"DIRECTING THREDS . . . THROUGH THE LABYRINTH": THE MORAL USE OF PLATONIC CONVENTIONS AND PATTERNS OF IMAGERY IN SIDNEY'S ASTROPHIL AND STELLA

by

Virginia Acheson Tucker

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Approved by

Christopher Spenser
Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Adviser Christopher Spencer

Oral Examination Committee Members Raymond Moore

Jean R. Bernert

Robert L. Kelly

Robert O. Stephens

March 22, 1973
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Upon examination, the widely recognized stylistic discontinuity of Sidney's Astrophil and Stella resolves itself into a pattern. What some critics have seen as immaturity in many of the early sonnets proves to be conventionality, and many of the final sonnets exhibit the same trait. But while the conventionality of the early group (1-51) is enlivened by Sidney's wit and originality, that of the final group (87-108) is often sterile and lifeless. Furthermore, the vigor of the middle sonnets (52-86) springs less from a break with convention than it does from a positive attack upon it; convention is constantly the measure.

Actually there are two conventions--of literature and of love--and both are essentially Platonic. Although neither Platonism nor Neo-Platonism rejects the role of sexual love for purposes of procreation within the bounds of law or custom, Astrophil's love for a married woman can be morally and ethically justified only if it remains Platonic. As a Platonic lover, he must sublimate his passion and direct his own thoughts and those of his lady to the higher beauty. As a poet, his duty, as prescribed by Sidney in The Defence of Poesie, is similar. He must transform the "brasen world" of nature into the "golden world" of the Ideal.

Sidney's own role as poet-author must be clearly separated from Astrophil's as poet-persona. In sonnets 1-51, Sidney makes Astrophil establish himself as one who is fully acquainted with his duty as poet and as lover. Sidney does this by having Astrophil assert the validity

of the governing conventions in his debates with himself and by showing him successfully idealizing Stella and his love for her. In sonnet 52, however, Astrophil makes the deliberate choice of appetite over reason, of the Brasen World over the Golden, and thereby acts against his own understanding, so signifying the ultimate corruption of his will. This corruption is further demonstrated in succeeding sonnets in Astrophil's attack upon the conventions and his subversion of them for the purpose of seduction. He has failed both as poet and as lover.

By allowing us to witness Astrophil's failure and the suffering which results from it, Sidney has proven himself a right poet, one who turns us to virtue and away from vice. He has affirmed the validity of the conventions which Astrophil has attempted to negate. Astrophil's negation renders the conventions inaccessible to him when he attempts to return to them for solace, and the failure of his attempt is underlined by the comparative lack of vitality in the conventionality of the final sonnets.

The imagery in the sequence is also primarily conventional, and its main interest lies in the pattern of its use. The major patterns are constructed so that they parallel and underline Astrophil's movement from his attempt to construct the Golden World of the Ideal in the first fifty-one sonnets to his fall into the Brasen World of the rest of the sequence. Four of these patterns, closely related are (1) images associated with the idealization of Stella's person; (2) light-dark imagery, associated with the light of the Ideal or its absence; (3) imagery associated with the Platonic hierarchy of the senses, the superior ones being sight, hearing, and mind, and the inferior ones, touch, taste, and smell; and (4) imagery which characterizes Stella's eyes.

A separate examination of the songs, which raises questions about the 1598 placement, reveals that they fall into two groups, the iambic songs, 1, 3, 6, and 7, in which Astrophil is abstracting and idealizing his passion as in the early sonnets, and the trochaic songs, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 11, in which the sensual is given rein; the iambic song 5 bridges the gap between the two. This grouping parallels and reinforces the grouping of the sonnets into Golden and Brasen World types. Thus, Sidney's manipulation of the conventions in the songs as well as in the sonnets, reflected as it is in the imagery, action, argument, tone, and style of the sequence, works to help the reader judge Astrophil so that he may choose for himself the path to virtue.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A great deal of evidence indicates that for "more than a century after his death" Sir Philip Sidney was considered to be the pre-eminent poet of his time.[1] Though this may no longer be the case, there has been a notable revival of interest in him both as poet and as critic in the twentieth century. William L. Godschalk's "Bibliography of Sidney Studies Since 1935," which cannot be considered complete, lists a total of nine books and thirty-one articles or parts of books on Sidney in the period from 1935 to 1962.[2] It was in the latter year that one of the major events in the history of Sidney scholarship occurred, the publication by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, of The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, the definitive edition of William A. Ringler, Jr. For the first time a secure text of Sidney's poetry was available to scholar and poetry-lover alike. In the following year, to complement the Ringler edition of the poems, the Cambridge University Press re-issued the long out-of-print Feuillerat edition of The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney (1917-1926) as The Prose Works of Sir Philip

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[1]William A. Ringler, ed., "Introduction," The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. xv. All citations from the poetry of Sir Philip Sidney are from this text. OA indicates Old Arcadia; CS indicates Certain Sonnets.

[2]Pp. 352-358 in Kenneth Myrick, Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman, 2nd ed. (Lincoln, Nebraska: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1965).

Sidney,[3] omitting the now superseded text of the poems. In succeeding years separate editions of a number of Sidney's works have appeared.

Not surprisingly, the availability of these texts has created a new surge of interest in the poet; and, in addition to a rapid rise in the number of articles published, there has been a spate of book-length studies and doctoral dissertations. A glance at the bibliography of this dissertation will give the reader a fair idea of the extent of this Sidney revival, if we may call it that. And a glance at most of the studies of Astrophil and Stella[4] which have appeared during the twentieth century, both before and after the Ringler edition, will show scholars grappling with a common problem--one which apparently did not trouble Sidney's contemporaries--which can best be described as the lack of stylistic continuity in the sequence. There are, however, differences of opinion about the extent of this discontinuity and its significance. Some critics hold that it is the result of lapses of time in the

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[3]Albert Feuillerat, ed., The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1965), 4 vols. All citations from the prose works of Sir Philip Sidney are from this text and will be indicated by an F followed by the volume and page number. DP in references indicates The Defence of Poesie.

[4]In quotations I will maintain the spelling of the original author, usually Astrophel;but I will myself adopt Ringler's spelling, Astrophil. All contemporary references appearing before the first quarto of 1591 spelled the name with the -il. Two of the extant manuscripts also preserve this spelling though other surviving texts read Astrophel. Ringler attributes this to a misreading of the secretary hand of the scribe who made the hypothetical fair copy (O) of Sidney's original holograph (O*) (p. 458). Ringler also notes that the apparent intermediary (Z), from which Q1 and three other extant manuscripts showing the -el spelling descend, "was a scribal transcript with a considerable number of corruptions" (p. 453). Finally, as Ringler points out, Astrophel is meaningless as a proper name while Astrophil, meaning star-lover, clearly conveys the meaning which Sidney sought and which, with his knowledge of Greek, he would have written (p. 458).

composition of the sequence and that it, therefore, represents different stages in Sidney's artistic development. Others see the very lack of stylistic continuity as a stylistic device and suggest even further that it is a thematic one. If these latter critics are correct, as I believe they are, it becomes important to determine, insofar as we may, what Sidney's purpose might have been.

Among those critics who explain the discontinuity as a result of an extended period of composition is Mona Wilson. In her chapter on Astrophil and Stella in her 1931 biography of Sidney, she finds that "the sonnets of the early group describing Stella's physical attractions are often as crude as anything in the Arcadia,"[5] that such sonnets as 26 and 28 "leave us with the feeling that Astrophel's devotion to Stella is a poetic habit rather than an overmastering passion,"[6] that in sonnets 4, 5, and 10 "the debate of reason and passion is conducted in set forms,"[7] and that sonnets 14 and 21 "might be Pyrocles replying to the reproaches of Musidorus" in the Arcadia.[8] In an appendix she concludes that "the workmanship of this early group is so uneven as to suggest that, in composing the cycle, Sidney made a selection from occasional

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[5]Sir Philip Sidney (London: Duckworth, 1930), p. 172.

[6]Wilson, p. 173. Part of Wilson's difficulty with these early sonnets may arise from her insistence upon seeing the sequence as an autobiographical outpouring of Sidney's heart. C. S. Lewis notes that in any sonnet sequence "where the poet (thinking symphonically, not historically) has put in a few lighter or more reflective sonnets for relief or variety, the reader who wants a 'human document' will thrust them aside as frigid and miss any structural fitness they may really have." He goes on to note that "something like this has happened with Sidney" and that those who find his first thirty-two sonnets dull do so "only because they do not fit into the story." (English Literature in the 16th Century [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954], pp. 327-328).

[7]Wilson, p. 174.

[8]Wilson, p. 176.

verse going back to 1579, or even 1578."[9]

Over thirty years later, Ann Howe, preparing a new edition of Astrophil and Stella (never published) for her doctoral dissertation at Boston University, came to a similar conclusion. To her the sonnets of the opening part of the sequence, the first twenty-seven, with the exception of 1, 2, 3, 6, 15, 19, and 24, show a "prevailingly amateur quality";[10] and she contends that a rhetorical analysis of the sequence indicates that these "sonnets were composed at an earlier date than the remainder of the sequence."[11] She finds internal evidence that they were all composed for Penelope Devereux[12] but contends that Sidney must

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[9]Wilson, p. 312.

[10]"Astrophel and Stella: Why and How," Studies in Philology, 61 (April 1964), 159.

[11]Howe, p. 160.

[12]No one seriously questions that Penelope Devereux is the subject of at least some of the sonnets in the sequence. Even Jack Stillinger, who has taken perhaps the most cautious and sceptical look at the available evidence, concludes that sonnet 37 "would have no point" if it were not about her, that sonnet 24 "probably refers to her husband and that sonnet 35 may refer to her name" ("The Biographical Problem of Astrophel and Stella," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 54 [Oct. 1960], 626.) It is, of course, possible, as Stillinger seems to suggest (p. 634), that Stella could even be a composite character. There is, however, at least one bit of evidence to which he apparently did not have access at the time of his article. It is in a manuscript of George Gifford's "The Manner of Sir Philip Sidney's Death" discovered in the late 1950's and privately printed by Dr. B. E. Juel-Jensen and Professor Herbert Davis at the New Bodleian Library, Oxford, 1959. The reference surfaced in print in the United States in an article by Jean Robertson: "Sir Philip Sidney and Penelope Rich," Review of English Studies, 15 (1964), 296-297. Gifford, the chaplain who attended Sir Philip at his death, reports that the dying Sidney told him that, unable to sleep one night and knowing that death was near, he felt troubled and "feared he had not a sure hold on Christ." Then, he said, "There came to my remembrance a Vanitie wherein I had taken delight, whereof I had not ridd my self. It was my Ladie Rich. But I ridd myself of it, and presentlie my Ioy and Comfort returned within fewe howers" (Robertson, p. 297). No one can dispute Stillinger's main point, however, That is that the sequence should be considered as poetry rather than as autobiography.

have been interested in her at an earlier date than present biographical knowledge indicates and, hence, began the poems in praise of her some considerable time before her marriage to Lord Rich. In fact Howe places these early poems before the Arcadia and The Defence of Poesie, putting herself generally in Wilson's camp as far as the dating of the early sonnets goes. She further believes that when Penelope married Lord Rich late in 1581, Sidney took up the sequence again[13] and inserted among the older lyrics the poems concerned with poetic technique and the identification sonnet, 24, in which the name of Stella's husband is indicated.[14] She cites in support of her theory A. W. Pollard's note to sonnet 6 in his edition of Astrophel and Stella (1888) that sonnets 1, 3, 6, and 15

> form Sidney's commentary on the unreality and affectation of the outpourings of other lovers. His strictures apply with equal force to many among the first twenty of these sonnets, notably the ninth, which it is hardly possible to believe that he composed after his poetic vision had attained this clearness.[15]

The best answer to Howe may be found in Ringler's review of the biographical evidence available, some of which was new at the time of the Ringler edition. Ringler concludes that "Sidney would have had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with Penelope until the early months of 1581."[16] James O. Osborn notes that there is meagre evidence of two

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[13]Stillinger, p. 621, rejects, as I do, the idea that sonnet 33 was written as an immediate response to Lady Rich's marriage.

[14]Howe, pp. 160-161.

[15]Howe, pp. 159-160.

[16]Ringler, p. 424; Ringler prints a complete review of all the biographical evidence of the relationship between Sir Philip and Lady Penelope as well as a summary of her life before and after her acquaintance with Sidney, pp. 435-447.

occasions on which Sidney might have had a glimpse of her. One was during the Queen's progress of 1575 when Elizabeth's party, of which Sir Philip was one, stopped briefly at Chartley, the home of Penelope's father, the Earl of Essex.[17] In a note Ringler deals specifically with this question and finds it "unlikely."[18] Another occasion upon which Sidney may have visited Chartley was in July 1576. The Earl paused there for a few days on his way to Ireland; and since Sidney also "went to Ireland at that time," it is possible that he may have accompanied Essex.[19] In either case Penelope would have been only twelve or thirteen years old, and the acquaintance would have been of the very briefest. If such an occasion occurred, this could be what Sidney is referring to in sonnet 33 when he says that he "could not by rising Morne foresee/ How faire a day was neare"; but this would only tend to support the conclusion that if he saw Penelope before her marriage to Lord Rich, he was not much taken with her, certainly not to the extent of writing sonnets to her. Other internal evidence, as Osborn notes, indicates that even if he knew her, "he failed to realize the force of his love for Stella until after she had become Lady Rich. This clearly suggests that nearly all of the sonnets were written after Stella's marriage."[20] Ringler further insists, quite correctly, that "Stella appears as a married woman throughout the sequence. . . . The poems . . .

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[17] Young Philip Sidney, 1572-1577 (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), p. 346.

[18] Ringler, p. 437, note 2.

[19] Osborn, p. 424.

[20] Osborn, p. 506.

must have been arranged in order, and for the most part composed, after Penelope's marriage on 1 November 1581."[21]

But any refutation of the idea of composition over an extended period must obviously be based on something more than a rejection of the position which Howe takes on the dates of the Sidney-Devereux relationship. Ringler again provides us with ammunition. He notes that there is important stylistic evidence that the poems were composed between the date of the completion of the Old Arcadia (late 1580) and that of the New Arcadia (1584). For one thing, as he points out, six of the songs in the sequence are trochaic, "a rhythm unknown in Elizabethan verse until Sidney introduced it."[22] Ringler notes further that Sidney had used trochaic measures tentatively in three of the songs included in Certain Sonnets but that there is no use of them in the Old Arcadia poems.[23] It is also noteworthy that, according to Ringler, the "Italianate" sonnet form, used consistently throughout Astrophil and Stella, appears in none of the eighteen Old Arcadia sonnets and in only two of those included in Certain Sonnets, CS 1 and 2, "which the evidence of the manuscripts shows were the latest of the Certain Sonnets to be written and were not added to the collection until late in 1581 or 1582."[24] Furthermore, Ringler says that

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[21]Ringler, p. 438.

[22]Ringler, p. 435.

[23]Ringler, p. 423.

[24]Ringler terms the sonnet form which Sidney preferred in his mature work "Italianate" rather than Italian because, as he explains, though Sidney "began to prefer an octave with only two rhymes, . . . only once in the Old Arcadia did he imitate the strict Italian form. . . . The form he eventually found most satisfactory combined an Italian octave with a

> several prose passages in the New Arcadia which do not appear in the Old, contain striking images and conceits that closely parallel and appear to be recollections of poems to Stella. Of even more significance are the changes in the character of Philisides, who is Sidney's fictional self-portrait. In the Old Arcadia, Philisides speaks often and openly of his love for a nymph named Mira; he has nothing to hide and is melancholy only because his lady has refused him. But in the New Arcadia he appears only once as quite a different person, for the object of his affection has there become a lady whom he calls his "star," and he is in the grip of a secret passion which would be shameful if it were known.[25]

Finally, there is the evidence of the one sonnet which can be clearly dated. An examination of the list of important international events Sidney cites in sonnet 30 makes it clear that it was composed in the summer of 1582, and Ringler notes that "there is no reason to suppose that the other sonnets were not also written during the same summer." He admits the possibility that the "composition of the poems might have been extended into the year 1583 and even later" but finds it "scarcely probable."[26] In fact, he rejects the idea that there was an extended period of composition on the grounds that

> any close reading of the sequence shows . . . that when Sidney wrote the first few sonnets he knew perfectly well what the shape and conclusion of his work were going to be. . . . The consensus of the evidence . . . indicates that the bulk of the poems were composed and the work was given its final form during the summer of 1582.[27]

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cdcdee sestet, a combination he used in his later composed CS 1 and 2 and in 60 of his Astrophil and Stella sonnets" (p. lix). In all of the sonnets in Astrophil and Stella, Sidney limits himself to two rhymes in the octave, but their order varies from abababab to ababbaba to the Petrarchan abbaabba. (See Ringler's "Table of Verse Forms," pp. 570-571.)

[25]Ringler, p. 435.

[26]Ringler, p. 439.

[27]Ringler, pp. 439-440.

His arguments are extremely persuasive.

If, then, we reject the extended-period theory of composition, how are we to account for the discontinuity of style? The clue lies in the very criticism of those who support the extended-period theory. If we study their remarks closely, we shall see that what they are actually objecting to as "immature" or "unconvincing" sonnets are those in which convention plays the greatest part. Critics who have seen the stylistic discontinuity as purposeful have generally recognized this fact. R. B. Young, in his essay "English Petrarke: A Study of Sidney's Astrophel and Stella" states the problem most clearly. He acknowledges that there is some reason for criticism of the early sonnets and takes note of those who feel, largely on the basis of their conventionality, that they are the result of "an earlier stage of Sidney's poetic development."[28] He cites sonnets 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 particularly for their "thoroughly conventional" treatment of Stella, noting that in them "she exists only as the goddess of the Petrarchan ritual." He goes on: "The weakness of the poems as a group is largely, I think, in the abstractness and formality of the conventional decorum."[29] But he also notes, adding a new dimension to the problem, that sonnets 94-103 are the "most conventional series in the sequence, and one in which the only variation of the mode is from one ritual to another. . . . With one or two exceptions, these are Sidney's least distinguished as well as his most conventional sonnets.[30]

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[28]In Three Studies in the Renaissance, Yale Studies in English, 138 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1958), p. 41.

[29]Young, p. 42.

[30]Young, pp. 84-85.

Robert L. Montgomery, Jr. also sees convention as the key. He considers the personification in two of the later sonnets, 84 and 103, as "nearly ludicrous" and goes on to say that the "taint of artificiality also colors some of the early sonnets. Several of these dramatize myth as a form of praise and declaration of love."[31] Elsewhere he notes that, after the first two sonnets, Sidney

> alternates, until Sonnet 30, between obviously conventional renderings of Astrophel's devotion (poems of praise and complaint) and his rigorous moral inquiry into his own motives. The sonnets in praise of Stella (their tone is repeated and intensified later in such poems as Sonnets 42, 43, and 48) are most reminiscent of the love lyrics in the Arcadia. The formulas of eulogy and the rounded balance of the lines are only partially modified by Sidney's wit.[32]

Montgomery also supports Young's view of the conventionality of the later sonnets which "show Astrophel returning to the pose of a literary lover, reverting to the conventions he has apparently denied" in the central portion of the sequence.[33]

A similar view is implied in Vanna Gentili's discussion of the structure of the sequence in her introduction to the Italian edition of Astrophil and Stella (1965). Of the first part of the sequence, in which she includes sonnets 1-43, she says: "Il setting di questo primo atto è . . . quello della tradizionale situazione petrarchesca, e ad esso si adegua largamente la scelta dei tòpoi e le loro resa stilistica."[34]

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[31] Symmetry and Sense: The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 90-91.

[32] Montgomery, p. 85.

[33] Montgomery, p. 102.

[34] Astrophil and Stella, by Sir Philip Sidney (Bari, Italy: Adriatica Editrice, 1965), p. 152; [The setting of this first act is . . . that of

She further notes of the end of the sequence that after the "furente invettiva" of song 5, Stella "tornerà ad essere elemento d'una convenzione cui non può sottrarsi, per riprendere il suo posto sullo sfondo della scena con la fissità d'une raffigurazione emblematica."[35] Recalling in a note Donald Davie's remarks in Articulate Energy: An Inquiry into the Syntax of English Poetry about the systematic and progressive attenuation of the Petrarchan-Platonic mistress in the usual sonnet sequence, Gentili comments "Vista in questo schema, l'operazione di S. apparirebbe abbastanza singolare: Stella sarebbe 'abstract worthiness' nella 1ª parte, 'living woman' nella seconda, e ridotta alla 'ultimate abstraction of "being"' nella parte conclusiva."[36]

What Young and Montgomery and Gentili see emerging, then, is a pattern which, it need hardly be pointed out, works to contradict any effort to make the early sonnets, because of their conventionality, part of an earlier effort of composition. Young sees this pattern as follows:

> The majority of the most dramatic sonnets seem to be clustered toward the center of the sequence; the most conventional, the most "mannered" sonnets are by and large confined to the beginning and the end. There is, furthermore, a notable difference in the type of conventional sonnet prominent in these two places. Characteristic of the beginning . . . is the allegorical conceit of Cupid, as in Sonnet 8. . . . Sonnets 11, 12, 17, 20, and 43 are

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the traditional Petrarchist situation, and to it is largely conformed the choice of tòpoi and their stylistic delivery.] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

[35]Gentili, p. 155; [will return to being an element of a convention which cannot be escaped, by reassuming her position in the background of the scene, with the fixity of an emblematic figure.]

[36]Gentili, p. 155; [Seen in this scheme, Sidney's procedure would appear singular enough: Stella would be "abstract worthiness" in the first part, "living woman" in the second, and reduced to the "ultimate abstraction of being" in the final part.]

> of the same type. At the end of the sequence such allegory is conspicuously absent, and the ritualistic meditation predominates, as in Sonnet 89, . . . 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, and 108.[37]

It is this pattern and the reason for its existence that I wish to explore in the chapters which follow.

A number of critics have offered theories to explain the pattern. Kenneth Muir attributes the conventionality of the early sonnets to Sidney's desire to characterize Astrophil as an immature lover.[38] Young sees the subject matter of the sequence as the Petrarchan convention and the pattern as the result of Astrophil's testing of and ultimate affirmation of the convention.[39] Montgomery praises Young's reading because "it carefully links Sidney's work to the literary traditions he inherited" and because

> it relieves criticism of the false position of accepting those poems which appear to move farthest from traditional utterance and seem most directly expressive of "real" emotions, while rejecting the highly conceited and mythological sonnets as stiff exercises in imitation of familiar Petrarchan formulas.[40]

However, he attacks Young's acceptance of "the outcome of the sequence as a vindication of the Petrarchan code." He sees the "hallowed conflict of reason and passion" as informing the sequence and in that light finds it "impossible to see reason as a support for idealism, for it judges the impulse to worship just as it judges the passion." Therefore, for Montgomery, the ultimate effect is to "undercut the devotional basis

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[37]Young, p. 40.

[38]Sir Philip Sidney (New York, 1960), p. 30, as cited by Howe, p. 160.

[39]Young, p. 88.

[40]Montgomery, p. 102.

of Petrarchan attitudes."[41] David Kalstone makes the same caveat and finds "the only possible dramatic resolution" for the sequence in the two sonnets of Christian renunciation (CS 31 and 32) erroneously printed with the sequence in many earlier editions.[42] But these two sonnets, of course, are not part of the sequence, a subject which will be taken up at greater length in my concluding chapter.

Some of the disagreement between those critics who, like Young and Montgomery, otherwise agree that the fluctuation in Sidney's style in the sequence is deliberate could be eliminated by a more rigorous separation of poet and persona in discussing the sequence. Such a separation may be difficult when one is considering Astrophil and Stella because of the complicating biographical frame of reference, but it is for that reason even more necessary, as Stillinger has pointed out.[43] If we separate Astrophil from his maker, we need not see Astrophil's reaction to his experience as the reaction which Sidney wishes his reader to share. Chapter II will examine Sidney's view of poetry as a moral force in order to establish a case for seeing Astrophil as a moral exemplum. The suggestion is not entirely new; indeed it has been implied, if not stated, in the treatment of many critics. But there has been no serious exploration of Sidney's means to this end unless we allow that of B. P. Harbst. He suggests that in Astrophil and Stella, Sidney has Astrophil construct a seven-part classical oration exactly paralleling The Defence of Poesie in structure with the intention of showing how Astrophil subverts the arguments of the critical work in the interest of defending

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[41]Montgomery, pp. 102-103.

[42]Sidney's Poetry: Contexts and Interpretations (1965; rpt. New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 177-178.

[43]Stillinger, p. 639.

his passion for Stella.[44] His argument is ingenious; he makes some interesting points; and he is correct in saying that Astrophil's behavior is "meant as an instructive model of what to avoid and what to shun";[45] but his theory operates as a strait jacket, making demands which sometimes force him to ignore contradictory material.

The key to a successful interpretation of the sequence as didactic in intent lies in an examination of the effect of Sidney's Platonism upon his poetry. That Sidney is a Platonist is widely acknowledged. Irene Samuel contends that both the Arcadia and Astrophil and Stella were written "clearly under the influence of Plato" and points out how Sidney "encouraged Spenser in his Platonism, how at his death he sought reassurance in the words of Plato, how in the Defense itself he asserted that Plato of all philosophers he had 'ever esteemed most worthy of reverence.'" And in the light of these facts, Samuel insists that

> we cannot allow that Sidney's golden world of art is not the Platonism of a loving student of Plato, but simply a faint resemblance in the current of European thought to the original source. There is in his conception, here and throughout the Defense, certainly something Platonic, something taken immediately from Plato, however and whencever re-enforced.[46]

Mark Roberts views the whole of The Defence of Poesie as the attempt of a neo-Platonist to come to terms with Plato's Republic.[47] Elizabeth

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[44]Astrophil and Stella: Precept and Example," Papers on Language and Literature, 5 (Fall 1969), 397-414. Harbst acknowledges his debt to Kenneth Myrick's analysis of The Defence of Poesie.

[45]Harbst, p. 413.

[46]"The Influence of Plato on Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesie," Modern Language Quarterly, 1 (1940), 390-391.

[47]"The Pill and the Cherries: Sidney and the Neo-Classical Tradition," Essays in Criticism, 16 (Jan. 1966), 23.

Holmes notes that all of Sidney's work is "suffused with his own 'platonic' ideals" and that "his 'platonism' breaks out in little eddies of conceits as well as into fuller tides of thought."[48] Stillinger admits that "the Platonic strain of [Astrophil and Stella] cannot be denied. Stella is the embodiment of the virtues of ideal love. In Astrophel's love, however, there is almost no Platonic element." He goes on to say that "it is possible that in his sequence Sidney intended to oppose Platonic and non-Platonic . . . love."[49] Gentili remarks that Astrophil and Stella is "illuminata da un platonismo di derivazione bembista,"[50] and John F. Mahoney sees that "it is quite obvious that fragments of very many neo-Platonic philosophers of the Renaissance are to be found in Sidney."[51] It is perhaps surprising then that, with the exception of Mahoney, there appears to have been no systematic analysis of the role of Platonism in Astrophil and Stella. Mahoney did attempt in 1964 to develop parallels from Castiglione's The Courtier and Astrophil and Stella in order to make a case for the inclusion in the sequence of the so-called rejection sonnets (CS 31 and 32).[52] Though a number of the passages from The Courtier which he cites can indeed be seen as glosses on the sonnets, and I have made some of the same connections, he

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[48]Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery (1929; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), pp. 11-12.

[49]Stillinger, p. 633. Astrophil does try to love Platonically, as I will demonstrate, but fails and in failing attacks and subverts the tradition that he believes has failed him.

[50]Gentili, p. 152; [illuminated by a Platonism derived from Bembo.]

[51]"The Philosophical Coherence and Literary Motives in Astrophel and Stella," Essays and Studies in Language and Literature, Duquesne Studies, Philological Series, 5, ed. Herbert H. Petit (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1964), p. 30-31.

[52]Mahoney, pp. 31-34.

demolishes his own argument by insisting that the connection can be made only if the two sonnets in question are placed at the end of the sequence to give it "literary unity and philosophical coherence." He goes on to hope that, "the hard problems of editorial accuracy notwithstanding," this can be done.[53] His error is essentially that of failure to separate poet from persona, as I hope to demonstrate.

I wish then to make an analysis of Platonic elements in Astrophil and Stella in order to demonstrate how their use (and misuse) leads to a moral interpretation of the sequence. The three main sources of Platonic and neo-Platonic material will be Plato's Symposium, Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium, and Castiglione's The Courtier.[54] Perhaps the three most important treatises on the conduct of love in circulation during the Renaissance, they would be expected to influence the development of one of the century's most famous poetic works on love. And Sidney's acquaintance with them at first hand is either established beyond a doubt or strongly suggested by the evidence. He alludes to the Symposium in The Defence of Poesie and elsewhere. There is extant a letter from Languet, dated September 24, 1579, stating that a copy of Serranus' translation (1578) of Plato, which included the Symposium, had been dispatched to Sidney three months earlier.[55] The

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[53]Mahoney, p. 37.

[54]The texts used are as follows: Plato, Symposium, The Dialogues of Plato, trans. Benjamin Jowett, 4th ed. rev. (1953; corrected and rpt., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, trans. Sears Reynolds Jayne, Univ. of Missouri Studies, vol. 19, no. 1 (Columbia, Missouri: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1944); Baldassare Castiglione, The Courtier, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby, Three Renaissance Classics, introd. and notes by Burton A. Milligan (New York: Scribner's, 1953). Page numbers of citations will be indicated in text.

[55]Ringler, p. 468.

Courtier was translated by the close friend of the Sidney family, Sir Thomas Hoby, and was probably known to Sidney in this form, though he may also have read it in the original since he learned Italian early in his career. In fact, he may have been assisted in his study of the language by the Epitome of the Italian Tongue which Hoby compiled to assist himself in his translation of Castiglione and which he sent to Sir Henry Sidney in 1552.[56] Sidney's acquaintance with Ficino is widely assumed. Mahoney says, "The works of Plotinus . . . [were] known to him through Ficino's commentary."[57] C. M. Dowlin notes that

> the complete works of both Plato and Aristotle . . . were conveniently at hand in one-volume Latin translations. One of them was Marsilio Ficino's celebrated translation of Plato's works, revised by Simon Grynaeus and published in Venice in 1556.[58]

But even if Sidney did not have a first hand acquaintance with Ficino, though that is unlikely, the ideas of the Italian Platonist "became atmospheric," as Sears Jayne notes, and he is "the real fountainhead of Renaissance Neoplatonism."[59] Montgomery points out that "Ficino's Convito . . . initiates the explicit authority of Plato in Renaissance theories of love."[60] Therefore, it seems safe to assume Sidney's familiarity with Ficino's ideas even if only through intermediaries.

Thus, what follows is the first serious study of Astrophil and Stella as an example of Sidney's contention that poetry should have

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[56]Malcolm W. Wallace, The Life of Sir Philip Sidney (1915; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1967), p. 16.

[57]Mahoney, p. 31.

[58]"Sidney and Other Men's Thoughts," Review of English Studies, 20 (Oct. 1944), 266.

[59]Jayne, "Introduction," Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 27.

[60]Montgomery, p. 50.

moral force, and it is also the first serious study of Platonic elements in the cycle. The results of the investigation modify substantially both our understanding of Astrophil and Stella as a sequence and our reading of certain poems within the sequence. It is further hoped that, taking into consideration Sidney's general influence upon the poetry of his contemporaries and the influence of Astrophil and Stella as "the most important of Elizabethan sonnet cycles,"[61] this new light upon Sidney's poems will also help to illuminate the work of his contemporaries and of some of the poets of the seventeenth century. After establishing the basis for a moral interpretation of the work in Chapter II, I will analyze in Chapter III those sonnets which occur before Astrophil's choice of passion over reason in sonnet 52 and in Chapter IV the remainder of the sonnets in the sequence, pointing out the Platonic frame of reference and showing how structure, style, and content support a reading of didactic intent. Chapter V will explore six patterns of imagery for the same purpose. Chapter VI will treat the songs separately, applying to them the same criteria used in discussing the sonnets. The conclusions which may be drawn from the study will appear in Chapter VII.

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[61]Hallett Smith, Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning and Expression (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), p. 142.

CHAPTER II

SIDNEY AND THE USES OF POETRY

Writing of The Defence of Poesie, Rosemond Tuve tells us that "Sidney's remarks about poetry's concern with universals would have made his theory of poetry didactic if he had never mentioned teaching-and-delighting. It is the essential feature of the orthodox Renaissance theory of poetry's usefulness."[62] But Sidney did mention teaching-and-delighting over and over again in his essay, and we may examine these statements for more explicit evidence of Sidney's conviction of the usefulness of poetry, of his didacticism, if you will. Early in the Defence he speaks of poetry as "hart-ravishing knowledge" (F, III. 6) and terms it "A speaking Picture, with this end to teach and delight" (F, III. 9). But another infinitive figures even more importantly in his discussion of the purpose of poetry, an infinitive implied by his terming the knowledge which poetry conveys through its teaching function as "hart-ravishing": to move. He says:

> And that mooving is of a higher degree then teaching, it may by this appeare, that it is well nigh both the cause and effect of teaching. For who will be taught, if hee be not mooved with desire to be taught? And what so much good doth that teaching bring foorth, (I speake still of morall doctrine) as that it mooveth one to do that which it doth teach. For as Aristotle saith, it is not γνωσις, but πραξις must be the frute: and how πραξις can be without being mooved to practice, it is no hard matter to consider. (F, III. 19)

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[62] Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics (1947; rpt., Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 387.

The sequence is quite clear. Delight functions in two ways. First it aids in teaching. It entices the reader to digest the matter prepared for him, "as if they tooke a medicine of Cheries" (F, III. 21). Or, as Sidney says, the poet

> commeth to you with words set in delightfull proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for the well enchanting skill of Musicke, and with a tale forsooth he commeth unto you, with a tale, which holdeth children from play, and olde men from the Chimney corner; and pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the minde from wickednes to vertue. (F, III. 20)

Then, joining forces with the knowledge of virtue so implanted in the mind of the reader, delight accomplishes its ultimate task, that of moving "men to take that goodnesse in hand" (F, III. 10), in other words, to engage in virtuous action, "the ending end of all earthly learning" (F, III. 12). Philosophers can give us the precept, historians the example; but only the poet can do both and more (F, III. 13). Nature may make a flesh and blood Cyrus but the poet "can bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyrusses, if they will learne aright, why and how that maker made him" (F, III. 8). Nowhere, as Myrick insists, does Sidney say anything about poetry "merely as an agreeable experience."[63] To Sidney as to "the overwhelming majority of Renaissance critics," M. H. Abrams reminds us, "the moral effect was the terminal aim, to which delight and emotion were auxiliary."[64]

But if Sidney insists on the moral efficacy of poetry, he is equally insistent that it not preach. The poet pretends to do no more than tell a tale; the medicine must taste like cherries; philosophers may preach

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[63]Myrick, p. 210.

[64]The Mirror and the Lamp (1953; rpt. New York: Norton, 1958), p. 16.

but the poet's lure is an irresistible call to pleasure which so enchants the reader or hearer that he is led to virtue or away from vice willingly, almost unconsciously, as it were. He is not told what is good or what is evil, he is shown. Placed before him are "all vertues, vices, and passions, so in their owne naturall states, laide to the view, that we seeme not to heare of them, but clearly to see through them" (P, III. 15). It is a speaking picture that the poet constructs. Note the emphasis on picture, something to be seen; and note that it is the picture which speaks for itself; it is not something outside the frame commenting upon what goes on inside it. Sidney comes closest to realizing this ideal in Astrophil and Stella because it is there that he allows his persona to present himself directly to our judgment through both word and deed without the interpretive third person voice of the Arcadia.

Unlike modern didacticism, which, as Tuve points out, is primarily "an insinuating method of indoctrinating readers with moral commonplaces which will not stand the test of severe thought,"[65] Renaissance didacticism is concerned with presenting universals, things "intelligible" rather than things "visible."[66] Tuve notes that whatever other differences there may be, the influence of Cicero, Plato (and the neo-Platonists), and Aristotle all "affected the practice of poetry similarly," in that all three stress the necessity for Imitation to be the imitation not of the particular object or the particular instance but of the Idea, Cicero's "intellectual ideal," Plotinus' "ideal form and

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[65]Tuve, p. 388.

[66]Tuve, p. 35, in a citation from Tasso's Discorsi, Book II.

order," Aristotle's "simple idea clothed in its own beauties, which [is called] the universal."[67] Sidney puts it this way: the province of the poet is "to imitate, borrow nothing of what is, hath bin, or shall be, but range onely reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be" (F, III. 10). Roberts explains that this is part of Sidney's attempt as neo-Platonist to answer Plato's attack on poetry in The Republic as "untrue" and, hence, "morally corrupting." Thus Sidney affirms that poetic Imitation is not the imitation of the world of nature, which is "brasen" (F, III. 8), nor of the work of any craftsman who has previously sought to embody the Idea in matter (that is, of those things created by man) but imitation of the Idea direct. The poet does this, as Roberts explains, "by 'idea-lizing' what is presented to him in experience: he can see what things are like in their ideal natures from the hints and intimations to be found in the imperfect copies with which he normally has to deal."[68] Sidney is asserting, then, that, insofar as anyone "can attain knowledge of the Ideas, . . . can imitate them" the poet can.[69] And it is on the basis of his success in grasping these Ideas that we are to judge him: "the skill of ech Artificer standeth in that Idea, or fore conceit of the worke, and not in the worke it selfe" (my italics) (DP,F, III. 8). The implication is that the ultimate test of the worth of the work is not in the technical skill of the poet, no matter how great, but in the Idea which it embodies. That this is not simply a separation of manner from matter is evident from the rest

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[67]Tuve, p. 41.

[68]Roberts, p. 23.

[69]Roberts, pp. 23-24.

of the passage: "And that the Poet has that Idea, is manifest, by delivering them foorth in such excellencie as he had imagined them." It is assumed that the Idea will have a suitable vehicle, one which will not only transport it but transport it with style. A truly successful poem will contain significant matter set forth to its best advantage, in a manner worthy of its matter. But a poem in which the artificer clearly has attempted to grasp the Idea though he has not entirely succeeded in clothing it appropriately is to be preferred to one in which the artificer, though his manner is skillful and polished, has either failed to grasp the Idea or having grasped it has perverted it. If my interpretation of Astrophil and Stella is correct, we may measure Sidney's success in constructing the sequence by this criterion; and we may simultaneously measure Astrophil's failure as a poet.

