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A Study of Sir Philip Sidney's Astrophel and Stella

Benjamin S. Cywinski
Marquette University

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A STUDY OF SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S
ASTROPHEL AND STELLA

by

Benjamin S. Cywinski, O.F.M.

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Marquette University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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P R E F A C E

The general purpose of this thesis is to determine the literary value of Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*. First of all, an analysis of the sonnet cycle as such is undertaken to evaluate these lyrics with respect to the unity and logical development of theme. Secondly, a close study of the content material is proposed with the aim of reflecting the poet's ability to personalize and adapt conventionalized modes of expression and of portraying his excellence as a poet-courtier and literary craftsman. Thirdly, two research problems are projected—one, relating to the identity of the lady of the sonnets, the other, relating to the date of the composition of the sonnets—so that an acceptable solution of these controversial problems can be proffered. Finally, an attempt is made to make manifest Sidney's originality in order to offset the common criticism that the sonnet sequence is a conventional imitation.

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CHAPTER I
NUMBER, UNITY, AND DEVELOPMENT

The series of sonnets entitled _Astrophel and Stella_, (the star-lover and his star), occupied Philip Sidney's leisure through the last six years of his life. As was customary, some or all of the sonnets were circulated among Sidney's friends in manuscript form. None of them were published during his life time. Any attempt to discuss the number, unity, and development of the sonnets will have to be tempered by the fact that the sonnets were published surreptitiously from a circulating manuscript that had been obtained irregularly by the printer.

1. Number

The commonly accepted number of sonnets in the Sidneian sequence is 108. This was the number of sonnets in the surreptitious Newman edition of 1591. On the title page of this edition, entitled _Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella_, Thomas Newman, the publisher, states:

To the end of which are added, sundry other rare Sonnets of divers Noble men and Gentlemen.¹

The "sundry other rare Sonnets" included twenty-eight sonnets by Samuel Daniel, seven lyrics (six anonymous and one assigned to E.O., i.e. Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford), and, as a separate group placed at the end, ten songs by Sidney.

The volume was dedicated to Francis Flower. Thomas Nashe was engaged by Newman to write a preface. How Newman acquired the manuscript is not known. In the preface to his edition he merely states:

It was my fortune not many days since to light upon the famous device of Astrophel and Stella, which carrying the general commendation of all men of judgment, and being reported to be one of the rarest things that ever any Englishmen set abroach, I have thought good to publish it.²

Newman's procedure can be compared to that of Thomas Thorpe when he published Shakespeare's sonnets in 1609, and Newman's Francis Flower occupies the same relationship to Sidney's sonnets as Thorpe's friend, W.H., occupies towards Shakespeare's sonnets.

Upon the protest of Samuel Daniel to the Stationers' Company against the piratical publication of his sonnets, the first edition was suppressed. Soon after, however, Newman issued another edition which excluded both Nashe's preface and the miscellaneous songs and sonnets. In the same year a third edition of Sidney's sequence was published by another piratical publisher named Matthew Lownes.³

². Sidney Lee, op.cit., I, 3.
It was not until 1598 that an authorized folio edition of the sonnets appeared. In this edition the Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister, made some corrections and additions. The preface of this edition begins:

The disfigured face, gentle reader, wherewith this work not long since appeared to the common view, moved that noble lady, to whose honor consecrated, to whose protection it was committed, to take in hand the wiping away those spots wherewith the beauties thereof were unworthily blemished.

Besides the corrections and emendations of the text the Countess of Pembroke made other alterations. She added an eleventh song to the ten songs of the 1591 edition and distributed these songs in their proper places within the sonnet sequence. Next, the sonnets were numbered. A sonnet, satirizing Lord Rich, "My mouth doth water and my breast doth swell," was numbered XXXVII and inserted within the sequence. At the end of the Astrophel and Stella sonnets, eighteen other songs and twelve new sonnets, hitherto unpublished, were appended.

The last two of these sonnets entitled "Thou blind man's mark! thou fool's self-chosen snare" and "Leave me, O love! which reachest but to dust" seem to be the logical ones to conclude the Astrophel and Stella sequence and should probably have been numbered CIX and CX.

2. Unity

In considering the unity of the sonnet sequence the problems that must first be settled are whether any new sonnets should be added, whether others should be taken away, whether others should be changed, and finally whether the order of the sonnets should be changed.

That the sonnet sequence should remain as it is preserved in the authorized edition of 1598 is strongly substantiated by Newman's dedication in the 1591 edition. Newman writes:

For my part I have been very careful in the printing of it, and whereas, being spread abroad in written copies, it had gathered much corruption by ill-writers; I have used their help and advice in correcting and restoring it to his first dignity that I know were of skill and experience in those matters.6

If this quotation means anything, it is that Astrophel and Stella circulated widely in manuscript form, as a collected whole and not in scattered sheets, before it fell into Newman's hands. It was already known to the world as a "famous device" and a "rare thing" and throughout the dedication it is spoken of as a single work.

What strengthens this argument is that the Countess of Pembroke permitted the sequence to be reprinted without making any alteration in the arrangement of the sonnets.

Percy Addleshaw suggests that Sidney himself might have deliberately disarranged the sonnets the better to

conceal their real meaning.\textsuperscript{7} But an analysis of the development of the thought in the sonnets will reveal that the sonnets should remain in their present order.

The sonnets fall into two general groups, those having autobiographical intention and those dealing with conventional themes. From the autobiographical group a sequence of action can be arranged which fits in with the known facts of Sidney's love affairs. The first thirty-two sonnets deal with the wooing of Stella before her marriage to Lord Rich; the sonnets up to the eighty-fifth continue Sidney's wooing even after her marriage; the remaining sonnets tell how the poet left her from a sense of honor, although she loved him; and finally, the two unnumbered sonnets "Thou blind man's mark" and Leave me, O love" round out the sequence by portraying how Sidney overcame his passion and became reconciled to his fate.

The importance of the autobiographical intention is that it gives the sonnets a personal quality. This personal quality gave Sidney's own sonnets an effect of unity by relating them all to his passion. This sincere revelation further imparted to the sonnets a highly subjective lyrical quality, which was so frequently absent in the Petrarchan imitators.

The non-biographical sonnets, usually introduced for

\begin{footnote}
\end{footnote}
their own sake and usually adapted from French and Italian sources, serve not only as decorative lyrics but are rather closely bound up with the biographical sonnets. The full scope of Sidney's art is not grasped until we realize that these decorative poems fit the mood of the lover at the stage of the sequence in which they are introduced. It is this dramatic arrangement of his themes by which Sidney secures the subtle unity of his lyrics.

Even the eleven lyrics interpolated at intervals among the sonnets are as closely related to the sonnets as the incidental addresses to sleep and to the moon.

The unity, therefore, of the sonnets, as they now stand, is achieved in two ways, by reflecting the passion Sidney felt for Stella and by revealing Sidney's own character and temperament.

3. Development

Sidney's main concern in the sonnets was not only to portray the theme of love but to analyze the diverse effects of love upon his mental and physical state.8 The catalogue of rare conceits--

In piercing phrases, late,

The anatomy of all my woes I wrote9

--offered him a great variety of ways for setting forth

---

9. Sonnet LVIII, 9-10. Throughout this work my quotations from the sonnets are taken from Sidney Lee's edition.
The first sonnet sets forth the general theme of the sequence:

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That She, dear She! might take some pleasure of my pain;
L jsxure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain;
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt brain:
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay.
Invention Nature's child, fled step-dame's Study's blows;
And others' feet still seemed but strangers' in my way.
Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes;
Hitting my treward pen, beating myself for spite:
"Fool!" said my Muse, "look in thy heart, and write!"

The sonnet portrays Sidney's struggle to express his love, even though he possessed phrases from famous models.

He wishes to please his lady and move her to pity. He finally attains successful expression simply by following the dictates of his heart. Sidney reverts to this theme in succeeding sonnets. He criticizes poets, who

With strange similes enrich each line,
Of herbs or beasts which Inde or Afric hold.10

He rejects the artificiality of the lover, who

His song, in Jove and Jove's strange tales attires;
Bordered with bulls and swans, powdered with golden rain:
Another humbler wit to shepherd's pipe retires,
Yet hiding royal blood full oft in rural vein.11

Equally artificial are those

That do search for every purling spring
Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows;
And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows
Near thereabouts, into your poesy wring:

10. Sonnet III, 7-8.
11. Sonnet VI, 5-8.
You that do dictionary's method bring
Into your rhymes running in rattling rows;
You that poor Petrarch's long deceased woes,
With newborn sighs and denizens wit do sing.12

And those

That with allegory's curious frame,
Of others' children, changelings use to make.13

All these poets seek their inspiration in the wrong source.
For Sidney sufficient inspiration is provided by his lady.

The next sonnet describes the growth of his love. It
describes how a long friendship with Stella gradually grew
into an ardent appreciation of her, how liking grew into
loving, and how gradually he became hopelessly enmeshed
in love.

Not at the first sight, nor with a dribbled shot,
Love gave the wound, which while I breathe, will bleed:
But known worth did in mine of time proceed,
Till, by degrees, it had full conquest got.
I saw and liked, I liked but loved not;
I loved, but straight did not what Love decreed:
At length to Love's decrees, I forced, agreed.14

Two new themes are suggested in the fourth and fifth
sonnets. The first is the debate between love and virtue,
the second is the Platonic conception of beauty as an
image of virtue. Sidney at first rather playfully toys
with the second theme.

True—that true beauty, Virtue is indeed;
Whereof this beauty can be but a shade,
Which elements with mortal mixture breed:

cf. J.M. Purcell, "Note on Sonnet II of Astrophel and
True—that on earth, we are but pilgrims made;
And should in soul, up to our country move;
True—and yet true, that I must Stella love.15

In a later sonnet the idea is more tersely described:

The wisest scholar of the wight most wise,
By Phoebus' doom, with sugared sentence says:
That virtue, if it once met with our eyes,
Strange flames of love it in our souls would raise.16

The tenth sonnet opens another dispute, this time between reason on the one hand and sense and love on the other. He wishes that reason would

climb the Muses' hill,
Or reach the fruit of Nature's choicest tree,
Or seek heaven's course, or heaven's inside to see.
Why shouldst thou toil, our thorny soil to till?
Leave Sense! and those which Sense's objects be.
Deal thou with powers! of thoughts, leave Love to will.17

The following two sonnets explain how Cupid has taken possession of Stella's person.

Her heart is such a citadel,
So fortified with wit, stored with disdain,
That to win it is all the skill and pain.18

Up to this point Stella still holds her heart inviolate.

The fourteenth sonnet is an answer to a friend who admonishes the poet for his sinful desire.

If that be sin, which doth the manners frame
Well stayed with truth in word, and faith of deed;
Ready of wit, and fearing nought but shame:
If that be sin, which in firt hearts doth breed
A loathing of all loose unchastity: Then love is sin, and let me sinful be.19

17. Sonnet X, 3-8.
Next, Sidney bewails his misemployed manhood:

My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toys;
My wit doth strive those passions to defend,
Which for reward, spoil it with vain annoys.20

The theme of his profitless youth is joined to his answer to another remonstrating friend:

Your words, my friend, right healthful caustics, blame
My young mind marred, whom love doth windlass so;
That mine own writings (like bad servants) show
My wits quick in vain thoughts; in virtue, lame.21

Stella's love is beginning to affect Sidney quite seriously. Friends, observing the effect of love upon the poet, begin to warn him, but the poet continues to trifle with love as a new and pleasant experience. The two following sonnets reflect his behavior under the influence of this new love.

The curious wits, seeing full pensiveness
Bewray itself in my long settled eyes:
Whence those same fumes of melancholy rise,
With idle pains and missing aim, do guess;
Some that know how my Spring I did address,
Deem that my Muse some fruit of knowledge plies:
Others, because the Prince my service tries,
Think that I think State errors to redress.
But harder judges judge ambition's rage--
Scourge of itself, still climbing slippery place--
Holds my young brain captivated in golden cage.
0 fools! or overwise! alas, the race
Of all my thoughts hath neither stop nor start,
But only Stella's eyes and Stella's heart.22

His friends are at a loss to explain his pensiveness.

They are all "fools" or "overwise." The explanation is

22. Sonnet XXIII.
simple enough: Stella. The following sonnet is a close parallel of the above.

Because I oft in dark abstracted guise,  
Seem most alone in greatest company;  
With dearth of words, or answers quite awry,  
To them that would make speech of speech arise.  
They deem, and of their doom the rumour flies,  
That poison foul of bubbling pride doth lie  
So in my swelling breast; that only I  
Fawn on me self, and others do despise.  
Yet pride, I think, doth not my soul possess,  
Which looks too oft in his unflattering glass:  
But one worse fault, ambition, I confess,  
That makes me oft my best friends overpass  
Unseen, unheard; while thought to highest place  
Bends all his powers, even to Stella's grace.  

Sidney now begins a series of sonnets punning on the name of Rich, Stella's husband. The poet does not consider Lord Rich to be worthy of Stella; he expresses contempt for him by calling him various names.

But that rich fool, who by blind Fortune's lot,  
The richest gem of love and life enjoys;  
And can with foul abuse, such beauties blot:  
Let him deprived of sweet but unfelt joys,  
(Exiled for aye from those high treasures, which  
He knows not) grow in only folly rich!  

In another sonnet the poet pities Stella, because she has the misfortune of being rich:

Rich in the treasure of deserved renown.  
Rich in the riches of a royal heart.  
Rich in those gifts, which give th'eternal crown:  
Who, though most rich in these and every part,  
Which make the patents of true worldly bliss;  
Hath no misfortune, but that Rich she is.  

The name calling becomes so envenomed with hatred that

23. Sonnet XXVII.  
it becomes abusive and offensive.

A monster! others' harm! self's misery!
Beauty's plague! Virtue's scourge! succour of lies!
Who his own joy to his own hurt applies;
And only cherish doth with injury!
Who since he hath—by Nature's special grace—
So piercing paws, as spoil when they embrace;
So nimble feet, as stir still though on thorns;
So many eyes, aye seeking their own woe;
So ample ears, that never good news know:
Is it not evil that such a devil wants horns?26

Sonnet XXX closes the introductory part of the sonnet sequence. It catalogues a series of state matters with which his mind might have been occupied had it been freed from his ruling passion for Stella.

From here on, Sidney's love enters a new phase. It becomes more passionate and intense. It is steeped in melancholy and expressed in images associated with night and darkness. One of Sidney's finest expressions of this subject is

With how sad steps, O Moon! thou climb'st the skies!
How silently! and with how wan a face!
What! may it be that even in heavenly place
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?
Sure, if that long with love-acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case.
I read it in thy looks. Thy languish grace
To me that feel the like, thy state deserves.
Then even of fellowship, O Moon! tell me
Is constant love deemed there, but want of wit?
Are beauties there, as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved; and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there, ungratefulness?27

Another striking expression is the Morpheus image of

27. Sonnet XXXI.
the succeeding sonnet.

Morpheus! the lively son of deadly Sleep,
Witness of life to them that living die,
A prophet oft, and oft an history,
A poet ere; as humours fly and creep.28

Sonnet XXXIII shows the first hint that Stella might have reciprocated the poet's love. Astrophel regrets that he did not seize some favorable opportunity before Stella's marriage. Things might have been different, but he has only himself to blame for not doing what love decreed.

But to myself, myself did give the blow;
While too much wit (forsooth!) so troubled me,
That I, respects for both our sakes must show:
And yet could not by rising morn foresee
How fair a day was near. O punish eyes!
That I had been more foolish or more wise!29

Too late! Nothing remains but to express his regrets and vain longings.

And, ah, what hope that hope should once see day
Where Cupid is sworn page to Chastity?30

But what consolation can words bring?

Come, let me write. And to what end? To ease
A burthened heart. How can words ease, which are
The glasses of thy daily vexing care?
Oft, cruel fights well pictured forth do please.
Art not ashamed to publish thy disease?
Nay that may breed my fame. It is so rare.
But will not wise men think thy words fond ware?
Then be they close, and so none shall displease.
What idler thing, than speak and not be heard?
What harder thing, than smart and not to speak?
Peace! foolish wit! With wit, my wit is marred.
Thus write I, while I doubt to write; and wreak

29. Sonnet XXXIII, 8-14.
30. Sonnet XXXV, 7-8.
My harms on ink's poor loss. Perhaps some find Stella's great powers, that so confuse my mind. 31

And yet Stella continues to affect him with increasing intensity.

Stella! whence doth this new assault arise?
A conquered, yielded, ransacked heart to win!
Whereto, long since, through my long battered eyes,
Whole armies of thy beauties entered in.
And there, long since, Love thy Lieutenant lies. 32

The many tales of unhappy lovers that Stella reads move her to tears. Astrophel would lead Stella to pity too, if she would consider his story:

Then think, my Dear! that you in me do read
Of lovers' ruin, some sad tragedy,
I am not I, pity the tale of me! 33

In the next nine sonnets Astrophel addresses Stella in various ways. He entreats her not to shun his presence or to withdraw the heavenly light of her eyes. He wants Stella to gaze upon him even if the force of her beauty and virtue might wither up his life. He considers her a veritable goddess. From the midst of this group of sonnets, two sonnets deserve to be mentioned, the first being the famous apostrophe to sleep, "Come, sleep! O sleep, the certain knot of peace," 34 the second, the graphic description of his victory in the tournament, "Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance." 35

31. Sonnet XXXIV.
32. Sonnet XXXVI, 1-5.
33. Sonnet XLIV, 12-14.
34. Sonnet XXXIX.
35. Sonnet XLI.
Astrophel's passion places him in a dilemma. Sometimes he feels this passion will lead him to ruin:

Virtue, awake! Beauty, but beauty is.
I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
Leave following that which it is gain to miss.
Let her do! Soft! but here she comes. Go to!
"Unkind! I love you not." O me! that eye
Doth make my heart give to my tongue the lie. 36

J. Brannin gives this sonnet a different interpretation. He contends that the Continental objects to English morality, because the Puritan Englishman is willing to quiet rebellious instincts by half-indulgence—a sort of moral inoculation against the fiercer maladies of the soul. 37

Sometimes he seems to draw strength from the same passion:

What! Have I thus betrayed my liberty?
Can those black beams, such burning marks engrave
In my free side? or am I born a slave,
Whose neck becomes such yoke of tyranny? 38

Up to this point Stella remains as remote from his reach as a star. Now she confesses that she loves him, but her love is very different from what he expected. It is pure and sisterly-like. Besides, she minglest her expression of love with admonitions little to Astrophel's liking.

