

**RHETORIC AND GENDER IN SIDNEY'S
ARCADIAS**

Navina Krishna Hooker

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
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*Rhetoric and Gender in
Sidney's Arcadias*

by

Navina Krishna Hooker

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Arts of the
University of St. Andrews in
fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

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Abstract

This thesis starts from the point of departure that Sidney's claim in his *Defence of Poetry* that the purpose of literature is to delight and instruct a given audience is both an accurate and important guiding principle behind the creation of his two *Arcadias*. By their author's criteria, Sidney's works seek not only to provide diverting images of a fictive world, but to insure that these images serve some specific moral, didactic purpose. The manner in which Sidney goes about achieving this end is, however, less simplistic than the ordinary understanding of didactic literature connotes.

The most historically determined aspect of the *Arcadia's* didacticism is its extensive and strategic deployment of rhetorical figuration. Rhetoric in Sidney's Renaissance England represented both a vital tool in the smooth running of political life and a signpost of literary genius. The *Arcadia* thus manipulates specific rhetorical figures and tropes both to demonstrate the great literary skill of its author as well as to depict an ethical and political ideal.

Part One of the thesis first investigates the history of rhetorical theory and its impact on the reputation of Sidney's work. It then goes on to explore particular rhetorical devices employed most frequently and significantly in the *Old* and *New Arcadias*, drawing comparisons between the versions as to underscore the differences in stylistic procedure and dramatic content of each work. Other aspects of Sidney's rhetoricism, such as his treatment of paradox and his rhetorical character portrayal, are also studied in an effort to gauge the major differences between the *Old* and *New Arcadias*. The overall conclusions drawn indicate that Sidney adapts his rhetorical strategy to accommodate a more complex and mature vision of ethical behaviour in his revised work.

The other key aspect of Sidney's didacticism is his self-conscious and contentious depiction of gender roles. That is, Sidney plays off varying aspects of traditionally gender-associated behaviour to portray his own vision of an heroic ethical ideal. For example, the Amazon and the transvestite become vehicles through which to explore aspects of femininity that are for Sidney wholly in concord with manifestations of heroism. Moreover, Sidney subverts traditional gendered conceptions of particular vices and virtues to illustrate a liberal attitude toward the potentialities of women and men. Part Two, then, is dedicated to drawing out Sidney's understanding of gender roles as they reflect and demonstrate his unique vision of an heroic ideal.

The observations made about the rhetorical and gendered dimensions of Sidney's didacticism are brought together in the conclusion, where Sidney's rhetoric is situated within the context of gender. In other words, the gendered conception of Sidney's particular brand of rhetoric is brought to the fore and poised within the ethical framework it embodies.

I, Navina Krishna Hooker, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 75,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

date 31st March 1994 signature of candidate

I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No. 12 on 1.10.89 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. on 1.10.90. The higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1989 and 1994.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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I wish first to thank the University of St. Andrews for awarding me a Research Studentship without which I would not have been able to undertake this thesis. Equally, I wish to thank the Overseas Research Studentship Fund for their material contributions. I am most grateful to both these institutions.

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Preface

The following examination of Philip Sidney's *Old and New Arcadias* starts with the aim of illuminating the critical equipment that a positive and culturally informed reading the *Arcadias* requires. That is, it begins by probing the network of assumptions that funded the author's understanding of the scope and purpose of literary achievement as executed in his own work, and that also facilitate contemporary understanding of what had long been seen as a 'difficult' and bizarre epic-romance. The *Arcadias* are no longer confined to the bottom shelf of English academic libraries as Virginia Woolf suggested they ought to be, but enjoy instead general recognition of their historical as well as aesthetic importance. Such a positive reevaluation of Sidney's work must however be understood as an overall function of changing critical attitudes toward the *Arcadias'* most fundamental and defining characteristics.

Chapter I examines the historical fluctuations of the *Arcadias'* reception as bound up with the fortunes of rhetoricism as a literary convention and philosophical standpoint. The self-consciously ornate style of Sidney's work, once the reason behind the *Arcadias'* unpopularity, can now be appreciated not only as a remarkable piece of rhetorical bravura, but also as a deliberate strategy of literary didacticism. Chapter II provides a more in-depth study of Sidney's own brand of rhetoricism as one reflecting Ciceronian suppositions about the nature of the relationship of the world of words to the world of political action. It

then goes on to scrutinise in detail the opening Books of both the *Old* and *New Arcadias* in the light of Sidney's rhetorical didactic scheme. Chapters III and IV also explore the specific rhetorical differences between corresponding Books of the *Old* and *New Arcadias*, opening issues such as the role of paradox in the *New Arcadia* and Sidney's specific plot and character developments. Chapter V brings together the local observations about Sidney's altered rhetorical didacticism in the *New Arcadia* to articulate a conception of Sidney's mature heroic ideal as it is delineated in his revised work. In the process of mapping this *New Arcadian* heroic ideal, it becomes exigent to discuss attitudes toward gender underpinning the work, as Sidney consciously and carefully evokes weighted gender issues and manipulates them to express his vision of ideal ethical behaviour.

This examination of overtly feminist issues in conjunction with Sidney's rhetoricism is neither accidental nor inappropriate. The relevance of gender to discussions of rhetoric has been established through the work of critics such as Patricia Parker, and Sidney's work clearly participates in the historical association of certain rhetorical excesses with femininity. More interesting, however, is that in the recent renaissance in Sidney criticism little has been said of these two aspects, both recognised as key to the *Arcadia*, in relationship to each other. That is, no attempt has yet been made to discuss the two most obvious and defining characteristics of the *Arcadias* in conjunction with each other. Sidney's *Arcadia* has been seen since its creation as a quintessentially rhetorical

work, and as I argue, its reputation with rhetoricians such as Abraham Fraunce could hardly have been higher. Equally, the *Arcadia* has been noted as a particularly 'feminine' work that has most commonly been described as the reading material of women from the Countess of Pembroke onwards. The femininity of readers of the *Arcadia* is suggested not only through the work's title and dedication, but through the many references in the text itself to the 'fair ladies' the author ostensibly addresses. Moreover, I propose, the psychological femininity of the *Arcadias'* readership is equally implied through Sidney's assessment of the nature of heroism. That is, the relationship of Sidney's heroic ideal to 'feminine' traits or characteristics is predicated upon a positive evaluation of the virtues of feminine behaviours. To admire and value the Sidneian heroic ideal is thus to demonstrate an empathy with feminist claims about the affirmative potentialities of femininity.

The following chapters deal with both sides of Sidney's work. While I examine specific rhetorical figurations in the *Arcadias* without immediate reference to gender issues, and probe the significance of powerful gender issues such as transvestism independently from Sidney's rhetoricism, there is nevertheless a unifying thread linking the two. This thread is found in the central preoccupation of Sidney's literary endeavour: his determined pursuit of an ethical ideal. Sidney's ethical, heroic ideal is ultimately articulated both through his manipulation of rhetorical figures and his treatment of gender depictions. Rhetoric and gender, I will argue, are ethical concerns for Sidney, and

for the same reason form the backbone of his literary didactic scheme.

PART ONE: RHETORIC

Chapter I

RHETORIC AND THE RECEPTION OF SIDNEY'S *ARCADIAS*

Sidney's critical reception over the last four hundred years presents interesting and significant parallels to the influence of rhetoric over the same period. It is no accident that the decline of rhetoric in educational institutions should coincide with the neglect of the *Arcadias* during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, as I shall demonstrate, there is a direct correlation between the philosophical and cultural developments which declared the study of rhetoric a type of pedantry and the aesthetic criteria that relegated the *Arcadias* to "the very bottom of the shelf" of one's library, as Virginia Woolf phrased it. Part and parcel of this bizarre story of initial critical and popular adulation and then disregard for Sidney is the critical rehabilitation of the *Arcadias* during the second half of this century. It appears that the linguistic assumptions and demands of Sidney's highly rhetorical work are no longer out of keeping with current philosophical frameworks, testified to by the present healthy state of affairs in Sidney scholarship. To understand why this should be so, it is necessary to trace first the events that marginalised both the *Arcadia* and the study of rhetoric and effectively made them obsolete.¹ This task will hopefully

¹ In discussing the demise and resurrection of rhetoric as a viable and important epistemological framework, I am indebted to the work of John Bender and David E. Wellbery. Their introductory article to *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) historicises the power and influence that rhetoric held from classicism to the modern age, and provides the background for

serve two functions: first, I intend to provide a theoretical basis for the insistence on illuminating and interpreting the rhetoricality of Sidney's texts; second, I wish to furnish a better understanding of the philosophical demands of such rhetoricality in terms of the *Arcadias'* historical reception.

1

The Renaissance and the Age of Arcadian Rhetoric

I will presently delineate the importance of rhetoric for all literary endeavour during the Elizabethan period with a view to proving that Sidney's work is if anything more than usually exemplary of that fact. For the moment, however, let us take for granted the supposition that Renaissance rhetoricism was as ambitious as it was wide-sweeping, largely due to the influence of both Cicero and Quintilian on the period's theorists. Ciceronian rhetoric, which endowed the proper and skilful manipulation of language with a direct and positive effectivity in the behaviour of one's audience, is seen as the highest union of philosophy and eloquence. The good orator is first a virtuous man and a learned man, and his verbal skills allow him to direct the actions of others to the betterment of society. Equally important for the Elizabethans was Quintilian, whose own brand of rhetoric likewise situated the orator as the prime director of society. As similar as Cicero and Quintilian are in their lofty aspirations for rhetoric, there is nevertheless one important difference between the two which I wish to clarify

classicism to the modern age, and provides the background for my own study of Sidney's literary and rhetorical reputation.

now. Cicero's conception of rhetoric and of language is aligned with the assumption that words and ideas exist on a continuum; that is to say, there is no semantic gap between a thought that seeks expression and the verbalised form of that thought. In this Ciceronian framework, then, a different phrasing of any idea yields another different and unique idea. The Quintilian model, by contrast, ultimately posits words as signs that never quite express the idea that orders them. Rhetoric's purpose according to Quintilian is thus to approximate any idea as accurately as possible, given that the idea and the word are never completely collapsed. It is from this Quintilian point of departure that the notion of rhetoric as sheer ornament ultimately originates, as Quintilian posits the notion of language's inherent distance from ideas.²

² Hence the notion, derived from Quintilian, of language as the 'dress of thought'. For a brief summary of the essential differences between Quintilian and Cicero on the question of language's semantic limitations, see Peter Dixon's *Rhetoric* in the *Critical Idiom Series* (London: Methuen, 1971). Dixon here defines Cicero's position on the matter as pivoting on the

point that 'wise thinking' and 'elegant speaking' are closely linked because thought, the subject-matter or material of speech (the *res*), is inseparable from the words (*verba*) in which it is made manifest. Expression and thought are indivisible. We cannot properly talk of expressing a thought in different words, for it will become a different (even if only a slightly different) thought in the process (P. Dixon, *Rhetoric*, pp. 16-17).

For Quintilian, on the other hand, the very idea of decorum or the suitability of words to subject-matter necessitates a gap or schism between the two. As Dixon writes,

Quintilian sees that Cicero's belief in indivisibility of thought and word is difficult to reconcile with the theory of decorum, the suiting of style to matter, which is a doctrine that Cicero also strenuously upholds. If we can talk of suitability, then we are thinking in terms of a relationship between words and thought, not a

It must nevertheless be noted that there is no neat and definitive distinction between each strain of rhetoricism, for, as has been stated, Cicero and Quintilian are both sources for the same rhetoricians, and indeed share much common ground. Hence the conflation between Ciceronianism and Quintilianism apparent in many essential Renaissance rhetorical treatises, such as Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*, which at once seek to define the moral, persuasive function of particular tropes and figures, and also discuss the purely ornamental function of others. Puttenham describes in the third Book of *The Art of English Poesie* this dual aspect of rhetorical figures, claiming

ornament... is of two sortes, one to satisfie and delight th'eare onely by a goodly outward shew set upon the matter with wordes, and speeches smoothly and tunably running: another by certaine intendments or sence of such wordes and speaches inwardly working a stirre in the mynde.³

He then makes the common identification of the first function of rhetoric with *enargia*, the giving of "glorious lustre and light," and the second with *energia*, or being "wrought with a strong and vertuous operation".⁴ Hoskins in his *Directions for Speech and Style* picks up on this linguistic doubleness as well. He defines the principal goals of rhetoric in the following two-fold manner: "To amplify and illustrate are two the chiefest ornaments of eloquence, and gain of men's minds two the chiefest advantages, admiration and belief".⁵ Here,

unity. In Quintilian's view, words can express thoughts either more or less adequately" (P. Dixon, *Rhetoric*, p. 19).

³ George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesie*, G. D. Willcock, (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936, p. 119.

⁴ G. Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 119.

⁵ John Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style* [c.1599], Hoyt H. Hudson, (ed.), Princeton: Princeton University Press,

'admiration' is correlate to the aesthetic dimension of beautiful speech, what Puttenham for one terms *energia*, while the 'belief' elicited from one's audience is that more conceptual domain of *energia*.

In speaking of rhetoric's double capability, then, Renaissance rhetoricians endowed the discipline with both the power to move men by appeal to their reasoning faculties as well as to their imaginative ones. Nonetheless, as Brian Vickers claims, the real importance of rhetoric in the Renaissance lay in its practical utility.⁶ Great orators, as has been said, were the great movers of society, and in addition, great poets had to be great rhetoricians. This last notion is sounded in Sidney's *A Defence of Poetry*, where the author begins to speak of poetry and oratory in the same breath, and essentially makes the same exacting demands of both.

It is important to bring up Sidney's *Defence* for another reason, because in speaking of rhetoric's double power, one may discern the nature of the following period's objections to its influence over the imaginations of its audience. Sidney justifies poetry against the traditional Platonic reservations about its deviation from strict truth by

1935, p. 17. Hoskins' first injunction of rhetoric, "to amplify" is the directive which results in *copia* or copiousness of speech, a key trait of Renaissance rhetoric. The ability to multiply words, to amplify on any given subject *ad infinitum* was given prime importance, and schoolchildren were instructed in the art of spinning out lengthy passages on given *topoi*. Erasmus' *De Copia* is a good example of Renaissance rhetorical instruction, in which Erasmus for instance gives four pages of examples of different ways to thank a friend for a letter.

⁶ Brian Vickers writes, "The stress on practicality is perhaps the most definitive feature of the Renaissance rediscovery of classical rhetoric" (B. Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, pp. 270-1).

suggesting that any such deviation in fact improves upon truth or reality. In other words, the 'golden world' that poetry creates inspires men to reach above themselves to better their condition. A similar type of justification is provided against Plato's condemnation of rhetoric as an art of lying. While rhetoric may be art rather than nature, such artifice is not seen as inferior to a natural truth; rather, it is perceived as man's ability to transcend a baser nature, to improve upon a given state of affairs by imposing his mark upon it. Thus, Puttenham describes man's acquisition of language as unnatural, but an unnaturalness which is a positive improving upon what is his given natural abilities: "Speech is not naturall to man saving for his onely habilitie to speake... as to the forme and action of his speach, it cometh to him by arte & teaching, and by use or exercise".⁷ Here, art merely connotes man's capacity to better nature, not a negation of what is true or essential.

The distinction is important, because with the emergence of the scientific method, instigated by Bacon, art and nature begin to assume a very different relationship to each other. It is at this point that some mention must be made of Bacon, and the great changes he helped to bring about vis-a-vis man's position to the world. I do not intend now to give a full account of Bacon's policies, for they are well-known. I do wish, however, to pose some of the more significant of his comments about art and nature, and the nature of language, against the Renaissance ideas listed above.

⁷ G. Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, pp. 119-20.

2

The Baconian Revolution

In speaking of rhetoric Bacon sees the relationship of *res* to *verba* very differently from Cicero, and thus many early Renaissance rhetoricians, who make the call for the complete coalescence of form and content. Cicero pictures *res* and *verba* as mutually dependent in *De Oratore* when he asserts that "Every speech consists of matter and words, and the words cannot fall into place if you remove the matter, nor can the matter have clarity if you withdraw the words".⁸ In comparison, Bacon follows a line closer to Quintilian, but more pessimistically envisages the rupture between *res* and *verba* as subject to the possibility of the second term's subjugating the first. In a well-known passage from *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon criticises the

affectionate study of eloquence and copie of speech, which... began to flourish. This grew speedily to an excess, for men began to hunt more after words than matter, and more after the choiceness of the phrase, and the round and clean composition of the sentence, and the sweet falling of the clauses, and the varying and illustration of their works with tropes and figures than after the weight of the matter, worth of the subject, soundness of argument, life of invention, or depth of judgement.⁹

While Bacon does allow some use for eloquence, it is only to make rigorous truths more palatable. Rhetoric "is a thing not hastily to be condemned, to clothe and adorn the obscurity even of philosophy itself with sensible and plausible elocution," but even this capacity must be strictly

⁸ Cicero, *De Oratore*, p. 17.

⁹ Francis Bacon, *Essays, Advancement of Learning, New Atlantis, and Other Pieces*, R. F. Jones, (ed.), New York: Odyssey Press, 1937, p. 199.

guarded, "for surely to the severe inquisition of truth and the deep progress into philosophy, it is some hinderance, because it is too early satisfactory to the mind of man, and quencheth the further search, before we come to a just period".¹⁰

Not only does rhetoric's power over the senses divert men from the search for truth, its advocacy of *memoria*, which pays the highest tribute to lessons of the past, essentially contradicts Bacon's rejection of handed-down authority. Bacon recognises the necessity to respect the work accomplished by antiquity, but deems it an error to end one's quest for knowledge there. "Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand thereupon, and discover what is the best way, but when the discovery is well taken, then to make progression".¹¹ The refutation of absolute authority vested in already established sources extends to the notion that ground covered by the ancients has been exhausted of what may be revealed. Bacon advises against the idea that

the best hath still prevailed and suppressed the rest, so as if a man should begin the labour of a new search, he were but like to light upon somewhat formerly rejected and by rejection brought into oblivion, as if the multitude, or the wisest for the multitude's sake, were not ready to give passage rather to that which is popular and superficial than to that which is substantial and profound, for the truth is, that time seemeth to be of the nature of a river or stream, which carrieth down to us that which is light and blown up, and sinketh and drowneth that which is weighty and solid.¹²

The previous reverence for antiquity held during the Renaissance is here supplanted by a deep-rooted suspicion

¹⁰ F. Bacon, *Essays, Advancement of Learning*, p. 200.

¹¹ F. Bacon, *Essays, Advancement of Learning*, p. 209.

¹² F. Bacon, *Essays, Advancement of Learning*, p. 211.

towards the findings of the past. Instead of turning to the past to seek some perfected truth, Bacon looks toward the immediate future to rectify the naive errors that passed for truths. He thus clearly contradicts the rhetorical agenda with its study of *topoi*, and insists instead on a rigorous scepticism towards previous generations' findings.¹³

This rigorous scepticism is most deeply entrenched in the key Baconian strategy of relying on experiential information to fund our store of knowledge. Bacon posits the true understanding of the world, obtained through sensory input, as polarised to the contemplation of abstracts accomplished without direct reference to particular phenomena. He writes,

Another error hath proceeded from too great a reverence and a kind of adoration of the mind and understanding of man, by means whereof men have withdrawn themselves too much from the contemplation of nature and the observations of experience, and have tumbled up and down in their own reason and conceits.¹⁴

¹³ The study of *topoi* was absolutely central to rhetorical training in the Renaissance. The young rhetorician was expected to demonstrate a wide acquaintance with stock phrases and examples to call to mind for any given subject. These phrases were, of course, mainly culled from the past as it was equally understood that all the best illustrations of arguments had already been articulated by the ancients. Peter Dixon remarks that the "imitation of good models, always an important part of rhetorical training, came in the sixteenth-century to occupy a central position in humanist education" (P. Dixon, *Rhetoric*, p. 23). He goes on to conclude that

in actual fact it must sometimes have resulted in a lazy echoing of formulas and mannerisms; ideally however, it meant the assimilation of the wisdom and the virtues, as well as the literary graces, of the chosen models. One learnt through keeping the company of the great classics, just as one learnt by personal contact with the teacher (P. Dixon, *Rhetoric*, p. 23).

¹⁴ F. Bacon, *Essays, Advancement of Learning*, pp. 211-12.

The above demand for personal experiential knowledge mixes uneasily with the orator's profession of persuading others through language. While Bacon will have rhetoric dress the obscure truths of philosophy, it is not in itself a viable means of uncovering or verifying those truths.

Bacon's anti-rhetoricism thus pivots upon several fundamental disagreements about the nature of our epistemological processes. First, nature is seen as the sole object of intellectual inquiry. This in essence negates the persuasive function of oratory, and strips the rhetorician of his role as the giver of light to society. Second, and as a correlate to the first, the authority of other sources is as such to be distrusted. In other words, when the individual is placed in the position of discovering truth through his own sensory experiences, the wisdom of others is necessarily subordinated. Third, the rhetorical relationship of *res* to *verba*, which was already somewhat problematical in the Renaissance, is definitely imaged by Bacon as a contentious one, where there is the possibility of the matter of a statement becoming obscured and even lost by its verbalisation. Conjoined to rhetoric's possible domination of content by form is its diversion of intellectual energy from the fruitful inquiry into the nature of things into the excessive and wasteful devising of rhetorical embellishments. The Elizabethan obsession with *copia* is thus no longer tenable, and is indeed strictly negated.

Richard Foster Jones neatly summarises several of the key developments in Bacon's seventeenth-century England in

the following passage from his article "Science and Criticism in the Neo-Classical Age of English Literature":

First was the demand for a sceptical mind, freed from all preconceptions and maintaining a critical attitude toward all ideas presented to it. Second, observation and experimentation were insisted upon as the only trustworthy means of securing sufficient data. And third, the inductive method of reasoning was to be employed on these data.¹⁵

The emergence of these intellectual changes described by Jones in the seventeenth century has its repercussion in the arts, and the problems Bacon had with rhetoric work their way down into a more systematised reaction against Renaissance rhetoricism. This took shape in the formation of the Royal Society in the second half of the seventeenth century.

The members of the Royal Society, in their efforts to set the perimeters and formalize the agenda of the arts and knowledge itself, draw heavily upon the conclusions reached by Bacon. Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* deserves special attention, because his extensive attack on rhetoric not only draws its inspiration from the general change in intellectual climate during the period, but it bears marked resemblance to an equally important and exhaustive assault on Sidney's *Arcadia* over a century later, which will be discussed shortly.

Sprat begins his summary of the goals and aspirations of the Royal Society by first identifying the errors committed by previous generations of thinkers. These were chiefly of the same order Bacon classified as the incorrect diversion of

¹⁵ Richard Foster Jones, "Science and Criticism in the Neo-Classical Age of English Literature", in R. F. Jones, et al. (eds.) *The Seventeenth Century: Studies in the History of English Thought and Literature from Bacon to Pope*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951, p. 42.

intellectual energy away from the inquiry into nature. Sprat describes the scholastics as

men of extraordinary strength of mind: they had a great quickness of imagination, and subtilty of distinguishing: they very well understood the consequence of propositions: their natural endowments were excellent: their industry comendable: But they lighted on a wrong path at first, and wanted matter to contrive: and so, like the Indians, onely express'd a wonderful Artifice, in the ordering of the same Feathers into a thousand varieties of Figures.¹⁶

Sprat enlarges upon the difference between rhetoric's 'thousand varieties of figures' and the correct path toward truth by defining the Royal Society positively against the failings of its French counterpart, the Academie Francaise. He asserts that the Royal Society has far outstripped its precursor, but begs the reader to acknowledge their greater ambitions despite his own lack of ability to speak in their behalf. His defense of his plain style of writing is however, yet a sharper condemnation of the highly rhetorical style of writing.

I have onely this to allege in my excuse; that as they undertook the advancement of the Elegance of Speech, so it became their History, to have some resemblance to their enterprize: Whereas the intention of ours, being not the Artifice of Words, but a bare knowledge of things; my fault may be esteem'd the less, that I have written of Philosophers, without any ornament of Eloquence.¹⁷

By juxtaposing the 'bare knowledge of things' and the 'artifice of words,' Sprat creates an unbridgeable dichotomy between rhetoric and knowledge, and between figurative language and real language. Such is the message of the

¹⁶ Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, Cope, Jackson I. and Jones, Harold Whitmore, (eds.), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1959, pp. 15-16.

¹⁷ T. Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 40.

following articulation of the Royal Society's official agenda.

Their purpose is, in short, to make faithful Records, of all the Works of Nature... to restore the Truths, that have lain neglected: to push on those, which are already known, to more various uses: and to make the way more passable, to what remains unreveal'd. This is the compass of their Design. And to accomplish this, they have indeavor'd to separate the knowledge of Nature, from the colours of Rhetorick, the devices of Fancy, or the delightful deceit of Fables.¹⁸

Not only does the Royal Society aim to separate what is rhetorical from what is 'real,' Sprat envisages the group as undoing many of the mischiefs wrought by the duplicity of language itself:

To the Royal Society it will be at any time almost as acceptable, to be confuted, as to discover: seeing, by this means, they will accomplish their main Design:... and so the Truth will be obtain'd between them: which may be as much promoted by the contentions of hands, and eyes; as it is commonly injur'd by those of Tongues.¹⁹

This valorization of the information received from the eyes and hands, versus the conjecture of the tongue, is merely the reformulation of Bacon's own demand to rely on experiential knowledge.

Sprat's attack on rhetoric is thus a natural extension of Baconian philosophy, and represents a formalised rejection of the power of Renaissance rhetoricism. I will quote one passage from the *History of the Royal Society* at length in summary, for it encapsulates the vehemence of this rejection of rhetoric.

Eloquence ought to be banish'd out of all civil Societies, as a thing fatal to Peace and good Manners. To this opinion I should wholly incline; if I did not find, that it is a Weapon, which may

¹⁸ T. Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, pp. 61-2.

¹⁹ T. Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 100.

be as easily procur'd by bad men, as good: and that, if these onely should cast it away, and those retain it; the naked Innocence of vertue, would be upon all occasions expos'd to the armed Malice of the wicked. This is the chief reason, that should now keep up the Ornaments of speaking, in any request: since they are so much degenerated from their original usefulness. They were at first, no doubt, an admirable instrument in the hands of Wise Men: when they were onely employ'd to describe Goodness, Honesty, Obedience; in larger, fairer, and more moving Images: to represent Truth, cloth'd with Bodies; and to bring Knowledge back again to our very senses, from whence it was at first deriv'd to our understandings. But now they are generally chang'd to worse uses: They make the Fancy disgust the best things, if they come found, and unadorn'd: they are in open defiance against Reason; professing, not to hold much correspondence with that; but with its Slaves, the Passions: they give the mind a motion too changeable, and bewitching, to consist with right practice. Who can behold, without indignation, how many mists and uncertainties, these specious Tropes and Figures have brought on our Knowledge? How many rewards, which are due to more profitable, and difficult Arts, have been still snatch'd away by the easie vanity of fine speaking? For now I am warm'd with this just Anger, I cannot with-hold my self, from betraying the shallowness of all these seeming Mysteries; upon which, we Writers, we Speakers, look so bigg. And, in few words, I dare say; that of all the Studies of men, nothing may be sooner obtain'd, than this vicious abundance of Phrase, this trick of Metaphors, this volubility of Tongue, which makes so great a noise in the World.²⁰

It is difficult to reconcile this hostility to the 'vicious abundance of phrase' with Brian Vickers' interpretation of Sprat's ultimate validation of rhetoric. Vickers takes offence at what he sees as the common error of all those who identify Bacon and the members of the Royal Society as anti-rhetorical. He claims instead in his *In Defence of Rhetoric* that "Sprat called for the banishment of eloquence from society, but retracted the call on Aristotle's grounds of its usefulness in defending goodness".²¹ This is plainly a case of special pleading which is indefensible when

²⁰ T. Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, pp. 111-12.

²¹ Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, p. 199.

the context of that statement is revealed. Sprat may suggest that rhetoric cannot be entirely banished from society, but this is only because its deleterious power is already operative in the world. Vickers thus gets the emphasis entirely wrong by attempting to posit Sprat's approval of rhetoric's positive potential instead of acknowledging Sprat's grudging allowance of an unfortunately necessary evil. In his study "The Royal Society and English Prose Style" Vickers goes so far as to make the dubious claims that "Sprat is not attacking language but the excesses of language," and that "Sprat is not attacking rhetoric but the abuse of rhetoric".²² Firstly, it is exceedingly difficult to condemn language itself in what is after all a written discourse; and secondly, at that period rhetoric itself is identified with *copia*, or abundance of speech. Vickers is hence textually demonstrably wrong when he concludes, "Indeed, far from attacking rhetoric, he [Sprat] explicitly preserves it in its traditional role as the protector of good against evil".²³ I think one last quotation from Sprat himself can answer any doubts about his stance on rhetoric. Sprat affirms that the Royal Society

have... been most rigourous in putting in execution, the onely Remedy, that can be found for this [linguistic] extravagance: and that has been, a constant Resolution, to reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver'd so many things, almost in equal number of words. They have

²² Brian Vickers, "The Royal Society and English Prose Style" in Thomas F. Wright (ed.), *Rhetoric and the Pursuit of Truth: Language Change in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1985, pp. 6-7.

²³ B. Vickers, "The Royal Society and English Prose Style", p. 7.

extracted from all their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness: bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness, as they can: and preferring the language of Artizans, Countrymen, and Merchants, before that of Wits, or Scholars.²⁴

The language of wits and scholars that Sprat denigrates includes, of course, rhetoric.

Rhetorical treatises themselves during and following this period divulge the same uneasiness with the philosophical implications of rhetoric's divergence from normative, 'truthful' language. Joseph Priestly's *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* written in 1777 underscores this concern when the author juxtaposes rhetorical language against plain language. His definition of the latter reveals the assumption that non-figurative language holds the potential to effect the same sort of one-to-one correspondence between word and thing that Sprat earnestly enjoined.

In plain unadorned style every thing is called by its proper name, no more words are used than are apparently sufficient to express the sense, and the form and order of every part of the sentence are such as exactly express the real state of mind of him that uses it.²⁵

Likewise, John Lawson in his 1758 text *Lectures Concerning Oratory*, remarks that the disregard of rhetoric among his contemporaries is due to their preference for that which is rational versus that which is rhetorical. "Reason is more exercised than Invention. Attached to what is solid, we neglect Ornament".²⁶ Lawson defends rhetoric (he is after all

²⁴ T. Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 113.

²⁵ Joseph Priestly, *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* [1777], Menston: Scolar Press, 1968, p. 75.

²⁶ John Lawson, *Lectures Concerning Oratory* [1758], Menston: Scolar Press, 1969, p. 4.

a rhetorician himself) by praising a figurative language which is not copious but a "strong, pure, and masculine Stile".²⁷ His redefining of rhetoric in this way makes the art more amenable to the historically specific claims of decorum. He writes of Swift, for instance, "Swift appears to have approached nearer to uncorrupt Antiquity and Nature; easy in his Language, pure, simple, unaffected," a mode of discourse that Bacon himself would applaud.²⁸ Lawson's shifting of emphasis from amplification to simplicity is thus a symptom of the eighteenth-century's hostility to highly figurative language. Lawson writes,

In all which Particulars, the Orator is restrained to much narrower Limits. He must confine himself to Truth, at least to the strictest Probability; must be exceedingly sparing in Digressions; his Transitions should be usually nice, and almost imperceptible; his Comparisons tend only to illustrate; he should rarely venture into Allegory; his Metaphors should not be frequent, seldom bold; Hyperboles are very dangerous to him; Descriptions should be short, and introduced only where they seem necessary; his whole Stile should be pure, clear, modest in its Ornaments, removed if possible from all Appearance of Art, and seeming to flow naturally from the Occasion.²⁹

Thomas Gibbons' *Rhetoric; Or a View of Its Principal Tropes and Figures* of 1767 reiterates Lawson's concern with the restriction of rhetorical language to the bare minimum of necessity. Gibbons works upon the well-known metaphor of language as the dress of thought by likening rhetoric to the seasoning of food, and suggests that it is best to rely upon

²⁷ J. Lawson, *Lectures Concerning Oratory*, p. 78. The 'masculine' quality that Lawson attributes to his version of good rhetoric is an interesting example of the link between rhetoric and gender that will be the subject of later discussion.

