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## (Un)bridled passion: chivalric metaphor and practice in Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*

### Abstract

In *Astrophil and Stella* Sidney draws repeatedly on his own equestrian expertise to particularise his subversion of the established disciplinary image of the horse and rider: his *persona's* eventual submission is to passion, not virtue. Sidney's structure short-circuits the progression of Petrarch's first three *Trionfi* so that Astrophil becomes tragically symbiotic with Cupid his rider.

Sir Philip Sidney's sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* was probably composed in the year 1582, while he was staying in Wales with his father, who was then in his second term there as Lord President. It is the first of the great English sequences of love-sonnets, and in its own way as enigmatic as that of Shakespeare. This is intentional on Sidney's part, but for a modern reader the complexities of the sequence are inevitably rather different from those calculated to engage his contemporaries.

The most obvious of these now is the question of how the content of the sequence relates to Sidney himself: how closely Astrophil's love for Stella matches with any actual relationship between Sir Philip Sidney and Lady Penelope Rich, formerly Penelope Devereux. Some years before Penelope's arrival at Court in 1581, and her marriage to Lord Rich in the same year, there had been some thought of a match between her and Sidney which came to nothing, but I suspect that for Sidney's original readers any query

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\*References to *Astrophil and Stella* and *The Defence of Poesie* are taken from *Sir Philip Sidney: Defence of Poesie, Astrophil and Stella and Other Writings*, ed. E. Porges Watson (London: Dent, Everyman Library, 1997); hereafter referred to as Everyman.

English references to the *Trionfi* of Petrarch in the text are, for the *Triumph of Death*, taken from the translation by Sidney's sister, ed. G. Douglas: '*The Triumph of Death: a critical edition in modern spelling of the Countess of Pembroke's translation of Petrarch's Trionfo della Morte*, *Sidney Journal* 17.1 (Spring 1999), pp. 2–17, and otherwise to Lord Morley's *Tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarch: the First English Translation of the Trionfi*, ed. D. Carnelli (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). Italian references, in the Notes, are taken from *Les oeuvres amoureuses de Pétrarque*, edited by P.-L. Ginguené (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1875; repr. 1948).

Abbreviations: AS: *Astrophil and Stella*; NA: *The New Arcadia*; TL: *Triumph of Love (Trionfo d'Amore)*; TC: *Triumph of Chastity (Trionfo della Castità)*; TD: *Triumph of Death (Trionfo della Morte)*.

as to the extent of any literally autobiographical element in the sonnets would hardly have arisen. The sequence was not intended for publication; it circulated in manuscript and appeared in print only after Sidney's death.<sup>1</sup> His immediate readership, for *Astrophil and Stella* as for other works being written at or about the same time,<sup>2</sup> would have been small and intimate: his sister and posthumous editor, Mary, Countess of Pembroke,<sup>3</sup> and close friends, among whom Fulke Greville was certainly one.<sup>4</sup> Such readers would have been very closely aware of every detail of Sidney's play with the first-person convention: his personal contacts with Astrophil, as of Stella's with Lady Penelope Rich, and so of the precisely limited functions of these within the sequence itself. When Thomas Nashe wrote his preface to the first quarto edition of *Astrophil and Stella*, 1591,<sup>5</sup> he had never had any such privilege of intimacy with its author. His reading of the sequence is generalised, as might be expected, but in specific terms that today might not be:

... this Theater of pleasure, for here you shal find a paper stage streud with pearle, an artificial heau'n to ouershadrow the faire frame, & christal wals to encounter your curious eyes, while the tragicomedy of loue is performed by starlight.<sup>6</sup>

Astrophil himself, as seen here, remains perceptible even today as a dramatic projection of poet, courtier and lover. Of these inter-related concerns the first two certainly he has in common with Sidney himself. Throughout the sequence the poet takes full advantage of the possible ironies of counterpoint between himself and his *persona*, as of Lady Penelope Rich with Stella, in evolving his intricate and cruelly objective analysis of self-destructive passion. His manipulative repetition of the familiar disciplinary image of

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Newman printed two pirated and corrupt texts of *Astrophil and Stella* in 1591, five years after Sidney's death. Thomas Nashe's *Preface* appeared with the first of these.

<sup>2</sup>Sidney completed the first version of *Arcadia*, *The Old Arcadia*, dedicated like its revision, the unfinished *New Arcadia*, to his sister, in the summer of 1580. He was working on *The Defence of Poesie* in the summer of 1582, at the same time as most probably he was also writing *Astrophil and Stella*.