Late tired with woe, even ready for to pine
With rage of love, I called my love "unkind!"
She in whose eyes love, though unfelt, doth shine
Sweetly said, "That I, true love in her should find."

38. Sonnet XLVII, 1-4.
I joyed; but straight thus watered was my wine. "That love she did, but loved a love not blind; Which would not let me, whom she loved, decline From nobler course, fit for my birth and mind: And therefore by her love's authority, Willed me, these tempests of vain love to fly; And anchor fast myself on Virtue's shore."
Alas, if this the only metal be
Of love new coined to help my beggary:
Dear! love me not, that ye may love me more!39

At first, he rebels against her admonitions:

No more! my Dear! no more these counsels try!
O give my passions leave to run their race!
Let Fortune lay on me her worst disgrace!
Let folk o'ercharged with brain, against me cry!
Let clouds bedim my face, break in mine eye!
Let me no steps but of lost labour trace!
Let all the earth in scorn recount my case;
But do not will me from my love to fly!40

Then he seeks relief in trifles. He describes how he
nursed Love in his bosom, and that consequently both must be
of the same lineage.

For when, naked boy', thou couldst no harbour find
In this old world, grown now so too too wise;
I lodged thee in my heart: and being blind
By nature born, I gave to thee mine eyes.
Mine eyes! my light! my heart! my life! Alas!
If so great services may scorned be:
Yet let this thought, thy tigerish courage pass.
That I, perhaps, am somewhat kin to thee.41

But Stella continues to disregard his attentions. In
Sonnet LXVIII he catches her blushing when their eyes met,
but she continues to remain aloof, and the poet remonstrates
with her upon this cruelty.

Stella relents again, yielding him the kingdom of her

39. Sonnet LXII.
41. Sonnet LXV, 5-12.
heart, but adding the condition that he must love virtuously:

O Joy! too high for my low style to show.
O bliss! fit for a nobler seat than me.
Envy! put out thine eyes! lest thou do see
What oceans of delight in me do flow.
My friend! that oft saw, through all masks, my woe
Come! come! and let me pour myself on thee!
Gone is the winter of my misery!
My spring appears! O see what here doth grow!
For Stella hath with words (where faith doth shine),
Of her high heart given me the monarchy:
I! I! O I may say that she is mine.
And though she give but thus conditionally
This realm of bliss, "while virtuous course I take;"
No kings be crowned, but they some covenant make.42

For the time being, his melancholy has turned into joy. He is jubilant, and then, almost in the same breath, he admits that Stella's virtuous cautions do not satisfy him. Again he bids farewell to desire:

Desire! though thou my old companion art,
And oft so clings to my pure love, that I
One from the other scarcely can descry;
While each doth blow the fire of my heart:
Now from thy fellowship, I needs must part.43

This fluctuation between sadness and joy, possession and loss, victory and defeat in his love making, is characteristic of Astrophel. It is repeated again on the subject of "a sugared kiss"44 which the poet stole while Stella was asleep.

Several sonnets are occupied with meditations on this lucky kiss. The poet's thoughts turn to alternate ecstasy

42. Sonnet LXIX.
43. Sonnet LXXII, 1-5.
44. Sonnet LXXXIII, 5-6.
and wantonness.

I never drank of Aganippe's well;
Nor never did in shade of Tempe sit:
And Muses scorn with vulgar brains to dwell.
Poor layman, I! for sacred rites unfit.

How falls it then that with so smooth an ease
My thoughts I speak? and what I speak doth flow
In verse? and that my verse best wits doth please?45

All this sweetness is caused by Stella's sweet kiss.

How quickly, however, this sweetness changes!

Treat not so hard your slave!
In justice, pains come not till faults do call:
Or if I needs, sweet Judge! must torments have;
Use something else to chasten me withal,
Than those blest eyes, where all my hopes do dwell.
No doom should make once heaven become his hell.46

The last quoted sonnet introduces a change in the

spirit of Sidney's dream. It is introduced by the song:

Only joy! now here you are,
Fit to hear and ease my care.
Let my whispering voice obtain
Sweet reward for sharpest pain.
Take me to thee, and thee to me!
No, no, no, no, my Dear! let be. 47

The song describes how on one occasion Astrophel finds

himself alone with Stella at night, when her husband's

asleep, her mother in bed, and the house closed. To all his

pleadings, it must be admitted, of questionable morality,

Stella returns a steadfast "No!"

The next five songs continue to develop this theme.

Against all of Astrophel's pleadings, however, Stella

45. Sonnet LXXIV, 1-4; 9-11.
46. Sonnet LXXXVI, 9-14.
47. Fourth Song, 1-6, in Sidney Lee, _op. cit._, I, 70.
perseveres. The lover has pressed his suit too far and Stella recognizes their common danger. Stella plays a part which compels our admiration. The situation had become unbearable to her. She loves Astrophel and confesses her love to him, but for her own sake and for his sake, she must part from him.

But, even in the hour of their parting, Stella betrays her emotion. Sonnet LXXVII describes the tears the poet saw in Stella's eyes. Now follow five sonnets written on the occasion of Stella's absence.

Each day seems long, and longs for long-stayed night;
The night as tedious, would th'approach of day.
Tired with the dusty toils of busy day;
Languisht with horrors of the silent night;
Suffering the evils both of the day and night;
While no night is more dark than is my day.
Nor no day hath less quiet than my night.48

The poet finds himself in an impossible position again. Stella's presence failed to satisfy him, her absence is equally bad.

The tenth song entitled "O Dear Life! when shall it be" follows the group of sonnets on absence. It seems that this lyric might have roused the jealousy of her husband and exposed Stella to cruel treatment. In Sonnet XGIII and the next seven sonnets Sidney reviles himself for placing Stella in such a predicament. The following is a typical example:

48. Sonnet LXXXIX, 5-11.
O Fate! O fault! O curse! child of my bliss!
What sohs can give words grace my grief to show?
What ink is black enough to paint my woe?
Through me, wretched me! even Stella vexed is. 49

After devoting two sonnets on Stella's sickness and another on the river Thames that carried Stella, Sidney in Sonnet CIV turns to the "envious wits" who were commenting upon Astrophel's intimacy with Stella. Then, too, Astrophel compromises Stella by wearing stars on his armour. As a consequence, Stella gives him express commands to abstain from her society.

The final song, in dialogue form, taking place beneath Stella's window at night so admirably portrays the state of mind of both lovers that its quotation in full is justified.

Who is it that this dark night,
Underneath my window plaineth?
--It is one who from thy sight,
Being, ah! exiled; disdaineth
Every other vulgar light.

Why, alas! and are you he?
Be not yet those fancies changed?
--Dear! when you find change in me,
Though from me you be estranged;
Let my change to ruin be.

Well in absence this will die.
Leave to see! and leave to wonder!
--Absence sure will help, if I
Can learn how myself to sunder
From what in my deart doth lie.

But time will these thoughts remove:
Time doth work that no man knoweth.
--Time doth as the subject prove,

49. Sonnet XCIII, 1-4.
With time still th' affection groweth
In the faithful turtle dove.

What in you new beauties see!
Will not they stir new affection?
--I will think thy pictures be
(Image-like of saints' perfection)
Poorly counterfeiting thee.

But your reason's purest light
Bids you leave such minds to nourish!
--Dear! do reason no such spite!
Never doth thy beauty flourish
More than in my reason's sight.

But the wrongs love bears, will make
Love at length leave undertaking.
--No, the more fools it do shake
In a ground of so firm making,
Deeper still they drive the stake.

Peace! I think that some give ear!
Come no more! lest I get anger.
--Bliss! I will my bliss forbear;
Fearing, Sweet! you to endanger!
But my soul shall harbour thee.

Well begone! begone I say!
Lest that Argus' eyes perceive you.
--C unjust Fortune's away!
Which can make me thus to leave you;
And from louts to run away.50

This song is followed by Sonnet CV depicting another
night scene in which Sidney, watching from his window, just
misses the sight of Stella as her carriage passes by.51

The sequence closes abruptly on a note of despair:

But soon as thought of thee breeds my delight,
And my young soul flutterst to thee his nest!
Most rude Despair, my daily unhidden guest,
Clips straight my wings, straight wraps me in his night.52

Philological Quarterly, X (1931), 399.
52. Sonnet CVIII, 5-8.
Stella's prudent withdrawal of herself from Sidney's company begins to have a good effect upon the poet's passion. As his passion cools, so the impulse to write declines; and the poet's sincerity is probably nowhere better shown than in this sudden and ragged ending of his work.

However, it seems hardly appropriate to end this sonnet sequence on the note of despair. I believe that the two following renunciation sonnets should properly end the sequence.

Thou blind man's mark! thou fool's self-chosen snare! Fond fancy's scum! and dregs of scattered thought! Hand of all evils! cradle of causeless care! Thou web of will! whose end is never wrought. Desire! Desire! I have too dearly bought, With price of mangled mind, thy worthless ware! Too long! too long asleep thou hast me brought! Who should my mind to higher things prepare; But yet in vain, thou hast my ruin sought! In vain, thou mad'st me to vain things aspire! In vain, thou kindlest all thy smoky fire! For virtue hath this better lesson taught. Within myself, to seek my only hire: Desiring nought, but how to kill Desire.53

Leave me, 0 Love! which reachest but to dust! And thou, my mind! aspire to higher things! Grow rich in that, which never taketh rust! Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings. Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might To that sweet yoke, where lasting freedoms be! Which breaks the clouds, and opens forth the light That doth both shine, and give us sight to see. 0 take fast hold! Let that light be thy guide! In this small course which birth draws out to death: And think how evil becometh him to slide, Who seeketh heaven, and comes of heavenly breath! Then farewell, world! Thy utmost I see! Eternal Love, maintain Thy love in me!54

54. Unnumbered sonnet, ibid.
The ascent from carnal to spiritual love is entirely in keeping with the Petrarchan convention. Petrarch himself in Sonnet LXXXVI of Sonnets after the Death of Laura ends his sequence with a similar renunciation of earthly love. Since Sidney follows Petrarch in so many other conventions, it is reasonable to suppose that he would want to imitate his master in such a powerful closing.

Another reason that prompts me to believe that Sidney intended these two sonnets to close his sequence is the Latin epigraph attached to the second: Splendidis longum valedico mugis (I bid reluctant farewell to these splendid trifles). This epigraph has the force of an envoy to the whole series of sonnets and songs which binds them into a unified whole.

Finally, the two last sonnets, by showing the glory of the soul's triumph and the necessity of that triumph, are in accord with Sidney's true aim of poetry, namely: to instruct delightfully the heart of man.

The two last sonnets by combining both the Christian and Platonic doctrine certainly instruct delightfully.

E.J. Putnam gives an admirable interpretation of them.

The courtier, with the aid of reason, turns his desire from the body to beauty alone. By so doing, he escapes all the bitterness of fleshly lovers; he does no injury to the husband or the kinsfolk of his lady; he causes her no infamy. Besides this, he finds another blessing. By no longer contemplating the beauty of one woman, he rises to a contemplation of universal beauty which adorns all bodies. And just as love leads from the particular to the universal beauty, so in the highest stage it leads from the particular to the universal intellect. Hence, the soul, kindled by the most sacred fire of true love, flies to unite herself with divinity itself.
CHAPTER II
THE SISNEIAN CONCEIT

The popular and widespread practice of expressing thoughts and impressions by means of the conceit can be traced to and linked with the actual logical training which poets of the Renaissance received. A large number of the processes taught in the study of logic naturally produce images. Habits formed in the long years of practice of these logical processes were easily transferred to the framing of poetic images when the poets moved from the province of logic to that of poetry.

For example, considering a subject from the standpoint of any of its predicaments (substance, quantity, quality, relation, manner of doing, when, where, situs, and habitus) will immediately lead to a creation of an image. The practice which Renaissance students were given in defining or characterizing things on the basis of these predicaments turned out to be a practice in the framing of images.\(^1\)

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Sidneian conceits as well as the conceits of the Elizabethan sonneteers have a tendency to exaggerate. They overemphasize the simile and metaphor; they dwell too long upon the comparison. And yet, in the hands of Sidney this exaggeration becomes an art. To exaggerate within the strict confines of a "fourteen line casquet, carved with exquisite phrases about the cameo of a classical simile and studded with rubies and pearls," without producing monotony and a feeling of boredom is a difficult task indeed. Still, it is Sidney's credit that he is able to achieve frequent success.

To determine the exact extent of the originality in Sidney's conceits is practically an impossible feat. The amount of imitation and originality in each conceit, or even in each group of conceits, is as undeterminable as the pedigree of a mongrel. It is only possible to say that the influence of Italy and France is omnipresent.

Before entering upon a discussion of the conceit as used by Sidney it may be useful to attempt a distinction between imagery and the conceit. Tuve defines imagery as an attempt to make things-as-they-are more expressive by the use of some covert meaning, some rhetorical figure less obvious and more shadowed than mere descriptive epithet. 3

Such a definition of imagery seems to differ very little from Samuel Johnson's definition of the conceit: a kind of *discordia concors*, a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike.

E. N. Chambers makes a closer distinction between the two. He says:

A figure loses the character of a just image and becomes a conceit: (1) if the element of similarity is less obvious than dissimilarity; or (2) if the expressiveness of the comparison is obscured by the ingenuity of the discoverer; or (3) if it lacks imaginative concreteness and vividness; or (4) if it is below the level of its theme.4

The conceit then entails much more than simple imagery. It entails a considerable use of the intellect. At times, the intellectual process takes precedence, at least for a moment, over the normal poetic process.

Raymond M. Alden classifies all conceits into three general groups: verbal, imaginative, and logical.5 For purposes of securing clarity and avoiding extreme tediousness in handling the Sidneyan conceit I will confine myself to this general classification.

1. *Verbal Conceits*

Sidney uses a wide variety of conceits which are based primarily upon the use of words. In two sonnets he plays

5. Ibid., p.138.
on Stella's married name (Rich). In Sonnet XXIV he simply
satirizes the name:

Rich fools there be, whose base and filthy heart
Lies hatching still the goods wherein they flow:
But that rich fool, who by blind Fortune's lot,
The richest gem of love and life enjoys;
Let him deprived of sweet but unfelt joys,
Exiled for aye from those high treasures, which
He knows not, grow in only folly rich!

In the second sonnet the poet gives a paradoxical

In a sonnet describing Stella's face as the court of
describing Stella's face as the court of
virtue the poet achieves a successful decorative play on
the word "touch." Stella's eyes partake of the nature of
a touch that touches without touching:

The windows now—through which this heavenly guest
Looks o'er the world, and can find nothing such
Which dare claim from these lights the name of best—
Of touch they are, that without touch do touch;
Whose Cupid's self, from Beauty's mind did draw:
Of touch they are, and poor I am their straw.7

Quite different, in effect, is the antithetical con-
struction of the two homonyms "raised" and "razed."

Stella! Whence doth this new assault arise?

7. Sonnet IX, 9-14.
A conquered, yielded, ransacked heart to win!
Where to, long since, through my long battered eyes,
Whole armies of thy beauties entered in.
And there, long since, Love thy Lieutenant lies:
My forces razed, thy banners raised within.8

Sidney leaves no stone unturned in order to win the
love of his lady. He even invokes the rules of grammar
to claim victory over the unsuspecting Stella. At one time,
craving the thing which Stella was consistently denying,
Sidney heard her utter the double negative "No!" "No!"
This is how he makes grammar serve his purpose:

Sing then my Muse! now Io Paean sing!
Heavens! envy not at my high triumphing!
But Grammar's force with sweet success confirm!
For Grammar says (O this dear Stella's "Nay!")
For Grammar says (to Grammar, who says "Nay?")
"That in one speech, two negatives affirm."9

2. Imaginative Conceits

The imaginative conceits depend upon the use of
fancy for their effectiveness. They are usually presented
in the form of figures of speech, such as similes, meta-
phors, and personifications; occasionally they take on
the form of a myth, explaining Stella's beauty.

Sidney uses very few conceits based on similes. The
probable reason for this seems to be that the conceit re-
lies mostly upon implication of meaning rather than direct
expression. His comparisons are expressed mostly by the

use of the metaphor which lends itself readily as the basis for conceit.

One of the very few simile-conceits is expressed in Sonnet LXXVI. Sidney compares the coming of Stella to that of Aurora, who comes with gentle force. The light shining from Stella's eyes is compared to the light of Aurora, which does not scorch, but simply removes "the dark chilling sprites" and creates a rosy morn. The poet dares to play gladly in the gentle and warm light created by Stella's eyes.

Sonnet XXIX also employs the simile—is, in fact, an extended simile:

Like some weak lords—neighbouring by mighty kings—
To keep themselves and their chief cities free;
Do easily yield that all their coasts may be
Ready to store their camp of needful things;
So Stella's heart, finding what power Love brings,
To keep itself in life and liberty;
Both willing grant that in the frontiers he
Use all to help his other conquerings;
And thus her heart escapes, but thus her eyes
Serve him with shot; her lips, his heralds are;
Her breasts, his tents; legs, his triumphal car;
Her flesh, his food; her skin, his armour brave.
And I, but for because my prospect lies
Upon that coast, am given up for slave.