²⁸ J. Lawson, *Lectures Concerning Oratory*, p. 79.

²⁹ J. Lawson, *Lectures Concerning Oratory*, pp. 195-6.

the plain, solid staple of non-figurative language. He writes,

I believe an hungry stomach would not choose to make a meal upon fine sauces and delicious sweetmeats, without any substantial food; and an hearer of taste will as little approve of a discourse that has no reason nor argument in it, but is crowded from beginning to end with rhetorical Tropes and Figures.³⁰

Gibbons then quotes a passage which endorses his own views on rhetorical excesses; "Metaphors were designed to render our language pleasant, but not for common constant use; and if you will always be infusing them into your compositions, they will no longer be natural, but monstrous".³¹ Gibbons develops his metaphor of rhetoric as a prudent seasoning of thought, as well as his depiction of the possible superfluity of rhetoric, when he asserts,

an injudicious multitude of Tropes, instead of enlightening and enlivening, in which consists their great service, cloud and obscure, and it may be sometimes even what I might call strangle our meaning, and therefore they ought to be discreetly used, and rather sparingly sprinkled, than superfluously lavished upon our discourses.³²

Gibbons' language concerning the negative potential of rhetoric actually to bury or obscure meaning grows stronger still. He advises stylists, "Let us avoid all filthy and impure Tropes," as they are an affront to a "chaste mind".³³ Lastly, he repeats Lawson's depiction of the proper rhetorical style as strict and masculine. "Our Tropes," he claims, "should be bold and manly, free and natural, without

³⁰ Thomas Gibbons, *Rhetoric; or a View of its Principal Tropes and Figures* [1767], Menston: Scolar Press, 1969, p. 4.

³¹ T. Gibbons, *Rhetoric: or a View of its Principal Tropes and Figures*, p. 5.

³² T. Gibbons, *Rhetoric: or a View of its Principal Tropes and Figures*, pp. 6-7.

³³ T. Gibbons, *Rhetoric: or a View of its Principal Tropes and Figures*, p. 17.

being stiffened by affectation subtilised by a puerile and trifling fancy".³⁴

Thus, it is clear that the advent of the scientific method inspired a change in the reception and conception of rhetoric in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Bacon's injunction to employ natural, non-figurative language is explicitly adopted by Sprat and the Royal Society, no matter what Vickers says on the subject, and we find even the rhetoricians around in the period feel it necessary to alter the terms in which they conduct their discussions of what good rhetoric is. It is thus not surprising that during the eighteenth century Sidney's *Arcadia* is all but forgotten by most of the day's rhetoricians. This is especially remarkable, given the importance the *Arcadia* had held for rhetorical handbooks in the Renaissance. Fraunce of course named his treatise *The Arcadian Rhetoric* after Sidney's work; Hoskins' *Directions for Speech and Style* uses Sidney as a prime English example of eloquence; and the *Arcadia* receives frequent mention in both Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence* and Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*. Yet, as I have said, rhetorical handbooks of the seventeenth and eighteenth

³⁴ T. Gibbons, *Rhetoric: or a View of its Principle Tropes and Figures*, p. 13. By employing terms such as "filthy" and "impure" to describe rhetorical tropes, Gibbons' remarks, like those of Lawson above, seem to touch upon underlying associations between rhetoric and gender. Gibbons not only responds to the correlation between *copia* or excessive rhetoricality with femininity, but he specifically appears to affirm the association of *copia* with errant or uncontrollable femininity as embodied in the figure of the loose or fallen woman. Patricia Parker's *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Power* is specially interesting in this context, where the author explores the Renaissance notion of "a feminine speech potentially out of control" (P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Power*, London: Methuen, 1987, p. 27). The subject will be further explored in Chapter V.

centuries deny Sidney's brand of rhetoricism its previous exemplarity. In fact, he is to all intents and purposes non-existent for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rhetoricians. I call attention to this fact for the simple reason that I see the *Arcadia's* copious rhetoricality as one of its most essential features, and the philosophical and aesthetic renunciation of that rhetoricality is responsible for the *Arcadia's* dramatic decline in popularity, both for rhetoricians and for literary artists.

It is only in these terms that we can explain the efforts of Mrs. Stanley, who sought to produce an edition of the *Arcadia* in the early eighteenth century that was more acceptable to current norms. This edition was an attempt at paraphrasing the *Arcadia*, keeping the plot, which Mrs. Stanley saw as ethically laudable, but removing much of the heavy rhetorical dress. Dennis Kay in his introductory article to *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism* remarks that Mrs. Stanley's product in its reduction of the *Arcadia's* "metaphoric component" is "as bland as it is literal," and draws attention to two passages in particular, which in their translation, have been entirely stripped of their rhetorical power.³⁵ I will cite one of them now, for it is a particularly Sidneian piece of rhetoricism, and will be commented on in greater detail in the next chapter. This passage is the description of Kalander's house, which is an extensive utilisation of several key rhetorical figures for Sidney. Here is a part of the description: it was

³⁵ Dennis Kay (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 31.

a great house as might well show Kalandar knew that provision is the foundation of hospitality, and thrift the fuel of magnificence. The house itself was built of fair and strong stone, not affecting so much any extraordinary kind of fineness as an honourable representing of firm stateliness; the lights, doors, and stairs rather directed to the use of the guest than to the eye of the artificer, and yet, as the one chiefly heeded, so the other not neglected; each place without curiosity and homely without loathsomeness... all more lasting than beautiful (but that a consideration of the exceeding lastingness made the eye believe it was exceeding beautiful).³⁶

Mrs. Stanley writes the same passage in the following manner: "the appearance of it [the house] spoke the judgement of the Master: the Situation seem'd form'd for Health, Convenience, and Delight: the Building Magnificent and Great: and every Thing about it bore an Air of Hospitality".³⁷ This de-rhetoricised Sidney bears little resemblance to the original, for its altered diction and style undoes much of Sidney's deliberately exhaustive descriptiveness.

3

Romanticism and Rhetoric

The repudiation and re-evaluation of rhetoric in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thus translates into a repudiation and re-evaluation of the *Arcadia* in the same period, and for the same reasons. Mrs. Stanley's paraphrased *Arcadia* and both Lawson's and Gibbons' redefinition of the 'masculine' style of rhetoric spring from the same (Baconian) desire for non-figurative, concise, accurate, and 'truthful' prose style. This call for linguistic simplicity evolves

³⁶ *New Arcadia*, p. 12.

³⁷ Mrs. Stanley, *Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia Moderniz'd by Mrs. Stanley* [1725], p. 8.

logically into later Romantic claims about language. In the last part of the eighteenth century Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* begins to figure the nineteenth century's objections to rhetoric, and provides the context of Hazlitt's famous barrage against the *Arcadia*.

Blair advises his students of rhetoric first and most importantly to follow nature. He asserts that figurative language is only beautiful when tropes manifest themselves spontaneously, "they must rise of their own accord; they must flow from a mind warmed by the object which it seeks to describe; we should never interrupt the course of thought to cast about for Figures".³⁸ Blair suggests that only certain naturally gifted individuals may use rhetoric effectively, and applies the term 'genius,' a key Romantic notion, to these people: "without a genius for Figurative language none should attempt it. Imagination is a power not to be acquired; it must be derived from nature".³⁹ The idea of genius immediately implies the value of originality, in essence the antithesis of the memorization of given *topoi*. Certainly, Blair's opinion that one cannot be taught the masterful command of rhetoric contradicts previous pedagogical practices regarding the rigorous rhetorical instruction of young boys. Blair acknowledges the antithetical relationship between *memoria* and originality when he states, "Slavish Imitation depresses Genius, or rather betrays the want of it".⁴⁰ Furthermore, Blair interestingly grounds his

³⁸ Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* 1783, 2 vols., Reprinted with an Introduction by H. F. Harding, London: Carbondale and London, 1965, pp. 2-3.

³⁹ H. Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* [1783], p. 6.

⁴⁰ H. Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, p. 469.

understanding of the historically evolved conception of language in terms of the gradual replacement of the spoken word with the written word. He consigns *copia* to the specific historical moment before the advent of the printing press, and describes the new (eighteenth-century) style of written language as opposed to it. "A book that is to be read, requires one sort of style;... we look for correctness, precision, all redundancies pruned, all repetitions avoided, language completely polished," while "Speaking admits a more easy copious Style".⁴¹ Blair's evocation of nature and genius as the guiding forces behind the successful rhetorician thus provides the focal point for the Romantic rejection of rhetoric, and Hazlitt's condemnation of Sidney's *Arcadia*.

Virginia Woolf's judgement of the *Arcadia* quoted earlier is but a reformulation of common opinion on the work, previously and most influentially articulated by Hazlitt. Hazlitt prefaces his commentary on the *Arcadia* by describing the purpose and subject of Sidney's genre of poetry, notably in purely Romantic terms; the poet

should embody a sentiment and every shade of a sentiment, as it varies with time and place and humour, with the extravagance or lightness of a momentary impression, and should, when lengthened out into a series, form a history of the wayward moods of the poet's mind.⁴²

By locating the poet's persona and its disclosure at the centre of poetry, Hazlitt displaces the role of the

⁴¹ H. Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, p. 471. Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982) provides an in-depth investigation of the question raised by Blair concerning the historical replacement of the spoken word by the written word.

⁴² William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (vol. 6) P.P. Howe, (ed.), London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1931, p. 302.

rhetorician or the poet as one who persuades others to uphold certain exterior truths. In other words, with the emphasis shifted to the quality of the poet's sensibility as the subject of poetic discourse, there is a corresponding decline in the epideictic or didactic role of poetry and oratory. Wordsworth echoes Hazlitt's concern with the sensibility of the poet in his *Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads*, when he reflects that a poet is

a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with a more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind... he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.⁴³

Given that poetry is but the expression of one person's thoughts and feelings, it follows that the relationship of the poet to his audience assumes a much less hierarchical, authoritative structure. If the poet is but a "man speaking to men", as Wordsworth would have it, the importance of persuading a well-defined audience is consequently diminished. Thus Wordsworth asserts, "it will be the wish of the poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes,-- nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs".⁴⁴ By confounding or conflating the roles of poet and the

⁴³ William Wordsworth, "Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*" in *Critical Theory Since Plato*, H. Adams, (ed.), New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971, p. 437.

⁴⁴ W. Wordsworth, "Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*", p. 438.

persons described, Wordsworth does away with the notion that the poet enjoys a special position of authority vis-a-vis his audience. This idea is key for the Romantic preference for the 'common' language of everyday life. That the subject and diction of poetry should cohere to the norms of the common man precludes the conventional association of poetic discourse with the elevated style of rhetoric. Wordsworth concludes that

the dramatic parts of composition are defective, in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature, and are colored by a diction of the poet's own, whether peculiar to him as an individual poet or belonging simply to poets in general; to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their compositions being in meter, it is expected will employ a certain language.⁴⁵

Wordsworth hence urges poets instead to

choose incidents from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as [is] possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of the imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect.⁴⁶

To do so is to effect the closest approximation of language and experience, for "in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language".⁴⁷

All these demands Wordsworth makes of poetry find their way into Hazlitt's judgement of Sidney, for it is exactly the above Romantic negations of rhetoricism that form the

⁴⁵ W. Wordsworth, "Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*", p. 439.

⁴⁶ W. Wordsworth, "Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*", p. 434.

⁴⁷ W. Wordsworth, "Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*", p. 434.

backbone of the *Arcadia's* unpopularity in the nineteenth century. Hazlitt makes the same observation about the historical decline of the oral method of composition that Blair identifies, and adds in the same vein as Wordsworth that the present historical moment demands a more spontaneous expression of the poet's sentiments. Hazlitt comments,

We have lost the art of reading, or the privilege of writing, voluminously... Learning no longer weaves the interminable page with patient drudgery, nor ignorance pores over it with implicit faith. As authors multiply in number, books diminish in size; we cannot now, as formerly, swallow libraries whole in a single folio... We skim the cream of prose without any trouble; we get at the quintessence of poetry without loss of time.⁴⁸

The historical death of voluminous reading and writing loosely correlates to the historical demise of the intimate relationship between an author and his audience. Hazlitt continues,

At the time that Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* was written, those middle men, the critics, were not known. The author and reader came into immediate contact, and seemed never to tire of each other's company. We are more fastidious and dissipated: the effeminacy of modern taste would, I am afraid, shrink back affrighted at the formidable sight of this once popular work, which is about as long (*horresco referens!*) as all Walter Scott's novels put together".⁴⁹

Hazlitt here reworks Wordsworth's own dictates about how the poet should redefine his relationship to his readers by seeking a complete conflation of his experiences with theirs. Similar to positing a collapsing of the poet and reader as Wordsworth does, Hazlitt's comments suggest a new formal relationship between the two parties that undoes the former Renaissance structure of addresser to addressee. In other

⁴⁸ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 319.

⁴⁹ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), pp. 319-20.

words, Hazlitt rephrases Wordsworth's destruction of the distinction between author and audience by claiming that the *Arcadia's* embodiment of the happy formal arrangement between the two no longer holds with modern tastes. John Stuart Mill reinforces this distinction between rhetoric's advocacy of a formal relationship of addresser to addressee and the Romantic poet's dissolving of the gap or distance between the two parties. In his essay "What is Poetry" Mill claims that

Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or uttering forth of feeling. But if we may be excused the seeming affectation of the antithesis, we should say that eloquence is *heard*, poetry is *overheard*. Eloquence supposes an audience; the peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener.⁵⁰

The *Arcadia's* unfashionable voluminousness or copiousness as well as its outmoded presentation of an authoritative voice that addresses its audience constitute two rhetorical features of Sidney's work that are responsible for the disfavour it finds with Romantic critics like Hazlitt. Hazlitt elaborates on the *Arcadia's* shortcomings by delineating the author's 'unnatural' penchant for the essentially rhetorical values of *enargia* and *copia*. I will quote the passage at length, for it encapsulates the entire range of Romantic objections to Sidney's highly rhetorical work. The *Arcadia*, he argues, is

one of the greatest monuments of the abuse of intellectual power on record. It puts one in mind of the court dresses and preposterous fashions of the time which are grown obsolete and disgusting. It is not romantic, but scholastic; not poetry, but casuistry; not nature, but art, and the worst sort of art, which thinks it can do better than nature. Of the number of fine things that are constantly passing through the author's mind, there is hardly one that he has not contrived to spoil, and to

⁵⁰ In P. Dixon, *Rhetoric*, p. 68.

spoil purposely and maliciously, in order to aggrandize our idea of himself. Out of five hundred folio pages, there are hardly, I conceive, half a dozen sentences expressed simply and directly, with the sincere desire to convey the image implied, and without a systematic interpolation of the wit, learning, ingenuity, wisdom and everlasting impertinence of the writer, so as to disguise the object, instead of displaying it in its true colours and real proportions. Every page is 'with centric and eccentric scribbled o'er;' his Muse is tattooed and painted out like an Indian goddess. He writes a court-hand, with flourishes like a schoolmaster; his figures are wrought in chain-stitch. All his thoughts are forced and painful births, and may be said to be delivered by the Caesarian operation. At last, they become distorted and ricketty in themselves; and before they have been cramped and twisted and swaddled into lifelessness and deformity. Imagine a writer to have great natural talents, great powers of memory and invention, an eye for nature, a knowledge of the passions, much learning and equal industry; but that he is so full of a consciousness of all this, and so determined to make the reader conscious of it at every step, that he becomes a complete intellectual coxcomb or nearly so;-- that he never lets a casual observation pass without perplexing it with an endless, running commentary, that he never states a feeling without so many circumambages, without so many interlineations and parenthetical remarks on all that can be said for it, and anticipations of all that can be said against it, and that he never mentions a fact without giving so many circumstances and conjuring up so many things that it is like or not like, that you lose the main clue of the story in its infinite ramifications and intersections; and we may form some faint idea of the Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*, which is spun with great labour out of the author's brains, and hangs like a huge cobweb over the face of nature!⁵¹

When this passage is broken down into its component parts, it is obvious that Hazlitt creates several dichotomies in which the characteristics of the *Arcadia* are juxtaposed against his period's aesthetic standards. On the one hand, Hazlitt valorizes the understanding of nature or things in themselves, and adds to this the poet's unselfconscious expression of his feelings and responses to nature, these

⁵¹ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 320.

being stock Romantic qualifications for great poetry. At the same time, he characterises Sidney's work as fundamentally opposed to these values. Sidney's intellect, he correctly surmises, is constantly imposing itself between nature and his perception of natural phenomena, despite what Sidney himself claims in Sonnet 1 of *Astrophel and Stella*. In other words, there can be no 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' for Sidney when his art is the self-conscious and deliberate imposition of the poet's mind on to nature. This is the source of Hazlitt's indignation at Sidney's art which 'thinks it can do better than nature,' and leads Hazlitt to remark that Sidney "must officiously and gratuitously interpose between you and the subject as the Cicerone of Nature".⁵² Moreover, Sidney's conscious re-working of nature into a Golden World of art is followed by the author's inability to leave unexpressed that which he is capable of articulating. That is, the *Arcadia's* exhaustiveness of description is yet another symptom of the author's rhetorical impulse toward *copia*, the antithesis of Hazlitt's preference for the simple and direct expression of the object "in its true colours and real proportions." Thus Hazlitt employs the three key metaphors above with which to describe and condemn Sidney's rhetoricism: the tattooed Muse, the Caesarian birth of thoughts, and the cobweb over the face of nature.⁵³ The first represents the unnecessary and disfiguring artifice of

⁵² W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 321.

⁵³ It is interesting to note that in the dedication to the Countess of Pembroke, Sidney himself refers to the *Arcadia* as a "spider's web" that might "be thought fitter to be swept away than worn to any other purpose". This assertion is however generally taken as sprezzatura. These three metaphors employed by Hazlitt are nonetheless revealing in respect to what will be shown as Sidney's 'femininity' of style.

Sidney's work; the second expresses the unnatural, forced and unspontaneous delivery of the author's 'many fine thoughts'; and the third symbolises the *Arcadia* as a complex but superficial overlay on to the essential being of nature. Hazlitt more specifically pinpoints Sidney's greatest defect in his rhetoricality when he laments his "continual uncalled-for interruptions, analysing, dissecting, disjointing, murdering every thing, and reading a pragmatistical, self-sufficient lecture over the dead body of nature".⁵⁴ Sidney's tendency to dissect and analyse every aspect of nature follows from and is a facet of the rhetorical habit of *divisio*. Hazlitt then explicitly cites the *Arcadia*'s rhetoricality as its major drawback, claiming "the quaint and pedantic style here objected to was not however the natural growth of untutored fancy, but an artificial excrescence transferred from logic and rhetoric to poetry".⁵⁵ Hazlitt continues his attack on Arcadian rhetoric by citing the famous passage describing Pyrocles shipwrecked at sea, and concludes that "If the original sin of alliteration, antithesis, and metaphysical conceit could be weeded out of this passage, there is hardly a more heroic one to be found in prose or poetry".⁵⁶ One last instance where Hazlitt specifically locates his dislike of the *Arcadia* in its rhetorical excesses is found when he concludes that the *Arcadia* "contains 4000 far-fetched similes,... numberless alliterations, puns, questions, and commands, and other figures of rhetoric," so that it proves its "author was one

⁵⁴ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), pp. 321-2.

⁵⁵ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 322.

⁵⁶ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 324.

of the ablest men and worst writers of the age of Elizabeth,"⁵⁷ like William Shakespeare.

Sidney's nineteenth-century editor Hain Friswell implicitly condones much of Hazlitt's criticisms of the *Arcadia* even while attempting to portray the work as a positive addition to any nineteenth-century library. In his introductory biographical essay to the edition of 1867, Friswell immediately justifies the reading of the *Arcadia* in the negative context of its incidental, historical value. He claims, "Sidney was not loved and admired for his 'Arcadia' so much as the book was loved and admired for its author".⁵⁸ By concentrating on Sidney's personal excellence during his lifetime, Friswell obviates the necessity to account for the *Arcadia's* more intrinsic problems which are responsible for its unpopularity during the period. He constantly perpetuates the myth of Sidney as the ideal courtier to promote our reading of his work, and only nominally credits the *Arcadia* with any intrinsic value. "Sidney's truest and best romance lay in his life;" he attests, "but yet there is and will ever be something very charming in his romance".⁵⁹ Friswell then attempts to classify this something 'charming' and valuable in the work itself as aspects of Sidney's Romantic tendencies. That is, Friswell attempts to paint Sidney as a Romantic, and actually negates, albeit in an unconvincing fashion, Hazlitt's charges against the *Arcadia's* outmoded rhetoricality. Those characteristics of the *Arcadia* which

⁵⁷ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 325.

⁵⁸ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, Hain Friwell (ed.), London: Sampson, Low and Company, 1867, p. xi.

⁵⁹ P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), p. xviii.

Friswell applauds are precisely Sidney's stylistic preferences which Hazlitt views as Sidney's "quaint and pedantic style." Friswell, however, does not describe the *Arcadia's* style as pedantic, but natural. He claims of the *Arcadia*, "it certainly contains elements of success, since, . . . it possess some of the most natural and charming, some of the purest and most elevated conceptions, ever put forward".⁶⁰ The diction employed evoking naturalness and purity is repeated in Friswell's general comments about Sidney's stature as a virtuous man. He writes,

Sidney's sentiments, always naturally and delicately expressed, are very pure and noble; and if to read Fielding after modern novels is, as has been well said, like walking over a breezy heath after being confined to the unwholesome air of a stifling chamber, then the atmosphere of *Arcadia* must be very rarefied and pure indeed; such breezes as would blow only round the higher belts of Parnassus.⁶¹

Friswell continues to express his understanding of Sidney's concise, clear, and essentially anti-rhetorical style by asserting that Sidney "does not waste words, . . . but goes at once to the heart of the matter," and that the *Arcadia* possesses "an innate manliness",⁶² suggestive of the masculine brand of writing described by Lawson and Gibbons.

Sidney's well-meaning editor nonetheless acknowledges to a degree the famous Arcadian rhetorical excesses he has been largely denying. He significantly attributes these defects not to Sidney, however, but to Sidney's considerably less-skilled scribe, his sister the Countess of Pembroke.

⁶⁰ P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), p. xvii.

⁶¹ P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), p. xxii.

⁶² P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), p. xviii.

It is... known that the Countess of Pembroke added to the episodes, adventures, and strange turns,... Hence there is to be met with an Arcadian undergrowth which needs much careful pruning; and this undertaken, with needful compassion, will leave the reader all that he desires of Sidney's own.⁶³

He continues the metaphor of the *Arcadia* as a beautiful garden that has been grown over through neglect, or rather through the efforts of Sidney's inept sister, by asserting that "Growing like certain fanciful parasites upon forest trees, on the books of the 'Arcadia' are certain eclogues of laboriously-written and fantastical poetry, some in Latin measures, against which Walpole was right to protest".⁶⁴ The Arcadian undergrowths along with their parasites have been kindly removed by the editor "without any loss, it is believed, to the romance," and also trimmed away are "long episodes of no possible use to the book, which we think have been supplied by other hands than Sidney's".⁶⁵ Hence, Friswell assures us that "Tedious excrescences have thus been removed, but it is to be hoped with judgement, so that the reader gets all that we think is Sidney's".⁶⁶

Friswell's attempt at redeeming the *Arcadia* after Hazlitt's attack thus unwittingly admits the validity of most of Hazlitt's criticisms. Friswell and Hazlitt share the belief that poetry should be pure, clear, concise, natural,

⁶³ P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), p. xxvii-xxix.

⁶⁴ P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), p. xxix.

⁶⁵ P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), p. xxix.

⁶⁶ P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), p. xxix.

and as a result, anti-rhetorical.⁶⁷ Whereas Hazlitt correctly gauges the *Arcadia's* heavy rhetoricality and ultimately holds it to task for its style, Friswell attempts rather weakly to deny this aspect of Sidney's work. He attributes to him a directness and linearity of style clearly out of keeping with the large majority of the *Arcadia*, and focuses instead on the purity and naturalness of Sidney's personal sentiments where naturalness is hard to find in his writing.

4

Rhetoric in the Twentieth Century

At the start of this chapter I remarked that Sidney's critical reception has come full circle in that he is once again a focus of attention of work on the Renaissance. We must note, however, that this recognition does not rest on the same sort of special pleading that Friswell opts for above. Rather, modern critical theory with its various formalisms has become better adapted to deal with the *Arcadia's* overt concern with the structuring of language. That is, the twentieth century's greater concern with semantics and the whole area of semiotics is entirely in keeping with rhetoric's preoccupations with successful linguistic communication as exemplified in the *Arcadia*. A large portion of the twentieth century's greater openness to the linguistic norms of the *Arcadia* is in particular attributable to late the twentieth-century doubts about the

⁶⁷ It should nonetheless be noted that despite their common opposition to rhetoric, Wordsworth, Hazlitt and Bacon have very different reasons guiding their objections.

attributable to late the twentieth-century doubts about the possibility of a 'normative' non-figurative language.

Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor* is one such questioning of the notion of paraphrasable meaning. Ricoeur argues for the metaphoricality of all language firstly by referring to Aristotle's definition of metaphor, and noting that Aristotle must employ figurative language, i.e. metaphor, to explain or describe metaphor; "the word *metaphor* itself is metaphorical because it is borrowed from an order other than that of language," that is, from the order of movement.⁶⁸ Thus, it is impossible to discuss metaphor non-metaphorically, and by extension, it becomes impossible to discuss non-figurative language without employing figurative language in some way. Ricoeur then shifts his attention to Aristotle's definition of metaphor as an act of deviation from or substitution for a putatively normative term or expression. He points out, however, that Aristotle's term *allogros* implies not only the negative notion of deviation, but also the positive one of *borrowing*, where the "displaced meaning comes from somewhere else; it is always possible to specify the metaphor's place of origin, or of borrowing".⁶⁹ Metaphor, in other words, is not simply the circumvention of that which is legitimate or proper, but it is, according to Ricoeur, the replacement of a more commonplace usage with a locatable, equally 'legitimate' source or meaning. Ricoeur's overall point is that there is a possible ambiguity within

⁶⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, R. Szerny, (trans.), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 17.

⁶⁹ P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, p. 19.

Aristotle's definition of metaphor as to the trope's signalling of a departure from accurate, legitimate, or proper meaning. He concludes, in fact, that "the opposition between figurative and proper meaning, omnipresent in the later tradition, is not implied here [in Aristotle's work]".⁷⁰

This conclusion is a necessary one for Ricoeur's ultimate apprehension of the creative dimension of metaphorical language. Given that metaphor is a borrowing from other orders, it is logical then to ask whether this borrowing is simply accomplished to fill some semantic void. In other words, is metaphor merely resorted to when there exists no ready, non-figurative expression for a given idea or thought? Consequently, then, is metaphor's value thus purely ornamental given its possible disjunction from normative meaning? To respond to this problem, Ricoeur calls attention to Aristotle's own depiction of metaphor's positive producing of new meanings. He insists that for Aristotle any substitution of one signification for another itself creates another meaning; "metaphor destroys an order only to invent a new one".⁷¹ The notion is an important one, for it dispels many traditional reservations about rhetoric's uselessness, its frivolity and its wastefulness articulated by Bacon, Sprat and others mentioned earlier. Instead of its sheer ornamental value, then, Ricoeur's discussion of metaphor highlights figurative language's potential to convey new information through its unique structure, and thus to change

⁷⁰ P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, p. 20.

⁷¹ P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, p. 22.

our cognitive horizon. "One must say," writes Ricoeur, "that metaphor bears information because it 're-describes' reality".⁷² It must be noted that Ricoeur is hardly a unique voice in the twentieth-century in making such a remark. Indeed, he mentions Max Black's work which affirms this redefinition of metaphor as "an epistemological concept and a poetic concept,... which is completely opposed to any reduction of metaphor to a mere 'ornament'".⁷³

Ricoeur then turns to Aristotle's conception of *mimesis* to confirm the creative epistemological potential of figurative language. *Mimesis* is divested of its conventional association with the simple copying of nature and thus with the ensuing accusations of naturalistic tendencies when, as Ricoeur points out, *mimesis* is defined as an act of *poiesis*. Ricoeur writes, "If *mimesis* involves an initial reference to reality, this reference signifies nothing other than the very rule of nature over all production. But the creative dimension is inseparable from this referential movement. *Mimesis* is *poiesis*, and *poiesis* is *mimesis*".⁷⁴ By binding the two acts together, Ricoeur effectively posits a cognitive creativity inherent in all metaphorical language and thus overturns previous criticisms of figurative language's disjunction from valuable, useful, or 'real' language.

Again, Ricoeur is by no means a lone voice in the discussion of the metaphoricality of all language. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson contribute to Ricoeur's findings in

⁷² P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, p. 22.

⁷³ P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, p. 22.

⁷⁴ P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, p. 39.

their *Metaphors We Live By* which largely seeks to establish the metaphorical structure of thought itself. The authors go about doing this by providing an exhaustive array of examples of how even the most basic and fundamental of concepts owes something to metaphorical structuring. One such typical example is our notion of time which, Lakoff and Johnson point out, is structured in terms of spatial directions, i.e. the future is *ahead* while the past is *behind*.⁷⁵ Time is also endowed with a metaphorical physicality so that it can be quantified or used up, depicted in the following types of statement: "I have loads of time on my hands;" or "I'm running out of time".⁷⁶ This is but one instance among many, all of which lead the authors to conclude that metaphor, irony, metonymy and other rhetorical devices are ordinary exploitations of the basic processes of verbal communication, and not codified departures from the normative use of language. As a consequence, Lakoff and Johnson come to the same conclusion on the subject of paraphrasable meaning that Cicero reached; i.e., any reformulation of a given expression will connote a different meaning. They write,

We conceptualize sentences metaphorically in spatial terms, with elements of linguistic form bearing spatial properties (like length) and relations (like closeness). Therefore, the spatial metaphors inherent in our conceptual system... will automatically structure relationships between form and content.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 41.

⁷⁶ G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 66.

⁷⁷ G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 136.

This particular statement of Lakoff and Johnson's is based on a spatial metaphor they have previously disclosed concerning the notion that closeness implies strength of effect. That is, the less spatial distance between the key components of a sentence, the greater the effect of those components. The only way to grasp Lakoff and Johnson's point is through the

While Lakoff and Johnson take their ideas about language's metaphoricality to a relativistic extreme,⁷⁸ it is not necessary to do so, and indeed, John Bender and David Wellbery's *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice* proves that an awareness of language's figurativeness need not end in a meaningless relativism. Instead, several contributions to this collection of essays seek to discuss rhetorical strategies as continuous with normal linguistic practice without sacrificing even the concept of a 'meaning' that these statements aim to convey. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's essay "Rhetoric and Relevance" in particular is engaged in working out the relationship of metaphor to a paraphrasable meaning. Their solution to the problem is to posit the objective meaning of a statement as a theoretical limit that is real but is nonetheless never realised. They write,

Instead of viewing the fully coded communication of a well-defined paraphrasable meaning as the norm,

examples they offer: "Sam killed Harry" and "Sam caused Harry to die" generally convey the same information, but the first phrasing acquires greater impact because of the closeness of the key elements. One could argue that 'killed' is simply a stronger word, but other examples the authors provide seem to back up their overall argument.

⁷⁸ Lakoff and Johnson's conclusion, that "metaphors... are conceptual in nature. They are among our principle vehicles for understanding. And they play a central role in the construction of social and political reality," (G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 159) articulates their prime concern with what they see as the spurious notion of objective or normative language. It is also, however, the point of departure for their larger claims about the relativity of truth itself; somehow, the authors correlate the Western preoccupation with the idea of a truthful non-figurative language with a false consciousness that wrongly assumes the existence of objective truths themselves. While it is possible to question the possibility of a non-metaphorical language, there is no logical imperative to agree with Lakoff and Johnson when they assert, "We do not believe that there is such a thing as objective... truth" (G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 159).

we treat it as a theoretical limit that is never encountered. Instead of treating a mix of explicitness and implicitness, or paraphrasable and unparaphrasable effects, as a departure from the norm, we regard it as normal, ordinary communication.⁷⁹

To this they add a similar caveat about the nature of communication to Ricoeur's earlier one which decrees that meaning is contributed not only in the addition of new information, but in any reformulation or re-articulation of a thought which necessarily will alter our conception of that thought. "We define communication," they write,

not as a process by which a meaning in the communicator's head is duplicated in the addressee's, but as a more or less controlled modification by the communicator of the audience's mental landscape-- or 'cognitive environment' as we call it-- achieved in an intentional and overt way.⁸⁰

While Sperber and Wilson acknowledge a paraphrasable meaning as extant and operative insofar as it governs the phrasing of any thought, the main point remains the same: rhetorical language cannot be viewed as a departure from or perversion of a normative meaning, but must be recognised as a normal mode of communication itself.