<sup>3</sup>Mary, Countess of Pembroke's collected edition of her brother's works appeared in 1598, and remained the standard edition until this century.

<sup>4</sup>Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554–1628, was a close friend and lifelong admirer of Sidney from their schooldays onward: his epitaph reads, 'Servant to Queen Elizabeth, Counciller to King James, Frennd to Sir Philip Sidney'. He edited and published the first edition of the incomplete *New Arcadia* in 1590, to which Sidney's sister appended the last three Books of the *Old Arcadia* in her edition of 1593. His biographical *Dedication* to Sidney was first printed in 1652.

<sup>5</sup>See above, Note 1.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas Nashe, *Preface to Sidney's Astrophil and Stella: Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Smith, 2 vols (Oxford U.P., 1904), II, p. 223.

horse and rider as it becomes interactive with other predominant motifs develops into the most complex and revealing example of such interplay.

Sidney's own skills in horsemanship were famous, and every range of his writing draws imagery or narrative action from his delighted expertise in tournament and in the riding school.<sup>7</sup> In *Astrophil and Stella* the overlapping tensions between himself and his *persona* allow him especially to juxtapose experiential chivalric practice with its established moral and emblematic connotations, to unexpected and sometimes paradoxical effect.

The rhetoric of *Astrophil and Stella* is widely allusive. Literary, learned and proverbial cross-references coincide with particular points of heraldic identity and play with names, including his own, Φιλίππος, lover of horses.<sup>8</sup> Sidney evidently expected at least his primary readership to recognise and to take full advantage of these complexities in their readings of the sequence. Specifically, they would of course have known the classical precedents for images of an unruly horse to signify passion uncontrolled and of a tamed or bridled horse indicating the supremacy of the will over impulse or instinct, from Plato,<sup>9</sup> and even back to the Homeric Ἰππόδαμος, 'tamer of horses'.<sup>10</sup> They are also likely to have met with later, medieval examples,<sup>11</sup> as well as

<sup>7</sup>Sidney leads into his argument in the *Defence of Poesie* with a witty reminiscence of his visit to the Emperor's court in Vienna in 1573, when he and his travelling companion Sir Henry Wotton, '... gave ourselves to learne horsemanship of *John Pietro Pugliano*, one that with great commendation had the place of an Esquire in his stable.' Everyman edition, p. 83. References to horsemanship, and descriptions of equestrian feats in tournament and battle, are frequent in both the *Old* and *New Arcadias*. For an example, see below, p. 127 and Note 33.

<sup>8</sup>AS 13 describes Stella's beauty in heraldic terms, referring to the Devereux arms; those of lady Penelope Rich by right of birth: 'Where roses gueuls are borne in silver field' (argent, three torteaux gules). See below, p. 122. In AS 65 *Astrophil* claims kinship with Cupid: 'Since in thine armes, if learnd fame truth hath spread, / Thou bear'st the arrow, I the arrow head,' alluding to the 'phaon azure', the blue arrow-head, in Sidney's own arms. AS 32, 35, 37 all make malicious play with Penelope Devereux's married name, 'Rich'. In AS 103 *Astrophil* refers to the stars ornamenting his armour: Sidney seems to have owned such a suit; at least, in the engravings made by Thomas Lant for his funeral procession in 1587, his armour is decorated in this way. The reiterated play on the image of horse and rider throughout the sequence itself constitutes a kind of subliminal pun on Sidney's own name, and in AS 83 he plays on 'Philip' being also the name of Stella's pet sparrow.

<sup>9</sup>*Phaedrus*, 246, 253–54. See p. 122 and Note 22.

<sup>10</sup>In the *Iliad*, the recurrent epithet for the Trojan heroes in general and Hector in particular.