But Astrophil is lover as well as poet and the reader is expected to judge him in both of his inextricably related roles; for, after all, the "speaking picture of Poesie" illuminates and figures forth "vertues or vices" which otherwise would "lie darke" not only "before the imaginative" but also before the "judging power" (DP, F, III. 14). Though it seems that Astrophil and Stella illuminates the figure of Astrophil sufficiently to enable us to make such a judgment, it is of interest to examine other available evidence of Sidney's attitude both toward the role and responsibility of the poet and toward sensuous love and its effects. There is, of course, no more complete treatment of the subject by Sidney, aside from Astrophil and Stella, than the Arcadia, for Pyrocles and Musidorus, its princely heroes, are not only lovers, but, largely through the force of love, are transformed into poets. This is as it should be because we are told in Plato's

Symposium that "at the touch of [love]every one becomes a poet, 'even though he had no music in him before'" (p. 528). And Castiglione asks: "Who applyeth the sweetnesse of musicke for other cause, but for this? Who to write in meeter, at the least in the mother tongue, but to expresse the affections caused by women?" (p, 510). And because Pyrocles and Musidorus are princely poets and princely lovers--rather than Arcadian shepherds--their habits of thought and speech reflect the conventions of Platonic love, which, it must be understood, are not merely conventions but are embodied with ethical and moral force. As Ideas they may not be capable of realization in the real world in which the princes move, though that is debatable; but that does not relieve the princes of the responsibility of attempting to realize them. The streams of Greek Platonism and courtly neo-Platonism mingled in the waterfall of Christian Platonism, as expressed in the works of Ficino and Castiglione, and sent up a pervasive mist. Nowhere is it more pervasive than in the manner in which, as Maurice Evans says, it "coloured and ennobled the concept of human love."[70] Pyrocles and Musidorus, and later Astrophil, must come to grips with the contradiction between their cherished intellectual beliefs and their own sensual natures, between reason and passion. Pyrocles and Musidorus, as John Galm notes in his unpublished dissertation, "are concerned with virtue and want to make love conform to their rationally conceived ethics."[71] The shepherd characters in the Arcadia are free from such conflict because they see no contradiction between sensuality and love, but

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[70] English Poetry in the Sixteenth Century (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 17.

[71] "Sidney's Arcadian Poems," Diss. Yale Univ. 1963, p. 75.

Pyrocles and Musidorus cannot forget Ficino's dictum that "love and the desire for physical union are not only not identical impulses, but are proved to be opposite ones" (p. 130). They feel that they truly love and they long to be true lovers but constantly find themselves slipping away from what they rationally accept to be the definition of true love. In such a dilemma, convention becomes not only an expression of idealized love but also a means of realizing it. As Rosemond Tuve points out, "the emphasis on solace through utterance" in Renaissance poetry is not "the sentimentalist's escape through talk" but rests upon the very old idea of "control through disciplined uttering."[72] Donne explores this idea in "The Triple Foole":

> Then as th'earths inward narrow crooked lanes
> Do purge sea waters fretfull salt away,
> I thought, if I could draw my paines,
> Through Rimes vexation, I should them allay.
> Griefe brought to numbers cannot be so fierce,
> For, he tames it, that fetters it in verse.[73]
> (11. 6-11)

Distracted by the physical, one consciously sets oneself the task of transforming it, abstracting it, changing object into subject, so that one's attention becomes focused on the intellectual problem to the obliteration, however brief, of the original stimulus. The relationship of this idea to the procedure to be followed by the Platonic lover is obvious. As Bembo tells us in The Courtier, the lover "to enjoy beautie without passion" must "frame it within in his imagination sundred from all matter" (p. 609). Galm notes that in the Arcadia

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[72]Tuve, pp. 171-172.

[73]Citations from the poetry of John Donne are from The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. Charles M. Coffin (New York: Random House, 1952).

> Musidorus deals in concepts and feelings abstracted from physical reality. . . . [His] imaginative process is also an idealization of love. Merely to emphasize the interior reality of his love raises it from a physical to a primarily spiritual level. And by abasing himself and granting Pamela "peerless height," he creates a Petrarchan situation . . . . Pyrocles acknowledges his friend's idealized love by referring to Pamela as "the saint, your onely Idea!" Musidorus' process of abstraction leads him to the Petrarchan convention, elevating his particular love into the universal realm. It is a test and a justification of the dignity of his passion.[74]

Furthermore, as Galm also points out, "In the language of poetic convention, love is an attraction to goodness and beauty rather than to pleasure, and carnal desire is at least dominated, if not replaced, by spiritual desire."[75] Through the application of convention, then, "Sexual energy is diverted into art; [the] fire in the body is a source of inspiration, but it is made to serve [the] delight of the soul."[76]

There are, of course, notable differences between the Old and New Arcadia; and an interesting insight into the development of Sidney's ideas about passion and its relation to poetry during the interval between the two works, during that period in which he was apparently also writing Astrophil and Stella, may be gotten by examining some of the changes. Perhaps the most notable change, from the point of view of this paper, is that of the development of the treatment of idealized love. Though Pyrocles and Musidorus utilize the Platonic-Petrarchan convention to some extent in the earlier work, its impulse is decidedly stronger in the later one. This may be partly explained by the literary demands

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[74]Galm, pp. 53-54.

[75]Galm, p. 93.

[76]Galm, p. 94.

related to the expansion and development of the work into a true heroic epic, but some instances can only be explained in the light of ethical-moral considerations. One may recall that in the original Arcadia, Pyrocles actually seduces Philoclea--though her resistance is minimal (F, IV, 222-227); and Musidorus is only forestalled from assaulting the sleeping Pamela by the interruption of some Clowns (F, IV. 189). Both of these incidents, with the sensuous imagery that accompanies them, are deleted from the incomplete newer version (1590); and Ringler cites convincing evidence that the deletions are Sidney's own,[77] as Greville had indicated. But Sidney's intended revision of the trial scene which ends the work was apparently incomplete since it preserves a reference, among other things, to Philoclea's rape (Arcadia [1593], F, II. 180).

It is to this trial scene which we must look for Sidney's intellectual judgment of uncontrolled sensual love. Sidney's authorial intrusions make it quite clear that we are to regard Euarchus as a just judge--his very name means "good ruler"--and that his sentence of death upon the two young princes is just--though it may not be merciful. Of those who find him overstrict in upholding justice even when he discovers it is his own son and nephew he has sentenced to death, Sidney says that they were "examening the Matter by theyre owne passions" and describes Euarchus as one of those "extraordenary excellences [who] not beeyng rightly conceyved do rather offend then please" (F, IV. 386). That he is not a man lacking in feeling is clear also: he is "vehemently stricken with the Fatherly love of so excellent Children" (F, IV. 382); he "felt his owne misery more then" the "Beholders" but "loved

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[77] Ringler, p. 375-379.

goodnes more then hym self" (F, IV. 386). His address to his son and nephew expresses both his sorrow and his sense of justice:

> But alas shall Justice haulte, or shall shee wincke in ones Cause w^ch had Lynxes eyes in an other, or rather shall all private respectes give place to that holy name? Bee yt so, bee yt so, lett my gray hayers bee layde in the Dust w^th sorowe, lett the smalle Remnant of my lyfe bee to mee an inward & owteward desolation, and to the worlde a gasing stock of wretched misery. But, never, never let sacred Rightfullnes falle, yt ys Immortall and Immortall oughte to bee preserved: yf Rightly I have judged, then rightly I have judged myne owne Children, unless the name of a Chylde shoulde have force to chaunge the never chaunging Justice. No, no, Pyrocles and Musidorus, I preferr yo^w muche before myne owne lyfe, but I preferr Justice as farr before yow: When yow did lyke youre selves my body shoulde willingly have beene youre sheelde, but I can not keepe yo^w from the effectes of youre owne doynge. (F, IV. 383)

In his reminder to the princes that, in betraying the beliefs which they themselves have cherished concerning the conduct of true love, they have betrayed their own better selves, Euarchus points the moral of the piece. And Musidorus, so much more temperate than his friend Pyrocles, acknowledges that "yt was theyre owne faulte and not his unjustice" (F, IV, 384). It seems clear then that Euarchus' opinion of the destructive power of unrestrained sensual love should weigh heavily with the reader. He rejects Musidorus' and Pyrocles' plea that their crimes spring from the force of love when he contrasts "that unbrydeled Desyer w^ch ys intituled Love" with that "sweete and heavenly uniting of the myndes, w^ch properly ys called Love, hathe no other knott but vertue: And therefore, yf yt bee a Right Love, yt can never slyde into any action y^t ys not vertuous" (F, IV. 378-379).

In the light of this condemnation of "unbrydeled Desyer" and this defense of Justice by Euarchus, the fairy-tale ending of the Old Arcadia

leaves us with "an effect of ethical confusion."[78] We may conclude from this, as Lanham suggests, either that "Sidney the moralist had lost his nerve" or, as Lanham further suggests, that we are to regard the Old Arcadia as a comic novel, a sort of sixteenth-century Tom Jones, which can make, or ask the reader to make, serious moral judgments and still allow for a surprise happy ending.[79] Lanham prefers the second alternative and some support for his view may be adduced from Sidney's discussion of comedy in The Defence of Poesie (F, III. 23) which indicates that his idea of comedy is the conventional neo-classical one later embraced by Fielding and his contemporaries. At any rate, Sidney, himself, was apparently troubled by the ethical ambiguity of his early effort and this, as well as literary considerations, urged him to expand and revise it. Ringler finds evidence in Sidney's revision of the oracle (OA 1) that he "planned a different denouement for the New Arcadia, for [the revisions] indicate that Pyrocles and Musidorus marry Philoclea and Pamela before their trial, and that the main point at issue in the trial is that they are accused of responsibility for the supposed death of Basilius rather than of violence toward the princesses."[80] These changes coupled with the earlier elimination of the seduction of Philoclea and the near rape of Pamela would have effectively eliminated the issue of unrestrained sensual love and brought the characters of

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[78]Richard Lanham, "The Old Arcadia," Sidney's Arcadia (New Haven and London: Yale Univ., 1965), p. 368. Lanham quotes approvingly a remark by Kenneth T. Rowe in Romantic Love and Parental Authority in Sidney's "Arcadia," Univ. of Michigan Contributions in Modern Philology 4, 1947, p. 16.

[79]Lanham, Arcadia, pp. 367-368.

[80]Ringler, p. 383.

his princes into the true pattern of heroic lover. If Fulke Greville is to be believed, Sidney was apparently so troubled by the moral problem presented by the work in its unfinished state that at the time of his death he feared "that even beauty it self, in all earthly complexions, was more apt to allure men to evill, than to fashion any goodness in them. And from this ground, in that memorable testament of his, he bequeathed no other legacie, but the fire, to this unpolished Embrio."[81] Greville himself, though choosing to ignore Sidney's wishes in the matter, published the incomplete later version of the romance as "fitter to be printed."[82]

It is particularly important to notice that Sidney was apparently most concerned with removing from his romance the issue of adultery, for that is what Pyrocles and Musidorus are charged with by Euarchus (F, IV. 379). The fact that both princes wish to marry the ladies they have dishonored, either in body or in reputation, is not an admissible defense. Euarchus rejects completely the argument that this will right the wrong (F, IV. 379) though all parties are eager for such a solution. As a matter of fact, however, the romance does end in the marriages of the princes and the princesses; and their marriages do go a long way to create the happy outcome of the work. Mark Rose contends that "marriage gradually [became] a duty, a virtue, and almost a kind of religious

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[81] Life of Sir Philip Sidney, etc (1652), with an introd. by Nowell Smith (1907; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 16-17.

[82] Walter R. Davis, "A Map of Arcadia: Sidney's Romance in Its Tradition," Sidney's Arcadia (New Haven and London: Yale Univ., 1965), p. 3. Davis quotes from a letter from Greville to Sir Francis Walsingham originally cited in R. W. Zandvoort, Sidney's Arcadia: A Comparison between the Two Versions (Amsterdam, 1929), p. 3.

order" in Protestant England.[83] But the sanction that marriage gave to desire was allowed not only by the Protestants but by the Platonists. It is not true, as Douglas L. Peterson implies, that neo-Platonism did not recognize that "men have bodies as well as souls."[84] Sears Jayne points out in his introduction to Ficino's Commentary that "Ficino insists that we realize that, in this life, body and soul are inseparable . . . , that the desires of the body are not wicked in themselves . . . , but are wicked only as man loses the sense of proportion which enables him to see that earthly desires are only the beginning of the path up which we trudge to the perception of divinity" (p. 26). It is not physical desire, per se, that Platonist and neo-Platonist alike condemn but "unbrideled Desyre," the irrational and hence impractical conquest of reason by passion. Ficino defines three kinds of love: the contemplative, through which "we are lifted immediately from the sight of bodily form to the contemplation of the spiritual and divine"; the practical and moral, where "we remain in the pleasures only of seeing and social relations"; and the voluptuous, in which "we descend immediately from the sight to the desire to touch." He goes on: "These three loves have three names: love of the contemplative man is called divine; that of the practical man, human; and that of the voluptuous man, animal" (p. 193). It is through adulterous love, he tells us, that "man descends to the nature of the beast" (p. 230). It is in this class that Pyrocles and Musidorus have placed themselves, and Euarchus'

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[83] Heroic Love: Studies in Sidney and Spenser (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p. 28.

[84] The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne: A History of the Plain and Eloquent Styles (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), p. 197.

judgment of their acts is merciless for that reason. They have, as he tells them, done unlike themselves (F, IV. 383), negated their erected wit which had placed them only a little lower than the angels.

If their marriages redeem them in the end, it is because marriage, though not as fine as divine love, is human and rational, that is, practical. If they have not transcended the human, at least they have transcended the beast. Human love is, by Ficino's definition, essentially limited to the pleasures "of seeing and social relations" but under the latter term is subsumed all of the social purposes of marriage, including procreation. Ficino tells us specifically that lawful procreative love is as honorable as contemplative love (p. 192). Diotima, lecturing Socrates in the Symposium tells him, "The union of man and woman is a procreation; it is a divine thing, for conception and generation are an immortal principle in the mortal creature" (p. 538). But intercourse outside of the bonds of marriage or custom is forbidden: "the functions of generation and coition" must be performed "within the bounds prescribed by natural laws and civil laws drawn up by men of wisdom" (Ficino, p. 143). It is this rule which the princes have violated and it is this rule which Astrophil longs to violate. But Astrophil's dilemma is much worse than that of the princes. To explore the situation to its fullest, to make impossible the kind of question-begging that occurs at the end of the Arcadia in its original form, Sidney creates for Astrophil an impossible love, thoroughly impractical in the Platonic sense (and the social one) and hence irrational. There can be no marriage here to make things come right; and in The Courtier Lord Julian warns that when love "can not ende in matrimonie, the woman must needs have alwaies the remorse and pricking that is had of unlawfull

matters, and she putteth in hazard to staine the renowne of honestie, that stadeth her so much upon" (p. 515). That Stella's husband is uncongenial--perhaps even a monster--alters matters not a jot:

> Yet since not loving is not many times in our will, if this mishappe chaunce to the woman of the Pallace, that the hatred of her husband or the love of an other bendeth her to love I will have her graunt her lover nothing els but the minde: not at any time to make him any certaine token of love, neither in worde nor gesture, nor any other way that he may be fully assured of it. (The Courtier, p. 516)

The middle way, that of human love, is closed to Astrophil. He, like his creator, is clearly well-grounded in what J. W. Lever calls the "moral and rationalistic aspects of Platonism";[85] and, as Michel Poirier says, "désir sensuel . . . lui paraît moralement répréhensible."[86] He knows that, as Bembo says in The Courtier, to covet the body is to allow the soul to fall "into most deepe errours" (p. 594). He resolves to reject the lowest road and seek out the highest. As there is no honorable end to which his desire may tend, as it may in the Arcadia, he must somehow sublimate his physical longing and convert it to the use of his soul.

If Platonism poses the problem, it also outlines the means to solve it. Indeed, it is with the conduct of love in such situations, outside of marriage, that Ficino is mostly concerned and that Castiglione exclusively deals. In the latter work, Bembo, detailing the steps by which man may ascend the Platonic ladder, warns the lover that at the very first moment of attraction "hee ought in this beginning to seeke a

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[85]The Elizabethan Love Sonnet (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1956), p. 79.

[86]Sir Philip Sidney: Le Chevalier Poète Élizabéthain (Lille: Bibliothèque Universitaire, 1948), p. 82;[sensual desire . . . appears to him morally reprehensible.]

speedy remedie and to raise up reason, and with her to sense the fortresse of his hart, and to shut in such wise the passages against sense and appetites, that they may enter neither with force nor subtil practice." If the fire "continue or encrease, then must [he] determine . . . to shunne thoroughly al filthinesse of common love, and so enter into the holy way of love, with the guide of reason." He should realize that the beauty of the woman's body is not True Beauty and is in fact much inferior to True Beauty in that it is incorporated in a "vile subject and full of corruption," the human body. He should further recognize that beauty, being the province of the eye, is to be enjoyed only through the sense of sight, as one would enjoy a beautiful painting, never that of touch. He may, however, also enjoy the beauty of his mistress' voice through the other of the "two senses, which have litle bodily substance in them, and be the ministers of reason," that of hearing (pp. 604-605). The process, in short, is one of de-personalization, or, as Bembo puts it later, the lover "by the helpe of reason must full and wholy call backe againe the coveting of the bodie to beautie alone, and (in what he can) beholde it in it selfe simple and pure, and frame it within in his imagination sundred from all matter" (p. 609). The poet-lover must, therefore, avoid sensuous imagery, shun the particular in favor of the universal, and abstract and idealize his mistress. He must, in short, exercise control of his passion through disciplined uttering.

Furthermore, the poet's duty to move his auditor to virtue is multiplied by the lover's duty to do the same, specifically with regard to his mistress. Bembo tells us in The Courtier that the lover must "love no lesse in her the beautie of minde, than of the bodie" and

> Therefore, let him have a care not to suffer her to run into an errour, but with lessons and good exhortations seeke alwaies to frame her to modestie, to temperance, to true honestie, and so to worke that there may never take place in her other than pure thoughts, and farre wide from all filthinesse of vices. And thus in sowing of vertue in the garden of that minde, he shall also gather the fruites of most beautiful conditions, and savour them with a marvellous good relise. (p. 605)

This "engendring . . . of beautie in beautie" (The Courtier, p. 605) is called by Plato pregnancy of soul in contrast with the pregnancy of body, which leads to the procreation of offspring (The Symposium, p. 540). The dual role of poet-lover is suggested by Ficino when he says that "Love which pertains to the soul desires to steep the soul in the most beautiful and significant learning, to bring forth a wisdom like itself by polished writing in a beautiful style, and to generate wisdom by teaching, in a beautiful soul" (p. 204). Note that a beautiful style is essential because it delights and therefore moves, or as Sidney says in The Defence of Poesie, it persuades, "which should be the ende of . . . fineness" (F, III. 42). Considerations of manner or style, then, are as vital to the poet-lover as are considerations of matter or Invention. This is the reason that Astrophil, struggling to create his golden world, in what is roughly the first half of the sonnets, spends considerable time on stylistic matters. He does not regard time so spent, nor should we, as a stepping aside from the main business at hand, the successful idealization of his passion, merely to consider technical matters or to criticize his contemporaries. The consideration of such matters is an essential part of his process.

Astrophil's struggle is doomed to failure. Though he tries to be a "contemplative lover" as Peterson notes,[87] his will is not firm enough;

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[87]Peterson, p. 195.

and though he never becomes an adulterer because Stella never abandons her Platonic role, he does become the voluptuous lover. And since literary and moral considerations are inextricably entwined for the Renaissance poet, his lapse from virtue corrupts his verse. Sidney, creating his moral exemplum in Astrophil, succeeds in realizing the "Idea, or fore conceit of the worke" (DP, F, III. 8); Astrophil, abandoning his Ideal, does not. Sidney guides his winged steed with a sure hand and a tight rein toward the end of its journey: to teach, to delight, to move. Astrophil, setting out upon the same flight, finds himself, as sonnet 49 puts it so aptly and significantly, the ridden instead of the rider. And he has not only lost control but he has, in the process, deliberately perverted the instruments of moral good, Platonic thought and poetry itself, and made them instruments of seduction, hence moral evil.

Davis says of the Arcadia that "Sidney used the pastoral romance as a vehicle for exploring problems of moral philosophy," and that one of these problems is "the problem of love's relation to virtue."[88] The same is true of Astrophil and Stella. In either case, the problem confronted by the lover (or lovers) is not a simple one, at least not in an age when man was thought to be only a little lower than the angels in the great chain of being, capable through his erected wit of recognizing the Ideal and, because of his unique share in the divine nature, of longing for it. The idea is a beautiful one and, as in the case of all the highest aspirations of mankind, not less beautiful because of the difficulty of its realization. The man of the Renaissance was as aware of the difficulties as his modern day counterpart though he had, perhaps, more faith in the

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[88]Davis, pp. 171-172.

possibility of triumphing over them. He knew, as Sidney tells us in The Defence of Poesie, that man's erected wit was coupled with an infected will, product of the Fall (F, III. 9) and that the will, therefore, was continually at hazard in the struggle between reason and passion (appetite). But he also knew there was no escape from the responsibility of choice. In The Courtier, Bembo tells us that "man of nature indowed with reason, placed (as it were) in the middle betweene these two extremities, [sense and understanding] may through his choice inclining to sense, or reaching to understanding, come nigh to the coveting sometime of the one, sometime of the other part" (p. 593). Ficino insists, as Jayne notes, upon free will, "upon the liberty of the individual. . . . [He] extended to mankind the right to choose, to win its way to God by intelligent control of desire, and by the recognition of the lofty end toward which desire tends" (p. 26). To err is human and in some circumstances even to be excused. In The Courtier Bembo says:

> As I judge therefore, those yong men that bridle their appetites, and love with reason, to be godly: so doe I hold excused such as yeelde to sensuall love, whereunto they be so enclined through the weakenesse and frailtie of man: so they show therein meekenes, courtesie, and prowesse, and the other worthie conditions that these Lords have spoken of. (pp. 596-597)

But it is quite clear that the men who exhibit this "weakenesse and frailtie" are by no means to be esteemed as are those who "with the bridle of reason restraine the ill disposition of sense" (The Courtier, p. 596). And they are not to be excused at all except upon the conditions laid down in the final clause, or as Bembo puts it elsewhere in The Courtier, unless they "to winne them the good will of their Ladies practise vertuous thinges, which for all they be not bent to a good end, yet are they good in them selves" (p. 596). At best such a lover deserves our

pity, not only for his weakness of character but also for the inevitable suffering his subjugation to sense will bring:

> Whereupon most commonly it happeneth, that yong men be wrapped in this sensuall love, which is a very rebel against reason, and therefore they make themselves unworthie to enjoy the favors and benefits which love bestoweth upon his true subjects, neither in love feele they any other pleasures, than what beastes without reason doe, but much more grievous afflictions. (The Courtier, p. 595)

Even if, however, we may grant our understanding and our pity to the man who chooses appetite over reason, we are not to absolve him of the responsibility which his freedom of choice places upon him. E. M. W. Tillyard, citing Hooker, notes that "specious arguments on the wrong side, too great haste of decision, and custom all persuade us to a wrong choice. Yet they are no excuse, for 'there is not that good which concerneth us but it hath evidence enough for itself, if reason were diligent enough to search it out.'"[89] And far worse than simple error of judgment is the error that arises when man deliberately "goes against the evidence of the understanding."[90] Such a course is evidence of a corrupt will; and, as Roberts explains, "for Sidney, as a Christian, virtue ultimately depends not on right thinking but on the purity and effectiveness of the will."[91] It is, therefore, significant that Sidney takes great pains to make us see that Astrophil is perfectly aware of the principles at issue and that his decision to cast off the reins of reason and yield himself up to the demands of appetite is a deliberate and conscious one.

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[89] The Elizabethan World Picture (1943; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, n.d.), p. 74.

[90] Tillyard, p. 74.

[91] Roberts, p. 25.

Astrophil and Stella is truly, as Leland Ryken has said, "a drama of choice,"[92] though the choice comes much later in the sequence than Ryken suggests.

Lanham's most recent view of Astrophil and Stella seems to be that it is merely a collection of occasional lyrics written to please a lady. In fact, he states bluntly that the "essential cause of the sequence is sexual frustration," that the sonnets were written merely because Sidney wanted "to bed the girl," and that, therefore, all the persuasion in them is aimed at her.[93] He insists further that the sequence "is not a meditative vehicle" but only a means to consummate Sidney's love.[94] There is, then, he contends, no Astrophil at all but only Sidney speaking to Penelope Devereux.[95] Lanham has apparently yielded to the temptation that we all feel at one time or another after reading reams of dull and pretentious pronouncements, to kick over the scholarly traces. But in so doing he has turned his back on his own earlier insights into the sequence. In his discussion in 1965 of "The Old Arcadia," he noted perceptively that "Sidney's literary method in . . . Astrophil and Stella . . . is diametrically opposed to the rhetorical. It is dialectical through and through. The reader watches rhetoric persuade others while Sidney aims to persuade him through his dialectic."[96] As Ringler notes,

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[92]"The Drama of Choice in Sidney's Astrophel and Stella," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 68 (Oct. 1969), 648.

[93]"Astrophil and Stella: Pure and Impure Persuasion," English Literary Renaissance, 2 (Winter 1972), 102.

[94]Lanham, "Astrophil and Stella," p. 103.

[95]Lanham, "Astrophil and Stella," p. 107.

[96]Lanham, Arcadia, p. 328.

Astrophil and Stella is unlike many other collections of sonnets which are

> series of verse epistles designed to gain the favour of a lady. There is no evidence that the sonnets were ever sent to Stella herself; indeed, many of them were inappropriate for her eyes--there would have been no point in having her guess her name (37), and no lover attempting to gain favour would tell his mistress of his cynical resolve to break her covenants (69).

He concludes that the poems "are a series of conversations or monologues which the reader overhears. The reader and not the lady is the audience, while Astrophil and those he addresses are the actors."[97] Over and over again, critics of the sequence have noted, as Vanna Gentili does, that Astrophil as a persona is "un amante ingénu che col poeta non può tutto identificarsi."[98] Confusing Sidney with his persona is, as noted earlier, particularly easy because of the known biographical background of the sequence, but it can be dangerous. Neil L. Rudenstine, for instance, makes the important and just observation that "Sidney's intentions were . . . moral: he expected poetry to move men to 'vertuous action,' the 'ending end of all earthly learning.' It was the thoroughgoing application of this persuasive theory to the practice of the love lyric, however, that constituted Sidney's particular contribution." But he illustrates this contention by saying that Astrophil would use these persuasive techniques to win "grace" from Stella.[99] The latter statement is, of

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[97]Ringler, p. xliv.

[98]Gentili, p. 164; [an ingenuous lover with whom the poet can not completely identify himself.]

[99]Sidney's Poetic Development (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), p. 171.

course, true, but in shifting from Sidney to his persona, Rudenstine fails to make the necessary distinction between the two. Sidney would never have considered Stella's yielding to Astrophil's will a "vertuous action" no matter how sympathetically he might have regarded it on other grounds. Astrophil, in the dramatic context of the sequence, subverts the technique of persuasion to virtue to move Stella to commit adultery; but Sidney wishes to move us to virtue and does it partly through irony which depends to a great extent on our witnessing Astrophil misuse and tarnish the poet's tools.

Tuve warns us that "modern readers are more likely to mistake the [sixteenth-century] author's meaning by forgetting that there may be a controlling didactic aim than by hunting for one."[100] And she reminds us that in The Defence Sidney defends even "the lyric on moral grounds."[101] She is, of course, referring to the passage in Sidney's essay in which he defines the nature and use of the different genres of poetry and asks how one can object to the lyric "who with his tuned Lyre, and well accorded voice, giveth praise, the reward of vertue, to vertuous acts? who giveth morall preceptes and naturall Problemes, who sometime raiseth up his voyce to the height of the heavens, in singing the laudes of the immortall God?" (F, III. 24). Later in the essay he speaks of "that Lyricall kind of Songs and Sonets; which Lord, if he gave us so good mindes, how well it might be employed, and with howe heavenly, fruites, both private and publike, in singing the praises of the immortall bewtie, the immortall goodnes of that God, who giveth us hands to write

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[100] Tuve, p. 46.

[101] Tuve, p. 14.

and wits to conceive" (F, III. 41). Taking note of the charge that poetry has become the tool of "wanton sinfulnesse, and lustfull love," he replies with what some critics have called a defense of love. Upon closer inspection, however, it seems perfectly obvious that if it is a defense, it is so weak a one that it would serve as well for an attack. For he simply says: "Alas Love, I would thou couldest as wel defend thy selfe, as thou canst offend others: I would those on whom thou doest attend, could either put thee away, or yeeld good reason why they keepe thee." This is no defense at all and a clear recognition of the irrationality of lovers. He does go on to say that he would find it hard to grant that "love of bewtie" were a fault, but he speaks here of love as "some of my maisters the Philosophers" set it forth. He grants that poetry has been abused in being put to the use of "not onelie love, but lust, but vanitie, but if they list scurrilitie" and that when so "abused by the reason of his sweete charming force, it can do more hurt than anie other armie of words" (F, III. 30). It seems clear then that Sidney would regard the lyric as being as liable to criticism upon moral grounds as any of its sister genres.

Sidney's own high moral character is beyond dispute. He was clearly himself aware of the pull of many passions; but whether through innate strength of character or through his early training, he apparently succeeded in keeping them under control most of the time, a habit that must have been useful in his usually frustrating dealings with Elizabeth. Control is the key word: man may feel but he must also think, and the triumph of passion over reason is a triumph of the animal over the angel. Even as a boy, if we may believe Thomas Moffett, Sidney was notable for this exercise of control:

> Though he saw, too, that the University (once the home of temperance, thrift, chastity, and holiness) through a gradual neglect of discipline and seizure of license had fallen almost to effeminacy and debauchery, yet by no allurements could he be led astray from the antique mode of duty; and even at first approach to puberty he checked the unbridled impulses arising from his time of life and from the custom of the place. Not by his own nature was this done, for it had made him vigorous, full-blooded, lively, ready for the sports of youth and all things after the manner of men, but by the strength of his virtue.[102]

This youthful insistence on control was further reinforced by his education both at home and at school. As Lever says, his "creed laid its main stress upon the individual conscience and practical morality,[his] philosophical grounding had lain chiefly in the moral and rationalistic aspects of Platonism, and [his] native tradition had no true affinity with the romance outlook." It is not surprising then, as Lever further notes, that he took more seriously than some of the courtly neo-Platonists who wrote sonnets on the continent the "moral purity and philosophic idealism [that] were the watchwords of a European movement which came to predominate in the Sixteenth century" and that, as a result, his art "operated in more organic accord with intellectual principles and he incorporated these in the very texture of his sonnet sequence."[103] Greville tells us that Sidney's aim in all of his works "was not vanishing pleasure alone, but morall Images, Examples, (as directing threds) to guide every man through the confused Labyrinth of his own desires and life."[104] Because Sidney was both a poet and a

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[102]Osborn, p. 21.

[103]Lever, p. 79.

[104]Greville, p. 223.

moralist and because, as Myrick notes, his "clarity of conception and deliberateness of method"[105] are notable, he chose to create his poet-lover persona, Astrophil, and confront him with a moral problem which, in the light of sixteenth-century poetic, had inescapable literary complications. In so doing, Sidney succeeded in creating a unique entity, a sonnet sequence that is moral not in the sense that Petrarch's can be said to be moral, as a blueprint to the realization of the Platonic ideal, but in a more practical sense, as a directing thread to guide us through the confused Labyrinth of our own desires and life.

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[105] Myrick, p. 217.

CHAPTER III

ASTROPHIL AND THE "GOLDEN" WORLD

It is in the first fifty-one sonnets that Astrophil attempts with varying degrees of success, to construct the "golden" world of the Ideal, in other words, to accomplish the task of the poet as Sidney envisions it in The Defence of Poesie when he says of nature, "her world is brasen, the Poets only deliver a golden" (F, III. 8). In sonnet 52 Astrophil openly rejects ideal Platonic love, throws off the reins of reason, and resolves to plunge into uncontrolled sensuality. In the balance of the sonnets in the sequence, he moves in the "brasen" world of nature as he first gives free rein to his desire (sonnets 52-song 8) and then suffers the consequences (song 9-sonnet 108).[106] Though I prefer to think of the

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[106]Various divisions of the sequence have been made based on different criteria. Young divides it 1-43, 44-song 3, 84-108. The division after sonnet 43 he makes because he feels that after this point there is a "reduction of the scale on which Stella has been treated" (p. 36). The problem this division creates will be discussed later in this chapter in connection with the discussion of sonnet 48 (see p. 80 below). The second division he makes just before sonnet 84 on the grounds that this sonnet, in which Astrophil moves toward an appointment in which he expects consummation of his love, prepares for the climax of the refusal which transforms him "into the Petrarchan lover who dominates the remainder of the sequence" (p. 81). It would seem that the Petrarchan phase Young sees could not exist until after the final refusal, that is, until after song 8 in which Astrophil's passionate plea for physical consummation of his love is hardly Petrarchan. Gentili agrees with Young's division after 43 for reasons similar to his but places the end of section two after song 4, that is, after Stella's first refusal. After this point, she says, Stella becomes an abstraction rather than a woman (p. 155), but it is in song 8 that Stella is most warmly human. A. C. Hamilton, "Sidney's Astrophel and Stella as a Sonnet Sequence," Journal of English Literary History, 36 (March 1969), pp. 59-87, ends the first section of the

sequence as having two main parts, Golden and Brasen, the latter portion clearly divides into two sections. Therefore, the division is essentially the same three-part division that Ringler sees. Ringler takes note of the sharp shift after sonnet 52 when he says that it is at this point that "the mask is dropped."[107] This phrasing, however, suggests that all that goes before has been merely a pose rather than a serious effort, accompanied by much soul searching, on Astrophil's part. This impression is confirmed when Ringler goes on: "Unlike many other sonneteers who had attempted to transform their emotions by processes of Platonic or religious sublimation . . . Astrophil remains a realist and accepts the power of emotion as an empirical fact that cannot be denied."[108] It seems evident, however, that up until sonnet 52 Astrophil does indeed attempt to "transform his emotions by processes of Platonic or religious sublimation" and that it is only at that point that he "accepts the power of emotion as an empirical fact that cannot be denied." This does

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sequence with sonnet 35, contending that sonnet 36 contains the first direct address to Stella (but see sonnet 30, l. 14), makes the first mention of her voice (but see sonnet 12, l. 8), and "creates an entirely new relationship between them [since] her voice implies, of course, that she is an immediate physical presence" (p. 78) (but see sonnet 38 in which she sings in Astrophil's sleep). His second section he begins after song 2, apparently because this is where the first kiss occurs and he sees this as beginning another phase of the relationship. This leaves sonnets 73 to 108 in the final section, but surely one would have to say that another phase of the relationship begins after Stella's final refusal in song 8. Leonora Leet Brodwin, "The Structure of Sidney's Astrophel and Stella," Modern Philology 67 (Aug. 1969), 35-40, agrees with Hamilton's division after 35 but ends the second section after sonnet 87. Her divisions are made on the basis of the light and dark imagery associated with Stella's eyes and will be discussed in Chapter V.

[107] Ringler, p. xlvii.

[108] Ringler, p. xlvii.

not mean, as we shall see, that Sidney agrees that such a denial is impossible.

In this chapter and the succeeding one the general movement of individual sonnets as well as the movement of the sequence as a whole will be traced and some aspects of style will be discussed. This chapter will deal with the Golden World sonnets (1-51) and the following one with the Brasen World sonnets (52-108). Though some of the Golden World sonnets function in more than one way, we can arrange them roughly into four groups by classifying them according to a primary function. One group of five sonnets, 2, 19, 34, 45, and 50, is concerned mainly with Astrophil's expressed need to idealize his relationship with Stella and the difficulty he has in doing so. Another group of four, 3, 6, 15, and 28, deals primarily with the question of the techniques he will use to accomplish his purpose. Sonnet 1 functions in both of these groups. A much larger group of nineteen, 4, 5, 10, 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 24, 27, 30, 33, 37, 40, 44, 46, 47, 49, and 50, reflects Astrophil's continual struggle to put down intrusions from the Brasen World, a struggle that he wins in almost every instance in this part of the sequence, the only exceptions being those sonnets which deal with his regret for two irremediable errors in the past, his failure to marry Stella himself when the opportunity arose (33) and her subsequent marriage to Lord Rich (24 and 37). Other sonnets in this group, with one exception, move internally from conflict to harmony, from doubt to resolution, or, in those coming later in this section of the sequence, from flesh to spirit. The remaining sonnet, 16, is not resolved internally but works with the following sonnet, 17, to achieve that end. The other twenty-two sonnets in this first portion of the sequence are those in which the Golden

World is truly achieved, that is, they exhibit Astrophil's successful idealization of Stella and his feeling toward her.

As I have indicated, sonnets 1, 2, 19, 34, 45, and 50 are those in which Astrophil either expresses the necessity of idealizing his romantic attachment or recognizes the difficulties inherent in the task he has set for himself. The first stanza of sonnet 1 states the problem neatly. Astrophil feels himself to be a true lover; and love, as is expected, has made a poet of him. In both his role as poet and as lover his duty is to follow the prescribed path: to teach, to delight, to move. But real pain--born of Nature's Brasen World--arouses no pleasure in the breast. Therefore he must turn life into art; he will "paint the blackest face of woe"; and it is this painted woe which will delight the lady (and the reader). In sonnet 2, Astrophil recounts the progress of his affliction. His denial of love at first sight in line 1 of sonnet 2 is always cited as a deliberate attempt by Sidney to break with Renaissance convention since the Petrarchists always insisted upon it, but it actually fits into the Platonic convention. In the Symposium, Pausanius tells us that "a hasty attachment is held to be dishonourable, because time is the true test of this as of most other things" (p. 515). Astrophil's love has met this test since Stella's

> knowne worth did in mine of time proceed,
> Till by degrees it had full conquest got.

The fact that it is her worth which has conquered him, not her beauty, shifts the burden of attraction from her body to her soul and asserts the Platonic quality of his love. The worth of the loved object determines the worth of the love, as Pausanius points out: "love of the noblest and highest, even if their persons are less beautiful than others, is especially honourable" (Symposium, p. 514). But this

honorable love of a married woman can only remain honorable if the lover succeeds in his attempt to eliminate from it the taint of sensuality. Astrophil informs us that he has employed

> the remnant of my wit
> To make my selfe beleeve, that all is well,
> While with a feeling skill I paint my hell.

The idea of disciplined uttering is stressed, both as a means of control ("to make my selfe beleeve, that all is well") and as a means of moving ("feeling skill" is skill to make others feel). Again the transformation of life into art is seen as necessary. He will set forth for her (and our) delight and edification a painted hell.

In a dialogue with himself in sonnet 34, Astrophil again underlines the necessity of his attempt at idealization. As disciplined uttering it will serve "To ease/ A burthned hart" and he can "wreake/ My harmes on Ink's poore losse." And again we find the emphasis on the delighting, hence, moving, effect of art: "Oft cruell fights well pictured forth do please." By the time we get to sonnet 45, Astrophil's emotions are beginning to assume control and his exploration and reassertion of the same idea in an entire sonnet is tinged with irony: "I am not I, pitie the tale of me."

But though idealization is necessary on several grounds, it does not follow that it is easily achieved. In fact, Astrophil alludes to the difficulty of achieving it in sonnet 19 in a phrase that echoes and is illuminated by this passage from The Defence of Poesie:

> This purifying of wit, this enriching of memorie, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we cal learning . . . the finall end is, to lead and draw us to as high a perfection, as our degenerate soules made worse by their clay-lodgings, can be capable of. . . . For some that thought this felicity principally to be gotten by

> knowledge, and no knowledge to be so high or heavenly, as acquaintance with the stars; gave themselves to Astronomie . . . but all one and other having this scope to know, & by knowledge to lift up the minde from the dungeon of the bodie, to the enjoying his owne divine essence. But when by the ballance of experience it was found, that the Astronomer looking to the stars might fall in a ditch. . . . (F, III. 11)

Astrophil, too, seeks by contemplation of his star (Stella) to "lift up the minde from the dungeon of the bodie, to the enjoying his owne divine essence" and like that other lover of stars, the astronomer, fails:

> For though she passe all things, yet what is all
> That unto me, who fare like him that both
> Lookes to the skies, and in a ditch doth fall?[109]

No matter how he tries, Astrophil is not able to keep his mind fixed on the divine essence, and his disappointment in himself is real and touching as he pleads:

> O let me prop my mind, yet in his growth
> And not in Nature for best fruits unfit.