Clearly, then, the move toward formalism and structuralism in twentieth-century theory has occasioned a regeneration of interest in the function of rhetoric in our communicative processes. The Ciceronian denial of the possibility of a paraphrasable meaning has been resurrected over the centuries and most recently by critics such as Ricoeur, which has as a result validated Sidney's own intricate and self-conscious linguistic play. Interestingly,

⁷⁹ Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, "Rhetoric and Relevance", in *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice*, p. 144.

⁸⁰ D. Sperber and D. Wilson, "Rhetoric and Relevance", p. 144.

the Quintilian model of language and rhetoric has also been rehearsed by late twentieth-century critics in a manner that equally revitalises interest in writers such as Sidney. Quintilian's notion of language as the dress of thought has clear correlations with deconstructive attitudes toward semiotics. As was mentioned earlier, Quintilian held that words were only ever signs that sought to approximate any given idea; they had, in other words, no fundamental or fixed relationship to thoughts or ideas. Such a suggestion fits comfortably with deconstructivist edicts. One need only turn to the most basic of deconstructivist conceptualisations of the sign and the signified to have this confirmed.⁸¹

On yet another level, deconstruction and post-structuralism in general validates the metaphoricality of all language. The assertion of the 'decentered subject', which is the logical consequence of the absence of the transcendental signified, must coincide with a reevaluation of the possibility of understanding statements as anything other than linguistic structures, given the fact that the

⁸¹ Take for example Ferdinand de Saussure's schematic representation of the semantic unit as Sign: Sign = Signifier/ Signified, which is the foundation for later deconstructive work. Saussure describes the word as a 'signifier' which attempts to convey a meaning or 'signified', but which has no essential, fixed relationship to it. In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure proclaims that the "link between the signal [or signifier] and signification [the signified] is arbitrary. Since we are treating a sign as the combination in which a signal is associated with a signification, we can express this more simply as: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary*. There is no internal connexion, for example, between the idea 'sister' and the French sequence of sounds s-ø-r which acts as its signal" (Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye (eds.), Roy Harris (trans.), London: Duckworth, 1983, p. 67). Derrida reworks Saussure's suppositions to suggest that the determined 'signified' is itself a naive, logocentric construct.

destruction of a contained subject precludes the ability for that subject to express itself wholly, precisely, and conclusively. In other words, the deconstructed self cannot claim access to a non-figurative mode of discourse when it has itself been declared a construct. Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play" gives rise to the concept of the decentered self through the author's ongoing critique of the very ideas of structure and centre. Derrida asserts that

It would be easy enough to show that the concept of structure and even the word 'structure' itself are as old as the *episteme*-- that is to say, as old as Western Science and Western Philosophy-- and that their roots thrust deep into the soil of ordinary language, into whose deepest recesses the *episteme* plunges in order to gather them up and to make them part of itself in a metaphorical displacement. Nevertheless, up to the event which I wish to mark out and define, structure-- or rather the structure of structure-- although it has always been at work, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by the process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure-- one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure-- but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure. By orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the center of a structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form. And even today the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself.⁸²

Derrida is illustrating here that the notion of structure, which has pervaded Western thought from its inception, has within it a central problematic: the notion of structure is itself structured around the idea of a centre, which while it orders the structure nonetheless remains distinct from or outside of it. In other words, the structure is ordered by

⁸² Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", in *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass (trans.), London: Routledge, 1978, pp. 278.

the centre, which is still not part of the structure, so the structure must have yet another centre. Thus, as Derrida remarks, the "center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere".⁸³ This may appear a sophistic and obscure distinction, but what Derrida is getting at is not unlike Ricoeur's comment about the metaphoricality of the definition of metaphor itself. The notion of the centre which structures structure itself is impossible to locate. "The concept of centered structure," Derrida suggests, "although it represents coherence itself,... is contradictorily coherent".⁸⁴ Consequently, "the entire history of the concept of structure... must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center."⁸⁵ Derrida's critique, then, of the concept of a centered, structured self necessarily brings down with it the very possibility of a centered and fixed meaning which may be accessed through any manipulation of language, figurative or not.

Derrida's later work goes on to affirm this last notion in more explicit terms. In "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" Derrida not only posits the absence of any literal or non-figurative truth and the consequent metaphoricality of all language, but suggests that philosophy itself is metaphorical. Derrida quotes Nietzsche first to illustrate the point of the metaphorical construction of

⁸³ J. Derrida, *Structure, Sign and Play*", p. 279.

⁸⁴ J. Derrida, *Structure, Sign and Play*", p. 279.

⁸⁵ J. Derrida, *Structure, Sign and Play*", p. 279.

truth:

'What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymics, anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage, seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions which have become powerless to affect the senses'.⁸⁶

Derrida argues that death and creation of effective and viable metaphors is an integral part of thinking itself. "The traditional opposition between living and dead metaphors"

Derrida writes,

corresponds to the difference between effective and extinct metaphors. Above all, the movement of metaphorization (origin and then erasure of the metaphor, transition from the proper sensory meaning to the proper spiritual meaning by means of the detour of figures) is nothing other than a movement of idealization.⁸⁷

Ultimately, Derrida reinscribes the all-pervasive function of metaphor within philosophy and virtually collapses the two domains:

Classical rhetoric... cannot dominate, being enmeshed within it, the mass out of which the philosophical text takes shape. Metaphor is less in the philosophical text (and in the rhetorical text coordinated with it) than the philosophical text is within metaphor.⁸⁸

Thus, Derridean deconstruction reaffirms the value of metaphor (and thus of figurative language) as indispensable to meaning itself. In this way, developments in late twentieth century critical thinking have gone a long way to reversing the negative stigma attached to language which announces itself as figuratively constructed.

⁸⁶ Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" in *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass (trans.), London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982, p. 217.

⁸⁷ J. Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy", pp. 225-6.

⁸⁸ J. Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy", p. 258.

There are, however, two problems with this type of modernist approach to rhetoric when it comes to understanding rhetoricality of the genre of Sidney's. The first is that the term 'rhetoric' as it is commonly used today in modern theory does not necessarily correspond with the word as it applied to the study learned by Renaissance rhetoricians. So many times the word seems merely to connote a concern with the structuring of language; thus, Paul de Man's *The Rhetoric of Temporality* for instance has little to do with the brand of exact systematisation of figures that Renaissance rhetoricians like Puttenham and Peacham dedicated so much of their efforts to illuminating and manipulating. In their introductory article to *The Ends of Rhetoric*, Bender and Wellbery remark upon this fact when they claim

Rhetoric today is neither a unified doctrine nor a coherent set of discursive practices. Rather, it is a transdisciplinary field of practice and intellectual concern, a field that draws on conceptual resources of a radically heterogeneous nature and does not assume the stable shape of a system or method of education.⁸⁹

Bender and Wellbery identify the greatest difference between Renaissance and modern rhetoric as the former's subjection to rigorous regulation and the latter's freedom from any set of standards. While rhetoric in the Renaissance, and indeed rhetoric until the twentieth century, was strictly "a rule-governed domain whose procedures themselves were delimited by the institutions that organised interaction and domination in traditional European society," modern rhetoricality by contrast "is bound to no specific set of institutions".⁹⁰ It

⁸⁹ J. Bender and D. Wellbery *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice*, p. 25.

⁹⁰ J. Bender and D. Wellbery *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice*, p. 25.

is the modernist negation of a metadiscourse that renders impossible any reference to a regulative set of standards, for in the modern period, rhetoric "becomes instead something like the condition of our existence".⁹¹

I will not here argue either the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of the modernist approach to rhetoric; I wish merely to point out, as do Bender and Wellbery, the discrepancy between the Renaissance usage of the term and the modern one I have been discussing in this section, as it is employed by Ricoeur and Lakoff and Johnson for instance. This also brings me to the second problem of dealing with Sidney's type of rhetoricism within the modern revival of interest in rhetoric, which is a direct consequence of the first. When rhetoric is stripped of its strict rules and regulations, it also sheds its didactic and epideictic purposiveness. That is to say, when there is no framework governing why certain figures are used in different situations to different effects, it is no longer possible to envisage rhetoric as having the same sort of potential to manipulate an audience in the sense that it did have for Sidney.

This is perhaps the most important reason to reject rigid formalist or structuralist analyses of the *Arcadias*, such as Michael McCanles' recent book *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*.⁹² This book does make reference to the central facet of Sidney's work, its rhetoricality, but it does so within a structuralist framework which cannot account for Sidney's over-riding didactic purposes. McCanles is left

⁹¹ J. Bender and D. Wellbery *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice*, p. 25.

⁹² Michael McCanles, *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1989.

restricting his discussion of the function of certain figures in Sidney simply to the author's penchant for figures like *contentio* which in their structure seem to suggest a locking of opposites into a type of paralysis or stalemate. As will become more evident in the following chapters, Sidney's vigorous ethical system disclaims the moral vacuum that accompanies the sort of paralysis suggested by McCanles' study.

In conclusion, then, the twentieth-century's revival of interest in rhetoric has been a mixed blessing to the understanding of Sidney's *Arcadia*. It has benefited the work in that a heightened awareness of the structuring of language is absolutely essential to coming to grips with the incredible stylistic complexity of both the *New* and the *Old Arcadias*. In doing so, however, it is necessary to look at such linguistic gymnastics as having some positive purpose; that is, one must avoid interpreting Sidney's rhetoric as an indication of his unfortunate inability to adopt a more clear, concise, and 'proper' style of writing. Another way in which Sidney has significantly benefited from the modernist revival of interest in rhetoric is the subsequent removal of the negative stigma applied to complex sentence structure, as this is now seen as a legitimate indication of language's overall slipperiness. On the other hand, there is the real danger of reducing Sidney's rhetoricism to an inauthentic concern with the difficulty of saying *anything* given language's splipperiness and elusiveness. As we shall see, this is precisely the problem of some recent studies of Sidney, most notably Michael McCanles' *The Text of Sidney's*

Arcadian World. Interesting as modern rhetoric is in its illumination of the impossibility of stating things without ambiguity, the ensuing linguistic and moral paralysis would not have been conceded by Sidney. That is, it is thus equally important in recognising the centrality of rhetoric for Sidney always to keep in mind *his* sixteenth-century vision of it, which is firstly and most importantly an art which instructs while it delights.

Chapter II

RHETORIC IN BOOK I OF THE *OLD AND NEW ARCADIAS*

Any close analysis of the function of classical rhetoric in Renaissance literature will recognise that in the Elizabethan period, the way one expressed oneself was the clearest indication of one's intended meaning. That is to say, the way in which words were ordered and structured was seen as a direct representation of any specific idea; the *verba* of a statement betrayed its *res*. As a result, the Renaissance gave priority to the study of oratory over any other discipline. It is difficult to over-emphasise the power and influence rhetoric exercised in the period, given the abundance of evidence offered by historians investigating Renaissance pedagogical practices. Their conclusions reveal the overwhelming centrality of rhetoric to academic curricula at all levels. Once such literary historian, Brian Vickers, remarks in his authoritative study *In Defence of Rhetoric*, that "the humanists' justification for making rhetoric central to their work was that eloquence (the skilful manipulation of rhetorical devices) was both natural and social".¹ In this one statement, Vickers makes two important points: first, that the Renaissance implicitly categorised rhetorical mastery as a fundamental aspect of human behaviour, a 'natural' or elemental facet of human artistic expression; and second, that such rhetoricism was geared to a specific social purpose.

¹ Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 273.

No Renaissance artist more genuinely reflects this attitude toward eloquence than Philip Sidney. It is surprising, then, that so little critical commentary on Sidney has focused on his rhetoricism, and that what commentary has been made has neglected to consider the second aspect of Vickers' observation. Nancy Lindheim's *The Structures of Sidney's Arcadia*² is just such a study which, despite its correct recognition of the importance rhetorical structures assume in the *Arcadia*, nevertheless fails to explore the social implications of the poet's rhetoricism. What is lacking in Lindheim's work, a more historically grounded exploration of rhetoric's role in literature, would not only add much to her judgments about Sidney's rhetorical turn of mind, but would alter her final conclusions about the *Arcadia*'s didactic purposes. This chapter will in effect be a detailed examination of not only the specific devices Sidney uses in the first book of both the *Old* and *New Arcadias*, but more significantly what the use of those devices suggests about Sidney's social and political philosophy.

1

The Defence of Poetry and Rhetorical Theory

Before we can begin discussing Sidney's rhetoricism, it is most helpful first to turn to his *Defence of Poetry* where he most succinctly delineates his poetics and consequently his attitude toward rhetoric, since he defines poetry as virtually synonymous with rhetoric or the study of oratory.

² Nancy Lindheim, *The Structures of Sidney's Arcadia*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.

In his discourse on poetry, Sidney finds himself "straying from Poetrie, to Oratory," but excuses himself in that "both have such an affinitie in their wordish consideration" that such an error is entirely natural.³ We may thus extend what Sidney says about the nature of poetry to that of rhetoric, as he finds the two disciplines so closely bound up together.⁴ This intimate correlation between oratory and poetry is something handed down to Sidney from Cicero, whom Sidney himself names in the *Defence* as "most worthy to be imitated".⁵ Cicero remarks in the first book of *De Oratore* that "the poet is a very near kinsman of the orator" and that "in the use of many sorts of ornament he is his ally and almost his counterpart."⁶ What is more important, however, is the fact that Sidney's indebtedness to Cicero goes beyond this likening of rhetorical skills to poetic ones; Cicero and Sidney share a common vision of the mechanics of oratory, and by association, of poetry. I will therefore bring to light the common lines of thought in the two men in order to

³ Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry*, J. Van Dorsten (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966. p. 72. Hereinafter *A Defence of Poetry*.

⁴ Charles Baldwin comments on this apparent elision of poetry and rhetoric in Sidney and suggests that it is quite a well-practiced one in the period. He writes, "The reminiscences of rhetoric [in the *Defence of Poetry*] are not accidental. Sidney makes the usual Renaissance transfer to poetry of the traditional threefold function of oratory: to teach, to delight, to move" (C. Baldwin, *Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice: Classicism in the Rhetoric and Poetic of Italy, France, and England 1400-1600*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1939, p. 44). Baldwin's remarks are particularly interesting insofar as the connection between rhetoric and poetry hinges on the shared concern with didactic responsibilities, a key facet of our reading of Sidney's *Arcadias*.

⁵ *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 70.

⁶ Cicero. *De Oratore*, (Books I and II), E.W. Sutton and H. Rackham (trans.), London: Loeb Classical Library, 1942, p. 51.

reveal how much Cicero's influence on Sidney extends to his key notion of the orator (or for our purposes, the poet) as the exemplarist of virtue to his audience.

The basic starting point in *De Oratore's* discussion of successful oratory is rhetoric's dependence on knowledge and learning. Cicero remarks very early in the work that

no man can be an orator complete in all points of merit, who has not attained a knowledge of all important subjects and arts. For it is from knowledge that oratory must derive its beauty and fullness, and unless there is such knowledge, well-grasped and comprehended by the speaker, there must be something empty and almost childish in the utterance.⁷

Cicero furthermore specifies that such knowledge must encompass not only the sphere of all arts, but must include a deep understanding of the human psyche itself:

the speaker will not be able to achieve what he wants by his words, unless he has gained profound insight into the characters of men, and the whole range of human nature, and those motives whereby our souls are spurred on or turned back.⁸

Here we see how Cicero makes the true and proper use of rhetoric contingent on the highest learning; to deserve his title the orator must not only master the use of particular rhetorical tropes, but must first undertake the project of understanding every dimension of the human spirit. An even more telling proof of the great breadth of purpose rhetoric holds for Cicero is found in the following passage of *De Oratore*:

eloquence is so great a force that it embraces the origin and operation and developments of all things, all the virtues and duties, all the natural principles governing the morals and minds and life of mankind, and also determines their customs and laws and rights, and controls the government of the state, and expresses

⁷ Cicero. *De Oratore*, p. 17.

⁸ Cicero. *De Oratore*, p. 41.

everything that concerns whatever topic in a graceful and flowing style.⁹

Sidney closely follows his predecessor on this point. He goes as far as to label poetry (whose close connection to oratory we have already established) as the primary step in the educational process of mankind; it is "the first light-giver to ignorance, and the first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled [men] to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges."¹⁰ Poetry and rhetoric, then, are the foundations of knowledge itself; they are the basis of all other forms of learning, and thus in this context they reach far beyond the simple understanding of linguistic forms.

The most important point of intersection between Cicero and Sidney, however, is the fact that the two also stipulate that the ideal poet must carry his concern with knowledge into the realm of action. In other words, no learning is autonomous for both Sidney and Cicero; real knowledge only exists through its manifestation in praxis. Sidney writes that learning is

in the knowledge of man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of *well doing* and *not of well knowing only*... So that, the ending end of all earthly learning being virtuous action, those skills that most serve to bring forth that have a most just title to be princes over all the rest (my emphasis).¹¹

This is perhaps the single most important facet of Sidney's poetics, and as it is difficult indeed to over-emphasise this dimension of the *Arcadia*. His basic point of departure is that poetry and thus rhetoric must operate as an inspiration to virtuous and ethical behaviour in the sphere of social interaction; "no learning is so good as that which teacheth

⁹ Cicero. *De Oratore*, pp. 61-2.

¹⁰ Sidney, Sir Philip. *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 18.

¹¹ Sidney, Sir Philip. *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 29.

and moveth to virtue, and... none can both teach and move thereto so much as poetry"¹². *De Oratore's* importance for Sidney is clear here as well. Cicero claims that in its ideal state,

our Oratory [must] be conducted out of this sheltered training-ground at home, *right into action*, into the dust and uproar, into the camp and fighting-line of public debate; she must face putting everything to the proof and test the strength of her talent, and her secluded preparation must be brought forth into the daylight of reality (my emphasis).¹³

Even more succinctly, Cicero asserts that "two careers which are inseparable" are the "men of action" and the orators.¹⁴

What we see here is that Sidney's well-known tenet of poetry's purpose, "to delight and instruct," when traced back to its Ciceronian roots, has more complex connotations. Sidney iterates poetry's link to the *vita activa*, its potential to inspire courage and virtue in its audience, when he claims that it is poets like Ariosto who directly promote valour: "as by him [Ariosto]... learned men took almost their first light of knowledge, so... active men received their first motions of courage".¹⁵ Yet poetry and oratory have a more specific agenda. Cicero expands the notion of the poet/orator who inspires general courage to a picture of the poet as one who, through his skill with words, directs society and illuminates the path towards truth. The orator is one who can

by his eloquence expose to the indignation of fellow-citizens, and restrain by punishment, the crimes and iniquities of the guilty; who also, by the shield of his talent, can deliver innocence from legal penalties; who again can either inspire a lukewarm and erring nation to

¹² Sidney, Sir Philip. *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 52.

¹³ Cicero. *De Oratore*, p. 109.

¹⁴ Cicero. *De Oratore*, p. 47.

¹⁵ Sidney, Sir Philip. *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 56.

a sense of the fitting, or lead them away from their blundering, or kindle their wrath against the wicked, or soothe them when they are excited against good men; who lastly by his eloquence can either arouse or calm, within the souls of men, whatever passion the circumstances and occasion may demand.¹⁶

Sidney's didactic intent is given greater depth when we place it within the context of this Ciceronian base. Not only does Sidney stress the practical dimension of poetry's function, its end being to inspire virtuous action, but we may assume that he also adopts Cicero's image of the rhetor as an exemplar through his eloquence. That is to say, it must be for Sidney as well that it is expressly rhetoric's project to encapsulate ethical dilemmas and to project solutions to those dilemmas through the manipulation of verbal structures.¹⁷

This conclusion is given validity by commentators on Renaissance rhetoric who stress the importance of the persuasive function of oratory in the period. Gerald Mohrmann saliently remarks that rhetoric in the Renaissance was thought of as a tool to do service to the community. He writes,

this aspect of the rhetorical inheritance enabled humanists to resolve the apparent conflict between the life of contemplation and that of active citizenship. The conflict and its resolution have essentially rhetorical dimensions because Cicero's conception must operate when interpersonal and other social relationships have an important place in analyses.¹⁸

¹⁶ Cicero. *De Oratore*, p. 143.

¹⁷ It seems specially appropriate to extend the gist of Cicero's comments to Sidney's poetics as Cicero is one of the most frequently cited sources in the *Defence of Poetry*, and certainly Sidney makes clear his total advocacy of Ciceronian tenets.

¹⁸ Gerald P. Mohrmann, "Oratorical Delivery and Other Problems in Current Scholarship on English Renaissance Rhetoric", in James J. Murphy (ed.), *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, p. 61.

A large portion of rhetoric's significance for Sidney's age, then, resides in its ability to bridge the gap between thought and deed through persuasion. Charles Trinkaus elaborates on this point, and emphasises the connection I make above between specific rhetorical tropes and their concrete results in action. Trinkaus writes,

Committed by their art to generating intention and action in their audience and public, Renaissance humanists attempted to become more precise in determining what kind of language and what kind of reasoning would produce meaningful persuasion, that is, a state of mind that would lead to the corresponding appropriate action.¹⁹

The arguments proposed by Trinkaus and Mohrmann thus support the notion that Sidney conducts his rhetorical strategy along these specifically didactic lines, the overriding concern of which is the active life of his readership. Trinkaus' and Mohrmann's remarks are specially applicable to Sidney as we've established Sidney's Ciceronian credentials and his standpoint as a humanist is widely recognised.

Arthur Kinney offers another suggestive comment on the role of rhetoric in the Renaissance. His notion of rhetoric's system of 'triangulation,' actively inviting the reader to supply his or her judgement of any proposed idea, makes the *Arcadia* seem even more of an exercise in encouraging ethical behaviour in its audience through rhetoric. Kinney points out, as Mohrmann and Trinkaus do, that "Sidney's apology rests, as his understanding of a successful and worthwhile poetics does, on its rhetorical

¹⁹ Charles Trinkaus, "The Question of Truth in Renaissance Rhetoric and Anthropology", in *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, p. 209.

ability to move men to particular virtuous actions".²⁰ But Kinney goes further to assert that, for Sidney, it is solely the response of his readers witnessed in their actions which determines the significance of the *Arcadia*; "Sidney contends, meaning rests in the complicit judgement of the reader... he scorns readers who are content to believe everything literally-- readers content not to judge".²¹ Rhetoric consequently provokes the audience's imposition of ethical judgments by its very nature, it necessitates a

response in the reconciliation by the reader in his well knowing; an act of triangulation through which the reader gives the final significance on the inherent disputation of any text using images-- on any act of poetic fiction.²²

Kinney's observations are particularly fruitful in revealing Sidney's political vision. He is correct in assuming that Sidney's use of rhetoric advances "different arguments so as

²⁰ Arthur F. Kinney, "Rhetoric and Fiction in Elizabethan England", in *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, p. 391.

²¹ A. F. Kinney, "Rhetoric and Fiction in Elizabethan England", p. 391. Kinney's remarks may be read in the context of Sidney's notorious proposition in the *Defence of Poetry* that the "poet, ... nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth" (Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 52). Underlining Sidney's refutation of Plato's condemnation of poetry is Sidney's faith in the reader's positive role vis-à-vis the text. That is, poetry does not deceive its audience because it does not present itself as authoritative fact; it therefore assumes the reader will not passively digest the poetic word as irrefutable truth, but will bring some other, more dynamic and participatory, understanding to it. Kinney's remarks, then, are not completely opposed to tenets held by reader-response critics in general. Kinney's insistence on the reader's active role in creating the meaning of the text is very much in keeping with reader-response theories of literary understanding. This point, already touched upon in our discussion of the history of Sidney's reception, will be further elaborated on in Chapter V in respect to the issue of gendered reader responses.

²² A. F. Kinney, "Rhetoric and Fiction in Elizabethan England", p. 391.

to force upon the reader an act of triangulation".²³ In using this technique, Sidney imposes on us a recognition of our obligation as readers to distinguish between the degrees of appropriateness in various possible courses of behaviour. The formal structure of the *Arcadia*, then, presents different political and ethical standpoints for us to adopt, and actually provides us with the ideal choices to be made by the very nature of the specific rhetorical tropes and figures the author employs to present them.

2

Book I of the *Old Arcadia*

We may now turn to the *Arcadia* to see how Sidney utilises rhetoric to accomplish the goals outlined for it above. I will first argue that Book I of the *Old Arcadia* presents us with an ideal world, in both the court and the pastoral topos, which undergoes a fall in the collapse of the natural order. It is this blurring of proper social and ethical hierarchies which precipitates the tragedy, and it is only a constant reassertion of these orders which allows the comic ending and reconciliation of Book V to come about. In the next section, I will explore how Book I of the *New Arcadia* starts from a more problematic point of departure. We will see that it is Sidney's growing awareness of the intricacies of his concern with social and political ethics which necessitates the more complex rhetorical strategy of his revision.

²³ A. F. Kinney, "Rhetoric and Fiction in Elizabethan England", p. 391.

I will now demonstrate how in Book I of the *Old Arcadia* the destruction of the ideal social hierarchy, as well as all the difficulties that ensue, is testified to by the rhetorical structure. In both the form and the content of this Book there is a shift from a balance between various elements to a more difficult and problematic situation where differing possibilities are presented in such a way that the reader is made to reposition them in their proper order. In other words, we shall see how the ethical dilemmas facing the characters of the *Arcadia* are occasioned by a splintering of interests, and how these conflicts are not only mirrored in the rhetorical strategy, but may be seen as a direct result of it.

The first description of Arcadia we are given in the *Old Arcadia* illustrates the point I make above. Sidney employs forms of *distributio* to represent the harmony found in Basilius' kingdom, before his choice to abandon his proper social role brings chaos and uncertainty to the realm.

Arcadia among all the provinces of Greece was ever had in singular reputation, partly for the sweetness of the air and other natural benefits, but principally for the moderate and well tempered minds of the people who... were the only people which, as by their justice and providence gave neither cause nor hope to their neighbours to annoy them, so they were not stirred with false pride to trouble others' quiet, thinking it a small reward for the wasting of their own lives in ravaging that their posterity should long after say they had done so (my emphasis).²⁴

Here the stasis and order of Arcadia itself are proven through the coalescence of the "sweetness of the air" and the "moderate and well tempered minds of the people;" it is both

²⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 4. Hereinafter, *Old Arcadia*.

by the Arcadians' "justice" and "providence" that they maintain peace with their neighbours. The figure of *distributio*, as it is defined by John Hoskins in his *Directions for Speech and Style*, is a method of dividing a general statement into its component parts, so as to discuss more precisely its meaning. It is used to amplify the importance of a statement through anatomization, and can reveal an underlying concord between different aspects of a general idea; "this amplification hath in it more credibility and instruction, for it makes instances of that which universally cannot be conceived without confusion and dullness",²⁵ Hoskins writes. Sidney's use of *distributio* here thus provides a complete and detailed picture of Arcadia's original peace and prosperity as it is realised through various, dovetailing aspects of civic life. Basilius' original competence as a ruler is likewise demonstrated by Sidney's deployment of *distributio*. He is "a prince of sufficient skill to govern so quiet a country" as Arcadia because "the good minds of the former princes had set down good laws, and the well bringing up of the people did serve as a most sure bond to keep them" (my emphasis).²⁶

In marked contrast to this harmonising of different linguistic components as contiguous parts of one whole, articulated and emphasised in the use of *distributio*, is the description of Basilius' confrontation with the oracle and his ensuing fall from grace as a worthy ruler. Here the dominant rhetorical figure employed is a type of *correctio*.

²⁵ John Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style* [c.1599], Hoyt H. Hudson (ed.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935, p. 24.

²⁶ *Old Arcadia*, p. 4.

Again according to Hoskins, *correctio* is a figure employed when "having used a word of sufficient force, yet pretending a greater vehemence of meaning, refuseth it and supplies the place with a greater".²⁷ Puttenham characterises this figure as one in which "we seem to call in our word again and to put in another fitter for the purpose".²⁸ Both these definitions imply that the use of *correctio* signifies a clarifying of distinctions between two possible meanings. Lee Sonnino in his *Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric* describes *correctio* as a way "to call in a word spoken and replace it by one more suitable," once more suggesting its potential to draw useful differences.²⁹ It is therefore puzzling why Nancy Lindheim in her *Structures of Sidney's Arcadia* conducts her discussion of Sidney's use of *correctio* by illustrating how this trope leads ultimately toward a collapsing of differences. She asserts that "Sidney often uses... *correctio* to overturn distinctions initially set up as an either-or choice;" it aims to "set up and overturn distinctions as a strategy of argument".³⁰ I would suggest that examining Sidney's use of *correctio* in the light of his contemporary commentators on rhetoric, quoted above, would lead to a different conclusion. Rather than finally superseding distinctions, then, *correctio* works toward entrenching them further.

²⁷ J. Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, p. 29.

²⁸ Puttenham, in *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, Lee A. Sonnino (ed.), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, p. 65.

²⁹ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 253.

³⁰ N. Lindheim, *The Structures of Sidney's Arcadia*, p. 37.

It is in this sense that the description of Basilius' decision to consult the oracle polarizes his erring behaviour and the actions of the ideal prince. He seeks to know the future

not so much stirred with the care for his country and children as with the vanity which possesseth many who, making a perpetual mansion of this poor baiting place of man's life, are desirous to know the certainty of things to come, wherein there is nothing so certain as our continual uncertainty (my emphasis).³¹

It is as a result of the contrast between Basilius' vanity to know the future and the "care for his country and children" that he ought to exhibit that his dilemma arises. To emphasise the growing tension springing from the blurring of correct ethical modes of action, Sidney also uses *adnominatio* in the above quotation. *Adnominatio*, according to Susenbrotus, is when the "same word is repeated a number of times in different cases."³² Susenbrotus says of *adnominatio* that it serves "to move the mind with a consideration of the high affinity and concord of the matter."³³ This repetition leads the reader to refine upon a definition of a word or thought, and can therefore work toward establishing the best understanding of a given concept. Sidney's utilization of *adnominatio* in discussing Basilius' consultation with the oracle thus imports the impropriety of such a course of action. Basilius occasions the confusion of 'certainty' and 'uncertainty' by neglecting his correct social role as a prince. Sidney suggests in the use of *adnominatio*, then, that such discord can be alleviated through a return to acting

³¹ *Old Arcadia*, pp. 4-5.

³² L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 24.

³³ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 24.

with certainty, despite the fact that such a term is subordinated to its opposite.

Another similar use of *adnominatio* to underline differences in ways of acting and to reassert the primacy of one means over another is found in the confusion Basilus ultimately feels after hearing the oracle he has foolishly sought out. The message he receives

as in part it was more obscure than he could understand, so did the whole bear such manifest threatenings, that his amazement was greater than his fore curiosity-- both passions proceeding out of one weakness; in vain to know that of which in vain thou shalt be sorry after thou hast known it (my emphasis).³⁴

Here again we see how the conflation of appropriate and inappropriate methods of behaviour brings about and is demonstrated through the rhetoric. Basilus' original vanity in wishing to know the future effects the opposite end; vanity leads toward a different sort of vanity.

Let us now turn to several key situations and episodes in the first book of the *Old Arcadia* to explore further how the re-establishment of proper distinctions between differing possibilities is carried out via rhetorical figurations. I will continue to define the principles of certain rhetorical devices as they arise in the narrative. The first important passage that expresses Sidney's concern with correct political action is of course Philanax's debate with Basilus. Here we will examine the way in which Philanax, the ideal political adviser, presents the options for action facing the prince. This is done in such a way that he suggests in his use of rhetoric the modes of behaviour most appropriate to a conscientious ruler.

³⁴ *Old Arcadia*, p. 5.