<sup>11</sup>In Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, for example, the manner of Arcite's death, caused by a fall from his horse in his moment of apparent triumph, exactly matches his own lack of forethought and control. The *Reeve's Tale* has a comic version of this same motif, when the miller looses the clerks' horse to run off 'With wilde mares as fast as he may go': a thematic prelude to the main action of the Tale: *Canterbury Tales*, 2676 ff: A, l. 4081; *Riverside Chaucer*, general editor L.D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford U.P., 1988),

more recent occurrences of these images in emblems such as Alciati's *Temeritas*<sup>12</sup> (Ill. 8); in moral and religious allegories<sup>13</sup> and in the more elaborate, neoplatonic, iconographical tropes to be found especially in Italian art of this period and earlier, for example the horse-taming scene shown on the central sarcophagus in Titian's *Amor Sacra e Profana*.<sup>14</sup>

Sidney's sources range widely, and naturally include intimate reference to the Continental sonneteers. The over-riding, structural coherence of *Astrophil and Stella* itself derives however from the first three of Petrarch's *Trionfi*. The rich and varied influence of this work in sixteenth-century England has been widely recognised,<sup>15</sup> and Sidney's carefully short-circuited distortion of its opening triad, the visionary progression from Love (*Amor*) to Chastity to Death, would be easily perceptible to contemporary readers from the very beginning of the sequence. The image of the horse and rider is of special importance here, linking this perversion of a familiar structure with its consequent psychological content. Sonnet 4 encapsulates Astrophil's situation:

*Vertue* alas, now let me take some rest,  
Thou setst a bate between my will and wit,  
If vaine love have my simple soule opprest,  
Leave what thou likest not, deale not thou with it.  
Thy scepter use in some old *Catoe's* brest;  
Churches or schooles are for thy seate more fit:  
I do confess, pardon a fault confest,  
My mouth too tender is for thy hard bit.

This dismissive flippancy is ominously precise. It is a direct reference to Laura's use of the same disciplinary metaphor in the *Triumphus Mortis* II over ll. 88–120, where it expresses her exquisite and painful charity to-

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pp. 61, 81. This motif is also used in hagiographical writings, as in the opening of the *Metrical Life of Saint Hugh* (c. 1220): l. 6, 'Carnis equo propriae frenum dedit: The steed on which he charged into battle was his own body' (Lit.: 'He applied the rein to the horse of his own flesh'); see *The Metrical Life of Saint Hugh of Lincoln. The Latin Text with Introduction, Translation and Notes*, ed. C. Garton (Lincoln: Honeywood Press for Lincoln Library Publications, 1986).

<sup>12</sup>*Andreae Alciati Emblematum Libellus* (Venice, 1546), fol. 39v. BL 24.c.7. Reproduced by permission of the British Library. Some editions show the Platonic charioteer (eg. Leyden, 1550; Antwerp, 1573). Sidney may well have known both versions.

<sup>13</sup>For the possible influence on Sidney of one of the most important of these, Cartigny's *Le Voyage du Chevalier Errant*, see below p. 128 and Note 39.

<sup>14</sup>In the Galleria Borghese, Rome.

<sup>15</sup>See for example Carnelli's Preface to his edition of Lord Morley's translation, *passim*, and also A. Fowler, *Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry* (Cambridge U.P., 1970), especially pp. 37–38.

wards her lover during her lifetime, now revealed from the perspective of her achieved beatitude:

‘Thou saw’st what was without, not what within.  
 And as the brake the wanton steed doth tame,  
 So this did thee from thy disorders win [...]  
 Virtue for aid did then with love advise.  
 If, spurr’d by love, thou took’st some running toy,  
 “So soft a bit,” quoth I, “will not suffice.”  
 Thus glad, and sad, in pleasure and annoy,  
 Hot red, cold pale, thus far I have thee brought,  
 Weary, but safe, to my no little joy.’<sup>16</sup>

Astrophil’s rebellious immaturity is given as his starting-point in love. So Petrarch may have looked back on his own introduction to Love’s Triumph, when first he saw himself to be among the victims of Amor,

Callyd a god of the people most vayne,  
 All be it he geveth for theyr reward and payne  
 Some the death forthwyth out of hande,  
 Some a long tyme in miserye to stand  
 To love (I say) them that loves not hym,  
 Fast tied and fetred both cheke and chynne.<sup>17</sup>

Astrophil might likewise be expected eventually to arrive at such a haven as that in which Laura was to rejoice, by whatever painful guidance. The Triumph of Love might be expected to be overtaken by that of Chastity.