His plea is answered by love who counsels him to bend all his wit to his task of celebrating his star. Finally, in sonnet 50, just before the shift in the tone of the sequence takes place, he deals with the difficulty of expressing in words his ideal vision of Stella, and it is clear here that part of his difficulty stems from his growing physical desire. The words in which he wishes to express her "figure" (not, of course, in the modern sense of the word but in the sense of an imagined representation, in other words his ideal vision of her) spring now from his "panting breast" but

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[109]Ringler, p. 467, notes that the allusion both in The Defence of Poesie and in the sonnet is to an anecdote from Plato, Theaetetus 174A, which became a Renaissance commonplace.

> as soone as they so formed be,
> According to my Lord Love's owne behest:
> With sad eyes I their weake proportion see,
> To portrait that which in this world is best.

Since, then he must idealize his passion for Stella and since it is no easy task, a consideration of means is in order. This consideration, as noted earlier, takes place in sonnets 1, 3, 6, 15, and 28. In sonnet 1, Astrophil, by juxtaposing the personification of Invention as the runaway child of Nature with the image of the poet "great with child" through whom Invention will be reborn with the assistance of the midwife muse, emphasizes the doctrine of the poet as "an other nature" (DP, F, III. 8). The muse shortens his labor by pointing out the proper source of inspiration. It is to his heart which she directs him, the heart which, as Ringler notes, meant to the Renaissance poet and his reader, "the mind in general, the seat of all the faculties"[110] and not the seat of the emotions. As Tuve notes, if the muse had been recommending that Astrophil express natural feelings "rebelliously bursting through the trammels of form," as a good Elizabethan she would have had to direct him to his liver.[111] Ficino makes clear the function of the heart in the recognition and perpetuation of the Ideal. The heat of the heart acts upon "the purest part of the blood" to create a "certain very thin and clear vapor" which Ficino calls the spirit. This spirit is the median which joins the body and soul, and it acts like a mirror to reflect the image of what the senses receive. The soul sees these images, already removed from the material, and

> conceives in itself by its own strength images like them, but much purer. Conception of this kind we

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[110] Ringler, p. 459.

[111] Tuve, p. 39.

> call imagination and fancy; the images conceived here are kept in the memory. Through these, the eyes of the soul are awakened to behold the Universal Idea of things which the soul holds within itself. Therefore it sees a certain man [or woman] by sense and conceives him in imagination. (p. 189)

For that reason, lovers "do not see the loved one in his true image received through the senses, but they see him in an image already remade by the soul according to the likeness of its own Idea, an image which is more beautiful than the body itself" (p. 188). Astrophil's muse directs him not outward to the material world to Stella's corruptible physical body for inspiration but inward to the world of spirit to the ideal image which rests there and is immortal (Ficino, p. 201). His insistence that it is this image which provides his inspiration, which is the source of his invention, recurs frequently in the first fifty-one sonnets. In sonnet 3, for instance, he criticizes the method of those who claim inspiration directly from the muses--rather than from the Universal Idea within at the direction of the muse, as Astrophil does; of those who merely imitate the Greeks; of those who take their pattern from rhetoric texts; and of the Euphuists who rely on herbiaries and bestiaries to enliven their verse with sheer novelty and strangeness. All of these sources of invention are mistaken and being so can only result in a "seeming fineness, but perswade few, which should be the ende of their fineness" (DP, F, III. 42).[112] Astrophil's inspiration, on the other hand, as he repeats in the concluding lines of sonnet 3, springs from his ideal vision of Stella. If the poet is to move, to persuade, he must gaze into the heart of the ideal fire by which he

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[112]The entire passage from which this quotation is taken is a gloss on sonnet 3.

cannot help but be moved himself. And being so moved, he can move others. He will not be like those lovers who

> so coldly . . . applie firie speeches, as men that had rather redde lovers writings, and so caught up certaine swelling Phrases, . . . then that in truth they feele those passions, which easily as I thinke, may be bewraied by that same forcibleness or Energia. (DP, F, III. 41)

Note, however, that the contemplation of the Ideal is not merely an emotional experience; in fact, it is essentially rational, and so it is appropriate that the poet-lover consider rationally his method. Means and ends are inseparable.

The focus on means becomes even clearer in sonnet 6 where Astrophil singles out certain specific abuses in the poetry of his contemporaries. Among these are the overuse of oxymoron, a too heavy reliance on myth or on the pastoral tradition, an excessive use of the word sweet or the excessive personification of emotions. Some critics have found a strange contradiction between Astrophil's animadversions in sonnet 6 and his practice elsewhere in the sequence, but common sense removes the difficulty. Astrophil is not attacking the conventions themselves, but quite specifically attacking those who abuse them. One would find it difficult to believe, for instance, that Sidney's child, as Astrophil is, would attack the whole of the pastoral tradition, defended by Sidney specifically in The Defence of Poesie and utilized by him in the Arcadia. Astrophil uses all of the conventions mentioned in sonnet 6 at one time or another in the sequence; he also deliberately abuses them at times for purposes of irony. In fact, it is my belief that he attacks their abuse specifically here, early in the sequence, so that when he deliberately uses them to excess we will be aware of what he is doing.

Sonnet 6 ends as sonnets 1 and 3 do with a reassertion of the source of Astrophil's invention, and sonnet 15 repeats the pattern of 1, 3, and 6. The first six lines of 15 attack other abuses of style and the comments above about sonnet 6 also apply here. Here are specifically mentioned the over-use of rhetorical figures and of alliteration, both of which Sidney attacks in The Defence of Poesie (F, III. 42). And, as contemporary rhetoricians noted, in line 6, Astrophil "to give a most artificiall reproofe of following the letter too much, commits the same fault of purpose":[113]

> You that do Dictionarie's methode bring
> Into your rimes, running in ratling rowes.

Astrophil is to commit such faults "of purpose" frequently in the Brasen World portion of the sequence. The rest of the sonnet deals again with the problem of the source of Invention. He warns that those poets who merely turn to Petrarch and imitate him "bewray a want of inward tuch." Note: inward. This is a clear statement of the error to be made by the poet who seeks his inspiration in the wrong place, outward, whether in material nature or in the literary works of others, rather than inward, in the image of the immortal Ideal carried within the heart. In sonnet 28 Astrophil reiterates the source of his inspiration. It is Stella, but again it is the ideal Stella which dwells within:

> But know that I in pure simplicitie,
> Breathe out the flames which burne within my heart,
> Love onely reading unto me this art.

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[113] Ringler, p. 466 quotes T. Combe (An Anatomie of Metamorphosed Ajax, 1596, $L6^{v}$) and notes that a similar remark was made by Hoskyns (Directions for Speech and Style, c. 1599). Sidney's comments on the abuse of rhetorical figures and alliteration are to be found in The Defence of Poesie, (F, III. 42).

Those flames may, ironically, be the flames of physical desire; but Astrophil intends for us to identify them with the ideal fire, that "sweet flame" which Bembo tells us "taketh the soules, which come to have a sight of the heavenly beauty," the "most holy fires in soules [which] destroyeth and consumeth whatsoever there is mortall in them, and relieveth and maketh beautifull the heavenly part, which at the first by reason of the sense was dead and buried in them" (The Courtier, pp. 612-613).

Among the most interesting sonnets in the sequence are those in which the Brasen World and the ideal Golden World which Astrophil seeks to create are juxtaposed. They occur in both sections of the sequence, and a comparison of the movement of those which occur before sonnet 52 and those which occur after is most revealing. Those in the first section, with the minor exceptions noted at the beginning of this chapter, terminate in a reassertion of the Ideal after a struggle between the two worlds. In those in the latter half of the sequence, as we shall see, the sense of real conflict is rare; and the juxtaposition is mainly ironic, a setting up of the Ideal so that it may be deliberately shattered. In the earlier sonnets the natural world may intrude in the shape of a friend chiding Astrophil for his lapse in virtue in his passion (14) or for his resultant failure to use his gifts in the active life of the court (21, 51) or in the shape of Astrophil's own concerns with the same problems (4, 5, 10, 18, 40). It may take the form of Astrophil's awareness of the envy and backbiting of his enemies at court (23, 27) or of the press of contemporary affairs (30). At other times his Golden World is shattered by the thought of what might have been if he had seized an earlier opportunity of making Stella his own (33) and

by his anger at the thought of her husband (24, 37). Finally, and most significantly, in terms of the later development of the sequence, there is the intrusion of physical desire, the flame which flickers up briefly in sonnet 16 only to be suppressed, burns more brightly before being banked in sonnets 44, 46, 47 and 49 as the section reaches its climax, and finally bursts into flame in sonnet 52.

Taking the sonnets in the order indicated, we may begin with those three in which the intrusion of a third party occurs. In sonnet 14 a friend, who clearly recognizes the true basis of Astrophil's attraction to Stella, who is after all a married woman and thus accessible only illicitly, warns Astrophil that

> Doth plunge [his] wel-form'd soule even in the mire
> Of sinfull thoughts, which do in ruine end.

Desire

But Astrophil, with a sophistry that he is to exhibit often in the sequence, denies that his love is physical:

> If that be sinne which doth the maners frame,
> Well staid with truth in word and faith of deed,
> Readie of wit and fearing nought but shame:
> If that be sinne which in fixt hearts doth breed
> A loathing of all loose unchastitie,
> Then Love is sinne, and let me sinfull be.

What he is doing, of course, is insisting on the Platonic nature of his love. "All true love is honorable, and every lover virtuous," says Ficino, "But the turbulent passion by which men are seduced to wantonness, since it attracts them to ugliness, is considered the opposite of love" (p. 131).[114] Love, says Phaedrus in the Symposium, implants more surely than any other thing "the principle which ought to be the guide of men who would nobly live . . . the sense of honour and dishonour, without

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[114] Cf. with Euarchus' speech on the difference between sensual and honorable love in the Arcadia, (F, IV. 378-379) which is quoted in my Chapter II, p. 28 above.

which neither states nor individuals ever do any good or great work" (p. 510). The right lover will lead his mistress "to modestie, to temperance, to true honestie, and so to worke that there may never take place in her other than pure thoughts, and farre wide from all filthinesse of vices" says Bembo in The Courtier (p. 605).

In sonnet 21, Astrophil's technique is different. He acknowledges all the criticisms his friend makes, repeating them mechanically, absentmindedly. His mind is "marde" by love; his wits are "quicke in vain thoughts, in vertue lame"; his studies of Plato have been in vain; the expectation of great things from him is in danger of being disappointed. But it is the acknowledgment of a man who agrees because he cannot be bothered to argue the question. Yes, yes, he says, you are perfectly right, but tell me: "Hath this world ought so faire as Stella is?" Just as Stella's image provides the resolution of all problems in the sonnets dealing with the source of invention and with technique, here and in almost all the other sonnets in this group, sonnets expressive of conflict, the power of Stella's image as harmonizer is stressed. Kalstone notes that in sonnet 1, "all the frustrations of the poem are finally dispelled by the energetic outburst associated with the discovery of Stella's image in the heart."[115] This same release of tension occurs over and over again in the sonnets in this group.

From earnest denial of unworthy thoughts and absentminded assent to his own jeopardy, Astrophil passes in sonnet 51 to irritability and evinces an impatience which prepares for the change in sonnet 52 and which is to characterize many of the sonnets that follow. Again he is

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[115]Kalstone, pp. 128-129.

being addressed on serious matters pertaining to his future at court and being warned "Of straying wayes, when valiant errour guides"; but this time he is not even civil to his admonisher. His "heart" (mind) is conferring with "Stella's beames," the ideal light of his star; and he finds himself

> irkt that so sweet comedie,
> By such unsuted speech should hindred be.

Astrophil's terming his vision of Stella a "sweet Comedie" is important but the discussion of its significance belongs more properly in the next chapter because it helps to signal Astrophil's fall into the Brasen World.

Though Astrophil is able to shrug off the concerns of his friends, he finds that he must also cope with his own misgivings. Early in the sequence he makes it clear that he knows that his attraction may not be entirely virtuous, and his first reaction is almost defiant:

> Vertue alas, now let me take some rest,
> Thou setst a bate betweene my will and wit,
> If vaine love have my simple soule opprest,
> Leave what thou likest not, deale not thou with it.
> (Sonnet 4)

But the fact that he is torn between his will (subject to appetite) and his wit (reason) is proof enough that he cannot, at least at this point, simply surrender to passion. He must, therefore, try to reconcile the two. The only means of doing this is by idealizing love, hence rationalizing it. The resolution of his conflict, the harmonizing of discord, as usual is found in the ideal image of Stella in his heart, an image which acts to reconcile all things. Virtue, looking upon this "true . . . Deitie" shall itself fall in love. And by implication it is not only love and virtue that will be reconciled but will and wit, the one infected," the other "erected," a dilemma which, as all good Elizabethans

knew and as Sidney noted in The Defence of Poesie (F, III. 9), had resulted from man's Fall. The ideal Stella is certainly a "true . . . Deitie" if she can accomplish such a task; and, Platonically speaking, there is no reason to doubt the possibility, assuming Astrophil's love is of the proper kind, i.e., non-sensual.

But the resolution is not a permanent one. Again and again the task is accomplished only to come undone. Astrophil, tormented by sensual love, by nature and training drawn toward honor and virtue, seeks his resolution as a good Platonist should by struggling to keep his vision focussed inward toward the ideal image of Stella that rests there. Over and over the conflict is harmonized only as he invokes this image. Smith described Astrophil's turning to Stella in this way as a "characteristic structure" which "allows a conflict to be terminated by a compliment to Stella without ever really facing the nature of love and desire or the relationship between them."[116] But Astrophil is doing much more than complimenting a lady; he is asserting her identity with the Ideal by investing in her that ability to harmonize, to reconcile opposites, to restore concord that is associated with "temperate" or "good" love by Eryximachus in the Symposium (pp. 517-519).[117]

In sonnet 5, Astrophil muses over the doctrines of Christian Platonism, which, his reason tells him, point to his deification of Stella as an error. All of these doctrines he accepts as true but finds also that it is "true I must Stella love." Kalstone notes here that Astrophil "confounds his opponents by constructing what appears to be a logical

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[116] Smith, p. 156.

[117] In the Symposium Diotima tells Socrates that all that is beautiful is harmonious with all divinity (p. 538).

argument ending in a paradox" and that the "two points of view are never reconciled."[118] Odette de Mourges sees the sonnet as a "false syllogism, the conclusion standing in contradiction to the premise. . . . We should expect the conclusion to be: I must love Stella because she is not earthly but true beauty" instead of what de Mourges sees as an implied "in spite of."[119] Gentili, who contends in a note that the sonnet is more accurately described as an emthymematic sorite, a "rhetorical" chain-syllogism,[120] says:

> La conclusione discenderebbe dalle premesse se fra le premesse che gli entimemi sottintendono vi fosse: "Stella è l'Idea della Bellezza." Ma tale proposizione non può darsi, perché [sic] Stella è, in questo sonetto come d'altronde in quelli che lo precedono, creatura mortale, bellezza terrena, e l'amore di Astrophil è definito idolatra. La conclusione, dunque, contraddice le premesse.[121]

But Stella has already been established in the preceding sonnet as a "true . . . Deitie" and hence is not merely a "creatura mortale." And because the sonnet does take the form of logical argument, because both premises are affirmed as truths, because the tone is so completely reasonable and because the progression of thought to an apparently inevitable conclusion is so clear, the structure of the sonnet itself acts

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[118] Kalstone, p. 138.

[119] Metaphysical, Baroque and Précieux Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 14.

[120] Gentili, p. 170.

[121] Gentili, p. 172; [The conclusion would descend from the premises if among the premises that the enthymemes understand there were: "Stella is the Idea of Beauty." But such a proposition can not be given, because Stella is, in this sonnet as elsewhere in those that precede it, a mortal creature, earthly beauty, and the love of Astrophil is defined idolatrous. The conclusion, therefore, contradicts the premises.]

to resolve the apparent contradiction. Gentili is correct in saying that it is necessary for one of the premises understood to be that Stella is the Idea of true beauty for the conclusion to be valid but that is the identification the sonnet implicitly makes. Smith recognizes this when he notes that in this sonnet the poet answers "objections to love by finding an identification between Stella's beauty and virtue,"[122] or true beauty. The argument, of course, is sophistical; but it is necessary. If Astrophil can make the identification he seeks to make, then his deification of Stella is no error; it does not contradict the tenets of Christian Platonism, because it is not the physical body of Stella that he places upon the altar but the Idea of her. Ficino tells us that Ideas (as distinct from Concepts) within the human mind result from the infusion of the light of God, which is True Beauty, into the circle of the Angelic Mind from whence it is imparted to the individual human mind (pp. 137-138). Thus Ideas result from a direct apprehension of God and partake of his divinity. The syllogism Astrophil asks the reader to construct in sonnet 5 is made explicit in sonnet 25: Stella is virtue (and therefore true beauty).

In both of the sonnets just discussed (4 and 5), reason is, of course, made the servant of love and Astrophil tells us bluntly in sonnet 10 that it is his intention that this be so. Just as virtue, apostrophized in sonnet 4, is made to acknowledge Stella's power, reason, which Astrophil addresses in sonnet 10, is made to yield to her. Astrophil rebels against reason which, as in sonnet 4, struggles with will,

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[122]Smith, p. 156.

dominated by appetite, "sence and love."[123] Astrophil cries out for reason to

> Leave sense, and those which sense's object be:
> Deale thou with powers of thought, leave love to will.

But the threatened separation of reason and love, placing the latter entirely within the province of sense or appetite, is averted. Again it is the image of Stella, her "rayes" which resolve the conflict, their brightness striking reason so that it falls to its knees in homage and

> offeredst straight to prove
> By reason good, good reason her to love.

In sonnet 18 philosophical problems give way to more immediate personal and practical ones. Astrophil agonizes over the question of whether his devotion to Stella is destructive to what his friend in sonnet 21 will call "great expectation." He has a sense of having "idly spent" all his gifts, of having wasted his youth, and of having abused his wit in defense of his passion. But again the idea of Stella triumphs:

> I see my course to lose my selfe doth bend:
> I see and yet no greater sorow take,
> Then that I lose no more for Stella's sake.

This is, of course, as it should be in the Platonic context. He is expected to sacrifice everything for his love. As Bembo instructs us in The Courtier, the lover must "obey, please, and honour with all reverence his woman, and recken her more deare to him than his owne life, and preferre all her commodities and pleasures before his owne" (p. 605). And his sacrifice, to be an acceptable sacrifice, must be as painful as it

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[123] Jayne, p. 143, makes the interesting notation that Ficino identifies intellect (reason) with the universal and will with the particular.

is deliberate or willing. Ficino makes this clear when he tells us that lovers "alternately lament and rejoice in their love. They lament because they are losing, destroying and ruining themselves; they rejoice because they are transferring themselves into something better" (p. 140). Such losses, then, are to be regarded in the light of a burning away of inessentials by the purifying ideal fire.

Regret again raises its head for a brief moment in sonnet 40:

> O Stella deare, how much thy power hath wrought,
> That hast my mind, none of the basest, brought
> My still kept course, while others sleepe, to mone.

But he concludes: "in my heart I offer still to thee." The image of his deity is still in its "Temple." This sonnet is also important because it is the first in the sequence that hints that Astrophil is expecting some kind of reciprocation from Stella for his love. He does, of course, speak in sonnet 1 of his purpose to obtain "grace" from Stella through his writing; but up until this point in the sequence he makes no direct approach to her on the subject. In fact, he only addresses her directly three times before this, casually, if tenderly, in sonnet 30 ("I cumbred with good maners, answer do,/ But know not how, for still I thinke of you") and formally in sonnets 35 and 36. Now, suddenly, she becomes "Stella deare"; and Astrophil reminds her that he "long thy grace hath sought" and that "noblest Conquerours do wreckes avoid." All he asks at this point, however, is "the influence of a thought." As Rudenstine notes, "the intimacy of his speech [in addressing her as "Stella deare"] has brought him momentarily close to Stella, but the gap between them widens considerably by the second quatrain. She is once again upon 'the height of Vertue's throne,' and the tone of address is thereafter determined by the decorum of the relationship as the

convention traditionally defines it."[124] It is clear that Astrophil marshals the forces of convention to defend the breach in the walls of his Golden World of the universal or Ideal made by his momentary, but prophetic, lapse into the Brasen World of the merely personal. This is one of many examples of the way in which Astrophil uses convention in the first section of the sequence as a device with which not only to express his love but also to control it. That is, it is an example of that disciplined uttering which Astrophil has announced earlier in the sequence to be a means of transforming real passion as it is found in the Brasen World, with all its attendant suffering, into idealized love. Here, however, the discipline is already beginning to weaken. The result is emotion held in check by convention but still very much alive. Rudenstine is correct in saying that

> behind this formal framework . . . we sense the presence of those feelings, peremptory and importunate, which provoke the cry of the very last line [i. e., "O do not let thy Temple be destroyed"]. The sonnet ends with an appeal that is tactical and conventional, yet also desperate in its helplessness and need.[125]

As the sequence moves toward the climactic moment of sonnet 52, Astrophil's controlling device, convention, becomes less and less effective as a tool to sublimate emotion; and his ironic attacks on convention in the portion of the sequence that follows are tinged with the cynicism of one who feels he has misplaced his trust.

Astrophil's awareness of the watching eyes that surround him at court and the envious malice of many of them is revealed in sonnets 23 and 27. In 23 he notes that those who place the best construction on

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[124]Rudenstine, p. 235.

[125]Rudenstine, pp. 235-236.

the behavior that his love melancholy induces[126] think perhaps that he is engaged in pursuing some "fruit of knowledge" or engrossed in matters of state in the service of the Queen; but others judge him to be infected with "ambition's rage." In 27 his abstraction is interpreted as "poison foule of bubling pride." In both sonnets he manages to shrug off his evident sensitivity to the whisperers by again focussing exclusively on the image of Stella. His only ambition, he reiterates in both sonnets, is centered on her. In sonnet 30 the abstraction that has given rise to the gossip of 23 and 27 is seen in action. Like gadflies, the "busie wits" of the court surround him, asking his opinion of important contemporary events, events which under ordinary circumstances would demand his full attention; but, again, his attention is turned inward to Stella. It is in the final line of this sonnet that he first addresses her, as I have noted above.

It is only in sonnets 24, 33, and 37 that Astrophil is unable to shrug off the intrusion of reality, the Brasen World. In these three sonnets he agonizes over the two irreversible events in the past that form the real barrier to the honorable consummation of his love for Stella in marriage, the barrier that he first acknowledges and accepts by denying the physical basis of his love and attempting to establish a morally and socially acceptable spiritual relationship, that he later attempts to storm regardless of the consequences, and that finally and decisively defeats him. The first of these two events, the one which

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[126] Astrophil exhibits some of the major maladies of love as outlined in Ficino, Speech 6, Chapter 9: abstraction, a loss of energy, melancholy "which fills the head with vapors" (pp. 194-195). The cure for this disease is also given: coition, hunger, inebriation, and exercise.

made the second possible, was his own early failure to recognize Stella's beauty and make her his own wife when he had the opportunity (33). The second is, of course, her subsequent marriage to Lord Rich, who is seen in sonnet 24 as incapable of appreciating that which he possesses and, even worse, as guilty of "foule abuse" toward his wife. Young notes the contrast between Astrophil's treatment of the threat posed by the court wits in sonnet 23, which he may shrug off by turning his attention to Stella, and that posed by Stella's husband in the sonnet immediately following. Astrophil's importation into the sequence of the proper name of a real person, making that person a character in his fictional world, breaks down for the moment the barriers between the two and, as Young notes, serves to emphasize the reality of the threat. Young says, "Rich as evil is 'real,' an actual character who is part of a 'real' world." And he concludes that the "violent tone" of the sonnet is a means of emphasizing this reality.[127] Sonnet 37, the second sonnet which refers to Lord Rich, makes explicitly the point which 24 suggests, that Stella's one misfortune is "that Rich she is."

Finally, we must take up the intrusion into Astrophil's Golden World that, as noted earlier, is the most important in thematic terms, that of physical desire. The "restless flames" of sonnet 16 may be seen as a first reference to the problem though here again the flames bear the weight of association with the ideal fire. Until he encountered Stella Astrophil had not experienced these flames, either sensual or Platonic, and doubted their strength. The image, though it is conventional, has a certain personal quality in the context in which it appears. Astrophil

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[127] Young, pp. 46-47.

thinks back on other women he has known and other physical attractions he has felt and compares his present feeling to them. The sonnet is rooted in the real, Brasen World. His conclusion is tinged with a certain bitterness. Since seeing Stella he is like one "who by being poisond doth poison know." The poison imagery is also conventional; Petrarch used it, e. g., Rime CLII, LXXXIII. Earlier references to the pains of love and most of the subsequent ones in the first section of the sequence are also conventional, hence idealized. But here, as many critics have noted, the tone at least cracks the veneer of convention. Lever expresses it best:

> The fierceness of the poison simile, and the parenthetical question--"Mine eyes (shall I say curst or blest) beheld Stella"--reveal a state of mind which reflects negatively upon the lady's accredited powers for good. All romance lovers, it is true, have reproached their ladies for coldness or cruelty; but Astrophil seems inclined to regret ever having set eyes upon his.[128]

It is interesting to note, however, that Astrophil never does directly reproach Stella for coldness or cruelty. In fact, he insists that "Her heart . . . is of no Tygre's kind" (44). It seems to be love, itself, or the act of loving which causes him pain rather than any particular coldness on the part of his lady. This is because the pain results from his moral dilemma, the struggle between his sensual nature and his moral nature. Significantly almost all such conventional references to the pains of love disappear after sonnet 52. That significance will be discussed in the chapter on patterns of imagery, Chapter V.

One of the effects of the desire which troubles Astrophil is a kind of chainless bondage. He has been fancy free. Many "Beauties" have

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[128]Lever, p. 73.

attracted him, but those earlier attachments did not result in a loss of freedom with its consequent suffering. He has considered those who complained of suffering the pains of love to be like babies pricked with a diaper pin. Romance has been a game. He has merely "plaid" with this "yong Lyon." Now he is caught and, like a newly captured beast, is restless in his cage. Here, too, he follows the path of Love which Ficino traces for him. Rage at servitude is only natural, says Ficino, and therefore all love has a certain "accompanying indignation" and all love "fades and grows green again from one moment . . . to the next." (p. 202). Sonnet 16 then is not resolved within itself as are the others in this group. Instead, Astrophil immediately follows it with a sonnet which handles in a completely conventionalized manner the subject of the lover's paralyzing wound. Sonnet 17 is a mythological set piece in which Cupid, newly armed with bows made from Stella's brows and arrows made from eyes, goes hunting with his new weapons and makes Astrophil his prey. The tone, in sharp contrast to the preceding sonnet, is light and playful. The effect is one of regained self-control. The real feeling which has escaped its conventional framework in sonnet 16 is neatly and effectively forced back into its bonds through the disciplined uttering of the poet and the generalizing effect of its association with myth.

Later in the sequence physical desire emerges more and more clearly as the main force Astrophil must struggle against if he is to maintain his idealism. Desire lurks in the shadows in sonnet 44, a full blown complaint in which the mistress, though she is not cruel, as has been noted ("Her heart . . . is of no Tygre's kind"), is certainly not kind:

> yet I no pitty find;
> But more I crie, lesse grace she doth impart.

Again, however, there is the retreat to convention as Stella's power as harmonizer is stressed. The reason she shows him no pity is:

> That when the breath of my complaints doth tuch
> Those daintie dores unto the Court of blisse,
> The heav'nly nature of that place is such,
> That once come there, the sobs of mine annoyes
> Are metamorphosd straight to tunes of joyes.

In sonnet 46, as Young points out, Astrophil "makes a frank acknowledgement of desire for the first time in the sequence."[129] He speaks of his own desire under the guise of an ungrateful Cupid who has been granted a "dwelling-place" in Stella's face but is not content

> alone to love and see,
> Without desire to feed of further grace.

Astrophil pleads with Stella, who is again "Deare," to forgive the erring boy "though he from book myche to desire," that is, as Ringler notes, though he "be a truant from the school of virtue and give himself to desire."[130] His intercession is based on the argument that it is impossible to "make hot fire" without "fewell"; in other words, Stella herself is responsible; she is the "fewell" to Cupid's fire. Though the sonnet may be classed as one that takes the turn of a conventional compliment, the tone is irreverent and it is evident that desire is gaining the upper hand. Convention, in other words, is failing in its function of control.

In sonnet 47 Astrophil is even more restive. In a series of abrupt questions he whips himself up to rebel against his tyrant. Here again we see the indignation which Ficino assures us will accompany the servitude of love, and the sonnet demonstrates perfectly Ficino's remark that

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[129] Young, p. 57.

[130] Ringler, p. 475.

love "fades and grows green again from one moment . . . to the next." Astrophil cries:

> I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
> Leave following that, which it is gaine to misse.

And when Stella appears, he says to her: "Unkind, I love you not." But his love "grows green again" as he thinks:

> O me, that eye
> Doth make my heart give to my tongue the lie.

Rudenstine has noted how the rhythms of the sonnet reflect its content:

> The sudden introduction of more fluid rhythms ("O me, that eye, etc.") after the preceding staccato, the pointed balance of "my heart" and "my tongue" and the strong sense of the couplet achieved by throwing emphasis on the rhyme words (especially "eye") all signify the return of Astrophel to his role as controlling courtly lover. Poetic order is re-established, and wit reconciles Sidney's hero to a situation that remains unresolved but at least has been rendered bearable.[131]

Convention, then, has reasserted its control; but the control is tenuous at best. As Montgomery contends: "The motive of physical possession is implicit and insistent, and although the idealistic tributes to Stella's beauty and virtue reveal him still inclined to Platonic devotion, it is equivocated by the increasingly aggressive demands of his libido."[132] This predicament is expressed metaphorically in sonnet 49 where Astrophil is a "horse to love" whose "spurres" are "desire," a common figure in Petrarch.[133]

These then are the sonnets in the first part of the sequence which in some way or another show us Astrophil struggling to idealize his

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[131] Rudenstine, pp. 180-181.

[132] Montgomery, p. 113.

[133] Ringler, p. 476.

passion. Now let us glance at the remaining twenty-two sonnets (7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17, 20, 22, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 48) in which he has succeeded. It will be noted that all of these sonnets lean heavily upon convention. Throughout this paper there has been an attempt to suggest the role that convention plays in the process of the Platonic poet-lover. Theodore Spencer sums it up in his essay, "The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney":

> Convention is to the poet in an age of belief what the persona is to the poet in an age of bewilderment. By submission to either the poet acquires authority; he feels that he is speaking for, representing, something more important than himself; . . . in both cases he has taken the first step toward universality.[134]

In other words, as Galm says of Musidorus in the Arcadia, he can in this manner succeed in "elevating his particular love into the universal realm."[135] This association of convention with universality explains its connection with the idea of control through disciplined uttering. To reiterate briefly what was said in Chapter II, the Platonic lover in his poetic role must de-materialize his mistress, forming her as an abstraction, a universal symbol of Love and Beauty and Virtue. It is only in this way that he can control his own sensual impulses and discourage hers, both of which are duties. And it is also in this way that he can transform his individual and personal experience into something of universal significance with which to edify his readers. Convention by its very nature tends to the formal, the ordered, therefore controlled. Rudenstine has noted that in Astrophil and Stella "the formal and the

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[134]"The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney," Journal of English Literary History, 12 (1945), 267.

[135]Galm, p. 54.

informal, the relatively structured and the relatively unstructured, are played off against one another in such a way as to dramatize the clash between Astrophel's contrary impulses."[136] An examination of the sequence reveals that formal pattern, comparative regularity of meter and of the placement of the caesura, and more formal diction are more likely to characterize Astrophil's utterances when his impulse tends toward the Ideal. The opposite is more likely to be true in those sonnets or portions of sonnets in which the sensual struggles to emerge. Rudenstine's discussion of the shifts in rhythm in sonnet 47, cited above, is a case in point. Galm has noted the tension developed in the Arcadia through juxtaposition of the more concrete and conventional speech of the pastoral lovers, whose love leads to physical consummation in marriage, and the more abstract and formal speech of the princes, who seek to "justify their action by projecting their love into a noble, Petrarchan realm, where physical passion is largely superseded by spiritual love." He compares these two distinct styles in the Arcadia with the "tonal contrasts in Astrophil and Stella" and sees Astrophil's "high, conventional style . . . often undercut by the intrusion of a lower colloquial style." As he points out, the tension thus developed "is concentrated in the personality of Astrophil" and accounts in great part for the "immediate dramatic power" of Astrophil and Stella "which isolated poems in the Arcadia may lack."[137] It is quite true that variations in tone are of major importance in Astrophil and Stella. Abrupt shifts in attitude with accompanying shifts in style reveal Astrophil's struggle in the

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[136] Rudenstine, p. 179.

[137] Galm, pp. 75-76.

early sonnets. In the first part of the Brasen World section, where sharp reversals also occur, they become ironic as Astrophil almost parodies his own earlier technique; later there is the irreverent joy of the baiser group, those sonnets which sing the delights of Stella's kisses; in the final section of the sequence there is a certain monotony of tone which successfully conveys the largely unrelieved suffering of the rejected lover. It would be difficult if not impossible to make as clear a distinction between styles as Galm has been able to make in his discussion of the Arcadia, but the tendency to regularity and balance does characterize almost all of the Golden World sonnets and the opposite tendency characterizes the intrusions of the Brasen World. One might notice, for instance, that in the twenty-two sonnets in which Astrophil achieves his Golden World there are a total of only twenty-two enjambed lines, an average of one per sonnet. Even that number is somewhat misleading since six of these lines are concentrated in a single sonnet, sonnet 38, and ten of these sonnets contain no run-on lines. On the other hand, in the nineteen sonnets in the first section in which he is struggling with intrusions from the Brasen World, there are forty-three run-on lines, an average of roughly two-and-a-quarter per sonnet. It is clear that in most cases the tightly controlled stop at the end of each line is associated with the tight control which he succeeds in maintaining over his passion in the twenty-two sonnets in which he successfully idealizes his love. This does not mean, however, that we are to delete sonnet 38, because of its six enjambed lines, from those in which his process of idealization is at work. The preponderance of run-on lines in this particular sonnet is an example of a case in which the prevailing pattern gives way to other poetic demands. This

is the poem in which the famous vision of Stella appears, shining and singing. The opening lines, all enjambed, describe Astrophil's sinking into sleep into the state in which the vision of Stella appears. The run-on lines reinforce the effect of the grammatical structure, a piling up of three introductory clauses, each taking us a step further into the consciousness-losing process, the climax of which is the vision of Stella, so that the reader is drawn down and around into the darkness with Astrophil to encounter the brightness within. Sidney does not allow the general pattern adduced to become a strait-jacket for his persona.

The universalizing nature of convention explains Astrophil's frequent use of myth in these twenty-two Golden World sonnets, despite his animadversions against the abuse of mythology in love poetry in sonnet 6. More than one-third of this group, eight sonnets altogether, rely entirely on mythological figures, primarily on Cupid, unsurprisingly, but also on Phoebus, Mars, Jove and Venus. Sonnets 8, 11, 12, and 29, in all of which Cupid figures, emphasize the lady's imperviousness to love, which cannot conquer her heart. The idea is conventional if not always conventionally handled. Sonnet 43 rings a small change on the theme, still conventional. This time Cupid does dwell in Stella's heart, but he does so because there he is safe from all intrusion. It is the place "Where well he knowes, no man to him can come." Sonnet 13 is a mythological setpiece, a contest between Mars, Jove and Love (Cupid) to settle who has the fairest arms. Phoebus (God of Light and Truth) is judge. As Ringler notes, the arms which Astrophil gives to Mars and Jove portray them as "unlawful lovers."[138] In Mars' case, his

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[138]Ringler, p. 465.

affair with Venus is adulterous; in Jove's, the relationship with Ganymede is homosexual.[139] The intended effect is to underline the Platonic nature of Astrophil's love for Stella. Phoebus' award of the palm to Love, whose shield is Stella's face, whose crest is her hair, identifies Astrophil's love as true love and associates it with the light of the Ideal, which Ficino always metaphorically equates with the light of the sun, the province of Apollo.[140] The remaining two Cupid sonnets in this group are sonnets 17 and 20. Seventeen has already been discussed as it works to resolve the conflict in 16. Sonnet 20, like 17, explores the convention of the lover's heart pierced by Cupid's arrow, the arrow being in both cases the beams from the lady's eyes, another convention.

Astrophil also achieves abstraction and hence idealization by associating Stella and her power with natural phenomena. But since this is accomplished largely through the imagery, which will be discussed in Chapter V, it need only be said here that she is associated with the sun (7, 8, 20, 22, 25, 41, 42), the stars (her name, of course, but also specifically in 26 and 48), and the primum mobile (42). She also transcends nature in sonnet 7 where her eyes are seen as representing

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[139]Sidney's opinion of homosexuality can be adduced from the fact that in defending poets against a charge of lewdness, he notes that philosophers are capable of the same abuse of their craft, and gives the example of Plato's Symposium and Phaedrus and Plutarch's discourse of love, all of which he says "authorize abhominable filthinesse" as no poet would do (DP, F, III. 33). Like most Renaissance humanists, Sidney was able to reject and condemn this aspect of his classical masters without its affecting his general respect for their philosophical ideals. And there is no doubt that Ficino and the other Christian Platonists made it much easier to do this.

[140]Light imagery in the sequence will be discussed in Chapter V.

Nature's ability to transcend itself, in other words to perform miracles. Sonnet 9 is a conventional blazon, associating Stella with things "rich and strange" which Ringler notes is a convention that was old before Petrarch adopted it.[141] Sonnet 31, Kalstone notes, is "the closest thing in Sidney's sonnets to the pastoral meditation that one finds so frequently in Petrarch's poetry."[142] Young points out the impressiveness of the sonnet "in view of the conventional nature of the materials: a nocturnal meditation--the sleepless lover making his complaint--with the generalizing tendency characteristic of the convention." He goes on:

> The point seems to be that Astrophel is deliberately trying to universalize his experience, to relate himself to the symbol provided by the Endymion myth, as a means of organizing his lover's world and transcending the limitations of his personal despair.[143]

It should also be noted that by linking his own constancy to that of the moon Astrophil introduces the idea of Necessity. Each is governed by natural law, the moon in its predetermined orbit and Astrophil in his fateful love for Stella. The idea also occurs elsewhere in this group of sonnets. For instance, we find it in sonnet 26 where Astrophil associates the rule of the stars over man's life with the rule of Stella's eyes over his "after-following race." The association of Love with Necessity is, of course, implied in all of the sonnets in which reason and virtue are reconciled with love through Stella's powers. For instance, in sonnet 5 Astrophil must love Stella. Ficino discusses at length the irresistible power of beauty in his Commentary on the

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[141]Ringler, p. 463.

[142]Kalstone, p. 163.

[143]Young, pp. 49-50.