Just as weak lords permit the use of their coasts to strong neighboring kings in order to preserve the freedom of their main internal cities, so also Stella, confronted by powerful Love, permits him to take over her external features in order to protect her internal strength (her heart). Because the poet cannot hope to break through the first line of defense, because Love is firmly entrenched there, he cannot
conquer Stella's heart and must remain a slave, a captive of Love.

The metaphoric conceits are more numerous. Sonnet XXVI proves the value of the study of astrology through the stars in Stella's face. "Dusty wits" scorn astrology, because the stars of the heavens have no other purpose but to "spangle the black weeds of Night." The heavenly stars, however, must possess another purpose, because the stars in Stella's face help him to arrange his undertakings.

For me, I do Nature unidle know;  
And know great causes, great effects procure;  
And know those bodies high reign on the low;  
And if these rules did fail, proof makes me sure.  
Who oft fore-judge my after-following race,  
By only those two stars in Stella's face.10

Sonnet LXXIX does nothing else except what the first line proposes to do: "Sweet kiss! thy sweets I fain would sweetly endite." The rest of the sonnet is a rather tiresome catalogue of overworked metaphors for a sweet kiss:

"Pleasing'st consort... best charge and bravest retreat in Cupid's fight... A double key... nest of young joys... schoolmaster of delight... the friendly fray... the pretty death... poor hope's first wealth... hostage of promised wealth... breakfast of love!"

The last of a series of sonnets dealing with the subject of kisses is an extremely sensuous and luscious metaphor. The poet implores his sweet garden nymph not to

10. Sonnet XXVI, 9-14.
banish him from those cherries "whose fruit doth far th'Hesperian taste surpass."

For though full of desire, empty of wit,
Admitted late by your best graced grace;
I caught at one of them a hungry bite:
Pardon that fault; Once more grant me the place;
And I do swear even by the same delight,
I will but kiss, I never more will bite.11

The ninety-sixth sonnet is an extended metaphorical conceit comparing the poet's thought with night. Both are "blackly darkened;" the night is barred from the sun, the poet's thought is barred from its sunlight, Stella; both are silent, solitary; and yet there is a difference, because night has the odds:

But, but, alas, night's side the odds hath far:
For that, at length, yet doth invite some rest;
Thou though still tired, yet still dost it detest!

I should like to quote one more sonnet, based on a three-pointed metaphorical conceit, that is successful in spite of being involved, and that reflects Sidney's ability as a masterful inventor of conceits.

Dian, that fain would cheer her friend the Night,
Shows her oft at the full her fairest face:
Bringing with her those starry nymphs, whose chase
From heavenly standing, hits each mortal wight.
But, ah, poor Night! in love with Phoebus' light,
And endlessly despairing of his grace;
Herself (to know no other joy hath place)
Silent and sad in mourning weeds doth sigh.
Even so, alas, a lady, Dian's peer!
With choice delights and rarest company,
Would fain drive clouds from out my heavy cheer:
But woe is me! though Joy itself were she;

She could not show my blind brain ways of joy;
While I despair my sun's sight to enjoy.12

Dian, the moon goddess, with her fairest face and starry
nymphs endeavors unsuccessfully to cheer Night, who is in
love with Phoebus, the sun god. So also, a lady with
choice delights and rarest company cannot but fail to cheer
the poet and bring him joy, even if she were the goddess of
Joy, because the poet is in love with Stella. The implication
is that just as it will never be possible for the sun
god to shine during the night so also it will be impossible
for Stella to become the poet's beloved.

Sidney delights in yet another kind of imaginative
conceit, namely the personification-type. Scattered pro-
fusely throughout Astrophel and Stella are personification-
type conceits elaborating on such abstract subjects as
virtue, patience, grief, and the sigh.

Sonnet IV deals with the personification of Virtue.
The poet addresses Virtue in a remonstrant tone. He says
that Virtue's place is in churches and schools and not
in himself, because his mouth is too tender for Virtue's
hard bit. If Virtue chooses to continue to hold him back
from his love, then let her put herself in the poet's
place. She will find out that she herself will fall in
love with his Stella.

More subtle is the personification of Virtue in the

12. Sonnet XCVII.
twentieth sonnet. The wisest scholar claims

That Virtue, if it once met with our eyes,  
Strange flames of love it in our souls would raise.

The poet agrees with the scholar, but with a reserved interpretation of Virtue:

Virtue, of late, with virtuous care to stir,  
Love of herself, takes Stella's shape; that she  
To mortal eyes might sweetly shine in her.

The poet goes on to prove that Virtue is really identified with Stella,

For since I her did see,  
Virtue's great beauty in that face I prove,  
And find the effect: for I do burn in love.

Sidney's apostrophe to Sleep is an example of a delightful personification:

Come Sleep! O Sleep! the certain knot of peace!  
The baiting place of wit! the balm of woe!  
The poor man's wealth! the prisoner's release!  
Th'indifferent judge between the high and low!  
With shield of proof, shield me from out the press  
Of those fierce darts, Despair at me doth throw!  
O make in me those civil wars to cease!  
I will good tribute pay if thou do so.13

After lavishing such praise upon Sleep and entreating it to deliver him from his woes, the lover offers to pay in tribute his "smooth pillows," his "sweetest bed," and "a chamber deaf to noise and blind to light." If this will not help, then Sleep will see, livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image in the sleepless lover.

The Personification of Patience is treated by Sidney

in much the same scornful manner that he treated Virtue in the fourth sonnet:

_Fie! School of Patience, fie! your lesson is_
Far far too long to learn it without book.
What! a whole week without one piece of look!
And think I should not your large precepts miss?
When I might read those letters fair of bliss
Which in her face teach virtue: I could brook
Somewhat thy leaden counsels; which I took
As of a friend that meanst not much amiss.
But now that I, alas, do want her sight;
What! dost thou think that I can ever take
In thy cold stuff a phlegmatic delight?
No, Patience! If thou wilt my good; then make
Her come, and hear with patience my desire:
And then, with patience bid me bear my fire!14

The lover scorns Patience for asking him to wait a week in order to secure a glimpse of his beloved. He asks Patience to bring his beloved one to him and to patiently hear his desire, then first will he patiently bear his fire!

The woe-stricken poet has little use for Grief. He challenges Grief to "find the words" to express his woe into which Grief catapulted him, a woe "so dark with misty vapours" that even infatuated eyes can scarcely discern the shape of his pain. He plans to get even with Grief:

Of if thy love of plaint yet mine forbears—
As of a caitiff worthy so to die—
Yet wail thyself! and wail with causefull tears!
That though in wretchedness thy life doth lie;
Yet grow'st more wretched than thy nature bears,
By being placed in such a wretch as I!15

Virtue, Sleep, Patience, Grief -- all are the poet's

14. Sonnet LVI.
enemies. Only Sighs are his true friends:

Yet Sighs! dear Sighs! indeed true friends you are,  
That do not leave you left friend at the worst:  
But as you with my breast I oft have nursed;  
So grateful now, you wait upon my care.  

Only true Sighs! you do not go away!  
Thank may you have for such a thankful part;  
Thankworhliest yet, when you shall break my heart!16

Besides the personification-type conceits, based on abstract subjects, Sidney uses other personifications based on concrete subjects. From amongst the numerous subjects, such as "the house" and "the sweet swelling lip," the "Highway" is most successful. The poet calls the Highway his chief Parnassus; he blesses it, because it leads him and his Muse to Stella. He wishes that the Highway will remain fair, honored by public heed, wronged by no encroach-
ment, nor shamed by sinful deed. And, as a very special mark of gratitude, the poet ends his sonnet with this wish:

And that you know I envy you no lot  
Of highest wish, I wish you so much bliss:  
Hundreds of years you Stella's feet may kiss!17

The fourth and last type of imaginative conceit used by Sidney is the myth-type conceit. The myth is devised either as an explanation of Stella's beauty, or as an ex-
planation of the operations of Love personified as Cupid, or as an explanation of some other function of Love.

17. Sonnet LXXXIV, 12-14.
One of the first sonnets concerned with the explanation of Stella's beauty by means of the myth is Sonnet VII.\(^\text{18}\)

The question to be answered is:

When Nature made her chief work -- Stella's eyes;  
In colour black, why wrapt she beams so bright?

After offering several possible reasons why Nature endowed Stella with brilliant, black eyes, the poet offers the mythical explanation that

She minding Love should be  
Placed ever there, gave him this mourning weed;  
To honour all their deaths, which for her bleed.

Sonnet XXII is another explanation of Stella's beauty. Stella and several fair ladies are out horseback riding, exposed to the scorching rays of the sun. The fair ladies protect their tender skins from the effect of the sun by their well-shading fans. Stella alone, rides with face unprotected. Still, the fair ladies are parched, and Stella is not affected.

The cause was this:  
The sun which others burnt, did her but kiss.

In Sonnet XVII Sidney explains the origin of Cupid's bows and arrows which is closely tied up with Stella's beauty. Cupid offends his mother Mars, and she, in chafe, breaks his bow and shafts. Nature, seeing Cupid saddened by this mishap, comes to his aid. She

Of Stella's brows, made him two better bows;
And in her eyes, of arrows infinite.

Cupid leaps for joy and begins wildly to shoot arrows (from Stella's eyes) in all directions. One of the arrows finds its mark in the poet who happened to be in Cupid's way.

Stella's paleness is also explained by a myth. In Sonnet CII the poet inquires

Where be those roses gone, which sweetened so our eyes? Where those red cheeks, which oft with fair increase did frame

The height of honour, in the kindly badge of shame?

The physicians, Galen's adoptive sons, following a beaten path, say that Stella's paleness is due to sickness. But they are mistaken. The real reason:

It is but Love that makes his paper perfect white,
To write therein more fresh the story of delight:
While beauty's reddest ink, Venus for him doth stir.

One of the more delightful stories of the operations of Love personified as Cupid is to be found in Sonnet VIII. Love, born in Greece, flees from his native place, because his fine pointed dart cannot pierce the Turkish hardened heart. Gradually he finds his way to England, but not being used to the cold climate, he looks for a warm spot where he might with ease employ his art. He is attracted by Stella's warm face; however, he soon finds out that Stella's warm face is as deceiving as the morning sun shining upon snow. Eventually Love finds his way into the poet's heart, where, while laying some firebrands, he burns his wings, and must
remain entrenched in the poet's heart.19

The story of Phoebus acting as judge between three gods is another delightful myth. The sonnet speaks for itself:

Phoebus was judge between Jove, Mars and Love;
Of these three gods, whose arms the fairest were.
Jove's golden shield did eagle sabers bear,
Whose talons held young Ganymede above.
But in vert field, Mars bare a golden spear,
Which through a bleeding heart his point did shove.
Each had his crest. Mars carried Venus' glove;
Jove on his helm, the thunderbolt did rear.
Cupid then smiles. For on his crest there lies Stella's fair hair. Her face, he makes his shield;
Where roses gules are borne in silver field.
Phoebus drew wide the curtains of the skies
To blaze these last; and swore devoutly then,
The first, thus matched, were scantly gentlemen.20

Sonnet XLIII is a description of the operations of Cupid when he has taken possession of a lady. The poet laments that he cannot even approach Stella's eyes, or lips, or heart, because they are Cupid's possessions.
Should a rival lover even so much as approach any of these objects, Cupid sends out darts through Stella's eyes that completely subdue the rival. Cupid's favorite play-ground is Stella's lips:

When he will play; then in her lips, he is;
Where blushing red, that Love's self them doth love;
With either lip, he doth the other kiss.
Whenever Cupid wishes to rest, then he will remove

From all the world; her heart is then his room:
Where, well he knows, no man to him can come.

20. Sonnet XIII.
One final example will round out the diverse roles played by Cupid. Love (Cupid) takes on the role of a contestant fighting for the possession of Stella. Sonnet LII portrays him in a strife with Virtue. He lays claim to Stella's eyes, lips, and body on the ground that they wear his badge. Virtue, on the other hand, makes a bid for Stella's virtuous soul, "the sure heir of heavenly bliss." The contest is finally resolved by permitting Virtue to take Stella's inner self and Love to take Stella's body.

3. Logical Conceits

The two most prevalent types of logical conceits used by Sidney are the paradox-type and the logical-metaphysical-type.

The subject matter of the paradox-type conceits includes such themes as: pain is pleasure, pleasure pain; winter seems like summer and vice versa; night seems like day and vice versa; the new story is always the old one; love is the servant of virtue then again of passionate desire.

In Sonnet II Sidney shows how "not at the first sight" but gradually he grew to love Stella. First he saw Stella and liked her but did not love her. At length, he grew to love her but "did not what Love decreed." Finally, he was forced to agree to Love's decrees. He ends the sonnet by employing
the remnant of my wit
To make me self believe that all is well;
While with a feeling skill, I paint my hell.

The structure of the entire sonnet is built up on reserved statements which form the basis for the seeming contradiction.

Sonnet LIV is based on another reserved statement. The "courtly nymphs" say that Astrophel cannot love, because he has never expressed his love. He tells the "Fair maids" that the right badge of Cupid is worn in the heart:

Dumb swans not chattering pies, do lovers prove.
They love indeed who quake to say they love.

The theme that pain is pleasure is brought out in two companion sonnets. In the first of these Sidney portrays his woeful condition. He is overcome with grief to such an extent that he expects Stella to pity him. He begins to reveal his woe to Stella, when

A pretty case! I hoped her to bring
To feel my griefs; and she with face and voice,
So sweet's my pangs; that my pangs me rejoice.21

The succeeding sonnet is almost a re-statement of the same idea:

In piercing phrases, late,
The anatomy of all my woes I wrote.
Stella's sweet breath the same to me did read.
O voice! O face! maugre my speeches' might
Which woed woe: most ravishing delight,
Even those sad words, even in sad me, did breed.22

The presence-absence paradox is quite successfully handled by Sidney in Sonnet LX:

When my good angel guides me to the place
Where all my good I do in Stella see;
That heaven of joys throws only down on me
Thundered disdains and lightnings of disgrace.
But when the rugged'st step of Fortune's race
Makes me fall from her sight; then sweetly she
With words—wherein the Muses' treasures be—
Shows love and pity to my absent case.
Now I—wit-beaten long by hardest Fate—
So dull am, that I cannot look into
The ground of this fierce love and lovely hate.
Then some good body tell me how I do!
Whose presence, absence; absence, presence is:
Blessed in my curse, and cursed in my bliss.

Next, let us examine the interesting way that Sidney
arrives at the conclusion that Stella should not love him
in order that she love him more. Astrophel begins his
sixty-second sonnet by calling Stella unkind for not re-
ciprocating his love. His sadness changes to joy when he
hears Stella sweetly say that he "true love in her should
find." Immediately after, however, "his wine becomes
watered:"

That love she did, but loved a love not blind;
Which would not let me, whom she loved, decline
From nobler course, fit for my birth and mind:
And therefore by her love's authority,
Willed me, these tempests of vain love to fly;
And anchor fast myself on Virtue's shore.

Stella will love him only insofar as Virtue will permit her
to love him. Being married to another man, Stella, within
virtuous bounds, can offer him very little love; still she
consents to love him with this little love rather than with
the love prompted by Desire. If such be the case. Astrophel
reconciles himself with the situation and asks for as much
of the little love that she can grant him:
Alas, if this the only metal be
Of love new coined to help my beggary:
Dear! love me not, that ye may love me more!

Sidney's sonnet constructed on the pattern of the alternate "night-day" rhyme, a frequently used device with French and Italian poets, is an example of his attempt to identify night with day, and winter with summer. The sonnet is sufficiently clear in itself and requires no interpretation:

Now that of absence the most irksome night,
With darkest shade, doth overcome my day:
Since Stella's eyes wont to give me my day;
Leaving my hemisphere, leave me in night.
Each day seems long, and longs for long-stayed night;
The night as tedious, woos th'approach of day.
Tired with the dusty toils of busy day;
Languisht with horrors of the silent night;
Suffering the evils both of the day and night;
While no night is more dark than is my day,
Nor no day hath less quiet than my night.
With such bad mixture of my night and day;
That living thus in blackest winter night,
I feel the flames of hottest summer's day.\(^{23}\)

The least frequently occurring conceit in Sidney's _Astrophel and Stella_ is the strictly logical or so-called metaphysical conceit. A few isolated examples are to be found scattered amongst the sonnets. Possibly the best examples of the metaphysical conceit are to be found in the first sonnet: "Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt brain;" "Invention Nature's child, fled step-
dame's Study's blows;" "Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes."

\(^{23}\) Sonnet LXXXIX.
Besides these isolated examples of the condensed metaphysical conceit, there are to be found in Sidney's poetry several examples of the extended metaphysical conceit. None of these, however, can stand comparison with products of such a metaphysical conceitist like John Donne.

There are a number of sonnets dealing with near-metaphysical conceits based on a central theme. This theme can be loosely stated as follows: the want of art in Sidney's verse is compensated by the all-sufficiency of his subject matter (Stella).

Sidney touches upon this theme as early as the third sonnet. He lets dainty wits shine in stately glory by "enmobling new-found tropes with problems old," or by enriching each line with strange similes "of herbs or beasts which Inde or Afric hold." As for Sidney, he knows only one Muse, Stella; in Stella's face he reads what love and beauty is. His task is simply to copy what Nature writes in her.

The poet continues the theme in Sonnet VI when he speaks of some lovers who write of "living deaths, dear wounds, fair storms, and freezing fires." Others present strange tales "bordered with bulls and swans, powdered with golden rain." Astrophel writes only what and how he feels about Stella, and he does it just as effectively.

Sonnet XV is an admonition to poets:

That do dictionary's method bring
Into your rhymes running in rattling rows;
You that poor Petrarch's long deceased woes,
With newborn sighs and denizened wit do sing.
You take wrong ways!

