her mouth so watered that she could not choose but ask him the question. And then he, making the grievousest complaints (that would have melted a tree to have heard them), vanished quite away; and she lay down, casting forth as pitiful cries as any scritch-owl. But having lain so, wet by the rain and burned by the sun, five days and five nights, she gat up and went over many a high hill and many a deep river, till she came to an aunt’s house of hers, and came and cried to her for help. And she, for pity, gave her a nut, and bade her never open her nut till she was come to the extremest misery that ever tongue could speak of. And so, she went, and she went, and never rested the evening where she went in the morning, till she came to a second aunt. And she gave her another nut.”

“Now good Mopsa,” said the sweet Philoclea, “I pray thee, at my request, keep this tale till my marriage-day, and I promise thee that the best gown I wear that day shall be thine.”<sup>7</sup> (214)

Perhaps the most immediately obvious aspect of Sidney’s presentation of this tale is its class prejudice. Mopsa condemns herself out of her own mouth, just as she always does in Sidney’s fiction. It is not just the occasional verbal redundancies (“there came in a knight into the court”); nor the contamination of her narrative with traces of an orality that Sidney generally took pains to erase from his rather more mannered writing (“now, forsooth”); nor even the vulgar atmosphere she manages to conjure up even whilst trying to be classy (talking about knights and gold and silver, but also about nuts and pap). Most fatal of all for Mopsa is the way in which she constantly manages to reduce her tale to the most basely appetitive of terms. Mopsa is possessed of the most compulsively gustatory sensibility of any of Sidney’s characters. For her there can be no more forceful expression of urgency than to say that her protagonists stole out “without staying for breakfast.” And the heroine’s curiosity? “Her mouth so watered that she could not choose but ask him the question.” This is not, it seems fair to say, a sentence that Sidney would ever have written about Pamela or Philoclea, or have permitted them to speak, ironic narrator though he may very well otherwise have been. At a slightly more indirect level, the seeds that conclude Mopsa’s tale further serve to underline the difference separating her narration from that of her creator. They conjure up a vision of temporality without causality, of a crassly aggregative fictive style that is utterly at odds with the much more involved poetics that govern the rest of Sidney’s fiction: first one nut, and then another, and another still . . . potentially *ad infinitum*.<sup>8</sup> In the rest of the *Arcadia*, by way of contrast, it seems far more characteristic that we should be plunged into a situation *in medias res*, and only subsequently unravel the antecedent events that led up to it. The device—which governs the whole of book 2—seems designed to saturate the narrative with causality and connection, and it seems likely that

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<sup>7</sup> In Anna Weamys’s continuation, Mopsa claims her gown, and finishes her tale (although she is again interrupted): *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney’s “Arcadia,”* ed. Patrick Colborn Cullen (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 166-9 (reprint edition).

<sup>8</sup> The phrase “temporality without causality” is from Lorna Hutson’s response to the original paper, with thanks.

Sidney would have regarded a plot that relied extensively on mere accident as inartistic.<sup>9</sup> Mopsa, then, is an anti-Sidney: coarse where he is refined, oral where he is literary, naïve where he is artful, and female where he is male. This, plainly, is the most straightforward reading of her narration. The rest of this paper will be devoted to exploring the reasons why one might want to supplement it with a diametrically opposed account of how Miso and Mopsa's contributions interact with Sidney's text as a whole.

The first fact that might suggest that there is more to Mopsa's tale than meets the eye is its resemblance to a narrative of Cupid and Psyche: the young woman in love with a man with supernatural connections (the water-nymphs), who violates the prohibition he lays upon her and who must subsequently seek him out, encountering various assistants along the way. If we were in any doubt about the true nature of Mopsa's story, the context might have alerted us. It appears within a series of other inset narratives, all with the same theme. Before Miso's poem about Love, Philoclea had been telling the company that Erona's troubles began when she rashly decided to "pull down and deface" (205) all the images of Cupid in Lydia. Mopsa's is yet another such story, even if it is not openly identified as such.

The tale of Cupid and Psyche is a classical one. It appears as—again—an inset narrative in Apuleius' Latin novel *The Golden Ass* or *Metamorphoses*, composed some time in the second century AD and translated into English by William Adlington in 1566. Sidney refers to the text in his *Apology for Poetry*.<sup>10</sup> There were

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<sup>9</sup> Compare the account of Heliodorus and the Renaissance appreciation of the artful "disposition" of his narrative in Terence Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1998), 16-17. The ancient novel may have offered Sidney a narrative technology or repertoire of devices that emphasized the "causeful" nature of things. A classic example would be the shipwreck that opens Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, and one might wonder to what extent it represents a sly joke that this key motif should itself represent an apparent accident. The motif has been extensively discussed by Steve Mentz in *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: The Rise of Prose Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), but on the whole not in these terms. In his paper at the "Romance" conference, it was intriguing that Julian Lethbridge ("Discover the Secret") should argue that the *Arcadia* was not romance, precisely because the events it depicted were relatively lacking in the arbitrary or mysterious quality characteristic of many medieval chivalric tales—and also that Tiffany Alkan ("What Happened to Pyrocles' Magic Sword? The Reformation of Romance in Sidney's *The New Arcadia*") should read Mopsa's nuts as the magical motifs of medieval romance that Sidney was proposing not to crack open in the course of his narrative.

<sup>10</sup> Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. R.W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 112. The tale of Cupid and Psyche also receives discussions in authorities such as Boccaccio and Frontinus: the tale was both

also folktale variants of the narrative, discussed by Elizabeth Porges Watson, that seem clearly relevant to his relocation of the narrative within a popular cultural context.<sup>11</sup> I think it is the case though that we as readers are meant to perceive Mopsa's tale as classical *in origin*, however subsequently distorted and transformed. When Cupid appears in monstrous form in Miso's poem, we are perhaps being offered a modified reprise of the description of Psyche's future husband in Apuleius as "A fierce barbaric, snake-like monster."<sup>12</sup> If valid, the allusion would seem to underline the fact that the two narratives function as companion pieces, as well as suggesting the relevance of the classical context to the Mopsa's tale. And yet, Mopsa's treatment of the story is not classicising. What we get instead is ancient material filtered through the narrative modes and linguistic mannerisms of later time periods. Mopsa's tale is not just socially anomalous, when set against the courtly narratives that frame it; it is chronologically anomalous, when the matter of the tale is set against the manner of its telling. Our hero is described as a "knight" on horseback; he has been brought up by the fairies (or rather, the "water-nymphs"—a rare moment in which the diction swims against the prevailing chronological current, towards the ancient world); the heroine plays a harp; her father owns a castle and acts like a feudal lord, keeping an open house. We might also note the emphasis on the month of May, the Chaucerian context of storytelling in a group, and the *Sir Thopas*-like interruption of the romance narrative. In short, Mopsa's tale seems less classical than medieval. Indeed, Katherine Duncan-Jones has suggested that some of its details may be even more up-to-date than that, since when Mopsa's knight

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popular and much-discussed—see Malcolm Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods: Classical Mythology in Renaissance Art* (London: Allen Lane, 2005). Robert H.F. Carver, "'Sugared Invention' or 'Mongrel tragic-Comedy': Sir Philip Sidney and the Ancient Novel," *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* 8 (1997), 197-226 argues that Apuleius' influence on Sidney has been underestimated; since he also sees this influence as predominating in the *Old Arcadia*, with the *New Arcadia* being a revision modelled on Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, his argument is not entirely congruent with that set out here.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Porges Watson, "Folklore in Arcadia," 3-15.

<sup>12</sup> Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 78. See also the description of the husband on pp. 89-90. I am indebted to Elizabeth Porges Watson for the suggestion of Apuleian influence in Miso's narrative. It may or may not be relevant that Hugh Sanford's address "To the Reader," to be found in the 1593 composite *Arcadia*, alludes to Apuleius by way of attacking those dissatisfied with the text: "they are roses, not flowers, must do them good" (*The New Arcadia*, lxi). Apuleius' protagonist Lucius was transformed into an ass and could only regain his human form by eating roses.

woos his lady with “daily diligence” he does so borrowing a phrase from a volume of George Turberville’s verse published in 1567, and dedicated to Sidney’s aunt.<sup>13</sup> Read carefully, then, Mopsa’s tale reveals itself to have been composed in accordance with a principle of stratification. It is made up of layers: the classical base, however dimly perceived; then the medieval; and finally the relatively recent, although Turberville’s style had itself been rendered a thing of the past by poetic innovators like Sidney himself. It is a scene written in triplicate, at the very least. We can also see that these different strata are interleaved with zones of distortion, since the tale also presents us with two types of culturally elite material, the Latin novel and the medieval courtly romance, reconfigured within an idiom that is popular and folktale-like. Like Lucius himself in Apuleius, the classical narrative has been assiduously transformed.

Yet one might also begin to see the sense in which outright hostility—to the female, to the lower-class and the popular—is only half the story here. We are familiar with the idea that the romance form might have had particularly feminine associations for Sidney. Helen Hackett writes of “the effeminacy of his narrative persona, and the fact that this is not necessarily resented or regarded as shameful.”<sup>14</sup> We are also familiar with the notion that Sidney enjoys introducing semi-concealed author-surrogates into his work. Still, it may require some effort to see Mopsa as belonging in the company of a Philisides, or even of an Astrophil. On the face of things, as we have seen, the very opposite seems to be the case. Nevertheless, for the time it takes her to tell her version of the myth of Cupid and Psyche at least, she has as much in common with her creator as any of his elite narrators. The connection lies in the mingling of temporally disparate materials discussed above; in the way both Sidney’s tale and the tale within

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<sup>13</sup> Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991), 12, and George Turberville, *Epitaphs, Epigrams, Songs and Sonets* (London: Henry Denham, 1567), “To his Friende: P: of Courting, Trauailing, Dysing, and Tenys,” F8’.

<sup>14</sup> Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 111. Even though the overt references to an audience of “ladies” that proliferate through the *Old Arcadia* are removed in Sidney’s revision of the text, one might still feel that his narrative is thoroughly implicated in the widely-understood, if often paradoxical, ascription of femininity of the romance genre—on which, see Hackett’s “‘Yet Tell Me Some Such Fiction’: Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania* and the ‘Femininity’ of Romance,” in *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760*, ed. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 39-68.

it arrange their literary borrowings in order to produce certain textual effects.

Almost every introduction to the *Arcadia* pauses to discuss the heterogeneous nature of Sidney's source material. The critical trope was well established even in the sixteenth century, when John Hoskins commented on Sidney's reading: "For the web, as it were, of his story, he followed three: Heliodorus in Greek, Sannazarius' *Arcadia* in Italian and *Diana* [by] de Montemayor in Spanish."<sup>15</sup> Hoskins was calling attention to the textual—or, as we would say, intertextual—character of Sidney's fiction, the fact that it is composed out of discrete strands woven together into a whole. In combination with the peculiar character of Miso's preceding account, Mopsa's tale suggests something about the arrangement of these threads, throwing light on the aesthetics of the text generally. Specifically, the chronological and genealogical themes of the mother's narrative resonate with the peculiar chronological structuring of the daughter's, in a way that suggests that the latter is entirely deliberate. The two accounts seem thematically continuous. The seeds that conclude Mopsa's tale, for instance, introduce temporal motifs about genealogy, inheritance, and the passing of something on from old woman to young, that tie her account in with her mother's, and permit the distinctive themes of the two to mingle productively. Mopsa's tale declares that the *Arcadia* is the product of diverse elements woven together—as stylistically various, indeed, as Apuleius' *Golden Ass* itself; Miso's poem suggests that these elements are understood to be coordinated, in however ambiguous a way, chronologically. Mopsa's tale descends to us from the classical world via a chain of intermediate steps, just like her mother's prayer-book: from the Latin novel to the medieval romance, and from the medieval romance to the earlier Tudor. And the overlayings, the uncanny chronological simultaneities, that characterise the earlier episode are particularly pertinent here, because when we get to Mopsa's tale, we do not get the classical followed by the medieval and then the Tudor, in sequence. Instead hers is a narrative that presents chronologically distinct elements all at once, rather than in an orderly succession. It displays a disorienting historical simultaneity, in which the narrative techniques and literary idioms of different eras mingle promiscuously; but the point perhaps is that we are supposed to allocate to each their proper chronological

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<sup>15</sup> John Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, ed. Hoyt H. Hudson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), 41.

provenance, even whilst we appreciate the juxtapositions created by their peculiar mode of presentation.

We may be getting, therefore, an “inset” insight into the peculiar temporal structuring of the *Arcadia* as a whole. The *Arcadia* is set in the past, in classical Greece, and in that entirely minimal and neutral sense, it is therefore a historical fiction. At the same time, though, we might be cautious about any more substantial claim of this kind, because the classical Greece of the *Arcadia* doesn’t look anything very much like classical Greece as we understand it. A lot of the time, in fact, it looks suspiciously similar to Elizabethan England. This is an ancient Greece in which people seem to sleep in four-poster beds and travel round in coaches (142, 151). Nor is the *Arcadia* a historical fiction substantially influenced by a sense of the history of manners. With due allowance made for the exaggerations and intensities proper to the kind of hyper-intellectual but also perhaps rather sensational fictional narrative that is the *Arcadia*, and with the important exception of their paganism, Sidney’s ancient Greeks seem to behave—to converse and to reason and to woo one another—very much like men and women of the late sixteenth century. We do not find in the *Arcadia* that focus on local colour and aspiration towards authenticity that defines the modern historical novel; quite the contrary. And yet the text can never, quite, be assimilated to a pure contemporaneity. As an example of just how mixed the signals it sends can be, one might consider the question of clothing: one of the most obvious ways of seizing upon a sense of the difference of the past, but one where one might almost suspect Sidney of deliberately setting out to muddy the issue. When Pyrocles first disguises himself as Zelmane, we are treated to a long description of his new costume, including the detail that he wears “crimson velvet buskins, in some places open (as the ancient manner was) to show the fairness of the skin” (68-9). This approaches the sort of thing we might expect of a fiction set in ancient Greece. Elsewhere, though, Philoclea is described dressed in “a light taffeta garment, so cut as the wrought smock came through it in many places” (84), which sounds rather more like sixteenth-century dress; whilst Artesia’s maids wear “petticoats” (314). And at the conclusion of the narrative as Sidney originally conceived it—and as readers after 1593 would have consumed it—Pyrocles attends his trial clothed, again, “after the Greek manner,”



but with his neck “not so much hidden with a ruff,” clearly implying that its absence is exceptional.<sup>16</sup>

This, then, is not so much narrative detail in “the ancient manner,” as it is the antique blended with the modern, with the fashions of later periods, just as in Mopsa’s tale. Of course, effects of this sort are scarcely unique to Sidney. On the contrary, they seem rather characteristic of English literary culture of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. One immediately thinks of Shakespeare’s “doublet and toga” versions of the ancient world, in which the conspirators against Caesar disperse as the clock strikes three (2.1.193); Cleopatra plays at billiards (2.5.3); and the Gothic armies approach Rome via a “ruinous monastery” (5.1.21).<sup>17</sup> The problem in attempting to assess such moments is that the inadvertent historical error looks identical, formally speaking, to the consciously deployed and entirely deliberate anachronism. One is obliged, then, to make a judgement from context. The value of Miso and Mopsa’s narratives is precisely to assist in this process. With their self-reflexive, inset character, they are parts that resemble, albeit in peculiar and twisted ways, the whole of which they are a part. Their analogical force is such as to suggest that anachronism may be a quite conscious part of Sidney’s aesthetic programme. Both the subsection and the work as a whole display a disorienting historical simultaneity, in which the narrative techniques and literary idioms and even (in the latter case) sartorial details of different eras mingle promiscuously. Understood properly, however, we might suspect that we are actually meant to be discriminating between these different phenomena and allocating to each of them their proper chronological provenance. It is one thing to produce a mess—historically distinct materials mixed together because one lacks the acumen to distinguish between them—and it is another thing to place these discontinuous materials side by side because their juxtaposition can produce a distinctive kind of aesthetic pleasure. But it is another thing still deliberately to place them side-by-side in the hope that part of that pleasure will come from the clash and

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<sup>16</sup> See Robertson, ed. (1973), 376. When Pyrocles first disguises himself as Cleophilia in the *Old Arcadia*, we get a comment on his hair, “which the young men of Greece ware very long, accounting them most beautiful that had that in fairest quantity” (26). The detail might be primarily geographical (thus in Greece, as not in England), but when Sidney revised his text, he clarified the emphasis. When Pyrocles is first introduced in the *New Arcadia*, we read of “his hair, which the young men of Greece used to wear very long” (8, my italics).