Symposium, particularly in the discussion of Phaedrus' speech in the section which deals with love as the motive power of the universe which results in the creation of form from the formless Chaos of the "disorderly mind" (pp. 128-129). Sidney clearly knew the Platonic source of the idea of the relationship of virtue to true beauty and, therefore, to love. In The Defence he says: "If the saying of Plato and Tully bee true, that who could see vertue woulde bee woonderfullie ravished with the love of her bewtie" (F, III. 25). All of sonnet 25 develops the same idea. The great beauty of virtue, if man could discern it, would raise "Strange flames of Love . . . in our soules." Therefore, Virtue, wishing man to be virtuous, becomes flesh in "Stella's shape" so she can be more readily perceived. The last half line of this sonnet, "for I do burne in love," is seen by many critics as a naked outburst of physical desire; but that is by no means certain. The ideal fire in which the true lover burns is, as noted in the discussion of sonnet 16, a Platonic commonplace. The line does seem to have some of the intensity of sensual feeling which no doubt lurks there but so does much religious ecstasy. What is agape after all but sublimated eros? What Montgomery says of some earlier sonnets is, no doubt, true of this one: "It may be argued that beneath the moral issues and the appeal of Stella's virtue and beauty lies an essentially physical urge, but [Astrophil's] sense of what is happening to him and the tone of the verse is only remotely carnal."[144]

In sonnets 32, 38, and 39, Astrophil idealizes Stella by presenting her image as it appears to him in a dream, rather than in the flesh.

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[144]Montgomery, pp. 109-110.

The imagery emphasizes her immateriality as we shall see in Chapter V; and the fact that this cherished image of Stella is not accessible through the senses but only through the inner eye, that organ capable of perceiving the Ideal, is stressed. In sonnet 32 Astrophil lies with "clos'd-up sense" and sees her with "blind eyes." He rediscovers that it is within his own heart that the treasure lies. In sonnet 38, the vision, both visual and aural, which

> Was held, in opend sense it flies away. in closde up sence

Stella's image, which, as Ringler notes, "shines like a star and produces the music of the spheres,"[145] is brought to him by "fancie's error"; and we must remember Ficino's conception of the Ideal image within the soul which he calls "imagination or fancy." The image Astrophil sees is "fancie's error" because what the soul conceives is not a true reflection of the physical body which triggers the process but, as Ficino says, "images like them, but much purer" (p. 189). The image which appears in Astrophil's dream, then, is separate from (though related to) and superior to the physical Stella. The fact that the vision sings aids in the idealization. As noted earlier, the two senses considered to be associated with non-sensual love are sight and hearing. In the Symposium Eryximachus discusses the relationship of music and love. Music, because of its ability to accord discordant elements and make "love and concord grow up among them . . . is a science of the phenomena of love in their application to harmony and rhythm" (p. 519). Commenting on Ficino's discussion of this passage, Jayne says in a note that music was placed in a trilogy with theology and medicine as "three

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[145]Ringler, p. 473.

fields of knowledge necessary to maintenance of health of the Soul, Spirit, and Body." He goes on: "Music was important as a healing agent because it created a harmony of the parts, which was regarded as the basis of health" (p. 151). In the last of the dream vision sonnets, "Stella's image" again appears. Young comments that this sonnet is a "highly successful treatment of thoroughly conventional material; and . . . the lover first universalizes his situation . . . then makes the particular application."[146]

There is one other sonnet in this section which places particular emphasis upon the fact that Astrophil's love does not depend upon sense. In sonnet 36 Stella is seen as having conquered Astrophil first through the sense of sight and now through the sense of hearing, the two senses which, as Bembo remarks in The Courtier, "have litle bodily substance in them, and be the ministers of reason, without entring farther towarde the bodie, with coveting unto any longing otherwise than honest" (p. 605). This itself places Astrophil in the category of a Platonically correct lover. But then he goes further to insist that Stella's power does not even rest here since neither

> stone nor tree
> By Sence's priviledge, can scape from thee.

If she can move that which is inaccessible through the senses, then her power is truly and essentially non-sensual. It is spiritual.

A few words may be said about the other sonnets in this group. Sonnet 35 plays with the idea of the conventional "praise" so that it becomes "a praise to praise, when thou art praisde." But, as Ringler notes, the line "Where Nature doth with infinite agree," indicates that

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[146]Young, p. 53.

Stella "though a product of finite nature, is goddess-like and therefore infinite."[147] As a goddess she is seen again in her role as harmonizer. Kalstone recognizes this when he notes of sonnet 35 that "the point of the poem [is] that love for Stella yokes virtues to their opposites without changing their natures."[148] Honor is not dishonored by being Stella's slave; reason blows up the coal of desire; wit learns to express perfection. Of sonnet 42, Kalstone says, "Here Sidney comes closer than at any other point in the cycle to a Petrarchan evaluation of Stella."[149] Young, who, as I have said, divides the sequence after sonnet 43, sees the sonnets occurring after that point as involving a "reduction of the scale upon which Stella has been treated."[150] Such an arbitrary position forces him into the unfortunate position of seeing the beautiful and hymn-like sonnet 48 as having "almost the effect of burlesque."[151] Other critics see the matter differently: Montgomery says that in this sonnet "Astrophil brings together a full statement of the terms of his allegiance"; and he associates this sonnet and others with the "religious commitment of Sidney's lovers, with their sense of unworthiness, their hunger for a consuming perfection, and their need to feel intensely and totally."[152] Kalstone, who follows Young in many respects, finds sonnet 48 an expression of Astrophil's "more harmonious mood" and adduces it

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[147]Ringler, p. 472.

[148]Kalstone, p. 162.

[149]Kalstone, p. 168.

[150]Young, p. 56.

[151]Young, p. 58.

[152]Montgomery, p. 58.

as an example of his "acceptance of Petrarchan rhetoric."[153] Rudenstine cites it as a poem in celebration of "Stella's chastity."[154] Any sharp division of the sequence must be in some sense arbitrary and that is why, though I have indicated an acceptance of Ringler's division, it is with the realization that transitional periods link them. It is true that as the sequence approaches the climax of sonnet 52, the balance of Astrophil's emotion begins to show a tilt toward the sensual so that the declaration in sonnet 52, while startling, is not entirely unprepared for. But up to that point and even beyond it, though only a short way, there are occurrences of sonnets reflecting Astrophil's better self, his attempt to idealize his passion. These will be discussed in the next chapter in which we will take up Astrophil's abandonment of the Golden World and his plunge into the Brasen one and the consequences of that fall.

Writing of five of the sonnets in this group of twenty-two in which Astrophil realizes his Golden World, Montgomery says that Astrophil manipulates them so that he may approach "his own ardor from an extreme esthetic distance, isolating emotion from immediate circumstance" and that they are useful "to fix Astrophel's role in the early moments of the sequence as the traditional Petrarchan lover."[155] Young, speaking of some of the same sonnets and of some others of this Golden World group, notes that their formality "serves as a dramatic device, keeping the real issues Astrophel faces at a distance."[156] Both of these

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[153]Kalstone, pp. 106-107.

[154]Rudenstine, p. 240.

[155]Montgomery, p. 91.

[156]Young, p. 42.

comments serve to emphasize the same idea, the use of convention in the tradition of disciplined uttering, as a means of control. A passage of Montgomery's in a chapter exploring the relationship between ornate style and idealistic love, seems to me to sum up best the manner and effect of this whole group. As he says, such sonnets spring from "impulses identical or similar to those associated with religious adoration."[157] They

> all lead to hyperbole, often to a hymn-like redundancy and overstatement, but it would be mistaken to regard the style thus occasioned as necessarily an excess of language alone. Rather it is a language that belongs with certain modes of feeling. These are not merely intense; they are intensely worshipful. And in such a context too much familiarity of expression would alter, or even frustrate, the sense that the lady one adores is a divine work of art. As a formal . . . object she must be contemplated and celebrated formally.[158]

Astrophil has striven to re-create Stella as a divine work of art, to sublimate his impossible and impractical love through a proper use of the tools of disciplined uttering; but if the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, and control slips away from him as reason yields to desire. Perhaps, as it did for Pygmalion, the creation of perfection has only served to whet his appetite. At any rate, his Galatea warms to life.

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[157]Montgomery, p. 54.

[158]Montgomery, pp. 57-58.

CHAPTER IV

ASTROPHIL AND THE "BRASEN" WORLD

Ann Howe has noted that one of the things that sets Astrophil and Stella apart from other sonnet sequences is that "there exists in Stella an individuality which stems . . . from the sprightliness of her discourse, direct and indirect."[159] This, of course, is true. But there is no discourse from Stella of any kind until after sonnet 52. If one is attempting to make, or is succeeding in making, one's lady a "divine work of art,"[160] one must de-emphasize her flesh-and-blood existence; and that, of course, is what Astrophil does in almost all of the first fifty-one sonnets. In fact, it is only in sonnet 45, near the end of the section, that we have any view of Stella as a person rather than as a thing. It is to Stella's image in the poet's heart that we are referred, not to her real self. We see her as a kind of larger-than-life goddess to be celebrated but not touched. She does not act, nor is she really acted upon. She is a passive supra-human recipient of the poet's pleas and of his praise. After sonnet 52, in which Astrophil announces that he has abandoned his allegiance to the Ideal and will henceforth seek physical consummation of his love:

> Let Vertue have that Stella's selfe; yet thus,
> That Vertue but that body graunt to us,

she comes to life. As Gentili puts it, "Stella non è più [sic] una

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[159] Howe, p. 151.

[160] Montgomery, p. 58.

delle properties con cui evidenziare la messinscena, ma avanza verso la ribalta nel suo ruolo di partner di Astrophil."[161] It is this reversal of the usual process in a sonnet sequence, the process by which the mistress becomes more and more attenuated and abstract as the sequence progresses, as she does in Petrarch, that is one of the most striking and significant things about Astrophil and Stella. Renée Neu Watkins notes that the movement in Petrarch's sequence is toward the "ever more impersonal and abstract."[162] In treating Laura as an abstraction, what Watkins calls "not a woman, but an embodiment of perfection,"[163] Petrarch succeeds in sublimating and ennobling his love. His art becomes, through the means of disciplined uttering, a "replacement for that relationship which he imagines, and in many ways . . . [a] consolation. . . . By celebrating and evoking her, he is above all winning a battle in his own soul. . . . Thus he is practicing two arts, that of writing and that of purifying his love."[164] The significance of the difference between Astrophil's procedure and Petrarch's would certainly not have been lost on Sidney's contemporaries.

In sonnet 38, Astrophil has had a vision in a dream of Stella singing. In sonnet 57 his dream vision materializes, is made flesh;

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[161]Gentili, p. 153; [Stella is no longer one of the properties with which to emphasize the mise en scène but advances to the footlights in her role as Astrophil's partner.] Gentili makes this remark of what she defines as the central part of the sequence, sonnets 44-85 but it is only after sonnet 52 that Stella is truly an actor.

[162]Renée Neu Watkins, "Petrarch and the Black Death: From Fear to Monuments," Studies in the Renaissance, 19 (1972), 214.

[163]Watkins, p. 213.

[164]Watkins, p. 212.

and flesh she remains for the rest of the sequence, despite Astrophil's half-hearted attempt to reintroduce the Ideal as consolation when things begin to go awry after song 8. In sonnet 57 she sings his own "plaints" to him and in 58 reads them. Contrast these two with sonnet 44 where she is the passive recipient of his complaints. In the latter sonnet, as I noted earlier, his "sobs" are "metamorphosd straight to tunes of joyes" as they pass through the "daintie dores" of her ears. She alone hears them as joyful. In sonnets 57 and 58 the metamorphosis takes place by the power of her voice and Astrophil shares in the delight. She is the actor. The language and tone of these two poems, however, are still rather formal; and there is still a tinge of unearthliness in the picture of Stella. The announcement of sonnet 52 has not enabled Astrophil to completely shake off the habit of thought he has struggled so hard to establish in the earlier sonnets. But it is in these two sonnets that we will see her for the last time in the sequence in just this way. Indeed, in the very next sonnet (59) the language and tone change sharply. There we see a very human, girlish, even frivolous Stella as she plays with her pet dog, hugging and even kissing him while the worshipper of the erstwhile goddess cries familiarly: "Deare, why make you more of a dog then me?" The diction is colloquial, irreverent, even somewhat vulgar. The dog "clips" her "bosome," "laps" her "lap," and is a "sowre-breath'd mate" who "tast . . . those sugred lips." Sonnet 60 emphasizes her capriciousness; and both hyperbole, which has earlier been a tool to express what Montgomery has called "intensely worshipful" feelings,[165] and the Petrarchan oxymoron are now put to the

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[165]Montgomery, p. 58.

service of humor. When Astrophil seeks Stella's company, he is received with "Thundred disdaines and lightnings of disgrace." When he is absent, she kindly inquires for him. As a result he is confused by her "fierce Love and lovely hate."

Sonnet 61 is the first of those sonnets in which we become acquainted with the argumentative Stella. The affair becomes an active contest between Astrophil, who has chosen the body, and Stella, who wishes to maintain her role of Platonic mistress. Astrophil makes use of all the customary tools of seduction, sighs, tears, and plaints, "slow words" and "dumb eloquence." The prescription is given in The Courtier by Lord Cesar when he details the "crafts" and "snares" practiced by the sensuous lover: "With silence in wordes, but with a paire of eyes that talke. With a vexed and faint countenance. With those kinled sighes. Oftentimes with most aboundant teares" (p. 506). Stella replies, as befits a Platonic mistress:

> That who indeed infelt affection beares,
> So captives to his Saint both soule and sence,
> That wholly hers, all selfnesse he forbeares,
> Thence his desires he learnes, his live's course thence.

This same instruction in the duty of the true lover is given in The Courtier to maister Unico by Ladie Emilia:

> For if you did love, all your desires shoulde bee to please the woman beloved, and to will the selfe same thing that she willeth, for this is the law of love.

For this reason,

> he that taketh in hande to love, must also please and apply himselfe full and wholy to the appetites of the wight beloved, and according to them frame his own: and make his owne desires, servants: and his verie soule, like an obedient handmaiden. (pp. 522-523)

Astrophil is to renounce sensuality because Stella's "chast mind" hates his unchaste love. She is reminding him of what he seems to have forgotten, though he knew it quite well earlier in the sequence, that true love

> doth breed
> A loathing of all loose unchastitie
> (Sonnet 14)

Ironically, considering his own penchant for that rhetorical sin, he accuses her of sophistry. That he does not give up after the first skirmish is soon evident. The argument continues throughout the rest of the sequence. In sonnet 62 he replies to it paradoxically, "Deare, love me not, that you may love me more," and it is quite clear what kind of "love" Astrophil is now interested in. In sonnet 63, Stella has temporarily dropped the Platonic argument and, in apparent desperation, has simply resorted to "No, no" when Astrophil "crav'd the thing which ever she denies." Astrophil cleverly cites grammar to prove that a double negative is an affirmative. Ringler notes of line 9, "Sing then my Muse, now Io Pean sing," that Elizabethans might very well associate the phrase "Io Pean" in this context "with the opening of the second book of the Ars Amatoria where Ovid, having previously described how to win a mistress, exclaims in joy that the prey he has sought has fallen into his toils:

> Dicite 'io Paean!' et 'io' bis dicite 'Paean!'
> Decidit in casses praeda petita meos.[166]

It is clear that the tone, content, and language of this group of sonnets are clearly unsuitable in dealing with a goddess whom one worships from

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[166]Ringler, p. 478.

afar with a pure heart. They are, however, quite appropriate for an attempted seduction of a flesh and blood lady, particularly one who is trapped in an unhappy marriage. Astrophil's behavior is the grossest kind of violation of the role of Platonic lover, who is enjoined above all things, as we have noted earlier, to increase the beauty of his lady's spirit by leading her to "modestie, to temperance, to true honestie" (The Courtier, p. 605).

The debate continues in sonnet 64 as Astrophil tells Stella bluntly that he cares naught for his future ("Let Fortune lay on me her worst disgrace") nor for what people think of him. He has only one idea. The idea amounts to an obsession, and it is clear what the obsession is. If earlier in the sequence he was fulfilling the role of Platonic lover when he regretted that he could "lose no more for Stella's sake" (sonnet 18), here his disregard of consequences is a perversion of the Platonic Ideal because the qualifying circumstance that Ficino insists upon does not exist: "they rejoice [at their losses] because they are transferring themselves into something better" (p. 140). His loss is not to be incurred in the service of the Ideal, where it becomes part of the mortification of the flesh which develops the soul, but in the service of Desire, which, as he has noted in sonnet 14, will "plunge his wel-form'd soule even in the mire of sin." His intention to disregard the consequences of yielding to passion is expressed in response to a warning from Stella:

> No more, my deare, no more these counsels trie,
> O give my passions leave to run their race.

The whole sonnet underlines the deliberateness of Astrophil's choice, a choice made in the full light of the knowledge of what it will cost him. Stella has apparently been using the same arguments to virtue which he

has himself employed in the earlier sonnets, and they are rejected. There is not even an attempt to rationalize his action. Reason is completely overthrown by passion, and even the slightest impulse to virtue is dead. He has "Nor hope, nor wishe another course to frame."

If Young's reading of the next sonnet (65) is correct, as I believe it is, it serves to underline Astrophil's complete rejection of the Platonic solution. The form of the sonnet, as Young notes, is a conventional complaint to Cupid, the only one of its kind in this section of the sequence. Sidney, however, produces "an effect that is far from conventional" by alluding in the couplet to the Sidney coat of arms, thus introducing a "reality" to the sonnet much as he has used the allusions to Lord Rich in sonnets 24 and 37 to "realize" the threat of Stella's husband. An implicit conflict between convention and reality, between the Golden and Brasen World, is thus set up. Furthermore, Young contends that the lady herself is identified with the "wise world" in the sonnet; and that, therefore,

> the poem lodges its main complaint against her, not the conventional one that she is "more chaste than kind," but simply that she is conventional. It is the conventional standard of pretense and artificiality that causes grief between lovers, Astrophil . . . argues, and by subscribing to it, he seems to imply, the lady relinquishes part of her own reality.[167]

If we accept this view, the sonnet may be seen as a direct comment upon and rejection of the conventional appeal to virtue which Stella makes in the sonnet immediately preceding, that is, a rejection of the Platonic Ideal.

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[167] Young, p. 19.

Immediately following Astrophil's counter-attack in sonnets 64 and 65, Stella shows signs of reciprocating his feeling. In sonnets 66 and 67 she cannot seem to look at him without blushing, and his new hope gives rise to a rather condescending and playful tone in sonnet 68 when, after listening indulgently to her rehearse again her arguments against his love, he replies that the "noble fire" in him is only "Fed by thy worth, and kindled by thy sight." She is again the fuel to Cupid's fire, as she was in sonnet 46. As a result, while she argues all he can think of is

> what paradise of joy
> It is, so faire a Vertue to enjoy.

It is clear in what sense he uses the word enjoy. In the opening quatrain there is a rush of hyperbolic similitudes linked by anadiplosis. Any one of these similitudes could be, and some have been, put to the service of the Ideal by Astrophil; but their piling up here mocks their more serious application elsewhere. The effect is to make us see them simply as a rush of meaningless words intended to overwhelm and to silence Stella's arguments. Thinking himself on the verge of physical possession, he, rather cynically and most certainly condescendingly, mouths the hyperboles which can be taken seriously only in the context of adoration of the divine work of art, the Ideal mistress. He seems to be saying that if Stella wishes to talk about Virtue and see herself as a Platonic mistress with the concomittant responsibilities and perquisites, he will humor her; but his observance of the convention will be limited to lip service.

If he thinks Stella will settle for the shadow without the substance, however, he is in for a disappointment. Though she does yield him her

heart in the following sonnet (69), she makes it clear that that is all she intends to yield. She will not relinquish her Platonic role. Astrophil, willing to settle for this for the time being, is clearly confident that the rest will follow. Like a king who makes certain covenants in order to obtain his crown and, the implication is, then gradually gathers the reins of absolute power into his hands, Astrophil agrees to her reservations. When he does try to exceed his agreement, as when in song 2 he steals a kiss, he finds she "Doth lowre, nay, chide" (sonnet 73). This choice of terms to describe her anger suggests just how seriously he is disposed to regard her at the moment. No goddess lowers or chides. The rest of the poem maintains the playful and irreverent tone:

> O heav'nly foole, thy most kisse-worthie face,
> Anger invests with such a lovely grace,
> That Anger' selfe I needs must kisse againe.[168]

In sonnet 76, despite his covenant of sonnet 69, Astrophil apparently again broaches the forbidden subject and as in sonnet 63 craves "the thing which ever she denies." The Stella that joins him where he waits for her has eyes that are warm, gentle, and gay; but they become, "while I do speake," flames that burn and dazzle. From the rosie sun of dawn they are now the flaming lights of noon; but Astrophil, acting the confident lover, takes it all lightly enough. In a playful <u>double entendre</u> he prays that his "sunne go downe with meeker beames to bed." We may compare his tone and language here with that of sonnet 42 in

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[168]Some critics refer to "the kiss" as if there were only one in the sequence, the stolen one. However, Mona Wilson says of sonnet 73: "Desire is recalled by a kiss, stolen while Stella was sleeping, but repeated when she woke" (p. 190). It seems evident that at other points in the sequence (79, 80, 81, 82) there are still others.

which he prays his sun to "Keepe still my Zenith, ever shine on me" even

> if from Majestie of sacred lights,
> Oppressing mortall sense, my death proceed.

Whatever Astrophil's request may have been in sonnet 76, in sonnet 81 he contents himself with again asking for a kiss. Stella blushingly refuses but Astrophil, "mad with delight" at her pretty confusion, cries: "Stop you my mouth with still still kissing me." In sonnet 82, Astrophil apologizes for nibbling her lips (like cherries) when she has granted permission for a kiss; and he promises not to do the same again if she will give him another chance:

> full of desire, emptie of wit,
> Admitted late by your best-graced grace,
> I caught at one of them a hungrie bit;
> Pardon the fault, once more graunt me the place,
> And I do sweare even by the same delight,
> I will but kisse, I never more will bite.

This is clearly a different kiss than the one alluded to in song 2 since that was stolen, this granted.[169]

The group of sonnets which deal with the pleasures of Stella's kisses are followed by another informal picture of Stella like the one in sonnet 59. In 83 she has exchanged her dog for a pet sparrow; and if the diction is not quite as vulgar as in sonnet 59, it is still irreverent and colloquial. The sparrow is, of course, the symbol of

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[169]The fact that Stella grants her kisses to Astrophil does not disqualify her as Platonic mistress. In The Courtier Bembo allows that the mistress may grant to the rational lover "mery countenance, familiar and secret talke, jeasting, dalying, hand in hand, may also lawfully and without blame come to kissing" (p. 607). Astrophil has committed himself in sonnet 69 to be a rational lover, so Stella's behavior is acceptable. It is Astrophil who breaks the bargain and takes advantage of the privileges his promise has won him.

lechery; and the fact that it was often called Philip allows Sidney to again emphasize the "reality" of the Brasen World by having Astrophil introduce the name. The last line of the poem, "Leave that sir Phip, least off your necke be wroong," permits him, as Young notes, to warn himself with "mock ferocity."[170] And the mockery is of Stella since the warning to Astrophil would come from her. The subject of kissing, of course, has not really been abandoned since it is Philip's being bold to "drinke Nectar from that toong" which has gotten him into trouble just as it is Astrophil's nibbling upon Stella's cherry lips that has earned him her displeasure in the preceding sonnet.

Stella is not present in sonnets 84 and 85 but Astrophil is seen on his way to a meeting with her at her house, and he clearly has high hopes about what the meeting will bring. It is interesting that it is at this point that a particularity of detail is introduced that is lacking elsewhere in the sequence. It is not that these sonnets are startlingly concrete by any modern measure but that up until this point there has really been no scenery, so to speak, at all. Suddenly we have a highway leading to Stella's house (84) and the house itself, seen as Astrophil approaches it (85). Gentili agrees that these sonnets are "notevole per l'evocazione di nuovi particolari della messinscena."[171] It seems likely that we can associate Astrophil's comparative concreteness here with the triumph of the physical which he foresees. The hoped-for illicit nature of the meeting is suggested in 84 when Astrophil tells

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[170] Young, p. 70.

[171] Gentili, p. 154; [notable for the evocation of new particulars of the mise en scène.]

us he is going where he and Stella may "safliest" meet. As Ringler notes, the term "emphasizes the secrecy made necessary by Astrophil's adulterous courtship."[172] In sonnet 85 the program for what can only be called an assignation is particularized. Astrophil, his heart pounding as he approaches his long-awaited goal, assigns the appreciation of Stella's beauty to his eyes, of her speech to his ears, of the sweetness of her breath to his own mouth, of her waist to his arms, of her lips to his own lips. To his heart he reserves the "kingly Tribute."

But the panting lover is again repulsed, and the final half of the Brazen World sonnets can best be described as damp. Separation, first apparently temporary and then permanent, makes Astrophil drench many a pillow; and Stella, too, for one reason or another, spends most of her time weeping. In sonnet 87, which begins the second part of the Brasen World section, Astrophil and Stella are taking what they believe to be temporary leave of one another; and Stella weeps and sighs at their parting, much to Astrophil's delight, In sonnet 93 she is again weeping, but this time with vexation at some careless act or speech of Astrophil's which has caused her embarrassment. She is weeping yet again in 100, this time apparently at least partly with joy during a brief reunion with Astrophil because he takes joy in her "tears, sighs, plaints." In sonnet 101, illness makes her weep. But recovery from illness apparently also helps mend any crack she might have had in her heart. In sonnet 103 we see her borne upon the "Happie Tems" and the tone of the poem suggests Stella shares in the cheerfulness. Her golden hair is dishevelled by the wind and she blushes at her disarray. There is something of a

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[172]Ringler, p. 483.

resurgence of idealism here, the vision of the dishevelled Stella calling to mind that of Venus, her rosy body entangled in her flowing hair, as she rises from the foam. There is evidence to suggest that Sidney may have had this image in mind. Whether he saw Botticelli's famous picture when he visited Florence in 1574 we cannot say, though given his well-documented interest in art, it is not unlikely. In any case the vision in sonnet 103 has been related to Venus in another way. L. C. John has noted that Petrarch's vision of Laura in Rime, 90, is derived from the vision of Venus in the first book of the Aeneid, ll. 319-320, and that Sidney's sonnet is in turn derived from Petrarch.[173] The first quatrain of Petrarch's sonnet is as follows:

> Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi
> che'n mille dolci nodi gli avolgea
> e'l vago lume oltra misura ardea
> di quei begli occhi, ch'or ne son sì scarsi.
>
> (Her golden hair was loosened to the breeze,
> which tangled it into a thousand sweet knots;
> and the fine light burned beyond measure in
> those beautiful eyes, where now it seldom shows)[174]

Sidney was undoubtedly aware of Petrarch's source. After this vision on the Thames, our last glimpse of the flesh and blood Stella in a sonnet is also Astrophil's,[175] a momentary one as she passes in her fast coach through the dark streets (sonnet 105). All of these sonnets demonstrate that Astrophil's whole treatment of Stella differs sharply from his treatment of her in the first part of the sequence; and the

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[173] The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequence (1938; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 243.

[174] The translation is Kalstone's, p. 110.

[175] He does of course see her again in song 11.

imagery, as we shall see in Chapter V, shifts with tone and content.

In the discussion of several of the sonnets in which Stella is seen as actor, I have pointed out how in the struggle between virtue and desire, desire triumphs (e. g., 62, 68). The same is true in all the other sonnets in that portion of the sequence beginning with sonnet 52 and continuing through 86. This is a reversal of the process demonstrated in the first fifty-one sonnets. Just as sonnet 1, with its direction to Astrophil to seek his inspiration in the ideal image within, introduces the idealism of the earlier sonnets, sonnet 52, in which the soul is rejected in favor of the body, sets the tone for those that follow it. It has been said earlier, and it is worth repeating, that Astrophil's separation of soul and body in sonnet 52 is the cardinal neo-Platonic sin. Ficino warns that

> If a man is too eager for procreation and gives up contemplation, or is immoderately desirous of copulation with women . . . or prefers the beauty of the body to that of the soul, insofar he abuses the dignity of love. Therefore, a man who properly respects love praises, of course, the beauty of the body; but through it he contemplates the more excellent beauty of the soul, the mind, and God, and admires and loves this more fervently than the other. (p. 143)

When Astrophil in sonnet 52 subverts the neo-Platonic argument he has made in sonnet 25, where Stella is virtue personified, and, yielding her soul to virtue, asks the body for himself, he has allowed himself to be overcome by immoderate desire. His sin is compounded by the fact that his love is adulterous, a kind of love through which, we must remember, Ficino says, "Man descends to the nature of a beast" (p. 230). And his guilt is, if anything, increased by his cynical "covenant" of sonnet 69 in which he accepts the role of Platonic lover with the clear intention of breaking his bargain and turning the opportunities granted to him

"while vertuous course I take" to the purposes of seduction. Sonnets 71 and 72 make it plain that when the first flush of triumph over his apparent victory in 69 has passed and Astrophil begins to suspect that Stella has every intention of holding him to his promise, he regrets making it. In sonnet 71 he rehearses again all of Stella's qualities which show "How Vertue may best lodg'd in beautie be" and pays lip service to the idea that her vertue "bends [his] love to good." Then, as Montgomery notes, "With the sudden shift in values (from the carefully virtuous to the sexually and subjectively impetuous), Sidney interposes direct speech and blunt, coarse metaphor":[176] "'But ah,' Desire still cries,'give me some food.'" His deliberate subversion of the Platonic idea that the power of the mistress will move her lover to virtue is even clearer when we note that up until the last line the whole sonnet is modeled after Petrarch's "Chi vuol veder quantunque po Natura" (Rime, CCXLVIII).[177] As Kalstone notes, sonnet 71 "opens with a promise of the same majestic harmony" as that which characterizes the Petrarchan sonnet. "For the first thirteen lines," as he points out, Sidney's poem appears to be a version of Petrarch's praise of Laura; then in the last line the poem departs completely from its model. . . . Two different views of love are balanced against one another: one, noble and assured; the other, impetuous and unanswerable." And it is even more ironic that, as Kalstone also notes, the language of Sidney's poem is "more abstract than Petrarch's, more explicitly 'Platonized.'"[178]

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[176]Montgomery, p. 93.

[177]Janet G. Scott, Les sonnets elisabethains: les sources et l'apport personnel (Paris: H. Champion, 1929), p. 306.

[178]Kalstone, pp. 119-120.

This, of course, assures that the abrupt shift is even more startling, the values of the first thirteen lines even more thoroughly destroyed. In sonnet 72 the effect of the reversal in the last half line is not quite so surprising because, though Astrophil is pretending to abjure desire throughout the sonnet the tone is clearly one of regret and his task is no easy one. Desire is his "old companion" and so much a part of his love that he "One from the other scarcely can descrie." He says that he is resolved that "Vertue's gold now must head my Cupid's dart" and concludes that

> thou Desire, because thou wouldst have all,
> Now banisht art;

but the reversal comes: "but yet alas how shall?"

One characteristic of these sonnets and of most of the sonnets in the second half of the sequence is a sense of unresolved tension. In the first half of the sequence the resolution may be temporary, even illusive, but, thanks to the control exercised by the conventions governing such matters, it is nevertheless present. In the Golden World section (1-51), almost all of the nineteen sonnets in which Astrophil is caught up in his struggle to achieve sublimation through idealization finally achieve this resolution. Furthermore, all twenty-two of the sonnets in the first section that have been grouped as those in which Astrophil succeeds in the process of idealization achieve a sense of ordered harmony. Consider sonnet 48 ("Soule's joy, bend not those morning starres from me") or 38 ("This night while sleepe begins with heavy wings") in which Stella "not onely shines but sings" or 39 ("Come sleepe, o sleepe, the certaine knot of peace"), all of which literally sing with harmony. These sonnets are all of a piece; no discordant elements intrude. No sonnet in the second half of the sequence quite

achieves the same feeling. Sonnets 57 and 58 have something of the quality of these earlier sonnets, as if they still preserve the lingering after-effects of Astrophil's idealism; but they are by no means as successful. Others, such as those in the baiser group, exhibit it superficially but in such a way that it destroys itself, becomes irony.

That this disharmony is deliberate is evidenced by the fact that Astrophil frequently does develop these later sonnets so that on first reading we expect the same kind of ordered harmony, of consistent purpose, that occurs so frequently in the first half of the sequence. But we are shaken out of our complacency as we read them by the sudden collapse of our expectation. Astrophil's deliberate subversion of Platonic ideas in sonnets 52 and 71 has been noted above. But it is not only the ideas of Platonic love which he obliquely attacks in such a way but also the style which is associated with its expression. This, as has been noted previously, is the cynical attack of a man who feels his trust has been betrayed. But while Astrophil mocks Platonism and its conventions, Sidney asks us to weigh and judge Astrophil and consider how mind (wit) can be corrupted when it is brought to rationalize a sensual and dishonorable love. As Rudenstine says, Astrophil's "tale . . . is structured as a sequence of choices, and when he elects to follow sensual desire instead of virtuous love, the act is fully self-conscious, decisive, and destructive of the highest Petrarchan values."[179] The effect of Sidney's decision to pattern sonnet 71 after Petrarch until the final line has been noted. Sonnets 76 and 77 are carefully planned to have a similar effect. In sonnet 76 the exalted opening,

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[179]Rudenstine, p. 181.

She comes, and streight therewith her shining twins
do move
Their rayes to me;

the choice of hexameters with the added formality of their classical associations; the use of repetition in the phrase "She comes" to begin the second quatrain and emphasize her approach as a formal, measured progress; her identification with a force of nature (the sun), lifting her above merely human status; the joyous but reverent tone; the expectation we have developed through our reading of similar openings earlier in the sequence (e. g., 42, 48), all of these factors and others prepare us for successful idealization. Then come the last two lines with their irreverent double entendre, reducing what has gone before to irony--good-natured, of course, but nonetheless irony. Montgomery points out quite accurately that both 76 and its "companion piece," 77, "invoke the rhythms, language, and tone of Petrarchan adulation for its own destruction."[180] In sonnet 77, Astrophil again utilizes hexameters, which occur only six times in the entire sequence, three times during the first eight sonnets, 1, 6, and 8, twice here, and once late in the sequence (102). In sonnet 77 he relies more heavily on formal rhetorical devices than he does in 76 (e. g., anaphora, zeugma, parallel clauses in a series). Astrophil constructs a list of his lady's charms, both of mind and body, operating very much within the poetic convention:

Those lookes, whose beames be joy, whose motion
is delight,
That face, whose lecture shewes what perfect beautie
is, etc.,

all carefully generalized, carefully non-sensuous. And if it seems that

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[180]Montgomery, p. 79.

the reference to kissing ("Those lips, which make death's pay a meane price for a kisse") might be seen as sensuous, it should be remembered that kissing was not necessarily a sensual act in a Platonic frame of reference. But then comes the last line, which, as Montgomery notes, "sharply modifies] the conventional style . . . to bring it up against the realities of feeling:"[181] "Yet, ah, my Mayd'n Muse doth blush to tell the best." It is not more specific than the rest of the poem; in fact it is deliberately non-specific in quite a different manner than the rest. And this non-specificity is what gives it its suggestiveness and imports sensuality into the sonnet. One might compare it with another blazon, that of sonnet 9, in which Stella's face is alabaster and the imagery and tone are consistent throughout, or that of the third quatrain of sonnet 29, in which various parts of Stella's body become, rather weirdly, Cupid's weapons and stores.

Interesting from a similar point of view, the angle from which we see Astrophil's subversion of the Platonic Idea and its convention, is the baiser group. In the earlier portion of the sequence the ideal image of Stella in the poet's heart is seen as his source of inspiration. In this group of sonnets the place of that image is usurped by Stella's kiss, the instrument of physical desire. The first of the group, sonnet 74, is a parody of sonnet 3 in which Astrophil has conventionally protested his literary unconventionality and asserted that the sole source of his invention is Stella. Howe notes:

> In sonnet 74, a fine rap at both the hypocrisy of the Petrarchan poet-lover who makes a convention of protesting his literary unconventionality and the affectation of the "bald rhymer" who pours out his sentiments

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[181]Montgomery, p. 79.

> without formal training, Sidney adopts in the first eight lines the grammar and the rhetoric of a true naif, a really simple-minded soul.[182]

Her observations about the nature of the sonnet are well-taken, but it is important here that we see that it is Astrophil, not Sidney, who is attacking the convention and, by implication, the ideas embodied in it. The attitude of the Petrarchan (or Platonic) poet-lover may be "unrealistic" but it is not the business of the poet--or the true lover--to deal with "reality," that is, with the Brasen World of nature. It is his business to real-ize the Golden World by submitting himself to the discipline of the convention and, by his act of submission, re-asserting the primacy of reason over passion, man's angelic nature over his animal nature. Astrophil's "burlesque," as Howe puts it,[183] is aimed at discrediting the convention and the Ideal that it upholds and serves to underline once again Astrophil's surrender to passion. The final line of the sonnet completes the effect. His source of inspiration now is "Stella's kisse."

All of the other sonnets in the baiser group continue the pattern set in 74. The reverent hyperbole applied to the image of the ideal Stella as inspiration to virtue becomes irreverent and ironic when it is applied to her kisses, incitements (whether she intends them that way or not) to passion, because Astrophil is a sensuous lover, not a Platonic one. As Bembo notes in The Courtier:

> For since a kisse is a knitting together both of bodie and soule, it is to bee feared, lest the sensuall lover will be more enclined to the part of the bodie, than of the soule (p. 607).

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[182] Howe, p. 155.

[183] Howe, p. 156.

There is, of course, no question about which way Astrophil is "enclined." He has made that quite clear in sonnet 52. Janet Scott notes that Petrarch "n'aurait pas décrit un 'baiser colombin,' même si sa dame lui avait accordé cette faveur" because of the "contradiction qui existe entre la chasteté absolue et le baiser lascif des amoureux."[184] But if Bembo is correct, the kiss of lovers need not be lascivious:

> the reasonable lover woteth well, that although the mouth be a parcell of the bodie, yet is it an issue for the wordes, that be the interpreters of the soule, and for the inwarde breath, which is also called the soule.
>
> And therefore hath a delite to joyne his mouth with the womans beloved with a kisse: not to stirre him to any dishonest desire, but because hee feeleth that the bonde is the opening of an entrie to the soules, which drawne with a coveting the one of the other, poure them selves by turne the one into the others bodie, and bee so mingled together, that each of them hath two soules.
>
> .....
>
> For this doe all chaste lovers covet a kisse, as a coupling of soules together. And therefore Plato the devine lover saith, that in kissing, his soule came as farre as his lippes to depart out of the bodie. (The Courtier, p. 607)

Astrophil's kisses are, however, lascivious; and he mocks the spirituality of the Platonic convention by turning it to the service of the physicality of the "baiser lascif."

Furthermore, he underlines the irony of his subversion by packing into most of the baiser sonnets all of the abuses of poetry which he has listed in sonnet 6. In sonnet 79 one may note the deliberately exaggerated and humorous use of the word "sweet":

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[184] Scott, p. 27; [Petrarch would not have described a "dovelike kiss," even if his lady had accorded him that favor] because of the [contradiction that exists between absolute chastity and the lascivious kiss of lovers.]

> Sweet kisse, thy sweets I faine would sweetly endite,
> Which even of sweetnesse sweetest sweetner art.