The hints of some very different outcome are cumulative. Petrarch’s Laura makes him ‘fast hyr servaunt bound’, but Love has no power over her. In fact, they stand in opposition:

And to this (it is a marvellouse thyng)  
 The God of love, this great myghty kynge,  
 It seemeth of hyr he is soore afearde...<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>TD ll. 97–120: (Quel di fuor miri, e quel dentro non veggia. / Questo fu quel, che ti rivolve, e strinse / Spesso, come caval fren, che vanaggia [...]) / Allor providi d’onesto soccorso: / Talor ti vidi tali sproni al fianco, / Ch’i dissi: Qui covien piu duro morso. / Così caldo, vermiglio, freddo, e bianco, / Or tristo, or lieto infin qui t’ho condotto / Salvo, ond’io mi rallegro, benche stanco.)

<sup>17</sup>TL I. ll. 131–36: (Fatto signior, è dio da gente vana. / Quall e morto da lui, qual con più gravi / Leggi mena sua vita aspera, ed acerba / Sotto mille catene, e milla chiavi.)

<sup>18</sup>TL III. ll. 189–91: (Dall’ atra parte, s’io discerno bene, / Questo signior, che tutto ‘l mondo sforza, / Teme di lei...)

Astrophil sees no such essential distinction between his Stella and Love, Cupid, himself. The conceits whereby the God ‘couching lyes’ in Stella’s breast (Sonnet 11) shines in her eyes and makes snares of her hair (Sonnet 12) has her eyebrows for bows and glances for ‘arrowes infinite’ (Sonnet 17) and so forth are of course commonplace. Their cumulative effect, however, is uneasily to confuse the identity of Love with that of Stella herself, while at the same time an increasingly emphatic change in register shades the poet’s play with this concept from wit into grotesquerie and bitterness. This shift is marked by carefully spaced pairs of sonnets, of which two are here of special importance.<sup>19</sup> In Sonnet 13 Cupid appears as a knight, with Stella’s hair as his crest and her face as his shield: “Where roses gueuls are borne in silver field.”<sup>20</sup>

In Sonnet 29 Stella’s body has become Love’s stronghold and, literally, his sustenance:

... her lips his heralds arre,  
her breasts his tents, legs his triumphal carre,  
Her flesh his food, her skin his armour brave. . .

This confusion has disturbing and far-reaching consequences. In Sonnet 21 their public aspect begins to become apparent, when Astrophil rehearses his friend’s<sup>21</sup> anxious criticism:

Your words, my friend (right healthful caustics) blame  
My young mind marde whom *Love* doth windlas so,  
That mine own writings like bad servants show  
My wits, quicke in vaine thoughts, in vertue lame:  
That Plato I read for naught, but if he tame  
Such coltish gyres, that to my birth owe  
Nobler desires. . .

The reference to ‘coltish gyres’ points to the friend’s specific citation of Plato’s *Phaedrus*, 246, 253–54: the allegory of the Charioteer of the soul, and in particular of the severe discipline to be meted out to the unruly

<sup>19</sup>Other pairs are: AS 38, where Astrophil’s sleep is filled by sweet dreams of Stella, and AS 96 where he is oppressed by nightmares; and AS 59, when he complains that Stella attends more to her pet dog than to him, and AS 83, where the play on her sparrow’s name ‘Philip’ and the associations of this bird with lechery gives his similar complaint against it a harsher edge of irony. See above, Note 8.

<sup>20</sup>See above, Note 8.

<sup>21</sup>Astrophil’s ‘Friend’, addressed also in Sonnets 21 and 69, is likely to have been Fulke Greville, see above, Note 4. His own *Caelica* (not just one star, but many) has a number of poems that may well have been intended as replies to or comments on various of Sidney’s sonnets: for example, AS 8: *Caelica* 12.

member of his pair before ‘...the soul of the lover follows the beloved in modesty and holy fear’.<sup>22</sup> Astrophil’s response, given in the final couplet, is as dismissive as his earlier rejection of Virtue’s ‘hard bit’:

Dig deepe with learning’s spade, now tell me this,  
Hath this world ought so faire as *Stella* is?

The central point of the friend’s criticism presently resurfaces, first in Sonnet 28, where Stella is Astrophil’s:

Princess of Beautie, for whose only sake  
The raines of *Love* I love, though never slake,  
And joy therin, though nations think it shame.

Here it is Love, unresented, that is in fiercely irresponsible control, not virtue with its attendant perspectives of noble thought and action. In Sonnet 30 the image of restraint is displaced so as to call ironic attention to Astrophil’s actual situation by direct cross-reference to Sidney’s own. Among the questions of state that ‘busie wits’ put to him he is asked:

How Ulster likes of that same golden bit  
Wherewith my father once made it half tame,<sup>23</sup>

a reminder both of his noble birth and of the inherited expectations it carries of public service. Astrophil’s reaction however is hardly that of Sidney himself, the frustration of whose own unresting ambition for such service was no secret:<sup>24</sup>

I, cumbred with good maners, answer do,  
But know not how, for still I thinke of you.