The chief rhetorical figures employed by Philanax in the debate are *correctio* and *expeditio*. We have already discussed how *correctio* plays off oppositions and ultimately works toward a subordination of one term to the other. We will now examine how *expeditio* accomplishes much the same thing. Philanax's speech, then, elaborates on this motif of juxtaposing different sorts of action and prioritizing one over the other for its ethical superiority. First, Philanax describes exemplary existence in this world in terms of a duality:

wisdom and virtue be the only destinies appointed to man to follow, wherein one ought to place all his knowledge, since they be such guides as cannot fail which, besides their inward comfort, do make a man see so direct a way of proceeding as prosperity must necessarily ensue.³⁵

Wisdom and virtue are the correct norms to follow since they have two positive effects which harmonize and work to one end; one's inward comfort is a beneficial aspect of acting conscientiously in the world. Philanax accordingly continues the discussion by describing the pursuit of virtue as making correct choices between two linked possibilities. Acting wisely is a choice made in the face of its antithesis, immorality;

although the wickedness of the world should oppress it, yet it could not be said that evil happened to him who should fall accompanied by virtue; so that either standing or falling with virtue, a man is never in evil case (my emphasis).³⁶

This use of *expeditio* thus engenders the same effect as *correctio*. The author of *Ad Herennium* identifies *expeditio* as the figure which "when we list the several ways by which something could have been brought about and, dismissing the

³⁵ *Old Arcadia*, p. 6.

³⁶ *Old Arcadia*, p. 6.

rest, leave one open upon which we insist".³⁷ Hoskins defines the term as a form "which, reckoning upon divers parts, destroys all but that one which you mean to rest upon".³⁸

Expeditio, in other words, presents different arguments and then suggests the most valid, or in Sidney's framework, the most ethical one. One last example of this 'either-or' figure of *expeditio* and how it is used in the debate to point out the best course of action among others is found in Philanax's explanation of the folly in seeking to know the future. Basilius' adviser remarks, we know

these kinds of soothsaying sorceries (since the heavens have left us in ourselves sufficient guides) to be nothing but fancies wherein there must *either* be vanity or infallibleness, and so *either* not to be respected or not to be prevented (my emphasis).³⁹

Here we see exactly the way in which this figure clarifies the correct courses of action to be followed in this given situation; Basilius may choose not to heed the oracle, or, more importantly, if he does, he must govern his actions knowing that he is left only with the considerations of his role as a prince to go by.

Philanax's advice is thus articulated in this manner; by using *expeditio* and *correctio* he pictures virtue as situated in a duality of opposing terms and distinguishes between them through reasserting their hierarchical importance. We have just discussed Philanax's use of *expeditio*, now we will examine his employment of *correctio*. In the examples I will draw on, Philanax stresses the importance of a prince's acting ethically in this world in the face of the possible

³⁷ In Sonnino, Lee A. *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 91.

³⁸ J. Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, p. 45.

³⁹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 7.

dangers associated with it. In other words, *correctio* is employed to assert the primacy of the *vita activa* over the *vita contemplativa*.⁴⁰

Philanax first states that Basilius is following an injudicious course in consulting the oracle because "the heavenly powers [are] to be revered and not searched into, and their mercy rather by prayers to be sought than their hidden councils by curiosity" (my emphasis).⁴¹ He is, in effect, correcting Basilius' folly by contrasting the prince's erring ways against the more virtuous plan of action. The use of *correctio* valorizes the strength of faith and prayer over the vanity and futility of a curiosity which leads to no direct good for the society he is entrusted to govern. Another instance of *correctio* used to hold up ethical action in the present over a weak contemplation of possible future disasters is found in the following passage: Philanax questions Basilius,

Why should you deprive yourself of governing your dukedom for fear of losing your dukedom, like one that should kill himself for fear of death? Nay rather, if this oracle [is] to be accounted of, arm up your courage the more against it (my emphasis).⁴²

Here Philanax critiques Basilius' choice to abandon his realm most effectively by first stating what Basilius has decided to do and then overturning that decision, replacing it with an option more fit to the occasion.

⁴⁰ This particular duality underscoring the *Old Arcadia* of the *vita activa* versus the *vita contemplativa* is one of the more thoroughly questioned and subverted dichotomies in the *New Arcadia*. See Chapter V for a discussion of Sidney's own ambiguous position as a philosopher and literary craftsman and an active politician.

⁴¹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 6.

⁴² *Old Arcadia*, p. 7.

One last example of this employment of *correctio* to place the importance of action in the present over contemplation of the unknown future leads directly into a *sententia* which crystallizes one of Sidney's key political tenets. Philanax advises the Duke,

Let your subjects have you in their eyes, let them see the benefits of your justice daily more and more; and so must they needs rather like of present sureties than uncertain changes. Lastly, whether your time call you to live or die, do both like a prince (my emphasis).⁴³

In this one speech of Philanax's, then, the utilization of figures like *expeditio* and *correctio* clearly juxtaposes the value of the *vita activa* and the relative futility of the *vita contemplativa*, forcing the reader to opt in favour of the former; it presents making ethical decisions in this world as choosing between the linked duality of virtue and weakness.

The next passage I wish to focus on is the debate between the heroes Pyrocles and Musidorus which parallels in many ways the one between Philanax and Basilius discussed above. This argument also centres on the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* conflict, although the issue at hand is love and less explicitly political responsibility. Pyrocles' love for Philoclea nevertheless positions him on the side of the contemplative life. He attempts to justify to Musidorus his refusal to engage in the active pursuit of virtue, the bane of his previous experience, by suggesting that time spent in solitary thought is worthwhile in itself. Pyrocles defends himself to his cousin by asserting,

Who knows whether I feed not my mind with higher thoughts? Truly, as I know not all the particularities,

⁴³ *Old Arcadia*, p. 7.

so yet see I the bounds of all those knowledges; but the workings of the mind, I find, much more infinite than can be lead unto by the eye or imagined by any that distract their thoughts without themselves. And in such contemplations, or, as I think, more excellent, I enjoy my solitariness; and my solitariness, perchance, is the nurse of those contemplations.⁴⁴

This praise of the *vita contemplativa* by Pyrocles, as we have seen, goes against what Sidney argues for in his poetics, thought subordinated to praxis. Musidorus prepares to articulate the Sidneian defence of the active life by framing in his mind,

a reply against it [solitary contemplation] in the praise of honourable action (in showing that such a kind of contemplation is but a glorious title to idleness; that in action a man did not only better himself but benefit others; ... and that the mind should best know his own good or evil by practice; which knowledge was the only way to increase the one and correct the other).⁴⁵

In the above quotation we see the utilization of an important figure in the *Arcadia*, *dirimens copulatio*. According to Peacham, *dirimens copulatio* is when

we bring forth one sentence with an exception before it, and immediately join another after it that seemeth greater... increases the signification by placing the meaner first and the worthier last.⁴⁶

Briefly put, this figure is a 'not only, but also' sentence structure which holds up two possibilities as linked, but subordinates the first to the following term. Musidorus' claim, then, that "in action a man did not only better himself, but benefit others," is an assertion whose rhetorical structure establishes the primacy of action in the interest of the community over action guided by individual concerns. Pyrocles' failure to act according to this

⁴⁴ *Old Arcadia*, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁵ *Old Arcadia*, p. 15.

⁴⁶ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 75.

stricture can be seen as a direct cause of his ensuing difficulties. His splintering interests, acting to bring to fruition his personal love for Philoclea and acting in the sole pursuit of the society's good, must be counteracted by recognising the validity of Musidorus' rhetorical prioritization of the communal good; he must re-establish the proper hierarchical importance of different possibilities for action that he must carry out as a prince.

The debate between Pyrocles and Musidorus over the former's failure to act according to the criteria appropriate to his social role is further developed in the same passage. Musidorus continues to use forms of *correctio* and *dirimens copulatio* to juxtapose the erring behaviour of his cousin, now devoted to a personal satisfaction of his love for Philoclea, and his former exemplary behaviour as a prince in the pursuit of virtue. Musidorus beseeches Pyrocles,

See with yourself how fit it will be for you in this your tender youth (born so great a prince, of so rare, *not only* expectation, *but* proof, desired of your old father, and wanted of your native country, now so near your home) to divert your thoughts from the way of goodness ^{to} lose, nay, to abuse your time (my emphasis).⁴⁷

The utilization of *dirimens copulatio* emphasises the significance of Pyrocles' past goodness in its manifestation in praxis, its 'proof,' while the use of *correctio* suggests that the young prince's current love involvement is best characterised as a futile endeavour, an 'abuse' of his time and potential.

One last important rhetorical scheme Musidorus employs in his attempt to reposition for his friend courageous action

⁴⁷ *Old Arcadia*, p. 17.

above the personal satisfaction of love is *contentio*. This figure, for Hoskins, is an "opposition of terms disagreeing... respecting the contrarities of things meant thereby".⁴⁸ Scaliger defines *contentio* as a scheme where the "contrast... is not merely between different words, but the ideas they convey."⁴⁹ *Contentio*, then, is yet another figure Sidney employs to highlight differences between ideas or modes of behaviour. Musidorus tries to clarify for Pyrocles the contrast between erotic or romantic love and valour by suggesting that other impulses have positive, laudatory results while love does not.

Fear breedeth wit; anger is the cradle of courage; joy openeth and enableth the heart; sorrow, as it closeth it, so yet draweth it inward to look to the correcting of itself. And so all of them generally have power towards some good, by the direction of reason. But this bastard love... as the matter it works upon is nothing but a certain base weakness,... as his adjoined companions be unquietness, longings, fond comforts, faint discomforts, hopes, jealousies, ungrounded rages, causeless yieldings; so is the highest end it aspires unto a little pleasure, with much pain before, and a great repentance after.⁵⁰

Not only does Musidorus contrast 'fear' and 'wit,' 'anger' and 'courage,' and so on, but he also juxtaposes all the active, beneficial effects listed above with the nugatory fruits of passionate love. Musidorus himself experiences the same confusion of objectives when he too falls in love, and likewise, the rhetoric of the narrative reflects and tries to overcome this dilemma. After his first encounter with Dametas and the royal family, Pyrocles discovers his friend caught in the state of bewilderment and uncertainty that

⁴⁸ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 61.

⁴⁹ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 60.

⁵⁰ *Old Arcadia*, p. 18.

Musidorus has just castigated him for. Pyrocles spies the figure of a shepherd

with his arms hanging down, going a kind of languishing pace, with his eyes sometimes cast up to heaven as though his fancies strave to mount up higher, sometimes thrown down to the ground as if the earth could not bear the burden of his pains.⁵¹

The use of *repetitio* here, "when many clauses have the like beginning,"⁵² serves to crystalise the discrepancy between the different responses engendered in Musidorus by his love for Pamela. The two diametrically opposed emotional states Musidorus is thrown into is shown to be the ambiguous results of his one new directive. The *repetitio*, thus, calls attention to the loss of continuity and clarity in his emotions and actions occasioned by Musidorus' fragmenting and conflicting interests.⁵³

Strikingly similar is Basilius' bewilderment occasioned by his improper and indeed ridiculous love for Cleophila. Basilius' new-found love for the disguised Pyrocles causes him to debate between his past understanding of princely duties and his inappropriate personal longings for Cleophila. Basilius desires to stay behind when the others go on to the pastorals to ponder his dilemma:

the poor old Basilius, now alone,... had a sufficient eclogue in his own head betwixt honour, with the long experience he had had of the world, on the one side, and this new assault of Cleophila's beauty on the other side.⁵⁴

The even balancing of the two clauses, an example of *compar*, leads the reader to compare and contrast their effects. The

⁵¹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 36.

⁵² J. Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, p. 13.

⁵³ We will return to this passage again in Chapter V, where the issue of the 'effeminacy' of love is revalued in the *New Arcadia*.

⁵⁴ *Old Arcadia*, p. 41.

two impulses Basilius experiences we see are of equal strength, as the use of *compar* connotes that "words match each other in rank,"⁵⁵ yet their irreconcilability suggests that they must be chosen between.

The Duke's folly in opting to indulge the less ethically sound impulse perpetuates more uncertainty and deepens his dilemma. Sidney narrates Basilius' further fall from apt political and social behaviour by using a form of *congeries*. *Congeries*, as described by Quintilian, is an "accumulation of words and sentences with the same meaning. Although the climax is not in this case reached by a series of steps it is none the less attained by piling up words".⁵⁶ This notion of *congeries*' piling up of words to accentuate a particular idea is evident in Scaliger's description of the figure, which he sees as one that "heaps things up in order to incite to action".⁵⁷ Puttenham, unlike Quintilian, emphasises *congeries*' comprehension of various disparate elements, but agrees on the effect achieved by the figure. He claims, "we lay on such a load and so go to it by heaps as if we would win the game by multitude of words and speeches, not all of one but of diverse matters and sense".⁵⁸ Basilius' error in choosing his love for Cleophila over his honour, then, is shown as a progressively and cumulatively dangerous one: the Duke's

passion ere long had gotten the absolute masterhood,
bringing with it the show of present pleasure, fortified

⁵⁵ J. Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, p. 38.

⁵⁶ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 56.

⁵⁷ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 57.

⁵⁸ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 57.

with the authority of a prince whose power might easily satisfy his will against the far-fet (though true) reasons of the spirit-- which, in a man not trained in the way of virtue, have but slender working... And so, as all vice is foolish, it wrought in him the more absurd follies.⁵⁹ (my emphasis)

Basiliius' original culpability in confounding the interests of his country with his own personal interest in avoiding the doom predicted by the oracle is compounded by this further diversion from the course of honour; his inappropriate love for Cleophila only engenders 'more absurd follies' in the end.

Let us now recall the rhetorical development of the problematic situations facing the characters so far discussed. We have seen how Basiliius first experiences a discord in the criteria by which he governs his behaviour when his role as a ruler of Arcadia is contrasted against his vanity in wishing to know the future, and his personal weakness in trying to circumvent what the oracle has predicted. Philanax attempts to clarify the necessity of reasserting the correct hierarchical importance of acting as a prince first, and an individual second, by his use of figures such as *correctio* which serve to prioritize the *vita activa* over the *vita contemplativa*. Pyrocles undergoes a similar disarrangement of priorities when his love for Philoclea becomes juxtaposed to his previous pursuit of courage and valour. Again, it is through the rhetoric, skilfully exercised this time by Musidorus, that acting in the interest of the self is subordinated to acting in the interest of the social good. Musidorus himself fails to uphold the hierarchically superior dedication to the communal

⁵⁹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 41.

good when his love for Pamela leads him to abandon his role as a prince for the role of a shepherd. Lastly, we have seen how Basilius further intensifies his dilemma by conflicting his illicit love for Cleophila and his honourable love for his wife Gynecia.

We have yet to discuss the difficulties facing the female characters. These are less overtly politically orientated than those of their male counterparts, but they still address the ethical concerns Sidney has raised in his treatment of Basilius and the two young princes. The case of Gynecia is perhaps the most obviously problematic one. Basilius' wife quickly recognises the disguised Pyrocles as a man, and soon after, falls in love with him. This love for Cleophila, like Basilius' own for the supposed Amazon, brings into conflict Gynecia's social duty to love faithfully her spouse and her personal and illicit longings. Moreover, as we shall see, Gynecia's love for the disguised Pyrocles becomes juxtaposed to her requisite filial love for her daughter Philoclea. Sidney narrates Gynecia's falling in love with Cleophila by using a rhetorical figure very similar to the *congeries* employed to describe Basilius' own ethical error in putting an inappropriate love above his socially sound one. *Gradatio* or *climax* is "a kind of *anadiplosis* (a repetition in the end of the former sentence and beginning of the next) leading by degrees and making the last word a step to further the meaning;" it is, briefly put, a "climbing argument"⁶⁰ akin to *congeries*, but employing a tighter reiteration of words. Puttenham goes as far as to stress that with *climax*,

⁶⁰ J. Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, p. 12.

"one word proceeds double to the first that was spoken,"⁶¹ indicating that the force of the first term gains momentum with each succeeding one. Gynecia observes Pyrocles while he is engaged in fighting off the beasts' attack, and

at the first sight she [Gynecia] had of Cleophila, her heart gave her she was a man thus for some strange cause disguised,... this doubt framed in her a desire to know, and desire to know brought forth shortly such longing to enjoy that it reduced her whole mind to an extreme and unfortunate slavery.⁶²

The rhetoric demonstrates, then, Gynecia's progressive fall from ethically commendable behaviour until her improper love leads to 'an extreme and unfortunate slavery.' Sidney clarifies the conflict occasioned between honour and a dishonourable love by utilising a negative form of *expeditio*. Gynecia neglects her social duty toward husband and family

but for a perfect mark of the triumph of love who could in one moment overthrow the heart of a wise lady, so that neither honour long maintained, nor love of husband and children, could withstand it (my emphasis).⁶³

Here the two considerations which should weigh most upon Gynecia are contrasted against her unethical disregard for family and honour.

Pamela's and Philoclea's dilemma is less fully developed in Book I than their mother's and father's, but it is still significantly worked upon. For the young princesses, an obligation to her state, for the one, and her sex, for the other, is placed into jeopardy due to their growing love for two apparently unacceptable mates. Philoclea, sensing her feelings for Cleophila to be in discord with what one woman

⁶¹ George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesie*, Gladys D. Willcock (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936, p. 163.

⁶² *Old Arcadia*, p. 43.

⁶³ *Old Arcadia*, p. 44.

should normally bear for another, is described in a state of bewilderment which is mirrored in the rhetorical structure of linked antitheses. Philoclea

grew shortly after of all other into worst terms; for taking her [Cleophila] to be such as she professed, desire she did, but she knew not what; and she longed to obtain that whereof she could not imagine the mean, but full of unquiet imaginations rested only unhappy because she knew not her good hap.⁶⁴

Pamela's response toward her attraction to Musidorus is a more explicit debate between one's social responsibility and one's personal longings.

Pamela was the only lady that would needs make open war upon herself, and obtain the victory; for indeed, even now find she did a certain working of a new-come inclination to Dorus. But when she found perfectly in herself whither it must draw her, she did overmaster it with the consideration of his meanness.⁶⁵

The rhetorical structure used to describe Pamela's situation does not display the type of joined antithetical clauses found in the narration of her sister's difficulties; rather, one clause articulating her feelings for Dorus is counteracted and overturned by the following clause stating her responsibility to her position. Temporarily at least, her individual desires are correctly subordinated to her sense of duty.

The attack of the beasts on the princesses is a key episode which crystalises the development in Book I of the main characters' confusion of priorities and modes of behaviour. The ethical difficulties of the princesses discussed above arise primarily from this incident, for it brings to light the worthiness of Pyrocles and Musidorus as possible mates, all the while their disguises make it

⁶⁴ *Old Arcadia*, p. 49.

⁶⁵ *Old Arcadia*, p. 49.

impossible to consider them as such. Similarly, the threat of danger to Pamela and Philoclea serves to contrast the princes' previous role as courageous men who employed their talents solely for the pursuit of valour and their new dedication to satisfying their love interests. The two young princes respond to the assault with an uneven mixture of desire to please and impress their loved ones and an instinctive impulse to act courageously in and for itself. At the approach of the beasts,

there might one have seen at one instant all sorts of passions lively painted out in the young lovers' faces--an extremity of love shining in their eyes; fear for their mistresses; assured hope in their own virtue; anger against the beasts; joy that occasion employed their service; sorrow to see their ladies in agony.⁶⁶

The above passage utilises *distributio* in a far different manner from the *distributio* at the Book's beginning where various terms coalesced. Here, the dissimilarities are sharpened between the two sorts of forces shaping Pyrocles' and Musidorus' actions. Pyrocles' hesitation to reassure Philoclea immediately of her safety from the lion, in addition, further demonstrates how his amorous sentiments have overset his normal standards of behaviour.

Perhaps the most powerful example of how *distributio* is used in this episode to highlight the discord the characters experience is the narration of Philoclea's flight. Pyrocles begins chasing the fleeing princess and is soon followed by Gynecia,

so that it was a new sight fortune had prepared to those woods, to see these three great personages thus run one after the other, each carried away with the violence of an inward evil: the sweet Philoclea, with such fear that she thought she was still in the lion's mouth;

⁶⁶ *Old Arcadia*, p. 42.

Cleophila, with a painful delight she had to see without hope of enjoying; Gynecia, not so much with the love she bare to her best beloved daughter as with a new wonderful passionate love had possessed her heart of the goodly Cleophila.⁶⁷

The disguised Pyrocles' and Gynecia's situations are recognised as particularly problematic in the above quotation, for within the *distributio* Sidney applies *contrapositum* and *correctio* to describe these two characters' emotional states. *Contrapositum*, a favourite Sidneian figure, involves a play on words, linking two opposite terms and, while highlighting their differences, works toward re-establishing the proper hierarchical order of importance between them. Hoskins defines *contrapositum* in the following manner: it is "a composition of contraries, and by both words intimateth the meaning of neither precisely but a moderation and mediocrity of both".⁶⁸ It recalls the necessity of making distinctions in degrees of importance by way of subordinating one term to another: "one contrary is affirmed to be in the other directly by making one the substantive, the other the adjective".⁶⁹ Pyrocles' 'pain' is ineptly subordinated to his 'delight,' while Gynecia wrongly positions her illicit love for Cleophila over her dutiful love for her daughter.

By the end of Book I in the *Old Arcadia*, thus, each of the major characters is involved in some sort of political or ethical dilemma. Basilius first neglects his political responsibility as the ruler of Arcadia for the sake of his self-preservation, then his love for Cleophila jeopardizes his filial responsibility toward his wife. Pyrocles and

⁶⁷ *Old Arcadia*, p. 43.

⁶⁸ J. Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, p. 36.

⁶⁹ Hoskins, John. *Directions for Speech and Style*, p. 36.

Musidorus call into doubt their social duties as princes in the pursuit of courageous action for the sake of their individual loves for the princesses, one forsaking his manhood and the other forsaking his nobility. Pamela and Philoclea are troubled by their acknowledgement of their ethical duty, one toward her social position and the other toward her sex, and their attraction for their unacceptable suitors. Gynecia also hazards her social duty to love her husband for Cleophila's sake. As we have seen, the rhetorical strategy of the Book has largely mirrored the conflicting interests and objectives of the main characters which have occasioned each's particular dilemma. The rhetoric, in other words, has likewise operated by presenting and contrasting different possibilities. Moreover, figures such as *contentio* and *correctio*, when employed by authoritative voices of reason, i.e. Philanax and the still unattached Musidorus, have worked toward a reassertion of proper hierarchies in modes of behaviour. In the next chapter, we shall see how Sidney furthers and develops this rhetorical drive toward reasserting correct ethical and political priorities, and how, thus, the *Arcadia* reveals the author's moral and social philosophy.

3

Book I of the *New Arcadia*

He taught me by word, and best by example, giving
in me so lively an image of virtue as ignorance
could not cast such mist over mine eyes as not to
see and love it...

---Pyrocles, *New Arcadia*.

I have already mentioned above that Sidney's revisions in the *New Arcadia* follow the direction of the original while suggestively expanding upon the problematic nature of acting ethically in the world. This is clear from the beginning of the *New Arcadia*, where the introduction of the characters Strephon and Claius represents more explicitly than in the precursor first how within the pastoral topos society has fallen from its ideal state, and secondly, how these difficulties arise when personal interests again upset the correct order of priorities. We have discussed the opening of the *Old Arcadia*, and have seen that Sidney first provides us with a picture of Arcadian society in its original state of peace and harmony which is mirrored in the rhetorical strategy. The revision, with its generic concerns more obviously geared toward the epic, begins the narration of the dilemma *in medias res*, outside of Arcadia itself. In other words, Sidney throws the reader directly into the crux of the problems facing society, and by focusing our attention on the plight of Strephon and Claius, Sidney starts the narration of the society's fall at the lowest generic level of the pastoral. Strephon and Claius, two shepherds, open Book I with their lamentations concerning their common love Urania. Sidney immediately employs the figures *contrapositum* and *dirimens copulatio*, whose function of presenting distinctions and working toward proper differences in importance we have discussed above, to articulate the problematic nature of being in love while regarding one's social responsibilities. Strephon is described in a state of "a heavy kind of delight," while he regards his companion

Claius as a "friendly rival,"⁷⁰ both uses of *contrapositum* which indicate the confusion and uncertainty a lover experiences when his amorous interests conflate and conflict with his other objectives. Both Strephon and Claius feel this worrying tension between their love for Urania and their dutiful love for each other as friends. The notion of their love for the shepherdess recalls them to Cythera, and Strephon laments that the remembrance of her engenders a troublesome result; their love for Urania "claims not only this duty [to return to the home of Urania] of us but, for it, will have us forget ourselves."⁷¹ Sidney here utilises *dirimens copulatio* to indicate how the love interests of the two shepherds have subordinated their other duties to the pursuit of that love, to the extent that it renders them relatively insensible to the natural responsibility that hitherto characterised them; it makes them 'forget' themselves. Strephon and Claius find themselves in a perplexing situation where opposing claims on their energies fight for control; they are in a similar state to the time of the year when the sun "becomes an indifferent arbiter between the night and the day,"⁷² their two concerns equal and yet mutually antagonistic.

The contentiousness of the shepherds' romantic love for Urania and their platonic love for each other is advertised in the rhetorical utilization of *commutatio*. While the figure of *commutatio* or *antimetabole* is employed in the first Book

⁷⁰ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, Victor Skretkowitz (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 3. Hereinafter, *New Arcadia*.

⁷¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 3.

⁷² *New Arcadia*, p. 3.

of the *Old Arcadia*, it holds much more importance in the revision. This may be so because the greater stylistic complexity of the *New Arcadia* necessitates the use of not only more rhetorical figures, but more qualitatively difficult ones.⁷³ The author of *Ad Herrenium* characterises *commutatio* as a form "when two discrepant thoughts are so expressed by transposition that the latter follows from the former, although contradictory to it."⁷⁴ An idea is first articulated and is then immediately metamorphosed into an expression of its contrary. While Lindheim again sees this figure as one which destroys the possibility of establishing distinctions, rhetorical commentators nonetheless suggest that it is an elegant and subtle means of drawing differences and generating *sententia*. Susenbrotus asserts that "from this scheme enthymemic arguments may be derived. In this way rhetoricians derive an enthymeme from contraries."⁷⁵ Hoskins says of *commutatio* that "this is a sharp and witty figure and shows out of the same words a pithy distinction of meaning."⁷⁶ This would then seem to indicate that Lindheim's conclusion, that *antimetabole* is one of those figures that "sets up and overturns a distinction,"⁷⁷ is misleading and incomplete. Rather, Susenbrotus' and Hoskins' descriptions of the figure leads us to understand *commutatio* as a form which

⁷³ This notion of the *New Arcadia's* use of more qualitatively 'difficult' rhetorical figures will be addressed more fully in the following chapter, especially in the section entitled "Synthesis to Antithesis: Rhetorical Figuration in the *New Arcadia*."

⁷⁴ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 42.

⁷⁵ L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 42.

⁷⁶ J. Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, p. 5.

⁷⁷ N. Lindheim, *The Structures of Sidney's Arcadia*, p. 35.

ultimately proposes a definite *sententia* to be upheld, through the process of rhetorical argumentation and clarifying of differences in meaning. Thus, when Strephon laments to Claius, "our remembrance [of Urania] came ever clothed unto us in the form of this place [Cythera], so this place gives new heat to the fever of our languishing remembrance,"⁷⁸ he articulates the perplexing nature of their love for Urania, as it results in the confusing state where remembrance brings them back to Cythera, and Cythera serves as more fuel for that original remembrance.

The *sententia* that the *enthymeme* helps to generate is expressed in the form of *gradatio*. Claius responds to Strephon's complaint by subordinating their present state of worrying remembrance to a more beneficial state of rejoicing in their love, despite the unfortunate foregone conclusion that they cannot both win Urania's love in return. He asserts, "let us think with consideration, and consider with acknowledging, and acknowledge with admiration, and admire with love, and love with joy in the midst of all woes."⁷⁹ The rhetorical structure of the plight of Strephon and Claius, then, demonstrates how confusion arises when love for one's friends and an amorous love conflict, and how this dilemma can be overcome by accepting the pain as a given and rising above it.

While the narration of this particular episode in the *New Arcadia* follows the general pattern of the *Old Arcadia's* rhetorical drive toward presenting the best ethical courses of behaviour available in each of the character's situations,

⁷⁸ *New Arcadia*, p. 4.

⁷⁹ *New Arcadia*, p. 4.

the rest of the *New Arcadia's* Book I is less formulaic in this objective. In other words, we have seen how Sidney makes it quite obvious in Book I of the *Old Arcadia*, and in the Strephon and Claius story here, what the solutions are for the different moral problems presented; very often the rhetorical structure of a crisis' narration immediately and inherently provides the means of correcting these problems. A large part of the revision's greater intricacy is stored in keeping the correct modes of action less directly available for the reader. We are given the same problems facing Pyrocles, Musidorus, Basilius, Pamela, Philoclea, and Gynecia, but the rhetoric does not hand us in the same clear and relatively simple fashion of the *Old Arcadia* their obvious remedies. Rather, the rhetoric presents the ethical crises of the characters, but the solutions to these problems are supplied by the rhetorical demonstrations of laudable behaviour in other characters who function as exemplars. In addition, Sidney gives us problems of entirely new individuals which in some way reflect and modify those of the original's main characters.

An additional point is that the new heroic episodes of the two young princes give greater depth to their moral dilemmas. In the *Old Arcadia* we are simply told of the princes' bravery. Sidney explains to us that Pyrocles and Musidorus experience trouble at sea and are taken far astray from their course. He writes that

what befell unto them, what valiant acts they did, passing in one year's space through the lesser Asia, Syria, and Egypt, how many ladies they defended from

wrongs, and disinherited persons restored to their rights, it is a work for a higher style than mine.⁸⁰

In the *New Arcadia*, however, Sidney places Pyrocles and Musidorus in the middle of the Helot rebellion to give concrete evidence of the bravery we have in the first version to accept only on the author's word. The rebellion plot in the *New Arcadia* thus amplifies the princes' dilemma in a more tangible and convincing fashion; what is hearsay in the original is acted out in the revision.

This last section then concerns itself primarily with the *New Arcadia's* added characters, the narration of the princes' involvement in the rebellion plot, and the reluctance on the author's part simply to dictate via the rhetoric the solutions to ethical crises we are readily given in the *Old Arcadia*. Discussing these three dimensions of the revision will demonstrate the claim I make above, that Sidney has developed a more intricate and complex conception of the nature of political and social ethics.

The description of one of the key characters added in the *New Arcadia*, Kalander, is a good example of how Sidney moves from a direct rhetorical articulation of moral probity to a less explicit representation of virtue by means of a visual or pictorial exemplar. Before Musidorus reaches the home of Kalander, he passes through the desolate land of Laconia which is "not so poor by the barrenness of the soil (though in itself not passing fertile) as by a civil war which, . . . hath in this sort as it were disfigured the face of nature and made it so unhospital."⁸¹ This use of *correctio* contrasts the evils of natural privation with those of human

⁸⁰ *Old Arcadia*, p. 10.

⁸¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 11.

devastation, suggesting that the latter is far more dangerous. The description of Laconia serves as a foil to that of Arcadia, and especially to Kalander's home in Arcadia. Where Laconia is noted for how nature and human agency strive against each other to culminate in total devastation, Kalander's home is marked for the exactly opposite effect. I will quote at length this passage which we have already encountered to demonstrate how the rhetoric posits nature and human nurture working together to create the most laudable harmony of art subordinated to natural utility. Musidorus is brought to

a great house as might well show Kalander knew that provision is the foundation of hospitality, and thrift the fuel of magnificence. The house itself was built of fair and strong stone, not affecting so much any extraordinary kind of fineness as an honourable representing of a firm stateliness; the lights, doors, and stairs rather directed to the use of the guest than to the eye of the artificer, and yet, as the one chiefly heeded, so the other not neglected; each place handsome without curiosity and homely without loathsomeness, not so dainty as not to be trode on, nor yet slubbered up with good fellowship-- all more lasting than beautiful (but that the consideration of the exceeding lastingness made the eye believe it was exceeding beautiful); the servants not so many in number as cleanly in apparel and serviceable in behaviour, testifying even in their countenances that their master took as well care to be served as of them that did serve.⁸²

In this one quotation, Sidney uses *correctio*, *contentio*, and *compar* all to the same effect: the *correctio* subordinates aesthetic appeal to usefulness and durableness, since the house's fixtures are "rather directed to the use of the guest than to the eye of the artificer;" the *contentio* between beauty and ostentation and between plainness and decrepitude, as "each place [is] handsome without curiosity and homely without loathesomeness;" and the *compar* serves to contrast

⁸² *New Arcadia*, p. 12.

miserliness and extravagance with well-considered economy and generosity, for "provision is the foundation of hospitality, and thrift the fuel of magnificence."⁸³ At the same time, Sidney implements *commutatio* to imply that while aesthetic attractiveness must be made subject to *utilitas*, perfect usefulness leads straight back to beauty; Kalander's whole residence is "all more lasting than beautiful (but that the consideration of the exceeding lastingness made the eye believe it was exceeding beautiful)."⁸⁴ Kalander thus functions as an example of the ideal host, whose simple virtue is made particularly apparent by the comparison with the troubled land of Laconia.