His advice to poets who wish to secure fame is that they should "Stella behold, and then begin to endite." In vain will anyone seek eloquence or philosophy in his sonnets. He writes in pure simplicity, breathing out the flames of love toward Stella that burn within his heart, because Stella's love teaches him this art, 24

Sonnet LV is another re-statement of the same thought.

The poet has often invoked the Muses for inspiration but to no avail. So he concludes:

Let me but name her whom I do love,  
So sweet sounds straight mine ear and heart do hit,  
That I well find no eloquence like it.

Sonnet XC rounds out and concludes the theme of the group of sonnets dealing with the all-sufficiency of his subject matter:

Stella! Think not that I by verse seek fame;  
Who seek, who hope, who love, who live but thee.  
Thine eyes my pride; thy lips mine history;  
If thou praise not, all other praise is shame.  
Not so ambitious am I as to frame  
A nest for my young praise in laurel tree;  
In truth I swear, I wish not there should be  
Graved in my epitaph, a Poet's name.  
Ne if I would, I could just title make  
That any laud to me thereof should grow,  
Without my plumes from others' wings I take.  
For nothing from my wit or will doth flow;  
Since all my words, thy beauty doth indite;  
And love doth hold my hand and makes me write.

There are several other sonnets that are extended

24. Sonnet XXVIII.
metaphysical conceits and that deal with diverse subjects. In Sonnet XLV Astrophel asks Stella to weep over his love as she does over the woes of the hero of the romance she is reading. In Sonnet LIX the poet complains over Stella’s caresses being wasted on a mere dog. Sonnet LXXXVIII is an extended conceit on the traitor Absence. In Sonnet XCI the poet asks Stella not to be jealous of him when he is pleased with other beauties, because they are merely models of her and he loves them only for the reason that they reflect Stella’s beauty.

4. Conventional Conceits

In my discussion of the Sidneyan conceit I have endeavored to point out examples of conceits that were entirely original with Sidney or that were so completely worked over by the poet that they can be considered at least partially original. I have purposely omitted, insofar as practicable, the conventional conceits dealing primarily with the art of courtly love.

These conventional conceits may be traced back to Greek and Latin classics. They were later taken up and

popularized by Petrarch and his Italian imitators. Subsequently, they found their way into France and then to England, where, during the 1590's, they constituted one of the chief mediums of expression of the courtly sonneteers.

These conventional conceits contain little or no merit in themselves. Their frequent repetitions in Sidney as well as in the other Elizabethan sonneteers create nothing but dullness and monotony.

For the sake of completeness, however, it is only necessary to list the most frequently occurring conventional conceits in Sidney's Astrophel and Stella. For convenience, I use the following arbitrary divisions: 1) conceits dealing with Cupid as God of Love, 2) conceits dealing with the effects of love, and 3) conceits dealing with the beauty of the sonnet lady.

Cupid is represented as dwelling in the eyes, face, or breast of the lady as well as in the heart of the poet. He carries on a cruel warfare against the poet by shooting arrows from the lady's eyes or by besieging his heart. He tricks the poet with snares and tortures him with the fires

of love. His nature is that of a merry, irresponsible child. Cupid figures in the following sonnets:

Cupid as a beggar: LXV

Cupid as a fugitive: VIII

Cupid as an irresponsible child or boy: XI, XVII, XXXV, XXXVII, XLVI, LXXIII, CI

Cupid as a winged god: VIII

Cupid (Love) as fire: XVI, XXV, XXVIII, XXXV, LIX, LXVIII, LXXII, LXXX, LXXXI, LXXXIX

Cupid's abode: VII, XII, XLIII, LXII, LXXXIII

Cupid's warfare against the poet: II, XX

Cupid besieging the heart: XII, XXXVI

Cupid conquered by the lady: XLII

Cupid enslaving the poet: II, XXIX, LIII.

The second division of conceits deals with a group of themes that enables the poet to set forth the effect of his love upon his mental and physical being. The lover is dumb in the presence of the lady and out of his wits when absent from her; he is pale and sleepless, sighing, weeping, and longing for death. The conceits dealing with the state of the poet's heart are often technically interesting. They deal with the debate between the heart and eyes29 to determine which was guilty of causing the poet's unhappiness, the engraving of the image of the lady upon the heart, and the heart as a sanctuary where that image is worshipped. These themes are dealt with in the following sonnets:

Absence: LVI, LXXXVII, LXXXVIII, LXXXIX, XCI, XCI, XCV, XCVII, CIV, CVI, CVII, CVIII

Despair, sighs, tears, and death: XLIV, XLV, LVII, LVIII, LXI, LXII, LXVI, LXX, LXXXVI, LXXXVII, XCI, XCV, XCVI, XCVII, XCVIII

Debate of the heart with the eyes: LXXXIII

Image of lady engraved upon the heart: IV, XXXII, XXXIX

Heart as a shrine for image of the lady: XL

Reflection of the poet's woes: XXXIV, L, LV, LVII, LXX, XC

Sleep: XXXII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, LXXXIX, XCVI, XCVIII, XCVII

The third division of conventional conceits describes the beauty of the sonnet lady. The ideal type of blonde beauty dominates for centuries the literature of Italy, France, and England. Sidney's Stella differs from the rest of the sonnet ladies only in having black eyes; Shakespeare's lady also differs from the rest of the sonnet ladies in being "dark." Stella's beauty is described in the following sonnets:

Stella's beauty in general: XLII, LXXVII, XCVII

Stella as a court of virtue: XXIX, XXXII, XLIII, LII, LXXVII

Stella's loss of beauty in illness: CI, CII

Stella's hair: IX, XII, XIII, XVIII, XXXII, XCI

Stella's black eyes: VII

Stella's eyes giving light: XLII, LXVIII, LXXI

Stella's eyes giving light: LXXXI, IX, X

Stella compared to coat-of-arms: XIII
Stella compared to a laurel tree: XC
Stella compared to a star: XXVI, LXXVI, LX
Stella compared to the sun: LXXVI, LXXVII
Stella compared to Aurora: LXXVI.
CHAPTER III
ATTEMPTS AT HUMOR

Miss Mona Wilson, commenting upon the qualities of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, says:

The whole nature of the lover, by turns tender, sensual, chivalrous, contemplative, passionate, and playful, is laid bare.¹

In the discussion of the development of the sonnet sequence we have noted examples of all these qualities except the last one.

There is no doubt that the sonnets relate the story of a real tragedy,

a profoundly moving tale... adorned and heightened as it is by every consideration of love and passion, of virtue, and frailty, and heart-breaking sympathy, of honour, and man's divine destiny.²

However, the somberness of the tone is lightened here and there with a quality which is possibly best expressed by the phrase "attempts at humor."

Kenneth O. Myrick traces this quality directly to

Sidney's sprezzatura,

the courtly grace which conceals a sober purpose and is indeed, the mark of consummate artistry. The servant of a prince could not afford to be thought chiefly a poet; but in daily conduct he needed the artist's fine tact, and Sidney in particular shows an eagerness and poise which made him by nature a poet, together with an earnestness which would have made it difficult for him to regard his compositions merely as an agreeable pastime.  

Humor as such, I think, would be altogether out of place in Sidney's serious sonnet sequence. On the other hand, the poet's sprezzatura, his courtly temper, almost necessitates the use of occasional courtly compliment, clever twists of reasoning, teasing playfulness, and light touches of irony.

1. Courtly Compliment

Which of the numerous courtly compliments used by Sidney can be considered as humorous is a highly debatable question. As an example of such a humorous compliment I would consider the sonnet in which Stella's eyes aid the poet in a tournament:

Having this day, my horse, my hand, my lance
Guided so well; that I obtained the prize:
Both by the judgment of the English eyes;
And of some sent by that sweet enemy, France!
Horsemen, my skill in horsemanship advance;
Townsfolk, my strength; a daintier judge applies
His praise to sleight, which from good use doth rise;
Some lucky wits impute it but to chance;
Others, because, of both sides, I do take

My blood from them who did excel in this;
Think Nature me a man-at-arms did make.
How far they shot away! The true cause is,
Stella lookt on, and from her heavenly face
Sent forth the beams which made so fair my race. 4

Is the final couplet of this sonnet to be taken literally?
The conceit is so far-fetched that by its very incongruity
it forces an unconscious smile upon the careful reader.

There is sufficient reason to consider Sonnet XLVIII
as an expression of reverend devotion toward Stella:

Soul's joy! bend not those morning stars from me!
Where Virtue is made strong by Beauty's might,
Where Love is Chasteness, Pain doth learn Delight,
And Humbleness grows one with Majesty:
Whatever may ensue, O let me be
Co-partner of the riches of that sight!
Let not mine eyes be hell-driven from that light!
O look! O shine! O let me die and see!
For though I oft myself of them bemoan,
That through my heart their beamy darts be gone;
Whose cureless wounds, even now, most freshly bleed:

Thus far, the sonnet is serious enough. But now, consider
the final three verses in relation to this seriousness:

Yet since my death wound is already got;
Dear Killer! spare not thy sweet cruel shot!
A kind of grace it is, to slay with speed.

How, in all seriousness, can we reconcile "Soul's joy"
with "Dear Killer?" I believe that neither Sidney nor
Lady Rich interpreted this sonnet literally. The poet's
request for a coup de grace in order to liberate himself
from his sufferings is an extreme example of the kind of
courtly compliment a lover can pay to his beloved.

4. Sonnet XLI.
2. Clever Reasoning

The most obvious instance of humor created by clever reasoning is the sonnet in which Sidney attempts to conquer Stella by sheer force of grammar.

First of all, he invokes the rules of grammar, which "children read with awful eyes," to show their virtues. Having established the authority of grammar, the poet proceeds to lay down the minor premise. Having lately asked Stella for the thing he was continually craving and which she was continually denying, the poet received a double negative for an answer:

Lest once should not be heard; said twice "No! 'No!"

Immediately the poet breaks out in a triumphant song:

Sing then my Muse! now to Paean sing!
Heavens! envy not at my high triumphing;
But Grammar's force with sweet success confirm!

The conclusion is inevitable:

For Grammar says (O this dear Stella's "Nay!")
For Grammar says (to Grammar, who says "Nay")
"That in one speech, two negatives affirm."

A clever twist of reasoning is also displayed in the sonnet in which Sidney plays prettily upon the doctrine of reason in love.

Reason! in faith, thou art well served! that still
Wouldst brabbling be with Sense and Love in me.
I rather wisht thee climb the Muses' hill,
Or reach the fruit of Nature's choicest tree,
Or seek heaven's course, or heaven's inside to see.
Why shouldst thou toil, our thorny soil to till?

5. Sonnet LXIII.
Leave Sense! and those which Sense's objects be. 
Deal thou with powers! of thoughts, leave Love to will! 
But thou wouldst needs fight both with Love and Sense 
With sword of wit, giving wounds of dispraise; 
Till downright blows did foil thy cunning fence. 
For soon as they strake thee with Stella's rays; 
Reason! thou kneel'st; and offerest straight to prove 
By reason good, good reason her to love. 6

He tells Reason to climb the Muses' hill, or seek heaven's 
course, or heaven's inside, but not to meddle with Sense 
or Love. To meddle with Sense or Love will prove Reason's 
undoing. For, even if Reason uses the sword of wit, the 
downright blows of Stella's magical rays will bring Reason 
to its knees in proof that it is reasonable to love Stella.

In the following sonnet Sidney turns from Reason to 
Love and insults the latter in much the same manner in which 
he insulted Reason. He compares Love to a child, who, 
finding a good book, plays "with the gilded leaves or 
coloured vellum" or concentrates on some fair picture, 
"but never heed's the fruit of the writer's mind." Trans- 
ferring the plane of the image, the poet insults Love by 
saying that he occupies himself with Stella's outward fea-
tures--

When thou (Love) saw'st in Nature's cabinet, 
Stella: thou straight look'st babies in her eyes; 
In her cheek's pit, thou didst thy pitfold set; 
And in her breast, bo-peep or couching lies: 
Playing and shining in each outward part. 7

--omitting the most important part:

6. Sonnet X. 
"But, fool! seek'st not to get into her heart!" 8

3. Teasing Playfulness

The series of sonnets dealing with the theme of the stolen kiss reflects Sidney's sportiveness. Stella lowers and chides her love, because, as he states

a sugared kiss
In sport I suckt, while she asleep did lie. 9

He excuses himself for this liberty; but no excuse seems to placate her. Despite the fact that the scarlet judges threaten bloody pain the lover would repeat the kiss:

Thy most kiss-worthy face,
Anger invests with such a lovely grace;
That Anger's self! I needs must kiss again! 10

The theme introduced in the foregoing sonnet is continued in several following sonnets in the same sportive mood.

The poet asks himself why he is able to speak so smoothly, why his speech flows in verse, and why his verse "best wits doth please?" His playful answer follows:

Guess we the cause. What is it thus? Fie, no!
Or so? Much less! How then? Sure thus it is.
My lips are sweet, inspired with Stella's kiss. 11

Next follows a sonnet which is nothing else but a series of metaphors for a sweet kiss. The very metaphors are

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10. Ibid., 12-14.
playful: "a double key," "the friendly fray," "breakfast of love." One cannot help but notice the superlativeness of the sweetness of the kiss in the opening verses of the sonnet:

Sweet kiss! thy sweets I fain would sweetly extol: Which even of sweetness, sweetest sweet! her art!12

If the kiss is so sweet, why bother about theory?

But lo! lo! where she is, Cease we to praise. Now pray we for a kiss?13

Continuing in the same spirit, the poet next takes up the subject of the "sweet swelling lip." After praising it ecstatically, he concludes:

But now spite of my heart, my mouth will stay; Loathing all lies, doubting this flattery is; And no spur can his resty race renew; Without how far this praise is short of you, Sweet lip! you teach my mouth with one sweet kiss!14

Even Stella has enough of this sweet praise. She thinks that her kiss has been sufficiently celebrated, so She forbids. With blushing words, she says "She builds her fame on higher-seated praise."15

However, despite Stella’s imposition of silence, the poet continues:

But my heart burns, I cannot silent be, Then since, dear life! you fain would have me cease; And I, mad with delight, want wit to cease: Stop you my mouth with still still kissing me!16

The last of the series of sonnets dealing with the

13. Ibid., 13-14.
15. Sonnet LXXXI, 9-10.
16. Ibid., 11-14.
kissing theme reminds one of Hilton's parody of Swinburne:

Ah! thy red lips, lascivious and luscious,  
With death in their amorous kiss,  
Cling round us, and clasp us, and crush us,  
With bitings of agonised bliss;  
We are sick with the poison of pleasure,  
Dispense us the potion of pain;  
Ope thy mouth to its utmost measure  
And bite us again!17

Sidney, however, does not go this far. He is satisfied with just one bite of Stella's cherries:

For though full of desire, empty of wit,  
Admitted late by your best graced grace;  
I caught at one of them a hungry bite.18

After sportively biting one of Stella's lips, the poet feels qualms of conscience and asks forgiveness:

Pardon that fault! Once more grant me the place;  
And I do swear even by the same delight,  
I will but kiss, I never more will bite.19

Thus ends the sportive kissing episode.

4. Light Irony

The following sonnet leads us to imagine that Sidney was consumed with a hopeless passion:

With how sad steps, O Moon! thou climb'st the skies!  
How silently! and with how wan a face!  
What! may it be that even in heavenly place  
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?  
Sure, if that long with love-acquainted eyes  
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case,  
I read it in thy looks. Thy languish grace  
To me that feel the like, thy state descries.

19. Ibid., 12-14.
Then even of fellowship, O Moon! tell me
Is constant love deemed there, but want of wit?
Are beauties there, as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved; and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there, ungratefulness?20

However, K. O. Myrick says that

We miss the polite ridicule of ladies' foibles, the habit of smiling at lovers' ways, the playful fancy; we miss, in short, the touch of irony so apparent in the Arcadia, the consummate grace of the artist. To me this quality is one of the greatest beauties in Sidney's poetry, and its loss can hardly be compensated for by the romantic legend of enthralling passion.21

I find it difficult to interpret the sonnet in this light, especially when the sonnet "preludes, with splendid melancholy, to a new and deeper phase of passion."22 Nevertheless, I admit, that it is possible to uncover a note of irony in the sonnet.

The "polite ridicule of ladies' foibles" is more apparent in the sonnet in which Astrophel begs Stella to pity him. Stella

oft sees the very face of woe
Painted in my beclouded stormy face
But cannot skill to pity my disgrace.23

But when Stella reads a piteous fable "of lovers never known" then she is overcome with pity and tears stream from her eyes. The poet feels that Stella makes herself ridiculous by permitting herself to be moved to pity by

20. Sonnet XXXI.
22. J. A. Symonds, Sir Philip Sidney, p. 121.
a fable when she has a better reason to be so moved:

Alas, if Fancy drawn by imaged things,
Though false, yet with free scope more grace doth breed
Than servant's wreck, where new doubts honour brings;
Then think, my Dear! that you in me do read
Of lovers' ruin, some sad tragedy.
I am not I, pity the tale of me!24

Written in the same vein of ironic ridicule is the sonnet comparing Stella's diverse attitudes toward the poet and Stella's dog.

Dear! why make you more of a dog, than me?
If he do love; I burn, I burn in love!
If he wait well; I never thence would move!
If he be fair; yet but a dog can be.
Little he is, so little worth is he.
He barks; my songs, thine own voice oft doth prove,
Bidden perhaps, he fetcheth thee a glove;
But I unbid, fetch even my soul to thee!25

Should this dog, this "sour-breathed mate," that pales into insignificance when compared to the poet, be permitted to taste Stella's sugared lips? Preposterous! So then

If you grant only such delight
To witless things; then Love I hope (since wit
Becomes a clog) will soon ease me of it.26

Sidney makes use of polite irony in yet another way, namely in punning on the name Rich. In the first of these two sonnets, Sidney ridicules Stella's husband by calling him a "rich fool," whose wealth breeds want, and who becomes more wretched as he is more blest with Stella's riches.27

In the second of these sonnets Sidney describes Stella

26. Ibid., 12-14.
27. Sonnet XXIV.
as Rich in all beauties which man's eye can see. And yet, though she possesses all these riches, she has one great misfortune -- she is Rich.