<sup>17</sup> All references are to *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt *et al* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1997).

interplay of distinct historical idioms *understood as such*.<sup>18</sup> For all its vigorous stylistic *bricolage*, the effect of Mopsa's tale is actually to sharpen, rather than dissolve, our sense of period.<sup>19</sup> Generalising from the individual case, we might say that the *Arcadia* is paradoxically all the more historical for its anachronistic derangement and apparent neglect of historical sequence. Although it scarcely resembles a modern historical novel, therefore, it is nonetheless in an important sense a historical fiction, in that its juxtaposition of chronologically distinct literary effects seems to be a deliberate writerly effect.

To read these episodes correctly would therefore be to see through their veneer of rustic idiocy and to understand how similar they are to Sidney's narrative as a whole. Mopsa's constant attendance on Pamela obliges Musidorus to take an indirect approach to wooing the princess. Correspondingly, her presence here may offer her creator the opportunity for some equally oblique self-presentation.<sup>20</sup> Surprising though it may seem on the face of things, when Sidney writes the *Arcadia*, he behaves exactly like Mopsa when she relates the tale of Cupid and Psyche. Their literary principles are the same even as their performances are diametrically opposed, and however much the text might seem to want the very opposite, here as least it finds itself mired in, and unable completely to distinguish itself from, the popular, the feminine, the foolish.<sup>21</sup> The inset character of the episodes gives them a self-referential, even hermeneutic, force, that in itself tells us something about the artfulness of the *Arcadia's* design. Rather than spooling out into a pattern of resemblance and counterpoint in the fashion of the interlaced medieval romances that were one of

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<sup>18</sup> Compare the account of Sidney's anachronisms in Constance C. Relihan, *Cosmographical Glasses: Geographic Discourse, Gender and Elizabethan Fiction* (Kent and London: Kent State University Press, 2004), 45-68.

<sup>19</sup> The example of Samuel Wolff is telling. Wolff fails to identify the story as that of Cupid and Psyche, and as a result absolutely consistently describes the tale as *medieval*: Mopsa, he writes, tells "a clumsy fairy tale"; it is a "mediaeval" narrative; he compares its conclusion to the Host's breaking into Chaucer's tale of Sir Topas. As for Miso's description of Love: "of course, this kind of thing is wholly mediaeval, not even touched by the Renaissance." *Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), 265, 332-3, 337.

<sup>20</sup> Derek Alwes, *Sons and Authors in Elizabethan England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 98 takes Mopsa to be paradigmatic of the "incompetent audience" and therefore a device that establishes the *Arcadia's* potential for indirect significance.

<sup>21</sup> Compare Porges Watson, "Folklore in *Arcadia*," 5 on how Mopsa's tale exemplifies an "interplay of association between vernacular and literary versions" of the narrative.

Sidney's many models,<sup>22</sup> the narrative can be seen drawing itself into a far tighter weave of analogy, of carefully contrived duplications, nested stories and frames within frames that constantly threaten to collapse in upon themselves and distort the text's meticulously-established hierarchies of difference. Jeff Dolven has recently suggested that there is something methodically controlled about the *New Arcadia's* self-organisation (its multifarious surface variety notwithstanding).<sup>23</sup> I am suggesting a similar deep structure here, although I cannot agree with Dolven that it implies a reduction in the text's complexity; quite the contrary. What we have here is a process of compression and doubling so extreme as to blur together, even if only temporarily, the images of Sir Philip Sidney, courtier, and Mopsa the ignorant peasant. Sidney chooses to have his own literary practice reflected back to him through the inanities of an uneducated countrywoman and her mother. All the differences that constitute historical change are mockingly reproduced as incessant fractional displacement, uncertainty, or inaccuracy; all its continuities summed up in the ghastly repetition: like mother, like daughter. The effect is playful, but also ambivalent—even rather scathingly self-disgusted: a self-effeminization too far, perhaps. Once again one ends up reflecting that when Sidney called the *Arcadia* a “toyful” book, there was a part of him that meant more by the phrase than just routine courtly self-deprecation.<sup>24</sup> These are episodes that proffer to us the ghostly outline of a Philip Sidney twisting, semi-humorously, in abjection, as he weaves for himself a phantasmagoria of his own lower-class femininity.

There is one final point to draw out here. As we have seen, the history produced by this overlaying of Sidney's authorial personae is itself a thing of simultaneities, of distinct time frames invoked all at once. But if Mopsa's tale of Cupid and Psyche represents the product of a highly evolved historical consciousness—and I have argued that it does—what that consciousness is processing is not at all the sort of history one finds in history books. What we get is not a history of actual events, of real historical personages and their actions and their

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<sup>22</sup> See Eugène Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 68-98.

<sup>23</sup> Jeff Dolven, *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 173-205.

<sup>24</sup> The classic account here is Katherine Duncan-Jones, “Philip Sidney's Toys” in *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, ed. Dennis Kay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 61-80.

suffering, however difficult or impossible that might be truly to apprehend in any final reckoning. These are all sidelined in favour of the activities of Sidney's fictional personages, who in a sense feature, as I have suggested, as a gallery of proxies, projection spaces for the author and his readers. Sidney is not particularly interested here in life as it was lived in the past.<sup>25</sup> The people, the events: these are excluded. But the slow unfurling of different narrative habits, linguistic forms and modes of expression that those people and events elaborated as they successively passed into non-existence: these are what the text concerns itself with. The *Arcadia* is the product of a historical vision that perceives the past primarily in terms of a history of *styles*, of textual effects, and it is in this maybe rather specialised sense that Sidney stands as one of the sixteenth century's premier cultural historians.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> It is notable that, although we can be sure that the *Arcadia* is set in the ancient world, it is impossible to be much more specific than that. So although we read that Macedonia is a kingdom "which in elder time had such a sovereignty over all the provinces of Greece that even particular kings therein did acknowledge" (159), possibly suggesting a time after the reign of Alexander the Great; the precise temporal setting is always left carefully vague.

<sup>26</sup> For a contemporary parallel, see Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991): an insistent "pastness," finding its expression in repeated attempts to connect the past and the present, accompanied by a tendency to focus in on only the most superficial aspects of that past; stylistic pastiche that is, arguably, unanchored in a comprehensive vision of history; and so forth.

## The Liminal Woman in Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*

MARION WYNNE-DAVIES  
*University of Surrey*

### I

Mary Wroth was frequently the focus of praise in highly commendatory verses, perhaps most famously in Ben Jonson's homage to her sonnets, "in your verse all Cupid's armory." It comes, therefore, as somewhat of a surprise to find her included by William Browne in the "Vale of Woe" sequence of his *Britannia's Pastorals* (1613).<sup>1</sup> The Vale occupies an ambivalent space that expands to encompass an array of different figures including pastoral characters from the main narrative, mythological figures, and individuals from Browne's own era and the near-past. Hence, Aletheia, a fictional shepherdess, may enter the Vale of Woe where she meets the nymph Idya, who symbolises England and who mourns the death, in 1612, of the real Prince Henry, who is, in turn, compared to "our Heroë (*honour'd ESSEX*) ... [who] 'dy'd'" in 1601. The deceased Earl of Essex is also figured as the "great man" who sits besides the "learnedst Maide," a character who may be identified as Wroth through the poem's reference to "an *Anagram ... Worth*."<sup>2</sup> The common element that allows Browne

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Jonson, "XXVIII A Sonnet, to the Nobel Lady, Lady Mary Wroth," in *Ben Jonson. The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), 165. William Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals*. A Scolar Press Facsimile (London: the Scolar Press, Ltd., 1969), 78-96.

<sup>2</sup> Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals*, 92, 80, 82. All further citations to this work will be taken from this edition and indicated parenthetically within the text. David Norbrook, *Panegyric of the Monarch and Its Social Context under Elizabeth I and James I* (D. Phil Oxford, 1978), 268 has identified this character as Arbella Stuart but, given the reference to anagram and the common anagrammatic use of her name—Worth—Browne must refer to Mary Wroth. For my argument that the character is Wroth see Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English Renaissance* (London: Palgrave, 2007), 98-103.

to hold together—albeit tenuously—these disparate characters is the political discourse of English Protestantism coupled with nostalgia for the Elizabethan age. As such, the poet is able to rewrite Essex's disgrace and execution as Elizabeth I's accidental wounding of the Earl's "vndaunted heart," and to situate him alongside Prince Henry, who died eleven years later, and Mary Wroth who was still very much alive (82). Browne traces a diachronic line of militant English Protestantism from Elizabeth and Essex to the resurrection of Elizabethan policy offered by Prince Henry, and bolsters this through a parallel familial investment by the Sidney/Herberts, which is represented in the poem via the dedication of the poem to William Herbert. This unwieldy combination of myth, fiction, history and contemporary political allegory is a commonplace of early modern pastoral and, together with Browne's dependence upon the patronage of William Herbert, serves to explain the often tortuous conjunctions employed in the poem. However, what is particularly interesting about Wroth's inclusion is that she appears in a space characterised by its lifelessness. In addition to Essex's presence, the Vale of Woe is described in death-like terms; it is "husht and silent as the mid of night," a "shady, sad, and solitarie ground" and there are no signs of "man nor beast" (78, 80). Mary Wroth is positioned at the intersection between life and death: through an interpretation of the anagram and, therefore, the contemporary allegory, she is associated with an existent reality, whereas through the fictional character of the "learnedst maid" she is transposed into a twilight world of death and mourning. Wroth's occupancy of this liminal space acts within Browne's poem as a means of uniting diverse elements of the political discourse, but for Wroth the role of the liminal woman has intriguing and far-reaching implications.

There can be no question that Wroth would have known of *Britannia's Pastorals*, and her interest in the pastoral genre suggests that she would have read and interpreted the poem. This essay does not argue, however, for explicit influence; rather, it sets out to explore the way in which Wroth reworked the idea of the liminal woman through the representation of female characters who must appear to be simultaneously living and deceased. I focus on Wroth's pastoral tragicomedy, *Love's Victory*, with its provocative recovery sequence, in which the corpses of the two main characters, Musella and her lover Philisses, occupy a central space during the final scene of the play, before being miraculously revived. In order to evaluate the radical nature of this occurrence, the essay initially compares the play with earlier pastoral tragicomedies as well as with examples of the death recovery trope

in Wroth's prose romance, *Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. The next section explores the ways in which personal, familial and political allegory might be a means by which to excavate possible interpretations of this complex sequence. The concluding section focuses upon the way in which gender politics might provide an underlying thematic unity to the various allegorical significations, although the essay ends by questioning the possibility of locating any stable readings within a world that incorporates liminal identities.

## II

*Love's Victory* is classed as a pastoral tragicomedy; its characters are shepherds and shepherdesses, the main theme is love, and the play's conclusion turns the tragic fate of the two main protagonists, Musella and Philisses, into comic resolution via a miraculous recovery from death. There are two versions of the play: the Penshurst Manuscript which is generally deemed to represent the full text, and the Huntington Manuscript which is often considered incomplete in that it omits material from the beginning and end of the play. Significantly, the Huntington Manuscript concludes at the point Musella and Philisses decide to commit suicide, containing neither their deaths by poison, nor the miraculous recovery. Here I will concentrate primarily on the material found in the Penshurst Manuscript; however, I wish to return at the end of this essay to the compelling question of the "unfinished" nature of the Huntington version.

Although Musella and Philisses love one another, Musella's mother, in accordance with her husband's will, has arranged for Musella to marry the boorish but wealthy Rustic. In order to avoid this fate, the two lovers agree to commit suicide, an act that will be witnessed by their friend, the shepherdess Simeana. Towards the end of Act V they approach the Temple of Love addressing Venus and Cupid in verse; Philisses promises Venus,

Hers [Musella's] I lived, hers now I die,  
Crowned with fame's eternity.  
Thus your [Venus'] force shall glory have  
By Philisses' loving grave.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Wroth, *Love's Victory*, V.iv.19-22, in *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. S.P.Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1996), 90-126. All subsequent quotations from the play are taken from this edition and references made parenthetically.

Correspondingly, Musella predicts,

Earth too mean for such a truth,  
 Shall in death have lasting youth;  
 No decay, no strife, no fate,  
 Shall disturb that 'during state. (V.iv. 27-30)

But, just as Musella prepares to kill herself with a knife, the Amazonian shepherdess Silvesta intercedes and suggests that, rather than allowing their "hands [to] be spotted with ... blood," they drink a "sweet potion" that will offer an easier death (V.iv. 59, 61). The lovers agree, drink the poisoned potion, die, and are placed on the Temple's altar. Meeting with the other pastoral figures (including Rustic) Simeana describes how the lovers have "for a wedding-bed a tomb obtained," and Silvesta confesses to the crime of providing the poison that "made their souls to meet, / Which in their clayey cages could not," ordering the assembled shepherds and shepherdesses to "lay / This love-killed couple in their biding clay" (V.v.52, 91-2, 97-8). The deaths of Musella and Philisses have a number of narrative outcomes: her mother repents; Rustic relinquishes the marriage contract; and Silvesta is condemned to be burned, martyr-like, on a pyre, since "Death she procured, and for death, life shall give" (V. vii. 19). The group performs a requiem-like poem, in which they contrast mutable bodily passion with eternal spiritual love:

Only Death hath force to part  
 Lovers' bodies by his dart;  
 But their spirits higher fly.  
 Death can never make them die. (V.vii.7-10)

For all its invocation of *Romeo and Juliet*, however, *Love's Victory* is not a tragedy, so Musella and Philisses rise from the altar brought back to life by Venus' power, and their concluding union is mirrored by the pairing of the other shepherds and shepherdesses—Rustic even agrees to marry the fickle Dalina. At the end of the play, therefore, even though Silvesta points out that Venus "sent the drink" and the goddess acknowledges that the shepherdess was her "instrument," there is no suggestion that the poison was a sleeping draught or that death was faked. In narrative terms Musella and Philisses must die so that they can be miraculously revived by Venus, a reading that is endorsed by a conventional decoding in which spiritual love must triumph over bodily passion before it can be blessed with survival. For Wroth,



this emphasis on spiritual union would have been underscored by her own family's literary evocations of Christianised neoplatonic erotics, in particular her father's sonnet sequences.<sup>4</sup>

In recent criticism on Wroth, the identification of *Love's Victory* as a pastoral tragicomedy was made initially by Josephine Roberts. She identified Wroth's literary antecedents primarily as Torquato Tasso's *Aminta*, Samuel Daniel's *The Queenes Arcadia* and *Hymen's Triumph*, and John Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*.<sup>5</sup> However, the most useful analysis of the generic inheritance of the play to date was made in 1991 by Barbara K. Lewalski, who provides detailed descriptions of narrative and motif similarities. In relation to the death recovery sequence, she makes two significant points: first, suggesting the instability of the characters' deaths:

Silvesta persuades them to die by poison instead of knives and offers them a potion which (*apparently*) causes their death ... the potion wears off, the *seeming* dead are called forth by Venus and her priests.<sup>6</sup>

Second, she goes on to note that Wroth changes the "generic convention ... for the final resolutions ... to be narrated ... rather than represented" into "a more dramatic resolution scene [in which] the *supposedly* dead lovers arise" (italics mine).<sup>7</sup> Although Lewalski does not go on to interrogate the impact of Wroth's employment of the liminal subject, her use of the terms "apparently ... seemingly ... supposedly" all convey a sense of unease with the final sequence, in which we know, from earlier pastoral tragicomedies, that the characters should simply be unconscious, but which also demands, from the textual evidence, that two dead bodies must be "represented" and not "narrated."