Kalander's personal goodness is further testified to when his appreciation for Musidorus' excellence is correctly based on the young prince's active demonstration of valour, above an unconsidered fondness for his likeable personality:

the good old man was even enamoured with a fatherly love towards him [Musidorus], or rather, became his servant by the bonds such virtue laid upon him, once he acknowledged himself so to be by the badge of diligent attendance.⁸⁵

The *correctio* here, then, demonstrates how Kalander properly places perceived goodness over personal affection, supporting the claim that he is an exemplar against whom others who fail to act ethically may be juxtaposed.

Most notably, Basilius is one of these characters whose shortcomings are exaggerated through the comparison the reader draws with Kalander, and it is Kalander who provides the example of how Basilius' failures might be rectified.

⁸³ *New Arcadia*, p. 12.

⁸⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 12.

⁸⁵ *New Arcadia*, p. 14.

Where we have seen Kalander judge the worth of Musidorus on his active demonstration of virtue, Basilius allows a foolish fondness for the bumpkin Dametas to cloud his judgement of the shepherd's abilities:

like a creature of his own making, he [Basilius] liked him more and more, and thus having first given him the office of principal herdsman, lastly (since he took this strange determination) [to go into pastoral retreat] he hath in a manner put the life of himself and his children into his hands.⁸⁶

Moreover, Basilius' affection for Dametas is inappropriately based on the prince's misreading of the bumpkin's character. Sidney uses *contentio* again here to draw the necessary distinction to be made between true virtue and that which ostensibly resembles it. Dametas' "silence grew wit, his bluntness integrity, his beastly ignorance virtuous simplicity."⁸⁷ While we find this same passage in the *Old Arcadia*, the comparison with the Kalander section immediately before it accentuates the prince's error and supplies that error's correction.

One other significant way in which the role Kalander plays amplifies Basilius' lapse in judgement is that Kalander serves as a commentator on the prince's actions. It is Kalander, and not the authorial narrator, who tells us of Basilius' decision to consult the oracle and of Philanax's sage advice against the prince's pastoral retreat. Again, this indicates how the *New Arcadia* moves from a direct rhetorical articulation of proper ethical behaviour to the creation of exemplars who are rhetorically shown to be worthy to be emulated. We have discussed earlier why Kalander

⁸⁶ *New Arcadia*, p. 19.

⁸⁷ *New Arcadia*, p. 19.

fits the role of exemplar, so the alert reader is then prepared to accept his word on Basilius' actions as seemly and just. Therefore, when Kalander asserts, using *correctio*, that "this experience shows us that Basilius' judgement, corrupted with a prince's fortune, hath rather heard than followed the wise... counsel of Philanax,"⁸⁸ the reader is made that much more aware of the necessity of drawing the distinction between a possible cognitive recognition of what is fitting and effectively carrying out that knowledge in action.

The same sort of differentiation is outlined by Kalander when he employs *correctio* once more to distinguish Basilius' fault in abandoning his proper role as prince of the realm to enjoy the delightful pastorals of the shepherds. Kalander asserts that the "blameworthiness is that to hear them [the shepherds] he [Basilius] rather goes to solitariness than makes them come to company."⁸⁹ Here, Kalander criticises self-indulgent solitude as inferior to the active participation in society in a way that echoes some of Musidorus' comments to Pyrocles in the *Old Arcadia*. Kalander's proven role as a representative of virtue gives greater validity and depth to that dictum.

Argalus is another central character Sidney adds to the *New Arcadia* who, like Kalander, functions as an exemplar. *Contentio* is used to depict Argalus' character in the same manner as in the description of Kalander's residence; Argalus' valour is defined through an opposition drawn between like virtues, subordinating less socially necessary

⁸⁸ *New Arcadia*, p. 23.

⁸⁹ *New Arcadia*, p. 25.

ones to truly beneficial ones, and between true probity and its associated flaws. Argalus is a

gentleman indeed most rarely accomplished, excellently learned, but without all vainglory; friendly without facetiousness; valiant so as,... the earth hath no man that hath done more heroical acts than he... no man for valour of mind and ability of body to be preferred, if equalled, to Argalus, and yet so valiant as he never durst do anybody injury; in behaviour, some will say ever sad-- surely sober and somewhat given to musing, but never uncourteous; his word ever led by his thought and followed by his deed; rather liberal than magnificent, though the one wanted not and the other had ever good choice of the receiver."⁹⁰

Argalus thus is rhetorically shown (through the marked use of *contentio*) to be the perfect blend of courage and pity, contemplativeness and engagement in society, and generosity and prudence.

His female counterpart, Parthenia, is likewise held up as an example of perfect womanly virtue which is articulated through *correctio*, *contentio* and *adnominatio*. Thus when we are told that Parthenia is

fair indeed..., and that which made her fairness much the fairer was that it was but a fair ambassador of a most fair mind full of wit, and a wit which delighted more to judge itself than show itself.⁹¹

The notion of her overall attractiveness is grounded on the fact that her physical beauty is most laudably culminated in her fairness of mind. The *correctio* used to describe her wit, that it "delighted more to judge itself than show itself," indicates the same Sidneian criticism of virtues that are mentally applauded versus those that are actively demonstrated that we have seen above. Sidney furthers the image of Parthenia as a model of female excellence in the following employment of *contentio*. Parthenia's "speech [is]

⁹⁰ *New Arcadia*, p. 27.

⁹¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 28.

as rare as precious, her silence without sullenness, her modesty without affectation, her shamefastness without ignorance."⁹²

We shall see in Books II and III how Parthenia as an exemplar provides a foil for the ethical failures of other female characters. For the present, however, it is clear that Parthenia provides a contrast for the difficulties of Queen Helen. Helen's unfortunate predicament with Amphialus and Philoxenus results from her confusion of queenly responsibilities and personal romantic urges, in much the same fashion as Basilius' problems develop. The rhetoric again exhibits this dilemma by highlighting the Queen's inner confusion. *Correctio*, which is used in the description of Parthenia to demonstrate her perfect ordering of priorities, here serves to indicate Helen's state of uncertainty. The Queen's original failure to act appropriately to her station can be seen as a result of her spiritual immaturity; she describes her ascendancy to the throne in the following manner:

I being left by my father's death, and accepted by my people in the highest degree that country could receive, as soon as, or rather, before that my age was ripe for it.⁹³

Correctio thus establishes the troubled queen's imperfect emotional development which is furthered through the comparison drawn with Parthenia's ideal 'fair mind full of wit.' Helen again articulates through *correctio* her lamentable lack of ethical judgement; she admits that she has "grown bolder, or madder, or bold with madness"⁹⁴ in her

⁹² *New Arcadia*, p. 28.

⁹³ *New Arcadia*, p. 60.

⁹⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 63.

problematic love for Amphialus. Similarly, *commutatio* delineates Helen's state of confusion. Her love for Amphialus is based on his worthiness, but she attempts to resolve this situation incorrectly by negating that same worthiness; she exclaims, "O Amphialus, I would thou were not so excellent; or I would I thought thee not so excellent; and yet would I not, that I would so."⁹⁵ The figures, then, that work toward establishing Parthenia as a female exemplar of virtue illuminate the shortcomings of her less ethically perfect counterpart, Helen, and further entrench that distinction through the juxtaposition of the two characters.

I have stated above that Sidney places the two young princes Pyrocles and Musidorus in the middle of the helot rebellion to enhance the enormity of their fall from virtuous and socially-minded behaviour in their personal quest to consummate their love interests. That is, the valour they display in the battle is in itself a foil for their subsequent decline in ethical behaviour. A factor which assists in establishing the princes' original excellence is the contrast made between their skill and courage in battle and the lack of martial expertise found in the people they command in the fight. Musidorus' men, we are told via *correctio*, are "more determinate to do than skilful how to do;" they fight

with such courage as rather grew of despising their enemies whom they knew not, than of any confidence for anything which in themselves they knew, but neither cunning use of their weapons, nor art showed in their marching or encamping.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *New Arcadia*, p. 61.

⁹⁶ *New Arcadia*, p. 34.

As for Pyrocles' men, the helots, "they had fought rather with beastly fury than any soldierly discipline," using *correctio* to the same effect of contrasting genuine military skill with unconsidered brutality.

Poised against the helots' and the Lacedaemonians' ineptitude are their captains Daiphantus and Palladius, that is, Pyrocles and Musidorus respectively. Daiphantus serves as a remedy for his mens' deficiencies by correcting their lapses and, more importantly, acting as a model of valour to be emulated. Sidney applies *compar* here to parallel the different ways in which Daiphantus or Pyrocles functions as a corrective for the uneducated helots, and the culmination of Pyrocles' reformatory efforts displayed in the *compar* is most significantly suggested as a valediction of wise negotiation before militant action. Daiphantus

brought up their ignorance and brought down their fury to such a mean of good government, and withal led them so valorously, that... the estate of Lacedaemon had sent unto them, offering peace with most reasonable and honourable conditions.⁹⁷

Musidorus' apt schooling of the Lacedaemonians is likewise described in terms of *compar*; he corrects them by "blaming those that were slow, heartening them that were forward, but especially with his own ensample leading them."⁹⁸ No simpler articulation can be given of Sidney's revised conception of didacticism than Musidorus' stated strategy of "with his own ensample leading".

The most trenchant rhetorical articulation of the two young princes' role as exemplars against which the failures of their troops are contrasted is found in the description of

⁹⁷ *New Arcadia*, p. 34.

⁹⁸ *New Arcadia*, p. 36.

their fight against each other. Here we are given a model enactment of martial combat which as a whole is juxtaposed against the overall but lesser battle they are taking part in. Musidorus and Pyrocles

began a combat which was so much inferior to the battle in noise and number as it was surpassing it in bravery of fighting and, as it were, delightful terribleness. Their courage was guided with skill and their skill was armed with courage. Neither did their hardiness darken their wit, nor their wit cool their hardiness; both valiant, as men despising death, both confident, as unwonted to be overcome- yet doubtful by their present feeling, and respectful by what they had already seen; their feet steady, their hands diligent, their eyes watchful, and their hearts resolute.⁹⁹

The *contrapositum*, *contentio*, *commutatio* and *compar* in the above passage again clarify the ideal harmony of skill and courage, confidence and prudence, that we have seen held up as exemplary in the description of Argalus. Moreover, the use of these figures provides a contrast with the preceding narration of the martial flaws of the helots and the Lacedaemonians, where figures like *correctio* and *compar* articulate the troops' inferior valorization of brutality over valour and mastery.

In addition, I have argued, the princes' bravery in the helot rebellion furnishes a foil for their subsequent fall from virtuous behaviour. I will not repeat precisely how this fall is rhetorically characterised, as this was discussed in the previous section. It should be noted, however, that what was said of Pyrocles' and Musidorus' dilemmas springing from a confusion of objectives, that is between virtue for its own sake and personal and erotic love, is amplified within this context of the princes' valour.

⁹⁹ *New Arcadia*, p. 37.

In this section so far we have seen how the rhetoric in the *New Arcadia* has presented us with models of ideal behaviour and has disclosed the failings of erring characters. This schema creates a situation where the reader must actively compare the actions of linked characters such as Helen and Parthenia, or Basilius and Kalandar, and forces the reader to supply the judgement of what true virtue is through the comparison. In addition, the rhetoric used to describe the original valour of Pyrocles and Musidorus gives greater depth to their fall from model conduct that we already see in the *Old Arcadia*, and will also provide a complement for the deficiencies of other characters in following Books.

At this point, I would like to discuss briefly an episode of the *New Arcadia* which, like the beast attack in the *Old Arcadia*, encapsulates the rhetorical development of the Book. This episode is the beauty contest, and it mirrors the Book's drive toward presenting exemplars of virtue who are contrasted against less perfect characters. This episode again forces the reader to supply the judgement of what true excellence, and in this instance, what true beauty is.

We are first given several instances of beauty that fall short of the ideal. The princess Elis' attractiveness is described in terms of *commutatio* which brings out the distinction between physical appeal and the more important emotional or spiritual attraction that beauty should engender. Elis is "a lady that taught the beholders no other point of beauty but this: that as liking is not always the

child of beauty, so whatsoever liketh is beautiful."¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, ideal beauty rests upon both spiritual and physical excellence, and her knight's defeat testifies to that definition. Erona's fairness equally centres on her emotional appeal. This time *adnominatio* refines our conception of the aesthetic judgement as one contingent on psychological allure. Her features are faulty, "yet love played his part so well in every part that it caught hold of the judgement before it could judge."¹⁰¹

On the other side of female attractiveness, that is strong physical allure as against emotional or spiritual charm, are Baccha and Leucippe. Baccha's fairness is grounded on a too-overt demonstration of her attractions, which ultimately penalizes her for her resulting spiritual inferiority. Her 'inviting look' fails in that it "dissuaded with too much persuading,"¹⁰² another use of *adnominatio* that plays off the actual meaning of real persuasion. As for Leucippe, she also lowers her appeal by neglecting to consider spiritual fairness as an essential facet of beauty. Her intellectual weakness makes her more an object of pity than one of love; her open features "the more one marked, the more one would judge the poor soul apt to believe, and therefore the more pity to deceive her,"¹⁰³ *adnominatio* again stressing the negative effect of excessive simplicity.

After establishing the imperfect beauty of the above women, who contrastingly display either physical or spiritual attractiveness, Sidney presents us with exemplars of female

¹⁰⁰ *New Arcadia*, p. 95.

¹⁰¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 95.

¹⁰² *New Arcadia*, p. 95.

¹⁰³ *New Arcadia*, p. 96.

beauty who symbolise the ideal harmony of both aspects of beauty. The first is Helen who, despite her ethical failings in the Amphialus situation, correctly blends her given physical comeliness with a wise consideration of artistic enhancement. Her 'jacinth hair' is most admirably "curled by nature and intercurled by art... mutually giving and receiving riches."¹⁰⁴ Parthenia even more fittingly earns the role of exemplar. Parthenia's physical loveliness is equalled by her spiritual goodness: her

face and body [that was] cast in the mold of nobleness, was yet so attired as might show the mistress thought it either not to deserve or not to need any exquisite decking, having no adorning but cleanliness, and so far from all art that it was full of carelessness-- unless that carelessness itself, in spite of itself, grew artificial.¹⁰⁵

Here the use of *expeditio* reveals that Parthenia's lack of ostentation, as either due to laudable humility or a correct evaluation of her own perfection, results in her ultimate just claim to beauty. The *commutatio* also announces Parthenia's ideal moderation between art and nature, or between humility and an accurate judgement of one's own worth. The wonder of Parthenia's modesty lies in the fact that, in its perfection, it ends in achieving an artful effect.

Parthenia and Helen, then, act as models of perfect female beauty. The other female characters listed before them are first juxtaposed against each other; the one set of women lacking in physical loveliness are posed against the other set of women lacking in spiritual excellence. Parthenia and Helen's possession of both these aspects qualifies them as

¹⁰⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 96.

¹⁰⁵ *New Arcadia*, p. 97.

worthy to be emulated. As a result, the reader's recognition of Parthenia and Helen as exemplars necessitates another comparison between their consummate beauty and that which only approximates it, ultimately leading the reader to the apt definition of that virtue.

The mechanics of the beauty contest thus operate on a larger scale throughout Book I of the *New Arcadia*, and throughout the rest of the work. We have seen that the rhetorical structure of the Book in question has centred on employing rhetorical figures to articulate the exemplary nature of certain characters, holding them up as worthy of emulation, and to illuminate the ethical shortcomings of other characters. This engenders the situation where the reader is led to form a series of comparisons, between the different characters and even between different stages in the same character's development, and thereby to arrive at an idea of perfect ethical behaviour. Book I of the *New Arcadia* thus shares the same morally-orientated agenda of the *Old Arcadia*, but the role of rhetoric has taken on new connotations. In Book I of the original, we have seen rhetoric present ethical dilemmas and then suggest immediately the correct responses to those problems. The role of rhetoric in the revision is much more complicated, and requires more active cognitive participation on the part of the reader. In our discussion of the following Books of both *Arcadias*, we shall see how Sidney completes and expands upon his overall project to determine the precise nature of political and social ethics.

Chapter III

RHETORIC IN BOOK II OF THE *OLD* AND *NEW* ARCADIAS

In the last chapter we examined the movement of Book I of Sidney's *Old Arcadia* in comparison to that of Book I of the *New Arcadia*. That comparison led us to conclude that while Sidney's didactic ends remained unchanged between the writing of the original and the revision, how the author set about achieving those ends altered significantly. We saw how Sidney first attempted to 'delight and instruct' his reader through the controlled deployment of rhetorical figures to the purpose of positing moral problems and suggesting solutions to those crises in the rhetorical form of *sententia*. The *New Arcadia* witnessed Sidney evolving the above formula into a more complex and difficult rhetorical structure. The crux of the revision's increased stylistic complexity, we saw, lies in its rhetorical creation of visual or pictorial exemplars which subsequently serve to contrast against ethically imperfect characters. It is through this comparison and contrast that the reader is provided with the indirect means of understanding and rectifying the errors committed by Arcadian characters. The shift from describing simple and immediately accessible settlements to moral difficulties to compelling the reader to compare certain erring characters with other exemplary ones, and gauging the significance of that contrast, is essentially a move from dictating morality to portraying it. It is feasible to explain this alteration as being testimony to the growing

maturity of Sidney as a literary craftsman, and this is no doubt true. But it is also important to view this shift in style as indicative of more than simple stylistic maturing, especially as I have already pointed out that style for Sidney is tantamount to substance.¹ Therefore, I would argue that the change in stylistic procedure not only results in, but is also the result of, a parallel modification in Sidney's idea of inspiring virtue through his art. This modification in the author's vision of the nature of effective didacticism is intimately tied up with the *Arcadia's* overall shift from overt enunciations of what virtue is to indirect suggestions of how to act ethically reached through witnessed valour in characters and rhetorical imagery.² In the second section of this chapter which deals with Book II of the *New Arcadia*, I will more fully explore and explain Sidney's growing and expanding understanding of ethics as they are dealt with in the work; first we need to discuss Book II of the *Old Arcadia*, in at least a brief manner. In my examination of the second Book of the *Old Arcadia* I hope to demonstrate ultimately how Sidney, in contrast to his stylistic procedure in the revision, is still relying on an employment of rhetoric which posits moral

¹ See pp. 6-16 above. See also Michael McCanles' *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989, p. 85) where the author states that "the Arcadian style does not point beyond itself to a meaning couched in the neutral, nonfigured language of thematic paraphrase. On the contrary, the Arcadian style calls attention to and thematizes several aspects of the style itself." McCanles is here and elsewhere emphasising the function of the *Arcadia's* rhetoric and style as conveyor of its meaning or content.

² I am referring here to, respectively, Parthenia's demonstration of virtue, and the description of Kalander's house as just two examples.

difficulties and articulates the correct responses to them in a relatively direct and immediate fashion.

1

Book II of the *Old Arcadia*

One of the most widely used figures in the *Arcadia* is clearly that of *contentio*, and Book II is specially reliant on its use. As the section of the *Old Arcadia* under analysis occupies itself primarily with further describing the crises of the six main characters, *contentio* thus appears to be a very convenient tool for outlining the nature of the still unresolved dilemmas of Pyrocles, Musidorus, and the rest. I have already discussed how the mechanics of that figure appealed to Sidney with its ability to draw useful differences; this certainly will constitute a large portion of the resolution of all the conundrums we have seen. Therefore, to avoid repetition of material laid out in the previous chapter, and for purposes of brevity, I will limit the ensuing examination of rhetoric in the *Old Arcadia* Book II to that of *contentio* as it both delineates the key moral problems of the Book and projects responses to them.

We begin the second Book of the *Old Arcadia* with the description of Gynecia still anguished over her love for the disguised Prince Pyrocles, which contradicts and overrules her dutiful love for her husband Basilius and daughter Philoclea. Typically, along the lines of the work's first Book, the unacceptability of the situation is asserted through a deployment of *contentio* which accentuates the final

irreconcilability of her opposing impulses; Gynecia laments to her beloved Pyrocles when he offers to aid her distress, "dost thou offer me physic which art my only poison, or wilt thou do me service which hast already brought me into slavery?"³ *Contentio* seems to be a figure particularly appropriate for Gynecia as it is again employed to portray the impossibility of her predicament in the following passage: "I am forced to fly to thee [Cleophila] for succour whom I accuse of all my hurt; and make thee judge of my cause who art the only author of my mischief."⁴ Basilius' dilemma, parallel to Gynecia's, is likewise enunciated in the opposing terms of *contentio*. He pleads with Cleophila for satisfaction of his love for her in a way that recognises the pursuit of personal amatory inclinations in the face of one's duty to family and state as ultimately untenable. Basilius begs to the Amazon,

see in me the power of your beauty which can make old age come to ask counsel of youth, and a prince unconquered to become a slave to a stranger.⁵

The result of both Basilius' and Gynecia's love for Pyrocles/Cleophila is a situation for the disguised prince of irreconcilable opposition yet again expressed in *contentio*. To Pyrocles, "their love was hateful, their courtesy troublesome, their presence cause of her absence thence where her heart lived;" he is "at one instant both besieged and banished" and "so happy as to see the cause of her [his] unhap."⁶

³ *Old Arcadia*, p. 83.

⁴ *Old Arcadia*, p. 83.

⁵ *Old Arcadia*, p. 84.

⁶ *Old Arcadia*, p. 99.

I want momentarily to pass over the function of *contentio* in the situations of the other two main characters, Pamela and Musidorus, to examine first the working of that rhetorical figure in the climactic episode of the *Old Arcadia's* second Book. The gist of the confrontation scene between the angry mob of Arcadians and Basilius in his pastoral retreat is tersely rendered in terms of *contentio* which encapsulates the cumulative decay Arcadian society has undergone since the departure of their Duke; the rhetoric divulges the extensive collapse of order and confusion of objectives that is a result of Basilius' folly in abdicating his given responsibilities. The citizens of Arcadia initially gather to celebrate the Duke's birthday, but that admirable impulse is in itself contradicted and neutralised by the means chosen to carry it out; the excessive largesse of the gathering sought wrongly "with vice to do honour, or with activity in beastliness to show abundance of love."⁷ Furthermore, when their grievances against the Duke augment with their consumption of wine, the Arcadians adulterate any legitimate claims they may have against Basilius as they are inappropriately muddled with lesser concerns: "public affairs were mingled with private grudge."⁸ The clashing and confused elements involved in the gathering finally degenerate into chaotic discord sounded in the following piece of *contentio*:

thus was their banquet turned to a battle, their winy mirths to bloody rages, and the happy prayers for the Duke to monstrous threatening his estate; the solemnizing his birthday tended to the cause of his funeral.⁹

⁷ *Old Arcadia*, p. 111.

⁸ *Old Arcadia*, p. 111.

⁹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 112.

From these employments of the figure *contentio* and the context in which they occur, we see that Sidney places things we may label as positive and desirable, i.e. courtesy, love, succour etc., in a diametrically opposed position to what somehow become their negative effects, hatefulness for example. In other words, Sidney is holding together what naturally remains distinct and even antithetical in a tenuous equipoise indicative of the character of the dilemmas they describe. Given the instability of this type of situation, one must then demand what sort of stabilizing force will act as a solution. That is, what rhetorical structure will counteract and resolve this great series of uses of *contentio* we have just witnessed? If we now turn to the predicaments of Pamela and Musidorus, we may see first, a like employment of the figure to those above, and second, how Sidney forecasts definitive settlements to this genre of ethical problem.

Musidorus' attempt to court the princess Pamela is very similar to Basilius' and Gynecia's frustrated love for Cleophila in that it is impeded by a contradiction within itself. Just as Basilius finds it impossible to maintain both his pressing love for the Amazon and his given identity as a mature and responsible monarch, and Gynecia finds her desires for Cleophila untenable with her natural duties as a mother and wife, Musidorus cannot manifest his love for Pamela without thereby thwarting it. His inability to convey his nobility to the princess which would aid in his endeavour adds to the contentiousness of his quandary. He thus questions Pamela about the paradoxical nature of his plight as the supposed courter of Mopsa in the following employment

of *contentio* which equally characterizes the problematics of his true position: "must that which should be a cause of compassion become an argument of cruelty against me?"¹⁰ Whereas Gynecia and Basilius experience a type of irresolution and impotence as a result of the *contentio* that describes their situations, Musidorus finds resolution to his query in the form of *sententia*. He asks that the princess "consider that a virtuous prince requires the life of his meanest subject, and the heavenly sun disdains not to give light to the smallest worm."¹¹ Here, Musidorus is reasserting the correct hierarchical order of humility and nobility through the moral commonplace of the *sententia*; while lowliness is to be subjugated to nobility, it should not be placed in an antithetical position to it.

As Pamela, who displays the greatest ethical fortitude and resilience of any of the main characters, and Musidorus both characterise cerebral versus emotional virtues, we may then assume that the more emotionally oriented characters, i.e. Pyrocles, Gynecia, Philoclea, will ultimately come to a cognitive understanding of what is necessary to rectify their problems in the pattern set by Musidorus.¹² That is, we can

¹⁰ *Old Arcadia*, p. 88.

¹¹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 88.

¹² Many critics have long remarked that the two princes embody almost polar types of virtue. Walter Davis in his article "Narrative Methods in the *Old Arcadia*" describes Pyrocles' dilemma as result of his being "more radically altered by passion," while Musidorus' more contemplative nature dictates that Sidney treat his problems "centering on his mind, purposes, and points of view" (Walter Davis, "Narrative Methods in the *Old Arcadia*," in D. Kay (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: an Anthology of Modern Criticism*, p. 106). Similarly, Nancy Lindheim asserts that Sidney's Musidorus is "more mature and ethically-minded," while Pyrocles is "more emotional and introspective" (N. Lindheim, *The Structures of Sidney's Arcadia*, p. 28).

expect the *contentio* of Basilius', Gynecia's, and Pyrocles' situations to find a like rhetorical resolution eventually in the form of moral *sententia*. In this fashion, rhetoric will reassert the proper hierarchical order to the impulses driving the main characters, in the place of their current capitulation to weakness as it is an antithesis to virtue seen in the *contentio* depicting their problems in Book II.

To recapitulate quickly, I have tried to demonstrate how Book II of the *Old Arcadia* remains loyal to the rhetorical formula found in the first Book. Here I focused on *contentio* as being the most suitable figure to illustrate the nature of the main characters' ethical plights, as these problems seem to revolve around a polarization of virtue and vice, with the opting for the latter necessarily making impossible a realization of the former. In other words, we have seen that Sidney's use of *contentio* to articulate moral crises involves placing in an antithetical and mutually exclusive position linked virtues and vices. *Contentio*, moreover, facilitated the projection of correct responses to the dilemmas through the development into *sententia* witnessed in the case of Musidorus.

2

Book II of the New Arcadia

The *New Arcadia*'s Book II is just as remarkable for its great complexity, or what some would call near confusion, as the original's second Book is for its simplicity and linearity. The bulk of *New Arcadia* Book II occupies itself

with the narration of Musidorus' and Pyrocles' adventures prior to their arrival in Arcadia, and the chaos of these escapades is naturally linked to the increased difficulty of this section's stylistic structure. The heart of the revision's rhetorical density, I suggested earlier, is situated in Sidney's developing notions of effective didacticism, and moreover, the new and more complicated stylistic schema is linked to the work's overall shift from dictating virtue to inspiring it through witnessed valour. I will now attempt to demonstrate that Sidney has arrived at an idea of didacticism which revolves around portraying the process of ethical behaviour, versus basic enunciations of what virtue is, and that furthermore, this 'process' of acting ethically ironically presupposes an understanding and control of what is normally viewed as 'unethical' behaviour. Any confusion aroused by this last statement should be cleared with the ensuing discussion, but I will rephrase my objective: I hope to establish that the author has not only shifted from saying what is to be valued to portraying the actions of admirable men, but that he also, as another result of his maturing artistry, has come to view virtuous behaviour not as a simple rejection or negation of undesirable deeds, but as something which necessarily involves the exemplification of ostensibly unethical actions. To this end I will focus chiefly on the description of the princes' escapades preceding their arrival in Arcadia, since this forms the majority of the new material of the work and is thus the best sign of Sidney's revised conception of ethics.

The first point at which the *New Arcadia* alters significantly from the *Old* is found in the episode of Musidorus' recounting of his birth and his troubles at sea to his beloved Pamela. That the narrator in the *New Arcadia* refrains from conveying to us the princess' response to her lover's story is in itself suggestive, for in the *Old Arcadia* Sidney's narrator plainly informs us of Pamela's delight in discovering Musidorus' nobility. We hear that Pamela

well found he [Musidorus] meant the tale by himself, and that he did under that covert manner make her know the great nobleness of his birth. But no music could with righter accords possess her senses than every passion he expressed had his mutual working in her. Full well she found the lively image of a vehement desire in herself, which ever is apt to receive belief, but hard to ground belief. For as desire is glad to embrace the first show of hope, so by the same nature is desire desirous of a perfect assurance. She did immediately catch hold of his signifying himself to be a prince, and did glad her heart with having a reasonable ground to build her love upon.¹³

Contrastingly, the revision keeps both Musidorus and the reader in suspense as to the princess' feelings:

Pamela, without show either of favour or disdain, either of heeding or neglecting what I [Musidorus] had said, turned her speech to Mopsa, ... with such a voice and action as might show she spake of a matter which little did concern her.¹⁴

In deferring and delaying the knowledge of Pamela's reaction, Sidney is already making a departure in the revision from having a fairly obvious and intrusive narrator and also from the consequent reliance of the reader on that narrator to hand him or her the 'truth' or meaning of Sidney's discourse. In other words, in diminishing the prominence of the narrator, Sidney is inherently increasing the need for the

¹³ *Old Arcadia*, p. 93.

¹⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 139.

reader to assume a more active role in deciphering the author's meaning; he is in effect opting for a less authoritarian 'dictating' of truth, for a more pictorial 'demonstrating' of it.¹⁵

I will now re-examine the passages in both versions in terms of their rhetorical content, beginning with the excerpt from the *Old Arcadia*. This section's stylistic schema, like its *New Arcadia* counterpart, seeks to play off certain key 'differentials'¹⁶ of both Pamela's and Musidorus' situations, although with significantly differing results. Here, this is chiefly the desire-hope problematic. In the traditional Petrarchan love scenario, desire and hope are often at best in an inverse relationship; that is, the Petrarchan lover is accustomed to having his desire for his beloved increase directly proportional to the decrease in the possibility of actually fulfilling that love. The *Old Arcadia's* treatment of this situation, we see, ultimately avoids the prospect of such a complex and negative relationship between love and faith through the deployment of *divisio*, only after having posited that potential through the *heratio*.

Heratio is a rhetorical figure involving the quick repetition of a key word; Scaliger defines *heratio* more

¹⁵ My reading of the *New Arcadia's* heavy reliance on the reader's complicity and participation in the creation of Sidney's ethical ideal gives special depth to the system of 'triangulation' outlined by Arthur Kinney which we discussed at the beginning of the last chapter. See above, pages 58-61.