Sweetness abounds in others of the group also though not to the same extent. In sonnet 80 we find "Sweet swelling lip," "Sweetner of musicke," "Sweet lip, you teach my mouth with one sweet kisse." In sonnet 82 we have "Most sweet-faire, most faire-sweet." This is not to say that Astrophil eschews sweetness elsewhere in the sequence, though with one exception he uses it very sparingly during the first fifty-one sonnets. The exception is sonnet 36, and a quick comparison of that passage to the one cited from sonnet 79 makes obvious the difference which lies mainly in the tone and structure of the passage:

> With so sweete voice, and by sweete Nature so,
> In sweetest strength, so sweetly skild withall,
> In all sweete stratagems sweete Arte can show,
> That not my soule, which at thy foot did fall,
> Long since forc'd by they beames, but stone nor tree
> By Sence's priviledge, can scape from thee.

Sidney seems to be demonstrating deliberately here that even an abused convention can be effective if properly used. Indeed, he frequently does the same thing. In sonnet 79, however, the parody is obvious. As Howe notes, "Such 'sugred' lines" are used "humorously to suggest the contrasting reality of the lovers."[185] Furthermore, as this comment suggests, a great deal of the mockery is directed at Stella herself because of her continued resistance, a resistance which is supported by her own concept of her role as Platonic Ideal, to which she continues to cling, though at times rather tenuously. Astrophil, at this point in the sequence, having gained certain concessions already, cannot believe in the seriousness of her refusal though before the sequence is over he is brought to believe it. The last lines of sonnet 79 point up his

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[185]Howe, p. 152.

assurance at this point;

> lo, lo, where she is,
> Cease we to praise, now pray we for a kisse,

It is as if he were saying in so many words, "I have said all the things you want to hear; now give me my reward." It is for this reason that Howe says, "the concluding couplet recalls the reality of the passion."[186]

The oxymorons that Astrophil attacks in sonnet 6 are also to be found here in the baiser group. Sonnet 79 furnishes "bravest retrait," "friendly fray," and "prettie death," not to mention a plethora of more lengthy paradoxes; and sonnet 80 gives us the conventional Petrarchan oxymoron, "Cupid's cold fire." Mythological references, too, are plentiful: Venus and her doves and Cupid in 79; Cupid and the Muses in 80; a nymph, Narcissus, Venus, and Paris, and the Hesperian gardens in 82. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is the heaping up of similitudes, a technique Sidney attacks in The Defence of Poesie (F, III. 42-43), far in excess of anything we find anywhere among the first fifty-one sonnets and different in kind. There are twelve of them in sonnet 79 alone and ten in sonnet 80. In sonnet 79 Stella's kiss is "Pleasingst consort, where each sence holds a part"; "coupling Doves" which "guides Venus chariot right"; "best charge" in "Cupid's fight"; also "bravest retrait"; "A double key" to the heart; "Neast of young joyes"; "schoolmaster of delight"; "the friendly fray"; "the prettie death"; "Poore hope's first wealth"; "ostage of promist weale"; and "Breakefast of Love." All of that in fourteen lines. The mockery is obvious. In sonnet 80 her lips are "Nature's praise, Vertue's stall,

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[186] Howe, p. 152.

Cupid's cold fire"; "The new Pernassus"; "Sweetner of musicke, wisedome's beautifier;/ Breather of life, and fastner of desire"; the color of her lips is like "Beautie's blush" dyed in "Honour's graine"; and her words are "heav'nly graces." Both these sonnets present clear examples of what Poirier is talking about when he says that "ces clichés, qui avaient déjà servi à plusieurs générations de pétrarquistes, sont employés avec une absence de mesure qui aboutit parfois à un effet ridicule."[187] It is surprising, therefore, that Lanham can say that "in the baiser group . . . a great deal is made of a kiss. . . . The occasion did not lend itself to ironic improvement, so irony is left alone."[188]

It is not, it should be noted, that Sidney does not allow Astrophil to use any of these techniques elsewhere in the sequence but that here there is a deliberate excess, a piling together to achieve a cumulative effect that is clearly ironic. As Gentili has said, "i più [sic] sfranati ricorsi a sdolcinatezze e ad oxymora [ricorrono] quasi sempre, in un contesto ironico che lascia intravvedere l'ammiccare malizioso dell'autore sopra la testa del suo personaggio giunto a un punto culminante del corteggiamento."[189] But it would be more accurate to say that the malicious wink is that of Astrophil himself. One is

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[187]Poirier, p. 238; [These clichés, that had already served several generations of Petrarchists, are employed with an absence of measure that sometimes results in a ridiculous effect.]

[188]Lanham, "Astrophil and Stella," p. 109.

[189]Gentili, p. 162;[the most unbridled recourse to sweetness and to oxymoron occurs, almost always, in an ironic context that allows us to glimpse the malicious wink of the author over the head of his persona arrived at a culminating point of the courtship.]

forcibly reminded of Sidney's animadversions against those who disguise "hony-flowing Matrone Eloquence . . . in a Courtisanlike painted affectation" or who

> cast Sugar and spice uppon everie dish that is served to the table: like those Indians, not content to weare eare-rings at the fit and naturall place of the eares, but they will thrust Jewels through their nose and lippes, because they will be sure to be fine (DP, F, III. 42)

Astrophil's style here is "Courtisanlike" not only because of its "painted affectation" but because it is being prostituted. That which was designed to move to virtue is being abused to move to vice. Nothing could underline Astrophil's deliberateness in this matter more than the sestet of sonnet 81 in which Stella, still attempting to adhere to the Platonic Ideal, tells Astrophil that she wishes to build "her fame on higher seated praise" than that which he has been making in this and the preceding two baiser sonnets, praise of the delights of her kisses. Janet Scott says that Stella's words "nous rapellent que Sidney a essayé d'effecteur la fusion d'éléments très différents, l'amour platonique et pétrarquiste, et l'amour-passion, qui doit en partie son existence au contact physique du baiser."[190] Here, however, rather than effecting a fusion of these elements, Sidney seems to be pointing out the contradiction between them. Astrophil's reply to Stella's remark is to ignore it completely and take delight in her blushing confusion, a delight which only further fires his passion so that he ends by crying: "Stop you my mouth with still still kissing me." Again the

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[190]Scott, p. 28; [remind us that Sidney attempted to effect a fusion of very different elements, Platonic and Petrarchist love and passionate love, which owes in part its existence to the physical contact of the kiss.]

mockery is of both Stella and the convention which she seeks to uphold. What was once the subject of serious thought and painstaking effort has become merely added spice to his sauce, or as he would put it, fuel to his fire. As Rudenstine points out, all of these sonnets "are in the manner of the Petrarchan decadence, and they culminate in the high-spirited, erotic suggestiveness of the poem on Philip Sparrow," sonnet 83.[191]

As we shall see, Astrophil's use of the term "Comedie" to describe his vision of Stella in sonnet 51 is important. This apparently casual remark actually signals an important change in the sequence. As Sidney tells us in The Defence of Poesie: "Comedy is an imitatiõ of the cõmon errors of our life, which he representeth in the most ridiculous & scornful sort that may be: so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one" (F, III. 23). On the authorial level, we are being warned of what is to come, that we are to see Astrophil caught up in the "common errors," in a predicament both "ridiculous and scornful" in which none of the audience would wish to find themselves. Ringler also notes of this sonnet that the province of comedy is "the common affairs of daily life, usually love," and he adds that they are to be presented "in a plain style; it is a breach of decorum to introduce matters of gravity or to use a high style."[192] Thus the remark, while it serves to rebuke the serious manner and high style of Astrophil's friend within the context of the sonnet, also functions to reveal a shift in Astrophil's vision

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[191]Rudenstine, p. 255.

[192]Ringler, p. 476.

of Stella and hence in the nature of his love, a shift to be made explicit in the very next sonnet. The imitation of the Ideal, which is the province of the lyric, is to give way to the imitation of the common affairs of life, in this case to ordinary sensual love between ordinary human beings. And with the abandonment of the Ideal, decorum demands the abandonment of high style. Astrophil, of course, does not abandon it in the sense that he completely ceases to use it; but he does abandon it in the sense that when he uses it, it is for different purposes, as we have seen. In the context of comedy, high style is a ridiculous violation of decorum; and when Astrophil uses it, ridicule is his intention because his ridicule of the style reinforces his ridicule of the Platonic convention itself. Sonnet 55 reiterates the change. Astrophil's attacks upon the abuses of the literary convention associated with love poetry in the early sonnets were not attacks upon the conventions themselves. He has, as he tells us in sonnet 55 and as the early sonnets demonstrate, done his best to "engarland" his speech "With choisest flowers." Now, however, he announces that he will abandon the muses and reveal his feelings in the "true but naked shew" heretofore "despisde." He will simply cry out Stella's name over and over again. In sonnet 70, when he thinks he has gained his victory, he announces that his muse will from now on drink "Nectar of Mirth" but ends by deciding to abandon poetry altogether, either in low or high style, because "Wise silence is best musicke unto blisse." That he does not keep his resolution is obvious, but that is because he finds he has not attained his goal and that his chiefest weapon is still needed.

It is also instructive to compare other specific sonnets to demonstrate how effectively Sidney has carried out his plan of showing us a

clear opposition between the first and second half of the sequence. In sonnet 41, for instance, Stella, as Ideal and inspiration, assures Astrophil's victory in a tournament. In sonnet 53, which deals with another tournament, we see, as Ringler notes, "the consequences of his change of attitude."[193] Stella, now the focus of Astrophil's physical desire, merely distracts him from his business and he makes a complete fool of himself. In the earlier sonnets, 14, 21, and 51, friends, evidently male speakers, have chided him for his passion and reminded him of the dangers it could bring, warnings that seem hardly to have impinged on his consciousness. In sonnet 54 the court ladies chide him for not acting the proper lover, an accusation against which he hotly defends himself. And he does so in terms that, ironically, associate him with the Platonic lover he has ceased to be. He announces: "They love indeed, who quake to say they love." Quaking is the lot of the true lover, Ficino tells us, because they

> both worship and fear the sight of the beloved. Even the brave and wise . . . usually suffer this effect in the presence of a loved one. . . . Certainly it is not a human passion which frightens them. . . . but that glow of divinity shining in beautiful bodies, like an image of God, compels lovers to awe, trembling, and reverence (p. 141).

Or as Bembo says in The Courtier, their soul "with a certaine wonder is agast, and yet enjoyeth she it, and (as it were) astonied together with the pleasure, feeleth the feare and reverence that men accustomably have towarde holy matters and thinketh her selfe to be in Paradise" (p. 608). And, of course, this fear does render the lover speechless, or nearly so. These "Dumb Swannes," the "true lovers," Lord Julian explains in

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[193]Ringler, p. xlvii.

The Courtier, "as they have a burning heart so have they a colde tongue, with broken talke and sodaine silence. Therefore (may hap) it were no false principle to say, He that loveth much, speaketh little." Sensual lovers, on the other hand, "him that entertaineth with communication of love" are never at a loss for words (p. 514). They are mere "chatring Pies." "Assuredly," Lord Julian insists, "there is otherwhile a greater affection of love perceived in a sigh, in a respect, in a feare, than in a thousand wordes" (p. 524). The picture of Astrophil in both of these sonnets, 53 and 54, is one suitable to grace a comedy. Sonnet 54 is also notable because in all the sonnets comprising the first half of the second section of the sequence (52 to 86), these court ladies are the only other characters in the drama and they appear only briefly. Stella does warn Astrophil that he is the subject of gossip (sonnet 64) but we have no sense of his moving among his male peers, paying heed, no matter how slight, to matters of moment as we have in at least six of the first fifty-one sonnets. The world of physical desire into which Astrophil moves after sonnet 51 is a closed one, inhabited almost solely by the two lovers. The result, of course, is the very opposite of the effect which virtuous love is supposed to have upon the lover, that of inspiration to virtuous action, as Astrophil himself will recognize in sonnet 107.

Another particularly interesting comparison is that which can be made between the two sonnets in which Lord Rich figures in the first half of the sequence and the one devoted to him in the second. In the first two Astrophil merely states that Lord Rich, unable to appreciate the jewel he possesses, subjects it to abuse (24) and that Stella's misfortune lies in being Lady Rich (37). Though these views are warmly

expressed, particularly in sonnet 24, they are impersonal in the sense that Stella is presented as a beautiful object whom any observer would resent being spoiled by a careless owner. Sonnet 78 is quite different. Astrophil's interest is now clearly sexual. Lord Rich is seen as an emblem book image of Jealousy whose "noysome" breath infects the "pleasant aires of true love" and who, like the jaloux in a medieval French romance, deserves to be cuckolded. Astrophil asks: "Is it not evill that such a Devill wants hornes?"; and it is clear that he is personally ready to provide a set. This is a direct contravention of the rule of Platonic love that the lover "shall doe no wrong to the husband . . . of y^{e} woman beloved" (The Courtier, p. 609).

Finally, a word may be said about a particularly curious sonnet, sonnet 75. Only once in the whole sequence does Astrophil invoke another lover with whom to compare himself, and it is singularly ironic and singularly significant that it is Edward IV that he chooses. Ringler notes that

> The chroniclers and poets of the sixteenth century . . . represented [Edward] as neither great nor admirable, and emphasized his violence and self-indulgence. . . . All the chroniclers stressed that he was "greately given to fleshely wantonnesse"; Shakespeare called him "lustfull Edward" and portrayed him "lolling on a lewd day bed . . . dallying with a brace of courtesans." Sidney knew, and knew that his readers would know, the unsavoury aspects of Edward's life and character.[194]

Astrophil's sophistical praise of Edward as true lover, therefore, is a thinly disguised admission of his own lust; and through this means Sidney invites us to make a rather harsh judgment of Astrophil. Hamilton goes so far as to state that the sonnet implies that "Edward

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[194]Ringler, p. 481.

was willing to risk syphillis for his whore,"[195] but this seems to be reading a bit more into the poem than is necessary. Howe contends that the style of the sonnet supports the intended satire:

> The tone, managed by a clever warping of rhetoric, grammar, and diction, serves to turn Edward IV (Jane Shore's lover) from the love divinity the words would seem to declare him to be into a kind of bumbling oaf. The bumptiousness of "well lined Braine," the awkward use of metonymy ("ballance" for Justice), the vice of employing a foreign term, all present the king in a light unlike that which one would expect to envelop a potential patron saint of Astrophel.[196]

And again we might note how appropriate the figure so portrayed is as a character in Astrophil's "Comedy."

Other comparisons may be made between the Golden World sonnets and the Brasen World sonnets of the last part of the sequence (87-108), that part of the sequence in which, despite Astrophil's effort to keep it blazing, passion's flame flickers, leaving only a sense of weariness and soreness of heart. Tears of separation dampen the last twenty-two sonnets, as I have noted. They also dampen the flames of love in both hearts as we can discover through careful reading. This is not really surprising given the nature of the relationship and the impossibility of its ever flowering into something more than it is, the illicit passion of a young man of promise with things to do in the world for a married woman.[197] The very fact that in leaving her, in sonnet 87, Astrophil pleads honor and duty, considerations he has explicitly rejected heretofore (sonnet 64), warns us that the idyll is over. The leavetaking described in sonnet 87 is not, as Young suggests, that that took place

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[195] Hamilton, p. 85.

[196] Howe, p. 156.

[197] The inevitability of disaster in an illicit sensual love is explained by Bembo in The Courtier. It may end in physical consummation,

in song 8. Astrophil is not being sent away by Stella; he is "forst" "By iron lawes of duty to depart." He is initiating the separation. He is no doubt discouraged at the event of song 8 and this plays a part in his leaving, but he is encouraged by Stella's obvious grief at parting:

> I saw that teares did in her eyes appeare;
> I saw that sighes her sweetest lips did part,
> And her sad words my sadded sence did heare.

And he has by no means given up the idea of succeeding in the end. Songs 10 and 11 attest to that. There is also evidence that he hopes that his absence will soften her heart.

In fact, the strategic value that he hopes his absence will have is indicated in the very next sonnet where he begins his effort to break down Stella's resistance by rousing her to jealousy. This device, designed to whip up Stella's flagging interest, ironically reveals Astrophil's own. It is in sonnet 88 that he introduces the rival lady or ladies. It has been noted that in the first portion of the sequence we see Astrophil moving among his male peers and that in the second, with one minor exception, we find a closed world in which the two

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in which case the lovers who satisfy "their unhonest lusts with ye women whom they love . . . as soone as they be come to the coveted ende, they not only feele a fulnesse and lothsomnesse, but also conceive a hatred against the wight beloved . . . or els they continue in the very same coveting and greedinesse, as though they were not in deed come to the end which they sought for. And . . . yet be they not satisfied." Or the woman may not relent, in which case "they never come by their covetings, which is a great unluckinesse." In either case, "both in the beginning and middle of this love, there is never other thing felt, but afflictions, torments, griefes, pining, travaile, so that to be wan, vexed with continuall teares and sighes, to live with a discontented minde, to be alwaies dumbe, or to lament, to covet death, in conclusion most unluckie are the properties which (they say) belong to lovers (pp. 594-595).

lovers are alone. Other women, except the scoffing court ladies of sonnet 54, have simply not existed. Suddenly in sonnet 88, which follows immediately the tender leave-taking of 87, Stella has a rival:

> in brave array heere marcheth she,
> That to win me, oft shewes a present pay.
> [italics mine]

Stella, as she is being reminded, is absent. Astrophil, lacking Stella's presence in the flesh, says that he will resort to his

> inward sight
> Where memory sets foorth the beames of love.

But this is ironic since the ideal vision held in the heart does not satisfy the need of the sensual lover. In The Courtier Bembo warns that in sensual love absence from the beloved is the cause of much suffering

> Because the influence of that beauty when it is present, giveth a wonderous delite to the lover . . . .
>
> .....
>
> The lover therefore that considereth onely the beauty in the bodie, loseth this treasure and happinesse, as soone as the woman beloved with her departure leaveth the eies without their brightnesse, and consequently the soule as a widdow without her joy (p. 608).

Ficino remarks on the same subject:

> The eye and the spirit, . . . like a mirror receive images when the body is present and lose them when it is absent,

and so to a sensual lover

> the presence of the beautiful body itself is necessary for them to shine continuously with its brilliance and be charmed and pleased. Therefore, because of their own poverty, they demand the presence of the body and the soul, being very compliant with them, is led to desire the same thing (p. 189).

There are two natural results of separation in the case of the Pandemic or sensual lover, into which classification Astrophil falls by

his own admission in sonnet 52. One is suffering; the other is infidelity. We find both in these final sonnets, but let us look at infidelity first. In the Symposium Pausanius says:

> Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul, inasmuch as he is not even stable, because he loves a thing which is in itself unstable, and therefore when the bloom of youth which he was desiring is over, he takes wing and flies away, dishonouring all his words and promises; whereas the love of the noble disposition is lifelong, for it becomes one with the perdurable (p. 515).

Astrophil has flown from Stella not because the bloom of her beauty has faded, of course, but because desiring it he has been unable to possess it. It is not surprising then that a rival lady or ladies appears in a number of these last sonnets. Sonnet 88 has already been discussed as the first of these. In sonnet 91 we see Astrophil's interest not in a particular woman, as in 88, but in several women as he writes to Stella:

> If this darke place yet shew like candle light,
> Some beautie's peece, as amber colourd hed,
> Milke hands, rose cheeks, or lips more sweet,
> more red,
> Of seeing jets, blacke, but in blacknesse bright.
> They please I do confesse, they please mine eyes.

But, he continues, they only please because they remind him of Stella. Astrophil is up to his old sophist tricks, subverting the Platonic argument that all beauty is a reflection of the true beauty, the divine light shining through bodies, and hence is identical. However, instead of using the idea correctly to remind himself that the true Platonic lover strives to come to the point where he "shall . . . beholde no more the particular beautie of one woman, but an universall, that decketh out all bodies" (The Courtier, p. 610), he uses it to arouse Stella's jealousy and compliment her at the same time. This is made clear when at the end of the poem he protests:

> Deere, therefore be not jealous over me,
> If you heare that they seeme my hart to move,
> Not them, ô no, but you in them I love.

In sonnet 97, his attention seems to be narrowed to one woman in particular who

> With choise delights and rarest company,
> Would faine drive cloudes from out my heavy cheere.

The description is not that of a man who is totally indifferent to the lady's charms and indeed he pronounces her Diana's peer. But, of course, Stella is the sun (Phoebus) and the rival lady, who is only the moon,

> could not shew my blind braine waies of joy,
> While I dispaire my Sunne's sight to enjoy.

Thus Stella is placated at the same time she is reminded that he is not unattractive to other women. These three instances of rivals (88, 91, and 97) all occur while yet the separation seems a temporary one; and indeed the lovers are reunited with tears, sighs and plaints on Stella's part (and no wonder considering the three sonnets just cited) and joy in the significance of these tears, sighs, and plaints on Astrophil's part (sonnet 100). But sickness intervenes to negate the effect of Astrophil's strategy, and we are never to know how successful it might have been. Though he apparently sees Stella again (sonnet 102), the end has only been postponed. The rival ladies occur again in sonnet 106 when Astrophil, having been told he may expect to find Stella at a certain gathering, finds not her but instead

> store of faire Ladies . . .
> Who may with charme of conversation sweete
> Make in my heavy mould new thoughts to grow:

He insists, however, that their efforts are to no avail.

Ironically, while Astrophil introduces the rival lady or ladies in order to arouse Stella's jealousy, Sidney introduces them to demonstrate

to the reader another of the pitfalls of illicit sensual love. And the irony is redoubled by the fact that Astrophil, apparently quite unconsciously, is following the prescription for curing oneself of a hopeless sensual love. As Ringler notes, all of these sonnets are "on the remedia amoris theme of 'examine other beauties' to get over love."[198] Ficino prescribes for the frustrated lover the following course of treatment: time, a gradual cessation of relations with the beloved, avoidance of her eyes, concerning oneself with serious matters, exercise, drink, and other women (p. 229). Whether Astrophil engages in exercise or takes up drinking we do not know but there is evidence in this final portion of the sequence that all the other methods are tried. Lever says of these sonnets on the rival ladies:

> Absence, and a resurgence of common male sexuality after the long period of frustrated ardour, eventually free him. Parted from Stella, he finds with some astonishment that other women can tempt him. . . . Desire begins to drive out desire; and the process is perhaps even accelerated by Stella's dawning jealousy. Her power over him is evidently on the decline; for the first time it becomes necessary for Astrophil to explain away, not very convincingly, his straying attention.[199]

Young and Rudenstine, both of whom see the end of the sequence as a reassertion by Astrophil of the values of Petrarchan-Platonic love also try to explain away the lover's straying attention. Rudenstine thinks that these sonnets serve to "underline his fundamental constancy,"[200] and Young sees poor Astrophil as innocently being besieged by coquettes who "now seem to find him fair game" because they can identify him as a

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[198]Ringler, p. 486.

[199]Lever, p. 80.

[200]Rudenstine, p. 265.

lover and therefore vulnerable.[201] It would seem more likely that if they see him as vulnerable to their attacks it is because they sense that his fancy is somewhat fickle. His acknowledgment of the attractions of the rival ladies and the fact that he quite deliberately conveys to Stella his awareness of those attractions in order to rouse her jealousy both argue against Young's and Rudenstine's generous interpretation of these sonnets.

If Astrophil's wandering eye reveals him as a "vulgar," i. e., sensual, lover, what does the nature of his suffering tell us? Scott has defended sonnet 89 against the charge that it is the worst sonnet in the sequence by giving examples to prove that Sidney was only following "l'example de ses prédécesseurs et contemporains étrangers."[202] Young agrees that the sonnet exhibits Sidney at his most conventional but thinks the "important thing is that he should choose to follow [convention] so slavishly at this particular point." He finds this slavishness evidence that Astrophil is reasserting Petrarchan absolutes.[203] But Sidney is quite capable of investing convention with life and vigor as many other sonnets in the sequence demonstrate. Therefore, the unimaginative quality of sonnet 89 must spring from another source. As it has been noted, Astrophil does not envision his separation from Stella as a permanent one at this point. Partly for that reason, he finds the separation not quite so painful as one might anticipate. After all, there are attractive ladies to distract him. Sonnet 89, therefore, is not just a purely conventional sonnet or separation, but also a merely

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[201] Young, p. 83.

[202] Scott, p. 41; [the example of his predecessors and foreign contemporaries.]

[203] Young, p. 82.

conventional one, informed by no real pain. As an absent lover, Astrophil is expected to express certain sentiments. Stella, it should be remembered, has never given up her role as Platonic mistress; indeed, she has recently reasserted it in song 8. Astrophil's course, therefore is laid out by Ficino. Love's melancholy, he says, "vexes the soul day and night with hideous images" (p. 195). Astrophil, following the literary and Platonic convention, abandons rime in the sonnet to substitute only the alternation of the two words "day" and "night." He speaks of himself as

> Tired with the dusty toiles of busie day,
> Languisht with horrors of the silent night,
> Suffering the evils both of the day and night,
> While no night is more darke then is my day,
> Nor no day hath lesse quiet then my night:
> With such bad mixture of my night and day,
> That living thus in blackest winter night,
> I feele the flames of hottest sommer day.

But here, too, Sidney is manipulating his persona for irony while his persona is manipulating the convention. Ficino tells us that the worst pains are felt by "those who neglecting contemplative love, have turned to a passion for physical embrace. For we bear much more easily the desires for seeing, than those of both seeing and touching the desired object" (p. 195). We have already seen, in the discussion of Sonnet 88,[204] Bembo's warning that in sensual love absence from the beloved causes great suffering. Astrophil's ardor may be somewhat cooled, but the flame is by no means dead, as we see by his interest in Stella in sonnet 92, part of which may arise from his curiosity about the success of his strategy to arouse her jealousy; he asks, among other things, whether she "sighd . . . or smilde." The highly sensuous imagined reunion with her in song 10 is further evidence both of his continuing interest in

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[204]See pp. 114-115 above.

possessing Stella physically and his continuing hope that such an outcome may be in the offing. Therefore, when there is a real danger that the temporary separation, which Astrophil hopes will prove a stimulus to the affair, threatens to become a permanent one, Astrophil begins to experience in earnest some of the pangs which he expressed as mere convention in sonnet 89.

The threat appears in sonnet 93. Astrophil has inadvertently done something to hurt Stella. Though we are not told explicitly what it is, we can assume that his injury consisted in a slip of the tongue:

> that my foul stumbling so,
> From carelessnesse did in no maner grow,
> But wit confus'd with too much care did misse.

Whether this slip injured her through injuring her reputation or by giving her husband cause to inflict pain on her, we do not know. Either or both contingencies would suit. At any rate, the relationship has been put in real jeopardy; and it is notable that it is after this point, in sonnets 94-99 that the emphasis upon the pains of separation really occurs and not after the temporary leave-taking of sonnet 87. One might recall, as perhaps Sidney did, Criseyde's letter to Troilus marking the end of her affair with him:

> For that I have herd wel moore than I wende,
> Touchyng us two, how thinges han ystonde;
> Which I shall with dissymulyng amende.
> And beth nat wroth, I have ek understonde
> How ye ne do but holden me in honde.[205]
> (Book V, ll. 1611-1615)

and wonder if sonnet 93 is in response to a similar letter from Stella. Again, Astrophil's own words and actions provide material upon which we

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[205]Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde in The Works, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston, Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 477.

may base our judgment of him. In The Courtier Bembo makes a point of saying that the rational lover "shall not bring [his mistress] in slander. He shall not be in case, with a much a doe otherwhile to refraine his eyes and tongue from discovering his desires to others" (pp. 609-610). Astrophil's "foul stumbling" condemns him from his own mouth.

There is justification after sonnet 93 for a more intense feeling to be expressed in the sonnets that immediately follow. Astrophil feels real regret at having harmed Stella; he fears the effect of this accident upon his relationship with her; and, partly because of this fear, he feels her physical absence more intensely than he did when he anticipated a tender reunion ending in final possession, a reunion like the imagined one of song 10. His passion is no longer at white heat, but he is not yet ready to give her up either. This is the appropriate time for him to explore his misery in verse, pacifying Stella by attempting to make his own pain at what has happened and at their separation seem so intense that it will lessen the pain he has caused her by sharing it. As he has announced at the end of sonnet 93

> Only with paines my paines thus eased be,
> That all thy hurts in my hart's wracke I reede;
> I cry thy sighs; my deere, thy teares I bleede.

At the same time he may hope to soothe her doubts about their relationship, doubts aroused both by his carelessness and by his reference to other ladies. And while he is arousing Stella's renewed sympathy, he is whipping up his own emotions, probing them as one probes a sore tooth, a particularly human reaction in a situation in which one is in some doubt about the quality of one's own feelings and consequently feels a certain amount of guilt about them. The ambiguity of his feelings creates a certain ambiguity in these sonnets. His uncertainty turns him back to the convention for support. Montgomery has noted that in sonnet 94,

"the effect of his address [to Grief], like his earlier addresses to Cupid, is to link his despair with an abstract, universal condition."[206] There is more real feeling in sonnet 94 and in others in this group than there is in sonnet 89, but we do not have the same sense of strong emotion sublimated to art that we have in many of the conventional sonnets among the first fifty-one. Astrophil's inability to achieve a succesful fusion of thought and feeling in the artful form that is convention is a sign of the damage his illicit sensual passion has done to him as a poet. Fusion was possible only so long as he fulfilled his proper role, that of poet-lover constructing a Golden World.

Montgomery notes that "the tone of the final sonnets is close to psychological paralysis, leaving Astrophel in a condition of moral and emotional ambiguity."[207] The point is well taken. Astrophil is unable to feel as much as he wishes to feel and unable to express effectively what he does feel. Those feelings he attempts to verbalize again classify him as a merely sensual lover. Take, for instance, sonnets 98 and 99. It is interesting to compare these two sonnets on sleep, or the lack of it, with sonnets 32, 38, and 39 in the first half of the sequence. In the earlier three sonnets, Astrophil's bed is a place of joy because sleep extracts from his own heart his ideal image of Stella (sonnet 32) and presents it to him in such a way that it "not onely shines but sings" (sonnet 38). He sees her there "Livelier then elsewhere" (sonnet 39). He actually seems to prefer his dream vision of her to his waking one, and this is logical from the Platonic point of view.

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[206] Montgomery, p. 95.

[207] Montgomery, p. 103.

The ideal image is superior to the physical being of his mistress. In The Courtier Bembo says that the rational lover "shall evermore carrie his precious treasure about with him shutte fast within his heart" and that "through the vertue of imagination, hee shall fashion with himselfe that beautie much more faire than it is in deede." Therefore, "he shal not take thought at departure or in absence" (p. 610). Kalstone notes that

> The satisfactory activity in Petrarch's poems is memory; pleasure lies in recalling the sudden illumination of his first sight of Laura. . . . The poet's first vision of Laura . . . becomes for him a type of the imagination of earthly beauty and an unfailing source of poetic invention. He willingly takes on symbolic exile . . . and a painful separation from Laura, attempting to preserve in the mind's eye the wonder and fear of these first moments.[208]

Astrophil, in the early sonnets, has this consolation for his lack of physical possession and this inspiration to the poetic expression of it. In the final portion of the sequence the vision is gone; the image, no longer sufficient to his needs, is obscured. His reduction of Stella from Idea to object of physical desire has left him with nothing to compensate for her physical absence. His love like that of Donne's

> Dull sublunary lovers love
> (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
> Absence, because it doth remove
> Those things which elemented it.
> ("A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," ll. 13-16)

As a result, what he once apostrophized as "sweetest bed" where sleep could "make in me those civill warres to cease" (sonnet 39), is now "The field where all my thoughts to warre be traind" (sonnet 98). Where once

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[208]Kalstone, p. 109.

the lively vision of the ideal Stella dwelled he now finds

> the blacke horrors of the silent night,
> Paint woe's blacke face so lively to my sight.
> (sonnet 98)

Where senses "closde up" in sleep (sonnet 38) once assured access to a more perfect light not accessible through the senses, Astrophil now lies with senses alert and

> is asham'd to find
> Such light in sense, with such a darkned mind.
> (sonnet 99)

Loss of the vision means loss of the source of poetic invention, and it is perfectly logical that these sonnets will suffer from that loss.

The affair does not come to an abrupt end. There is a tender and tearful reunion in sonnet 100. But Astrophil's carelessness (sonnet 93) seems to have hastened a process which abstinence and absence had already begun, and Stella's illness (sonnet 101) completes. His subsequent views of her in the sonnets are all apparently from a distance, unless the view of her still pale from her illness in sonnet 102 was obtained at a face-to-face meeting. If so, the stiff formality of the sonnet would seem to indicate that it was either a public meeting or that a certain coolness has set in. In these final sonnets we see again Sidney's complete understanding of his persona's psychology and of the psychology of the sensuous lover as it is outlined by the neo-Platonists. One of the major ironies of the sequence, indeed, is that as Astrophil rejects the conventional role of the Platonic lover, he falls, willy-nilly, into the conventional role of the non-rational lover. No longer welcome to Stella's presence, Astrophil loiters near her house passing her window, hoping to catch a glimpse of her (104), and frequents places he thinks she may appear (sonnets 105 and 106). Lord Julian in The Courtier notes

that besides the sighs, tears, and plaints used by the sensuous lover for purposes of seduction, the woman he pursues is subjected to other annoyances:

> At what time can she ever looke out at a window, but she seeth continually the earnest lover passe by? . . . . . .
>
> When doth she at any time issue out at her doores to Church or any other place, but he is alwaies in the face of her? And at every turning of a lane meeteth her in the teeth, with such heavie passion painted in his eyes, that a man woulde weene that even at the instant hee were readie to dye?

And:

> Again, in the night time she can never awake, but she heareth . . . that unquiet spirite about the walles of her house, casting forth sighes and lamentable voices. (pp. 506-507)

And we must recall that in song 11, Astrophil risks disgrace for both of them as he casts "forth sighes and lamentable voices" about the walls of Stella's house. It is then that he is met by real anger for the first time. There are still other tactics of the sensuous lover which Astrophil employs but they are more closely related to the occurrences in songs 4 and 8 and will be discussed in Chapter VI.[209] Nothing succeeds, however, and it is finally all too much for him. In sonnet 107 he has come to the point of expressing his need to be free of his preoccupation with

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[209] See pp. 186-187 and 188 ff. below: Astrophil is weak and sinful in that he has deliberately chosen desire over reason but he is not the really despicable kind of sensuous lover. The tricks of the sensuous lover he employs, while they are to be deplored, are mild compared to some Lord Julian details in The Courtier. Some women are tempted by such lovers "with money" (p. 506), and some seducers are so wicked that "perceiving they can not prevaile with faire wordes, fall to threatnings, and say that they wil tell their husbands, they are that they be not" while "other bargaine boldly with their fathers, and many times with ye husbands, which for promotions sake give their own daughters and wives for a pray against their will" (p. 507).

Stella, a freedom she has not the power to grant, of course. It is noteworthy that in this sonnet for the first time he introduces the subject of the mistress' inspiration of her lover to virtuous action, a basic tenet of the idea of Platonic love:

> And on my thoughts give thy Lieftenancy
> To this great cause, which needs both use and art,
> And as a Queene, who from her presence sends
> Whom she imployes, dismisse from thee my wit,
> Till it have wrought what thy owne will attends.

In so doing, Astrophil is attempting to recapture the control he has earlier lost and to justify his love on higher grounds than the unrequited passion which has driven him. Ficino tells us that true lovers "are always undertaking great tasks with a burning zeale, so that they may not appear contemptible in the eyes of the beloved, but may seem worthy of an exchange of love." (p. 131). And in The Courtier Bembo, as has been noted earlier, while insisting that sensual love is "naught" allows some excuse to young and passionate men if in the service of their desire to win a mistress to their sensual pleasure they engage in virtuous action: "for all they be not bent to a good end, yet are they good of them selves" (p. 596). Astrophil's admission that up to this point such has not been the result of his love is implied in the concluding lines of the sonnet:

> On servants' shame oft Maister's blame doth sit;
> O let not fooles in me thy workes reprove,
> And scorning say, 'See what it is to love.'

And again Sidney has made his persona condemn himself from his own mouth so that ironically the very remark Astrophil fears will be upon people's lips is implanted in the mind of the reader: "See what it is to love"--at least as Astrophil has loved. Thus is the didactic purpose of the sequence underlined.

The fact that there is no real resolution to the sequence is only another way of underlining this same idea. Astrophil's love is impossible, a physical passion which he cannot successfully sublimate but which cannot find its consummation in marriage. Such love, as Galm notes the pastoral poems in the Arcadia imply, is tragic.[210] Astrophil can only truly free himself by freeing himself completely of his desire, and as the sequence ends he has not been able to do that. Human love is, paradoxically, both mortal and immortal, Ficino tells us. It is mortal because "that continuous fervor of desire which is natural love impels a man to different goals at different ages" but it is immortal because it is forever held green in the imagination. Having lost Stella, Astrophil is doomed by the operation of the physiology of love, as expressed by Ficino, to be haunted by her forever:

> A form once loved is always loved. . . . You will always love the same form fixed in your memory, and as often as it meets the eye of your soul, it kindles your love. Therefore, whenever we meet that person whom we formerly loved, we are shaken, our hearts jump or quiver, or our livers melt and our eyes tremble, and our faces turn many colors. For[her] presence suggests to the eyes of the soul in [her] presence the form lying dormant in the mind as though rousing the fire slumbering under the ashes by blowing on it (p. 201).

It is apparently this fire which Astrophil is referring to in sonnet 108 when he says

> When sorrow (using mine owne fier's might)
> Melts downe his lead into my boyling brest,
> Through that darke fornace to my hart opprest,
> There shines a joy from thee my only light.

This fire will, Ficino tells us, "glow and fade alternately" as the eye of the mind sees with varying strength the loved form (p. 201). If

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[210]Galm, pp. 75.

George Gifford's account of Sidney's troubled mind as he lay dying can be believed, Sidney himself experienced some such after-effects from his love for Penelope Devereux.[211]

Another interesting aspect of the final sonnet is the resemblance between Astrophil's metaphor, "my yong soule flutters to thee his nest," and the passage in The Courtier in which Bembo discusses the difficulty a man encounters in trying to raise his thoughts from a particular beauty to the universal beauty:

> Wherefore such as come to this love, are like to yong birds almost flush, which for all they flitter a little their tender winges, yet dare they not stray farre from the nest, nor commit themselves to the winde and open weather (p. 610).

But while he whose soul strives to attain the goal of ideal beauty has the support of the nest in which it is fledged, the particular beauty of the mistress, until he should find his wings, Astrophil's "yong soule" can neither take flight to the open sky of the Ideal nor return to its nest:

> Most rude dispaire my daily unbidden guest,
> Clips streight my wings, streight wraps me in his night.

Such a dilemma cannot be resolved quickly or simply and the poet-lover, finding his verse to be of no further use, falls silent. Psychological truth demands that the sequence end upon this note. So does Sidney's didactic purpose.

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[211]See note 12, p. 4 above.

CHAPTER V

SOME PATTERNS OF IMAGERY

Renaissance poetic, as we have seen, insisted that the business of the poet was not to re-create life, but to create a world in which the Ideal assumes intelligible form so that it "To mortal eyes might sweetly shine" as virtue does in the person of Stella in sonnet 25 of Astrophil and Stella. Ficino tells us that the light of God is infused into the three invisible circles of Mind, Soul, and Nature, where it gives rise respectively to Ideas, Concepts,[212] and Seeds (the energia seminaria). The Seeds produced in the circle of Nature, so long as they remain only seeds, that is, only potentiality, are "true things" like the Ideas and Concepts produced in the Mind and the Soul; but when becoming is transformed into being, potentiality into actuality, imperfection is the inevitable result because "seeds never produce as perfectly as pure potentiality."[213] It is in the visible circle of Matter that Shapes finally come into existence, and that circle is merely a shadow of the three invisible circles of Mind, Soul, and Nature. Therefore, Ficino says, the "Forms of bodies [and other visible forms] seem to be the shadow of things rather than true things themselves." Therefore, the world of actuality, i. e., Nature in visible form, can never furnish man more than a hint of the "true nature of the divine." (pp. 137-140).