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Sidney, *Poems of Robert Sidney*, ed. P.J.Croft (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> Josephine Roberts, "The Huntington Manuscript of Lady Mary Wroth's Play, *Loves Victorie*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46 (1983), 166. A further path-breaking analysis was undertaken in Margaret Anne McLaren, "An Unknown Continent. Lady Mary Wroth's Forgotten Pastoral Drama, 'Loves Victorie'" in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 276-94.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara K. Lewalski, "Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Pastoral Tragicomedy" in *Reading Mary Wroth. Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 96.

<sup>7</sup> Lewalski, "Mary Wroth's," 101.

Indeed, when Wroth's influences are analysed in more detail, what is surprising is not the difference between representation and narration, but the lengths to which authors go in order to imbue a sense of realism into an otherwise unashamedly romance context.

Examples of the ingenious ways that pastoral tragicomedies transform corpses into living figures through (un)believable means include a range of medicinal and physical methods.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most dramatic of the false death sequences occurs in Tasso's *Aminta*: first, Silvia is assumed from the evidence of her bloody veil to have been killed by a wolf, but it turns out instead that her veil had caught in a tree and that she only tore some hairs while trying to free herself; and second, Amintas is seen flinging himself off a cliff to certain death, only later is it revealed that his fall was broken by the undergrowth and he was simply knocked out.<sup>9</sup> In Daniel's *The Queenes Arcadia*, Amyntas takes poison and is saved by Urania who has "great skill in hearbes" and he is brought round by his lover Chloris, who "rubbd his face [and] Chafd his pale temples."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in Daniel's *Hymen's Triumph* Thyrsis, believing his beloved Silvia to be dead, tries to kill himself; both are revived by "the skilful Lamia" with "cordiall waters," the revivals being completed with practical actions—the couple's friends "chaff'd their temples" and "rubbd & strok'd their Cheekes."<sup>11</sup> John Fletcher in *The Faithful Shepherdess* allows a certain degree of the supernatural into his play in that the River God saves Amoret, but the author is careful to point out that although she is simply wounded, "yet shee's warme, her pulses beat" and therefore may be saved with a pure "drope."<sup>12</sup> Finally, the way in which Shakespeare reworks the false death sequence in order to stress the way reality can be transformed clearly links *The Winter's Tale* to the English pastoral tragicomedy tradition. One of the most powerful moments of the play occurs when Leontes realises that Hermione is not dead and

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<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed comparison of the potion death sequence in Wroth's play with other pastoral tragicomedies, see Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers*, 90-8.

<sup>9</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Amintas in Three Renaissance Pastorals*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Daniel, *The Queenes Arcadia in Three Renaissance Pastorals*, 235-6.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Daniel, *Hymen's Triumph* (Oxford: Malone Society Reprints, 1994), 65.

<sup>12</sup> John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess in The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), III, 543.

that, instead of seeing her statue, he embraces a living body: O, she's warm! / If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating.<sup>13</sup>

In each of *Love's Victory's* antecedents the texts stress the potency of remedy and/or mishap, proving that although the lovers appear dead, they have been alive all along. As Shakespeare expresses it, "magic" and "art" must always be revealed to be as realistic or "lawful as eating."

Clearly Wroth chooses not to employ such devices in her play, so it is particularly intriguing when she does use such "lawful" narrative events to explain the false death sequences in her prose romance. Sheila T. Cavanagh examines the way in which Wroth presents death, locating the "primary boundary between the physical and spiritual realms, which a reader might expect to be absolute," pointing out that these "sites of death remain remarkably untrustworthy."<sup>14</sup> Cavanagh refers to several key moments in the text: for example, how although Pamphila always desires death, even when she believes her beloved Amphilanthus to be dead, she cannot die, instead living as Wroth explains, "some years ... like a religious," about which Cavanagh notes, "ironically, therefore, when Amphilanthus actually appears to be dead, Pamphilia chooses a religious path rather than the death she demands when he breaks her heart."<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Cavanagh comments briefly in a footnote that "Wroth's interest in the permeability of this boundary [between life and death] appears also in the ending of "Love's Victory."<sup>16</sup> Like Lewalski, Cavanagh identifies the way in which characters in Wroth's works occupy a liminal space, but there is a distinct line between the play in which art and magic is necessary to ensure the lovers' recovery and the romance where "lawful" reality is clearly stated. Pamphilia might use numerous metaphors for death, swoons repeatedly and is forever asking to die, but she remains firmly alive.

Other examples of such trenchant reality recur throughout the text, for example in an Amintas-like plot where Limena's blood-stained clothes are falsely interpreted as signifying her death, and when Polidorus's widow is erroneously believed to be a

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<sup>13</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. J.H.P. Pafford (London: Routledge, 1990), 159; V.iii.109-111.

<sup>14</sup> Sheila T. Cavanagh, *Cherished Torment. The Emotional Geography of Lady Mary Wroth's Urania* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 164, 171.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Wroth, *First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), 584; and Cavanagh, *Cherished Torment*, 170. All citations to this edition will be made parenthetically within the text, with I signifying "First Part."

<sup>16</sup> Cavanagh, *Cherished Torment*, 255.

ghost before being discovered alive, “seeming so like a dead body, as they were afraid, they had but heard a voice which caused their search, but that she had been dead, that spirit which shee once had, had guided them to her” (I.352-3). Perhaps the most remarkable of the false death sequences is, however, the decapitation of Meriana. The narrative is introduced as a tale told by Rosindy to his sister, Pamphila, in which he describes how his lady, Meriana, has been captured by a rival for her love, Clotorindus. In the battle to release her from captivity Clotorindus appears to be losing and so takes the drastic action of executing Meriana, afterwards displaying her head on the battlements:

That peerelesse head was seene of him [Rosindy], being set upon a pillar, and that pillar being upon the top of the Pallace, the haire hanging in such length and delicacie, as although it somewhat covered with the thicknesse of it, part of the face, yet was that, too sure a knowledge to Rosindy of her losse, making it appeare unto him, that none but that excellent Queene was mistrisse of that excellent haire. (I.158)

The reader alongside Rosindy is convinced of Meriana’s death, although Wroth has chosen her terminology carefully, and with hindsight it is possible to emphasise the lack of stability in this interpretation through the use of the word “appeare.” It turns out that Meriana is not dead at all, and one of Clotorindus’ servants explains to Rosindy how the “counterfeting” was performed:

That pillar had bin made and set there by her Father, a man excellently graced in all arts, and especially in prospectives, to try his skill he made this, which though so big, as one might stand in it, yet so farr, it seemd but as a small piller, of purpose made to hold a head upon, and so had they rais’d her within it, as no more appeared above it then her chinne comming over it, it was as if stucke into her throat the just distance and art in the making being such and so excellent as none could but have thought it had beene her head cut off. (I. 160)

The ingeniousness of this explanation confers on it an almost theatrical quality, for although Meriana’s father is said to be “graced in all arts,” there is nothing supernatural about the pillar; rather it resembles a conjuror’s trick. Wroth’s source for this illusion was most probably the description of how Philoclea

appears to be beheaded on a scaffold in Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Philoclea explains in precise detail how the effect has been achieved:

By bringing me down under the scaffold and (making me thrust my head up through a hole they had made therein) they did put about my poor neck a dish of gold whereout they had beaten the bottom, so as having set blood in it, you saw how I played the part of death.<sup>17</sup>

Although the two devices display some variance, the exposure of the beheading trick, linked to the false death sequence of romance texts, evidences Wroth's immediate source, although she might have known of Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) in which the scaffold trick is also described.<sup>18</sup> The link to the supernatural and witchcraft is further underlined by the possibility that Meriana's father may be identified with Henry Percy, Duke of Northumberland who was known to have experimented with "all arts." Wroth clearly intends to debunk any magical or supernatural interpretations, mocking those credulous enough to believe in them and associating herself firmly with Sidney's scepticism. In *Urania*, therefore, arts are distrusted and explanations that are offered align Wroth's treatment of the false death sequence with pastoral tragicomedy. She might dally with the liminal, but reverts to the "lawful" as Pamphila lives, Polidorus' widow is proved to be no ghost, and Meriana's death is revealed to be a mere conjuring trick. Why, then, does *Love's Victory* allow the liminal woman to remain unchallenged?

### III

Critical convention has consistently interpreted *Love's Victory*, along with Wroth's other writing, in terms of familial allegory, aligning Musella with Wroth, Philisses with her cousin William Herbert, and Rustic with Wroth's husband Robert Wroth. Gary Waller provides an incisive and comprehensive analysis of the ways in which Wroth and Herbert inform and engage with the way

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<sup>17</sup> Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), 569.

<sup>18</sup> Reginald Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: 1584). Although it is possible that Sidney knew of Scot's work, it is unlikely that Wroth would have read the text since it was banned at the accession of James I in 1603 and most copies were burned.

gender is represented.<sup>19</sup> The plot of Wroth's play may thus be interpreted as depicting the mutual affection of the young Wroth and Herbert, the arranged and unhappy marriage to Robert Wroth, and finally the resumption of love between the cousins after Robert Wroth's death in 1616. Even a double-level of associations exists with Musella as Stella/Penelope Rich and Philisses as Astrophil/Philip Sidney. The death recovery sequence may be seen, through the familial allegory, to represent the "death" of Wroth and William Herbert's love at the point of her unhappy marriage and the resurrection of that desire when Robert Wroth's death enabled the cousins to consummate their passion. The illegitimacy of their liaison (and of their two children) might explain the liminal state of Musella who must, through her representation of Wroth, both be desired by Herbert and repudiated by society. Any account of the play that refers to an autobiographical reading should be considered alongside Wroth's other evocation of herself and Herbert as Pamphilia and Amphilanthus in *Urania* where, of course, Pamphilia does not die, choosing the material alternative of living as a nun, although she later returns to court. It would be possible to explain the distinction between the two female characters by pointing out that the play is an earlier text probably composed while Wroth's affair with Herbert was ongoing, while the prose romance reflects the later distance between the two cousins. There can be no question that the *death recovery* sequence described above does engage with the play's evocation of familial allegory; however, I would argue that the links in themselves do not provide sufficient evidence for Wroth's radical departure from the use of *false deaths* in other pastoral tragicomedies and in her own work.

While early scholarship on Wroth tended to identify autobiographical and familial discourses, her use of political material has become increasingly evident. Josephine Roberts' identification of characters and events in her edition of the first book of *Urania* has proved invaluable for interpreting further material in the prose work and in Wroth's other writings.<sup>20</sup> This immersion in public discourse certainly informs Browne's

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<sup>19</sup> Gary Waller, *Sidney Family Romance. Mary Wroth, William Herbert, and the Early Modern Construction of Gender* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Josephine Roberts, "Introduction," Mary Wroth's *Urania*, I, lxix-xcviii. For a more recent account of the politicised nature of the play see Akiko Kusunoki, "Love's Victory as a response to Shakespeare: A Configuration of Gender Distinctions," *Essays and Studies* 54 (2008): 1-18.

representation of Wroth in the Vale of Woe and links her to the cult of Elizabethan nostalgia, mourning for Prince Henry, militant English Protestantism and, as a consequence of all these, Elizabeth of Bohemia and the Thirty Years War. Indeed, the figure of Aletheia, who languishes alongside Wroth in the Vale, has been identified as representing, in typical Browne style, a combination of moral symbol (truth), political allegory (England) and contemporary history (Princess Elizabeth).<sup>21</sup> Wroth would have had both a personal and political interest in the events surrounding Elizabeth's life, given that Robert Sidney had accompanied the young Queen to her new home in 1613 and also given that support for her husband Frederick, Elector Palatine was provided by William Herbert and his faction at court and in Parliament. The last two songs of the 1616 edition of *Britannia's Pastorals*, which was dedicated to Herbert, contain a stringent attack on James for refusing to initiate action against Spain and, therefore, Catholicism. The *Urania* presents a more complex version of European politics than Browne's strident Anglo Protestantism, with Amphilanthus offering an image of Frederick that is both worthy and morally flawed. As Roberts points out, "At the height of the Bohemian disaster, Wroth constructed a counter-myth within the *Urania* of a young man who brilliantly succeeds in creating an international coalition" (I,xlii). But, at the same time, Amphilanthus cannot be trusted by Pamphilia. His characterisation as a lover suggests a lack of stability that contrasts sharply with his militaristic success. Given the doubling of personal and political allegory, layers of identifications may be constructed by comparing the prose romance and the play, so that just as Amphilanthus may be linked to William Herbert and Frederick in *Urania*, so Philisses can be associated with William Herbert and Frederick in *Love's Victory*, which, in turn, predicates a parallel pattern of Pamphilia/Musella coupled with Wroth and Elizabeth of Bohemia. As the earlier text, *Love's Victory* traces the successful marriage and pre-war harmony of Frederick and Elizabeth, just as it might shadow the consummated desire of Wroth and Herbert after Robert Wroth's death. The engagement of pastoral tragicomedy with political events is now a critical commonplace, and the foregrounding of Elizabeth of Bohemia in this context was particularly popular, as is evidenced by *Britannia's Pastorals* and

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<sup>21</sup> Michelle O'Callaghan, *The 'shepherds nation.' Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture, 1612-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 88-96. Her name might suggest a link with Aletheia Talbot Howard, Countess of Arundel, although given the Arundels' determined Catholicism, this might be unlikely.

*The Winter's Tale* as well as in *Love's Victory*. In terms of political allegory, therefore, the death recovery sequence may be interpreted as a phase of mourning for Anglo Protestantism following the death of Prince Henry, then followed by the resurrection of the English Protestant cause through the union of Elizabeth with Frederick. And, of course, before 1619 when Frederick rashly accepted the Bohemian throne, their success in Europe looked as hopeful as Musella's and Phillises' marriage in the play.

By combining familial and political allegory it is possible to posit a certain justification for the liminal woman, a woman who must, like Musella, be both alive and dead, who, like Wroth, is marginalised by an adulterous relationship or who, like Elizabeth of Bohemia, might be trapped between nostalgia for the prowess of the Elizabethan age and James' determination to value peace before English Protestantism. There is, however, a further factor permeating these fictional, personal and public selves that is identified, most recently, by Paul Salzman in his perceptive analysis of Wroth's work and in particular her engagement with political concerns: "Wroth's interest in the possibilities of female power ... may be seen as engaging in the Protestant faction's nostalgia for Elizabeth I."<sup>22</sup> Salzman's identification of "female power" as a central tenet in Wroth's writing shifts the interpretation of the liminal woman away from the specifics of familial and political allegory towards a wider investment in exploring how early modern women functioned in a sphere where power is simultaneously offered and prohibited.