¹⁶ I use the word in the same sense as McCanles seems to do, meaning linked elements, factors, or forces between which exists tension and possible mutual negation. McCanles of course, as we will see later, makes much of certain 'differentials' mutual negation of mutual negation, such as the 'reason-passion' differential, the 'heroism-eroticism' differential, and the 'determinism-freedom' differential. See M. McCanles, *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, pp. 7-8 for his precise description of this term.

particularly as "not merely repetition of the same sound, but repetition of the word as a unit of meaning," adding, "the meaning is inevitably altered on the second appearance of the word."¹⁷ *Heratio* or *ploche*, then, refines upon the difference in meaning between two uses of a word and thus between two distinct concepts: in this case, between love's willingness to "receive belief" and the different situation of the difficulty love encounters "to ground belief." Pamela's indecision is not allowed to linger for long, however, as it is rhetorically resolved through an employment of *divisio* strongly reminiscent of the beginning portion of the *Old Arcadia* dedicated to describing the harmony and stability of Arcadian society before Basilius' foolish and irresponsible response to the oracle. Just as Arcadia's reputation was built upon the cumulative effect of "the sweetness of the air and other natural benefits" and "principally... the moderate and well-tempered minds of the people," Pamela's ability to embrace whole-heartedly Musidorus' suit is achieved through the combined working of disparate factors to one common end. Musidorus provides the 'ground' for Pamela's belief in their love in the following piece of *divisio*: "principally... the virtuous gratefulness for his affection; then, knowing him to be a prince; and lastly, seeing herself in unworthy bondage"¹⁸ should all lead Pamela to accept her shepherd lover's plea. The *Old Arcadia's* rhetoric, then, works to counter any ambiguity or tension latent in the differentials of this romantic situation; desire and hope are not

¹⁷ L.A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 103.

¹⁸ *Old Arcadia*, p. 94.

positioned against each other, but rather one dovetails into and fuels the other.

Going back to the corresponding passage of the *New Arcadia*, we find that in the rhetoric Sidney makes no move to dissipate the contrariness inherent in Musidorus' and Pamela's predicament. Instead, he opts to employ *expeditio* to the almost inverse result, acknowledging differences and even further setting them apart. It is in fact the intensified recognition that differences do not easily dissolve which feeds Musidorus' suffering; he finds that he is not faced with a clear-cut situation in which the right course of action is plainly poised against the wrong. Rather, Sidney paints the prince's position as fraught with ambiguity: Musidorus laments

in the princess I could find no apprehension of what I either said or did... which kind of cold temper... is of all others most terrible to me. For yet if I found she contemned me, I would desperately labour both in fortune and virtue to overcome it; if only she misdoubted me, I were in heaven, for quickly I would bring sufficient assurance; lastly, if she hated me, yet I should know what passion to deal with, and either with infiniteness of desert I would take away the fuel from the fire, or if nothing would serve, then I would give her my heart-blood to quench it. But this cruel quietness, neither retiring to dislike nor proceeding to favour... is so impossible to reach unto that I almost begin to submit myself to the tyranny of despair.¹⁹

This *expeditio* which posits different alternatives to Musidorus' quandary remains unresolved; Sidney defers the unproblematic closure of the original's rhetoric in favour of promoting the idea of existential dilemmas revolving around an inability to determine clear solutions. Musidorus is troubled by the very fact that he cannot interpret what is

¹⁹ *New Arcadia*, p. 140.

right and what is wrong. It is this core problem of *interpretation*, then, which renders the pursuit and accomplishment of ethical behaviour that much more difficult and demanding in the *New Arcadia*.

My purpose in discussing this section at length is to make explicit four crucial elements indicative of Sidney's new didactic technique that are intrinsic to the passage. The first of these I have already announced and examined, and that is the shift from verbal enunciations of virtues to pictorial demonstrations of virtuous behaviour. Intimately tied in with that move is Sidney's new preference for more ambiguous rhetorical figuration; I mean here both more unstable figures, such as *commutatio* and *contrapositum*, and more ambiguously deployed figures, such as the instance of *expeditio* above where no definitive conclusion is available. The third and equally related facet of Sidney's developed didactic intent are plot innovations which dramatize the author's preoccupation with unexpected and ironic twists involved in all ethical enterprises. That is, the good portion of retrospective narrative relayed by the two princes that deals with their indoctrination into the chivalric code of honour is a series of episodes in which attempts to carry out the moral right can be strangely thwarted and paradoxically transformed into exacerbations of already formidable predicaments. Sidney thus provides us with plot developments which specifically highlight the easy slippage of good intentions into unwanted and detrimental effects as the result of inflexible and simplistic moral rules. We shall examine the narratives of Musidorus and especially Pyrocles

in this light. Finally, there is what must be seen as an over-arching deconstruction of rigid good-evil dichotomies. I mean by this that the *New Arcadia* positions itself against the *Old* by overturning the original's ethical structure of achieving virtue through a renunciation of its polar opposite, vice. Necessarily, these four elements overlap a good deal. I hope to illustrate, nevertheless, that each component part plays a role in the *New Arcadia's* depiction of an unstable and elusive moral good.

3

**Verbal to Pictorial:
Portraits of virtue in the *New Arcadia***

Let us begin our discussion of the first of the key stylistic modifications by examining Musidorus' attempt to bridge the unresponsiveness of his beloved. He does this by proving he is in possession of the very quality he has ostensibly divested himself of in his choice of disguise, that is, nobility. I am speaking of the passage describing Musidorus' equestrian exercise in which he seeks to demonstrate that he is fact no mere shepherd, but a well-educated and refined gentleman.²⁰ Pamela begins her depiction of Musidorus' performance firstly by poising it against the

²⁰ The association of horses with the passions in the Renaissance yields the resultant correlation of equestrian mastery to highly developed social skills and maturity. Jeanne Addison Roberts, for one, in her article "Horses and Hermaphrodites: Metamorphoses in *The Taming of the Shrew*" comments, "The skilled equestrian... is a model for well-governed individual existence" (J. A. Roberts, "Horses and Hermaphrodites in *The Taming of the Shrew*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34 (1983), p. 166). Thus Musidorus' equestrian display may thus be seen as a loaded demonstration to Pamela of his overall self-discipline and social grace.

comic demeanour of her guardian Dametas. She recounts to her sister Philoclea that

A few days since, he [Musidorus] and Dametas had furnished themselves very richly to run at the ring before me. Oh, how mad a sight it was to see Dametas like rich tissue! furred with lambskins! But oh, how well it did with Dorus!"²¹

Pamela is thus immediately furnishing the context for the ambiguity involved in the appearance-essence differential at work here. In other words, Pamela's recognition of the disjunction between Dametas' outer finery and his obvious inner coarseness provides the foil for the other schism between Musidorus' essential valour and his superficial humbleness.

Playing off this carefully made distinction that inner and outer qualities of divergent character can yet be curiously held together in the same person, Musidorus exposes his ultimate excellence in a beautifully balanced command of antithetical possibilities. In the famous passage I will now quote at length, I wish to draw special attention to Pamela's use of *contentio* and *correctio* as conveyors of Musidorus' seamless governing of extremes:

with what grace he [Musidorus] presented himself before me on horseback, making majesty wait upon humbleness... with a kind rather of quick gesture than show of violence, you might see him come towards me... he, as if centaur-like he had been one piece with his horse, was no more moved than one is with the going of his legs, and in effect, so did he command him as his own limbs. For though he had both spurs and wand, they seemed rather marks of sovereignty than instruments of punishment; his hand and leg with most pleasing grace commanding without threatening, and rather remembering than chastising (at least, if sometimes he did, it was so stolen as neither our eyes could discern it, nor the horse with any change did complain of it), he ever going so just with the

²¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 153.

horse, either forthright or turning, that it seemed, as he borrowed the horse's body, so he lent the horse his mind (in the turning, one might perceive the bridle-hand something gently stir, but indeed so gently as it did rather distil virtue than use violence); himself... showing at one instant both steadiness and nimbleness-- sometimes making him turn close to the ground..., sometimes with a little more rising before... all so done, as neither the lusty kind showed any roughness, nor the easier any idleness, but still like a well-obeyed master, whose beck is enough for a discipline; ever concluding each thing he did with his face to me-wards, as if thence came not only the beginning, but ending, of his motions."²²

Musidorus visually displays his virtue to Pamela through his effortless control of a situation that could, by Pamela's own narration, have an ugly turn.²³ Pamela is made aware of her lover's merit in harmoniously yoking together strength with dexterity, and grandeur with modesty, by being faced with the material representation of the failure of those objectives in the form of her rustic jailor Dametas. She remarks,

The sport was to see Dametas. How he was tossed! from the saddle, to the mane of the horse, and thence to the ground, giving his gay apparel almost as foul an outside as it had an inside (but, as before he had ever said he wanted but horse and apparel to be as brave a courtier as the best, so now, bruised with proof, he proclaimed it a folly for a man of wisdom to put himself under the tuition of a beast).²⁴

Where Musidorus skilfully forges a perfect liaison between the different roles of horse and rider so that each lends grace to the other, Dametas only seems to reverse even the supposed superiority of man to beast. Pamela thus receives and interprets this visual information, and seeing the

²² *New Arcadia*, pp. 153-4.

²³ Michael McCanles gives an excellent account of the oppositional forces involved in this passage. He writes, "Musidorus displays power joined with grace, and the description articulates this balance of opposites by defining it against other possible extreme and unbalanced versions of itself" (M. McCanles, *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, p. 27).

²⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 154.

contrast between the two men, cannot help but admire the virtue painted in Musidorus' actions.

There is still another aspect about this episode which evidences Sidney's over-riding concern with the hermeneutical dimension of ethical behaviour, with the problems encountered in interpreting the visual information which constitutes at least the chief, if not the only, source of our fund of knowledge. While Musidorus' display is correctly 'read' by its prime target, Pamela, the prince himself is still beset by doubts as to his love's reaction to the sight he has presented her with. Pamela is astutely conscious of the fact that any emotion she displays in her face or actions will be digested and cogitated by Musidorus. As a result, she takes care to edit whatever feelings appear in her expression, as she is unwilling to betray her weakness to the prince. Pamela admits to her sister,

But how delightful soever it [Musidorus' display] was, my delight might well be in my soul, but it never went to look out of the window to do him any comfort, but how much more I found reason to like him, the more I set all the strength of my mind to suppress it-- or at least conceal it... But alas, what did that help poor Dorus, whose eyes, being his diligent intelligencers, could carry unto him no other news but discomfutable?²⁵

Musidorus' anguish is solely occasioned by reading the information his eyes are presented with, and only because Pamela has cunningly manipulated the picture she advances to her lover.

The other segment I wish to talk about in terms of its integral pictorial component is the scene of Philoclea's recognition of her love for the disguised Pyrocles. This

²⁵ *New Arcadia*, p. 154.

passage is specially significant because of the great difference in shape it has in the two versions. In the *Old Arcadia*, we are told relatively little of the process Philoclea undergoes in order to come to the realisation that she is in love with her Amazon friend. Sidney first describes the princess' natural and unpremeditated love of virtue, only to tell us that Philoclea now feels disloyal to her original purity:

now the amiable Philoclea, whose eyes and senses had received nothing but according as the natural course of each thing required... was suddenly (poor soul) surprised before she was aware that any matter laid hold of her... finding a mountain of burning desire to have overwhelmed her heart... did suffer her sweet spirits to languish under the heavy weight."²⁶

The *New Arcadia* departs from this straight forward enunciation of Philoclea's discomfort to expend more time in drawing the development of her anguish in its successive stages.²⁷ Sidney breaks from the *Old Arcadia's* account of the episode at a point before Philoclea acknowledges to herself that she is in love. Instead, Sidney tellingly likens the

²⁶ *Old Arcadia*, p. 95.

²⁷ McCanles describes the *New Arcadia's* account of Philoclea's discomfort as a movement of awakening female sexuality, that is, from innocence to latent homosexuality, and from there finally to fully developed heterosexuality (M. McCanles, *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, p. 83). Constance Jordan also picks up on this point in her *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*. Jordan remarks, "For Philoclea, representing the interests of the young and inexperienced woman, sexual difference is both fearful and obscure", and Philoclea's discovery of sexual difference in this passage is thus the cause of her sorrow and frustration (C. Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 226). I wish to stress here instead the meticulously drawn-out delineation of the mechanics and problems involved in Philoclea's interpretation of Zelmane's love for her as the most important aspect of the passage. That is, I am highlighting here the hermeneutical difficulties of Philoclea's situation as the prime source of her dilemma.

young princess to an unlearned animal whose greatest obstacle in life is the correct interpretation of the information it is presented with: "she was like a young fawn, who coming in the wind of the hunters, doth not know whether it be a thing or no to be eschewed."²⁸ It is in fact Philoclea's original inability to decipher the exact meaning of Zelmane's demonstration of love for her which causes the best part of her sorrow. The delight she sees the Amazon take in her presence is at first understood by the princess to be the love of one virtuous female for another, and she responds in kind. It is Zelmane's natural gifts of nobility along with "the extreme shows she [Zelmane] made of most devout honouring Philoclea"²⁹ that engenders a like effect in the young woman. Even more suggestive is the following quotation, in which Philoclea's incorrect interpretation of the import of Zelmane's gestures, or rather, her unthinking acceptance and return of gestures which she makes no attempt to interpret, which perpetrates her ensuing predicament:

not only she did imitate the soberness of her [Zelmane's] countenance, the gracefulness of her speech, but even their particular gestures; so that, as Zelmane did often eye her, she would often eye Zelmane, and as Zelmane's eyes would deliver a submissive but vehement desire in their look, she, though as yet she had not the desire in her, yet should her eyes answer in like-piercing kindness of a look... If Zelmane took her hand and softly strained it, she also, thinking the knots of friendship ought to be mutual, would with a sweet fastness show she was loath to part from it... till at the last, poor soul, ere she were aware of it, she accepted not only the band, but the service; not only the sign, but the passion signified."³⁰

²⁸ *New Arcadia*, p. 144.

²⁹ *New Arcadia*, p. 144.

³⁰ *New Arcadia*, p. 145.

Philoclea's hermeneutical failures here precipitate her unwitting love for what seems to her to be an impossible object of that affection. By the time the princess rectifies her understanding of the meaning inherent in the actions of her friend, it is already too late to correct her own response; "while she might prevent it [the love] she did not feel it [or understand it for that matter], now she felt it when it was past preventing."³¹ Ironically, it is Philoclea's valid interpretation of the spectacle her mother presents to the world which further compounds the princess' perplexity. Seeing that Gynecia herself has fallen in love with Zelmane, Philoclea questions herself,

What do I, silly wench, know what love hath prepared for me? Do I not see my mother as well, at least as furiously as myself, love Zelmane? And should I be wiser than my mother? Either she sees a possibility in that which I think impossible, or else impossible loves need not misbecome me.³²

To recapitulate quickly then, Philoclea's lamentation scene centres pivotally on the problems of interpreting visual information. Her initial failure in doing so allows her to fall prey to what is apparently an impossible love. Secondly, her correct, or partially correct, reading of her mother's behaviour further complicates her already difficult situation. As a result, this passage, like the one concerning Musidorus' equestrian exercise, indicates Sidney's increasing preference for the exploitation of pictorial versus oral means to convey his poetic vision, as well as his preoccupation with the difficulties attached to interpreting what we see. We must assume, then, that this developed poetic

³¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 146.

³² *New Arcadia*, p. 149.

vision acknowledges the superiority of visual images to inspire virtue, a sentiment which is echoed in the mouth of Musidorus who wonders, "what can saying make them believe, whom seeing cannot persuade? Those pains must be felt before they can be understood; no outward utterance can command a conceit."³³

4

**From Synthesis to Antithesis:
Rhetorical dilemmas in the *New Arcadia***

In the previous chapter's discussion of Book I of the *New Arcadia*, I already made some mention of the revision's incorporation of more 'difficult' rhetorical figures. I wish now to expand on that notion to account for why figures like *commutatio* and *contrapositum* hold such prominence in the *New Arcadia*. Firstly, I called these figures more difficult ones because I see their mechanics as radically different to the harmonising and totalising nature of figures like *gradatio* or *distributio*, or indeed, to the finalising and stabilising essence of *sententia*. This claim is substantiated by *commutatio*'s and *contrapositum*'s delicate yoking together of apparent opposites which necessarily implies a more unstable relationship between its component parts. The *New Arcadia*'s rhetorical developments do not stop at the employment of these more complex figures, moreover, but include as well unusual, at least according to the standards of the *Old Arcadia*, deployments of even relatively stable figures. The *raison d'être* of both these aspects of the *New Arcadia*'s

³³ *New Arcadia*, p. 136.

rhetoricism, we shall see, again reflects upon Sidney's revamped idea of ethics, as the ambiguity the author infuses into the rhetoric of his narrative advertises his rejection of facile and formulaic answers to all existential crises.

Let us begin our discussion of the *New Arcadia's* more ambiguous rhetorical formulation by focusing quickly on a section of Musidorus' tale to the princess Pamela describing his education in the art of seamanship. In recounting the workings of the compass in the hands of the worthy seamen, Musidorus employs *dirimens copulatio* to an unusual end. In the following quotation, I wish to draw attention to the way in which the *dirimens copulatio* strings together two different and inverse notions in one seamless and uninterrupted concept. Musidorus urges Pamela

to see the admirable power and noble effects of love, whereby the seeming insensible loadstone, with a secret beauty holding the spirit of iron in it, can draw that hard-hearted thing unto it, and like a virtuous mistress, not only make it bow itself, but with it make it aspire to so high a love as of the heavenly poles, and thereby to bring forth the noblest deeds that the children of the earth can boast of (my emphasis).³⁴

Here the movement of submission of a master to his mistress, like that of the magnet, paradoxically becomes a movement of ultimate triumph; in lowering himself, he further raises himself. This example is subtly different from the instances of *dirimens copulatio* already discussed in the *Old Arcadia*. For instance, when Musidorus asserts to his cousin that "in action a man did not only better himself but benefit others,"³⁵ there is a clear indication of a progression from the particular to the general, from one smaller idea to a

³⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 165.

³⁵ *Old Arcadia*, p. 15.

like but more encompassing one. In the above use of *dirimens copulatio*, however, there is not logical progression but paradoxical inversion.

A very similar sort of point can be made about Musidorus' prefatory remark to his cousin Pyrocles as he is about to recount his adventures in the wooing of Pamela. Musidorus tells Pyrocles of his plan to court the bumpkin Mopsa in the stead of the princess, stating, "at last I lighted and resolved on this way, which yet perchance you [Pyrocles] will think was a way rather to hide it."³⁶ Now again in the *Old Arcadia*, the deployment of a figure like *correctio* is generally unproblematic; a straight-forward linear development of an idea is achieved through a refinement of meaning which does not flirt with relating opposite significations. Let us take for example a quotation of the same speech Musidorus gives to Pyrocles in the *Old Arcadia*. Musidorus chastises his young friend, "see with yourself how fit it will be... to divert your thoughts from the way of goodness to lose, nay to abuse, your time" (my emphasis).³⁷ There is certainly a modification of meaning going on here, but it does not involve the same sort of strange transformation of opposites witnessed in the excerpt from the *New Arcadia*; what Musidorus hopes will be a way of winning the princess' love may at first glance seem to be ironically a means of making his task more difficult.

One last example of the *New Arcadia*'s indeterminate usage of otherwise stable rhetorical figures is the following employment of *adnominatio* articulating the reprobate

³⁶ *New Arcadia*, p. 129.

³⁷ *Old Arcadia*, p. 17.

Pamphilus' approach to fidelity and love. We are told that Pamphilus

would prove it was no inconstancy to change from one love to another, but a great constancy; and contrary, that which we call constancy, to be most changeable: 'For,' said he, 'I ever loved my delight, and delighted always in what was lovely, and wheresoever I found occasion to obtain that, I constantly followed it. But these constant fools you speak of, though their mistresses grow by sickness foul or by fortune miserable, yet still will love her, and so commit the absurdest inconstancy that may be, in changing their love from fairness to foulness, and from loveliness to his contrary... --where I, whom you call inconstant, am ever constant: to beauty in others, and delight in myself'.³⁸

Adnominatio, which normally develops the most appropriate definition of a concept through the repeated and varied use of a word, here only serves to confuse the notion of constancy under discussion. Pamphilus strangely arrives at a definition of constancy which is more applicable to that term's opposite, perfidy.³⁹ The contrast to the *Old Arcadia's* employment of the figure *adnominatio* is again striking. When Philoclea is asked by her father to plead on his behalf for Cleophila's mercy, Sidney exercises *adnominatio* to arrive at the most exact definition of obedience to one's father. The *correctio* which immediately follows clears up any ensuing confusion: Philoclea hopes she will not

be forced to begin by true obedience a show of disobedience, rather performing his general commandment (which had ever been to embrace virtue)

³⁸ *New Arcadia*, pp. 239-40.

³⁹ This passage is paradoxical in more than one way, as we will explore in Chapter V. Pamphilus not only attempts to define fidelity in terms more akin to its opposite, but Sidney also subverts the traditional association of women with inconstancy by portraying Pamphilus here as the essence of that vice while women are the victims, not the perpetrators of inconstancy. See below, pages 252-3.

than any new particular sprung out of passion and contrary to the former.⁴⁰

Where the notion of constancy is turned upside down in the *New Arcadia* by the use of *adnominatio*, that rhetorical figure in the *Old Arcadia* serves usefully to refine upon the best definition of what it means for a daughter to be obedient to her father's most urgent dictates.

The above three instances of *correctio*, *dirimens copulatio*, and *adnominatio* in the *New Arcadia*, then, signal the revision's more ambiguous deployment of rhetorical figures also prevalent in the *Old Arcadia*. Where the original *Arcadia* employs such figures to attain the assertion of static order, the same rhetorical devices in the revision point on the contrary to antithetical, paradoxical situations. Let us now turn our attention to the figures themselves that feature more prominently in the *New Arcadia* than they do in the *Old*. One obvious contender for that description is *commutatio*, and equally *contrapositum* is more important in the *New* than in the *Old Arcadia*. Both these figures, it will be shown, involve in some way the type of linking together of apparent antitheses that we have seen Sidney manipulate into the comparatively unambiguous figures of *correctio*, *dirimens copulatio*, and *adnominatio*.

A good illustration of *commutatio*'s transfiguring power is found in the tale of the evil Plexirtus. Plexirtus exerts his malignant force through a dextrous control of the responses he wishes to engender in those around him. Sidney's description of him in itself delineates the series of paradoxes which comprise his twisted character:

⁴⁰ *Old Arcadia*, p. 102.

so had nature formed him... to all turningness of sleights, that though no man had less goodness in his soul than he, no man could better find the places whence arguments might grow of goodness to another; though no man felt less pity, no man could tell better how to stir pity; no man more impudent to deny, where proofs were not manifest; no man more ready to confess, with a repenting manner of aggravating his own evil, where denial would but make the fault fouler.⁴¹

Sidney adds to the above portrait of subtle ironies with a type of *commutatio* that betrays Plexirtus' cunning transposition of his own vices into seeming virtues; he gains the pardon of his praiseworthy brother Leonatus by further exaggerating his own guilt:

with a rope about his neck, barefooted, [he] came to offer himself to the discretion of Leonatus-- where what submission he used... *in making greater the fault, he made the faultiness the less* (my emphasis).⁴²

There are simply too many instances of *commutatio* to list in the *New Arcadia*, but for the most part they operate on the principle set out in this one example; a startling and curious mutation of one idea into its specious converse is executed through this rhetorical figure.

The other figure that I have proposed as indicative of the *New Arcadia's* more ambiguously laden rhetoric is *contrapositum*. On its own, *contrapositum's* mechanics do not differ significantly from that of *commutatio's*. What I see as more interesting and more 'New Arcadian,' however, is the conjoined use of *contrapositum* with forms of *commutatio*. Such is the case of the following description of Dido's miserly but wealthy father Chremes. His house, like Kalandar's, is a symbol of his inner state, only Chremes, unlike Kalandar, grounds his pleasure in extreme exhibitions of frugality; his

⁴¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 185.

⁴² *New Arcadia*, p. 185.

house "was the picture of miserable happiness and rich beggary."⁴³ In this single phrase, Sidney depicts in the most concise fashion possible the paradoxical elements that constitute Chremes' psychological makeup; the *commutatio* signals the movement from misery to happiness, wealth to beggary, which is Chremes' own doing, while the *contrapositum* suggests that it is Chremes' very misery which ironically becomes his happiness, and that his richness is the occasion for his ostensible poverty.

A slightly simpler version of this pairing of *contrapositum* with *commutatio* is in Sidney's portrayal of the bathing Philoclea. In this passage the author deftly suggests the princess' perfect combination of beauty and virtue, two qualities that in themselves are often characterised as mutually exclusive as in the beauty contest of Book I. Philoclea's blushing at her own nakedness is seen as "making shamefastness pleasant, and pleasure shamefast."⁴⁴ Here Philoclea achieves a transcendent level of female perfection which is evinced in the rare and often incongruous mixture of her purity and outstanding beauty.

We have thus witnessed the *New Arcadia's* highly complex and equivocal rhetorical formulation. The particularly '*New Arcadian*' figures of *commutatio*, and *commutatio* joined with *contrapositum*, distance themselves from *sententia*, a figure far more important to the *Old Arcadia*, through the unstable and almost antithetical relationship between their component parts. Furthermore, the *New Arcadia's* manner of applying figures like *correctio* and *adnominatio*, which in the *Old*

⁴³ *New Arcadia*, p. 245.

⁴⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 189.

Arcadia generate little confusion, serves to necessitate the recognition of the ambiguity latent in almost any one assertion.

5

**The *New Arcadia's* Plot Innovations:
Commutatio as plot device.**

The last section's discussion of the *New Arcadia's* rhetorical equivocacy raised the issue of Sidney's dissatisfaction with the *Old Arcadia's* comparatively facile elucidations of the ethical difficulties facing his characters. I will begin this section by claiming that the same motivating force behind the rhetoric's increasingly complicated structure induces the type of plot developments observed in the retrospective narrative of Book II. It is not difficult to demonstrate that the revision's plot progression has greater scope than the original's, since clearly very little happens in terms of actual events in Book II of the *Old Arcadia*. Nevertheless, it is the type of action that is relayed in the *New Arcadia* that is important rather than the quantity, for the quiddity of the pre-Arcadian adventures of Pyrocles and Musidorus is equally symptomatic of Sidney's departure from the basic procedure and presuppositions of the original.

Let us take for example the story of Leucippus and Nelsus, the two faithful servants of the princes on their maritime journeys. Musidorus and Pyrocles encounter trouble at sea and desperately seek a floating piece of their broken ship which is on the verge of sinking. Unfortunately it is already claimed by the two servant brothers Leucippus and

Nelsus, and the added weight of their masters threatens to capsize them all. The two virtuous brothers offer selflessly to abandon the board to face almost certain drowning in the sea in order to preserve the lives of their beloved princes. What makes this episode highly ironic, however, is the information regarding how Leucippus and Nelsus arrived in the service of the princes in the first place. Having been captured in a war between Phrygia and Thessalia, the good brothers are forced to endure thirteen years of imprisonment "because... their valour known" has raised the cost of their ransom far beyond the means of their war-impooverished relations.⁴⁵ Musidorus and Pyrocles, hearing of their distress, pursue all avenues possible to secure the funds for their release, and achieving that, they earn the devotion and service of Nelsus and Leucippus.

Thus, the progression of the episode is as follows: the virtue of the two brothers occasions their prolonged imprisonment; the goodness of the princes prompts them to save the brothers; the gratefulness to the princes for their generosity provokes Nelsus and Leucippus to invite almost certain death for their masters' sake. Sidney exacerbates the already elaborate irony by having Leucippus and Nelsus miraculously rescued, finding the land of Pontus and attaining the favour of that country's wantonly cruel king. Only after Nelsus and Leucippus fall prey to the dangerous flattery of the king's faithless courtiers and are made into minions are they betrayed by what was actually their best virtue, the faithfulness to their masters Pyrocles and

⁴⁵ *New Arcadia*, p. 168.

Musidorus. The King of Pontus discovers that his new favourites were the loyal servants of those same two princes responsible for the death of his cousin, the King of Phrygia, and they are accordingly thrown into prison. Musidorus and Pyrocles again attempt their rescue, but one of Pontus' councillors, jealous of Nelsus' and Leucippus' fortune in having such generous masters, advises the king to strike off the brothers' heads.

Looking at the internal structure of the episode, then, we see Sidney setting up and then destabilising the roles of saviour and saved between the two sets of men. One pair of men is saved only to be thus given the chance to rescue the other two, who are again free to become the liberators of their liberators. So works the pattern of virtue spawning virtuous gratefulness, again in turn inspiring a just return of valour. Here we can discern with a little carefulness the essential configuration of *commutatio*: virtue generates gratefulness, then gratefulness itself effects a show of virtue. Yet even so, Sidney further complicates and intensifies the paradox by his final gesture of turning the princes' well-meaning attempt to release Leucippus and Nelsus into the act that ultimately kills the brothers. That in itself can be seen as a type of *contrapositum*: deathly kindness.

The longer episodes related by Musidorus and especially Pyrocles to the two princesses follow similar patterns to the one established in the Nelsus and Leucippus scenario above. The trials of the blind King of Paphlagonia, Plangus and

Andromana,⁴⁶ and Erona, to list but a few, illustrate the author's new approach to ethical difficulties, namely his acknowledgement of their essential equivocacy which renders them crises as such in the first place. One such situation which I feel deserves special attention and which encapsulates and crystalises the structure of the *New Arcadia's* plot developments is the Dido-Pamphilus story. Here we are given a predicament which uniquely exemplifies Sidney's mature and highly complex approach towards ethical dilemmas.

The tale is told by Pyrocles to his love Philoclea, and relates how the young prince gets involved in an incident which stays him from his appointed battle against the brave but braggartly Anaxius. On his way to the combat, Pyrocles comes upon nine women cruelly torturing a man whom they have bound to a tree and clearly enjoying his pathetic cries of agony; "the poor man wept and bled, cried and prayed, while they sported themselves in his pain, and delighted in his prayers as the arguments of their victory."⁴⁷ As Nancy Lindheim has correctly noted, the logistics of this particular scene directly pose certain difficulties, for, she asserts, "a stock response is inappropriate; it is a man, not a lady in distress, and though the knight's allegiance is instinctively with the victim it would be ungentlemanly to

⁴⁶ McCanles' *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World* (pp. 60-5) is very helpful here, with its vigorous discussion of the Andromana, Plangus, and the King of Iberia love triangle. McCanles saliently remarks on Andromana's grasp and control of the "dialectical potential of human moral qualities," that is, of the ambiguity and indeterminacy comprehended within all ethical enterprises. His preoccupation, however, with the neat division of text and anti-text has correctly been seen as limiting.

⁴⁷ *New Arcadia*, p. 236.

use force against women."⁴⁸ I would add to the above statement that not only are the traditional roles of the victim as a female and the persecutor as a male reversed, but the victimised man himself is characterised as strangely female in his agonised pleas for help; he has "the voice of a man, though it were a very unmanlike voice so to cry."⁴⁹ Sidney thus already destabilises on two levels the obvious scenario that a chivalric knight is expected to resolve. Moreover, Pyrocles is faced with further complications which render still more difficult his choice of action when he is acquainted with the reasons behind the women's hatred for Pamphilus. It is revealed that Pamphilus' previous amatory exploits have centred around the humiliation of one woman after the other, using each one in turn to lure yet more victims and delighting in their helplessness and shame. This behaviour is certainly reprehensible and deserves punishment of some sort, so the enraged women are somewhat justified in their treatment of the faithless Pamphilus. Even so, their choice of torture is extreme indeed, and Pyrocles finds himself in the awkward position of having to choose either to defend an evil man, or to turn a blind eye to blatant cruelty.

⁴⁸ N. R. Lindheim, "Sidney's *Arcadia*, Book II: Retrospective Narrative", *Studies in Philology* 64 (1967), p. 166. Nancy Lindheim discusses the retrospective narratives of Book II as exemplifying Sidney's 'complex sense of structure,' and his understanding of virtue as grounded in active choice between relative degrees of well-doing. Her reading of this passage's surprising and unusual inversion of the gendered roles of victim and culprit is something that will be returned to in Chapter V, where I will explore the relationship of femininity to heroism.

⁴⁹ *New Arcadia*, p. 236.