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[212]Ideas are a kind of direct apprehension of the Ideal; Concepts are formed with the assistance of reason and sensation.

[213]Jayne, note to p. 137 of Ficino's Commentary.

It is for this reason that Sidney terms Nature's world "brasen." The poet, however, is not hampered in his attempt to make intelligible the Ideas, which the infusion of the light of God has created in his mind, by the necessity of incorporating them in Matter. He can remain in the world of potentiality, "the divine consideration of what may and should be," and avoid the world of actuality, "what is, what hath bin, or shall be" (DP, F, III. 10). In fact, it is only so long as he is using his gifts in this way, in the service of the Ideal, that he can claim to be a true poet.

It is important to keep this in mind in discussing Renaissance imagery because, as Rosemond Tuve puts it, "we shall understand why an image has the character it has only as we come closer to knowing why the poem was written at all."[214] The poet who announces that he is not concerned with the material world of nature will, as Tuve says, eschew "sensuous accuracy in . . . images" in favor of "profound suggestiveness or logical subtlety,"[215] both of which are more suitable for the transmission of Ideas. The criteria for successful imagery in this context are outlined by Tuve. The image must succeed on the level of artificiality, that is, it is to be an "artful construct . . . designed to please on grounds of its formal excellence rather than by its likeness to the stuff of life--a relatively formless subject matter not to be identified with the poetic subject and evidently not even loosely identified with 'reality.'" Secondly, on the level of coherent ordering, images are to be selected for their appropriateness and significance and

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[214]Tuve, p. 77.

[215]Tuve, p. 25.

are to be "consistent, apt, particular, but not local or singular." And, finally, imagery must succeed on the level of "Imitation as truth-stating, as didactically concerned with the conveying of concepts--not simply orderly patterns but what we should commonly call 'ideas' and 'values.'"[216] As the poet is concerned with art, not life, with the universal, not the singular, with truth, not pretty patterns, so will be the imagery he chooses. "Decorum" is, of course, the key word, the apt fitting of the part to the whole on all levels. As Tuve contends, images will be selected "on grounds of their decorous relation to the coherent pattern which is the author's subject";[217] and each image will be "chosen and presented as a 'significant' part of an ordered pattern, and every care [will be] taken to make that order rationally apprehensible."[218] If, then, we have correctly identified the "coherent pattern which is the author's subject"--that is, if we are correct in believing that Sidney's purpose in writing the sequence is moral and that his method is to exhibit his persona, first, striving, with the aid of Platonic literary and love conventions, to idealize his love; then, as his reason is overcome by appetite, embracing the Brasen World and not merely rejecting the conventions but in his disillusionment subverting them for corrupt purposes; and, finally, attempting to turn to them anew for consolation in the face of his failure to win Stella, only to find that they are no longer accessible to him--if this pattern is correct, then we should be able to point out patterns of imagery which are clearly related to it.

Six such patterns of imagery will be discussed in this chapter. Four of these overlap and intertwine to such an extent, and, taken

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[216]Tuve, p. 25.

[217]Tuve, p. 40.

[218]Tuve, pp. 43-44.

together, are so significant that they form the warp upon which the whole fabric of the sequence is woven. These are (1) the pattern of imagery which characterizes Stella's person, (2) that which characterizes her eyes, (3) light-dark imagery, and (4) imagery associated with the hierarchy of the senses, the superior ones being sight, hearing, and mind and the inferior ones being touch, taste, and smell. Though the close relationship of these patterns makes it rather awkward to separate them and necessitates a certain duplication--many of the images functioning in more than one pattern--the attempt will be made to untangle the various strands. The other two patterns, images associated with the pangs of love and animal imagery, will be discussed last.

We have seen that in the majority of the first fifty-one sonnets and most particularly in those twenty-two sonnets in which he achieves successful idealization of his passion, Astrophil concentrates on turning Stella into an abstraction, a "divine work of art . . . a formal . . . object [to] be contemplated and celebrated formally."[219] Some of the ways in which he goes about his task have been discussed in earlier chapters, notably his refusal to allow her in these early sonnets the active role she plays in the later ones. One of the most important of his tools, however, is the imagery with which he associates her. He relies almost exclusively on conventional imagery, what Tuve calls "images with known significance"[220] because such imagery, by its very "generalness," is, as Tuve notes, suitable for stressing "the ideational element" in a poem.[221] Stella is robbed of personal significance and

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[219]Montgomery, p. 58.

[220]Tuve, p. 47.

[221]Tuve, p. 47.

robed in the significance of the Ideal by the way in which such imagery associates her with the convention. Associating her with myth is one of the ways in which this can be accomplished, and it has been noted in Chapter III[222] that Astrophil relies heavily on myth in eight of the twenty-two Golden World sonnets. In those eight sonnets Stella is seen in the company of mythological figures and through this association becomes a figure in the convention herself. She is also directly transformed metaphorically into a mythological figure in two of the so-called identification sonnets, 33 and 37. In sonnet 33 she is Astrophil's Helen and in 37 she is a nymph. But other kinds of conventional imagery are also used to transform the concrete Stella into the abstract Idea. Sonnet 8, which draws on myth, also presents Stella to us as some kind of larger-than-life-size statue, cold and inanimate; and all the imagery works to remove her from the human sphere. Cupid, shivering from the chill of English weather, is attracted by the "pure light" emanating from Stella's face; but, when he perches there seeking warmth, he finds it to be as cold and white as snow and must again take flight. In sonnet 46 her face is again the dwelling place of Cupid; but, in keeping with the movement of this particular sonnet, in which Astrophil gives way to an expression of desire, she falls from her position as ideal edifice in the octave to the prosaic role of schoolmistress in line 10 and finally to just plain "Deare" in line 12. In sonnet 43 she keeps her exalted position throughout. Again she is larger than life. Her eyes are Cupid's "main force"; when he wishes to play, he plays "in her lips"; and her heart is his refuge from the outside world. In many of the

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[222]See pp. 74-75 above.

Cupid sonnets specific parts of her body are Love's weapons. In sonnet 12 her eyes, mirroring Cupid, are compared to the mirror lures used by Wiltshiremen to lure larks into their "day-nets"[223] and the nets are her hair. Her lips, her breath, her breast, and her voice serve Cupid--but her heart is a "Cittadell." In sonnet 13 she is Cupid's arms, her face being his shield, her hair his crest. Cupid's new bows are made from her brows and his arrows from her eyes in sonnet 17. In sonnet 20 her eye-beams are Cupid's dart and the blackness of her eyes provides the ambush in which Cupid lies in wait: the "darke bush," the "sweete blacks which vailes the heav'nly eye," "the black hue [which] from me the bad guest hid." Here Astrophil appears to be echoing Hoby's Courtier:

> The eyes therefore lye lurking like souldiers in war, lying in waite in bushment, and . . . it draweth unto it and allureth who so beholdeth it a farre off: untill he come nigh: and as soone as he is at hand, the eyes shoote, and like sorcerers bewitch. . . (p. 525).

The weaponry imagery continues in sonnet 29 where various parts of Stella, in a somewhat awkward blazon, are made to serve Cupid, her eyes "with shot," her lips his heralds," "her breasts his tents," her "legs his triumphall carre," her "flesh his food," and "her skin his armour brave."

In a longer blazon, sonnet 9, the architectural image suggested when her face is made Cupid's perch or dwelling-place in sonnets 8 and 46 is fully developed. Stella's face is now "Queen Vertue's court." The "front" (her forehead) is of "Alablaster," her hair is a roof of gold; the "doore" (her lips) are of "Red Porphir" with a "locke of pearle"

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[223] Ringler, p. 465.

(her teeth); her "porches" (cheeks) are of "Marble mixt red and white"; and her "windowes" (eyes) are of "touch" (i. e., black lignite or jet).[224] Young notes of this sonnet that the decorum of the poem demands that we understand in terms of an abstract and general value, variously suggested by alabaster, gold, porphyry, and pearl, and not in terms of the monstrous, mineral idolatry the concrete detail might suggest."[225] Montgomery makes the same point when he says that the blazon, which is, of course, a highly conventional form, is not "a photograph of the living presence of a woman but . . . an image of her significance. Secondarily, perhaps, it represents the attitude of the speaker who contemplates that significance."[226] The same may be said of other conventional imagery which Astrophil employs. In sonnet 44 we again have the architectural image. Stella's head is seen as the "Court of blisse" and her ears are the "daintie dores" through which Astrophil's complaints must pass only to be transformed within to "tunes of joyes."

The impression which we receive from sonnet 8 and sonnet 43, that Stella is some kind of immense statue over which the child Cupid clambers, is modified in the imagery of sonnet 38 (and, by extension, 39). Here in Astrophil's dream vision she is a more delicate image, a statuette, one

wrought
By Love's owne selfe;

and Love is such an excellent maker that, like Yeats' golden bird upon a golden bough, "she . . . not onely shines but sings." She may also be

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[224]Ringler, p. 463.

[225]Young, p. 11.

[226]Montgomery, p. 37.

aptly adorned with gems like some holy image. In sonnet 32, another dream vision, her skin is "Ivorie," her lips "Rubies," her teeth (as in 9) "pearle," and her hair (as in 9) "gold." These images recall Bembo's remark in The Courtier that the divine light of beauty shining in the countenance most perfectly suited for it is "like the sunne beames that strike against beautifull plate of fine golde wrought and set with precious jewels" (p. 593). In sonnet 24 she has become herself a single jewel: "The richest gemme of Love and life," which is to be found in the coffers of the worse-than-miserly Lord Rich. She is also another kind of precious object, a rare book. In sonnet 3 her face is the book in which Nature writes "What Love and Beautie be." A comparable similitude is developed by analogy in sonnet 11. Cupid is like a child who finding a beautiful book pays attention only to the

> guilded leaves or colourd Velume . . .
> Or at the most on some fine picture stayes,
> But never heeds the fruit of writer's mind.

Therefore, when he sees Stella "in Nature's cabinet" he plays upon her surface, just as he does in several of the other sonnets utilizing the Cupid myth, but never seeks to penetrate deeper to her heart.

There are, of course, other methods of exalting one's mistress to the status of Idea besides making her explicitly or implicitly into an objet d'art. Looking again at Montgomery's phrase, "a divine work of art," we may shift our attention from the noun phrase to the adjective. Stella's divinity is emphasized in several ways. In sonnet 4 she is specifically termed a "true . . . Deitie." In sonnet 35, the phrase "Where Nature doth with infinite agree" is indicative of her divinity, as noted in Chapter III.[227] And in sonnet 40 she is again a goddess;

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[227]See pp. 79-80 above.

in my heart I offer still to thee,
O do not let thy Temple be destroyd.

But her divinity is also indicated by her association with the forces of nature. In sonnet 22 she is the sun's equal; she marches unarmed to intercept his progress and when they meet he kisses her as a king kisses a brother or sister monarch in greeting. Sonnet 33 describes her youth as "rising Morne" and her ripeness as "heav'nly day." Her "heavenly face" sends forth "beames" in sonnet 41. Much of the imagery associated with her eyes, as will be seen, is of this kind. Finally, she is raised above human level into the higher regions by being associated with abstract virtue. In sonnet 25 she is the very personification of virtue, and in sonnet 40 she sits on "the height of Vertue's throne."

Another kind of throne characterizes her exaltation also. This time she is not supra-human but placed among the great of humankind, those who rule by divine right and who, in the great chain of being, form the link between man and the angels. She is a "Princesse of Beautie" in sonnet 28. In sonnet 10, in a somewhat mixed metaphor she is a queen (or conqueror) accepting the pledge of vassalage from reason, who kneels at her feet, overcome by her "rayes." In sonnet 36 she is a conqueror whose "Lieutenant" is Love. She is again a conqueror in sonnet 40 where, as I have already said, she is both upon virtue's throne and a goddess in her temple.

This, then, is the major imagery by which Stella is characterized in the first fifty-two sonnets. Considering it we should consider Tuve's remark that "tropes were not commended as suitable to clear visualizing of object, act, place, person; they were commended as a means of getting around the inadequacies of language economically, of making the reader

think connections which language does not actually say."[228] What Sidney is doing here, in keeping with his plan for the sequence, is having Astrophil select imagery which will force us not to see Stella herself but to see her significance as Idea. The image of Stella transcends the physical Stella as a goddess or a queen transcends an ordinary mortal, and that image is endowed with significance by its very scale and richness. Galm notes that in the Arcadia

> the clearest illustration of Musidorus' poetic processes is the superficially pastoral poem in Book II: "My sheepe are thoughts, which I both guide and serve." . . . A real shepherd, depending upon his environment as a source of metaphor, would probably say "My thoughts are sheep," and use a familiar physical world to clarify his mental state.[229]

What Musidorus does, of course, is just the opposite. Instead of attempting to make the abstract concrete, he reduces "physical appearances to meaning alone," as Galm says.[230] This is what Tuve is speaking of when she says that Renaissance poets "use metaphor . . . to fairly push one into an abstract process."[231] This is what Astrophil is doing in the first part of the sequence; and in making the physical Stella into an abstraction, he is also attempting to defuse his own passion. Thus, the process also becomes one of control through disciplined uttering.

In the twentieth century we have fallen into the habit of thinking of figurative language as a tool to concreteness, a means by which abstract ideas and states of feeling can be crystallized. T. E. Hulme,

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[228] Tuve, p. 101.

[229] Galm, p. 50.

[230] Galm, p. 50.

[231] Tuve, p. 102.

for instance, notes that the poet is "to see things as they really are" and express what he sees through "fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new . . . but because the old cease to convey a physical thing and become abstract counters [italics mine]."[232] It is quite clear that Hulme's "things" are not the Renaissance poet's "true things" and that what a Hulme expects of figurative language is precisely what a Sidney wished to avoid, the conveying of a physical thing. Hulme is correct in saying that "old," or conventional epithets and metaphors become abstract counters. This is what gave them their value for the Renaissance poet. In the work of a modern poet we would expect that a heavier weight of figurative language in one section of the sequence than in another would tend toward a comparable weight of concreteness. This is certainly not the case in Astrophil and Stella. Howe has done a rhetorical analysis of the sequence and notes that the two figures Omiosis (simile) and Icon (that particular species of similitude which "paints the likeness of a person by imagery")[233] occur in thirteen of the first fifty-one sonnets in a total of fifty-eight lines. (Nine of these thirteen sonnets are found among the twenty-two in which Astrophil realizes his Golden World, and these instances account for forty-four of the total fifty-eight lines.) In contrast, these figures occur in only three of the twenty-five sonnets grouped between 51 and 87 and in a total of only fifteen lines in that portion of the sequence. In the twenty-two remaining sonnets they occupy twenty-two lines in four sonnets.[234] Other

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[232]quoted in C. Day Lewis, The Poetic Image (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1948), p. 24.

[233]Sister Miriam Joseph, Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language (New York: Hafner Publ. Co., 1966), p. 143.

[234]Howe, p. 168.

figurative language, with the exception of personification and apostrophe, both of which have a special function,[235] is distributed in roughly the same manner. The first section of the sequence, then, the one in which Astrophil is idealizing his love by turning it into an abstraction, is the most heavily figurative; the first half of the Brasen World section exhibits a sharp drop in figurative language; and in the final portion of the Brasen World section, in which, as we have noted, Astrophil attempts to recapture control by returning to the convention, there is a sporadic resurgence of figurative language. Astrophil's figures, because of their reliance on convention, are abstract counters used in the service of the Ideal.

The second section of the sequence is, of course, not devoid of figurative language associated with the characterization of Stella. Astrophil still relies on the power of the images that he does use to suggest rather than make concrete; but, in the context in which they are placed, what they suggest is quite different. In other words, just as Astrophil attacks conventional style and conventional ideas about ideal love in the second section by using them ironically, so he attacks conventional imagery. We may compare for instance the imagery in sonnet 52 with that of sonnet 43. In the latter sonnet, as we have seen, Stella is larger than life, her eyes Cupid's armed might, her lips his playground, her heart his retreat from the world. Now in 52 in a sharp

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[235]These are two of the devices which Sidney has Astrophil use throughout the sequence to achieve energia, that "forcibleness" which convinces the reader that the passions portrayed are truly felt (DP, F, III. 41). Rudenstine, pp. 156-157, 167, notes that energia is achieved through "general vigor of language" and explicitly includes such devices as prosopopoeia, apostrophe, narrative techniques, exclamations, sharp questions, abrupt openings, and effective use of meter.

reduction in scale "her eyes, her lips, her all" wear Love's "badge." She is his vassal and servant like any other pretty and seductive miss. And where before Cupid's chief pleasure sprang from his assuredness of her inaccessibility, he is now in league with the lover who seeks to take possession of her body. In sonnet 53 Stella makes "a window send forth light" but again we must consider the context. This light dazzles Astrophil and forces him to make a fool of himself in the tournament. Her face is again a book in sonnets 56 and 71 but the lesson therein is one the lover cannot brook with patience. In sonnet 56 he cries out,

> No Patience, if thou wilt my good, then make
> Her come, and heare with patience my desire,
> And then with patience bid me beare my fire;

and in 71 that "fairest booke of Nature" may provide sustenance to his virtue,

> 'But ah,' Desire still cries, 'give me some food.'

In sonnet 61 she is a "heav'n of joyes" but this heaven thunders and lightnings, and in sonnet 63 she is again "lightning Love." The effect of the piling up of similitudes in sonnet 68 has been discussed in Chapter IV.[236] In sonnet 69, Stella's heart is a "realm of blisse," but it is Astrophil who is now king, who has "the monarchie," and Stella is dethroned. This new pride of possession transforms the distant star of the earlier sonnets into simply "my Starre" who lowers and chides because he has

> a sugred kisse
> In sport . . . suckt.
> (Sonnet 73)

Her face is "Beautie's throne" in the same sonnet but seated upon this

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[236] See p. 90 above.

throne are those rather ridiculous "scarlet judges, threatning bloudy paine" which help earn the erstwhile goddess the title of "heav'nly foole." The nymph of sonnet 37 reappears in sonnet 82 but instead of her being "Rich in those gifts which give th'eternall crowne" as she was in the earlier sonnet, she is the keeper of the cherries that Astrophil has nibbled when he was "full of desire." Her beauty here is also compared to the naked Venus, the only bit of nudity in the sequence. Elsewhere in this group of sonnets the little imagery that exists is clearly different from that of the first half of the sequence. In sonnet 63 she is Astrophil's "young Dove" and she is a sophistical angel in sonnet 61.

In the final part of the sequence, Stella is Astrophil's "deare Captainnesse" (sonnet 88), "Phenix Stella" (sonnet 92 when Astrophil is hoping that his absence has renewed her love), and sweetness, grace, beauty and joy personified (sonnet 101). In sonnet 103 the imagery suggests Venus, as we have seen; but this is in many ways one of the most concrete of the sonnets, the one in which for a moment one glimpses her as a living being rather than an abstraction. She takes on life through her behavior and speech in several of the sonnets after sonnet 51; but here, though we know the imagery is largely borrowed from Petrarch, the effect is to make us "see" her sitting in her boat on the Thames with her golden hair flying and a blush upon her cheeks. This occurs nowhere else in the sequence. In sonnet 105 her face is "heav'n" and his eyes' "Nectar"; in 102 her cheeks, pale after her illness, are Love's "paper perfit white" upon which he will write with "beautie's reddest inke." Before her illness, he says, her cheeks had been roses and morning's "crimson weeds."

The dominant imagery in this part of the sequence is the sun imagery; but here it is used in a negative fashion, being entirely concerned with the absence of light. For that reason, it will be discussed later in the chapter in treating of the pattern of light-dark imagery in the sequence. Other than this sun imagery, there is very little of the kind of exalted imagery we find in the first part of the sequence. It is only in sonnet 107 that Stella is again restored to her heights as "Princesse," "Queene," and "Maister" as Astrophil seeks his release from her. Except where he has used imagery of the higher style ironically, Astrophil has been true to his vow of sonnets 51 and 55 to assume a lower style, more suitable to "comedie" in the second half of the sequence.

Another striking contrast between the first and second portions of the sequence, the Golden and the Brasen World portions, is the difference in the amount of imagery associated with the characterization of Stella's eyes. There is a great deal more of it in the first fifty-one sonnets and this is not surprising. The eyes are the most important organ in the Platonic hierarchy. They are the organ through which light and beauty are perceived and through which hearts and souls may be interchanged. Only the ears, through which the beauty of music is received, are considered to be on anything like the same level of importance. In the first fifty-one sonnets, six entire sonnets are devoted to the characterization of Stella's eyes (7, 17, 20, 26, 42 and 48). In two other sonnets, there are significant portions devoted to the eyes (9 and 43); and there are at least ten other sonnets in which one or more lines serve such a purpose. There are probably others; but it is sometimes difficult to say, when Astrophil is speaking of Stella's beams, whether he is speaking of her eye-beams or of her general ability, as beauty, to give

off light. It is certainly not an exaggeration to say that imagery associated with Stella's eyes dominates the first portion of the sequence.

Because the eye is the organ of sight and because it functions as both receiver and, Platonically speaking, transmitter of light, eye imagery plays an important part in both the patterns of sense imagery and of light-dark imagery we shall examine a little later in the chapter. Here we will concentrate on the way in which it functions to exalt Stella just as the other imagery associated with her person does. In fact, some of the imagery associated with the eyes has already been discussed in the passage dealing with various parts of Stella's body as weapons of love. The eyes are perhaps the most effective weapon of all.

Other eye imagery emphasizes the association with the forces of nature which has been pointed out as one of Astrophil's means of exalting Stella. In sonnet 42 her eyes are Astrophil's sun: "Keep still my Zenith, ever shine on me." In the same sonnet they are also associated with the primum mobile because of their ability to move "the Spheares of beautie" just as the primum mobile governs the movement of all the lesser spheres in the Ptolomaic universe. Sonnet 26 makes her eyes into "two starres" which govern Astrophil's life. In sonnet 48 they are "morning starres." In sonnet 51 either Stella or her eyes give off "beames" like the sun or the stars. In sonnet 7 her eyes are "sun-like" though Nature kindly veils them in blackness to protect the sight of those who look into them. And in the same sonnet her eyes demonstrate Nature's power to break her own laws. They are "miraculous" in that in them "all beauties flow" in black, which is "Beautie's contrary," as all good Platonists know, black being the absence of light and beauty being constituted of light. In sonnet 8, her eyes are like "morning sun."

Her eyes also exalt her in the human hierarchy. Just as she is, in her complete person, a conquerer, so are her eyes. In sonnet 42 "they make Love conquer" at the same time they "conquer Love"; and they are "Only lov'd Tyrants."

In the second half of the sequence, in contrast, there are only two sonnets which may be said to deal exclusively with her eyes; and only one of these, sonnet 76, utilizes much imagery. Sonnet 89, the other one, simply states that Stella's eyes have been the source of the poet's light and that since they are absent he is left in darkness. Astrophil then goes on to describe his own suffering, not Stella's eyes. Sonnet 76 is completely ironic. Stella's eyes, her "shining twins" are associated with the sun, just as they have been in many of the earlier sonnets; but here the metaphor is used to justify the suggestive double entendre of the concluding lines. Other references to her eyes in this part of the sequence are few in number, utilize much less figurative language, and are almost all ironic. In sonnet 52 her eyes, as previously noted, are associated with her lips and her body as wearing the badge of what is now a lustful love. In sonnet 62 love shines in her eyes but it is a sham, "unfelt." In sonnet 66 her eyes are "beames of blisse," and in sonnet 67 they speak; but in both cases the association is with Stella's blushing confusion at her own feelings for Astrophil, confusion that signals, he is quite sure, his physical triumph. In sonnet 71 the "inward sunne" of virtue shines in her eyes but it is desire that begs for food. In 77 her "beames" are joy, but the best part of her his "Mayd'n Muse" dare not speak of. In sonnet 86 her eyes are "blest" but they "chast'n" him: "Alas, whence came this change of lookes?" In sonnet 87 they weep pearls at parting; in 92 the "seeing jets" of the

Rival Ladies remind him of Stella's; in 103 they are "faire planets." The latter sonnet, as noted previously, reveals a partial resurgence of idealism. One may compare these examples with the imagery in the first section where Stella's eyes are described in the exalted language which characterizes Astrophil's attempt to construct the Golden World.

The second part of the sequence, in which the deliberate choice of the sensual is made, is appropriately presided over by another organ: the lips. Many of the similitudes used to characterize the lips in the baiser sonnets have been discussed in Chapter IV.[237] The lips are, of course, associated with two of the inferior senses, the senses of touch and of taste; the shift from eyes to lips is therefore quite significant. Ficino is most insistent that the senses of touch, taste, and smell have no part in true love. This is the province of the superior ones: mind, sight, and hearing. Galm notes that Aristotle makes a "similar distinction when discussing continence. Incontinence arises only from excessive gratification of taste and touch, not sight and hearing."[238] Ficino says that bodily beauty is perceived only through the eyes and so the eye alone enjoys it. Hence, "lust to touch the body is not a part of love, nor is it the desire of the lover, but rather a kind of wantonness and the derangement of a servile man" (pp. 146-147). He says:

> love is always limited to[the pleasures of] the mind, the eyes, and the ears. What need is there of the senses of smell, taste, and touch? None of these is human beauty, since these qualities are simple, and human beauty of the body requires a harmony of various parts. Love regards as its end the enjoyment of beauty;

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[237]See pp. 105-106 above.

[238]Galm, p. 97.

> beauty pertains only to the mind, sight, and hearing. Love, therefore, is limited to these three, but desire which rises from the other senses is called, not love, but lust or madness (p. 130).

And he says, finally, that the love of the voluptuous man, whom he characterizes as he who desires to touch, is animal (p. 193). In The Courtier Bembo asserts the same thing:

> And as a man heareth not with his mouth, nor smelleth with his eares: no more can he also in any manner wise enjoy beautie, nor satisfie the desire that she stirreth up in our mindes, with feeling, but with the sense, unto whom beautie is the very butte to level at: namely the vertue of seeing (p. 604).

And he reminds us that the "wayes that be a passage to the soule . . . [are] the sight and the hearing" (p. 606).

Galm has noted that in "the poetic convention the separation of the senses is often perceptible in the imagery," and he discusses the way in which this is true in the Arcadia. He gives as an example a blazon poem in which Pyrocles describes Philoclea bathing and in which the imagery "suppresses carnal appreciation in favor of an almost esthetic contemplation." This is done, he notes, not only by giving priority to "sight images . . . but by deliberate frustration of tactile sensation." He further takes note of Pyrocles' use of snow, marble, alabaster, etc., whose whiteness suggests chastity but which also suggests coldness.[239] Briefly interrupting his discussion of the Arcadia, Galm notes correctly that Astrophil also uses this device in Astrophil and Stella. He discusses sonnet 9 as an example of this technique; and the passage bears repeating though he goes astray toward the end of the poem, perhaps because he did not have access to Ringler at the time of his dissertation.

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[239] Galm, pp. 96-97.

Of the sonnet he says:

> This sculptured and lifeless portrait of Stella is no accident; stone was as cold in Sidney's day as it is now. Astrophil develops the visual architectural conceit which raises Stella's beauty beyond carnality and gives it conventional spiritual value. The conceit does not neglect but intentionally frustrates non-visual senses. The coldness of the stone repels any desire to touch and the reader must use only his visual imagination to perceive a coherent picture. The point of the conceit is the meaning which it abstracts from Stella's face. But the point of the poem is the pun on touch in the final tercet, touch being an explosive as well as a stone. Even though he obliterates his touch impressions, Astrophil is fired by Stella's beauty, and by her eyes in particular, as if by gunpowder. His attempt to concentrate affection in his eyes and mind has not succeeded in sublimation of the "lower" senses; they are only temporarily suppressed and even "without touch" explode finally more violently than ever.[240]

Though one cannot quarrel seriously with Galm's discussion of the poem until his reference to touch, it would seem more accurate to say that the reader of the blazon must use only what Ficino would call his mental sense rather than his visual imagination. C. Day Lewis notes that both "mixed metaphors and incongruous images seem to be successful in proportion as they lack sensuous appeal"[241] and this seems to me a classic example. The reader may, of course, bring his visual sense into play and "see" the architectural monstrosity Astrophil builds; but if he does, it becomes just that, a monstrosity. One must conceive the images rather in terms of the values they represent, abstractly, as things which are precious.

But the real problem with Galm's reading is that he bases his discussion of the word touch upon Lever's assumption that it alludes to

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[240]Galm, pp. 98-99.

[241]Day Lewis, p. 73.

"touchwood" which was a kind of match or tinder used to touch off explosives. But Ringler notes that

> "touch" [is]a glossy black stone which[Sidney] apparently thought was a species of jet , . . . a form of lignite that has the property of attracting light bodies when static electricity is induced by rubbing. The windows (Stella's black eyes) are made of 'touch' (glossy black stone) that without 'touch' (contact) doth 'touch' (affect the emotion); they are made of 'touch' (black lignite or jet) and I am their straw (irresistibly drawn to them).

He notes a comparable use by Lyly in Euphues and an entry in the OED citing The Fayre Mayde of the Exchange (1607): "The drawing vertue of a sable jeat."[242] Furthermore, in addition to Ringler's citations, one finds similar images in Ficino's Commentary where he discusses the magnetic power of the eyes (p. 183) and where he says that love draws men as "amber draws the chaff" (p. 100). The effect of Ringler's reading, supported both by his sources and by the usage of Ficino, is clearly to strengthen Galm's argument that the poet deliberately tries to "frustrate non-visual senses." It is the whole poem that does this and not simply the largest part of it. Astrophil is trying to make clear here as he does elsewhere that Stella's power to move is not dependent on touch; it is non-sensual. In rejecting touch, he is rejecting the sensuous side of love and focussing our attention again on the Ideal. Indeed, imagery other than visual or aural or mental is almost non-existent in this portion of the sequence. The emphasis is on the untouchable, upon coldness as in sonnet 8 or upon the hard glitter of jewels as in sonnets 24 and 32, or upon abstractions as in sonnet 25 or distant stars or glittering suns or upon anything but flesh and

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[242]Ringler, pp. 463-464.

blood. In sonnet 36 Astrophil carefully limits those senses through which he is conquered to sight:

> through my long battred eyes
> Whole armies of thy beauties entred in.

and hearing: "With so sweet voice." He insists further that Stella's victory does not depend upon the senses at all since neither

> stone nor tree
> By Sence's priviledge, can scape from thee.

These lines, however, bring us back to her voice since it is her voice, paradoxically, which moves these senseless stones and trees. This ability links her with both Amphion and Orpheus, who, Astrophil tells us in song 3, moved stones and trees respectively. Stella's voice moves both. Appropriately, since hearing is the second superior sense, her voice also plays an important part in sonnet 38 where she not only "shines but sings," both senses being brought into play. Of course, sonnets 57 and 58 are concerned with characterizing the effect of Stella's voice upon Astrophil, too; and we should recall that these two sonnets are the last to exhibit the idealism which dominates the first part of the sequence.

In this part of the sequence there is almost no imagery which could be in any way related to the inferior senses. In sonnet 12, Astrophil speaks of Stella's sweet breath, which may evoke the senses of both smell and touch, and which he frequently mentions in the later portion of the sequence. A possible taste image, though it is indeed abstract, is the reference in the same sonnet to Cupid's pap which "well sugred lies" in Stella's breast. In sonnet 14 he notes how bitter, figuratively speaking, his friend's words are to him by calling them "Rubarb words"; but they are an intrusion from the Brasen World. In sonnet 46, where

Cupid's and Astrophil's desires are getting out of control, both "desire to feed of further grace."

In keeping with the triumph of the sensual over the Ideal in the second part of the sequence, imagery related to the inferior senses appears much more frequently. The sweetness of Stella's breath is considered in three sonnets (58, 61 and 68). The dog in sonnet 59 touches his mistress and quite intimately at that. As noted in Chapter IV,[243] he clips her bosom and laps her lap; he also tastes her "sugred lips"; and he is a "sowre-breath'd mate." Astrophil, too, tastes her "sugred" lips in several sonnets. Suddenly we have a flock of images related to food and drink. We may note that Ficino says of sensual lovers that they desire "to feed upon dishes as charming, pleasant, and beautiful as possible and to generate a handsome offspring by a beautiful woman" (p. 204). And we may remember that Astrophil has told us in sonnet 71 that desire cries for its "food." In sonnet 62, he expresses his disappointment when Stella says she loves him only virtuously by saying "thus watred was my wine." In 70 his apparent triumph is to be toasted in "Nectar of mirth" drunk from "Jove's cup." Stella's kisses are the "Breakefast of Love" in sonnet 79, impart to him the "frutes of new-found Paradise" in 81, and in sonnet 82 they are sweet cherries to be "caught at . . . a hungrie bit." The lascivious Philip Sparrow of sonnet 83 drinks "Nectar" from Stella's tongue. Stella is the "food" of Astrophil's thoughts in sonnet 87 and in 88 she is "heavn's food" to be preferred above "earthly cates." The latter is ironic since Ficino tells us that the heavenly banquet at which one is never sated is

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[243] See p. 85 above.

reserved to those who have progressed to the stage where they love God (the Ideal) the most (p. 162). Astrophil's classifying Stella as "heavn's food" after his change of direction in sonnet 52, is, therefore, another abuse of the convention. And, of course, it becomes quite clear that Astrophil finds those "earthly cates" rather tempting. In sonnet 100 the brief reunion of the lovers is marked by

> honied sighs, which from that breast do rise,
> Whose pants do make unspilling creame to flow.

and we cannot forget Bembo's remark in The Courtier that the soul of the sensual lover who is separated from the presence of his beloved

> is alwaies in affliction and travell and (in a manner) waxeth woode, until the beloved beautie commeth before her once againe, and then is she immediatly pacified and taketh breath, and throughly bent to it, is nourished with most daintie food, and by her will, would never depart from so sweet a sight [italics mine] (p. 609).

Finally, in sonnet 105 Stella is "Nectar" to Astrophil's eye, an odd figure confusing two senses. Other images rooted in the lower senses may be pointed out, such as the touch imagery in sonnet 83. Further, we might note that in sonnet 79 the kiss is specifically described as "Pleasingst consort, where each sence holds a part." Astrophil is apparently committing neo-Platonic heresy by insisting upon the value of all the senses in love. The same kind of thing occurs in sonnet 85 in which Astrophil specifically assigns to each sense its particular role:

> But give apt servants their due place, let eyes
> See Beautie's totall summe summ'd in her face:
> Let eares heare speech, which wit to wonder ties,
> Let breath sucke up those sweetes, let armes embrace
> The globe of weale, lips Love's indentures make.

We might also note the warmth of the images in the octave of sonnet 76 and contrast them with the coldness of sonnet 8 or with the sun images in the early part of the sequence in which Stella may give off light or

intense and burning heat but never merely comfortable and comforting warmth. And we might, finally note that in sonnet 77 Astrophil says that Stella can conquer "without touch" but in the very next line introduces the most intimate of touches, the kiss, and ends by making the whole blazon ironic when he notes that his "Mayd'n Muse doth blush to tell the best."

Light has a particular significance to the Platonist. Ficino says:

> Beauty is a kind of force or light shining from [God] through everything. . . . It fits the Mind with a system of Ideas; it fills the Soul with a series of Concept; it sows Nature with Seeds; and it provides Matter with Forms. . . .[As] the single light of the sun lights up . . . fire, air, water and earth, so that single light of God illumines Mind, Soul, Nature and Matter. Anyone seeing the light in these four elements sees a beam of the sun, and through this beam is directed to the perception of the supreme light of the sun itself. In the same way, whoever sees and loves the beauty in these four, Mind, Soul, Nature and Body, seeing the glow of God in these, through this kind of glow sees and loves God Himself (p. 140).

Form itself derives from light:

> When [the eye] sees the light [of the sun], it loves the light and is, in turn, lighted up in looking at it; in receiving the glow, it receives form in the colors and shapes of things (p. 129).

And the metaphorical equation of the sun and the light of God is insisted upon: "one simple and clear light. . . .[like] the very globe of the sun . . . not dispersed through the air" is the beauty of God (p. 211). The same metaphor is used by Bembo in The Courtier:

> But speaking of the beautie that we meane, which is onely it, that appeareth in bodies, and especially in the face of man, and moveth this fervent coveting which wee call Love, we will terme it an influence of heavenly bountifulnesse, the which . . . stretcheth over all thinges that be created (like the light of the sunne) . . . (p. 593).

The sun-light imagery is introduced in the first sonnet. Astrophil speaks of his "sunne-burn'd braine," which, as Ringler notes, may refer to the drying up of the intellect by the flames of love.[244] These flames, which rise from exposure to the sun-like light of true beauty, only have a deleterious effect if when the soul is set on fire by them it allows its "selfe to be guided with the judgement of sense . . . and judgeth the bodie in which beauty is discerned to be the principall cause thereof" (The Courtier, p. 594). If, however, the soul of the lover allows itself to be guided by reason, the lover will turn from the light of the body without to the light of the more perfect image which his imagination will fashion within and

> hee shall gather in his thought by litle and litle so many ornaments, that meddling all beautie together, he shal make an universall conceite, and bring the multitude of them to the unitie of one alone, that is generally spred over all the nature of man. And thus shall beholde no more the particular beautie of one woman, but an universall, that decketh out all bodies (The Courtier, p. 610).

At length his soul "burning in this most happie flame . . .[will] seeth the heavenly beautie" (The Courtier, p. 611). Both kinds of love, sensual and Ideal, arise from an attraction to the same light; the responsibility for the choice of responses to the light rests with the individual. Astrophil's muse counsels him to take the first step on the right path, to turn from the light of the body without, the heat of

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[244]Ringler, p. 459; Kalstone, pp. 127-128, also notes that this is "an accepted Elizabethan figure for poetic imitation" and cites an example from Thomas Wilson in which he recommends imitation of the ancients: "For if they that walke much in the Sunne and thinke not of it, are yet for the most part Sunne burnt, it can not be but that they which wittingly and willingly travayle to counterfect each other, must needes take some colour of them."

which, because of the sensual nature of his response to it, has dried up the springs of poetic inspiration, to the light of the image within, framed "sundred from all matter" (The Courtier, p. 609) which is the true source of poetic invention. At this point, Astrophil chooses to follow his muse and focus his attention on the Ideal.

Leonora Leet Brodwin sees the light-dark imagery in the sequence as a consistently developed pattern, and on the basis of this pattern she divides the sequence into three sections, 1-35, 36-87, and 88-108. The pattern, she says, "is contained, in essence, in the definition of Stella's eyes."[245] But in discussing how the pattern works she includes images which define the complete Stella as well as those which clearly pertain only to her eyes. She contends that in the first thirty-five sonnets "it is overcast by night and Stella can only appear, wrapped in black as a star. . . . As a distant star she reigns over him from on high and causes him to appear in 'darke abstracted guise'" (sonnet 27). Then, Brodwin continues, in sonnet 37 the reference to Stella as dwelling in the direction of "Aurora's Court" indicates a "ray of hope"; and, she says, day actually arrives in sonnet 41 where Astrophil is inspired by the "beames" from Stella's "heavenly face." Brodwin believes that by sonnet 48 Stella "has become, if not yet wholly the sun, still those 'morning starres'" and that "it is with the hopeful sonnets preceding the series on the kiss that Stella finally becomes the sun and brings full day to the sequence." Finally, she insists, comes the third section, which is "night unilluminated by starlight and so different from the first."[246] Brodwin's pattern could be adapted to fit the scheme I have

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[245]Brodwin, p. 27.