To conclude Sidney's use of irony it is necessary to mention one final sonnet. Although Lord Rich's name is not mentioned, the sonnet is clearly aimed at him. Sidney departs from his usual light irony and employs biting satire. After calling Lord Rich "hellish Jealousy" he proceeds to give an almost repulsive description of him:

Who since he hath--by Nature 's special grace--
So piercing paws, as spoil when they embrace;
So nimble feet, as stir still though on thorns;
So many eyes, aye seeking their own woe;
So ample ears, that never good news know;
Is it not evil that such a devil wants horns? 29

29. Sonnet LXXVIII, 9-14.
In versification, Sidney alone of all the English sixteenth century sonneteers followed, rather slavishly, his foreign models.

The Italian sonneteers of the sixteenth century observed the common Petrarchan scheme of abba-abba-cde-cde. The French sonneteers observed the Italian formula insofar as the octave was concerned. They modified the sestet to ccd-cde. But neither the French nor the Italian sonneteers used more than five rimes.

The standard practice of the English sonneteers was to have the first twelve lines riming by cross metre in staves of four lines and the last two lines riming together. Of the Elizabethan poets, Sidney alone disregarded this anglicized sonnet form. In nearly all of the one hundred and eight sonnets of his Astrophel and Stella Sidney observes the principle of the double quatrain. In the majority of these he adopts the orthodox Petrarchan scheme abba-abba. Regarding the sestet, Sidney allows himself some liberty. As a general rule, he employs the final couplet,
making use of it in some eighty sonnets. However, whenever he does employ the couplet, he diversifies the rimes of the preceding four lines in such a manner as to preserve the general semblance of the double tercet.

1. Versification

Sidney's favorite rime scheme in the **Astrophel and Stella** sonnets is abba-abba-cdcd-ee. This scheme is to be found in the following sixty sonnets: II, VIII, IX, XI, XII, XIV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXI, XXII, XXVII, XXVIII, XXX, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIV, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XLI, XLIV, XLV, XLVI, XLVII, XLIX, LI, LII, LIII, LIV, LV, LVI, LVII, LIX, LX, LXIV, LXVII, LXVIII, LXIX, LXXI, LXXII, LXXVI, LXXIX, LXXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXIV, LXXXV, LXXXVI, XC, XCI, XCIII, XCV, XCVI, XCVII, XCVIII, GIV, GV, GVII, and GVIII.

In order to secure the above classification it must be noted that final "y" and "ie" rime with words like "be,
"mee," and "thee."¹ For example,

Is sauciness reward of curtesie?
Cannot such grace your silly selfe content,
But you must needes with those lips billing be?²

Other examples of such rimes occur in Sonnets LXIX, LXXXIV, LXXXVI, XC, XCVI, and CVII.

¹ In order to explain Sidney's rimes it is necessary to adhere to Sidney's original spelling. For this reason, all references to Sidney's rimes are based on A. Feuillerat's (1591) edition of the sonnets, in The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney, Vol. 3 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1922).
² Sonnet LXXXIII, 10-12.
Also to be noted is the fact that Sidney sometimes employs the final "y" and "ie" to rime with such words as "die" and "lie". This is the case in Sonnets XXXII and XCIX. Witness the following:

Witness of life to them that living die:
A prophet oft of hidden mysterie.

A peculiar problem arises in Sonnet LXXI. In the octave, for the second rime, Sidney uses the words "bee-thee, sovereigntie-flie." The discrepancy is caused by the word "flie". If "flie is to be pronounced with the "ai" sound of "high" we obtain the peculiar rime scheme of abba-acca, a form nowhere else found in Sidney. An interesting solution is proffered by R.G. Whigam and O.F. Emerson. They argue that Sidney most probably wrote "fliie" for the fourth rime, but the scribe or printer, misled by the subject "night birese" before it, rendered it as "flie."

Sidney's second most popular rime scheme is abab-abab-ccod-ee. This form differs from the preceding one only in the alternation of the rimes. The asestet is the same as in the first division. Eighteen sonnets belong to this group: I, VII, XX, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXXII, XXXVI, XXXIX, XLII, L, LXV, LXVI, LXX, LXXIV, LXXVII, CI, and CII. Here also, as in the preceding group, the rimes "be," "y," and "ie" occur in Sonnets VII and XLII.

Some manipulation is required with Sonnet XXVI to

make it fit under this division. Whigam and Emerson maintain that the words "astrologie-ernitre, skie-nie" indicate the secondarily stressed "ie" rimes as intended to have the diphthongic "ai" of "high."\(^5\)

In Sonnet LXXVII the rime "is-misse" is assumed to be perfect.

Sidney's third rime scheme, abba-abba-cdd-eed, is to be found in the following nine sonnets: XLVIII, LVII, LXIII, LXXXVIII, LXXX, XCVIII, C, CII, and CVI. This requires the old spelling of "wrate" for "wrote" in the following sestet:

Now judge by this, in pearcing phrases late
The Anatomie of all my woes I wrote,
Stellas sweete breath the same to me did reede.
Oh voyce, oh face, mauger my speeches might,
Which woed words, most ravishing delight,
Even those sad words a joy to me did breede.\(^6\)

Next follow four minor groups of infrequent occurrence. The first of these groups has the rime scheme of abab-abab-cdd-eed. This occurs in Sonnets III, LXI, LXXXIII, and LXXXVIII. The second minor group has abab-baba-cdd-ee, which is found in Sonnets V, X, XLIII, and LXXV. In Sonnet V "serve" and "swerve" are to be pronounced as "carve" and "swarve." This is a common practice with Spenser.\(^7\)

The third minor group comprises two sonnets, LXXXI and LXXXVII, having the rime scheme abab-baba-cdd-eed. The

\(^{6}\) Sonnet LVIII, 9-14.
\(^{7}\) Cf. "Swarve" as used by Spenser, \textit{Faerie Queene}, I, x, 14; II, viii, 30, 36, and xii, 76; III, i, 11.
fourth minor group also comprises two sonnets, IV and LXII, having the rime scheme abab-abab-codd-cdd. The sestet of Sonnet LXII needs an emendation. The words are: "authority-flee-be-beggary." "Flee" would suit the sense even better than a similar emendation in Sonnet LXXI. The sentence, as it stands, is:

Wilde me these Tempests of vaine love to flie. 8

Here again, Sidney probably wrote "flee" and the scribe or printer, misled by the rime of "authority," altered it to "flie." 9

The nine remaining sonnets have individual rime schemes. Six of these have Sidney's favorite abba-abba rime scheme for the octave, but vary in the sestet structure. The remaining three have variations both in the octave and the sestet. The individual forms of the nine sonnets are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sonnet</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LI</td>
<td>abba - abba - codd - eed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>XXII: abba - abba - cddc - ce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>XXIX: abba - abba - cddc - ce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>XL: abba - abba - cdd - cdd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>LXXIX: abba - abba - abba - ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>XCVI: abba - abba - cdc - cd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>XCVII: abab - baba - cddc - egd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>XXXV: abab - abab - cddc - ee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Sonnet LXII, 10.
The curious structure of Sonnet LXXXIX is due to the use of only two rimes, "night" and "day," a common practice among Petrarchan sonneteers.

In summary, Sidney uses the Italian octave abba-abba in seventy five sonnets. The octave with alternate ab rimes are found in another twenty five sonnets. The third octave scheme, abab-baba-, is used in seven sonnets, while the octave abba-baab is employed in only one sonnet.

The most frequent sestet arrangement is the quatrains and the couplet, cdcd-ee, occurring in eighty two sonnets. This is the arrangement used by Surrey. The sestet next in frequency is cdcd-ee found in seventeen sonnets. Three sestets have the arrangement cdcd-cd, while three others have the arrangement of cdcd-ee, the usual Wyatt sestet. The remaining three sestets are individual variants.

The strict rigidity of the sonnet form leaves no room for experimentation with rhythm schemes. However, according to Erskine,10 numerous attempts were made in the Elizabethan period to adapt alexandrines verses to the sonnet form. Sidney himself wrote six hexameter sonnets in his Astrophel and Stella. These are Sonnets I, VI, VIII, LXXVI, LXXVII, and CIII. A curious anomaly occurs in the first sonnet. While the first thirteen verses are hexameters, the fourteenth verse is a pentamer:

"Fool!" said my Muse, "look in thy heart, and write!"11

11. This is Sidney Lee's version.
The reason alexandrine verses were not successfully adapted to the sonnet form seems to be that they tend to break too easily into equal parts, thus adding more limitations to the already limited effects obtainable in the sonnet form.

2. Style

In the early part of his sonnet sequence Sidney describes three chief faults of his poetic contemporaries. He censures them for seeking meaningless and pseudo-classical decoration:

You that do search for every purling spring
Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows;
And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows
Near thereabouts, into your poesy wring. 12

He is against a too profuse use of alliteration:

You that do dictionary's method bring
Into your rhymes running in rattling rows 13

and against a slavish imitation of Petrarch

You that poor Petrarch's long deceased woes,
With newborn sighs and denizened wit do sing. 14

Sidney himself makes use of all these devices. His use of classical and pseudo-classical allusions is moderate. Most frequent reference is made to Cupid, the God of Love, 15

Occasional and well-placed references to Hercules, Atlas, Mars, Venus, Jove, Aganippe, Aurora, Diana, Phoebus, and

13. Ibid., 5-6.
15. For detailed references cf. Chapter II.
Aeol not only lend a decorative quality to the sonnets but serve to intensify the meaning as well.

Sidney's imitation of Petrarch in describing the sonnet lady and the varied effects of love has already been adequately described.16

It would be difficult indeed to accuse Sidney of "rhymes running in rattling rows." He carefully avoids a monotonous repetition of sets of rhymes. Regarding alliteration he is even more careful. He employs alliteration to affect elegance. The fineness of Sidney's alliteration is most clearly apparent in sonnets of heightened passion. Usually a second and third reading of a sonnet is required to note the fine alliteration that contributes to the effectiveness of the sonnet. A few scattered examples will sufficiently illustrate Sidney's masterful use of this device.

With how sad steps, O Moon! thou climb'st the skies! How silently! and with how wan a face! What! may it be that even in heavenly place That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?17

Come Sleep! O Sleep! the certain knot of peace! The baiting place of wit! the balm of woe! The poor man's wealth! the prisoner's release! The Indifferent judge between the high and low! With shield of proof, shield me from out the press.18

Highway! since you my chief Parnassus be; And that my Muse to some ears not unsweet, Tempers her words to trampling horses' feet More oft than to a chamber melody. Now blessed you! hear onward blessed me

16. For detailed references Cf. Chapter II.
18. Sonnet XXXIX, 1-5.
To her, where I my heart safest shall meet.

To vary his style Sidney makes abundant use of such rhetorical devices as questions, exclamations, and apostrophes.

Rhetorical questions, such as the following, scattered throughout the sonnets but especially at such strategic points as the beginning and end of sonnets, add a touch of liveliness to the strict formality of the lyrics:

Alas! have I not pain enough? my friend?20

Dear! why make you more of a dog, than me?21

Hope! art thou true, or dost thou flatter me?22

Is it not evil that such a devil wants horns?23

It is impossible to read Sidney's sonnets and not be affected by the animated conversational tone, which, in many instances, is effected by the judicious use of exclamations. Some of the exclamations are so striking that they readily serve to identify Sidney.

"Fool!" said my Muse, "look in thy heart, and write!"24

Reason! in faith, thou art well served!

Leave Sense! and those which Sense's objects be. Deal thou with powers! of thoughts—leave Love to will!25

Soul's joy! bend not those morning stars from me!

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20. Sonnet XIV, 1.
22. Sonnet LXVII, 1.
Where Virtue is made strong by Beauty's might! 26
Gone is the winter of my misery!
My spring appears! O see what here doth grow! 27
All mirth, farewell! Let me in sorrow live! 28

It is equally impossible not to note the effectiveness
of the Sidneian apostrophes. Such apostrophes as —

With how sad steps, O Moon! thou climb'st the skies!
How silently! and with how wan a face! 29

Morpheus! the lively son of deadly Sleep,
Witness of life to them that living die! 30

Come Sleep! O Sleep! the certain knot of peace!
The baiting place of wit! the balm of woe!
The poor man's wealth! the prisoner's release!
Th'indifferent judge between the high and low! 31

—cannot but arrest the attention even of the most casual
reader. The apostrophes to the kiss, to Fate, grief, night,
and the bed are equally striking. 32

Sidney's style is further characterized by the subtle
use of antithesis. Fully aware that ideas are very often
clarified by contrasting ideas, Sidney liberally employs
antithetical ideas and expressions. To describe the gradual
process of growing in love rather than falling in love,
Sidney uses

I saw and liked, I liked but loved not;
I loved, but straight did not what Love decreed:

27. Sonnet LXIX, 7-8.
32. Cf. Sonnets LXXXII, XCIII, XCIV, XCV, XCVIII.
At length to Love's decrees, I forced, agreed.33

In order to show to what great extent he was affected by his love for Stella, Sidney uses the descriptive phrase:

Because I oft in dark abstracted guise,
Seem most alone in greatest company.34

Unable to explain why his love should cause him such woes and unable to receive a satisfactory answer from his friends, the poet turns to the moon with the query whether or not even in the heavenly place beauties are

as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved; and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there, ungratefulness?35

In the dialogue between Love and the poet's heart, Sidney finds himself at a loss to express his love. Love consoles him with the query:

"What idler thing, than speak and not be heard?"

Whereupon, the poet's heart answers in the same vein:

What harder thing, than smart and not to speak?36

Finally, Sidney uses a series of antithetical metaphors to describe the sweetness of Stella's kiss:

Best charge and bravest retreat in Cupid's fight!
Most rich, when most his riches it impart!
The friendly fray! where blows both wound and heal.
The pretty death! while each in other live.37

Adding variety to Sidney's style is another device,

33. Sonnet II, 5-7.
34. Sonnet XXVII, 1-2.
35. Sonnet XXXI, 11-14.
36. Sonnet XXXIV, 9-10.
37. Sonnet LXXIX, 5, 7, 10, 11.
a reduplication of words in successive phrases and clauses.
Setting forth the purpose of his sonnet sequence, Sidney states that he writes so that Stella might take some pleasure of my pain; Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know, Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain.38

The sonnet, in which the poet's moans are changed by Stella's heavenly nature to tunes of joy, begins with a rather successful example of reduplication:

My words, I know, do well set forth my mind;
My mind bemoans his sense of inward smart;
Such smart may pity claim of any heart;
Her heart, sweet heart, is of no tigress kind.39

After raising Stella to the dignity of a goddess, Astrophel tells her that it is useless for her to stop him:

And all in vain, for while thy breath so sweet,
With choicest words; thy words, with reasons rare;
Thy reasons firmly set on Virtue's feet.40

Sidney's revival of the use of the compound epithet is another characteristic of his style. The compound epithet fell into disuse during the Middle Ages, but was revived again by the French Renaissance sonneteers du Bartas, du Bellay, and Ronsard. Besides Shakespeare, Sidney seems to be the only English imitator of these French poets in this regard.

Not all of these epithets are successful. They run

38. Sonnet I, 2-4.
40. Sonnet LXVIII, 9-11.
through practically the same gamut of effectiveness as the conceits. One is at times irritated with such epithets as "kiss-worthy face," "mark-wanting shafts," "rose-enamelled skies," and "sour-breathed mate." At other times the epithets are well-chosen and effect a happy degree of expression. "Love-acquainted eyes," "new-found Paradise," "long-stayed night," "amber-coloured head," and "self-felt disgrace" are certainly expressive epithets.

Finally, Sidney's style is characterized by the proverbial-like quality and pithiness of the final distich or the final verse.

Dumb swans not chattering pies, do lovers prove. 
They love indeed who quake to say they love. 41

All mirth, farewell! Let me in sorrow live. 42
No doom should make once heaven become his hell. 43
Wise silence is best music unto bliss. 44
No kings be crowned, but they some covenant make. 45

No doubt, Sidney's style is at once the most personal and most original element in the sonnets. His use of a wide variety of devices certainly adds spirit and vivacity to themes that might otherwise seem trite and shop-worn. Sidney is so much a master as to make a judicious use of conventional expressions and to blend these with his own

41. Sonnet LIV, 13-14.
42. Sonnet C, 14.
43. Sonnet LXXXVI, 14.
44. Sonnet LXX, 14.
45. Sonnet LXIX, 14.
ingenious inventions. Rarely does he overwork any single device, knowing full well that rambling repetition tends to tire the reader. The sonnet sequence is admirable, too, in its avoidance of jarring rhythms, too close repetition of sets of rimes, and monotony of mood. It is particularly Sidney's style that gives much of the literary value to *Astrophel and Stella* and that differentiates him most prominently from his contemporaries. It would be no exaggeration to say that Sidney surpasses all the Elizabethan sonneteers, except Shakespeare, in individuality, spirited feeling, artistic judgment, and lyric quality.
CHAPTER V
THE IDENTITY OF STELLA

The name "Stella" dates back to mediaeval Latin hymns in which the Virgin is called "maris stella," star of the sea. During the Renaissance the name occurs in Neo-Latin poetry. Du Bellay, in a poem entitled De Amoribus Poetarum, gives a very complete list of famous erotic poets and their mistresses, beginning with Catullus and ending with the Pleiade. The name is found later in a poem by Douza, the Elder, William Camden's friend: Ad Stellam et Philaestrum Amantes. Incidentally, the second of these names, Philaster, meaning a star love, is a variant of Astrophel, having the same meaning.