The young prince is saved from the uncomfortable choice as a group of Pamphilus' friends arrive on the scene and are urged by the tortured man to revenge his loss of dignity on the women. Pyrocles can thus fully defend the women with few ethical complications. The truce he ultimately achieves between the participants appears to be the best solution possible in such an uncertain situation, although that too proves to be equally unstable. Pyrocles returns to his journey to fight Anaxius only to be interrupted once more in the middle of the battle as Dido appears before them, this time being beaten by the very same man she had just been punishing. Here again a conflict immediately presents itself between opposing courses of action, both holding claim to chivalric exigency. Is Pyrocles to ignore the pitiful plight of a wronged woman, or is he to forsake the code of honour which dictates that a virtuous knight does not shirk honourable battle? As Anaxius represents a paradox himself, being a brave and able fighter and yet too jealous of his reputation to risk it for the sake of some unknown woman, Pyrocles is forced to choose between relative degrees of chivalric virtue. His decision to save Dido earns him our approbation, but also the derision of the spectators of the combat who assume his departure is urged by cowardice.

The Dido-Pamphilus episode, as a result, is a highly problematic and ambiguously structured one. Not only does the original situation Pyrocles is confronted with demand a "significantly more complex evaluation of right and wrong"⁵⁰ than we have seen in the *Old Arcadia*, but the ensuing

⁵⁰ N. R. Lindheim, "Sidney's *Arcadia*, Book II: Retrospective Narrative," p. 167.

developments of the story insure that even the victim-villain distinction becomes destabilised at a fundamental level. Pyrocles, the epic hero, cannot in this episode define his virtue in absolute terms; he is made to recognise the need for compromise between varying aspects of the same code of chivalric honour. Indeed, Pyrocles responds to a code of ethical behaviour that rejects the inflexible and rigid strictures of chivalry.

Before concluding this section, I would like to discuss two short scenes of the *New Arcadia* that are added into the climactic peasant rebellion of Book II of the *Old Arcadia* and specifically embody the revision's narrative equivocacy. The first scene describes the plight of the dapper tailor who has had his nose struck off by Basilius in the heat of the battle. The tailor, having ambitions to wed a seamster's daughter, is thus "not a little grieved for such a disgrace,"⁵¹ and so he attempts to retrieve his nose, hoping to cleave it back on again. Unfortunately for him, the disguised Pyrocles arrives only to dash such thoughts with his sword. The following quotation is a brilliant and extremely 'New Arcadian' example of *commutatio* as a plot device: "as his [the tailor's] hand was on the ground to bring his nose to his head, Zelmane with a blow sent his head to his nose."⁵² That little scene is quickly followed by that of the painter. This painter is involved in depicting a battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths and therefore decides to accompany the rebels in order to witness some of the wounds and to transfer them more vividly onto his canvas.

⁵¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 281.

⁵² *New Arcadia*, p. 281.

As with the tailor, Sidney imbues the wounding of the painter in the fighting with keen irony:

this morning, being carried by the stream of this company, the foolish fellow was even delighted to see the effects of the blows-- but this last happening near him so amazed him that he stood stock still, while Dorus with a turn of his sword stroke off both his hands; and so, the painter returned well-skilled in wounds, but with never a hand to perform his skill.⁵³

Here as before the description of an action is fundamentally structured in terms of *commutatio*: painterly skill seeks first-hand experience to guide it, but that experience renders the painterly skill impotent and irrelevant.

Both the above scenes which are new in the revision indicate, as do the two longer episodes considered earlier, then, Sidney's manipulation of plot devices to articulate his understanding of the essence of ethical difficulties. The episodes all dramatize, as I have already suggested, the author's preoccupation with the unexpected and ironic twists that work their way into all ethical occupations. Furthermore, Sidney's plot innovations in the *New Arcadia*, many pivoting on the conceptual framework of *commutatio*, declare his concern for the ambiguity always latent in interpreting and carrying out the moral right.

6

Heroic Idealism Meets Relativity: Beyond Good and Evil in the *New Arcadia*

The three previous sections have been inter-related in many aspects. Perhaps the most obvious of these is their

⁵³ *New Arcadia*, p. 282.

negation of clear, facile, unproblematic, and determinate solutions to ethical difficulties, since for the most part the *New Arcadia's* rhetorical figuration, its key pictorial element, and its plot strategy all serve to highlight the author's appreciation of the difficulty involved in the exercise of acting ethically. The above developments are intimately conjoined with the move Sidney makes in the *New Arcadia* to dedicating his exploration of social and political ethics to the difficulty in both designating the moral good, and effectively executing that moral requirement. The outcome of Sidney's progressive destabilising of ethical *sententia* is the ultimate dismantling of the sort of strict Good-Evil dichotomies prevalent in the *Old Arcadia*. The manifestation of this last statement is twofold: first, the portrayal of certain characters as neither wholly evil nor absolutely good; and second, the delineation of moral dilemmas themselves as resistant to solutions entirely beneficial to all involved. We must overlap slightly here on the last section's examination of the paradoxical nature of the *New Arcadia's* plot progression since, as I have said, all the developments in the revision are equally symptomatic of the author's change in attitude toward effective didactic art.

One of the *New Arcadia's* most important added characters is of course Amphialus, and it is fitting that much critical attention has been devoted to the great sophistication of his characterisation. I would suggest that the basis for Amphialus' special place in the *Arcadia* is that he, more than any other central character, symbolises Sidney's later

recognition of the impossibility of a pure idealism.⁵⁴ As John Carey puts it, Amphialus becomes the new hero, or even the 'anti-hero,' of the *New Arcadia*; he is the embodiment of the Sidneian human dilemma of self-conflict and *perepeteia*.⁵⁵ Amphialus' integral self-contrariness, therefore, exemplifies Sidney's refutation of the clear right-wrong distinctions of the *Old Arcadia* and personifies the author's mature vision of the problematics of heroic virtue.

We are first introduced to Amphialus in Book I of the *New Arcadia*, when Musidorus comes across the discarded armour of the noble knight. We learn shortly thereafter in the same Book of the terrible tragedy involving Helen Queen of Corinth, Philoxenus, Timotheus, and the unwitting Amphialus. The configuration of the entire episode is vitally interesting from the point of view of this chapter, so I will accordingly stretch the limits of this discussion to include that portion of Book I of the *New Arcadia*.

We discover in Book I that Amphialus, as a token of gratitude towards his benefactors Timotheus and his son Philoxenus, undertakes the courtship of Helen on his friend's behalf, the queen being immune to the pleadings of the love-sick Philoxenus. Unfortunately, Helen falls in love with

⁵⁴ We will return to the characterisation of Amphialus in the following chapter, where the question of Sidney's tragic vision is further explored in respect to this key *New Arcadian* figure.

⁵⁵ John Carey, "Structure and Rhetoric in *Arcadia*," in *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, p. 253. Carey's analysis of the rhetorical formation of the *New Arcadia* leads him to conclude that the style of the work, its tendency toward deadlock between two equal and opposite forces achieved in the use of *periphrasis* and *commutatio*, mirrors Sidney's tragic world view. His comments on the 'functionality' of the *Arcadia's* rhetoric and Amphialus' fatal ambivalence and vacillation are particularly salient.

Amphialus himself, who cannot reciprocate her sentiments on the basis of his loyalty to Timotheus' son. The queen cannot contemplate marriage to anyone but Amphialus, and misleads Philoxenus to believe that he has been deliberately usurped by his own assistant. Enraged, Philoxenus finds Amphialus and attempts to kill him for his betrayal, and Amphialus not knowing what has happened to change his friend's former affection, accidentally kills him while defending himself. Amphialus' remorse is enormous, but is further intensified when Timotheus arrives on the scene to witness his son's death at the hands of his beloved ward and dies from the shock. Amphialus' hatred for himself is only rivalled by that he holds for the queen who has wounded him so keenly, ironically because of her love for him.

This story parallels the genre of plot innovation we have just examined, but also suggests Sidney's more complicated picture of a romantic hero; Amphialus is outwardly on the same heroic scale as the main characters Musidorus and Pyrocles, and yet he is the centre of the work's most extended tragedy. He is a protagonist with nearly all the virtues of the exemplary Pyrocles and Musidorus, but the results of his actions on others and his own fate are almost entirely tragic; he is thus neither infallible nor entirely deplorable.

Not surprisingly, then, the reaction of others to this strange blend of unimpeachable valour and tragic misfortune is similarly paradoxical. Amphialus appears in Book II as the princesses are bathing in the river, ardently watched by Zelmane/Pyrocles. Pyrocles discovers him and immediately

recognises the merit apparent in his 'goodly presence.' His request, therefore, for the intruder to leave the forbidden area is respectful but firm. When Amphialus, who has fallen in love with his cousin Philoclea, asks to keep the glove his dog has brought him, Pyrocles instantly finds his admiration for the stranger contested by his jealousy.

The situation is rife with irony; while Pyrocles is compelled to fight Amphialus, he can empathise with his feelings for Philoclea and is in fact guilty of the same trespass against her privacy. At the same time Pyrocles admires Amphialus' martial expertise, he seeks to undo him, and furthermore finds Amphialus' gallant refusal to be aggressive toward a woman yet more reason to despise him; "Zelmae [was]... more spited with that courtesy that one that did nothing should be able to resist her."⁵⁶ As for Amphialus, he is grateful to the Amazon for saving the life of his beloved Philoclea, and is nevertheless forced to fight him/her. Moreover, his expressions of gratitude springing from his love only seem to heighten his opponent's ire. The final paradox is that Pyrocles' innate virtue and charity turn his triumph into a type of defeat; his last successful blow renders his "victorious anger... conquered by the before-conquered pity."⁵⁷

In this highly complex situation, then, two virtually perfect heroes are matched against each other with each one experiencing ambivalent emotions toward his rival. In each's eyes, the other is both the opponent and the exemplar. Both, in addition, are guilty of a crime for which they have the

⁵⁶ *New Arcadia*, pp. 196-7.

⁵⁷ *New Arcadia*, p. 197.

same excuse; they are erring and yet they are essentially good. Amphialus' later endeavours, we shall see in Book III, proceed with the same tendency toward negative acts done for positive reasons.

The other manifestation of Sidney's overall problematizing of the Good-Evil dichotomy is the creation of ethical dilemmas for which there is no possible solution that does not have its own adverse effects. Such is the case of the real Zelmane, the unfortunate daughter of the evil Plexirtus. Zelmane falls in love with Pyrocles while both he and his cousin are imprisoned by Andromana as revenge for their rejection of her advances. Zelmane therefore uses her influence over Andromana's son Palladius, who has long been in love with Zelmane, to gain the release of the two cousins. The two princes escape with Palladius' help, while Palladius himself is tragically killed in the struggle. Later, Pyrocles and Musidorus come across a young gentleman who begs Pyrocles to become his page, and being granted that position, the young man faithfully serves the prince in several of his adventures. When they hear of the misfortune of Tydeus and Telenor at the hands of Plexirtus, however, Pyrocles' dedicated page suddenly takes ill, and his condition becomes deadly when he hears of the imminent death of Plexirtus unless some noble knight stands for his cause. It so turns out that the young page is really Zelmane who has chosen these means to serve her beloved Pyrocles, and the knowledge of her lover's hate for her father and then of her own father's impending death has crippled her. Her dying wish to

Pyrocles, as she finally reveals her identity, is for him to attempt to save Plexirtus' life.

The perversity of the situation is evident: Zelmane's faithful and virtuous love for Pyrocles deservedly earns her his respect and admiration, and yet her father's depravity is incontrovertible even by herself. Pyrocles decides to sacrifice his moral castigation of Plexirtus for what he judges to be the more ethically exigent act of carrying out Zelmane's last wish. Pyrocles furthermore compromises his loyalty to his cousin Musidorus to some extent when he leaves him alone to succour the King of Pontus, his decision to rescue Plexirtus calling him away at that time. Pyrocles remarks on the irony of the situation to Philoclea, saying, "I was to leave the standing-by Musidorus (whom better than myself I loved) to go save him whom for just causes I hated."⁵⁸ Pyrocles' slaying of the beast and thus securing of Plexirtus' release is not, however, judged by the good nobleman holding Plexirtus captive to be a valid sacrifice. He tells the prince that he regrets his "virtue had been employed to save a worse monster than [he] killed."⁵⁹ Pyrocles' moral decision to save Zelmane's father is rendered even more dubious when we discover that immediately after he is set free Plexirtus, who feels neither remorse for his past actions nor gratitude for Pyrocles' kindness, deviously betrays the same princes' lives to gain the favour of their enemy Artaxia.

This one situation demonstrates, then, how ethical dilemmas in the *New Arcadia* differ from the ones examined in

⁵⁸ *New Arcadia*, p. 269.

⁵⁹ *New Arcadia*, pp. 270-1.

the *Old*, since as we have just seen, Pyrocles is forced to choose between relative degrees of well-doing. In making what he feels to be the more ethically necessary decision, the prince frustrates his other moral ideals and eventually endangers his own and his beloved cousin's lives for the sake of a villain. An analogous predicament is that of Erona, who is forced to decide either to spare the life of her lover by marrying someone else, or to be faithful to him knowing that he will be killed for it. Erona's decision, like Pyrocles, is between relative degrees of right and wrong, "for the love of him [her lover Antiphilus] commanded her to yield to no other; the love of him commanded her to preserve his life."⁶⁰

From both these morally ambiguous situations and from the mixed characterisation of Amphialus for one, we can conclude that Sidney departs from the possibility of moral certitude and absoluteness available in the ethical structure of the *Old Arcadia*. The idealism of the original work is subjected to the limits of relativity in the revised, and even the *Arcadia's* main heroes Pyrocles and Musidorus cannot achieve complete assurance that their attempts to preserve the moral right will not be thwarted.

In conclusion, I hope to have demonstrated that Sidney's delineation of moral exigency is progressively complicated on many levels: the hermeneutical problematics of interpreting visual information, the ambiguity underpinning verbal assertions, the possibility of unforeseen and ironic twists of fate, and finally the impossibility of an absolute Good.

⁶⁰ *New Arcadia*, p. 207.

These factors all occasion and constitute the *New Arcadia's* depiction of an unstable moral good.

Chapter IV

RHETORIC IN BOOK III OF THE *OLD* AND *NEW* *ARCADIAS*

Book III of the *Old Arcadia* delineates the princes' overcoming of the immediate obstacles placed in the way of attaining access to their princesses, which is essentially the central enterprise of the entire romantic plot. As such, it copes with broad questions addressing the quality of the skill and virtue they display in dealing with the entanglements of their projects, with the final degree of culpability in the behaviour of Basilius and Gynecia, and with the nature of the oracle itself which has determined the situations of all the characters. The last of these considerations embraces issues raised by the first two, as the fulfilment of all the predictions but one of the oracle is accomplished in this book, and only through the sins of the royal couple and the clever and perhaps devious manoeuvres of the princes. For this reason, the discussion of this Book of the *Old Arcadia* will be extended to include the resolutions for the oracular dictates (i.e. the judgement of Euarchus in Book V) and will refer to Sidney's overall narrative thrust to the work's conclusion.

The basic thread which unites the individual plot lines as they tend toward (temporary) conclusion is the rhetorical role of paradox. Paradox, in other words, becomes not only the chief operative rhetorical scheme in this Book of the *Old Arcadia*, but its structure and character are the governing principles behind the way in which Sidney's heroes

meet the requirements of their objectives. Whether the author presents these as entirely laudable tactics, however, must be questioned subsequently. The first half of this chapter, then, will treat the machinations of the main characters as pivoting on the principles of paradox as it is defined by Renaissance theoreticians, and secondly, how Sidney thus leaves the door open for his later discussions of the nature and essence of justice.

1

Paradox in Books III-V of the *Old Arcadia*

The Third Book or Act begins with a scene bringing together and contrasting the two princes and their relative degrees of success in courting Basilius' daughters. Sidney opens the scene with the narrator's *sententia* about the virtues of friendship which provides the background for the following comparison between the two cousins. The narrator remarks on Pyrocles' and Musidorus' exchange of reports of their progress in the following manner:

there is no sweeter taste of friendship than the coupling of their souls in this mutuality either of condoling or comforting, where the oppressed mind finds itself not altogether miserable, since it is sure of one which is feelingly sorry for his misery; and the joyful spends not his joy either alone or there where it may be envied, but may freely send it to such a well-grounded object, from whence he shall be sure to receive a sweet reflection of the same joy, and... see a lively picture of his own gladness.¹

Here, friendship provides a fortuitous mirroring of gladness for happiness, increasing the first joy, and sorrow for

¹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 148.

failure, mitigating the original unhappiness. Instead, as becomes clear, the discrepancy between their different situations oddly places the princes in almost competitive, opposed positions. The disguised Pyrocles laments to Musidorus after hearing the cheerful song he has written for his good fortune,

Alas,... can you not joy sufficiently in your joys, but you must use your joys as if you would vauntingly march over your friend's miseries? Be happy still, my Dorus, but wish the same hap to him whom goodwill doth make place much of his hap in you.²

The *sententia* is placed on its head; what should be a conventional scene of congratulation and consolation becomes paradoxically one of contention and antagonism.

I have used this passage as an example to provide the context for the following analyses of the plot concerning the lovers. I wish to suggest that the rationale behind this friction is embedded in the paradoxicality of the princes' very situations. Musidorus and Pyrocles reflect upon the changes they have undergone from responsible and virile men of action to effete pastoral masqueraders in the following paradoxical comments each makes of the other. Cleophila exclaims, "who would ever have thought so good a schoolmaster as you [Musidorus] were to me could for lack of living have been driven to shepherdry?," while Dorus counters, "even the same... that would have thought so true a chaste boy as you [Pyrocles] were could have become a counterfeit courtesan."³ It is most important to note again, however, that not only have two virtuous men descended into weakness, but that the

² *Old Arcadia*, p. 149.

³ *Old Arcadia*, p. 148.

mode of each's descent is remarkable for demeaning his chief strength: Musidorus' belittles his famed nobility while Pyrocles betrays his previous sexual integrity.

Exhibited here in part we have the Renaissance conception of the paradox as playing upon and affirming the unexpected and the self-contradictory. Common to Quintilian's, Puttenham's, and Peacham's definitions of the scheme is paradox's assertion of the hitherto unthought-of or the generally surprising belief. *Paradoxon* or *inopinatum* is called by Quintilian simply "the unexpected," while Puttenham describes it as the "report of a thing that is marvellous" and Peacham claims that paradox is when the "orator affirmeth something to be true by saying that he would not have believed it,... it is so strange, so great, or so wonderful that it may appear to be incredible."⁴

This element of the unbelievable and the marvellous takes shape in the Arcadian world in the form primarily of fate or Providence, which exists above and beyond human agency or understanding, and which very often contradicts human reason. It also, as we will see, palliates to some extent the importance of human responsibility. Margaret Dana in her essay "The Providential Plot of the *Old Arcadia*" remarks on the widespread disagreements between readers of Sidney regarding the relationship of the work's narrative voice to the structure of its plot.⁵ Such disagreements seem

⁴ In L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, p. 113.

⁵ Margaret Dana, "The Providential Plot of the *Old Arcadia*", in *Sir Philip Sidney: an Anthology of Modern Criticism*, pp. 83-102. Dana's discussion addresses the discrepancy between the plot itself and the narrator's attitude toward it by focusing in on Sidney's ironic yet compassionate pose toward his characters.

to spring from the perceived schism between the original characterisation of Euarchus as the exemplary voice of reason and political sense as opposed to his possible later extremism. Equally, the improper praise given to Gynecia and her earlier undeserved condemnation at the end of Book V, where Sidney labels her "the... person most infamous and most famous, and neither justly"⁶ contribute to the overall feeling of disjunction between authorial conviction and plot structure. Dana highlights, in other words, the lack of a single character in the *Old Arcadia* who can be said to embody and reflect Sidney's final judgement on the follies of all the six main actors of the work. Her insistence that it is the narrative voice itself which becomes the reader's only reliable guide suggests a more important observation to be made about Sidney's ultimate depiction of social ethics as we have been examining them. I intend to demonstrate that the third Book of the *Old Arcadia* points toward an inescapable dependence of the human impulse to act virtuously on the concurrence of the higher powers, and that the same Book of the *New Arcadia*, while sharing similar concerns about human responsibility, adopts a quite different pose. This is in effect achieved through each's different incorporation and manipulation of paradox.

Pyrocles and Musidorus do not stay at odds for long, as their natural virtuous love for each other resurfaces, and they are soon discussing Musidorus' imminent departure from Arcadia with his beloved Pamela. The result of this discussion leads Pyrocles once more to remark on his

⁶ *Old Arcadia*, p. 360.

troublesome situation, cursed by an incredible series of misunderstandings and misguided passions.

There came straight before her [Cleophila's] mind, made tender with woes, the images of her own fortune; her tedious longings; her causes to despair; the cumbersome folly of Basilius; the enraged jealousy of Gynecia; herself a prince without retinue, a man annoyed with the troubles of womankind, loathsomely loved, and dangerously loving.⁷

The *contentio* and the *contrapositum* participate in the overall irony and paradoxicality of Cleophila's position: she cannot realise her passion for the one she loves while she is plagued and frustrated with the unwanted attentions of those who unfortunately love her. As a result, Cleophila is involved in three separate amatory dilemmas which are governed by the rules of paradox, self-contradiction and the transcendence of human abilities and belief.

When Cleophila accidentally stumbles upon the solitary Gynecia and is faced with the possibility of being revealed if she doesn't give in to the Duchess' advances, she faces the first of her irreconcilable situations. Here the narrator suggestively intrudes in his narrative to describe the situation with a paradoxical *sententia* of his own. He comments, "Cleophila... was, as the proverb saith, like them that hold the wolf by the ears: bitten while they hold, and slain if they lose."⁸ More intrusively still, the narrator chooses this delicate point of stalemate to shift his attention to the plight of Dorus, abruptly remarking "methinks I hear the shepherd Dorus calling me to tell you of his hopeful adventures."⁹ We leave Cleophila, then, stuck in

⁷ *Old Arcadia*, p. 153.

⁸ *Old Arcadia*, p. 162.

⁹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 161.

her paradoxical situation, with the narrator exercising his power over his own characters and overtly guiding the action of the story.

Gynecia experiences the same sort of frustration in trying to realise her love for Cleophila, but she more astutely and self-consciously than the supposed Amazon locates the source of the painful ironies of love within the basic paradoxicality of the human condition. Her *sententia* about man's 'erected wit' and 'infected will' reads a more pessimistic and negative result into Sidney's own delineation of human moral exigency:¹⁰ "O strange mixture of human minds: only so much good left as to make us languish in our own evils!"¹¹ Instead of continuing to pursue virtue despite human frailty, Gynecia opts for an abandonment to vice in much the same style as Medea does in both Euripedes' and Seneca's play; she cries

ye infernal furies,... aid one that dedicates herself unto you! Let my rage be satisfied, since the effect of it is for your service; neither be afraid to make me too happy, since nothing can come to appease the smart of my guilty conscience! I desire but to assuage the sweltering of my hellish longing.¹²

Gynecia's conscious decision to cast her lot with what she recognises as sin sets her apart from the other actors of the work. Her negative, abandoned reaction to life's paradoxicality casts her in the role of a tragic heroine, endowing her with both of the sins of her daughters. The love

¹⁰ These terms are taken from Sidney's *Defence*, where he defines man's impulse to do good as a sign of his 'erected wit' or intimation of Godliness and his 'infected will' as man's moral weakness resultant of the Fall, here lack the *Defence's* optimism about our ability to attain greatness despite our flawed natures.

¹¹ *Old Arcadia*, pp. 160-1.

¹² *Old Arcadia*, p. 161.

Gynecia bears for Cleophila, having no honour in it whatsoever, is truly "unfit for [her] state, uncomely for [her] sex."¹³

Despite her self-conscious capitulation to vice, Gynecia remains perplexed by her own contentious nature. Cleophila, seeking to escape from her unwanted lover, later appeals to the Duchess' power of reason by explicating how contradictory the impulses driving Gynecia are. Cleophila pleads to her,

you desire my affection, and yet you yourself think my affection already bestowed. You pretend cruelty before you have the subjection, and are jealous of the keeping that which as yet you have not gotten. And that which is strangest in your jealousy is both the unnatural injustice of it (in being loath that should come to your daughter which you deem good), and the vainness, since you two are in so diverse respects that there is no necessity one of you should fall to be a bar to the other.¹⁴

This long exposition of Gynecia's illogicality has no positive effect, as she freely admits reason and logic no longer rule her behaviour. She counters,

thoughts are but the overflowings of the mind, and the tongue is but a servant of the thoughts. Therefore, marvel not that my words suffer contrarieties, since my mind doth hourly suffer in itself whole armies of mortal adversaries. But, alas, if I had the use of mine own reason, then should I not need, for want of it, to find myself in this desperate mischief. But because my reason is vanished, so have I likewise no power to correct my unreasonableness.¹⁵

Cleophila is thus left to seek safety only in deceit, ironically counterfeiting love where she feels none, and disdain to Philoclea where she feels love; "am I not run into a strange gulf," she asks herself, "that am fain for love to hurt her I love; and because I detest others, to

¹³ *Old Arcadia*, p. 161.

¹⁴ *Old Arcadia*, p. 178.

¹⁵ *Old Arcadia*, p. 178.

please them I detest."¹⁶ Her deception is in itself ironically couched in the language of sincerity, as she seeks "with plainness to win trust-- which trust she might after deceive with greater subtlety."¹⁷ Sidney closes the scene once again by interrupting the narrative with an authorial *sententia* promoting the contrariety of man's nature. Gynecia's final duping by Pyrocles is representative of the human being's essential imperfection:

For such, alas, are we all! In such a mould are we cast that, with the too much love we bear ourselves being first our own flatterers, we are easily hooked with others' flattery, we are easily persuaded of others' love.¹⁸

Cleophila narrowly escapes from her encounter with Gynecia only to be constrained by the web of lies she has fabricated, which follows on the general tendency of paradoxes to breed yet more paradoxes. Forced by Gynecia's jealousy to show disregard for Philoclea, Cleophila engenders in the young princess a series of self-doubting questions which present her current state of unsatisfied love as paradoxically the result of her too-eager acceptance of that same passion. The princess demands of herself,

alas, Philoclea, is this the prize of all thy pains? Is this the reward of thy given-away liberty? Hath too much yielding bred cruelty, or can too great acquaintance make me held for a stranger? Hath the choosing a companion made me left alone, or doth granting the desire cause the desire to be left neglected?¹⁹

Continuing the play of perverse reversals, Philoclea first castigates her lover, then praises him and castigates herself, and finally pronounces her state of emotional

¹⁶ *Old Arcadia*, p. 189.

¹⁷ *Old Arcadia*, p. 179.

¹⁸ *Old Arcadia*, p. 181.

¹⁹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 184.

stalemate: "This is my case: my love hates me, virtue deals wickedly with me, and he does me wrong whose doing I can never account wrong."²⁰

Basilus' attempted seduction of Cleophila embodies particularly that aspect of paradoxy concerned with that which is "so strange" that it is beyond belief, and in this instance, even ludicrous. He approaches Cleophila proposing to return to his rightful place in Mantinea, hoping to impress her with shows of his nobility. Ironically, fear of being discovered for what 'she' really is pushes Cleophila again to counterfeit affection where now she only feels disdain if not disgust. As a result, the Duke's pride in his degree of success only serves to accentuate his foolishness in those eyes in which he is trying to find favour. The narrator tells us, "you might have seen Basilus humbly swell, and with a lowly look stand upon his tiptoes," and with that "Cleophila thought it not good for his stomach to receive a surfeit of too much favour."²¹ As Basilus continues his advances later, he scoffs at the Amazon's suggestion that his wife's jealousy might prove an obstacle to his efforts. He asks, the irony growing increasingly heavy, "what,... shall my wife become my mistress?"²² Not only does that come true, as the reader at this point already knows it will, but it does so in ways the unwitting Basilus cannot even suspect.

The cave scene in which Basilus encounters his wife in lieu of his would-be mistress is indeed wholly comic from the

²⁰ *Old Arcadia*, p. 185.

²¹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 157.

²² *Old Arcadia*, p. 194.

point of view of the Duke's behaviour, as are also his actions leading up to that climax. Attempting to enter his chamber quietly so as not to wake its occupant, supposedly Gynecia, Basilius instead is just as clumsy as he is eager to avoid being so;

the more curious he was, the more he thought everything creaked under him; and his mind being out of the way with another thought, and his eyes not serving his turn in that dark place, each coffer or cupboard he met, one saluted his shins, another his elbows; sometimes ready in revenge to strike them again with his face.²³

The most acutely paradoxical aspect of Basilius' absurd manoeuvres is that they are in fact self-defeating; the narrator remarks, "thus with a great deal of pain did Basilius go to her whom he fled, and with much cunning left the person for whom he had employed all his cunning".²⁴

So far I have said nothing of Musidorus and Pamela, and this is because their dilemma is qualitatively different from those I have been tracing. Pyrocles, it has been said earlier, is more closely associated with the passions than is his cousin; his entanglements have correspondingly been centred more on issues of emotional/amatory propriety than those of the social standards put into question by Musidorus. Gynecia, Basilius, and Philoclea, likewise, consciously or unconsciously, face problems of sexual integrity. Since Pamela's and Musidorus' difficulties are obviously those of political legitimacy, they seem less paradoxical for as Dana comments in her article discussed above, the "central focus for the paradoxes of the human predicament in the *Old Arcadia*

²³ *Old Arcadia*, p. 198.

²⁴ *Old Arcadia*, p. 198.

is love",²⁵ and Pamela's and Musidorus' love is never put in doubt. Musidorus, instead, gains a greater degree of success in his plan to marry Pamela by exploiting in a comparatively linear and non-paradoxical fashion, the ineptitude of Pamela's guardians.

Noticeably, the rhetoric of this section strays away from the more 'paradoxical' figures of *commutatio* and *contrapositum* and from paradoxical *sententia*. Rather, the narrator discusses Musidorus' actions in terms of *distributio* and non-paradoxical *sententia* such as in the following passage which lays emphasis on his intelligence, ingenuity, and self-possession. Dorus addresses each of the obstacles before him, and

did wisely consider how they were to be taken, with whom he had to deal, remembering that in the particularities of everybody's mind and fortune there are particular advantages by which they are to be held. The muddy mind of Dametas he found most easily stirred with covetousness; the cursed mischievous heart of Miso most apt to be tickled with jealousy...; but young mistress Mopsa, who could open her eyes upon nothing that did not all to-bewonder her, he thought curiosity the fittest bait for her.²⁶

Musidorus' plan succeeds flawlessly, and he and Pamela are set to leave Arcadia. At this point, however, the paradox of fate disrupts the couple's scheme. Not even this most ethically rigorous pair are spared the rule of providence, for however just and earnest Musidorus is in pledging to ask nothing of Pamela until they are duly married, he is nonetheless a man fallible in his condition. As he beholds the sleeping Pamela, Musidorus feels his weakness overcome him;

²⁵ M. Dana, "The Providential Plot of the *Old Arcadia*", p. 85.

²⁶ *Old Arcadia*, p. 163.

each of these [Pamela's beauties] having a mighty working in his heart, all joined together did so draw his will into the nature of their confederacy that now his promise began to have but a fainting force, and each thought that rase against those desires was received but as a stranger to his counsel, well experiencing in himself that no vow is so strong as the avoiding of occasions; so that... overmastered with the fury of delight, having all his senses partial against himself and inclined to his well beloved adversary, he was bent to take the advantage.²⁷

C.S. Lewis for one found this description of Musidorus' flawed behaviour inconsistent with his role as an ideal hero and thus plainly unbelievable. Lewis obviously underplayed the growing significance of paradox itself as it represents the failings of humankind to overcome fate, and this will occupy the next part of our discussion. It is important to note, in addition, the narrator's "mellow tact and ironic compassion", to repeat Dana's words, towards the characters of the *Old Arcadia*, characters who are all inadequate in some way despite their virtues and thus deserve both our indulgence as well as our admiration.