Once the theme of public duty has been raised and in this way dismissed the reader is alerted to the uneasy implications underlying the first of the second pair of sonnets to be considered. In Sonnet 41 Astrophil recounts his success in a tournament, where,

<sup>22</sup>Plato, *Phaedrus* 254: *The Dialogues of Plato*, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd edn, 5 vols (Oxford U.P., 1892), I, p. 461.

<sup>23</sup>Sidney’s father, Sir Henry Sidney, had been Lord Deputy in Ireland for three terms, the last, during which he pacified Ulster, ending in 1578. In 1582, at about the time *Astrophil and Stella* was being written, he was considering a further term. The ‘golden bit’ is the ‘cess’: a tax on landowners in Ireland reintroduced by Sir Henry to fund the English military presence there.

<sup>24</sup>Sidney’s brilliant potential was never given the scope he and his friends in England and abroad felt he deserved. Fulke Greville records that even William of Orange, at the christening of whose daughter Sidney had represented the Queen in 1579, was surprised at Elizabeth’s neglect of so valuable a servant. For my own view of the possible reasons for her attitude, see Everyman, Introduction, pp. xxxiv-xxxvi.

I obtained the prize,  
 Both by the judgement of the *English* eyes,  
 And of some sent by that sweet enemy *France*.

This reference, though deliberately imprecise, would recall the chivalric celebrations and contests that enlivened the unsuccessful marriage negotiations taking place between Queen Elizabeth and the French Catholic Duc d'Alençon between 1579 and 1583, in which Sidney himself took a notable part.<sup>25</sup> Astrophil triumphs on what is a public occasion involving considerations of diplomacy and national honour as well as personal expertise. Praise is lavished on him, he says, for his horsemanship, and for his use of skills nobly inherited. But,

How far they shoot awrie! the true cause is,  
*Stella* lookt on, and from her heav'nly face  
 Sent forth the beames that made so faire my race.

The concept of love as an inspiration to virtuous action has already been subverted, forcing the register of the conclusion obliquely into comedy. In Sonnet 53 it is actually reversed, cruelly, into open farce. Once again, "In Martiall sports I had my cunning tride," but the sight of Stella, "Who hard by made a window send forth light," now affects him very differently. He loses control of his horse, and his skill deserts him:

My heart then quak'd, then dazled were mine eyes,  
 One hand forgot to rule, th'other to fight.  
 Nor trumpets sound I heard, nor friendly cries;  
 My Foe came on, and beat the aire for me,  
 Till that her blush taught me my shame to see.

In Sonnet 41 the uneasiness prompted by Astrophil's established disregard for the public context of his success is still indefinite. In Sonnet 53 this is no longer so: Astrophil's humiliation is a public enactment of his inner distraction. Between these two, Sonnet 49 acts as a pivot, presenting a detailed and crucial analysis of the cumulative uncertainties that I have

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<sup>25</sup>Sidney's uncle, the Earl of Leicester, and Sidney himself were prominent in the militant Protestant party opposed to the match. In 1579 Sidney had written an open letter to the Queen, advising her against it. Among the various chivalric displays involving the French embassies the most spectacular was probably *The Four Foster Children of Desire*, performed on April 16, 1581, in which both Sidney and Fulke Greville took part. It was a highly emblematic fiction, the point of which, contrived in the most allusive chivalric terms, was that any kind of siege or defiance offered to the Queen, as Beauty, was bound to fail. There were speeches and songs to point the action, some of which are likely to have been by Sidney himself.

tried to indicate as complicating the identities of horse and rider, controller and controlled, as this image has been recurring up to this point in its various contexts, both literal and metaphorical. In Sonnet 49 it is expanded as a paradox, so as to offer two near opposite choices of interpretation:

I on my horse, and *Love* on me doth trie  
 Our horsmanships, while by strange worke I prove  
 A horsman to my horse, a horse to *Love*;  
 And now man's wrongs in me, poor beast, descrie.  
 The raines wherewith my Rider doth me tie,  
 Are humbled thoughts, which bit of Reverence move,  
 Curb'd in with Feare, but with guilt bosse above  
 Of Hope which makes it seeme faire to the eye.  
 The Wand is Will, thou, Fancie, saddle art,  
 Girt fast by Memorie, and while I spurre  
 My horse, he spurres with sharpe desire my hart:  
 He sits me fast, how ever I do sturre:  
 And now hath made me to his hand so right,  
 That in the Manage I do take delight.