#### IV

A number of critics working on *Love's Victory* have examined the female politics of the play. Lewalski, in particular, argues that Wroth changed the traditional elements of the pastoral tragicomedy in order "to develop an implicit feminist politics which emphasizes a non-hierarchical community, female and cross-gender friendships. And especially female agency in the roles of Venus, Silvesta, Musella, and even Dalina."<sup>23</sup> The friendship between the female characters is foregrounded throughout the play and, interestingly, features as a central element in the death recovery sequence, since it is Silvesta who gives the two lovers the poison to drink and who, consequently, must be executed. Roberts points out that in changing the conventional ending of the pastoral where

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Salzman, *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 75.

<sup>23</sup> Lewalski, "Mary Wroth's," 104-5.



the deaths are fake, Wroth drew upon Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* but "instead of a fearful, bumbling friar, Wroth supplies the courageous figure of Silvesta."<sup>24</sup> And as Carolyn Ruth Swift goes on to argue, "Wroth creates a situation that may be unique in early English drama: a female friend is willing to sacrifice her own life for another woman who is not her relative or mistress."<sup>25</sup> Roberts and Swift's joint interpretation of the serious threat to Silvesta's life as a real possibility reinforces Wroth's radical reworking of the false death sequence into a statement of mortality and miraculous recovery. The powerful bond between women at the end of the play is further confirmed by Naomi J. Miller who notes that there is, "a triumph ... [of] the enduring relations between women."<sup>26</sup>

By returning to the false-death sequence and looking at it in more detail, the importance of female power in specific relation to the liminal woman becomes apparent. Initially, the "lawful" realistic elements of death predominate: Philisses talks about his "grave"; Musella refers to "earth [and]...decay;" Simeana comments on the lovers' "tomb;" and Silvesta, most tellingly, describes their bodies as "clayey cages" and their graves as "biding clay." The vocabulary has more in common with sermons than with the light depictions of curable wounds in the pastoral tragicomedies. This may partly be explained through Wroth's engagement with the conventional ellipsis between spiritual and secular love, so that Musella's and Philisses' romantic attachment is elevated via the Christianisation of the words used to describe their union. At the same time, those "clayey cages" remain within the imaginative frame. Even more disconcerting, however, is the fact that Musella contradicts the representation of the bodies as mortal, claiming instead that they have "lasting youth" and that their "during state" prohibits "decay." The lovers' bodies must encode, therefore, both endurance/youth and mortality/decay; they are on a cusp between life and death and, as such, adopt a liminal space.

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<sup>24</sup> Josephine A. Roberts, "Deciphering Women's Pastoral. Coded Language in Wroth's *Love's Victory*" in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted Larry-Pebworth (London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 170. See also Sheila T Cavanagh, "Romancing the Epic: Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* and Literary Traditions," in *Approaches to the Anglo and American Female Epic, 1621-1982* ed. Bernard Schweizer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 19-36.

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn Ruth Swift, "Feminine Self-Definition in Lady Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory* (c.1621)," *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1989): 179.

<sup>26</sup> Naomi J. Miller, *Changing the Subject. Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), 215.

Elizabeth Bronfen analyses the concept of liminality in relation to the fictional and artistic representations of dead women. She concludes that death must be “resolved” in order for the “deceased and her story [to] ...receive a stable meaning.” Thus for female characters who have in “life” been ambivalent in terms of actions or role, death offers a solution, a recognised and acceptable meaning, so that “her dying body is in fact transmitted as its incarnated emblem, the martyred saint whose death speaks her truth and thus truth *per se*.”<sup>27</sup> There are consanguinities between Bronfen’s theoretical analysis and Wroth’s play. In *Love’s Victory* Musella’s rejection of the arranged marriage and her failure to acquiesce to her parents’ authority destabilises early modern social codes by placing personal desire before filial duty, and female independence over patriarchal rule. By dying, however, Musella allows both mother and betrothed to condone such rebellion precisely because it has been contained—literally, within the tomb. Musella can be elevated as a martyr or saint because her attempt to assert personal choice and independent subjectivity is negated by the supposed “decay” of her “clayey cage.” Musella will, of course, be restored—thereby vindicating her questioning of social rules—but her rebellion will also be contained by Rustic’s freeing her from the marriage contract and her mother’s forgiveness. Within the traditional formulations of pastoral tragicomedy, misrule is offered but always contained.

What I would like to suggest, however, is that prior to the neat form of rebellion/restraint, Musella’s body has offered a much more disconcerting challenge to conventional expectations. For order to be restored, the destabilising forces—whether of character or discourse—must be seen to be negated by death, but this required “death” is questioned because Musella has previously asserted that she will not decay, will not be negated, will not be contained by the tomb, death, fate, or any social conventions. She is what Bronfen defines neatly—“a bad corpse.”<sup>28</sup> In this intriguing distinction Bronfen characterises those bodies that decay with their souls departing appropriately for heaven as “good corpses,” while those who persist on earth resisting “natural” decay as “bad corpses”—the most obvious being vampires and ghosts. What I should like to argue is that Musella, unlike her pastoral tragicomedy antecedents, is a bad corpse, accessing a liminal state that disrupts fixed meanings and social codes. By asserting that

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<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 292-3.

<sup>28</sup> Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body*, 296.

“Earth” (that is, the grave) is “too mean” for the truth of love, and that she and Philisses will have “lasting youth,” Musella posits an imaginative body that might be entombed, still and silent, but is also alive, without signs of decay or time. The play’s action requires that the body is dead, but the words demand that such finality is questioned, resulting in Musella’s representation as liminal: she is both dead and alive, a mortal body that refuses to be bound within the “biding clay” of the tomb or the “[mean] earth.” On the imagined stage Simeana and Silvesta are party to this disruption of stability, echoing the audience/reader interpretation that is accessible only from the words spoken by these three women. For the other shepherds and shepherdesses the two lovers are dead, are contained and will be buried, as their mutual song at the beginning of the final scene indicates. This gendered focus and its consequent understanding is reinforced through the projected execution of Silvesta who must be burned martyr-like for administering the poison to the lovers. The Amazonian shepherdess is presented from the start of the play as challenging conventional norms by the way she dresses and by her rejection of love. Although it must be recognised that cross-dressed shepherdesses, nymphs and maidens are a commonplace of early modern pastoral, nevertheless her unconventionality is underlined by the fact that she does not participate in the concluding unions at the end of the play. She offers only “chaste love” to the Forester who loves her and would have died in her place on the pyre; he resigns himself perforce to accept this limited affection, declaring he “now shall go contented to [his] grave” (V.vii.103). Like Musella, whose claim for independence threatens to destabilise the arranged marriages of early modern society and its allegorical representation in the pastoral world, Silvesta challenges conventional female roles and, as such, must be similarly contained.

It is significant that Philisses never claims that his body will remain untouched by decay, instead welcoming the tomb because he will be “crown’d with fame’s eternity” and his “grave” will offer him “glory.” If Musella is a bad corpse, Philisses is a decidedly good one: he acquiesces to death, seeing his future identity in terms of “fame” (that is, what will be said about him), rather than in the presence of his body as a constant reminder of destabilisation. Another telling line that resonates with ambiguity comes from Musella’s other “swain” Rustic who, when relinquishing his claim on Musella, notes, “Were she alive, she were her own to choose” (V.vii.61), an ambivalent questioning of mortality that prefigures Musella’s resurrection, when the

shepherdess does re-emerge as an independent woman who is free to choose for herself. And this, I think, is the key point: Musella threatens social stability by desiring independent female subjectivity—the right to choose for herself—but unlike Philisses, she will not be contained, demanding instead the right to occupy a liminal state in which her threat becomes, through the processes of the uncanny, even more disruptive. Even lying on the altar, on the threshold of mortality Musella must be seen to have the right “to choose,” a possible disturbance that is affirmed by Rustic’s odd sentence structure, “were she alive.” By bringing Musella back to life Venus simply formalises a process that Musella herself has initiated through her role as a bad corpse, transforming the miraculous conclusion into a dissatisfying question about how far ideal harmony may ever be attained. And, of course, this is exactly how the play ends—not with the happy love and marriages of pastoral tragicomedy, but with the convenient union of Rustic and Dalina; the continued lack of consummation between Silvesta and Forester; and, finally, the exile of Arcas, a scheming and manipulative Autolycus-like figure who has tried to thwart love. It is important to remember that *Love’s Victory* commences with Venus and Cupid promising “sorrow” and concludes with “shame,” shifting the play’s tone towards a darker and more complex interpretation than is usual in pastoral tragicomedy.

Mary Wroth’s adoption of various generic discourses is never simple or one-dimensional, and her reworking of pastoral tragicomedy is no exception.<sup>29</sup> To begin, she takes the classic false death sequence and, instead of merely debunking the supernatural—as she was certainly able to do given the evidence from *Urania*—she challenges convention by allowing her lovers to remain represented as corpses until the end of the play when they are miraculously recovered. While at odds with the generic tradition, the foregrounding of a material and “lawful” plot allows for a strong presentation of the Sidney/Herbert familial allegory and its close ties to the political investments of the English Protestant cause. Yet *Love’s Victory* moves beyond a simple transference from *false* death to death *recovery*, instead engaging with notions of female power through the evocation of the liminal woman. Musella might be represented as a corpse, but her words

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<sup>29</sup> Here I should specifically like to thank my colleague at the University of Dundee, Victor Skretkovicz, for his perceptive comments on my reading of *Love’s Victory* when he pointed out that if Wroth reworked romance in a radical fashion then I should be looking for a more complex interplay of interpretations than those offered by familial allegory alone.

demand that she is simultaneously perceived as “uncanny,” and therefore as a threat to the stability of the patriarchal discourses of “lawful” containment. In generic terms Wroth adopted, reworked, and radicalised pastoral tragicomedy in order to engage with questions about the self, politics, and female subjectivity. No other early modern play within this genre interrogates the repression of women so perceptively, nor do any conclude with the harmony of love so deeply undercut by the realities of married life, of sorrow and of shame.

The death recovery sequence only occurs, however, in the Penshurst Manuscript, whereas the Huntington version breaks off before any questions of liminality may be posed. Salzman offers an intriguing perspective on the two manuscripts suggesting that the Huntington “*Love’s Victory* ends with Philisses and Musella intent upon suicide ... a radically and, dare I suggest, *consciously* unfinished text.”<sup>30</sup> Reading the two versions of the play in the context of the liminal woman and the death recovery sequence, I find Salzman’s interpretation of a “radically” and “*consciously* unfinished text” very persuasive. If we accept the Huntington to be a copy of the complete Penshurst that was broken off as a conscious and radical act, then the material circumstances of that text’s production need to be excavated. This essay, through its interrogation of pastoral tragicomedy, indicates that such circumstance might be located in Wroth’s rewriting of her own play’s focus on female power in order to move away from an uncertain, yet liberating, liminality, towards “lawful” containment within a Vale of Woe.

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<sup>30</sup> Salzman, *Reading*, 84.



## Endless Love: Narrative Technique in the *Urania*

SHEILA CAVANAGH  
*Emory University*

As everyone who encounters the text soon realizes, characters in *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* talk. There are innumerable characters and what often seems like interminable talking, with many of the conversations revolving around love. Love in this text is sometimes good, generally mixed or bad, and always a subject of major interest. Just as in life, however, where people often tire of hearing all the painful and painfully repetitive details of another's tumultuous love life, readers undoubtedly weary of the countless stories of love gone wrong that are recounted during Wroth's lengthy narrative. However personal and individual a failing or conflicted love affair may feel to those involved, they tend to merge for those not directly participating in the romance. At times, moreover, even the most patient friend needs to tell a moaning lover to snap out of it. In this text, that job often falls to Urania, who gently, but pointedly, urges Pamphilia to remember herself: "Where is that judgment, and discreet govern'd spirit, for which this and all other places that have beene happy with the knowledge of your name, hath made you famous?"<sup>1</sup>

As Urania implies, while romantic drama may be endlessly fascinating when it involves oneself, it enjoys a more limited shelf life for external audiences. The tales of love pervading the *Urania* serve a more significant purpose than enabling Lady Mary Wroth to experiment with ways of telling love stories or to vent her own romantic frustrations through literature, however. Though they are admittedly often repetitive, they

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Wroth, *First Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts. *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*, 140 (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1995), 468. All further citations to this work will be inserted parenthetically in the text, with 1 indicating this text as *First Part*.

represent one of the many interlocking techniques that Wroth employs in order to craft and sustain the ambitious project known as the *Urania*. As numerous critics have noted, the *Urania* combines elements from the romance and roman à clef traditions into her massive literary creation that also openly reflects its—and her—Sidneian origins. In addition, the work draws some of its inspiration from its epic predecessors and displays its author’s eclectic erudition at the same time that it demonstrates her commitment to literary experimentation. In many respects, the text underscores Margaret Doody’s contention that “the concept of ‘Romance’ as distinct from ‘Novel’ has outworn its usefulness, and that at its most useful it created limitations and encouraged blind spots.”<sup>2</sup> Wroth’s narrative style does not fit neatly into any one generic category. Barbara Fuchs rightly notes that “romance is a notoriously slippery category,”<sup>3</sup> but even that admission does not account for the stylistic abundance found in the *Urania*. As Doody suggests, trying to label any text simply as a “romance” undermines critical access to its complicated narrative structure. In her terms: “Romance and the Novel are one. The separation between them is part of a problem, not part of a solution.”<sup>4</sup> The *Urania* clearly illustrates the stylistic characteristics underlying Doody’s proposed generic reformulation.

Other critical discussions of narrative further exemplify the *Urania*’s refusal to conform to traditional generic categories. Bakhtin, for example, whose work preceded Doody’s complication of these labels, provides a formulation that could designate the *Urania* as a novel: “The fundamental condition, that which makes a novel a novel, that which is responsible for its stylistic uniqueness, is the *speaking person and his* [sic] discourse.”<sup>5</sup> According to this model, the abundance of talking (Bakhtin does not discuss singing and versification) presented by Wroth places her text in the generic category Bakhtin and others consider a novel. Similarly, Bruce R. Smith notes the importance of this kind of speech as a marker of verisimilitude, another quality frequently associated with novels: “Oral performances of stories, poems, and plays—oral performances of art made out of words—is only a ritualized instance of the identity marking and group affirmation

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<sup>2</sup> Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), xvii.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Fuchs, *Romance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Doody, *True Story*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 332.



that go on in everyday exchanges of speech.”<sup>6</sup> At the same time, however, Jennifer Lee Carrell rightly notes that Wroth’s “fictions are quite often quasifactual, so that her readers find it impossible to distinguish which episodes and characters belong to which category.”<sup>7</sup> She also comments upon the pleasure Wroth and her readers apparently found in “that very liminality, the neither-flesh-nor-fowl character of fictional fact/factual fiction.”<sup>8</sup> Whatever generic label is placed upon the *Urania*, therefore, the work can only be categorized simply by those who do not know it well enough to recognize the richness and complexity of its literary style. The *Urania* cannot rightly be labeled as an Arcadian knock-off; neither does it fit neatly into many of the other literary categories into which one might initially seek to place it. Instead, this work continually borrows from and realigns literary conventions from a variety of sources and prefigures later prose fiction.