The Italian Petrarchists, also, were in the habit of calling their mistresses their "guiding stars." Sidney was most probably acquainted with Fontano's De Stella. True, the tone of Sidney's sequence is entirely different from that of Fontano's sensuous poetry, but Sidney's Sonnet XVII can be traced directly to De Stella.1

The first question that may be asked regarding the identity of Stella is: Was there a "real" Stella? Those that argue that Sidney's *Astrophel* and *Stella* is just a literary exercise based upon no real love affair,\(^2\) fail to consider, first of all, that Sidney's sonnet sequence is not to be classed with the sonnet sequences of the 1590's. Sidney wrote his sonnets much earlier, at a time when the sonneteering rage had not yet begun. The sonneteers of the 1590's used his work as a source and model. Secondly, it is entirely probable that Sidney would have fallen in love with someone between the year 1573, when he was nineteen, and 1582, when he contracted to marry Frances Walsingham. Thirdly, there is no reason to believe that a conventional expression may not be the vehicle of genuine passion. Finally, those that list Petrarchan echoes in *Astrophel* and *Stella* usually fail to specify the non-Petrarchan material or to reveal the details wherein Sidney varied from his models.

Critical research produces evidence confirming the early tradition that Sir Philip Sidney was for a time in love with an unhappily married lady and that this lady was Penelope Devereux, Lady Rich. The proof rests upon Elizabethan opinion and internal evidence of the sonnets.

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1. Elizabethan Opinion

The first document to be examined is a manuscript account of the death of Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, father of Penelope Devereux. The story of the Earl's death is written presumably by Edward Waterhouse, his secretary. The most pertinent passage in the manuscript is the following:

... The same daie talking of manye of his Frendes he spake of Mr. Phillipp Sidney. O that good gentleman have me commended unto him, and tell him I sende him nothings, but I wishe him well, and so well that if God so more both there hartes I wyshe that he might matche with my Daughter. I call him sonne, so wyse, vertuous and godlye...

That Sidney considered marrying Penelope Devereux is further substantiated by a letter from Edward Waterhouse to Sir Henry Sidney, dated November 14, 1576:

And all these Lords that wishe well to the children, and, I suppose, all the best Sort of the Englishe Lords besides, doe expect what will become of the treaty betwene Mr. Philip, and my Lady Penelope. Tru­ly, my Lord, I must safe to your Lordship, as I have said to my Lord of Leicester, and Mr. Phillip, the breaking of from this Match, if the Default be on your Parts, will turne to more Dishonour, then can be repaired with any other Marriage in England.

Ruth Hughey's discovery at Arundel Castle of a manuscript owned by Sir John Harington brings forward contemporary evidence hitherto unknown in regard to the matter. The manuscript contains in the handwriting of Sir John Harington the first sonnet of Astrophel and Stella with the

heading: "Sonnnettes of Sr Philip Sidney to ye Lady Ritch."5

This confirms the pun upon Lady Rich's name in the
preface to Sir John Harington's translation of the Orlando
Furioso:

... And our English Petrarke, Sir Philip Sidney, or
(as Sir Walter Raulegh in his Epitaph worthely call-
leth him) the Scipio and the Petrark of our time, of-
ten comforteth himselfe in his sonets of Stella,
though despairing to attaine his desire, and (though
that tyrant honor still refused) yet the nobilitie, the
beautie, the worth, the graciousnesse, and those her
other perfections, as made him both count her, and
call her inestimably rich, makes him his owne great-
est losses.6

Harington was an epigrammatist and knew how to introduce
a pun subtilly. Harington is obviously supplying the answer
to the riddle proposed by Sidney in the following sonnet:

For of my life I must a riddle tell.
Toward Aurora's Court a Nymph doth dwell,
Rich in all beauties which man's eye can see.7

The name Rich turns up again in a tribute to Sidney
that also mentions Stella. The tribute is entitled "An
Elegie, or friends passion, for his Astrophill" and is
to be found in Spenser's Colin Clouts Come Home Again. The
pertinent passage follows:

Stella, A Nymph within this wood,
Most rare and rich of heauenly bliss,
The highest in his fancie stood,

5. Ruth Hughey, "The Harington Manuscript at Arundel
Castle and Related Documents," The Library, XV (1935),
388-444.
6. Notes to Book XVI, in L.C. John, Elizabethan Sonnet
Sequences, p.186.
7. Sonnet XXXVII, 1-3.
And she could well demerite this,
Tis likely they acquainted sone,
He was a Sun, and she a Moone. 8

We now pass to John Florio's translation of Montaigne's 
*Essays*, published in 1603. Each of the three books of this translation is separately dedicated, and each is dedicated to two noblewomen. Book Two honors Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland (Sir Philip Sidney's daughter), and Lady Penelope Rich. These ladies are jointly addressed throughout the long dedication. In one sentence a distinction is made between them, and this sentence has reference to Sidney:

I know, nor this (Montaigne's style and work), nor any I have seen, or can conceive, in this or other language, can in aught be compared to that perfect-un- perfect Arcadia, which all our world yet weeps with you, that your all praise-exceeding father (his praise-succeeding Countesse) your worthy friend (friend-worthiest Lady) lived not to mend or end-it. 9

This establishes that Sir Philip Sidney had been Lady Rich's "friend."

In the same book we find two sonnets, one addressed to the Countess of Rutland, and one to Lady Rich, both signed "Il Candido," (the white one), the pen name of Florio's friend, Dr. Matthew Gwynn. "Gwyn" in Welsh means "white."

The second of these sonnets has reference to our case:

To the Honorably-vertuous Ladle, La: Penelope Rich.

Madame, to write of you, and doe you right,
What meane we, or what meanes to ayde meane might?

---

Since HE, who admirably did endite,  
Entiteling you Perfections heire, Ioyes light,  
Loves life, Lifes gemme, Vertues court, Heau'ns delight,  
Natures chief worke, Fair'st booke, his Muses spright,  
Heau'n on Earth, peerelesse Phoenix, Phoebe bright,  
Yet said, he was to seeke, of you to write.  
Unlesse your selfe be of your selfe devising;  
Or that an other such you can inspire.  
Inspire you can: but o none such can be:  
Your selfe, as bright as your mid-day as rising  
Yet, though we but repeate who would flie higher,  
And though we but translate, take both in gree.  
Il Candido.10

All the epithets following the phrase "entiteling you"  
are to be found in Sidney's poetry:

Perfections heire - LXXXI, 9-10  
Ioyes light - LXXVI, 3-4  
Loves Life - "When to My Deadlie Pleasure," stanza 6  
Lifes gemme - XXIV, 9-10  
Vertues court - IX, 1  
Natures chiefe worke - VII, 1  
Fair'st booke - LXXI, 1-4  
Heau'n on Earth - "The Seven Wonders of England," stanza 14  
Peerelesse Phoenix - XCII, 1, 5-8  
Yet said, he was to seeke, of you to write - LXIX, 1;  
XXXIX, 12-4; XXV, 1-2  
Heau'ns delight - LXVIII, 4; LII, 6-7.

The only epithet for which a parallel cannot be found  
in Sidney's poems is "Phoebe bright." Hudson's explanation  
of this oddity seems logical.11 He says that the three

11. Ibid., p.102.
epithets which are farthest from the actual wording of Sidney, namely "Heau'ns delight," "his Muses spright," and "Phoebe bright," are all in a riming position. Gwynn might have found it difficult to find a suitable rime in Sidney's poems, so he invented "Phoebe bright."

The relationship established between Penelope Rich and Sidney is unmistakable. The "HE" of the third verse, despite Purcell's forced interpretation,12 can scarcely be interpreted to mean any other sonneteer than Sidney.

The next argument dates from the year 1606. Charles Blount, Baron Mountjoy, to whom Penelope had borne three children in an adulterous union, had returned from Ireland in 1603 to receive the gratitude of the king for his efforts in Ireland. He was made Earl of Devonshire and in 1605 married Lady Rich, after her husband had divorced her. The divorce was not supposed to allow re-marriage. In 1606, Blount died. Among the friends that paid tribute to him was John Ford. Since Blount's notoriety was widespread, Ford in his Fames Memoriall repeats the slanderous statements about the Earl of Devonshire and denounces them. Of Devonshire's union with Lady Rich, he says:

Linck't in the gracefull bonds of dearest life
unjustly term'd disgracefull he enjoyed,
The contents, abundance, happinesse was rife
Pleasure secure, no troubled thought amoyd
His comfort's sweetes, toyle was in toyle destroyed

Maugre the throat of malice, spight of spight
He lin'd united to his heartes delighte.

His hearts delight who was that glorious starre
Which bewtified the value of our lande,
The lightes of whose perfections brighter are
Then all the lampes, which in the lustre stand
Of heavens fore head, by discretion scan'd
Wits ornament, earth's love, loves Paradise
A Saint divine, a bewty fairly wise.13

In the quoted passage we cannot but notice that
Penelope was "that glorious starre which bewtified the va-
luce of our land." In other words, she was Stella.

That the phrase "glorious starre" refers to Stella is
further substantiated by a similar reference in Cooper's
Funeral Teares, published in the same year. Cooper, using
his Italianated name of Caprario, published a book of
seven songs as his tribute to the dead Earl of Devonshire.
The songs are offered to Devonshire's widow, Penelope, and
are written as if sung by her. Among the poems there is
a sonnet entitled "To the Ayre," in which Cooper says that
Penelope is the owner of "these sad laments":

Receive then chearefull Ayre these sad laments,
Though thou art but one Element, and she
That owes them, of all four the quintessence,
The Starre of honor, and the sphere of beautie.
Goe, heare her sing these farewells, thou wilt wepe,
And nowless ever in thy regions sleepe.14

Here again Penelope is "the Starre."

In spite of these forceful external arguments identi-
fying Sidney's Stella as Penelope Devereux, Lady Rich, there

are two Elizabethan poets who seem to imply that Stella is to be identified with Sidney's wife, Frances Walsingham. These two poets are Edmund Spenser and Lodovick Byskett. Let us examine the case.

The most seemingly valid objection against accepting the identity of Stella as Lady Rich is Spenser's *Astrophel*, one of a group of obituary poems published in 1595, nine years after Sidney's death. There is a seeming attempt to identify Stella as the poet's wife, Frances Walsingham, daughter of Queen Elizabeth's foreign secretary.15

Before taking up the discussion of Spenser's *Astrophel* mention must be made of one pertinent fact. After Sidney's death there seems to have been an attempt to disassociate him from the implications of his love poetry, or, in other words to "whitewash" him. This was probably due to the fact that Sidney, on his death-bed, had asked his friends to burn his amorous works.

*Astrophel* begins with a description of the nymphs making advances to Sidney. The poet then proceeds:

For one alone he cared, for one he sight,
His life's desire, and his deare loues delight.

Stella the faire, the fairest star in skie,
As faire as Venus or the fairest faire;
A fairer star saw never liuing eie,
Shot her sharp pointed beames through purest aire.

Her he did loue, her he alone did honor,  
His thoughts, his times, his songs were all upon her.

To her he vowed the service of his daies,  
On her he spent the riches of his wit;  
For her he made hymnes of immortal praise,  
Of onely her he sung, he thought, he writ.  
Her, and but her, of loue he worthie deemed,  
For all the rest but little he esteemed.

Ne her with ydle words alone he vowed,  
And verses vaine (yet verses are not vaine)  
But with braue deeds to her sole service vowed.16

Following this, the poet relates how Astrophel receives  
the fatal wound and how the other shepherds bring him to  
his "loved lasse." She bathes his pale face with her tears,  
and, after he dies, she dies also. The gods transform both  
of them into a flower that first grows red and then fades  
to blue, with a star in the middle of it, "resembling  
Stella in her freshest yeares."

It is evident that Spenser does not clearly state that  
Stella is Frances Walsingham, but, it seems, that he is  
trying to create the impression, or to leave the way open  
for the inference that she is.17

Spenser's account of the death of Stella puts his  
treatment of the subject into the realm of fiction rather  
than history.18 He is endeavoring to build up a new fiction—

Notes, XXVIII (1913), 224-6; T.F. Harrison,"Relations of  
Spenser and Sidney," FMLA, XLV (1950), 712-31; J.M. Pur-  
cell, "Relations of Spenser and Sidney," FMLA, XLVI  
(1961), 940.

al story around the Stella of Sidney's poetry. Spenser's *Astrophel* then, seems to be pointed in the direction of "whitewashing" Sidney, in other words, to keep Sidney's reputation free from scandal and to honor Sidney's wife.

A definite effort to hush or forestall stories about Sidney's having written his poems to someone else may be inferred from the following lines:

> And layes of loue he also could compose.  
> Thris a happie she, whom he to praise did chose.

> Full many Maydens often did him woo,  
> Them to vouchsafe amongst his rimes to name,  
> Or make for them as he was wont to doe,  
> For her that did his heart with loue inflame.  

There remains to be examined one more selection from Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*. This is Lodovick Bryskett's elegy entitled *The Mourning Muse of Thestylis*. In this elegy we find Stella introduced as the first of many mourners for the dead Sidney. The poet tells how her hair hung loose and how "her heart sent drops of pearle" from "those two bright starres, to him sometime do deere."

Stella laments:

> My true and faithful phere,  
> Alas and woe is me, why should my fortune frowne  
> On me thus frowardly to rob me of my joy?  
> . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
> Alas if thou my trustie guide  
> Were wont to be, how canst thou leave me thus alone  
> In darknesse and astray; weake, wearie, desolate,  
> Plung'd in a world of woe, refusing for to take  
> Me with thee, to the place of rest where thou art gone.

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Having ended, Stella continues weeping. The epithet "faithful sheere" is an almost outright indication that Stella is Sidney's wife.

It can readily be seen that both Spenser's and Eryskett's attempts to identify Stella as Sidney's wife are almost futile when compared with the volume of Elizabethan evidence identifying her as Penelope Devereux, Lady Rich. I think that it is also clear that Spenser and Eryskett were willing, and perhaps hoping, to create a different impression mainly for the purpose of clearing Sidney. When we recall Sidney's death-bed request to burn his amorous works, the efforts of these two poets become readily understandable.

2. Internal Evidence

On the basis of the sonnets themselves it is practically impossible to identify Stella as Frances Walsingham. In the first place, how can the three sonnets punning on the name "Rich" be accounted for, if the sonnets were intended to be written about a Walsingham? Secondly, why should Sidney have departed from the Petrarchan pattern by writing about someone lost to him by his own blindness, if such were not the case? Finally, there is no reason to believe that Frances Walsingham was ever opposed to a marriage with him.

Beginning with the second sonnet Sidney makes it very clear that he had only his own blindness to blame for his
unhappiness. The strongest expression of this is, of course, the following:

I might—unhappy word, O me!—I might,
And then would not, or could not see my bliss:

Heart rent thyself! thou dost thyself but right
No lovely Paris made thy Helen his;
No force, no fraud robbed thee of thy delight;
No Fortune, of thy fortune author is;
But to myself, myself did give the blow.21

Then, too, the cycle of sonnets reveals the poet's conflict with himself over the righteousness of his course. The first intimation occurs early in the sequence:

Virtue! alas, now let me take some rest,
Thou settest a hate between my will and wit.22

Another sonnet states his failure to fulfill his own ambition:

Reason! in faith, thou art well served! that still
Wouldst brabbling be with Sense and Love in me.
I rather wist thee climb the Muses' hill,
Or reach the fruit of Nature's choicest tree,
Or seek heaven's course, or heaven's inside to see.23

Sonnet XIV, addressed to a friend, would appear to have little significance, if the poet felt his course to be above reproach:

But with your rhubarb words ye must contend
To grieve me worse in saying, "That Desire
Doth plunge my well-formed soul even in the mire
Of sinful thoughts, which do in ruin end."

Similarly, how can the following be explained if the poet knew his course to be above reproach?

My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toys;  
My wit doth strive those passions to defend,  
Which for reward, spoil it with vain annoy.  
I see my course to lose myself doth bend;  
I see, and yet no greater sorrow take,  
Than that I lose no more for Stella's sake.\textsuperscript{24}

Again, another friend reproaches the poet, to which he
answers:

Your words, my friend (right healthful caustics) blame  
My young mind marred, whom love doth windlass so;  
That mine own writings (like bad servants) show  
My wits quick in vain thoughts; in virtue, lame.  
"That Plato I read for nought, but if he tame  
Such coltish years; that to my birth I owe  
Nobler desires: lest else that friendly foe  
Great Expectation, wear a train of shame."  

Sure you say well! Your wisdom's golden mine,  
Dig deep with learning's spade! Now tell me this,  
Hath this world ought so fair as Stella is?\textsuperscript{25}

The struggle continues,\textsuperscript{26} until Stella herself de-
cides the outcome and keeps the poet to a safe course.

The story ends with Sonnet CVIII on absence and despair of
separation. This last sonnet and the unnumbered sonnet
"Leave me, O Love" would hardly have been written if
Sidney had married Stella.

The evidence that Stella was Lady Rich is strengthened
by the "Rich" sonnets which have already been discussed
at length elsewhere.\textsuperscript{27} I mention here only one sonnet which
undeniably calls Stella "Rich." In Sonnet XXXV, the poet
tells of Stella's triumphs: she has conquered Reason; she

\textsuperscript{24} Sonnet XVIII, 9-14.  
\textsuperscript{25} Sonnet XXI.  
\textsuperscript{26} Cf. Sonnets X, XIX, XXXIII, XLVII, LXII, LXIV, LXXII.  
\textsuperscript{27} Cf. Chapters I and II.
has made Cupid a sworn page to Chastity; she has made Honor her slave, and thereby honored him; and now, the poet says

long needy Fame
Both even grow rich, naming my Stella's name.