The reins here are no longer 'never slake', as they were in Sonnet 28, but subtly handled in the 'Manage'; the Haute Ecole still practiced in the Vienna Riding School where Sidney studied with Pugliano,<sup>26</sup> when even its highest arts were also battle exercises. Sidney knew from expert experience how a horse may come to 'delight' in its instruction and developed skills. Only two things differentiate Astrophil's situation here from that of Petrarch as presented by Laura in her summary of his education in virtuous love: Petrarch took no delight at all in Laura's stern discipline, and Astrophil's rider is Love, not the Virtue of his beloved. Even here ambiguity is sustained however, in the first place by an oblique complex of allusion. The chariot of Petrarch's Amor was, "Drawen with foure coursers all mylke whight";<sup>27</sup> a carefully ambiguous recollection of Plato's Charioteer, and the metaphor Laura later uses for Love's proper discipline makes what has become the established shift of Plato's image to that of horse and rider, of which Sidney is taking full and in some ways more literal advantage.<sup>28</sup> He may also be recalling Among Alciatati's emblem *Potentissimus affectus Amor* (Ill. 9),<sup>29</sup> which offers an erotic variation on Plato: it depicts Love driving a chariot

<sup>26</sup>See above, Note 7.

<sup>27</sup>TL I. l. 34. (Quattro destrier via più che neve bianchi.)

<sup>28</sup>See above, Note 7.

<sup>29</sup>*Andreae Alciati Emblematum Libellus* (Leyden, 1544), fol. 11. BL 1163.b.48. Reproduced by permission of the British Library.

drawn by two lions, his whip and reins displaying the discipline by which love should rightly control feral passion and self-will. Spenser will later make just this point, possibly in a direct allusion to Sonnet 49,<sup>30</sup> when he also shifts Alciati's image of the charioteer into that of horse and rider, applying it to a lover's new found maturity:

Dame *Venus* sonne that tameth stubborne youth  
 With iron bit, and maketh him abide,  
 Till like a victor on his backe he ride,  
 Into his mouth the maystring bridle threw,  
 That made him stoup, till he did him bestride:  
 That gan he make him tread his steps anew,  
 And learn to loue, by learning louers paines to rew.  
 (FQ IV xii 13)<sup>31</sup>

As it stands, Sonnet 49 could express such a gracious and positive self-discovery, though, as I have tried to indicate, the foregoing context tends to mitigate any real hope of this, so that hints as to an opposite, negative outcome become the more readily apparent. There is no mention of virtue in this sonnet, and none of Stella herself, whose image is absorbed into that of Love. Certainly she has none of the fine and absolute direction exercised by Laura over the course of Petrarch's love for her, when: 'Virtue for aid did then with love advise.'<sup>32</sup>

It is really only Sidney's final couplet that suggests that a positive direction might be taken from the sonnet as a whole, and this can be seen as qualified by what goes before. Astrophil feels sympathy with his own hard-ridden mount: 'And now man's wrongs in me, poor beast, descrie,' and the restlessness he displays, as might a horse with a heavy-handed rider, when Love, '... sits me faste, however I do sturre,' suggest that the 'delight' he learns is the relief of a struggle abandoned rather than joy in new awareness hard-won. A brief comparison with a passage from Sidney's *New Arcadia* describing the consummate horsemanship of one of his two principal heroes,

<sup>30</sup>Books III-VI of *The Faerie Queene* first appeared in 1596, but it is in any case likely that Spenser's friendship with Ludowyck Bryskett, who had served in the Sidney household and been Sir Philip's travelling companion, gave him access to to *Astrophil and Stella* and other of Sidney's works in manuscript some years before any of them were printed. See above, Notes 1 and 4.

<sup>31</sup>Marinell, who has scorned Florimell's devotion, has overheard her laments as he passes by the cave of Proteus where she is imprisoned, and is moved by pity to return her love. The context is the celebration of elemental concord in the Marriage of the Thames and the Medway, expressed in human terms by the lovers' union. See E. Porges Watson, 'Spenser's Submarine Creation', *Reinardus* 9 (1997), pp. 128-32.