Much of the creative tension displayed throughout the *Urania* can be located in the continual interplay between characteristics associated with the interrelated literary genres of “roman” and “romance.” These terms are often treated as interchangeable although, as Doody notes, “‘romance’ is a dismissive term, especially in English usage; other European languages have admitted the unity of Romance and Novel: a novel is *le roman, der Roman, il romanzo*.”<sup>9</sup> Doody rightly questions evaluative distinctions between the categories and others might deem them synonymous; nevertheless, the terms can be usefully separated in order to describe important facets of Wroth’s literary technique. From this perspective, her narrative style can be said to draw aspects from these associated realms in order to craft what can be conceptualized as the “wave and particle” characteristics of her text. In other words, many of the tales, most often the inset stories, can be seen as individual narrative entities that can be separated from the rest of the text, but that can simultaneously be read according to how they keep the narrative action moving forward. Like waves and particles, however, these distinctive states cannot be viewed simultaneously. In this regard, the narrative behaves similarly to the geographical components described in its

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 24-5.

<sup>7</sup> Jennifer Lee Carrell, “A Pack of Lies in a Looking Glass: Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania* and the Magic Mirror of Romance,” *SEL* 34 (1994): 80.

<sup>8</sup> Carrell, “Pack of Lies,” 89.

<sup>9</sup> Doody, *True Story*, 15.

pages. Like the water that keeps so many of its characters in motion, the narrative flows in individual streams toward a common destination that leads toward a supposed conclusion. At the same time, it shifts its course and is sidetracked by various narrative “eddies” or other metaphoric stopping points where it gathers new material, leaves behind detritus from prior encounters, and realigns itself for continuing its journey. This metaphoric flow underlies the whole of the *Urania* and offers a symbolic parallel between the movement of the narrative and that of the text’s characters. It also illuminates some of the rationale for the narrative’s length and circuitous, often meandering, style. Like a river, the narrative flows onward, sometimes in ways that resemble prior movements, but never quite the same as it was farther upstream. Just as a river or, to add an even more germane parallel—a human life—moves beyond, but does not erase its prior movements, the *Urania* keeps heading forward without untoward regard for what has come before. While Wroth sometimes returns to issues discussed much earlier in the work (Parselius’ betrayal of Urania, for instance), this is not her dominant concern as a writer. Instead, she fashions her text in a manner resembling the movement of a river or a life that stalls periodically, alternately slows or speeds up, occasionally changing course, but generally moving forward into new, albeit often familiar, spaces.

While the distinction between “roman” and “romance” proposed here may not accord precisely with traditional interpretations of the terms, it usefully describes parts of Wroth’s complicated narrative technique. The “roman” facets of her text are identified here as those many episodes of storytelling that pause the action, while simultaneously propelling it forward. These interludes sometimes emanate from encounters with strangers; at other times, they involve characters with significant roles throughout the narrative. They typically, though not exclusively, contain tales of love and marriage, while they provoke the main characters’ next actions or ruminations. They also establish important social parameters, similar to those created by the Kenilworth revelers in Bruce Smith’s formulation:

Nobility, citizens, laborers and artisans: in their day-to-day lives the contributors to the Kenilworth revels functioned not as representatives of abstract “ranks” or “sorts” or “orders” but as members of communities, as people who day by day saw each other in the same places and talked to each other in forms of speech that

they recognized as their own and interpreted according to an implicitly understood set of rules.<sup>10</sup>

These encounters also parallel what Erving Goffman terms “face-work”:

Every person lives in a world of social encounters, involving him either in face-to face or mediated contact with other participants. In each of these contacts, he tends to act out what is sometimes called a *line*—that is, a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself.<sup>11</sup>

These patterns of discursive and social positioning begin at the opening of the narrative, where Urania, echoing her Arcadian literary predecessors, announces her life circumstances to the readers while addressing the wind:

‘Alas, Urania,’ said she, ‘(the true servant to misfortune); of any miserie that can befall woman, is not this the most and greatest which thou art falne into? Can there be any neare the unhappinesse of being ignorant, and that in the highest kind, not being certaine of mine owne estate or birth? Why was I not stil continued in the beleefe I was, as I appeare, a Shepherdes, and Daughter to a Shepherd? My ambition then went no higher then this estate, now flies it to a knowledge; then was I contented, now perplexed. O ignorance, can thy dulnesse yet procure so sharpe a pain? and that such a thought as makes me now aspire unto knowledge? How did I joy in this poore life being quiet? blest in the love of those I tooke for parents, but now by them I know the contrary, and by that knowledge, not to know my selfe. Miserable Urania, worse art thou now then these thy Lambs; for they know their dams, while thou dost live unknowne of any.’ (I.1)

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<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Acoustic World*, 37.

<sup>11</sup> Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 5.

Her pastoral companions return to the mead toward the conclusion of this speech, but Urania “esteeming her sorrowing thoughts her best, and choycest companie, left that place” (I.1), taking instead the path that leads her back to her lost family and her destiny.

This opening is, of course, conventional, and by placing it at the start of her narrative, Wroth misleadingly signals her audience about the kind of story they can expect to read or hear. As I have discussed elsewhere, numerous critics of the *Urania* who encountered it before its republication were fooled by this pastoral opening.<sup>12</sup> They read it, for example, as a sign that the text was nothing more than a modestly-altered variation on Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* or decided that the entire text could be discerned and assessed from these opening passages. The *Urania* exceeds this characterization, however, even at its outset, and encompasses far more narrative territory than its pastoral beginning suggests. In addition to invoking Wroth’s uncle, for instance, Urania’s lament sets off a series of “call and response” type narratives that provide each speaker with a platform for his or her tale, then sets the stage for another character or group to step in and take the larger narrative forward. While pastoral figures within this pattern at times, this technique helps mark Wroth’s stylistic departure from many Arcadian norms.

When Urania carries her sad tale away from the gathering of shepherds, for example, she crosses a physical and imaginative space that takes her into the realm from which she was kidnapped as a child. Although she first mistakes the hermitage she finds as the place she is meant to “spend thy daies” (I,3), she soon overhears another tale of woe that captures her attention and moves her forward both geographically and emotionally:

Miserable Perissus, canst thou thus live, knowing she  
that gave thee life is gone? Gone, O me! and with her  
all my joy departed. Wilt thou (unblessed creature)  
lie here complaining for her death, and know she died  
for thee? Let truth and shame make thee doe  
something worthy of such a Love, ending thy daies  
like thy selfe, and one fit to be her Servant. (I.3)

When Perissus concludes his sorrowful lament, “he fell from complaining into such a passion, as weeping and crying were never

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<sup>12</sup> Sheila T. Cavanagh, *Cherished Torment: The Emotional Geography of Lady Mary Wroth’s ‘Urania’* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 3.

in so wofull a perfection, as now in him" (I.4) that draws Urania's compassion. Subsequently, by joining Perissus on his journey toward his besieged love Limena, she helps launch him back into the world of chivalry, and starts on the road that leads her to rejoin the family she lost shortly after birth. This focus on individual needs illustrates what Sue P. Starke notes as a shift from Philip Sidney's "emphasis on place" to Mary Wroth's "emphasis on person." In Starke's terms, moreover, for Sidney "pastoral is one half of a constitutive dichotomy between Arcadia and everywhere else," but for Wroth, "the pastoral realm is just one of many different locations where her emotional drama of female constancy and male perfidy is played out."<sup>13</sup> As Starke suggests, emotion trumps place at every juncture.

Given all the stories that fill the pages of the *Urania*, it would be easy to miss the links between them that often propel the characters into their next destinations or decisions. Mary Ellen Lamb argues, for example, that the narrator leaves out transitions between episodes.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, many of these apparently disparate tales create pathways to subsequent actions. The story of Urania and Perissus, for instance, obviously takes Urania away from her familiar physical environs and leads her to a place where she can find family members and others from her native environment, but it also creates the emotional space she needs in order to participate in the next stage of her life. Thus, when she meets Parselius, who will attract her love and discover her true identity, the text emphasizes the importance of her encounter with Perissus in creating her subsequent bond with Parselius:

She who poore soule had with the sight of Perissus,  
given leave for love to make a breach into her heart,  
the more easily after to come in and conquer, was in  
so great a passion, as they seem'd like two Master-  
pieces, fram'd to demonstrate the best, and choisest  
skill of art. (I.21)

Urania does not carry on a lengthy relationship with Perissus, nor does she remain in love with Parselius (although she has to be released from this passion through magical intervention);

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<sup>13</sup> Sue P. Starke, *The Heroines of English Pastoral Romance* (London: D.S. Brewer, 2007), 107-8.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Biopolitics of Lineage in Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*: Proliferating Plots and Anti-Narratives," *English Literary Renaissance* 31.1 (2001): 118.

nevertheless, these episodes of intersecting “roman” or call and response tales illustrate a predominant narrative technique that operates throughout the *Urania*. As this small set of stories demonstrates, each tale that is told provides those who speak and those who listen with the information, the courage, or the despair that takes them to the next stage of their life’s journey within the text. While characters and readers often misinterpret the significance of a specific tale within the life of a particular individual, the stories regularly offer something critical to the movement of the overall narrative.

The tale of Alarina, for example, helps prepare Pamphilia and her companions for the cleansing leap from a rock that frees several of them from ill-fated passions. The forlorn shepherdess has left her “former happy (because contented) life” in order to pursue her beloved, who, in response, “strove by all plaine waies, and craftie slights, and all to make me see, how I was cast away, and left by him” (I.217). Through the course of Alarina’s lengthy lament, she tells of her ultimate decision to renounce her beloved, even when there appears to be renewed hope for their relationship. Changing her name to Silviana, she chooses “habits [that] keepe me from discourse with men” and pronounces herself “free from love” (I.224). Pamphilia initially doubts Silviana’s resolve, “‘I cannot yet believe,’ said Pamphilia, ‘but you love him still, for all this liberall and excellent discourse’” (I.224). Nevertheless, she urges herself to draw courage from this transformation: “‘Pamphilia,’ said she, ‘can thy great spirit permit thee to bee bound, when such as Alarina can have strength to master, and command even love it selfe?’” (I.225). Pamphilia accompanies her friends and cousins to the precipice at St. Maura, where many of those gathered are freed from doomed love affairs, as Alarina’s example helped make possible (I.230-2). Once cleared of these amorous burdens, the group reunites Urania with her birth family, as they are now ready for the fresh starts enabled by this return of “the Princesse of true worth and admiration” (I.231).

This pattern of entrelacement appears in many of the *Urania*’s precursor texts, but its function within Wroth’s narrative still emphasizes the experimental nature of her fiction. The magical cleansing, for example, incorporates the kind of fantastical element that often identifies romance, but Wroth is also presenting a model of emotionally realistic fiction whose shape resembles, as I have suggested, that of a human life. As a consequence, the *Urania* is not presented as a neat, straightforward story. Instead, it often appears to be a fairly sloppy text, filled with false starts, contradictions, overlapping stories, and an abundance of confusing

pronouns that often confound the most attentive reader. As Lamb rightly notes, “narratives of constant love do not lend themselves to linear plots of purposive action.”<sup>15</sup> A modern copy editor would probably pare and shape the *Urania* into something barely resembling the seventeenth-century narrative. The resulting manuscript would presumably provide more order and get to the point more quickly, but it is likely that the *Urania* would also lose those places where it attempts affective verisimilitude. Powerful emotions make for effusive text, after all. In Wroth’s presentation of the narrative, this abundance of words and strong feelings verbally recreates the kind of magnified emotional reactions that make up her stories.

As Bakhtin notes, moreover, “the speaking person and his [sic] discourse is ... what makes a novel a novel, the thing responsible for the uniqueness of the genre.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, like the call and response parallel invoked here, however a-historically, Wroth uses emotional exuberance to engage her audience as she keeps her characters moving onward in their complex lives. While neither her characters nor her readers may shout “Amen! Hallelujah!” at critical junctures in the narrative, they are still prompted to join in with the emotional whirlwinds they encounter, however melodramatic these episodes may become. *Urania* is able to love Parselius because she opened her compassionate heart to Perissus and can later marry Steriamus because she gained further knowledge about love from her passion for Parselius. Characters and readers similarly learn how to respond to key events and people in the text because of those they have previously encountered. Ultimately, therefore, the *Urania* often directs the reactions of its readers and its characters, although its narrative control is not always evident to those who encounter it. The technique here termed “roman,” with an emphasis on its aspect of storytelling, is the primary shaping force in this narrative maneuver. The stories told are not always complete, of course, as the narrative reminds us through Polarchos in the manuscript *Urania* when he tells Amphilanthus “the whole story (as much, I meane, as hee knew of itt).”<sup>17</sup> Even such incomplete storytelling

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<sup>15</sup> Lamb, “Biopolitics,” 117.

<sup>16</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 333.

<sup>17</sup> Mary Wroth, *The Second Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, edited Josephine A. Roberts and completed by Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies*, 211 (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 296. All further citations to this work will be inserted parenthetically in the text, with II indicating *Second Part*.

reflects the narrative's forays into realism, however, since human stories are always subject to the vagaries of memory, omission, and reconstruction.

At the same time, however, the long and repetitive tales of woe do not escape the narrator's signature irony, despite how seriously they are offered and how critical they are in determining the direction of the narrative. Floristello, for example, son of Urania and Steriamus, utters a long, impassioned lament over his inability to reach his unknown lover. He is not named in this passage, however, and the reader knows only that one of the princes of Albania is speaking as he mourns his situation:

'O miserable creature,' sayd hee, 'what see I here butt as miserable a wante as my most miserable misfortunes have plung'd mee into? Wher, O wher, is my deerer self? Unlucky plaines, thus to bee made barren of the whole earthes hapines, in beeing without you. You, O you, the darling of the worlde, the ornament of Nature, the glory and onely miroir of her sex.' (II.332)

As one might expect, Floristello's tormented cries continue for some time, and this passage represents only a portion of his sorrowful utterances. However critical such outpourings are in the *Urania*, however, a mysterious unidentified "Voice" soon forbids further outbursts of this kind. Denying Floristello the opportunity to talk directly with his unknown beloved, telling him that "charmes admitt noe discourse" (II.334), he is allowed to look at the lady, but then is sent on his way with a warning that romantic bliss is not imminent: "This adventure is reserved for you, and you shall have this lady you soe much covett, butt you must follow other, and pass many other adventures first" (II.333). Here, the narrative voice, speaking through the "Voice," reminds readers that the emotional excess of the text should not be taken too seriously. Thus, the chastened Floristello, who never questions the source or veracity of the unusual voice that speaks to him, goes sadly on his way:

This was though a hopefull, yett a cruell dampe to the Allbanian. Yett hee knew fate must be observ'd, soe with most sad butt affectionate lookes hee departed, keeping his eyes on her, and after on the place, as longe as any glimmering sight of either cowld bee discern'd. And soe in as much haste as men make from the most poysenous infections, hee posted,



leaving Countrye, Parents, and all, to seek novelties,  
 since destined soe, and yett leave his hart and best  
 delights beehinde him. (II.334)

As he rides off, the narrator declares that Floristello is “fettered in the strongest bonds of cruell slavery to the cruellest destinie of loving” (II.334), but immediately turns to another character and another story. By not allowing him access to “discourse,” any *Uranian* character’s most powerful weapon in love and in life, the narrator brings an ironic halt to his role in the text at this juncture. Without discourse, the characters cannot participate in the action at hand. Since the narrative refers to Floristello only by his role in the world—the Albanian Prince—it alerts the reader to the mysterious voice’s implicit admonition that he should “shut up and go make a name for yourself before seeking love.” As Lamb comments, the narrator is quite sympathetic towards long laments of thwarted love: “Like those who hear her story, the narrator herself is commanded by love, her writing is love, and love itself has become a narrative principle.”<sup>18</sup> Still, the narrative also regularly reminds its characters that there are limits to its indulgence in this regard. Personal stories may move the action, but nothing concrete can happen while characters are busy emoting. Emotional venting also generally fails to produce positive romantic outcomes.