If the sonnets themselves were the only evidence available to support the theory that Stella is Penelope Devereux, Lady Rich, then the internal evidence would indeed be of little value. However, the evidence of the sonnets is so strongly substantiated by so many allusions by contemporary Elizabethan writers that it is hardly possible to doubt that Sidney's Stella was Penelope Devereux.
CHAPTER VI
DATE OF COMPOSITION

The problem of determining the date of composition of *Astrophel and Stella* is so complicated by the surreptitious and posthumous publication of the cycle that the actual date of composition will, at best, remain conjectural.

One thing is certain: *Astrophel and Stella* circulated in manuscript form for some time before its publication. Conclusive evidence is afforded by Newman in his dedication to the 1591 edition of the sonnets:

> It was my fortune not many days since to light upon the famous device of *Astrophel and Stella*... For my part, I have been very careful in the printing of it, and whereas, being spread abroad in written copies it had gathered much corruption by ill-writers...1

How many manuscripts were in circulation cannot be determined. We have knowledge of only five. Thomas Newman had a manuscript copy of Sidney's sonnets for his edition of 1591; Matthew Lownes, who also published the sonnets in 1591, had another copy. A third manuscript, better and more complete than those of Newman and Lownes, was owned by the Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister, who used it for her edition of the sonnets in 1598. A fourth, apparently

incomplete copy, is the Bodleian MS. Rawlison Post 85, which contains three of the songs of the *Astrophel and Stella* cycle.² The fifth manuscript is the Bright MS. in the British Museum which contains twenty-four of the sonnets.³

An approximate date of composition of Sidney's sonnets can be arrived at from a comparison of the various theories of Sidney critics, from the date of Penelope Devereux's marriage to Lord Rich, and from the nature of the sonnets.

1. Theories of Sidney Critics

The Sidney critics agree that most, if not all, of the sonnets were written after the marriage of Lady Penelope Devereux to Lord Rich. M.W. Wallace, Mona Wilson, A.W. Pollard, and A.H. Bill think that a few sonnets may have appeared before the marriage.

Wallace says:

The first thirty two sonnets, with the single exception of number XXIV—the punning invective against Lord Rich—were obviously written before Penelope's marriage, and they bear out the theory that up to this time both Sidney and Penelope were heart-whole.⁴

Miss Wilson is of the opinion that some of the sonnets reflect the bitter frustration of his youthful ambitions,

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a tone reflected in his old Arcadia. She is inclined to
date the more mature of the early sonnets from the summer
and autumn of 1580. However,

The workmanship of this early group is so uneven
as to suggest that, in composing the cycle, Sidney
made a selection from occasional verse going back
to 1579, or even 1578.5

Easing himself upon the interpretation of Sonnet XXX
Pollard believes that Astrophel and Stella was composed
in 1580-1.6

A.H. Bill implies that some of the sonnets came early,
but implies that Sidney's infatuation for Lady Rich must
have begun after 1581:

His infatuation with Penelope must have begun after
the end of 1581... After making every allowance for
the Elizabethan's utilitarian attitude towards marriage,
it is impossible to imagine a man of Philip's make-up
planning a marriage with a young girl, who was moreover
the daughter of one of his closest friends, at the same
time that he was making passionate love to another
man's wife. The affair with Penelope caused him to
suffer enough in conscience without that.7

Sidney Lee expresses different opinions regarding the
date of composition of Sidney's sonnets; all of them, how-
ever, can be reduced to his one statement that the series of
Sidney's sonnets occupied his leisure through the "last
six years of his life," 1580-6.8

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p.191.
p.221.
J.A. Symonds states:

I have committed myself to the opinion that Astrophel and Stella was composed, if not wholly, yet in by far the greater part, after Lady Rich's marriage... The poems would have no meaning if they were written for a maiden.9

H. R. Fox Bourne, discussing Sidney's literary career and the three books on which Sidney's fame as an author rests, says:

The Defence of Poesy, The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, and Astrophel and Stella may be dated between 1580 and 1583; that is, between the twenty-sixth and twenty-ninth years of his short life.10

Fulke Greville, Sidney's close friend and contemporary, in his Life of the Renowned Sir Philip Sidney,11 does not even mention Astrophel and Stella.

On the basis of the diverse opinions of Sidney critics the composition of the sonnets falls between the years 1578 and 1586. The first part of the sonnet sequence, some thirty odd sonnets, may, in all probability, be assigned to several years before Penelope Devereux's marriage to Lord Rich, reaching to a date as early as 1578. The majority of the sonnets, however, according to popular opinion, date to the years immediately following Stella's marriage, extending as late as 1586.

To approximate the date of composition any closer, it

is first necessary to establish the date of Stella's marriage.

2. Penelope Devereux's Marriage

Sidney's biographers in their efforts to determine the date of composition for the Astrophel and Stella sonnets have necessarily given consideration to the date of the marriage of Penelope Devereux to Lord Rich.

The first instance of specific information regarding Penelope's marriage is a letter, dated March 10, 1581, from the Earl of Huntington, one guardian of Penelope, to Lord Burleigh (Burghley), another guardian, arranging for the marriage between Penelope and Lord Rich. It is assumed that the marriage took place shortly after.12

There is, however, a letter, not mentioned in any of the Sidney biographies, which seems to refer unmistakably to this marriage and to place it at a later date in 1581.

The letter in question is a news-letter, dated Sept. 18, 1581, from Richard Brakenbury to the Earl of Rutland. The letter, sent from the queen's court at Greenwich, first gives the Earl detailed information concerning political news, then the events of the court itself. Among these items is the fact of the approaching marriage of a maid-in-waiting to Lord Rich. The following pertinent excerpt from

that letter is to be found among the Manuscript Papers of
the Earl of Rutland, Vol. 1:

1581, Sept. 18. Greenwich. Ireland is likely to be quiet. In Scotland they agree well yet... Mr. Secretary (Walsingham) is not looked for yet... Two German noblemen have come to see her Majesty—the Count of Emden and the Count of Waldeck. They were here, and much made of. The first is her Majesty's pensioner. The Court is to move on the 22nd to Streatham, and on the next day to Nonsuch. Marchmont has been sick, which delayed us, although a whole household died of the plague. In London 75 died of the plague last week. The Lord Chamberlain has not come to the Court since his chaplain died of the plague. My Lady and mistress will be married about Allhallow tide to Lord Rich. Though your Lordship is mindless of beauty, our maids are very fair.13

The accuracy of Brakenbury in regard to details of his letter adds considerable stress to its importance.

That the Court was at Greenwich at this date is shown by the entry for September 21 of Walsingham's Diary: "I came to the Court at Greenwich, being returned from France."

His entry for September 22 is: "The Court removed to Nonsuch, and I went to Barnelmes." That the German noblemen were present is shown in a letter of September 13 from Lord Hunsdon to the Earl of Leicester, which tells of the arrival of two counts, the one, John of Emden, and the other, Count Waldeck, from a visit to the Queen. Richard Brakenbury, then, would hardly be inaccurate about the date of the marriage of the person, presumably Penelope Devereux, whom he terms "My Lady and mistress."14

13. Quoted in L.C. John, "Date of Marriage of Penelope Devereux," PMLA, XLIX (1934), 961.
There seems to have been some reluctance on Penelope's part to marry Lord Rich, and the source of that reluctance seems to have been Charles Blount, later Earl of Devonshire and Lady Rich's second husband. At any event, the marriage seems to have taken place toward the end of October, 1581. This is confirmed by an entry regarding the marriage in the Household Book of Lord North for the year 1581: "October 29: A cup to give to my Ladie Penelope to hir marriage £11.16s. 15

Purcell is apparently correct in assuming that "Ladie Penelope" is Penelope Devereux because of the kinship of Lord Rich and Lord North and because the gift is more expensive than that of £10 given that year by Lord North to Queen Elizabeth.

From the evidence submitted, it can be quite readily supposed that Penelope Devereux's marriage with Lord Rich took place toward the end of October, 1581. If Sidney's cycle was written after this marriage, we can assume that the date of composition of the sonnets was after October, 1581.

3. Allusions in the Sonnets

The internal evidence of the sonnets is, at best, inconclusive with regard to dates of composition of the sonnets.

Nevertheless, certain sonnets in *Astrophel* and *Stella* have been thought to refer to specific events, which, if they could be dated, would determine the dates of composition.

Three sonnets are usually referred to by the Sidney critics to determine the date of composition. The first of these is Sonnet XXIII. J. E. Purcell argues that this sonnet was composed in 1574 or earlier. A. B. Grosart and Miss Wilson think that this sonnet refers to the year 1580.

Sonnet XLI is most frequently used by the critics in their attempts to date the composition of *Astrophel* and *Stella*. Pollard suggests that this sonnet could not have been written later than May, 1581. This date is also accepted by Grosart and Miss Wilson but rejected by Purcell who believes that the tournament mentioned in the sonnet might refer to any one of numerous tournaments in which Sidney participated.

Sonnet XXX receives the most attention from Purcell. He maintains that this sonnet refers to political events in Europe before 1575, probably of the winter of 1573-4, when Sidney was in Italy. The events to which he refers,

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18. *Astrophel and Stella*, p.165.
however, seem to belong too little to any one year to make it possible to date the sonnets from them. The references can apply equally well to later dates.24

The contemporary events, then, alluded to by Sidney in his sonnets cannot be dated with any certainty. Consequently, the sonnets themselves offer no help in establishing the date of the composition of Sidney's sonnets.

Until facts or allusions are turned up, therefore, which will yield new light upon the date of composition of Sidney's sequence, we must rely chiefly upon the date of Stella's marriage with Lord Rich in determining the date of the sonnets. Thus far, the only tenable conclusion seems to be that most of the sonnets were written after the marriage of Penelope Devereux to Lord Rich, which took place toward the end of October, 1581. Presumably, the sonnet cycle was completed in 1582.

CHAPTER VII
ORIGINALITY OF SONNETS

In the preface to his edition of the Elizabethan sonnet cycles Sidney Lee states that few of Sidney's poetic ideas are his own and that few of his "swelling phrases" are of his own composition.1 This is rather severe criticism. Even a cursory study of Sidney's Astrophel and Stella will reveal that many of the ideas and phrases are highly original and constitute a literary fount to which later Elizabethan sonneteers frequently refer.

The originality of Sidney's sonnet sequence, however, must be qualified. Sidney is least original in his use of conventional themes and imagery; on the other hand, he is highly original in the particular manner in which he adapts his source material and in his literary style.

This qualified originality of Sidney's sonnets is evident in many varied ways. First of all, the poet himself makes allusions in the sonnets to his originality. It is later reflected in the personal element of the sonnets, in

the successful and striking imagery, in the intimacy of the general tone of the sequence, and in the original manner in which he uses and adapts source material.

1. Personal Allusions

Sidney professes his originality in at least six of the sonnets. Theodore Spenser considers Sonnet I of the sequence as a manifesto of sincerity.² Tortured with the thought of adequately expressing his feeling toward Stella, Sidney rejects all decoration, exaggeration, and borrowing. After chiding himself for being at a loss to express himself successfully --

Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes; Eating my treward pen, beating myself for spite.

--Sidney proffers an obvious and logical conclusion:

"Fool!" said my Muse, "look in thy heart, and write!"ª

In a succeeding sonnet the poet elaborates the source of his inspiration:

For me, in sooth, no Muse but one I know. Phrases and problems from my reach do grow, And strange things cost too dear for my poor sprites. How then? Even thus. In Stella's face I read What love and beauty be. Then all my deed But copying is, what in her nature writes.⁵

Thus Sidney will write only of Stella, because to copy her is to copy nature itself. He will therefore,

4. Ibid., 14.
in pure simplicity,
Breathe out the flames which burn within my heart,
Love only leading me unto this art.6

Not only is Stella his sole inspiration but also the chief subject about which he intends to write.

For nothing from my wit or will doth flow;
Since all my words, thy beauty doth indite;
And love doth hold my hand, and makes me write.7

His relationship then with Stella constitutes the proper subject matter of his sonnet sequence, which is sufficiently motivated and inspired by his intense love toward his lady. It is this intensely personal feeling, that he experiences, which argues unequivocally for the originality of the lyrics.

How falls it then, that with so smooth an ease
My thoughts I speak? And what I speak doth flow
In verse? and that my verse best wits doth please?
Guess we the cause. What is it thus? Fie no!
Or so? Much less! How then? Sure thus it is.
My lips are sweet, inspired with Stella's kiss.8

With such an inspiration it is easily understood why Sidney is led to swear

by blackest brook of hell;
I am no pick-purse of another's wit.9

Finally, Sidney argues, what's the use of stealing another man's thought? Stolen goods will eventually come to light.

You that poor Petrarch's long deceased woess,
With newborn sighs and denizened wit do sing:

7. Sonnet XC, 12-14.
9. Ibid., 7-8.
You take wrong ways. Those far-fet helps be such
As do bewray a want of inward touch;
And sure at length, stolen goods do come to light.10

While the above quoted passages do not conclusively
prove that the sonnet sequence as a whole is original, they
at least indicate a sincere effort on Sidney's part toward
originality. Even if the actual existence of Stella were
to be denied, one would have to admit that a wholly ficti-
tious and imaginary Stella, to whom the sonnets are addressed,
would not militate against the originality of this delight-
ful sequence.

2. Autobiographical Elements

More important than Sidney's frank claim to originality
are the personal elements embodied in the sonnets. These
include complimentary fancies, his own analysis of love,
and allusions to Lady Rich.

Sidney was one creative genius to whom Ophelia's
words might be applied without reservation:

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
Th'expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observ'd of all observers.11

Court beauties, by their imperious demands upon their
dedoted "slaves," added much to the popularity of the con-
ceited form of the sonnet. As a result, very frequently the
truest poetry came to be considered that which was most

10. Sonnet XV, 7-11.
11. Hamlet, III, 1, 159-62.
feigning. The sonneteer felt compelled to pretend an ardent passion. These demands upon the gentleman's invention resulted often in the sonnet becoming merely a tour de force in ingenuity, and the authors sought every available means to add to their prestige. 12

Undoubtedly, this fashion of the Elizabethan courtiers to please their real or imaginary court beauties by writing the conceited sonnets did have its influence upon Sidney. However, the influence is not so great as might at first be surmised. In the first place, Sidney wrote his sonnets before the sonneteering rage began. Secondly, he was not forced to write his sonnets. He was not compelled to pretend an ardent passion for his lady. It was pointed out in an earlier chapter that Sidney wove his complimentary fancies and directed them toward Stella, because he was truly in love with her. 13

When Sidney began to write about love, he soon found out that it was next to impossible to escape completely from the sonnet conventionalities and from the artificial conceits of the foreign courtiers who served as his models. In spite of this, he strove to be original in inventing new conceits and in investing old conceits with realistic touches which made them seem new. But even when the poet succumbed to the influence of the love conventions, he always insisted upon his

13. Cf. Chapter V.
sincerity. As he became increasingly serious, he felt the need of defending his sincerity, as is evident in the following gracious and courtly sonnet:

Because I oft in dark abstracted guise,
Seem most alone in greatest company;
With dearth of words, or answers quite awry,
To them that would make speech of speech arise.
They deem, and of their doom the rumor flies,
That poison foul of bubbling pride doth lie
So in my swelling breast; that only I
Fawn on me self, and others do despise.
Yet pride, I think, doth not my soul possess,
Which look too oft in his unflattering glass:
But one worse fault, ambition, I confess,
That makes me oft my best friends overpass
Unseen, unheard; while thought to highest place
Bends all his powers, even unto Stella's grace. 14

The poet's story of his advance in love is entirely original. The difference between his treatment of love and that of other sonneteers lies in the analysis of it. Sidney is always serious-minded.15 It is this seriousness that turns him from passion to the analysis of it. Thus, he does not show the despair of one who has loved and lost, or who has loved too late; rather, his is the melancholy note of idealism.

Sidney's friendship with Languet taught him that attraction develops into genuine liking only by slow degrees. This theme he sets forth in one of his first sonnets:

Not at the first sight, nor with a dribbled shot,
Love gave the wound, which while I breathe, will bleed:
But know, worth did in mine of time proceed,

14. Sonnet XXVII.
15. Lu Emily Pearson, op.cit., p.86.
Till, by degrees, it had full conquest got.
I saw and liked, I lik'd but loved not;
I loved, but straight did not what Love decreed:
At length to Love's decrees, I forced, agreed.16

To Sidney then, love at first sight was an absurdity.
One must advance toward a knowledge of love step by step.
The plan is evident in the arrangement of the whole sonnet sequence. The first thirty-two sonnets portray the fanciful side of the poet. These sonnets, while strong and passionate, lack intensity. Sonnet XXXII, for instance, is too much of a catalogue to be a sincere outpouring of intense love. It is simply the voice of a man saying a thing thing as finely as he is able.

The thirty-third sonnet is so different that it might be considered written by a different man. The revolution is effected by the removal of Stella from his reach. At this point, the entire man awakes. Stella, the unattainable, now becomes a symbol of virtue. T. G. Marquis asserts that Stella's continued repulses and her final dismissal of him, under the guise of cruelty, provided the means for the poet to form a clearer knowledge of spiritual love.17 The sonnet beginning with

Leave me, 0 love! which reachest but to dust!
And thou, my mind! aspire to higher things!
Grow rich in that, which never taketh rust!
Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings.18

voices the poet's yearning for this ideal. It also shows
that Sidney attained a fuller measure of sincerity and
originality than most of the Elizabethan sonneteers.