<sup>32</sup>TD II. l. 115. See above, Note 16.

Musidorus, may serve to throw into relief these discrepancies, which would have been immediately and in many cases experientially evident to a contemporary readership:

But he, as if centaur-like he had been one piece with the horse, was no more moved than one is with the going of his own legs; and in effect so he did command him as his own limbs; for though he had both spurs and wand they seemed rather marks of sovereignty than instruments of punishment. . . nor the horse did with any change complain of it; he ever going so just with the horse, either forthright or turning, that it seemed as he borrowed the horse's body, so he lent the horse his mind.<sup>33</sup>

The image of the centaur, used here, is again in itself bivalent, depending on whether the human (rational) or the equine (passionate) faculties are seen as being in control. The figure of Chiron, as in Alciati's emblem *Consiliarii Principum* (Ill. 10) typifies the positive aspect of the centaur, as in Piero di Cosimo's painting the episode of the Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs does the negative.<sup>34</sup> The centaur image is only suggested in Sonnet 49, but even this hint marks an ominous shift in perspective, which will draw the sequence to its bitter conclusion. Cupid, Love, can be seen up to this point becoming ever more closely identified with Stella herself. This fusion starts now to dissolve, as, instead, Cupid, Love and Astrophil begin to elide into each other, finally to conflate indistinguishably. But first the opening line of Sonnet 52, where, 'A strife is grown betweene *Vertue* and *Love*,' that should by now have been transcended, finally resolves in abstract but clearly negative terms the lingering ambiguity proposed in the conclusion to Sonnet 49. This is immediately confirmed by the metaphorical realism of Astrophil's public humiliation in the tournament described in Sonnet 53.<sup>35</sup>

From Sonnet 1 through to Sonnet 63 the sequence of sonnets is unbroken by any other verse form. Through Sonnet 54 to Sonnet 63 Astrophil's wit becomes increasingly sophisticated, trivialising both his passion and its object, until in Sonnet 63 Stella's emphatic rebuffs become in mockery his 'high triumphing':

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<sup>33</sup> *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, ed. V. Skretkovicz (Oxford U.P., 1987), Book II, p. 153.

<sup>34</sup> *Andreae Alciati Emblematum Libellus* (Venice, 1546), fol. 28. BL 245.c.7, reproduced by permission of the British Library. Piero di Cosimo, *The Fight between the Lapiths and the Centaurs*, see:

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/WebMedia/Images/48/NG4890/eNG4890.jpg>

<sup>35</sup> See above, p. 124.

For *Grammer* says (to *Grammer* who says nay)  
That in one speech two negatives affirme.

This is followed immediately by the first of the eleven Songs that intersperse the remaining sonnets of the sequence, from Sonnet 64 through to Sonnet 108, quickening and interrupting their progression from Astrophil's emerging admission of his own self-indulgence to his final despair. The First Song is a parodic Triumph of Stella, not, as might be expected as Champion of Chastity like Petrarch's Laura,<sup>36</sup> but, jarringly, as Love's own sovereign: 'Onely by you *Cupid* his crowne maintaineth.' This structural short-circuit combines with the flatly rhetorical question, 'Who else for whom *Fame* worthy trumpets wanteth?' to call attention to what are by this stage in the sequence two glaring thematic omissions. Nowhere, up to this point or later, does Astrophil consider death, or give warning to Stella of her own mortality and beauty's transience. His few mentions of fame itself are dismissive, and in Sonnet 90 he will disassociate himself specifically from the 'Lawrel tree' of Petrarch,<sup>37</sup> whose *Triumphs* of Love, Chastity and Death were succeeded by the wider perspectives of Fame, Time and Eternity; he does not even make the conventional claim that, as a poet, Stella's secular immortality is in his gift. The vision of Stella evoked in the First Song is a vacuous construct of his own, a Triumph of Frustration rather than of Chastity, and the refrain to the first verse, as repeated in the last, prefigures the final inversion of the sequence as a whole: "Only in thee my song begins and endeth."

In Sonnet 64 which immediately follows the First Song, the image of the horse and rider occurs for the last time. Here control is finally abandoned: "O give my passions leave to run their race," and Astrophil goes on openly to devalue any thought of learned, military or other noble ambition:

I do not envie Aristotle's wit,  
Nor do aspire to Caesar's bleeding fame.  
Nor ought do care, though some above me sit,  
Nor hope nor wishe another course to frame. . .