Nevertheless, tales of love predominate in this text that can aptly, though not definitively, be named a romance. While this genre encompasses many aspects that have nothing to do with amorous interchange, in the *Urania* such relationships, whether fruitful or painful, take center stage despite the powerful political positions held by most of the main characters. While both male and female figures contend with war, religious strife, and other assorted conflicts throughout the *Urania*, nothing takes precedence over their exploits in love. In fact, since most of the central figures are monarchs who marry other monarchs, their romantic adventures generally intersect with their political endeavors. Falling in love typically carries governmental implications of some kind in addition to the standard emotional and familial consequences.

Given the repetitive nature of these woeful tales of love gone wrong and the relative stasis of the relationship between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, these stories have to move the overall narrative forward in order to counterbalance the inertia they

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<sup>18</sup> Lamb, “Biopolitics,” 118.

so often represent. While a great many things happen to the various lovers in the *Urania*, their basic situations remain remarkably similar and stable. In the case of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus, moreover, nothing ever really changes. Despite marrying each other and then wedding other people, the partners in this couple remain painfully enraptured with each other, with no hope of any resolution to their romantically unsatisfying circumstances. However significant marriage to each other and then to others might appear to be, therefore, even these seemingly definitive events do not change the heartfelt but ill-fated passion this pair feels for each other; nor do they materially alter their situations. A blissful end to their story would not be practical within the parameters of this narrative and would counter the underlying pessimism that imbues it. It would also undermine the diffusion that characterizes people's lives as reflected in the *Urania* and which prompts Lamb to call the text "the 'most diffuse' romance in [the] genre."<sup>19</sup>

Typically, the *Urania* offers stories that repeat, with variations, rather than stories that reach closure. The only absolute closure that humans may reach is death, and in a tale drawing from both Christianity and the occult, even the finality of that event remains ambiguous. In addition, as Lamb argues, Wroth's decision to end her tale in mid-stream "signifies a shift of focus from the events of her own life and the society of her peers to a life-affirming absorption in the never-ending events of the lives of the next generation."<sup>20</sup> The unfulfilled romance, moreover, provides endless narrative fodder. Even though the basic tale is spread among numerous different figures in order to minimize the seemingly endless repetition of these narratives, the contours of the basic story remain the same. Often contributing to the roman à clef aspects of the *Urania*, the continuous tales of sorrow share enough similarities that readers who do not pay close attention will still grasp the function of such stories.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lamb, "Biopolitics," 107.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 148.

<sup>21</sup> I was fortunate to have generous and astute anonymous readers for this essay and I am grateful for their suggestions. One reader understandably expressed concern over the implication that readers do not need to pay close attention to the text. In response, I suggest that such a multi-dimensional text provokes numerous reading strategies, reflecting its "wave and particle" aspects. Readers gain certain forms of understanding when they read closely, but also acquire a different, yet still "legitimate" reading when they get lost in the text.

Even fairly late in the printed *Urania*, for example, Pamphilia is found grieving over her lack of news from Amphilanthus, who “had forgot to write” (I.462). In order to distract her from this sorrow, Meriana decides to recount love stories to the Queen: “Meriana likewise to make her discourse, and passe away the time, would often tell her stories she had knowne of his affection” (I.462). This plan backfires, however, as Pamphilia vows silence, that is, a break from discourse, rather than speaking or hearing anything that could discredit her neglectful love who is about to be crowned emperor:

Sweet Meriana, those dayes now are pass'd of my  
 best delights, be not you an increaser of my woe, but  
 curst remembrance, for no new act of his in this  
 change presents it selfe, but gives a deaths blow to  
 our ancient loves. I could almost be brought to tell it  
 her my selfe, and would, were it not to discover his  
 forgetfulnes and cruelty; but rather then my lips shall  
 give the least way to discover any fault in him, I wil  
 conceale all though they breake my heart; and if I  
 only could be saved by accusing him, I sooner would  
 be secret and so dye: no, my love will not let me use  
 thee ill; then be it as it is, Ile live forsaken and  
 forlorne, yet silently I will indure this wrong.  
 (I.462-3)

The storytelling here fails to calm Pamphilia's pain, but it still fulfills its narrative function of enabling the story to move toward Frankfort and the coronation without concerns that Pamphilia's sorrow will intrude on that celebration. Notably, however, it is Pamphilia's discourse about silence, not actual silence, which she contributes to the text at this point. Still, her vow to keep her woe private facilitates the immediate change in tone to “greatest applause and content” in Frankfort (I.463).

At the same time, a reader needs to remain alert through Wroth's dense prose in order to ensure that it is Pamphilia who is tormented here, not one of the many other women who suffer similar fates in the *Urania*. As Lamb indicates, this is not a text that can be followed easily: “Because it is virtually impossible to remember all the characters and plots, the *Urania* demands of its readers that they relinquish this form of mastery to abandon

themselves to the flow of the text.”<sup>22</sup> Without the modern apparatus valiantly compiled by its editors with the assistance of Micheline White, many modern readers would undoubtedly be continually confused as they worked their way through the vagaries of the narrative. This text is not easy to read, even for its most attentive audience, and Lamb is right to suggest that this circumlocution is not accidental. Presumably even a seventeenth-century listener would have had similar difficulties in keeping it straight, no matter how attuned to oral transmission. In short, this is a confusing text that seems to demand that its audience attend to missing pronouns and misleading locution, meandering storylines, and contradictory narratives. At the same time, as Lamb suggests, readers often impose an “artificial coherence” upon the text that “distorts a central feature of the *Urania*: a refusal to cohere.”<sup>23</sup> Traditional close reading, in other words, may be something that the text actively resists. Once again, however, this confusing literary style enables Wroth to represent the complexities and inconsistencies of a human life.

Although she is certainly not attempting strict realism, Wroth does offer a document that more closely follows the contours of an actual life than many more tightly fashioned literary texts achieve. Someone who actually knew a woman like Pamphilia, for example, would probably get as confused by the twists and turns comprising her life as any of Wroth’s readers do. Like the reader, moreover, this fictive friend would probably not need to attend to every word uttered by the forlorn lover or by those who share her fate in the narrative. The gist of the message is often sufficient in these instances: a lover or husband has mistreated the lady in question or her father has forced her into an unacceptable marriage instead of letting her remain with the man she truly loves. These scenarios occur frequently enough that every auditor or reader can grasp what is going on with the sparest of details. They can readily fill in the rest. Although closer readings generally offer insight into the interconnected aspects of the *Urania* and its broader goals, the stories of thwarted love are still similar enough to be largely interchangeable, as this familiar-sounding excerpt indicates:

Woe is mee, I lost all my comfort, all my joy by that;  
but at last a greater ill tooke mee, for another got him

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<sup>22</sup> Lamb, “Biopolitics,” 107-108.

<sup>23</sup> Lamb, “Biopolitics,” 107.

from us both, who had long sought it, but while he held fast to me, she could not gaine him, beauty was the untying of my blisse, and wit her losse, yet I had the fairer share in loosing that, a faire creature was my undoer, like the fortune of Paris, she a terrible harme to have her joy, and hopes bereft her by a witt, which gaining discover'd her want. (I.531)

While a small number of readers *may* know the *Urania* well enough that they will immediately cry, “Why, that’s the story of Pelarina, who else?” more typical readers would be unable to identify this story so readily—particularly since the story is told to an audience including the similarly-named Perselina.<sup>24</sup> There is not enough that is unique about the lovelorn Pelarina to keep her fresh in the minds of readers or listeners unless they have unusually strong memories or latch on to something in the story that most readers will overlook. While Pelarina’s tale of romantic woe might (or might not) resonate while it is being told, once the lady has shared the story of her repentant journey to Jerusalem, it seems unlikely to have a significant impact on anyone who has heard or read it. In the *Urania*, the tale seems to be told primarily for the sake of Perselina, who initially appears not to have learned the intended lessons:

Perselina found in her selfe she should never come to that excellency of constancy; wherfore she admired, though scarce commended her richnes, in that plenty, and fulnesse, and being call’d by Rosindy, left the constant Lady to her vertuous vowes and religious truth, who lived the rest as she had begun her dayes in fervent zeale and affection. (I.534)

In typical Uranian fashion, however, Perselina then almost immediately marries, despite her doubts about constancy, suggesting that the story has changed her views, regardless of her prior resistance. The readers receive the last word of her that they will hear in the text just a few lines later:

[T]he young Princesse soone after tooke her minde and former resolution, marrying her selfe with her

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<sup>24</sup> Jennifer Lee Carrell also includes this tale in her analysis of the *Urania*, so readers who have recently read her essay are likely to remember it.

chosen love: some busines there was before it could  
bee effected; but the effect came happily to their  
owne resolutions conclusion, and peace, the Nurse of  
love was among them. (I.534)

Thus, Perselina and Pelarina are both quickly dispatched within a few lines of each other and neither reappears again. They have served their purpose from the perspectives of both *roman* and romance, however. While Persalina's decision to marry is presented fairly abruptly, it demonstrates the kind of cause and effect action that these call and response stories often elicit. Pelarina's life does not change as a result of sharing her tale, but Perselina's is altered significantly.

At this point, the narrative turns to Philarchos and Orilena on the way to Mytelin, where another call and response dyad is established. As they journey, they encounter an unnamed "Lady of Nycaria" whose familiar story of an unhappy fate in love leaves her:

weeping and wringing her hands, all in mourning,  
and more sorrowfull yet in her illustrious expression  
then the mourning could shew mournfull, and  
therefore shee more then their habits mourn'd. Shee  
onely look'd up, and cast her eyes downe againe, and  
her face against the ground, crying. (I.535)

While this lady also only exists for a few pages, the readers learn the full story of the rest of her life, after Philarchos and Orilena "left her on a Rock in a little Iland with an old religious father":

[T]here shee remained, and spent the rest of her  
dayes in prayer, her Dog still garding her, which at  
her death brought her (who out-lived the old man) to  
have a Christian buriall by his howling and crying,  
calling passengers in, and buried her, but could not  
win the Dog from the grave, but there he died.  
(I.540-1)

Although the woman's death appears to end her story, once again it provides a segue into what transpires next, in this case, the foreshadowing of Philarchos' and Orilena's deaths:

Philarchos and his deare held on their way for  
Mytelin, where with joy, and feasts they were  
welcomed, and lived ever, till their ends happily, but

Philarchos thought his end the crueller, because faire  
Orilena was taken from him, desiring to die together.  
(I.541)

While the pair appears several times in the second part of the *Urania*, the readers are reminded fairly early in their story that they will eventually die, but without the marital traumas undergone by the Lady of Nycaria. The vision of Philarchos' and Orilena's deaths, therefore, becomes the end toward which these prior stories have pointed. Although their actual (however fictive) lives will not end for quite some time, the readers are being reminded that such mortality is always part of the narrative fabric being presented. Once again, resembling a human life, the *Urania* and its characters are shown in a context that contains hints of their ending just as the heart of their stories are being told.

Like many of its predecessors, the *Urania* is lengthy and unfinished. While its abrupt Arcadian ending could suggest that the text's inconclusiveness reflects a note of homage to Philip Sidney (and in some ways, of course it does), it also highlights the way this particular narrative is organized around the human life. Unlike *The Faerie Queene*, which ends before considering all of the public and private virtues, or *The Canterbury Tales*, which fails to bring all the pilgrims to their ultimate destination, the *Urania* reaches its conclusion while its central couple is still alive, and before the Knight of the Faire Design's prophesied victory makes manifest Amphilanthus's failure to achieve lasting peace for his empire. By the time that "Amphilanthus wa[s] extreamly" (II.418) "whatever," he and Pamphilia have already begun to lose members of their own and later generations through causes unrelated to combat or childbirth. Mortality is no longer a concept applicable to others; it has entered their inner circle. Just as Philarchos and Orilena must die, so must all of the human figures who populate the text.

It appears, however, that Wroth was not prepared to contend with finality on behalf of her main characters—that is, Pamphilia, Amphilanthus, and Urania. Instead, she chooses to conclude her narrative, however, inconclusively, with a very familiar scene, whereby her thwarted lovers seem to be in the living company of Pamphilia's recently deceased husband as they stop to hear a tale from the "Island of Love," this time told by Andromarko:

I ame in doubt whether I can bee soe happy as to see  
your selves, butt that, as this is the Island of love, soe

for loves sweet sake, Phantasmes rise in the shapes of  
 them I most honor and Love. For, my deerest Lord,  
 how cowl'd I hope or immaginn you would honor this  
 poore place with your happy presence? (II.418)

Notably, however, this story refers to the possibility of Amphilanthus's death and the impact it would have on the course of Faire Designe's foretold triumph:

And Sir, your Faire Designe hath now left all things  
 (being certainly informed by severall wisards,  
 especially the sage Melissea), that the great  
 Inchantment will nott bee concluded thes many  
 yeeres; nay nev [er], if you live nott to assiste in the  
 concluding. (II.418)

The book then ends, just as Amphilanthus is identified as the critical but supporting player in a grand finale that will be engineered at some distant date by the Knight of the Faire Designe, who may—or may not—be his son. The stage is set for the passing of his role and influence, but the narrative stops as soon as this eventuality is uttered. The author/narrator may know that Amphilanthus, like all of us, will die and leave behind whatever legacy he has established at the point of this demise, but she is not prepared to take this story down that road. As Lamb notes, Andromarko's speech describes "its own final deferral and the deferral of the *Urania* itself."<sup>25</sup> Here, of course, Wroth draws from what Patricia Parker describes as the major tenet of a "romance" which is "characterized primarily as a form which simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end."<sup>26</sup> *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* concludes romantically, therefore, but also similarly to its beginning, with a tale that will lead to a few years of additional adventures, whether or not these further events ever get reported. While the *Urania* defies closure, therefore, it still stylistically circles back and ends as it starts, with a story designed to move the action forward into its next cycle, even though that cycle never materializes.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Lamb, "Biopolitics," 129.

<sup>26</sup> Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), 4.

<sup>27</sup> I am grateful to Emory University's International office (ICIS) for providing the funding that enabled me to present a version of this essay at the Romance conference in honor of Victor Skretkiewicz at the University of Dundee in 2007.



## Spenser's Romances: From "Lying Shepherd's Tongues" to Wedded Love

JEAN R. BRINK  
*Huntington Library*

There is always some challenge in differentiating between the fictional narrative that a poet constructs about himself and the literal facts of his life. Documenting Spenser's life is particularly challenging because his poems are ostensibly autobiographical, and this autobiographical suggestiveness invites us to conflate the author with his narrator, Colin Clout. If we examine the facts of Spenser's life and juxtapose them with his fictional self-presentations, we recognize this fictional autobiography can be misleading. Spenser made fiction of three romances. His best-known occurred in 1594 when he married his second wife, Elizabeth Boyle, and celebrated the event in the *Epithalamion*. He also fictionalized two romances in 1579, one with a man, Hobbinol, and one with a woman, Rosalind. I will demonstrate that these fictions are undercut by the facts of his first marriage and conclude by making suggestions regarding the impact of his first marriage on his career.