One other element, the personal allusions to Lady Rich,
the Stella of the sonnets, substantiates Sidney's claim
to the originality of his sequence. Some critics, among
them W.J. Courthope, discount the originality of the son-
ets by denying that the sonnets contain autobiographical
data. Courthope writes:

It is plain enough to the careful reader that the
whole series forms a regular design, the object being
to exercise the imagination on a set of themes accord-
ing to the traditional rules of a particular poetical
convention, which required, above all things, a dis-
play of wit by the poet, partly in placing a single
thought in a great number of different lights, partly
in decorating it with a vast variety of far-fetched
metaphors.19

Even if it were to be denied that the sonnets are
autobiographical, the mere fact that the sonnets are the
products of a fertile imagination argues for their original-
ity. Courthope rests his observations on mere suppositions.
He argues that the character of Sidney as well as the
character of the sonnets make it ridiculous to consider Sid-
ney as being in love with Lady Rich.20 However, no evidence
has ever been brought forth to show that the sonnets do not
record Sidney's love for Lady Rich. To deny this would be
to deny the existence of Sonnets XXIV and XXXVII both of

20. Ibid.
which are extended puns on the name "Rich."

Closer to truth is T.W.H. Crosland's evaluation of the sonnets as "the most delicate and simple and sincerely human" of the so-called sequences.21

3. Themes and Imagery

Generally speaking, Sidney is probably least original in the selection and treatment of the themes and the imagery in his sequence. The debates between the eyes and the heart, between the poet and Reason, the apostrophes to the Night and the Moon, the descriptions of the contradictory sentiments of the lovers, all these are typical Renaissance themes. They are original with Sidney, only insofar as he gives them a new twist or presents them in a slightly unconventional way.

Relative to the themes of the sonnets J.G. Scott maintains that of the 108 sonnets roughly about a dozen are entirely original.22 Miss Scott writes:

Sidney n'a pas traduit, et affirmer cela au sujet d'un sonnetiste du XVI siècle est un sérieux éloge. Les poètes de second ordre imitent servilement, ils imitent betement, et le chercheur éprouve beaucoup de satisfaction a dépister facilement ces poètes a l'oeuvre, mais les grands auteurs ont, eux, assez de génie pour suivre l'esprit et non la lettre.23

Although Sidney's sonnets, then, are not entirely

23. Ibid.
original, they are not servile translations either. Sidney possessed the genius of following not the letter but the spirit of his models, and the spirit is so ingeniously embodied in his imitations that it is very difficult to find the original upon which Sidney based himself. What is original in Sidney, then, is not that the themes of most of the sonnets are of his own invention, but that the poet possessed a creative talent that gave a new form to old material.

The poet's originality is more evident in his conceits. Some of them are extremely original, striking, and successful. At times, the reader must exercise a special effort to comprehend them. Without interrupting the thought of the sonnet, the conceits, at times, take the form of an extraordinary image, an exaggerated personification, or a paradoxical reasoning, as was made manifest in an earlier chapter.24

4. Style

It is Sidney's style that gives this collection of sonnets its high literary value. It is also in style that Sidney is most successfully original. His sonnets prove interesting reading even today, because his deep feeling and sincerity have penetrated into almost every verse of his love poems.

Sidney's style was already adequately treated in an

24. Cf. Chapter II.
earlier chapter. It is sufficient to summarize his merits at this point.

One cannot read Sidney's sonnet without noticing the vivacity of the apostrophes. For the most part his style is that of animated conversation. The phrases are concise, the apostrophes frequent, the questions and exclamations striking.

Another characteristic of his style is the repetition or reduplication of the same word at short intervals. Sidney does not, however, overwork this device, because he likes variety and knows that such an artificial repetition can easily discourage the reader.

Sidney also revives the usage of the compound epithet, a device known in Anglo-Saxon poetry, which fell into disuse during the Middle Ages. He is not always successful in handling these epithets. At times, however, these epithets are worthy products of his genius.

His use of alliteration is moderate and forceful. His combination of elaborate figures and antithetical comparisons adds liveliness and effectiveness to the sonnets.

Sidney's versification is exacting. There is not a slipshod or careless sonnet in the whole collection. His sequence is admirable in its avoidance of jar in rhythm and of repetitious "rattling" rhymes.

25. Cf. Chapter IV.
These devices constitute Sidney's personal style, and it is precisely in style that he differs most from his contemporaries.26

5. Use of Sources

Sidney's borrowings of machinery and ideas from other authors do not detract from his originality. He uses the Elizabethan conventions, because it's the accepted medium of expression just as the heroic couplet was the style of expression during the Restoration.

Sidney is probably most indebted to Petrarch. However, L.C. John says that he is indebted to Petrarch only in such a manner as an author of a pastoral poem is indebted to his predecessors, or that a writer of a Pindaric ode is indebted to Pindar.27

J.G. Scott is in accord with this interpretation when he states:

Sidney imite évidemment, mais d'une façon particulière, qui modifie tant l'original que le poème anglais qui en ressort est quelquefois tres différent de la source.28

Although Sidney imitated French and Italian poets, his imitations are modified in such an original manner that the English product is quite another thing.

A slight resemblance in thought or even in expression

between an English sonnet and some particular French or Italian product does not necessarily argue indebtedness at this point until the whole field of possible sources has been considered. Up to this time no complete study of the sources has appeared.

Sidney's masters were Petrarch and Ronsard. His admirers dubbed him "our English Petrarch," or "the Petrarch of our time." His habit was to paraphrase and adapt foreign writings rather than literally translate them. The following examples will make manifest the method which Sidney used in adapting foreign material.

The following sonnet represents Sidney's freedom in handling source material:

Having this day, my horse, my hand, my lance, Guided so well; that I obtained the prize: Both by the judgment of the English eyes; And of some sent by that sweet enemy, France! Horsemen, my skill in horsemanship advance; Townsfolk, my strength; a daintier judge applies His praise to sleight, which from good use doth rise; Some lucky wits impute it but to chance; Others, because, of both sides, I do take My blood from them who did excel in this; Think Nature me a man-at-arms did make. How far they shot awry! The true cause is, Stella lookt on, and from her heavenly face Sent forth the beams which made so fair my race.

Sidney here describes how he won a prize in a tournament owing to the presence of his lady-love among the spectators. The beams of her eyes lent him prowess. A comparison of

30. Sonnet XLI.
this sonnet with Petrarch's sonnet, on which it is based,
will bring out the wide difference between the two:

A purple nature, an exalted mind,
A soul unflawed, swift aspect and sharp eye,
Prompt penetration, thought as eagle -high
As worthy of the breast that holds it shrined:
A bright assemblage on that day combined
Each other in his honour to outvie,
When, in that throng, his sovereign glances fly
Lighting upon the loveliest they can find.
Needless of age or rank or certain blood,
He motioned his most gentle preference,
And proudly drew him near that humbliest life:
So courteous his kiss that all who stood,
Though brilliant, thrilled at beauty's recompense--
Only it pierced my heart through like a knife;31

The resemblance between Petrarch's brilliant court
entertainment which was illumined by the light of Laura's
countenance and Sidney's victory in a tournament at which
Stella was present is indeed very slight.

Sidney's sonnet, addressed to the river Thames,32 is
another adaptation of two of Petrarch's sonnets, the first
being an address to the river Po, and the second, an address
to the river Rhone. Sidney's sonnet is a paraphrase of
the two Petrarchan sonnets.33

The resemblance between Sidney's thought and that con-
tained in his source is further made clear by a comparison
of Sidney's sonnet of renunciation and one of the closing
sonnets of Petrarch's sequence. Sidney's sonnet follows:

Leave me, O love! which reachest but to dust!

31. Francesco Petrarch, Sonnets During the Life of Laura,
   Sonnet CCI, in J. Amslander, op.cit., p.201.
32. Sonnet CIII.
33. Petrarch, op.cit.; Sonnets CXLVII and CLXXXIII.
And thou, my mind! aspire to higher things! Grow rich in that, which never takest rust! Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings, Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might To that sweet yoke, where lasting freedoms be! Which breaks the clouds, and opens forth the light That doth both shine, and give us sight to see. O take fast hold! Let that light be thy guide! In this small course which birth draws out to death; And think how evill becometh him to slide, Who seeketh heaven, and comes of heavenly breath! Then farewell, world! Thy uttermost I see! Eternal love, maintain Thy love in me! 34

This is a faithful imitation of the Italian poet's solemn and impressive renunciation of love's empire:

Death has put out the burning of the sun; Her constant eyes his dark dominions keep; Dust is my Lady—dust and a long sleep; My bright elected laurels are undone; I know my bliss and bitterness are one; No more may passion in my pulses leap From flame to frost, from bold to timorous creep, With anguish crawl, with hope the wind outrun, Out of Love's blind despotic hands who wastes And hallows, loosed from Love's dear bitter bands, My heart the acid-sweet of freedom tastes. And to the gracious Lord who understands, Who, with His sovereign forehead halts or hastens, I turn with my life broken to His hands. 35

Although Sidney follows Petrarch quite closely, he shows a greater fidelity to his sources in his use of French material. Sidney's Sonnet LXIX, beginning with "Dear, why make you more of a dog than me?" and reproaching his mistress for showing more attention to her dog than to himself, is a very close parallel of Ronsard's sonnet beginning: "Hai

petit chien que tu es bien-heureux."36

The themes of beauty lodging with virtue and love with reason are handled in very much the same manner by both Sidney and Ronsard. Here is Sidney's version:

Who will in fairest book of Nature know
How virtue may best lodged in beauty be;
Let him but learn of love to read in thee!
Stella! those fair lines which true goodness show.
There, shall he find all vices' overthrow;
Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty
Of Reason: from whose light those night birds fly.
That inward sun in thine eyes shineth so.
And not content to be perfection's heir,
Thyself dost strive all minds that way to move;
Who mark in thee, what is in thee most fair:
So while thy beauty draws the heart to love,
As fast thy virtue bends that loved to good.
But ah! Desire still cries, "Give me some food!"37

To be sure, Sidney's sonnet is very different from Ronsard's:

If 't please you see how Love's might overcame,
How He attacked and how He conquered me,
How my heart burns and freezes for His glee,
How He doth make His Honor of my Shame;
If 't please you see my youth running to claim
What brings it nought but pain and contumely,
Then come and read, and know the agony
Of which my Goddess and my God make game.
Then you shall know that Love is reasonless,
A sweet deceit, a dear imprisonment,
An empty hope that feeds us with the wind.
Then you shall know how great man's foolishness
And his delusion are, when he's content
To choose a child for lord; for guide, the blind.38

C. H. Page's translation of the French sonnet doubtless constitutes a barrier for an accurate comparison of the two sonnets. However, an analysis will show that the

37. Sonnet LXXI.
main theme of the sonnets is the same. Sidney's sonnet shows how freely he can handle his source and still preserve enough of his source to indicate his indebtedness.

Sidney can, at times, be a veritable slave to his source. An extreme example of this conspicuous imitation is recognizable in such a sonnet as:

Sweet kiss! thy sweets I fain would sweetly endite: Which even of sweetness, sweetest sweet'ner art!39

In his reiteration of the epithet "sweet," Sidney no doubt had in mind lines like these:

Baiser plus doux que le nectar des Dieux, 
Que miel, que sucre, que manne etherée
Baiser sucre d'una bouche sucrée.40

Sidney's apostrophe to the bed, in which he turns and tosses in "the black horrors of the silent night,"

Ah, bed! the field where joy's peace some do see;
The field where all my thoughts to war be trained:
How is thy grace by my strange fortune stained!
How thy lee shores by my sighs stormed be!41

is but an echo of such an Italian Petrarchist as Tebaldeo:

Letto, se per quiete e dolce pace
Trovato fosti da l'ingegno humano
Nòr perché il corpo mio ti colca in vano,
E senza requie in te tue piume giace?42

and of the French poet Desportes:

O list! s'il est ainsi que tu sois invente
Pour prendre un doux repos, quand la nuit est venue,

39. Sonnet LXXIX.
41. Sonnet XCVIII.
42. Tebaldeo, Opera d'Amore, XV, in Sidney Lee, op. cit., I, xlv.
D'ou vient que dedans toy ma douleur continue,
Et que je sens par toy mon tourment augmenter?
Je ne fay que tourner d'un et d'autre coste. 43

Other Sidneian themes, such as the apostrophes to sleep, to the moon, and to the nightingale are all close echoes of his reading, even though they are at times imbued with a finer feeling and possess finer music than can be discovered in the foreign originals.

J.G. Scott has compiled the only available list of sources for Sidney's sonnets. 44 The list is not complete, but by its inclusiveness, such as it is, it shows Sidney's rather heavy dependence upon foreign sources. The list of sources is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sonnet</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Watson, <em>Hecatombphilia</em>, XLI</td>
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<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Ronsard, <em>Odes</em>, II</td>
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<td>VII</td>
<td>Ronsard, <em>Amours</em>, II; Tasso, Sonnet 151</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>Serafino, <em>Strambotto</em> 193</td>
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<td>IX</td>
<td>Petrarch, <em>Canzoniere</em>, IV, st. 2</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Ronsard, <em>Helen</em>, I, 30, 54; II, 21; Tasso, 102; Sceve, <em>Delie</em>, 179</td>
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<td>XVII</td>
<td>Sceve, <em>Delie</em>, 89</td>
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<td>XX</td>
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<td>XXVI</td>
<td>Sceve, <em>Delie</em>, 243</td>
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<tr>
<td>XXXII</td>
<td>Petrarch, Sonnet 165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXVI</td>
<td>Tebaldeo, Sonnet 90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In regard to other influences upon Sidney, it may be safely maintained that they were of minor importance. A.M. Pellegrini points out that Giordano Bruno's influence upon Sidney was indeed very slight.
In the dedication to his **Eroici Furori**, Bruno is sometimes interpreted as reproaching Sidney for writing sonnets to a woman in the manner of the Petrarchists; furthermore that Sidney was deeply touched by this reproach, and under the influence of the **Eroici**, he went through a spiritual conflict which is reflected in some of his sonnets; and that in the later sonnets Sidney became pretty well reconciled to the ideal of the **Eroici**, namely the worship of spiritual beauty.

Pellegrini argues against this contention, because, in the first place, it is not known how many of the sonnets, if any, were written after the publication of the **Eroici** in 1585. Secondly, there is no evidence that Bruno saw any of the sonnets of the **Astrophel and Stella** sequence. Thirdly, it is not known whether Bruno knew of Sidney's affair with Lady Rich. Lastly, there is the question of deciding whether the anti-Petrarchist tirade of the opening pages of the **Eroici Furori** was actually intended as a reproach to Sidney.

On the basis of the extracts from the **Eroici** quoted by Pellegrini the only conclusion that can be made is that Bruno knew Sidney, but that he exercised little or no influence upon him.45

In summary, then, the greatest influence upon Sidney

was wielded by Petrarch, Du Bellay, and Ronsard. The influence of minor French and Italian Petrarchists such as Desportes, Sceve, Serafino, and Tebaldeo was of lesser importance. Sidney's dependence upon other men's thoughts is more easily recognizable in his Arcadia and Apology for Poetry, but these are outside the scope of this paper.

6. Tone

John Erskine contends that since Sidney did not intend to publish his sonnets, they are more intimate in tone and appear more genuine than those of Petrarch or his French imitators.

It has already been pointed out that Sidney put forth his claim for sincerity in the famous phrase of the first sonnet "look into thy heart and write," which he repeated in Sonnets III, XV, XXVIII, LIV, and C.

Sidney's poetry is enhanced by a hundred circumstances of time and fortune. His birth, his boyhood, his Elizabethan opportunities, his hapless romance, and his adventure across Europe, all add to the glamor of his poetry. Up to the moment of his death he was involved in a march of events so stirring and irresistible that it is often caught and reflected

in the music of such lines as —

Highway! since you my chief Parnassus be;
And that my Muse to some ears not unsweet,
Tempers her words to trampling horses' feet
More oft than to a chamber melody.49

There is more than this in Sidney's poetry. There is
a note of chivalry in its finer mood, tuned to the praise of
Stella. But unlike his comppeers, Sidney refrains from over-
painting the lily and over-gilding the refined gold. One
is made to feel that Stella is a woman, human and rare,
uncertain and coy, hard to please, but neither a goddess
nor a taciturn at the game of love.

Furthermore, the sonnets tell a profoundly moving
tale. Sidney loves a lady whom we best know as Stella. He
loved her too late, when she is married to an unworthy and
profligate husband. She loves him in return, and yet remains
loyal to her husband and holds her lover to his high ideals.
At length they part, and Sidney transfers his love toward
spiritual love. Soon after, Sidney dies, and it would have
been better for her to die too, for her after history be-
comes unhappy. This simple story loses nothing in its
highly personalized telling. It is decorated by every consi-
deration of love and passion, of virtue and frailty, of
honor and heart-breaking sympathy.

As a transcription from human experience, it is
a passionate love-story told at its best in terms "simple,

49. Sonnet LXXXIV.
sensuous, and passionate."

Ernest Rhys probably best describes the sonnet sequence by quoting a passage from Ruskin:

If you don't like these love-songs, you either have never been in love, or you don't know good writing from bad (and likely enough both the negatives, I am sorry to say, in modern England).50

7. Summary

Wherein does Sidney's originality lie? In the first place, the originality of his sonnets is evident in the autobiographical allusions of the sonnets. The poet's story of his advance in love is entirely original. He differs from most of the other Petrarchan sonneteers in this that he does not feign complimentary fancies but is sincere and serious.

In themes and imagery Sidney leans heavily upon foreign sources. His originality, however, is apparent in the masterful way in which he handles his sources. He possesses the ability to re-make his source so that it becomes almost completely Sidneian.

His originality, finally, is most evident in the style and tone of the sonnets. Characteristic of Sidney are the vivacity of the apostrophes, the use of reduplication and compound epithets, the invention of many successful conceits, and the striking manner of concluding his sonnets. The tone of his sonnets is more highly personalized than that of many other Elizabethan sonnet sequences.

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