A runaway horse is a disaster waiting to happen, as in Alciati's emblem of *Temeritas*<sup>38</sup> (Ill. 8). Sidney may also have known the chivalric *Peregrinatio Vita*, by Jean Cartigny, *Le Voyage du Chevalier Errant*, either in a French edition or in the English translation as *The Wandering Knight* by William

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<sup>36</sup>TC ll. 75 ff.

<sup>37</sup>In AS 34 Astrophil disclaims interest in 'brazen fame', in AS 64 in scholarly or military renown, and in AS 90 in being thought of as a follower of Petrarch, or even in being remembered as a poet.

<sup>38</sup>See above, Note 12.

Goodyear,<sup>39</sup> where Pride gives the hero, ‘a galloping horse called Temerity’, only for him to find himself in due course in ‘. . . the mire and deep ditch of sin’, until he is rescued by divine Grace.<sup>40</sup> In his own terms of erotic self-obsession Astrophil’s unbridled career leads him into as dismal and more hopeless entrapment. His self-identification with Love, who has, ‘Mine eyes, my light, my heart, my life, alas,’ in Sonnet 62 seems a mere conceit at first, and his throwaway excuse for stealing a kiss: ‘Sweet, it was saucie *Love*, not humble I,’ in Sonnet 73, is, taken in itself, a clever quip. In its context however, of violent mood change and the growing certainty of Stella’s rejection, the concept of literal symbiosis with which it plays is deeply disturbing, and has its tragic corollary in the final Sonnet, 108, when:

Most rude *Dispaire* my daily bidden guest,  
Clips streight my wings, streight wraps me in his night,  
And makes me then bow down my head and say,  
Ah what doth *Phoebus*’ gold that wretch availe,  
Whom iron doors do keepe from use of day?

Astrophil has become Cupid himself, not merely his prisoner,<sup>41</sup> but he is finally the captive of his own ungoverned passions, not of Chastity triumphant. His wings are clipped like those of Petrarch’s Amor, and he is condemned to the same bleak imprisonment,<sup>42</sup> from which, unlike Cartigny’s Knight, he has no prospect of release.

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<sup>39</sup>The first edition of Jean Cartigny’s *Le Voyage du Chevalier errant* was published in Antwerp, 1577: another edition followed in 1572. The first English translation appeared in 1581: *The Voyage of the wandering Knight. Devised by Iohn Carthenie, a Frenchman, and translated out of French into English, by William Goodyear of South-hampton Merchant. A Worke Worthie of Reading, and dedicated to the Right worshipfull Sir Fraucis Drake, Knight. Imprinted at London by Thomas East, the xxvij of May. 1581.* References here are to the edition of this translation by D. Evans (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1951).

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 8, 56–59.

<sup>41</sup>TL IV ll. 194–98.

<sup>42</sup>TC ll. 200 ff.

ANDREAE ALCIATI

*Temeritas .*



*In præceptis rapitur , frustra quoque tendit habemas  
Auriga , effreni quem sechit oris equæ .  
Haud facile huic credas , ratio quem nulla gubernat ,  
Et temere proprio ducitur arbitrio .*

Ill. 8 Alciati, Venice 1546: *Temeritas*. Reproduced by permission of the British Library [cf. pp. 120, 128].

EMBLEMATVM LIBELLVS. II

Potentissimus affectus amor.



Aspice ut inuictus uires auriga leonis  
Expressus gemma p<sup>u</sup>isio uincat amor,  
Vtq; manu hac scuticam teneat, hac flectat habenas,  
Vtq; sit in pueri plurimus ore decor.  
Dira lues procul esto, feram qui uincere talem  
Est potis, a nobis temporet an ne manus e

Ill. 9 Alciati, Leyden 1544: *Potentissimus Effectus Amor*. Reproduced by permission of the British Library [cf. p. 125].

*Consiliarij Principum .*

Heroum genitos , & magnum fertur Achillem  
 In stabulis Chiron erudisse suis .  
 Semiferum doctorem , & semivirum centaurum ,  
 Assideat quisquis regibus , esse decet .  
 Est fera , dum uiolat socios , dum proterit hostes :  
 Estq; homo , dum simulat se populo esse piũm .

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Ill. 10 Alciati, Venice 1546: *Consiliari Principum*. Reproduced by permission of the British Library [cf. p. 127].