[246]Brodwin, pp. 27-28.

put forth, but the sequence itself forces us to modify her conclusions somewhat. For instance, if Stella and her eyes are to be seen only as a star or stars in the first thirty-five sonnets, how do we account for the fact that in sonnet 8 we are specifically told that her eyes are like "morning sun"? Furthermore, in sonnet 22 Stella is quite clearly associated with the sun through their meeting in progress and the sun's brotherly kiss. In sonnet 25 Stella as virtue personified is the source of the "inward sunne" which illuminates the mind which is not in the grip of sense. In sonnet 33 she is "heavenly day" following upon the "rising Morne" of her childhood. Brodwin notes also that her eyes are described as "sun-like" in sonnet 7 but, since they are veiled in black by kindly nature, she adduces this in support of her scheme.[247] Finally, if the interpretation of the reference to "sunne-burned brain" in sonnet 1, just discussed, is accepted, Stella's association with the sun is also established there. She or her eyes are, of course, specifically identified with stars in sonnet 19, by allusion; sonnet 26; and, probably, sonnet 10. But star imagery also occurs in the sonnets between 36 and 88, which Brodwin terms the "day" portion of the sequence. There are the "morning starres" of sonnet 48, as Brodwin herself notes; and in sonnet 73 Astrophil calls Stella "my Starre." Stella is, of course, specifically identified with the sun in sonnets 42, 68 and 76. The point to be made is that star imagery and sun imagery are so thoroughly mixed together in those sonnets which come before 88 that it seems impossible to maintain a pattern of starlit darkness giving way to sunny day.

Other light images abound in the sonnets between 1 and 52. Stella's "beams" are frequently mentioned without specifying their nature. The

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[247]Brodwin, p. 27.

term may refer to her eye-beams, which Ficino and all the neo-Platonists speak of, or to the light which she would surely give off as a vessel of the light of God, which is the source of all beauty. In sonnets 11 and 12 the light of love shining in her person or eyes is specifically mentioned, as it is in sonnet 7 where it is veiled because it is shrouded in weeds of mourning for her victims. The light of virtue shines from her windows (eyes) in sonnet 9 and shines again in her person in sonnet 25. Her eyes are, paradoxically, both light and dark in the fashion of a chiaro-oscuro painting in sonnet 7.[248] The light is the "lightning grace" or the glistering of Cupid's dart in the secret dark of night or amidst dark bushes in sonnet 20. Stella herself is a shining image in sonnet 38 in the darkness of Astrophil's dream. The paradox of brightness in blackness is frequently developed in the first fifty-one sonnets. This is part of the Petrarchan convention, but it also functions to develop the difference between ideal love and illicit sensual love. As long as Astrophil holds to the ideal image of Stella within his heart, there is no night in his soul. It is always illumined by the image of Stella. From the time that he makes the choice he announces in sonnet 52, light imagery declines. From twenty-one sonnets containing it among the first fifty-one, we drop to nine among the sonnets between 51 and 87. This, for the most part parallels Astrophil's drop in references to Stella's eyes and the images which persist, as we have seen, are found

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[248]Bembo, in The Courtier, also makes an apparent allusion to the chiaro-oscuro painters in a passage in which he describes the human face most likely to reflect the light of God clearly. The whole passage sounds like instructions to a painter: "a face well-proportioned, and framed with a certaine lively agreement of several colours, and set forth with lights and shadowes, and with an orderly distance and limits of lines" (p. 593).

in ironic contexts. In turning his back on the soul in favor of the body, Astrophil has turned his back on the ideal light. But it is only when separation removes the physical body that has engrossed his attention that he becomes aware of his loss. We must remember that Ficino says that to the eyes and the soul of the sensual lover "the presence of the beautiful body itself is necessary for them to shine continuously with its brilliance and be charmed and pleased" (p. 189). Astrophil, turning confidently to his "inward sight" in sonnet 88 finds only unrelieved darkness. The imagery still insists on Stella's association with the sun. In fact it is in this section that she is consistently spoken of as the sun; but she is an absent sun. This absence-of-light imagery which Astrophil chooses to use in these last sonnets, whether he is expressing merely conventional grief, as he seems to be in sonnet 89, or grief aroused by a real fear of losing Stella, as he seems to be in sonnets 94-99, ironically classifies Astrophil as a merely sensual lover and demonstrates clearly in Platonic terms the nature of the pain which will befall those who follow the same path, that mental and moral blindness that results from a deliberate turning away from the ideal light. Lanham, commenting upon the admitted conventionality of Sidney's imagery in his discussion of the Arcadia, says that what he does find "unusual is the unmistakeable pattern established by the constant repetition of images of certain kinds clustered around the theme of love" in the Arcadia. He notes that such imagery is "consistently unpleasant," always associated with

> attack, victory and slavery; . . . burning torment; wounds, poison, disease and death; . . . violence and compulsion, desire and appetite, above all the folly of lust. Each of these terms by itself seems simply a Petrarchan cliché; their use is often

> comically hyperbolic; but the cumulative force and direction are unmistakably serious.[249]

Interestingly, such images occur in Astrophil and Stella almost exclusively in the first section of the sequence. In sonnets 2, 20, 39, and 48 Astrophil is wounded. In sonnets 2, 7, and 48 he bleeds. In 7 many deaths are caused by Stella's eyes and in 42 and 48 they threaten to cause his. In sonnets 8, 14, 17, 31, 39, and 49 he has been hit by the darts or arrows of Cupid. In sonnets 2, 20, and 48 he is shot. In sonnet 21 he is "windlassed," that is, ambushed and trapped. In sonnet 16 he is poisoned, and in 14 his vitals are torn as the eagle tore the vitals of Prometheus. He is a horse cruelly spurred by desire in sonnet 49. Civil war rages within him in sonnet 39. In sonnets 2, 29, and 47 he is a slave and in sonnet 20 he is love's prey. Love itself is a murderer and thief in sonnet 20, a tyrant in sonnets 2 and 20. Stella's eyes are tyrants in sonnet 42. Astrophil is conquered in sonnets 2, 36, and 40.

Then, suddenly, such imagery disappears. Slavery is mentioned again only in sonnet 57, which as we have seen, still retains the flavor of the Golden World sonnets, and in sonnet 86 when discord threatens. The only weapons in the second section are the arrow and arrowhead in sonnet 65, an allusion to Sidney's coat of arms, and the Cupid's dart in sonnet 72, which is now headed with virtue's gold. Astrophil is the ruins of Stella's conquest in sonnet 67, but she is looking upon those ruins with pity and her conditional surrender is near. The only death in the section is the "prettie" one in sonnet 79. No wounds, no poison, no blood.

We may draw some interesting conclusions from this pattern. If it is true, as Lanham seems to suggest, that Sidney deliberately uses such

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[249]Lanham, Arcadia, p. 348.

images in the Arcadia not just because they are part of the convention but because cumulatively they suggest a condemnation of the sensual love of the two princes, what do we make of the fact that Astrophil uses them almost exclusively here only in that section of the sequence in which he is trying to hold on to ideal love and drops them in the part of the sequence in which he surrenders to desire? There are two possible explanations. Again we must carefully separate poet-author from poet-persona. The clue is to be found in sonnet 6 in which Astrophil speaks of the conventional means of expressing love in poetry:

> Some Lovers speake when they their Muses entertaine,
> Of hopes begot by feare, of wot not what desires:
> Of force of heav'nly beames, infusing hellish paine:
> Of living deaths, deare wounds, faire storms and
> freesing fires.

As has been noted previously, this poem and others like it should not be read as a condemnation of the convention itself but of the abuse of the convention. The sequence certainly abounds in references to "heav'nly beames" as the discussion of eye imagery and light imagery above suggests, and the pattern followed by the imagery incorporating the traditional "unpleasantnesses" of love is the same. Astrophil uses the conventional pangs-of-love imagery in the section of the sequence in which he is attempting disciplined uttering through the use of convention. There it is clearly a part of his attempt to universalize, hence sublimate, his love. When he loses control of his passion and revolts against convention, he drops the imagery.

Another explanation, hinted at in Chapter III, p. 67, which in no way conflicts with that just given, is that the pains of the earlier sonnets do not arise from the cold and cruel treatment by the mistress of her lover, as they would in the traditional literary love affair.

Stella is never seriously accused of either coldness or cruelty, even when she is resisting Astrophil's advances in the later sonnets; and since there is apparently no attempt at seduction during the earlier portion of the sequence, she cannot even be accused of refusing Astrophil anything. It is not unreasonable to suggest, then, that the suffering results from Astrophil's moral dilemma; the wounds are those incurred in those "civill warres" (39) raging between his moral and his sensual nature. Sonnet 52 announces the victory of the latter; the battle is at an end and, with it, the pains he has suffered. It should be remembered that it is a new and different, and much more painful, kind of unpleasantness that dominates the imagery of the final sonnets, a kind of spiritual blindness asserted over and over again in the absence-of-light imagery discussed earlier.

Finally, we turn our attention to the animal imagery in the sequence. Outside of mythological references to Leda's swan and Europa's bull in sonnet 6 and to the eagle which bore Ganymede in sonnet 13, the reference to love as a "young lyon"[250] in sonnet 16, and the remark that Stella's heart is of "no Tygre's kind" in sonnet 44, it is the horse which dominates the animal imagery of the first fifty-one sonnets. Astrophil warns virtue in sonnet 4 that his "mouth too tender is for thy hard bit"; in sonnet 21 he characterizes his own behavior as "coltish gyres"; and in sonnet 28 he loves "The raines of Love" because they are held by Stella. In sonnet 30 he refers to the "golden bit," that is the cess[251] with

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[250] D. W. Robertson, Jr., in A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, N. J., Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 113, speaks of "the fierce lion of youthful desire" in medieval iconography.

[251] Ringler, p. 471.

which his father has made Ireland half-tame. As he falls asleep in sonnet 38 his

> unbitted thought
> Doth fall to stray.

It is clear that the bridled and bitted horse is associated with the idea of control and that in at least four of these images he sees himself as a restive steed held in check only with difficulty. D. W. Robertson notes:

> The analogy horse/flesh is very old and very common. Thus St. Gregory wrote, "Indeed the horse is the body of an holy soul, which it knows how to restrain from illicit action with the bridle of continence and to release in the exercise of good works with the spur of charity." The same figure is familiar in the Middle English "Debate of the Body and Soul," and a fourteenth-century commentator on Scripture sums it up succinctly, "Thus moraliter our flesh is the horse and the reason spirit is the rider."[252]

The analogy is extremely common in neo-Platonic literature. Castiglione, for instance, uses it over and over again, e. g., "reason . . . setteth a bridle to the unhonest desires" (p. 608); "with the bridle of reason restraine the ill disposition of sense" (p. 596); "those yong men that bridle their appetites, and love with reason, . . . be godly" (p. 596), etc. The analogy is given its fullest development in Astrophil and Stella in an entire sonnet devoted to it, sonnet 49. Here Astrophil sees himself as "a horse to Love," reined in by "humbled thoughts," that is by the neo-Platonic lover's sense of his own unworthiness before his exalted vision of his mistress. The bit is "Reverence" for her as ideal beauty, and it is his fear of offending her that curbs him. There is a "guilt bosse" decorating the bit which he terms "Hope" but it is

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[252]Robertson, p. 254.

apparently only for show since he tells us that it only "makes it seeme faire to the eye." Love rides astride the saddle of "Fancie," whose function, according to Ficino, as we have noted, is to recreate within the soul the image of the beloved in its purer, more perfect state, refining away the flesh (p. 189). The saddle girth is "memorie," which, again as we have already noted, Ficino says holds forever the image of the beloved and, hence, forever holds the lover fast (p. 201). But we should also note that in this sonnet, coming late in the first part of the sequence, the "spurre" of desire is also felt, though at this point Astrophil has not yet bolted. Notice also that he is guided by a "Wand" which is "Will." This is an unreliable guide at best since will is subject to appetite, that is, to the desire which spurs him. The final couplet indicates that the time has not yet come when his Will will betray him and Astrophil will shake off the reins of reason; but the danger is a clear and present one. It is no surprise that only three sonnets later Astrophil becomes a runaway. The significance of the horse imagery is clear. The emphasis is on control, the noble steed responding to intelligent and rational discipline. It is more than just a coincidence that Sidney begins the Defence of Poesie by stating that in defending his "unelected vocation" he is following the example of the master who not only taught him and Edward Wotton horsemanship but also enriched their "minds with the contemplations therein" (F, III. 3).

In the second part of the sequence, horse imagery occurs only twice. In sonnet 98 the controls which counteract the spur of desire in sonnet 49, controls in which Astrophil actually claims to "take delight" in the earlier sonnet, are replaced by a single controlling force, "care's hard hand" by which he is "gald and shortly raind." The image of an intelligent

rider controlling a noble if spirited steed is replaced by the image of a cruel rider abusing his mount. The spurs are still those of desire but the reins are no longer in the hands of reason; Astrophil is restrained now not by his own self-control but by the external forces of separation and of Stella's displeasure. The only other horse image is in sonnet 102 in which the medical opinions of the doctors who attend Stella in her illness "hackney on" like old and worthless horses, an image unrelated to the other equine images. In the second part of the sequence, it is another image that dominates, bird imagery. There is sonnet 59 in which Stella's lap dog rouses Astrophil's jealousy. There is, also, another tiger reference in sonnet 65. This time the tiger, which did not characterize Stella's heart in sonnet 44 does characterize Cupid's courage in sonnet 65. Finally, there is the allegorical monster with "piercing pawes," the emblem of jealousy, which characterizes Lord Rich in sonnet 78. But aside from these and the two leftover horse images, all the animal imagery refers to birds of one sort or another. There are two examples of bird imagery in the early sonnets just as there are two horse images in the later ones. We should first take a look at these earlier ones so that we may compare them with those which come after Astrophil's decision in favor of sensual love. They occur in sonnets 11 and 12, both Cupid sonnets, which I have classified as two of those in which the Golden World is achieved. Both are couched in terms of bird-snaring. In sonnet 11, Stella's cheek's pit is Cupid's "pitfould," which, as Ringler tells us, is a bird trap.[253] In sonnet 12, it is her hair which is the snare, "thy day-nets," and her eyes are

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[253]Ringler, p. 465.

the shining bait which attracts the unwary. Robertson says that the "figure of the bird-snare is a very old one" and that it usually operates in the following fashion: The image of the beloved in the mind, which, as we know, Ficino says is a mirror image of the original but more beautiful and purer than the original because it is abstracted from the flesh (p. 189), attracts the eye of the lover; and the "contemplation of an image in the mind by the 'corporal sense or by the lower part of the reason'" arouses love. According to Robertson, then, the lover, lured by the image in the mind, is captured by the "desire for pleasure." It is clear from Robertson's discussion that in the Middle Ages this was considered an unfortunate occurrence, associated with sin; and it was only the birds that escaped this snare that were pictured as "happy with their young in the nest."[254] Ficino would no doubt agree that the snare was a dangerous one for the man or woman who contemplated the image with the "corporal sense" or the "lower part of reason." Such a lover would be associated with Ficino's animal love, or lust--purely sensual love. But there are other pleasures than the sensual, those which Ficino classifies as "temperate, moderate and decorous" (p. 130). The desire for these pleasures is aroused by the contemplation of the image in the mind not with the lower senses but with the higher ones, and if the lover is snared when he responds to such a lure it may be to virtue (ideal beauty) that he becomes a captive. There may be a certain discomfort in the process, but such a trap is not necessarily to be shunned. It is in this manner that Petrarch uses the imagery of the bird-snare in Rime, LIX, CXCVI and CXCVII. In the latter poem, for

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[254]Robertson, pp. 94-95.

instance, Laura's hair is the

> curly snare
> Which so sweetly can tie, so sweetly tear
> My soul that with humility I arm.[255]

In the two uses of bird-snaring imagery in the first part of the sequence, there is no indication that the process is to be regarded as in any way undesirable or painful.

Let us then turn to the bird imagery in the second half of the sequence. In sonnet 54 Astrophil compares his love to that of a "Dumb Swanne" (lovers who suffer in silence) and says they are truer lovers than "Chatring Pies" (lovers who protest their love to all hearers). We have seen in Chapter IV the ironic context in which this protestation is made.[256] Astrophil seeks to associate himself with the true Platonic lover by insisting that he "quakes" to say he loves, but his protestation follows almost immediately upon his rejection in sonnet 52 of the role of Platonic lover. In sonnet 63, Stella is Astrophil's "young Dove" and in 79 her lips are Venus' "coupling Doves." Robertson tells us that Venus is shown accompanied by doves because they were "thought to be maxime in coitu fervidae."[257] Doves also occur in two of the songs, as we shall see in Chapter VI. Nesting images occur in three places in the last half of the sequence. In sonnet 108, the imagery seems to be associated, as has been noted earlier, with an idea expressed

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[255] Dico le chiome bionde e'l crespo laccio,
Che si soavemente lega, e stringe,
L'alma che d'umiltate e non d'altr'armo.

Trans., Anna Maria Armi, Sonnets and Songs, Petrarch, introd. Theodor E. Mommsen (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1946).

[256] See pp. 110-111 above.

[257] Robertson, p. 372.

in a passage from The Courtier and the usage in sonnet 86 appears to be very much the same. Here Astrophil seems to fear for the first time since he set out to seduce Stella that he will not succeed and in trying to propitiate her he insists that his soul

> only doth to thee
> (As his sole object of felicitie)
> With wings of Love in aire of wonder flie.

The third image is in sonnet 79 where Stella's lips are a "Neast of young joyes," the idea apparently being that in kissing her his lips settle into this nest. In sonnet 71 vices are "nightbirds" which fly from the light of reason. In sonnet 75 a term from falconry is used when Astrophil remarks that less gifts than the "faire outside" and "well lined braine" of the lecherous Edward IV "impe" feathers on to fame. The image is amusing because, in keeping with the ironic thrust of the whole sonnet, it associated Edward with a bird of prey, the falcon, and his gifts with the method through which the flight of the falcon, and hence its hunting ability, was improved, i. e., through impeing, that is engrafting feathers on to its wings.[258] In sonnet 90 Astrophil disclaims any praise as a poet on the grounds that he takes his "plumes from others' wings," but he does not mean that he imitates the ancients or other poets. Instead, it is Stella who is the bird whose plumes he has plucked for his pen:

> Since all my words thy beauty doth endite,
> And love doth hold my hand, and makes me write.

Finally, in sonnet 92 Stella is "Phenix Stella." Though the bird imagery had by no means the coherence of the horse imagery in the first part of the sequence, the general tendency is toward the sensuous. The sexual

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[258]Ringler, p. 481.

symbolism of the dove and the association of the lechery of Edward IV with the hunting falcon are cases in point. The nesting images have a decidedly sensuous feel. The "nightbirds" who are vices in sonnet 71 are associated, as Kalstone notes,[259] with Astrophil's own flight from the light of reason as he admits that "Desire still cries, 'give me some food.'" There may be no sensuous suggestion intended in his designation of Stella as a "Phenix" in sonnet 92, but the fact that he uses it in the context of asking about her reaction to his absence at least raises the possibility that it is an oblique reference to the hope that renewed fire will arise from the ashes of her love. We might recall Donne's use of the phoenix imagery in The Canonization. The most important of the sonnets which use bird imagery, however, is sonnet 83, which has been purposely omitted from the discussion heretofore. This sonnet sums up the bird imagery in the latter part of the sequence just as sonnet 49 sums up the horse imagery in the first part. The subject of the entire sonnet is, of course, Philip Sparrow, the traditional Renaissance symbol of lasciviousness since Skelton. Sir Phip has his nest here just as Astrophil has or longs for his in sonnets 79, 86, and 108. He sleeps "In Lillies' neast, where Love's selfe lies along," that is between Stella's fair breasts. He also nibbles Stella's lips as Astrophil does in sonnet 82 just preceding and drinks "Nectar from that toong." The effect of the last line of the sonnet, with its allusion to Sidney's own name, has been discussed in Chapter IV.

In summary, then, it is evident that the six patterns of imagery discussed here parallel in their development the pattern of development of the sequence as a whole as it has been traced in Chapters III and IV.

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[259]Kalstone, p. 121.

It is in those sonnets coming before sonnet 52 that we find the preponderance of imagery, whether associated with her eyes alone or with her person as a whole, designed to exalt Stella to the status of Idea. After Astrophil chooses the body over the soul at that turning point in the sequence, such imagery occurs much more rarely and only in ironic contexts. The shift from imagery associated with the superior senses to that associated with the inferior ones after 52 is also marked. Perhaps the most interesting of the patterns is that associated with light-dark imagery, marking, as it does, three separate stages in Astrophil's development from that of ideal lover, to whom the ideal light is always readily available (1-51), to hopeful sensual lover, to whom the ideal light is a subject of mockery (52-86), to hopeless sensual lover, who, after finding his outward sight deprived of the light of the beautiful body, discovers that his inward sight has also failed and that the ideal light is no longer available to him (87-108). The remaining two patterns also demonstrate a marked shift after sonnet 52. Pains-of-love imagery, frequent in the early part of the sequence, disappears as Astrophil's inner struggle ceases with the triumph of appetite; and the bridled and bitted horse of the first 51 sonnets disappears, with Astrophil's self-control, at the same point, to be replaced by the sensuous bird imagery of the remainder of the sequence.

Tuve is, of course, quite correct in stating, as was noted at the beginning of this chapter, that an understanding of a poet's reasons for choosing the imagery he chooses is dependent upon an understanding of his reasons for writing the poem in the first place. Conversely, we shall come closer to knowing why a poem was written at all when we examine, as we have in this chapter, the character of the patterns of imagery the author has constructed.

CHAPTER VI

THE SONGS

The order of the songs in Astrophil and Stella has been the subject of critical controversy for some time. Ringler accepts, as an editor, the authority of the 1598 text; and his definitive edition reproduces the order which appears there. But as a critic, Ringler finds his position more difficult. As he notes,

> The songs . . . present something of a problem. The six songs in trochaic metres narrate the more important events of the sequence. . . . The other five songs, in conventional iambic metres, are little more than fillers, and the grouping, between the trochaic songs iv and viii, of sonnet 86 and the iambic songs v, vi and vii, shows clumsy joinery. Sidney obviously saw the necessity of separating the two important lovers' meetings described in iv and viii; but in order to provide the needed interval he contented himself with selecting one sonnet he had written to Stella and adding to it three songs, at least one of which [song 5] he had written earlier for quite a different purpose. The results are not very happy, for though the "change of lookes" of sonnet 86 provides an adequate occasion for the reproaches of song v, it follows strangely upon Stella's inadvertent revelation of her affection in song iv, and though songs vi and vii on the lady's voice and face are related in subject to one another, they again follow strangely after the reproaches of v and do not in any way prepare for the May-time meeting in viii.[260]

He offers as a "possible explanation" for these "inconsistencies" the speculation that

> Sidney first began to write about Astrophil's love for Stella in a set of detached songs in the new trochaic metres he had recently been experimenting with in

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[260]Ringler, p. xlv.-xlvi.

> Certain Sonnets, and that not until after he had written the songs did he think of writing the sonnets and of combining them with the songs in a single sequence.[261]

As "some corroboration of this assumption" he offers the "textual evidence . . . which indicates that, while Sidney did not allow the sonnets to circulate during his lifetime, at least one of the iambic [6] and four of the trochaic [4, 8, 9, and 10] songs were given early and separate manuscript circulation."[262]

Ringler's studies have led him to believe that the order of the 1598 text is probably derived from Sidney's own manuscript. Other critics, admittedly without the authority of close textual study which Ringler has, have been less willing to concede as much. Stillinger, writing three years before the Ringler edition appeared, noted that the authority for the distribution of 1598 was not known and insisted that while some of the songs as they are placed "are appropriate to their new contexts; the First, Third, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Songs are unrelated to theirs."[263] Howe, working at roughly the same time as Ringler to prepare a new edition of Astrophil and Stella, also rejected the order of 1598, blaming the "lumping together" of the songs on the Countess of Pembroke. "They actually belong," she says, "like those of Petrarch, at intervals throughout the sequence."[264] She suggests a new order based on both the thematic relationship of the various songs to specific sonnets and on dramatic continuity. Thus, she would place song 1 between sonnets 28

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[261] Ringler, p. xlvi.

[262] Ringler, p. xlvi, note 1.

[263] Stillinger, p. 621.

[264] Howe, p. 164.

and 29 where she sees it as carrying on the theme of identification in sonnet 28 and leading to the "anatomical dissection" of Stella in the sestet of sonnet 29. The third song she would place before sonnet 36 since she sees both the sonnet and the song as dealing with the assault of Stella's voice.[265] But Howe fails to note that in the third song Stella not only "singeth" but also "shineth" just as she does in sonnet 38. Therefore, there are actually verbal echoes of both 36 and 38 in song 3. It is interesting to note that the sonnet which separates these two, sonnet 37, is one of the identification sonnets and, apparently for that reason, was omitted from Quartos 1 and 2 of 1591 and from at least one of the manuscripts.[266] If what are now sonnets 36 and 38 were printed consecutively as in these instances, and song 3 were placed to follow them, the song would comment on both sonnets and so provide a kind of synthesis of the two. Song 4, in Howe's reordering, with its refrain "No, no, no, no, my Deare, let be," is placed before sonnet 63 in which Astrophil notes that Stella has "twise said, No, no" and reminds her that double negatives "affirme."[267] Ringler notes that this is one of the songs given early and separate circulation;[268] and one might speculate that Sidney originally composed the sonnet (63) as a response to the song. Songs 6 and 7 Howe associates with sonnets 57 and 58 which also celebrate Stella's face and voice. Song 8 she places after sonnet 85, making Stella's gentle denial of

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[265]Howe, pp. 164-165.

[266]Ringler, pp. 448 and 473.

[267]Howe, p. 166.

[268]Ringler, p. 453.

physical consummation of their love follow hard upon Astrophil's excited expectation in the sonnet; and she keeps the ninth song in its position following the eighth. The other four songs, 2, 5, 10, and 11, she considers to be correctly placed.[269] In the time since her rearrangement of the songs appeared, Howe has gained support from other critics. Harbst, for instance, agrees with her order;[270] and so does Hamilton. Hamilton further suggests that convention and symmetry demand that there be 12 x 9 songs, that is, one for each nine of the 108 sonnets, and that, therefore, the sequence is unfinished.[271]

Still other critics have taken a completely opposite tack, not only accepting the placement of 1598 on editorial grounds as Ringler does, but also attempting to justify it aesthetically, as Ringler does not. Kalstone and Young both take this position. Kalstone admits "that one cannot be certain what place is occupied by the eleven songs" but goes on to insist that there is "every dramatic justification" for the placement of 1598. He feels that the six sonnets clustered between sonnets 85 and 87 provide "a necessary narrative bridge between an anticipated meeting with Stella (85) and what appears to be a separation enforced by 'iron lawes of duty' (87)."[272] But it is impossible to see how songs 6 and 7 can be seen as in any way forwarding the narrative. Kalstone also contends that all of the songs placed after sonnet 72, that is all but song 1, "actually bring Stella on stage, presenting her as a speaker,

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[269]Howe, pp. 166-167.

[270]Harbst, p. 403.

[271]Hamilton, p. 68.

[272]Kalstone, p. 175.

and they particularize the conflict that the rest of the cycle has made abundantly clear."[273] But this simply is not the case. It is true that some of the songs placed after 72 "actually bring Stella on stage, presenting her as a speaker" and "particularize the conflict"; but this can certainly not be said of songs 3, 6, and 7 and is only partially true of song 5. Perhaps this is why, despite his contention, Kalstone limits his discussion of the songs to 8, 4, and 3, in that order; and of 3 he says only that in it Astrophil "praises her in language that realizes the fleeting dream of sonnet 38: she 'not onely shines but sings.'"[274]

Young's justification is more subtle because he distinguishes two kinds of songs. He argues that "in some cases the songs are dramatic necessities, for the decisive action of the sequence occurs in them" and "in other cases, though a song may be non-dramatic in itself . . . it produces a dramatic effect through the contrast of form achieving emphasis at points in the development of the story where such emphasis is needed."[275] Unlike Kalstone, he takes up each of the songs in turn and in some detail. In fact, an examination of his treatment points up, ironically, just what the problems are in accepting the 1598 placement. In attempting to explain away the inconsistencies which Ringler and others have noted, Young succeeds in underlining them. Song 1, as Young justly notes, sums up "Petrarchan [or Platonic] themes presented earlier in the sequence";[276] and it follows oddly upon the irreverent badinage of sonnet 63. Young is not insensitive to this contradiction:

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[273] Kalstone, p. 175.

[274] Kalstone, p. 176.

[275] Young, p. 81.

[276] Young, p. 62.

> The high formality of structure and the ritualistic hyperbole, insisting on Stella as deity, modify the effect of the sonnets immediately preceding. Having treated her gaily and not altogether respectfully in an effort to make her identify herself as a woman Astrophel now sings his Te Deum.

And he is aware that the sonnets which follow song 1 contrast with it sharply also:

> The dramatic effect of the song, emerging from the sonnets that precede it, is heightened by the marked shift of tone and technique in the sonnets that follow it. Sonnet 64 continues the celebration of Stella's transcendent powers, but in an intensely personal, rather than conventional, way.[277]

It seems then that one must take some trouble to rationalize the placement of song 1 in its 1598 position. The position of song 2 being undisputed, we may go on to Young's discussion of song 3. Here again he notes the almost startling contrast between the sonnet on Philip Sparrow (83) in which the "attitude toward Stella . . .--possessive, sensual, ironic, and highly individual--is at one extreme" and song 3 which follows it, in which it is "at the other."[278] The problem in the placement of song 4 is not so much a matter of tone as it is a dramatic one. Stella's "No, no, no, no," through which ultimately and in the tradition of such songs, she inadvertently reveals her affection,[279] is hardly justification for the complaint of sonnet 86 which follows it. Young says that "Astrophel seems to be uncertain of the appropriate response. He speaks, rather suddenly, in the accents of the Petrarchan lover . . . and he clearly takes this rebuff more seriously than he did the series of rejections, admonitions,

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[277] Young, p. 62.

[278] Young, p. 70.

[279] Ringler, p. xlv.

and evasions in the second section."[280] Young finds the grouping of songs 5 through 9 appropriate because they "constitute the climax of the whole sequence,"[281] but his discussion makes clear his recognition of the differences of tone and treatment in songs 6 and 7 when they are compared to songs 8 and 9.[282] The placement of songs 10 and 11 are not in dispute.

Howe's order, then, is attractive[283] though a closer look at the relationship of song 3 to sonnets 36 and 38 would be desirable as has already been suggested. But it is not necessary here to arrive at an exact positioning of individual songs. Instead we shall be concerned with examining the content, tone, style and imagery of the songs to discover whether we would be justified in dividing them into two types which parallel the division made of the sonnets into those concerned with the Golden World and those concerned with the Brasen World and, on that basis, suggesting in which section of the sequence (1-51 or 52-108) each belongs.

One of the main criteria by which we divided the sonnets was Astrophil's characterization of Stella. We should remember that in all but one of the first fifty-one sonnets, she becomes an exalted Ideal, an abstraction, not a woman of flesh and blood, while in the sonnets which come after 51 she is very much a participant, a partner in the action. A tentative preliminary classification of the songs may be made on the same basis. Then each of the songs will be examined more closely to see

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[280]Young, p. 73.

[281]Young, p. 74.

[282]Young, pp. 76-80.

[283]Lacking other authority for such changes, however, Ringler, as a careful editor, had no alternative to preserving the order of 1598.

if our first impression is supported by more substantial evidence. We should note, therefore, that in songs 2, 4, 8, and 11, Stella is very much present and very much an actor in the piece. In songs 9 and 10 she is not present in the flesh but so vividly in the mind of the narrator that she may again be said to be an actor. Astrophil's treatment of her in song 10 is perhaps the most sensual in the entire sequence. Song 5 presents a particular problem since it begins with a rehearsal of the imagery which is associated with the characterization of Stella as a divine work of art but pointedly associates this imagery with the past tense, using the present tense to handle her roughly--not, certainly, as one would handle a goddess: "Sweet babes must babies have, but shrewd gyrles must be beat'n." All of these songs, then, can be classed as ones in which Stella's role is that of human mistress, not Platonic Ideal. And it is interesting to note that, with the exception of 5, all of the songs in this group are in trochaic meters; in other words, they are deliberately set apart from the remaining songs, 1, 3, 6, and 7, all of which are iambic.

Let us look first at the four iambic songs, which we may tentatively place in the Golden World group. Song 1 is highly conventional. As Young points out,

> The structure . . . is extremely formal, and constitutes an "envelope" as the last stanza is a repetition of the first. . . . The intervening stanzas make up, in question and answer form, the catalogue of the conventional blason. . . . The total effect of this general celebration of Stella's "virtues" is one of summing up Petrarchan themes presented earlier in the sequence, drawn together here in the single form.[284]

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[284] Young, p. 62.

Note that Young uses the word "celebration" to describe the method of the poem. It is a most appropriate term because Stella is exalted as a divinity to whom "all song of praise is due" as the refrain insists. She is "Nature's chiefest treasure (l. 6) for whom "heav'n forgate all measure" (l. 8). Cupid owes his crown to her (l. 12), and she rules with Venus' scepter (l.16). She is the flourisher of the "tree of life" (l. 20), and she is beyond envy because envy of her is "hopelesse" (l. 24). Nothing that is said to her can be termed flattery because anything that is said of her, no matter how extravagant, is true (l. 28). And she renders even miracles unmiraculous (l. 32). None of the imagery associated with her in this song can be termed in any way sensuous. The imagery is not even visual but carefully mental. It has, as does sonnet 9, for instance, what Day Lewis calls "emotional propriety."[285] It is expressive not of her person, though specific parts of her body are mentioned, but of her value as Platonic Ideal to her admirer. Here are "eyes which marrie state with pleasure" (l. 5). Here, too, are lips--but how different from the lips of the baiser sonnets. They are expressly associated not with their function of touch or of taste as they are in that group of sonnets but with their function as utterers of reason: "where wit in fairnesse reigneth" (l. 9). And as utterers they are associated also with the aural sense. Her breast is not the sensuous "Lillies Neast" of sonnet 83; but instead, in an image with religious overtones, it is one "whose milke doth passions nourish" (l. 17). And, as in sonnet 9 and in the portion of sonnet 77 which comes before Astrophil's subversion of the convention, her ability to move without

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[285] Day Lewis, p. 73.

touch is stressed: "Who hath the hand which without stroke subdueth" (l. 21). Her hair, as in sonnet 12 and, as noted previously, in many examples from Petrarch, is a snare (l. 25), the significance of which has been discussed in Chapter V.[286] Finally, she is able through the power of her voice to separate "soule from sences" (l. 29), that is, she can move the soul without relying on a sensual intermediary just as in sonnet 36 she can move senseless stones and trees. This, of course, eliminates a sensual response to her voice. Light-dark imagery, animal imagery (except for the snare image), and images of the unpleasantness of love are absent from this particular song unless line 26 can be considered an example of the latter: "Who makes a man live then glad when he dieth." This is probably a reference to the "living death" which is love, discussed by Ficino at length in his Commentary (pp. 144-145). Since the idea figures much more prominently in song 5, it will be discussed more fully in that connection.[287] Everything about song 1, then, i. e., its conventionality, its exaltation of Stella to the status of Ideal, its use of imagery associated only with the higher senses, its explicit rejection of sensuality, all work to place it among the Golden World sonnets.

Song 3, as has been noted earlier, has verbal echoes of both sonnets 36 and 38. As in sonnet 36, Stella's voice is capable of moving even stones and trees. The first stanza of the song explicitly associates her in this moving power with Orpheus, who moved "sencelesse trees" by breathing music through their "pores" (ll. 1-2), and Amphion, whose lyre

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[286]See p. 166 above.

[287]See p. 199 below.

made stones dance themselves into position as the walls of Thebes (l. 3-4). If Orpheus and Amphion could accomplish so much, Astrophil says, surely Stella, being more powerful, can do at least as well: "More cause a like effect at leastwise bringeth" (l. 5). The second stanza moves from her voice, which is perceived through the superior aural sense, to her person, which is perceived through the superior visual sense. Here sonnet 38 echoes; in the first stanza she "singeth" (l. 6); in the second she "shineth" (l. 12). Just as her singing moves stones and trees in the first stanza, her shining amazes birds and beasts in the second. As in the first stanza her power is linked to Greek mythological figures, Orpheus and Amphion, in the second the moving power of her shining vision is linked to another kind of myth, that of Pliny's Natural History.[288] Just as Thoas, "a boy of shepheard' brood" (l. 7) has moved a dragon to devotion and a "Grecian Mayd" (l. 9) has so moved an eagle, Stella moves all birds and beasts. If her shining and singing together, then, move birds, beasts, stones and trees so, Astrophil asks us, why are they not drawn to where she is to bear witness to this attraction? The answer, given in the final stanza, is that they are so "amaz'd" by what they feel that they are incapable of movement. The poem concludes that Man, being capable of reason, and therefore a measure of self-control, retains his power of motion (and by implication is drawn to Stella) even though his eyes and ears are "charmed" (ll. 17-18). The introduction of reason in the final stanza completes the trilogy of higher senses, sight, hearing, mind, which Ficino sets up, as Young has also noted.[289] As in song 1, Stella is exalted, idealized. As Young

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[288]Ringler, p. 483, notes Pollard's identification of these allusions.

[289]Young, p. 70.

says, "Like the First Song, the Third is in blason form, a ritual celebration. . . . The song has the impersonal, generalizing--even universalizing--effect characteristic of the convention."[290] We might also note the light-dark imagery in line 10. Speaking of the eagle's love for the Grecian maid, Astrophil tells us: "As his light was her eyes, her death his endlesse night." This fits the pattern in the sequence as a whole where Stella's eyes furnish most of the light and her absence, though not through death, leaves the world plunged into darkness. The "shining" of her whole person also, of course, represents the light of the Ideal, a portion of which spills out through her eyes.

As we have seen, Young links song 1 with song 3 and he goes on to call our attention to the similarities between the latter and songs 6 and 7. He notes that both 6 and 7

> reassert the attitude characteristic of all the rituals, and like the Third Song they are confined to the two senses in which, along with reason, Love alone resides, according to the Platonist. . . . Desire . . . is specifically omitted.[291]

Song 6 explicitly sets up a stylized debate between voice and face, that is, between that which is perceived aurally and that which is perceived visually, to determine which is to be ranked in first place. The debate is not resolved, apparently because such a contest cannot be resolved. Both senses in question are necessary to the apprehension of the Ideal. Again, as in song 3, reason is introduced in the concluding stanza to complete the triumvirate of superior senses. Astrophil notes in the fourth stanza the inter-relationship of the visual and aural in "heavenly

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[290] Young, p. 70.

[291] Young, p. 77.

harmonies" (l. 21). Ficino tells us that the soul is endowed from the beginning "with the principle of . . . music, for the heavenly harmony is rightly said to be innate in anything whose origin is heavenly" (p. 181). And the same musical term is used to describe both the beauty which may be perceived through the visual sense--"bodily beauty is . . . splendor in a harmony of colors and lines"--and the beauty which can be grasped with the mind--"Beauty of soul also is splendor in a harmony of knowledge and morals" (p. 146).