Determining how, or even if, Colin Clout and Edmund Spenser intersect is complicated by the insistence of early commentators on accepting autobiographical statements as literal fact. Nineteenth and early twentieth scholars expected fiction to be grounded in real life and, in the case of sixteenth-century love poetry, the real life of the author. Poets were expected to be sincere, and so it became an important project for critics to identify Shakespeare's dark lady, Sidney's Stella, and Spenser's Rosalind.

To these critics and commentators Edmund Spenser was a god-send. His love sonnets, the *Amoretti*, were followed by an *Epithalamion*, a wedding poem addressed to his bride, Elizabeth Boyle. Not only were Spenser's sonnets addressed to a real woman, but in this instance the poet-lover was so sincere that he actually married his mistress! In the *Epithalamion*, he adapts the

conventional blazon and pays tribute to her “goodly eyes lyke Saphyres,” her cheeks “lyke apples which the sun hath rudded,” and “her lips lyke cheryes, charming men to byte” (ll.171, 173-4).<sup>1</sup> Then, as her husband to be, he very chastely deals with her more private charms: “And all her body like a palace fayre, / Ascending uppe with many a stately stayre, / To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre” (ll.178-80).

Spenser’s *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion* were followed by his real-life marriage to Elizabeth Boyle in 1594. There is no extant documentary record of the wedding; the date has been calculated on the basis of numerological allusions.<sup>2</sup> This 1594 marriage culminating in a magnificent epithalamion was Spenser’s third literary romance. Fifteen years earlier in 1579 Spenser had published the *Shepherdess Calender*, and in this poem had described two courtships that were less attractive to critics than the romance with Elizabeth Boyle. In the *Shepherdess Calender*, in addition to an unhappy romance with a mysterious Rosalind, Colin Clout has a male lover. Until the 1990s the suggestion of a romantic connection between Hobbinol and Colin was so troublesome that most commentators preferred to ignore it.<sup>3</sup> Colin describes the relationship as follows:

It is not *Hobbinol*, wherefore I plaine,  
Albee my love he seeke with dayly suit:  
His clownish gifts and curtsies I disdaine,  
His kiddes, his cracknelles, and his early fruit.  
Ah foolish *Hobbinol*, thy gyfts bene vayne:  
*Colin* them gives to *Rosalind* againe. (*Januarye*, ll.55-61)

Hobbinol is enamored of Colin Clout, but Colin, who is securely heterosexual, gives the presents he receives from his male admirer to his hard-hearted Petrarchan mistress, Rosalind.

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<sup>1</sup> *Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram, Einar Bjorvand, Ronald Bond, Thomas H. Cain, Alexander Dunlop, and Richard Schell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 669. All further references to Spenser’s shorter poems will be to this edition. For verse line numbers will be cited parenthetically in the text; page numbers will be cited for the prose gloss.

<sup>2</sup> For the numerological analysis, see A. Kent Heatt, *Short Times Endless Monument* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

<sup>3</sup> For exceptions, see commentary on the homo-erotic elements in Colin’s relationship with Hobbinol by Jonathan Goldberg, “Colin to Hobbinol: Spenser’s Familiar Letters,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989): 107-26 and *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 63-80. For background and context, see Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 94-9.

Hobbinol's unrequited love for the male Colin Clout has a classical precedent in Vergil—just as Colin's unrequited love for his mistress Rosalind has a precedent in Petrarch. Vergil's second *Eclogue* was taught in every Elizabethan grammar school, and it relates the story of the rustic Corydon, who gives gifts to the city boy Alexis, but is scornfully rejected. Even though the gloss to *Januarye* teasingly suggests that the poem alludes to real people, early twentieth-century critics preferred to treat the romance between Hobbinol and Colin as an allusion to Vergil. In *Shepherd's Calendar*, Hobbinol, the man in love with Colin, is identified as Spenser's real life friend, Gabriel Harvey. The gloss on "January," l.59 tells us that Hobbinol "is a fained country name, whereby, it being so commune and usuall, seemeth to be hidden the person of some his very speciall and most familiar freend, whom he entirely and extraordinarily beloved, as peradventure shall be more largely declared hereafter" (33).

Because Harvey is identified as Hobbinol and the gloss extends the suggestion of a homo-erotic attachment on Harvey's part, I am persuaded that Harvey must have been involved in composing E. K.'s *Glosse*.<sup>4</sup> It is one thing to say that Hobbinol gives Colin gifts and that Colin then gives them to Rosalind, but quite another to bring up pederasty in an exposition of this gift exchange: "In thys place seemeth to be some sauour of disorderly loue, which the learned call paederestie" (33-4). E. K. expounds the grounds for legitimizing love between men and even elevating their affectionate bonds over love between a woman and a man:

For who that hath red Plato his dialogue called Alcibiades, Xenophon and Maximus Tyrius of Socrates opinions, may easily perceive, that such love is muche to be allowed and liked of, specially so meant, as Socrates used it: who sayth, that in deede he loued Alcybiades extremely, yet not Alcybiades person, but hys soule, which is Alcibiades owne selfe. (34)

After associating pederasty with platonic love, E. K. then dismisses heterosexual love because he thinks that it easily degenerates into

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<sup>4</sup> For a nuanced and important discussion of the collaboration between Harvey and Spenser, see Jon Quitslund, "Questionable Evidence in the *Letters* of 1580 between Gabriel Harvey and Edmund Spenser," *Spenser's Life and the Subject of Biography*, ed. Judith H. Anderson, Donald Cheney, David A. Richardson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 81-98.

lust: “And so is paederastice much to be praeferrred before gynerastice, that is the love whiche enflameth men with lust toward woman kind” (34). After linking platonic love and pederasty, Hobbinol elevates it over heterosexual love, but adds the qualification that he deplors “unlawful fleshlinesse”: “But yet let no man thinke, that herein I stand with Lucian or hys develish disciple Unico Aretino, in defence of execrable and horrible sinnes of forbidden and unlawful fleshlinesse” (34). Gabriel Harvey was trying to establish himself at Cambridge as a means of gaining access to the court. The entire episode and the commentary on it are potentially humorous, but only if Harvey, who is a university don, is in on the joke. Pederasty means “love of boys,” and even though some commentators on Plato may have allegorized pederasty as platonic love, E. K. is well aware that not everyone in his culture is sanguine about love between men and boys. Not everyone, in fact, thought that Vergil was writing about platonic love. In *De ratione studii* (1511) Erasmus supplies detailed instructions on how to deal with the homosexual content in *Eclogue Two*. He says nothing about spiritual pederasty, but instead encourages the instructor to talk about the virtues of true *amicitia* between those who are similar and so to distract students from the homosexuality in the poem.<sup>5</sup>

Uneasiness with this romance between men led early twentieth-century critics to focus on Colin and Rosalind. E. K. hints that the mysterious Rosalind is a real person and that her name may be an anagram:

Rosalinde) is ... a feigned name, which being wel ordred, wil bewray the very name of hys loue and mistresse, whom by that name he coloureth. So as Ouid shadoweth hys loue under the name of Corynna, which of some is supposed to be Julia, themperor Augustus his daughter, and wyfe to Agryppa. ... And this generally hath bene a common custome of counterfeicting the names of secret Personages. (34-5)

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<sup>5</sup> Erasmus' *De ratione studii* (1512), ed. J.-C. Margolin; Erasmus, *Opera Omnia* (Amsterdam, 1971), I, pt. 2, 139-40; Erasmus' commentary was widely reprinted in collections on educational theory. For discussion of Erasmus' pedagogical approach to Greek and Roman homosexuality, see Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science: 1450-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 37-8, 256 and Anthony Grafton, *Bring Out Your Dead: The Past as Revelation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 104, 242.

Rev. Alexander Grosart, Spenser's nineteenth-century biographer, decided that Rosalind, Colin's fair mistress, lived in "north-east Lancashire." He speculates that when Spenser left Cambridge in 1574, he went into Lancashire to visit his extended family and became a victim of the charms of the fair Rosalind.<sup>6</sup>

The account of Spenser's love affair with a northern beauty developed out of reading fictions in the *Shepherd's Calendar* as facts and then trying to document them. It is true that pastorals shadowed real people and events under the fictional rubric of characters who played pipes and tended sheep, and it is very true that the gloss of the *Shepherd's Calendar* invites such a reading. E. K. repeatedly hints that Rosalind is an actual person. He tantalizes credulous readers when he claims that the name "Rosalinde," if the letters are rearranged, will reveal the name of Colin's mistress (34). The name Rosalind is not a very plausible source for an anagram—far less so than Samuel Daniel's Delia who easily metamorphoses into "ideal." Nevertheless, scholars had some support from seventeenth-century commentators. On the second-hand authority of John Dryden, who was not born until after Spenser's death, John Aubrey claimed that Spenser "was an acquaintance and frequenter of Sir Erasmus Dreyden" and that Rosalinde was "a kinswoman of Sir Erasmus's Lady."<sup>7</sup> Aubrey loved gossip, but he is not always reliable. His carelessness about facts even led him to accept 1510 as the date of Spenser's birth even though Spenser was not born until the 1550s.

Various scholars have attempted to identify Rosalinde and have suggested Rose or Rosa Lynde (Church), Rose Daniel (Halpin), Rose Dinle or Dinley (Fleay), Rose Dineley of Downham, Lancashire (Grosart), Elizabeth North (Long).<sup>8</sup> In an important challenge to Grosart, Percy Long corrects Grosart's misreading of locations mentioned in Harvey's manuscript *Letter-Book* and argues that Rosalinde lived in or near Cambridge, pointing out that Cambridge could be considered north of London and of Kent.<sup>9</sup> Grosart, however, seems to have carried the day on this issue, influencing the biography still repeated in standard

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<sup>6</sup> Rev. Alexander Grosart, ed., *Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Edmund*. 10 vols. (London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1882-8), 1:43-61.

<sup>7</sup> For an overview and convenient summary of early scholarship, see *Spenser Variorum, Minor Poems*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, et al. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1943), 1, Appendix 4, pp. 651-5, esp. 652 (Aubrey).

<sup>8</sup> *Spenser Variorum*, 1: 652-5.

<sup>9</sup> Percy Long, "Spenser's Visit to the North of England," *Modern Language Notes*, 21 (1917): 58-9. For a judicious summary of the evidence for a real Rosalind, see Percy Long, "Spenser's Rosalind," *Anglia* 31 (1908): 72-104.

reference works. He contended that Spenser's family had originated from Lancashire and that Rosalinde lived literally in the north of England. Once Grosart persuaded himself that Spenser's extended family resided in Lancashire rather than London, he was in a position to amass archival detail because he himself resided in Lancashire at St. George's, Blackburn.

Alexander Judson, author of the standard biography published with the *Spenser Variorum*, repeats Grosart's biographical assertion that Spenser visited the north of England where he engaged in a love affair with the mysterious Rosalind.<sup>10</sup> There is no documentary evidence for this visit to northern England, and inserting it into an account of Spenser's life makes him appear strangely indifferent to a future career. Attempts to identify and physically locate Rosalind are symptomatic of the tradition of approaching Spenser's work as personal autobiography; but in this instance, there is documentary evidence that Edmund Spenser cannot be equated with Colin Clout. Between April 1579, when the dedicatory epistle was signed and dated, and the entry of the *Shepherd's Calendar* into the Stationers' Register on 27 October 1579, Spenser married Machabyas Chylde at St. Margaret's, Westminster.<sup>11</sup> No one has found or is likely to find an anagram for Rosalind in Machabyas Chylde.

Mark Eccles identified the church record for the wedding.<sup>12</sup> The marriage is also confirmed by internal references in Spenser's correspondence with Gabriel Harvey in *Familiar Letters*.<sup>13</sup> Gabriel Harvey alludes to Spenser's new wife and sends her his greetings, addressing her as "mea Domina Immerito, mea bellissima Collina Clouta" (G1). Harvey plays on Spenser's pseudonym "Colin Clout" when he calls Machabyas "Colina Clout." He also calls her "Domina Immerito," alluding to Spenser's use of the epithet "Immerito" in the Induction to the *Shepherd's Calendar*. The details of Spenser's first marriage

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander C. Judson, *The Life of Edmund Spenser* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1945), published as *Spenser Variorum*, 8: 44-7.

<sup>11</sup> For a deductive argument that there must have been a first marriage, see Douglas Hamer, *Review of English Studies*, 7 (1931): 271-86.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Eccles, *Times Literary Supplement* (December 31, 1931), 1053. See also Eccles, "Elizabethan Edmund Spensers," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 5 (1944): 413-27.

<sup>13</sup> *Three Proper, and Wittie, Familiar Letters: lately passed between two Universitie men* (London: H. Bynneman, 1580). Signatures will be cited parenthetically in the text. Because there are five letters—not three—and Harvey later published *Four Letters*, I will allude to the Harvey-Spenser correspondence as *Familiar Letters*. Henry Bynneman printed these letters after Spenser had left for Ireland.

were further documented in the mid-twentieth century by Douglas Hamer and W. Welply working independently, but this documentation has had virtually no impact on Spenser's biography.<sup>14</sup> His second marriage to Elizabeth Boyle in 1594 inscribed in the *Amoretti* and the *Epithalamion* has remained central to critical and biographical discussion of Spenser's romances.

Spenser created the fiction of Colin's unrequited love for Rosalind and embedded it in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, but his real life romance with Machabyas Chylde ended in marriage. Underestimating the importance of this marriage has distorted our understanding of Spenser's career track. References to Spenser cease to appear in the account books of Pembroke College in the summer of 1574 when he was twenty years old.<sup>15</sup> His birth date is less uncertain than has been reported. We can be fairly certain that he was born in 1554 as stated in *Amoretti* LX.<sup>16</sup> He matriculated at Cambridge in 1569; the usual age of admission was fourteen or fifteen—not sixteen.<sup>17</sup> The manufactured fiction that Spenser left Cambridge in 1574 to visit relatives, met Rosalind, and stayed in

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<sup>14</sup> Douglas Hamer, "Edmund Spenser: Some Further Notes," *Notes and Queries* 162 (1932): 380-4 and "Some Spenser Problems," *Notes and Queries* 180 (1941): 165-7, 183-4, 206-9, 220-4, 238-41. W. H. Welply, "The Family and Descendants of Edmund Spenser," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 28 (1922): 22-34, 49-62. For a listing of Welply's numerous articles in *Notes and Queries* from 1924-1944, see Anderson, et al, *Spenser's Life*, 215.

<sup>15</sup> Aubrey Attwater, *Pembroke College, Cambridge: A Short History*, ed. S. C. Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 49. The Pembroke College Account Books list no entries for Spenser after 1574.

<sup>16</sup> See the influential commentary on this passage in the *Spenser Variorum*, *Minor Poems*, 2: 421, 439-40. Grosart argues from the wedding date of June 11, 1594 and the date of entry in the Stationers' Register, November 19, 1594, with the statement "written not long since" as evidence that *Amoretti*, or at least the sonnets addressed to Elizabeth Boyle, were written in 1593 or 1594, but the arithmetic becomes confused: "If, as the poet says, he was then forty-one, he was born in 1552 or 1553. But 'fourty yeares' may be a round number, and the possibilities may include 1550 or 1551" (440). These estimates ignore the evidence of his age at matriculation at Cambridge.