Eyes, ears, and mind form an intricate pattern in song 7. The relationship is established in the first stanza. If one's senses are in "consort," that is, in harmony, delight, which the rest of the poem limits to delight aroused by the three superior senses, will produce "sweete tunes" unless the mind is out of tune. In other words, the three senses together perceive and recreate the heavenly harmonies. The second stanza develops the inter-relationship of sight and mind further:

> Who have so leaden eyes, as not to see sweet beautie's show,
> Or seeing, have so wodden wits, as not that worth to know;
> Or knowing, have so muddy minds, as not to be in love;
> Or loving, have so frothy thoughts, as easly thence to move:
> O let them see these heavenly beames, and in faire letters reede
> A lesson fit, both sight and skill, love and firme love to breede.

And the third stanza expands the relationship of sight and hearing:

> Heare then, but then with wonder heare; see but adoring see,
> No mortall gifts, no earthly fruites, now here descended be:
> See, do you see this face? a face? nay image of the skies,
> Of which the two life-giving lights are figured in her eyes:
> Heare youthis soule-invading voice, and count it but a voice?
> The very essence of their tunes, when Angels do rejoyce.

Note that Stella's face is explicitly linked with the Ideal. It is not just a face but "image of the skies." And the imagery elevates not only Astrophil's senses of hearing and sight but Stella's visual organs, "the two life-giving lights," and her voice, which is "soule-invading." Here again is the inter-relationship between the eye as perceiver of beauty, which is visual harmony, and the eye of the mistress as the vehicle of the light of ideal beauty, and between the ear as perceiver of aural harmony and the voice of the mistress as a mover of souls.

There are eleven poems in the sequence called songs, but it is only in these four (1, 3, 6, and 7) that music is really important, that there is explicitly a singer whose voice conveys these harmonies. In song 1, Astrophil is the singer, inspired by Stella's ideal beauty: "Only in you my song begins and endeth." She is the source of his music. In song 3 it is Stella who "singeth." In song 6 she is again singing as we are asked to judge between her voice with "Musick's wondrous might" (l. 34) and her face with "beautie's lovely light" (l. 32). In song 7 we are again urged to "Heare . . . this soule-invading voice" (l. 17). In contrast, music figures in only two of the other seven songs. In one, song 10, Astrophil, picturing a tender and sensual reunion with Stella, vows to devour, along with other things, "musicke" (her voice) with his "greedy licorous sences" (l. 33). The contrast is obvious. In song 8 it is the birds who are singers, birds who, as we have seen in Chapter V, symbolize sensuality; and here their function is quite explicit. Their music is termed "wanton" (l. 2) and in their song they counsel the lovers to "use the season" and consummate their love. It is interesting to take note of Ficino's commentary on the speech of Eryximachus (The Symposium, pp. 518-519) suggesting that there are two kinds of music related to the

two goddesses of Love, Urania, the goddess of heavenly love, and Polyhymnia, the goddess of common or vulgar love. Ficino notes that the music to be associated with "heavenly harmony" is "serious and steady." The other music, that associated with Polyhymnia, is "soft and sensuous." A taste for the former kind of music is to be "indulged," for the latter "resisted" (p. 151). The measures of songs 1, 3, 6, and 7 are clearly stately and formal, that is "serious and steady." The birds' songs are clearly sensuous.

Songs 1, 3, 6, and 7 are the only ones of the eleven which can be termed purely lyrical. All of the others have some narrative or dramatic element and all but 5 and 10 function entirely in that manner. Song 2, of course, marks the first physical contact between Astrophil and his Stella after Stella agrees to love him conditionally. Naturally it is the sense of touch which dominates the poem. In fact, Stella's "life-giving lights" (song 7) are here quenched and her "soul-invading voice" (song 7) is stilled in sleep. This is an explicit turning away from the higher senses through which an appeal can be made to Astrophil's non-sensual nature. Stella is defenseless without them. Three whole stanzas are devoted to this defenselessness. Stanza two deals with her vulnerability because of her blindness in sleep; stanza three deals with her vulnerability because of her inability to speak. Stanza four introduces a third reason for her defenselessness: those hands which "without touch" can move to virtue are also stilled:

> See the hand which waking gardeth,
> Sleeping, grants a free resort.

As a result, Stella's "fort," which in several sonnets in the earlier part of the sequence has been termed impregnable, is now open to invasion (ll. 15-16). It is only Astrophil's fear of her displeasure that limits

him to stealing just a kiss from her "sweetly swelling" lips, lips of which we will hear a great deal in most of the sonnets which follow. As Stella wakes up and "lowers" at him, hardly, as we have noticed, a term one would apply to a goddess, Astrophil flies; but even in flight he berates himself for making so little of his opportunity: "Foole, more foole, for no more taking."

Song 4 like song 8 to follow is an attempt at seduction. As Astrophil begs over and over again for physical consummation of their love: "Take me to thee, and thee to me," Stella, with a hint of desperation and apparently bereft of all the Platonic arguments of sonnets 61 and 62, matches each request with: "No, no, no, no." But she still calls him "my Deare," and the structure of the song makes her last denial an affirmation of her love. The occasion of this attack upon her virtue is clearly a secret assignation. Astrophil speaks in a "whispering voyce" (l. 3), the suggestive sibilance transforming the organ of virtuous utterance to one which is used to subvert virtue. He reminds Stella that the night is their "cloke," clearly indicating that such goings-on cannot stand the light of the sun; and the shining remote stars which symbolized Stella's role as embodier of the ideal light and her own resulting remoteness are transformed into "Twinckling starres" which "love-thoughts provoke" (ll. 7-8). All of nature seems in league with the impatient lover. The "sweet flowers on fine bed" suggest the lovers join them; the moon only gives enough light to reveal the gleam of Stella's eyes. Astrophil, acting as befits the sensual lover, has taken "good care" to avoid danger; her husband ("Jealousie," cf. sonnet 78), her "faire mother," "all the house" are asleep; no one

can "spie" them.[292] So, having calmed her fears, Astrophil turns to carpe diem argument in the next two stanzas. They should "take time while [they] may" (l. 28), and if they don't it will be long before Time will "graunt the same." But she still resists and the argument continues. His growing impatience is indicated by his descent into the vulgar suggestiveness of line 40: "Write, but first let me endite"; and in the next to last stanza he is finally driven to resort to force. He lays hands upon his star and there is a struggle, the strength of which apparently surprises him:

> Sweet alas, why strive you thus?
> Concord better fitteth us:
> Leave to Mars the force of hands,
> Your power in your beautie stands:
> Take me to thee, and thee to me.
> (ll. 43-47)

Howe notes that in this passage Astrophil is "neatly twisting the Platonic concept of the power of beauty.[293] In other words, he is up to his old trick of subverting the tradition as he does in so many of the sonnets which come after 52. All of the imagery in this sonnet is clearly sensual as befits its content; and, as Young points out, the song is full of "details that are sharply realistic and concrete; this seems to be a 'real' garden."[294]

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[292] In The Courtier, Lord Cesar, recounting the wiles of the sensual lover as he proceeds with his seduction, notes his care to arrange everything to quiet his victim's fears: "Here then for all hard matters are found out remedies, counterfeite keyes, ladders of ropes, waies to cast into sleepe, a trifling matter is painted out, examples are alleaged of others that doe much worse: so that every matter is made so easie, that she hath no more trouble but to say, I am content" (p. 507).

[293] Howe, p. 153.

[294] Young, p. 72.

The second attempted seduction takes place in song 8. Here the perspective is changed. For the only time in the sequence we have a third person narrator describing the scene for us and recounting the lovers' conversation. This meeting is apparently during the daytime, but it is "In a grove most rich of shade." The song abounds in sensuous detail as song 4 does. The "wanton" songs of the birds have been mentioned. It is May time and the "pide weeds" are showing and the air is "New perfumed with flowers fresh growing"(11. 3-4). It is a beautiful day, one of "Smiling ayre" (1. 55) and the light breeze is stirring the leaves of the trees which are decked with their fresh spring growth (11. 56-59). The oneness of the lovers, the mutuality of their love, is stressed in stanzas 2 through 7; and the use of parallel structures and the diction effectively underline this oneness. Their eyes "Enterchangeably reflected" (1. 16), their sighs are "mixt" (1. 18), their arms "crost" (1. 19). Astrophil has apparently considered his tactics in song 4 and found them deficient. There his attack was abrupt and undisguised. No word of love passed his lips. He never even so much as complimented the woman he wished to possess. There was no color of romance, only a concern with the practicalities of time and place. As we look down upon him in song 8, his impatience is obviously no less but his control is a bit better. He begins by reeling off epithets in Stella's praise, covering everything he can think of, a tactic that reminds us of the manner in which he seeks to silence her arguments for virtue in sonnet 68. The imagery, taken separately and in the proper context, is very much within the tradition; but here, as in sonnet 68 and the <u>baiser</u> sonnets, it is subverted for the purposes of seduction. Four stanzas are devoted to this hasty ground-laying. Then, having said all that any

woman could reasonably expect, Astrophil wastes no time in getting to the point:

> 'Graunt, ô graunt, but speech alas,
> Failes me fearing on to passe,
> Graunt, ô me, what am I saying?
> But no fault there is in praying.
>
> "Graunt, ô deere, on knees I pray,
> (Knees on ground he then did stay)
> That not I, but since I love you,
> Time and place for me may move you.
>
> 'Never season was for fit,
> Never roome more apt for it;
> Smiling ayre allowes my reason,
> These birds sing: Now use the season."
> (11. 45-56)

But it is not only the smiling air and the birds that Astrophil claims for his allies. Love, for the Platonist, as Jayne says, "is the motive force of the whole Universe";[295] and Astrophil, again subverting the tradition, turns this belief to his own use:

> 'This small wind which so sweete is,
> See how it the leaves doth kisse,
> Ech tree in his best attiring,
> Sense of love to love inspiring.
>
> 'Love makes earth the water drink,
> Love to earth makes water sinke;
> And if dumbe things be so witty,
> Shall a heavenly grace want pitty?'
> (11. 57-64)

Poirier sums up the effect neatly:

> Dans le bosquet ombreux où il la rencontre, Astrophel montre à Stella que sous l'influence de l'amour, la brise dépose son baiser sur les feuilles, la terre boit l'eau, l'eau pénètre dans la terre. . . . Les circonstances dans lesquelles il fait ces obversations réduisent singulièrement la signification de cet apport néo-platonicien, comme celle du carpe diem sur lequel il brode dans un autre tête à tête;

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[295] Jayne, "Introduction," Commentary on the Symposium by Ficino, p. 24.

> cette invitation à suivre l'exemple de la nature environnante n'est que l'argument d'un séducteur.[296]

That this is indeed the case is demonstrated by the next stanza in which Astrophil, as in song 4, resorts to force of hands:

> There his hands in their speech, faine
> Would have made tongue's language plaine;
> But her hands his hands repelling,
> Gave repulse all grace excelling.
> (11. 65-68)

A moment before he has been kneeling to her as he would kneel to a goddess, though praying for what no goddess grants. Now even the pretense of observing the convention is dropped. It is clear that it is through his sense of touch that he wishes to enjoy her.

Stella responds just as she has responded in sonnets 61, 62, 68, and elsewhere with the Platonic argument that <u>if</u> he really loves her he will be content with the chaste love she offers him (11. 89-96). And she indicates, again in her role as Platonic mistress, that though she will not cease to love him, his persistence in this matter will make her blush when he is named. The implication is not that she will merely find his attentions embarrassing in the usual sense but that his insistence upon physical consummation of an adulterous love will make him unworthy of her love. Her love for him would then become dishonorable; for in the <u>Symposium</u> Pausanius tells us that "evil is the vulgar lover who loves

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[296]Poirier, p. 187; [In the shady grove where he meets her, Astrophil points out to Stella that under the influence of love, the breeze deposits a kiss upon the leaves, the earth drinks up the water, the water penetrates the earth. . . . The circumstances in which these observations are made reduce singularly the significance of this neo-Platonic idea, like that of the <u>carpe diem</u> idea on which he expounds in another tete-a-tete (song 4); this invitation to follow the example of the nature surrounding them is nothing but the argument of a seducer.]

the body rather than the soul" and that "there is dishonour in yielding to the evil, or in an evil manner; but there is honour in yielding to the good, or in an honourable manner"(p. 515). From thence Stella's blushes would spring. Her exhortation is exemplary because as a Platonic mistress it is her duty to hold her lover to the highest Ideals. Such, of course, is also Astrophil's duty to his mistress; but here and elsewhere he not only fails in this duty but actively seeks to lead Stella into sin. It is no wonder that her speech leaves him "passion rent" (l. 102). His pain springs not only from her refusal but from the sting of his own conscience under her gentle reminder of his lapse from virtue. In the Symposium Phaedrus explains such pain by telling us that "a lover who is detected in doing any dishonourable act . . . will be more pained at being detected by his beloved than at being seen by his father, or by his companions, or by anyone else" (p. 510). But if Stella's role here is chiefly to point out to Astrophil his danger and seek to direct him back to the path of virtue, she does it as a flesh and blood woman and not, as in sonnet 25 for instance, as an abstraction. In song 8, as Young notes, Stella is "completely [a] woman" and her refusal of Astrophil, direct and sincere, "seems to come from the heart."[297]

Astrophil seems to have been truly moved by Stella's words in song 8, but by the time he speaks in song 9 he has become ironic. He shakes off her suggestion that only a chaste love is worthy of both of them by doubting that she loves him at all, and in the process he clearly rejects the possibility of ideal love:

> Why alas doth she then sweare,
> That she loveth me so dearely,

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[297] Young, p. 78.

Seing me so long to beare
Coles of love that burne so clearely;
And yet leave me helplesse meerely?

Is that love? forsooth I trow,
If I saw my good dog grieved,
And a helpe for him did know,
My love should not be beleeved,
But he were by me releeved.

No, she hates me, wellaway,
Faining love, somewhat to please me:
For she knowes, if she display
All her hate, death soone would seaze me,
And of hideous torments ease me.

As Young says, "the irony is tacitly comic as he rejects Stella's protestation of love";[298] and it seems to me that this comic treatment signals a change in Astrophil's attitude toward Stella, or at the very least, a determination on his part to attempt a change of attitude with the hope that he might eventually become free of her influence. His departure from her, taken on his own initiative, and his new interest in other women, discussed in Chapter IV,[299] follow naturally upon the heels of his resolution.

Though Stella is not actively present in song 9 as she is in 2, 4, and 8, it is her previous action which precipitates Astrophil's response there. In song 11 she returns to the stage, but it is a very different Stella that we see. Much has transpired since the tender scene of song 8--a period of separation, an indication of interest in other women from Astrophil, a misunderstanding (93), a temporary reunion (100), Stella's illness (101, 102), and so on. Time and event and the inconvenience attendant upon a secret passion have taken their toll. It is quite clear

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[298] Young, p. 80.

[299] See p. 115 ff. above.

that whatever the force of Stella's love has been earlier, it has now quite faded. Astrophil's interest, on the other hand, is only increased by Stella's change of heart. It is the inaccessibility of the mistress which renders her desirable. We should remember both Ficino's (p. 140) and Bembo's (pp. 594-595) comments, cited earlier,[300] on the disappointment in store for the lover who succeeds in his quest for physical consummation of his love. At any rate, in song 11 Stella is not pleased to see Astrophil underneath her window and speaks to him impatiently:

> 'Why alas, and are you he?
> Be not yet those fancies changed?'
> (11. 6-7)

Irked by his insistence that he will love her forever, she speaks rather abruptly of the healing power of absence and time, both of which she has found efficacious, and of attention to other women. The latter suggestion, and indeed the former, may spring from her awareness that Astrophil has already tried these remedies for love, as prescribed by Ficino. At any rate, he now rejects them all. Next she appeals to reason, an appeal which Astrophil counters with the traditional insistence that in his case reason compels him to love. He has developed this idea earlier in sonnet 10 in which Stella forces Reason to serve her. Finally Stella suggests that

> 'the wrongs love beares, will make
> Love at length leave undertaking.'
> (11. 31-32)

to which Astrophil properly replies that with love such as his abuse only makes it stronger. Conventional arguments exhausted and the fear of discovery aroused, Stella impatiently cries:

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[300] See p. 113, note 197 above.

'Peace, I thinke that some give eare:
Come no more, least I get anger.'
(11. 36-37)

When Astrophil reluctantly agrees to leave to avoid endangering her but dallies to insist that his soul will be with her forever, her most ungracious response is

'Well, be gone, be gone I say,
Lest that Argus eyes perceive you.'
(11. 41-42)

The goddess is clearly a woman and one who finds the importunities of her once-favored Astrophil simply inconvenient. But after all, it was Astrophil who first took her from the throne upon which he had set her and placed her in the Brasen World where such things as court gossip and husbands count for a great deal. Poor Astrophil attempts to prolong the affair through a reversion in his replies to the Platonic view of love which he has himself discredited. He maintains his absolute devotion; the dove associated with Venus and sensuality is here replaced by the turtle dove, symbol of fidelity (l. 20). He reasserts Stella's identity with true beauty in the opening stanza where he contrasts the light of her presence with "every other vulgar light" (l. 4). He replaces her in his heart where she once reigned as ideal image and from whence, as Ficino tells us, the image can never be completely erased (11. 13-15). He implies that he will accept a love rooted in soul rather than in body (11. 38-40). But it all comes too late. Having been unable to embrace the Platonic relationship she has previously offered, he finds himself with nothing.

Two songs remain to be discussed. In song 10 Stella does not appear in the flesh, but she is very much present in the imagination of Astrophil, and his imagination (not surprisingly) is more sensuous than any of his

real encounters with Stella have been. Thought is sent to rehearse the reunion that Astrophil himself looks forward to. He will seize on her with "Strength of liking, rage of longing" (11. 21-24), and the implication is that this time he will not be put off by her arguments or by her struggles. The "Red Porphir" with the "locke of pearle" of sonnet 9 becomes "Opening rubies, pearles deviding" under the pressure of Astrophil's kisses; and the hard, cold gems of sonnet 9 are miraculously transformed into an image loaded with sensuality. Imagery rooted in the sense of touch is mingled with that rooted in the sense of taste, in eating, and we recall again Ficino's remark that the love "which rules and governs the body desires to feed itself upon dishes as charming, pleasant, and beautiful as possible, and to generate a handsome offspring by a beautiful woman" (p. 204). Astrophil will feed upon, that is,

> devower,
> With my greedy licorous sences,
> Beauty, musicke, sweetnesse, love
> While she doth against me prove
> Her strong darts, but weake defences.
> (11. 32-36)

Taking note of the items he intends to feast upon, we remember that the appreciation of beauty is associated with the sense of sight, of music with the sense of hearing. Are we then to associate "sweetenesse" with the sense of taste (or smell) and, accounting for all the senses, love with the sense of touch? It would seem a logical assumption if we recall sonnet 85 in which Astrophil apportions to each of the senses, in violation of the neo-Platonic doctrine, a place in love. Here again it seems that he is deliberately rejecting the doctrine and, in doing so, associating his passion for Stella with lust rather than love. His assertion in the next two lines that her struggles against him will not succeed seems to bear out this view. The next stanza envisions the lovers at

last united, "dalying" with "Dovelike" murmurings (11. 37-38) and the bird here is clearly the companion of Venus, "maxime in coitu fervidae." The occasion is one to evoke "glad moning" (1. 39) and the lovers will joy "till joy make us languish" (1. 42). Though Astrophil's account is rendered in impeccable taste and no really concrete details are given, he has succeeded in creating some of the most sensuous verses in literature. The diction of the last stanza continues the effect. Astrophil calls upon his thought to cease since

> My life melts with too much thinking;
> Thinke no more but die in me, . . .
> (11. 45-46)

And though it is Thought which he invites to "die in" him, we cannot, in view of the context and the use of the expression in other poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, escape the sexual implications.[301] Finally, the last line of the poem unites the touch and taste imagery which has dominated the whole as Astrophil considers the time when he will "At her lips my Nectar drinking" just as Philip Sparrow has in sonnet 83. Montgomery has said that after the failure of the seduction in song 8, all of Astrophil's "reserves of ascendent desire have been exhausted."[302] Whatever else may be said about the change in Astrophil after that point, song 10 testifies that desire is not dead.

Song 5 is of particular interest because where songs 1, 3, 6, and 7 express the Golden World and songs 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 11 express the Brasen one, song 5 compares the two, commenting explicitly on the

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[301] One of the most familiar, of course, is Donne's use in The Canonization, stanzas 3 and 4.

[302] Montgomery, p. 95.

difference between these two worlds and between methods of expressing them. The occasion of the song is a fit of pique with Stella. This is the most difficult of the songs to place firmly since there are several possible occasions for it in the sequence. Perhaps that is why the 1598 placement has not been challenged. But it seems clear that it does not belong in the Golden World section, that is, between sonnets 1 and 52, if for no other reason than that there is no occasion for it there. In fact, the song was probably not written for Astrophil and Stella at all. Ringler suggests that it was probably written as part of Philisides "hasty revenge" on Mira in the Old Arcadia. He notes that Poirier has pointed out that

> only a few of the phrases in lines 10-11 and 37-39 that the poet said he had formerly used to praise his lady can be approximated in Astrophil and Stella but all (except "thy voyce the Angels' lay" line 11) appear practically verbatim in OA 62, the blason composed by Philisides in praise of Mira. Three of these phrases (lines 10-11 and 37), which cannot be found in any form in Astrophil and Stella, clearly echo OA 62 (lines 60, 131, and 126).[303]

If it was not written for Astrophil and Stella, however, it still has many pertinent things to say about the Ideal-versus-real conflict in the sequence, and it seems likely that this was Sidney's reason for including it. In the song Astrophil lists the imagery which he has associated with idealization. There is the light-dark imagery of 1. 5 which associates Stella with the ideal light and is linked to the visual sense. Line 6 evokes the aural sense. Both types of imagery recur in the second stanza in "thine eyes were starres" (1. 10) and "thy voyce the Angels' lay" (1. 11). Other idealizing imagery listed is the "sweet poison" of 1. 8

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[303]Ringler, p. 484.

(cf. Petrarch, Rime, 152, l. 8) which recalls the not-so-sweet poison of sonnet 16; the description of her breasts as "the milk'n way" (l. 10), recalling l. 17 of song 1; the "Ambrosian pap" of the muses (l. 26) recalling sonnet 15. A weaponry image, characteristic of the earlier sonnets, is found in "Thy fingers Cupid's shafts" (l. 11). Her skin is "warm fine odourd snow" (l. 37), recalling sonnet 8, l. 9; her cheeks are "blushing Lillies" and her teeth are "pearles" ruby-hidden row" (l. 38) reminding us of sonnets 9 and 32 and, with the difference noted, song 10. Her hair is "that golden sea, whose waves in curles are brok'n" (l. 39). She has also been the one "whom partiall heavens conspir'd in one to frame" (l. 19) (cf. song 1, l. 8); the "proofe of Beautie's worth" (l. 20) (cf. song 1, l. 22 and many of the early sonnets); "th'enheritrix of fame" (l. 20) (cf. song 1, l. 14; sonnets 15 and 35); "The mansion seat of blisse, and just excuse of Lovers" (l. 21) (cf. sonnets 4, 5, 10, and 25). The whole of song 5 is developed in contrasts between what Astrophil has said of her in the past and what he will say of her in the present. All of the above imagery is associated with her in the past tense. The first two stanzas are devoted wholly to what he has said of her in the past but the third moves into the present and the transition is made by the use of an image of a bridled and bitted horse. Astrophil says that the reins were formerly guided by "Pleasure" (cf. sonnet 49) but are now guided by "rage" (cf. sonnet 98). And, as has been noted, he reminds her disrespectfully in ll. 35-36,

> Now child, a lesson new you shall begin to spell:
> Sweet babes must babies have, but shrewd gyrles must
> be beat'n.

The last eight stanzas form a hierarchy of abuse, most of which is based on neo-Platonic doctrine as put forth by Ficino. In stanza two, Astrophil

has noted that his soul belongs to Stella and wishes it were otherwise. Ficino tells us, as Young has also noted in his discussion of song 5,[304] that the soul of the lover leaves his body and lodges in the body of the beloved so that the lover is truly "dead in himself." If, however, the love is returned, the beloved's soul will also lodge in the body of the lover and he will live again through her. But if the love is not returned, the lover is truly dead and only "indignation" at his treatment can bring him back to life. Thus is love a "living death," as Astrophil notes in l. 76: "I am alive and dead." Because this is so, one who does not return a love which is offered, Ficino says, is a "thief, homicide, and desecrator." The reasoning is as follows:

> Money is possessed by the body, the body by the soul, and therefore the man who takes captive a soul, by which both body and money are possessed, thus seizes all three at once: soul, body, and money. Hence it happens that, like a thief, homicide, and desecrator, he is punishable by triple death, and, as though naturally wicked and immoral, he may be killed by anyone with impunity (pp. 144-145).

Thus, Astrophil accuses Stella in stanza 8 of being "a theefe" and in stanza 9 of being a murderer; and in stanza 14, in associating her with the "Devill," who also steals souls, he associates her with desecration.

It is interesting to compare Sidney's use of the convention here with his use of the same convention in OA 72 where Strephon and Klaius take turns expressing their grief at Urania's absence:

Klaius:

> Thus, thus alas, I had my losse in chase,
> When first that crowned Basiliske I knew,
> Whose footsteps I with kisses oft did trace,
> Till by such hap, as I must ever rewe,

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[304] Young, pp. 75-76.

Mine eyes did light upon her shining hewe,
And hers on me, astonisht with that sight.
Sihce then my harte did loose his wonted place.
Infected so with her sweet poyson's might,
That leaving me for dead, to her it went:
But ah her flight hath my dead reliques spent.

Strephon:

But ah her flight hath my dead reliques spent,
Her flight from me, from me, though dead to me,
Yet living still in her, while her beames lent
Such vitall sparke, that her mine eyes might see.
But now those living lights absented be,
Full dead before, I now to dust should fall,
But that eternall paines my soule have hent,
And keepe it still within this body thrall:
That thus I must, while in this death I swell,
In earthly fetters feele a lasting hell.

Klaius:

In earthly fetters feele a lasting hell
Alas I doo; from which to finde release,
I would the earth, I would the heavens sell.
But vaine it is to thinke those paines should
cease,
Where life is death, and death cannot breed
peace.

Urania is not condemned as thief, murderer, and desecrator as Stella is because she represents ideal love as her name makes clear, and Strephon and Klaius desire no physical union with her. She has not stolen their souls and left them dead from cruelty, as Astrophil unjustly accuses Stella of doing; but her absence from Arcadia, an absence which is symbolically significant, produces the same result.[305] We should note that as the personification of ideal love certain of the images associated with Urania in this passage echo ones associated with Stella in the Golden World sonnets and in the stanzas of song 5 which refer to

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[305]Montgomery, p. 61, notes that the poem explores "the paradox that the liveliness of love is a form of death . . . adopts the language of religious estrangement, recalling perhaps the Christian view of man's dual nature, the mortality of his flesh and the immortality of his soul." It seems more likely that the source is in the neo-Platonic love convention discussed.

imagery associated with the Ideal: "her shining hewe" (cf. sonnet 38, song 3, etc.), "sweet poyson" (cf. sonnet 16, song 5, l. 8), her "beames" (cf. many songs and sonnets) which lend to him a "vitall sparke" (cf. "life-giving lights" song 7, l. 16).

It seems likely that the other accusations against Stella in song 5 also have a neo-Platonic origin. In stanza 13, for instance, she is termed a "witch" who has turned his heart to lead (cf. sonnet 108)[306] and destroyed his mind. Socrates reports in the Symposium that Diotima has told him that love is "an enchanter, sorcerer" (p. 535); and Ficino comments on this passage in Chapter X of Oration VI. He also comments on this aspect of love in Chapter IV of Oration VII where it is related to Socrates' power of enchantment as described by Alcibiades. Stella is described as an unjust tyrant in stanza 10, unjust because she, who is a "rightfull Prince" does "unright deeds." We may contrast this with "only loved Tyrants" of sonnet 42. In stanza 11 she is a rebel against not only nature but reason, both of which designed her to serve Love. Since her rebellion obviously consists of her refusal to gratify Astrophil's physical desire, this is clearly a subversion of the Platonic Ideal which links reason with ideal, and not with sensual, love, as we see in such sonnets as 3, 4, 5, 10, and others. Finally, in stanza 12, she is accused of "vagabunding shame" because she has run away from the court of Venus and joined that of Diana. Since the true Platonic lover strives to reinforce the chastity of his mistress, Astrophil's accusation reflects upon the nature of his own love. At the end of the song, Astrophil offers

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[306] One wonders if Astrophil's accusation that Stella has turned his heart to lead is designed to suggest a kind of reverse alchemy: gold to lead rather than lead to gold. If this is so, it may be that he is commenting that his passion for her has cost him the golden vision of the Ideal which once dwelled in his heart.

Stella one more chance, assuring her that all of his "cruell words" will be turned into "praises" if she will "mend . . . her froward mind." Ironically, his "cruell words" are "praises" because his attack upon her is a tribute to the steadfastness with which she adheres to the Ideal of Platonic love and to her power, power which he praised rather than damned when he was engaged in the process of idealizing his own love. The change has not been in Stella. It has been in Astrophil.

Closer examination of the songs, then, only serves to strengthen our original classification. Songs 1, 3, 6, and 7 can be placed firmly in the Golden World and songs 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11 just as firmly in the Brasen one. The fact that this grouping, with the exception of song 5, which is transitional because it comments on both worlds, parallels the division between iambic and trochaic songs only serves to sharpen the distinction between the two; and it is impossible to believe that the metrical difference is not significant. Instead it seems a deliberate attempt by Sidney to call our attention to corresponding differences in content, style, tone and imagery. We have seen that Howe has placed songs 1 and 3 among the sonnets coming before 52 and that she has associated 6 and 7 with sonnets 57 and 58, which, as has been noted earlier, retain the flavor of idealism found in the earlier portion of the sequence. The remainder she leaves among the sonnets coming after 52 though some of them she shifts into positions other than those of the 1598 placement. My examination would tend to lend weight, in at least a general way, to her placement. The most important thing to note here, however, is that the fact that such a sharp division can be made in the songs serves to support the contention that such a division is also justified in the sonnets.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Stillinger says "Critics . . . who believe (wrongly) that Astrophel's love is Platonic, base their views almost entirely upon the two extrinsic sonnets," CS 31 and 32, which were so long printed as the concluding sonnets in the sequence.[307] There seems little doubt that he is correct, though the abrupt shift in tone and mood of these sonnets raised, as they should have, serious doubts about their placement long before Ringler's editorial work settled the question. As Hallett Smith noted in 1952, "the course and tendency of the series in no way leads up to them."[308] There are still voices, however, which insist that the sequence is incomplete without these sonnets. Kalstone sees them as "the only possible dramatic resolution for Astrophel and Stella" and believes that "the cycle comes to no fitting conclusion" without them.[309] Mahoney insists that the sequence lacks both "literary unity" and "philosophical coherence" without them.[310] This failure to see the coherence and completeness of the sequence without the rejection sonnets is a failure to separate the poet-author from the poet-persona. Stillinger is correct

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[307] Stillinger, p. 621.

[308] Smith, p. 155.

[309] Kalstone, p. 178.

[310] Mahoney, p. 37.

in saying that Astrophil's love is not Platonic. The tension and suffering at the end of the sequence are ample evidence of that even if Astrophil had not himself made it clear in sonnet 52 and in almost all the sonnets which follow. Sidney wishes us to understand clearly that Astrophil's suffering at the end of the sequence is a result of the situation which his earlier choice of the flesh over the spirit has created. His dilemma is that he is unable to satisfy his physical desire and unwilling to sublimate it. He can neither nest in the particular beauty of his mistress nor take flight toward the beauty of the Ideal (sonnet 108). It is this problem which creates the tension at the end of the sequence. This conflict is never resolved though in terms of plot the sequence is as complete as any drama could be.

Dramatically and didactically the lack of resolution of the conflict within Astrophil is the only fitting conclusion to the sequence. Dramatically it is fitting because it has the ring of psychological truth. We understand clearly the frustration Astrophil is experiencing, his state of "moral and emotional ambiguity" as Montgomery puts it.[311] On the one hand Stella's denial only increases his desire for possession; his investment in her in time, in thought, and in emotional coin has been great; he is loath to write it all off. On the other he is exhausted by his ordeal, emotionally battered by it, tired of the prison his passion for her has become, and more than half willing to give her up. There is also the element of guilt. He knows his attempted seduction of a married woman is morally inexcusable; he has injured his worth not only in Stella's eyes but in his own. Like Musidorus and Pyrocles he

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[311] Montgomery, p. 103.

has, in the grip of "that unbrydeled Desyer" (Arcadia, F, IV. 378) done unlike himself. He feels the need to redeem himself, which he can do only by freeing himself of her (sonnet 107). In the face of this dilemma, the sudden appearance of the rejection sonnets: "Thou Blind Man's Mark" and "Leave Me, O Love" would offer too simple and abrupt a resolution, would take into too little account the still strong attachment evidenced in sonnet 108.

From the didactic point of view, this emotional irresolution is, if anything, even more effective. As Howe notes, "his eventual sad end in frustration and discontent--reveals in detail the perils of an illicit love ending in what Nashe was to call 'the epilogue despair.'"[312] And, as she further notes, this ending is not only "unhappy" but "instructive."[313] Astrophil's choice in sonnet 52 is a failure of will. Roberts notes that "for Sidney, as a Christian, virtue ultimately depends not on right thinking but on the purity and effectiveness of the will."[314] Sidney carefully and deliberately constructs the sequence to demonstrate that Astrophil knows the right and understands clearly what virtue demands. The whole of the first part (1-51) establishes this: Astrophil's debates with himself in which he demonstrates his awareness of the Platonic solution to his problem; his discussions of the duty of the true poet as well as of the true lover; the sonnets in which in idealizing Stella he achieves the vision of the Golden World of the true poet. His understanding is in perfect working order. Thus, when he chooses

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[312]Howe, pp. 156-157.

[313]Howe, p. 157.

[314]Roberts, p. 25.

in sonnet 52 to abandon virtue, to reject "intelligent control of desire," the path to God, as Ficino wished us to understand,[315] in favor of the demands of appetite, we are to recognize the corruption of will which this signals. Man may err because he does not see clearly, but the ultimate corruption is that in which the will is so corrupt "as to go against the evidence of the understanding."[316] Of this ultimate corruption Astrophil is guilty. Sidney does not rest content, however, with allowing Astrophil to announce his own fall in sonnet 52. Further evidence of his corruption of will is presented to us throughout the rest of the sequence. It is presented directly as we hear Astrophil again and again announce his intention of yielding to desire or as we watch him in the act of seduction; it is conveyed through the change in Astrophil's, and, therefore, our, view of Stella, a change from seeing her as abstract beauty and virtue to seeing her as a woman of flesh and blood, a direct and deliberate reversal of Petrarch's method. But perhaps most significantly, it is presented in the manner in which Sidney allows his persona to manipulate the Platonic literary and love conventions. It is not enough simply that Astrophil has turned his back on virtue as it is embodied in these conventions. His error is compounded in his deliberate attack upon them, his implied ridicule of them, and his subversion of them for the purpose of seduction. Each incidence of such misuse moves him farther and farther from the sphere of right thinking, a habit which man must consciously acquire and ever strive to maintain. Corruption of will, corruption of action, and

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[315] Jayne, p. 26.

[316] Tillyard, p. 74.

corruption of mind are inextricably related; man's need to rationalize his acts assures this. Astrophil's attacks upon the conventions are so successful and his mind is so corrupted by these attacks, that he effectively and ironically cuts himself off from his only possible source of solace when he finally loses his hope of Stella. He discovers too late his own moral and spiritual blindness,symbolized by the absence-of-light imagery of the final sonnets. Roberts notes that the theory of poetry as a moral force that Sidney held demands poetic justice, that the wicked must suffer and the "good flourish."[317] Astrophil's suffering is his just punishment.

Roberts also notes that Sidney's literary theory takes into account the fact that

> in so far as an Idealism is false to our experience of the world (however true to "what ought to be") we are likely to need further instruction to tell us how to apply it to this world, in which, willy-nilly, we live and move and have our being, and perhaps even further encouragement to make us think the effort to apply it worthwhile.[318]

Astrophil rejects Platonic Idealism as false to his experience and attacks it on those grounds; but it is Astrophil who is in error and if he is unable to apply the conventions associated with Idealism to his own world, it is his failure, not the failure of the conventions. Observing his failure we are instructed in the correct application of the Ideal and we are encouraged to make the effort to apply it. We are also asked to see that the code of behavior which the convention upholds is not impossible to realize but that, as Jayne says Ficino's neo-Platonism

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[317]Roberts, p. 26.

[318]Roberts, p. 27.

affirms, man through his own choice can "achieve what he desires, dependent only upon his own will."[319] And the code is also demonstrated to be an eminently practical one. It warns that if you act in a certain way, in this case if you give free rein to a hopeless passion for a married woman, you will suffer. Astrophil violates the code and he suffers. Sidney is interested in drawing a moral blueprint, or as Greville put it, he wishes to present "morall Images, and Examples, (as directing threds) to guide every man through the confused labyrinth of his own desires and life."[320]

The sense that the rejection sonnets are somehow necessary to the sequence seems to rise from the consciousness of the reader that Sidney himself affirms the convention which he allows his persona to attack. This is quite true. Sonnets CS 31 and 32 may be seen as expressing Sidney's view of the kind of situation in which Astrophil has placed himself though their date of composition, if Ringler is correct, indicates that they do not comment specifically upon Astrophil's dilemma.[321] But this is Sidney's view, not Astrophil's. This sense that the convention is being affirmed is a tribute to the manner in which Sidney has constructed his sequence so that even when biographical considerations lead us astray we are instinctively aware of the irony created by the tension between what the persona holds to be true and what the author wishes us to grasp as the truth.

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[319]Jayne, p. 26.

[320]Greville, p. 223.

[321]Ringler, p. 423.

Howe notes Harvey's remark that Troilus and Criseyde was "one of [Sidney's] cordials,"[322] and suggests that Astrophil and Stella is "Sidney's Christian romance, his Troilus and Criseyde."[323] The comparison is interesting. Sidney says in The Defence of Poesie:

> Chawcer undoubtedly did excellently in his Troilus and Creseid: of whome trulie I knowe not whether to mervaile more, either that hee in that mistie time could see so clearly, or that wee in this cleare age, goe so stumblingly after him. (F, III. 37).

Sidney himself did not stumble. Chaucer chose an external narrator to recount the love of Troilus and Criseyde and to draw the moral for us. Sidney chose to have his persona tell his own tale, to have us listen to and watch him at first hand and draw our own conclusions. In so doing he succeeded in creating for us his "speaking picture of Poesie" (DP, F, III. 14) through which "all vertues, vices, and passions [are] so in their owne naturall states, laide to the view, that we seeme not to heare of them, but clearly to see through them" (DP, F, III. 15). They no longer lie dark "before the . . . judging power" (DP, F, III. 14). Nothing is neglected to make the picture complete. Patterns of imagery, action, argument, tone, and style, and, related to all of these, Sidney's manipulation of Platonic literary and love conventions, all are designed to help the reader judge Astrophil and, having judged, choose for himself the path of virtuous action, "the ending end of all earthly learning " (DP, F, III. 12).

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[322] Howe, p. 167.

[323] Howe, p. 156.

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