<sup>17</sup> M. B. Hackett, *The Original Statutes of Cambridge University: The Text and Its History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 167. See also J. A. Weisheipl, "The Structure of the Arts Faculty in the Medieval University," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 19.3 (1971): 266 and S. E. Morrison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 32. Spenser, who was academically precocious, is more likely to have matriculated at fourteen (born 1555) than sixteen (1553). The allusion to his fortieth birthday in *Amoretti* (1594) confirms fifteen. See Damian Riehl Leader, *A History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1: 36: "The normal age for a boy to enter university would be fifteen or sixteen, with exceptional boys starting earlier, and some rather later."

the north until 1578 has always made the next documented event in Spenser's career improbable. We know that Spenser served as a secretary to John Young when he became Bishop of Rochester in 1578.<sup>18</sup> It is unlikely that, after spending nearly four years in the north of England, Spenser would be summoned back to London in the spring of 1578 to become the secretary of Bishop John Young. It is more reasonable to assume that when Spenser left Cambridge in the summer of 1574, he went immediately to London where he found employment in the service of John Young and that he became sufficiently valuable as an employee so that Young made him his secretary upon being created a bishop.

Young, who had been Master of Pembroke College prior to Spenser's matriculation, served as Master for a total of eleven years. Throughout this period from 1567 to 1578 he resided principally in London where he held a number of ecclesiastical livings.<sup>19</sup> He held a prebend under Alexander Nowell, Dean of St. Paul's, for over fifteen years, not resigning it until a year after he became bishop. He was installed as prebendary of Westminster on 26 April 1571, a position he retained until his death. Young needed assistance in managing these many obligations, and it is almost certain that he employed Spenser before 1578 when he was appointed Bishop of Rochester.

The romantic fiction of *Rosalind* has also led us to underestimate the significance of Spenser's decision to marry Machabyas Chylde and the impact this marriage may have had on his career decisions. The author of the *Faerie Queene* did not endorse celibacy:

The loue of women not to entertaine;  
A lesson too too hard for liuing clay.<sup>20</sup>

He was interested in and attracted to women. Universities, however, did not encourage men who were serious about their academic careers to "entertain" the "loue of women." The celibacy of fellows at Oxford and Cambridge was conventional in all colleges until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Like clergymen who wished to progress in the church hierarchy, scholars were supposed to be single in order to devote themselves

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<sup>18</sup> For a summary of Young's career, see Judson, *Life*, 48-9.

<sup>19</sup> For Young's non-residence, see Attwater, *Pembroke College*, 44.

<sup>20</sup> *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton. Text edited by Hiroshi Yamashita and Toshiyuki Suzuki. Longman Annotated Poets (London and Edinburgh: Pearson, 2001), III. iv.26. All further references will be to this edition.



to their studies. This convention was so accepted that there were no statutes forbidding marriage in the charters of colleges that were founded before the Reformation.

Since Protestantism, in contrast to Roman Catholicism, favored the idea of a married clergy, colleges founded after the Reformation faced a dilemma. In 1585 when the strict Protestant Sir Walter Mildmay framed the statutes for Emmanuel College, like a solid Protestant, he disparaged celibacy and praised marriage, but then inconsistently but very explicitly prohibited any member of Emmanuel from marrying:

Although we willingly concede to marriage that honour which is accorded to it by the Holy Spirit in Holy Writ, and reject the opinion of those who have held that matrimony ought to be forbidden to a certain order of men, yet there are many and grave causes why we should suffer no one of those who shall be numbered among the members of our College to be married. We therefore desire and decree that if anyone hereafter who has a wife shall be elected in the College aforesaid, his election shall be held void, as of one unable to have any rights in the College aforesaid; and if he shall take a wife after his election, he shall forever lose all rights he may have obtained by such election.<sup>21</sup>

Technically, the Master of a College was allowed to marry. The queen, however, opposed the marriage of senior fellows and masters. In 1561 she observed that cathedral churches and colleges were founded to house societies of “learned Men professing Study and Prayer for the Edification of the Church of God, & so consequently to serve the Commonwealth.”<sup>22</sup> She had learned that “Prebendaries, Students, and Members” as well as “cheif Governors” kept wives, children, and nurses. So she decreed that no one, who was either the head or a member of a college or cathedral church, might house a wife and family within its precincts or even have a woman dwelling there. Anyone violating

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<sup>21</sup> *The Statutes of Sir Walter Mildmay, Kt Chancellor of the Exchequer and one of Her Majesty's Privy Councillors; authorised by him for the government of Emmanuel College founded by him*, trans. Frank Stubbings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 89.

<sup>22</sup> George Dyer, *The Privileges of the University of Cambridge*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1824), 1: 131-2.

this order would by her express order “forfeit all ecclesiasticall Promotions in any Cathedrall or Collegiate Church or College within this realm.” Spenser’s mentor, John Young, Master of Pembroke, married Grace Watts, widow of Thomas Watts, the Archdeacon of Middlesex; he did not forfeit his position, but he was not further promoted

Spenser’s academic prowess suggests that he could have remained at Cambridge on a fellowship after receiving the M.A. When Spenser’s B.A. was awarded in 1573, four of his classmates were elected to fellowships, and of these, three had ranked below him in the graduation list. According to John Venn, of the men proceeding to the M. A. at Cambridge, nine out of ten eventually took holy orders.<sup>23</sup> Spenser, who received an M.A., must have been considering a career in the church when he served as secretary to Bishop Young in 1578. Young is unlikely to have appointed a secretary who had no interest in the church. Traditionally, a man without fortune or property had the choice of a career in the church or the military; marriage, as we have noted above, might further affect his career choices. Spenser’s marriage to Machabyas Chylde in 1579 may have been a watershed event in his life. This marriage meant that Spenser would experience obstacles in making his way in the university and in the church. Less than a year after marrying Machabyas, Spenser accepted a position with a military leader. He became the secretary of the new Lord Deputy of Ireland, Arthur Lord Grey of Wilton. This appointment would enable the young poet to see at first hand the wars that he wanted to write about. Colin Clout would be able to draw upon his own military experiences in writing his epic. Spenser may also have shifted his career path to accommodate his position as the husband of Machabyas Chylde.

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<sup>23</sup> *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge from the Earliest Times to 1900*, compiled by John Venn and J. A. Venn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 1: xi.

## European Erotic Romance: Introduction

VICTOR SKRETKOWICZ  
*University of Dundee*

The ancient “love-and-adventure”—or “ideal”—prose romances that inspire the erotic romances of Sir Philip Sidney, William Shakespeare and Lady Mary Sidney Wroth were written in Greek between the first and fourth centuries A.D.<sup>1</sup> While modern scholars know of “over twenty” novels of this type, no more than five survive complete. Of these, only the three by Longus, Achilles Tatius, and Heliodorus received wide circulation during the Renaissance. Relatively late manifestations of the European philhellene (“lovers of ancient Greece”) revival of Greco-Roman letters, they were published and translated during the sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries. These works gave readers their first experience of the long-forgotten art of writing rhetorically complex, extended prose fiction in which the trials of love, resolved in the dénouement, mask an implicit moral and political allegory.

Inevitably, coming during the Reformation, Counter-Reformation and the Catholic Reformation, this cultural phenomenon was not without its religious and political dimensions. If “France in the sixteenth century displaced Italy as the pre-eminent centre of Hellenic studies in western Europe,”<sup>2</sup> rivalling, among others, Rome and the Vatican, Florence, Venice and Padua, its hegemony was challenged by French Protestant scholars in Geneva and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Opposed to the Church of Rome and what they interpreted as its tyranny and its support for tyrannical monarchy, these Calvinist religious exiles regarded themselves as true Christians. Of republican orientation, they were

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<sup>1</sup> B. P. Reardon, “Introduction,” in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, ed. by B. P. Reardon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 2-3. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Longus, Achilles Tatius, and Heliodorus are from this edition, cited as “Reardon.”

<sup>2</sup> G. N. Sandy, “Resources for the Study of Ancient Greek in France,” in *The Classical Heritage in France*, ed. by G. N. Sandy (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 48.

<sup>3</sup> P. Conner, *Huguenot Heartland: Montauban and Southern French Calvinism during the Wars of Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

determined to demonstrate that they were intellectually, morally, ethically, spiritually and politically superior to those of Roman persuasion.

Erotic romance played its part in this complicated drama. Heliodorus first appeared from Protestant presses in Basel: 1534 in Greek; 1552 in Latin. The earliest complete Latin text of Achilles Tatius came out of Basel in 1554; the Greek in 1601 from Heidelberg. These editions both precede, and overlap with, Bishop Jacques Amyot's French translations of Heliodorus (1547 [*i.e.*, 1548]; corrected 1559), Longus (1559), his monumental Plutarch's *Lives* (1559), and François de Belleforest's translation of Achilles Tatius (1568).

On the Continent, both sides of the religious and political divide use prefatory dedications and addresses to the reader to politicise their publications. More subtly, Calvinist inspired translators painstakingly distinguish their work from fashionable courtly expansions, like Amyot's and Belleforest's, by making a concerted effort to represent their authors without textual embellishment or rhetorical ornamentation. Associating scholarly integrity with political and religious propaganda, they use the medium of print to create intellectual and spiritual bonds among disparate Protestant communities of quasi-republican inclination.

The cumulative effects on content and style of these varying approaches to translation manifest themselves through detailed comparison of passages. How translation theory and practice affect the representation of the text, and attempt to guide reader response, is the thrust of these chapters on Longus, Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus.

The three principal English exponents of rhetorically conscious Greco-Roman erotic romance were all witnesses to, and participants in, this war of rhetorical styles. It had been engendered by the preceding generation, and they were fully aware of its political and religious overtones. All three were born during the reign of Elizabeth I, when the bulk of literary output was patronised by first and second-generation Protestants of more or less Anglican or Calvinist disposition. Neither Sidney, Shakespeare nor Sidney Wroth, working in cadenced prose and dramatic verse, schematically shuns extremes of plainness and ornament. Rather, each studiously engages with the Renaissance politicisation of Greco-Roman models through negative portrayal of national and domestic tyranny, at times associating rhetorical with political style.

Amyot's translations and prefatory remarks may have established a precedent for French writers to address their readers,

emphasising the eloquence, morality and instruction contained in their fiction.<sup>4</sup> The fashion was emulated in England, especially following the ascendancy in 1625 of Charles I and the French Henriette-Marie. Nonetheless, the earlier politicisation of stylised erotic romance by Sidney, Shakespeare and Sidney Wroth challenges the notion that “the idea of an aesthetic vocation of the genre has no impact before the translation of French heroic novels.”<sup>5</sup>

The Calvinist emphasis on style as an identifier of political sympathies contrasts with the focus on “rhetoric” as encoded diction, particularly when used in meaningful clusters. Blair Worden traces this practice among the coterie of philhellene Protestants associated with the Sidney circle, whom he terms “forward Protestants.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly David Norbrook notes how, from the second decade of the seventeenth century onwards, many writers of political polemic and its literary representations employed a hitherto undreamed of directness of expression.<sup>7</sup>

In some measure both of these observations could apply to the potentially elitist, politically charged vocabulary used by Sidney, Shakespeare and Sidney Wroth. However, as these chapters illustrate, through consciously imitating and adapting the plots, structures, characters and literary styles of their Greco-Roman literary precedents, these three demonstrate a potent rhetorical commitment to the evolving philhellene Protestant movement in England. In the larger social context, they politicise erotic romance by promoting tolerant pan-European Protestantism, destruction of tyrants, and the establishment of a notional English “republicanism” through elected, or chosen, consultative monarchy. On a deeply personal level, they portray selfless dedication to Christian stoicism, reverential respect for romantic love, and make a special effort to represent female dignity in the face of male tyranny.

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<sup>4</sup> L. Plazenet, *L'ébahissement et la délectation. Réception comparée et poétiques du roman grec en France et en Angleterre aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 1997), 679-80.

<sup>5</sup> Plazenet, *L'ébahissement*, 680: “L'idée d'une vocation esthétique du genre n'a pas d'impact avant la traduction des romans héroïques français.”

<sup>6</sup> Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).



## **Professional Communications**

### **Tribute to Elizabeth Porges Watson, 1935- 2008**

We note with grief the recent death of our much-loved Elizabeth Porges Watson, whose paper on Anaxius and Amphialus delivered at Victor's conference would have been included in this issue had not her passing prevented its reaching finished form. She is well known for her scholarship on folklore, published in such journals as *Reinardus*, *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, *Spenser Studies*, *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, as well as in the *Sidney Journal*, where she advanced our knowledge of Sidney's *Arcadia* with her essays on the allegorical significances of wild animals (*SJ* 15.2 [1997]) and on Mopsa's tale (*SJ* 16.2 [1998]). She edited the Everyman volume of Sidney's shorter works, titled *Defence of Poesie, Astrophil and Stella, and Other Writings* (Everyman, 1997), as well as *Spenser: Literature in Perspective* (Evans, 1967). Her versatility appears in her scholarly activity outside the sphere of early modern studies with her edition of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Cranford* (Oxford University Press, 1972) reprinted as an Oxford World Classic in 1980 and 1998. An active member of the Sidney Society, she regaled us with stories at the annual conference at Kalamazoo numerous times. She will be very much missed. Cards or other expressions of sympathy may be sent to her husband at 3 High Street, Waltham on the Wolds, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire LE14 4AH, UK.

## Upcoming Sidney Sessions, Spring 2009

**Renaissance Society of America**, Los Angeles, 19-21 March

### 1. Sidneys and the Psalms

Chair: Robert Stillman, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Anne Lake Prescott, Barnard College

“Singing the Lord’s Songs in a Female Voice: Mary Sidney, Elizabeth Chéron, and Chiara Matraini”

Susan Felch, Calvin College

“Sculpting the Scriptures: Psalm Paraphrase in *Holesome Herbs* and the Sidney Psalter”

Elliott M. Simon, Haifa University

“Sir Philip Sidney’s Prophetic Voice”

Roger Kuin

“A String of Pearls: Perrot’s *Perle Elette* and the Sidney Psalms”

### 2. Sidneys and Material Culture

Chair: Lisa Cevolsky, Suffolk University

Respondent: Mary Ellen Lamb, Southern Illinois University

Elizabeth B. Bearden, U of Maryland

“Sidney Is Dead, Long Live Sidney: Funeral Materials for the Body Natural and Transmigration for the Body Poetic”

Catherine L. Howey, History, Eastern Kentucky University

“Critique or Compliment?: Lady Mary Sidney’s 1573 New Year’s Gift to Queen Elizabeth I”

Susie West, Open University

“Remembering Philip: heritage, memory and material culture”

### 3. Lady Mary Wroth

Chair: Margaret Hannay, Siena College

Respondent: Katie Larson, University of Toronto

Ilona Bell, Williams College

“Mary Wroth’s Crowning Glory”

Akiko Kusunoki, Tokyo Women’s Christian University

“Mary Wroth’s Representations of Elizabeth I in *Urania*”

Mary Ellen Lamb, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale

“Signifying through Clothing in Wroth’s *Urania*”



**International Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Studies,  
Kalamazoo May 8-11, 2008**

**1. Images and Imagination**

Clare Kinney, University of Virginia

“Remodeling Sidneian Romance: Mrs. Stanley's *Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia Moderniz'd*”

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