This leads me back to my earlier comments on Dana's essay, where I suggested that the repercussions of the providential plot mitigated the importance of individual action and human responsibility. The third Book of the *Old Arcadia* finishes with each of the characters in a paradoxically pleasing and yet troubled situation: Basilius is happy believing he has seduced Cleophila, and is unknowingly betrayed by her; Gynecia gives in to Basilius but still hopes for Cleophila's affection; Musidorus has Pamela at his mercy but faces the onslaught of some "clownish villains"; Pamela believes she has Musidorus' honour to

²⁷ *Old Arcadia*, p. 177.

protect her and is yet threatened by him; and Pyrocles and Philoclea are in each other's arms and still face imminent discovery. In addition, the narrator's voice has grown progressively prominent in the unfolding of the plot; the more important authorial presence has thus served to relocate the focal point of attention away from the moral *sententia* expressed by the characters themselves to the external voice of the narrator. As a result, it is apparent that the emergence of an exoteric force is increasingly necessary. Significantly, the next Book opens with an authorial *sententia* that both encapsulates and projects a resolution to the impasse that has embraced the characters. Equally suggestive is the fact that this Book begins specifically with the words "the everlasting justice," immediately intimating that the intervention of higher powers is the necessary catalyst for any such resolution to come about.

This 'everlasting justice' that the narrator invokes is that which "us[es] ourselves to be the punishers of our faults, and mak[es] our own actions the beginning of our chastisement, that our shame may be the more manifest, and our repentance follow the sooner."²⁸ Divine intervention, in other words, makes use of our own sins to correct them; our actions are turned back upon ourselves and there is ultimately little we can do to avoid or anticipate it. In this way, then, the failings of each of the characters are counteracted and corrected; and once again the means of this divine correction are essentially paradoxical, i.e. contrary to human reason and marvellous or unbelievable.

²⁸ *Old Arcadia*, p. 230.

At this point it is necessary to say a few words about the oracle which has precipitated these events. One of the most widely assumed characteristics of all oracles is their reliance on a certain ambiguity or irony to maintain a degree of surprise in the way that they are materialized. Very often this ambiguity is seated in the multiple ways of defining a word, or a secret or little known meaning of a word the oracle uses. Frequently, this ambiguity resides simply in an unusual way of interpreting a situation.²⁹ In any case, an underlying problematic of oracles is that they present unknowables to human beings in a seemingly discernible fashion; always some ambiguity or irony surfaces to pre-empt complete and accurate understanding of the oracle's true portent. In addition, there is a distinct irrationality inscribed within the topos of oracles, which is a result of the fact that while they are considered valid, they are simultaneously undermined.³⁰ One believes that the oracle

²⁹ An obvious example of this type of ambiguity is found in *Macbeth* when Macbeth is told by the Weird Sisters to "Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn/ The pow'r of man, for none of woman born/ Shall harm Macbeth" (IV.i.79-81). Macbeth doesn't know, of course, or fails to consider the possibility, that Macduff "was from his mother's womb/ Untimely ripped" (V.viii.15-16). Joseph Fontenrose in his book *The Delphic Oracle: its Responses and Operations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, pp. 63-4) discusses this scenario in *Macbeth* and links it to the following passage when Macbeth hears that he "shall never vanquish'd be until/ Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane Hill/ Shall come against him," whereupon Macbeth replies, "That will never be./ Who can impress the forest, bid the tree/ Unfix his earth-bound root?" (IV.i.91-96). Here, that which seems impossible or unnatural comes about in unthought of ways.

³⁰ McCanles makes this point in *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, when he says that Basilius "both does and does not give the prophecy credence. He exhibits sufficient belief in its inevitability to take drastic measures to escape it. But... by attempting to avoid the predicted occurrences, Basilius betrays the fact that he does not believe in their

speaks true, yet one inevitably takes steps to avoid its happening, thus denying its inviolability. There is then no logical purpose to the warning of an oracle since nothing may be done to prevent the ensuing action at the time of its prediction. These oracular properties, thus, duplicate the form of the divine intervention outlined above in their two-fold paradoxicality: oracles are usually expressed in apparently self-contradictory terms, and are fulfilled in unexpected or unbelievable ways.

If we now turn to the oracle of Book I and examine its structure, we will see paradoxy depicted and employed in the previously described ways; Basilius is told

Thy elder care shall from thy careful face
 By princely mean be stolen and yet not lost;
 Thy younger shall with nature's bliss embrace
 An uncouth love, which nature hateth most.
 Thou with thy wife adult'ry shall commit,
 And in thy throne a foreign state shall sit.
 All this on thee this fatal year shall hit.³¹

Michael McCanles again discusses this passage in terms of its figuration of 'differentials' which intimates the meaning of the *Arcadia* itself (if McCanles would allow there to be a meaning at all); that is, that Arcadian reality pivots upon opposites poised in consummate dialectical union. He writes,

its [the oracle's] 'message' to the reader dovetails with the complex message of the whole: namely, the problem of understanding any kind of text, oracular or otherwise, when this text renders human actions in differential form... the oracle 'predicts' nothing else than what Sidney himself 'predicts,'... the structure of human character and the actions this structure generates obey the dialectical rules governing the texts of human lives structured dialectically.³²

World, p. 126).

³¹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 5.

³² M. McCanles, *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, p. 134.

McCanles plainly disregards that specific generic and historical properties of oracles, such as the ones I have traced above, necessarily condition them differently from other "texts;" it would be wrong, then, to collapse the two and dismiss aspects of oracles which do not neatly dovetail into the strict structuralist agenda he adopts. One such aspect which I will now enlarge upon is that while oracles may be structured 'differentially,' i.e. oppositionally, they can not be said strictly to mirror a human reality which is likewise differentially structured. Rather, oracles more properly encapsulate or crystalise the relationship of human reality to non-human forces.

Let us then turn quickly to Books IV and V to scrutinize the fulfilment of the oracle. I will expose how these Books make more frequent and pointed references to divine forces, and thus how this section of the *Arcadia* most concerned with justice depicts that notion as a function of human and divine collaboration. In Book IV we first see that the means by which the two sets of lovers are caught and made to confront justice is itself rendered as a function of the oracular dictates which have been dealt to Basilius. In this manner, the plot evinces both that Basilius' efforts to escape his predicted fate become paradoxically the method of realising it, and that the princes' crafty deception of Basilius, Gynecia, Dametas, Miso, and Mopsa is brought home to them by the same universal and inescapable hand of justice.

We are told that it is none other than the bumpkin Dametas who spoils the blissful sleep of Pyrocles and Philoclea, being "guided by a far greater constellation than

his own."³³ Dametas of course is simply looking for his charge Pamela, whom he has foolishly neglected in his wild goose chase. Fate leads him instead to the other princess and provides what Dametas thinks will be his salvation from punishment, but what paradoxically develops to be the opposite. By sending the base Dametas to apprehend the essentially noble Philoclea and Pyrocles, fate also serves to heighten the shame the virtuous couple must feel for their inappropriate and uncharacteristic behaviour. Musidorus and Pamela likewise are brought to justice by agents sent by Providence, and again this agent is ironically a base one to increase their penitential humiliation. A vagabond group of Phagonian peasants who participated in the rebellion against Basilius in Book II come across the pair, since "they were guided by the everlasting justice to be the chastisers of Musidorus' broken vow."³⁴ Once more, fate works in fundamentally paradoxical ways. The rebels think they can buy either reward or forgiveness for their previous faults with the return of the Arcadian princess, and only meet their death by over-seeking reward: a party searching for Pamela finds these rebels "who first resisted them for the desire they had to be the deliverers of the two excellent prisoners," so that the search party "suffered not one of them to live."³⁵ Moreover, Musidorus and Pamela themselves become "twice prisoners without any due arrest, delivered of their gaolers but not of their gaol, [and] had rather change than respite of misery."³⁶ One other parallel between the two

³³ *Old Arcadia*, p. 236.

³⁴ *Old Arcadia*, p. 266.

³⁵ *Old Arcadia*, p. 274.

³⁶ *Old Arcadia*, pp. 274-5.

situations is that the agents who are sent to apprehend the princes and princesses are by-products of Basilius' original lapse in judgement, therefore suggesting that these events are intimately tied up with the oracular prediction.

These unfortunate but fated occurrences engender a set of debates between the couples which question the human being's relationship to the gods, and ultimately affirm that any human action must subordinate itself to divine will. Upon hearing of Dametas' discovery, Pyrocles immediately considers killing himself to preserve the honour of Philoclea. Philoclea wakens to stop him and the two discuss the validity of suicide vis-à-vis human responsibility to oneself and God. Philoclea first asserts "God had appointed us captains of these our bodily forts, which without treason to that majesty were never to be delivered over till they were redemanded."³⁷ Pyrocles counters to this that, "if God have made us masters of anything, it is our own lives, out of which without doing wrong to anybody we are to issue at our own pleasure," and furthermore that "if we be lieutenants of God in this little castle, do you not think we must take warning of him to give over our charge when he leaves us unprovided of good means to tarry in it?"³⁸ Philoclea, however, has the last word in the debate, and claims that while man does have the freedom and even obligation to apply his judgement in matters of social ethics, certain universal laws appointed by God are immiscible.

Sufficient and excellent it were, if the question were of two outward things wherein a man might by nature's freedom determine whether he would prefer

³⁷ *Old Arcadia*, p. 255.

³⁸ *Old Arcadia*, pp. 257-8.

shame to pain, present smaller torment to greater following, or no. But to this,... there is added of the one part a direct evil doing, which maketh the balance of that side too much unequal, since a virtuous man, without any respect whether the grief be less or more, is never to do that which he cannot assure himself is allowable before the everliving rightfulness, but rather is to think honours or shames (which stand in other men's true or false judgements), pains or not pains (which yet never approach our souls) to be nothing in regard of an unspotted conscience.³⁹

Pamela's and Musidorus' exchange about fortune and the inability of humans to control it fully doubles the one above; its core likewise is the particular relationship of men and women, in their individual ability to act, to God or the existing transcendent powers. Musidorus initially bemoans the failure of his plans as the result of some perverse divine act, castigating himself,

How unmerciful judgements do I lay upon my soul now that I know not what god hath so reversed my well meaning enterprise as, instead of doing you [Pamela] that honour which I hoped... Thessalia should have yielded unto you, am now like to become a wretched instrument of your discomfort?"⁴⁰

Pamela wisely responds that chance is a force that inevitably must be reckoned with since it operates beyond human prevention, yet men and women do exercise some degree of responsibility in relation to fortune since those who most put themselves in fortune's hands are most at risk. She replies,

a great wrong you do to yourself that will torment you thus with grief for the fault of fortune. Since man is bound no further to himself than to do wisely, the chance is only to trouble them that stand upon chance.⁴¹

Pamela also has the final word in the discussion, proclaiming that "What is prepared for us we know not, but that with

³⁹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 258.

⁴⁰ *Old Arcadia*, p. 269.

⁴¹ *Old Arcadia*, p. 270.

sorrow we cannot prevent it, we know."⁴² These two set debates, then, posit human subordination to divine will, yet within that subservience men and women preserve individual responsibility in the domain of social ethics.

The last Book or Act extends the discussion of transcendent forces to justice itself, which in the *Arcadia* is most nearly approximated by the character of Euarchus. When he arrives in the troubled Arcadia, his deserved reputation for equity lands him the responsibility of sorting out the purported crimes of the princes and princesses, Philanax claiming that "the heavenly powers have in so full a time bestowed him on us to unite our disunions."⁴³ The common conception of Euarchus as the earthly incorporation of justice, however, is tempered by the man himself. Before undertaking any judgement, he warns the people, "remember I am a man; that is to say, a creature whose reason is often darkened with error."⁴⁴ Euarchus' self-styling as a fallible mortal lacking a transcendent apprehension of justice is poised against the 'everlasting justice' itself, which employs Euarchus as yet another tool in its divine scheme. Pyrocles' father and Musidorus' uncle holds their lives in his hands, but only since it is he "whom the strange and secret working of justice had brought to be the judge over them."⁴⁵ Euarchus' final verdict betrays his fallibility, and his own supposition is ultimately validated by those same forces he addresses: he justifies his decision by urging,

⁴² *Old Arcadia*, p. 271.

⁴³ *Old Arcadia*, p. 307.

⁴⁴ *Old Arcadia*, p. 315.

⁴⁵ *Old Arcadia*, p. 333.

never, never let sacred rightfulness fall. It is immortal, and immortally ought to be preserved. If rightly I have judged, then rightly have I judged mine own children, unless the name of a child should have the force to change the never-changing justice.⁴⁶

There are too many references to the higher powers in Book V to list here, but Musidorus, Pyrocles, and especially Gynecia all add their voices to Euarchus' in deferring to the gods as the only ultimate source of pure justice. This is in fact part and parcel of the oracle's design, as the fulfilment of a predicted fate validates both the infallibility of the gods and the subjection of humankind. The fact that the divine justice finally takes pity on human weaknesses is another aspect of fate's paradoxicality. Basilius, who has in many ways occasioned the entire predicament, realises these truths. He adopts a humble position toward his supposed murderers,

remembering the oracle, which now indeed was accomplished (not as before he had imagined), considering all had fallen out by the highest providence, and withal weighing in these matters his own fault had been the greatest.⁴⁷

The conclusion of the *Old Arcadia*, then, asserts that the exploration of social and political ethics is itself subjected to the superior and cryptic powers of God, for "so uncertain are mortal judgements."⁴⁸ While the work's heroes have illustrated the beauty of virtuous action, even they are constrained by the paradoxical nature of fate and of their own condition.

⁴⁶ *Old Arcadia*, p. 356.

⁴⁷ *Old Arcadia*, p. 360.

⁴⁸ *Old Arcadia*, p. 360.

2

Paradox and Tragedy in Book III of the *New Arcadia*

It has been remarked by many readers of the *New Arcadia* that the character of Amphialus comes to dominate the revision, especially its last, incomplete Book.⁴⁹ It has also been suggested that we may read this most important character of the *New Arcadia* as a wholly tragic figure, one who represents the problematic of indecision and self-conflict.⁵⁰ These two notions conjoined underscore the prime interest in tragedy of Book III of the *New Arcadia*, and particularly in the tragic consequences of the type of behaviour exhibited by Amphialus. I wish therefore to dedicate this section of the chapter primarily to appraising the tragedy of Amphialus, and how it relates to the paradox of the *New Arcadia*.

The princesses and Zelmane are taken prisoner very shortly after the beginning of the Book, captured by Artesia at the instigation of Cecropia. The ensuing siege of Amphialus' castle and the jousts that occur as a result

⁴⁹ John Carey, for one, asserts that Amphialus is "the key figure... in this second, rewritten part of the *New Arcadia*,... It is Amphialus around whom the interest centres: he is in a sense the new hero, or the anti-hero of the whole work" (J. Carey, "Structure and Rhetoric in Sidney's *Arcadia*", in *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, pp. 252-3). McCanles largely agrees with this; he claims that "Amphialus represents a qualitative leap in Sidney's capacities as narrator and delineator of character" (McCanles, *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, p. 65).

⁵⁰ Critics as early as E.M.W. Tillyard have made this observation. Tillyard simply contends that "Amphialus is a truly tragic character" in *The English Epic and its Background* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954, p. 319). John Carey attributes Amphialus' tragedy to the fact that he, more than any other Arcadian character, "personifies the human dilemmas [of] peripeteia and... self-conflict" (Carey, "Structure and Rhetoric in Sidney's *Arcadia*", in *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, p. 253).

comprise the remainder of the *New Arcadia*. This series of individual battles is essentially representative of the battles Amphialus wages with himself, for as Carey has stated, Amphialus is a character fraught with self-contradiction. Quite obviously, a good portion of Amphialus' emotional and psychological division is seated in the unfortunate particulars of his individual situation, such as falling in love with a woman who already loves another. Nonetheless, I intend to illustrate that however unfortunate Amphialus may be in the external accidents that make up his situation, the true core of his dilemma must be located elsewhere. En route to this notion, it will also be addressed how the influence of the tragic genre itself redefines Sidney's stance towards the project of ethics in society. Finally, a comparison of the conclusions we have just drawn about the *Old Arcadia* will be made in relation to the general assumptions of the *New* that have emerged, and we will then attempt to place Sidney's reworking of the *Arcadia* into the larger context of the development of the narrative form.

The first description of Amphialus we are given in the third Book immediately posits the paradoxicality of his very birth; the narrator characterises him as "like a rose out of a briar, an excellent son of an evil mother".⁵¹ That inherent incongruity surfaces and expands dramatically when his mother Cecropia takes Basilius' daughters and Zelmane prisoner. Amphialus, as we will see, is bound to his mother's doings both through loyalty and more importantly through a basic desire for the objectives she holds, for they include his

⁵¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 317.

marriage to the beloved Philoclea. Amphialus, nonetheless, remains integrally virtuous throughout, despite his weakness, and thus provides further fuel for the paradoxicality that lies at the heart of his quandary.

The development of his inner confusion and torment are first perfectly poised against Cecropia's unadulterated evil. Her articulation of the life she led while still the heir to the Arcadian throne reveals her complete hubris as well as her complete lack of self-division.

My port and pomp did well become a king of Argos' daughter. In my presence, their tongues were turned into ears, and their ears were captives to my tongue. Their eyes admired my majesty; and happy was he or she on whom I would suffer the beams thereof to fall. Did I go to church? It seemed the very gods waited for me, their devotions not being solemnized till I was ready. Did I walk abroad to see any delight? Nay, my walking was the delight itself".⁵²

Cecropia here subverts the natural order of cause and effect; even the supposed act of worship becomes perversely more an opportunity for the gods to worship her. Cecropia's pure obliviousness to the nature of spiritual goodness provides the perfect foil for her son's own sentience of virtue, for while Amphialus carries out his unexpectedly deleterious actions while pursuing commendable aspirations, his mother represents only evil intentions forced against its will to suffer good acts.⁵³ The greatest irony, which we will now

⁵² *New Arcadia*, p. 318.

⁵³ McCanles similarly postulates that Cecropia's 'single-minded malice' and Amphialus' 'inner torments and divisions' play off each other dialectically (McCanles, *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, p. 76). I would add, however, that not only do mother and son complement each other here, but rather the actions of the two combined figure one aspect of Amphialus' tragedy: that is, his inability to reconcile his imperfect notions of heroic virtue to the new exigencies of romantic love. This will be more fully developed later.

flesh out, is that in fact, Amphialus and Cecropia with their divergent sentiments end in mimicking each other.

It is Amphialus himself who originally sets up and articulates the apparently irreconcilable dialectical dilemma he faces in the imprisonment of Philoclea. When Cecropia informs him of what she has done for his sake, he cannot formulate a response that is either grateful or condemnatory; he claims,

my heart would fain yield you [Cecropia] thanks for setting me in the way of felicity, but that fear kills them in me before they are fully born: for if Philoclea be displeas'd, how can I be pleas'd; if she count it unkindness, shall I give tokens of kindness? Perchance she condemns me of this action--and shall I triumph? Perchance she drowns the beauties I love with sorrowful tears--and where then is my rejoicing?⁵⁴

Cecropia, knowing her son will condone her actions since they have brought him the woman he loves, pretends to allow the release of the princesses, only to hear Amphialus announce what he feels to be his impossible position. "No good mother," Amphialus cries, "since she is here! I would not for my life constrain presence-- but rather would I die than consent to absence!"⁵⁵

This statement by Amphialus is a weighty one; it encapsulates the quiddity of his problem, and this problematic core is intrinsic to the nature of Amphialus, rather than to the circumstances in which he finds himself. He himself positions the options that are available to him in a diametrically opposed configuration, mistaking love's potential effects for exigencies. Well-meaning though Amphialus is, he nevertheless exhibits a degree of self-

⁵⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 320.

⁵⁵ *New Arcadia*, p. 320.

absorption which disallows him from fully empathising with the point of view of the woman he loves. The description of the garment Amphialus chooses to appear before Philoclea in is symptomatic of his state of mind. He is extremely concerned about winning Philoclea's approval, yet he is totally aware that his situation is fraught with inconsistencies, both of which are reflected in his difficulty in deciphering what apparel reflects all his warring emotions:

nothing seemed sumptuous enough for his mistress's eyes; and that which was costly, he feared were not dainty; and though the invention were delicate, he misdoubted the making. As careful he was too of the colour, lest, if gay, he might seem to glory in his injury, and her wrong; if mourning, it might strike some evil presage unto her of her fortune.⁵⁶

He finally settles on something which indicates his delicate and paradoxical position.

At length, he took a garment more rich than glaring, the ground being black velvet, richly embroidered, with great pearl and precious stones--but they set so, among certain tufts of cypress, that the cypress was like black clouds through which the stars might yield a dark lustre. About his neck, he wore a broad and gorgeous collar, whereof, the pieces interchangeably answering, the one was of diamonds and pearl set with a white enamel so as, ... it seemed like a shining ice; and the other piece, being of rubies and opals, had a fiery glistening--which he thought pictured the two passions₅₇ of fear and desire, wherein he was chained.⁵⁷

It is unfortunate for Philoclea, however, that his considerate and sensitive analysis of what is appropriate in dress does not extend far enough to embrace the best interests of the person for whom all this effort is spent. The debate the two have about Philoclea's imprisonment

⁵⁶ *New Arcadia*, p. 321.

⁵⁷ *New Arcadia*, p. 321.

presents Amphialus' intractable subjection to the system of possibilities for action he has set himself, and the fact that he holds this discussion with Philoclea and negates her articulation of her own situation indicates Amphialus' removal from total empathy with his beloved. Amphialus approaches Philoclea begging her understanding and affection, claiming that he is now her slave and that she holds his life in her hands. Philoclea responds to him in much the same fashion as the disguised Pyrocles did to the enamoured Gynecia; she elucidates the essential irrationality of Amphialus' proposals. "Alas, cousin," she responds,

what shall my tongue be able to do, which is informed by the ears one way and by the eyes another? You call for pity-- and use cruelty; you say you love me-- and yet do the effects of enmity; you affirm your death is in my hands-- but you have brought me to so near a degree to death as, when you will, you may lay death upon me, so that while you say I am mistress of your life, I am not mistress of my own; you entitle yourself my slave-- but I am sure I am yours.⁵⁸

Whereas Gynecia sapiently acknowledged her departure from rational behaviour and freely embraced the knowledge of her own guilt, Amphialus stubbornly clings to the notion that he himself has little to do with Philoclea's suffering, and perversely turns the blame back to Philoclea herself and the love she has engendered in her unwitting victim. He argues,

It is love! It is love, not I, which disobey you. What then shall I say, but that I who am ready to lie under your feet; to venture, nay, to lose my life at your least commandment, I am not the stay of your freedom, but love-- love, which ties you in your own knots. It is you yourself that imprison yourself! It is your beauty which makes these castle walls embrace you! It is your own eyes which reflect upon themselves this injury!⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *New Arcadia*, p. 322.

⁵⁹ *New Arcadia*, p. 323.

Amphialus is not being inauthentic here; he simply is entrapped in the vicious circle he has created. The image used to describe Amphialus' state of mind reveals the lack of a single positive action that presents itself to him.

Amphialus was like the poor woman, who loving a tame doe she had above all earthly things... is constrained at length by famine (all her flock being spent, and she fallen into extreme poverty) to kill the deer to save her life: many a pitiful look doth she cast upon it, and many a time doth she draw back her hand before she can give the stroke.⁶⁰

Hopelessly in love though Amphialus may be, his love has not yet assumed the form of complete selflessness; it never occurs to him that it might be better to starve than to kill the deer.⁶¹

William Craft's recent article "Remaking the Heroic Self in the *New Arcadia*" sheds some important light on this matter.⁶² It is Craft's contention that the *New Arcadia*'s most portentous message is that the

ideal of self-sufficiency and control which characterizes the princes' [Musidorus' and Pyrocles'] early triumphant career is noble and good, but that it cannot withstand the full weight of human experience: only in accommodation to the fearful, transforming power of selfless love can higher heroic virtue be found.⁶³

This is especially true in regard to Amphialus, whose story Craft sees as embodying the "irreconcilable divorce of love

⁶⁰ *New Arcadia*, p. 323.

⁶¹ We will return to the subject of Amphialus' moral failure to embrace the quality of compassion at greater length in Chapter V, where Amphialus' shortcomings are explicitly linked to his embodiment of a faulty masculinist ethical framework. See especially pages 245-50.

⁶² William Craft, "Remaking the Heroic Self in the *New Arcadia*", *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 25, (1985), pp. 45-67.

⁶³ W. Craft, "Remaking the Heroic Self in the *New Arcadia*", p. 46.

and right action".⁶⁴ Ultimately, true heroism must learn the lessons offered by the examples of other Arcadian characters. Strephon and Claius, whose story opens the *New Arcadia*, are indeed two such characters who provide images of patience, valour, and humility quite opposed to the martial nature of Amphialus' own virtue. Other examples provided by Craft include Palladius and Zelmane, and Helen and Plangus, who exhibit "the devotion of those who have no reason to hope for any returned affection, but who through patient service or military valour seek only to serve and preserve the beloved."⁶⁵ Against these moving examples of altruistic love Amphialus' own comportment must be compared and contrasted in the same manner we have outlined in the third section of Chapter II, and that comparison must show Amphialus lacking in the integral quality of self-sacrifice.

The passage concerning Amphialus' preparation for the expected attack from Basilius underlines his martial expertise, but in the same movement it reveals his total self-possession at a moment which sits uncomfortably with his professed helplessness. His Machiavellian self-control and ruthlessness flies in the face of the patience and suffering we have come to expect of other Arcadian lovers. First, he gathers supporters around him to aid him in what he knows to be "the foulness of his treason," seeking

such whom any discontentment made hungry of change,
or an over-spended want made want of civil war-- to
each... conforming himself, after their humours: to
his friends, friendliness; to the ambitious, great
expectations; to the displeased, revenge; to the

⁶⁴ W. Craft, "Remaking the Heroic Self in the *New Arcadia*", p. 47.

⁶⁵ W. Craft, "Remaking the Heroic Self in the *New Arcadia*", p. 64.

greedy, spoil-- wrapping their hopes with such cunning, as they rather seemed given over unto them, as partakers, than promises sprung of necessity.⁶⁶

In the allocation of duties, Amphialus is no less canny; he displays great virtuosity in making the most of his men's strengths and weaknesses. He distributes tasks by

regarding... the constitution of their bodies, some being able to abide watching; some, hunger; some, labour; making his benefit of each ability, and not forcing beyond power. Time to everything, by just proportion, he allotted, and, as well in that as in everything else, no small error winked at lest greater should be animated. Even of vices he made his profit, making the cowardly Clinias to have care of the watch, which, he knew, his own fear would make him very wakefully perform.⁶⁷

This section reads much like a manual of how to conduct a coup. Amphialus' admirable military dexterity, however, announces his inability to escape from that framework, even in matters of love.⁶⁸ Amphialus, in other words, approaches his relationship to his beloved equipped with the same standards of 'masculine virtue' more applicable to the battlefield than to a courtship.⁶⁹

Ironically enough, as has been suggested, Amphialus' words ultimately end in mimicking those of his mother. When

⁶⁶ *New Arcadia*, pp. 324-5.

⁶⁷ *New Arcadia*, p. 327.

⁶⁸ It is true that love-war topos is a familiar one in the Renaissance; here, however, Amphialus' skill embodies rather more political cunning than is usually involved in the typical Petrarchan convention.

⁶⁹ To be fair, Amphialus never considers using violence against Philoclea, but his refusal to put her wishes above his own as well as his exhibitions of complete self-absorption and self-possession elsewhere do indicate a removal from the type of altruistic abandonment described by Craft as the highest form of virtuous love. Another sign which points to Amphialus' overly martial nature is his association with Anaxius, who represents martial skill turned to no good purpose. It is Anaxius and his brothers who save the weakened Amphialus from immediate death at the hands of the Forsaken Knight; "not recking law of arms nor use of chivalry, they flew in to defend their friend, or revenge their loss of him" (*New Arcadia*, p. 411).

Cecropia attempts to coax Philoclea into accepting her son's suit, she does so with the same language and logic originally employed by him. She assures the princess, "you misconster everything that only for your sake is attempted: you think you are offended, and are indeed defended; you esteem yourself a prisoner, and are in truth a mistress; you fear hate, and shall find love".⁷⁰ By placing these same words in the mouth of Cecropia, Sidney adroitly exposes Amphialus' reasoning for what it is: imperfect and wanting. The discrepancy between Amphialus' and his mother's intentions ultimately amounts to little in practical terms, for Amphialus' inability to break out of the prison house of masculine martial virtue unfortunately leads him to become an accomplice in his mother's malevolent plans, although continually believing them to be well-intended. As a result, we can conclude that Amphialus' inability to reconcile heroic virtue to the demands of love, i.e. self-sacrifice and patient suffering, is first borne out by the nature of the possibilities for action he sets himself, and is in fact witnessed in his self-absorption and political ruthlessness. Secondly, Amphialus' system of reasoning is shown to be deeply flawed, for it is ironically employed by the wholly evil Cecropia for radically different motives.

This last notion is reinforced during the siege and Cecropia's ensuing torture of the captive princesses. Throughout this episode, Amphialus asserts himself valiantly in battle while abandoning the care of the princesses primarily to his untrustworthy mother. His eventual wounding

⁷⁰ *New Arcadia*, p. 330.

by the Forsaken Knight moreover provides Cecropia the opportunity of exerting more violent methods of persuasion on the princesses than Amphialus would otherwise allow. An additional burden to Amphialus is that while he performs incredible acts of bravery and skill, these acts perversely assume cataclysmic consequences. These two aspects of the siege, then, Amphialus' latent permission of Cecropia's dastardly deeds, and Amphialus' unwitting destruction of people he attempts to save, together constitute that aspect of Amphialus' situation which is his tragic characterization.

T. McAlindon's *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos* offers much interesting commentary on the nature of the tragic experience. In this studious work, MacAlindon remarks that the 'amazement' experienced in the unfolding of tragic drama is "a state of mind which registers that sign and referent, name and identity, appearance and essence, have become wholly disjoined".⁷¹ Surely Amphialus' inherent worthiness and his unintentional cruelty comprise just such a glitch between appearance and essence, but more suggestive is McAlindon's refining of A.C. Bradley's concept of the 'ultimate power in the tragic world' which governs the justice and retribution in the plays. McAlindon identifies the idea of an 'undefined ultimate power' with the element of time in Shakespeare, claiming that its "corrective order is both impersonal and, from the purely human perspective, cruelly imperfect".⁷² Time's action is corrective "first of all in the sense that it is retributive" but "also in the sense that it is

⁷¹ T. McAlindon, *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 2.

⁷² T. McAlindon, *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos*, p. 17.

restorative".⁷³ He suggests, in other words, that the external, eternal forces which exist above human reckoning are essentially indifferent to the particular constraints of individual characters or beings, for when its order has been disrupted, the tragedy ensues and some great human suffering is necessary to restore it: in the tragedies, we have a world "where time [or the ultimate power] is put disastrously out of joint with terrifying ease, and can only be set right again at huge cost".⁷⁴ Applied to its capacity in the *New Arcadia*, then, the tragic depiction of the super-human order connotes a basic lack of interest of the gods in the innate virtue of Amphialus, and instead shows the order to be counteracting his disruptive behaviour.

The series of man-to-man combats involving Amphialus during the first attack by the Basilians communicates Amphialus' tragic inability to set things right during what he has already designed to be a fateful act of treason. Agenor, the young and handsome brother of Philanax, none too wisely launches a brave if untimely attack on the valiant Amphialus, an attack he cannot win given his opponent's greater skill and experience. Amphialus, quickly sizing up Agenor's inferior abilities as well as his youth and physical beauty, decides graciously to spare him his life. The result, predictably, is the opposite of what he desires:

compassion so rebated the edge of [Amphialus']
 choler that he spared the fair nakedness and let
 his staff fall to Agenor's vamplate, so as both
 with brave breaking should hurtlessly have
 performed that match-- but that the pitiless lance
 of Amphialus, angry with being broken, with an
 unlucky counterbuff full of unsparing flinters

⁷³ T. McAlindon, *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos*, pp. 17-18.

⁷⁴ T. McAlindon, *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos*, p. 18.

lighted upon that face far fitter for the combates of Venus, giving not only a sudden, but a foul death, leaving scarcely any tokens of his former beauty.⁷⁵

Instead of preserving the boy's youthful beauty, Amphialus unintentionally and unhappily annihilates it.

Fate, or more specifically, the transcendent order ignores Amphialus' personal attempts to overcome the negative results of his ill-conceived disruptive treason; some 'terrible loss' is necessary to restore the lost balance. Such is the death of Ismenus, Amphialus' valued esquire, which is another dire consequence of Amphialus' unwitting and undesired killing of Agenor. Ismenus displays great courage and dedication to his master by relinquishing his own horse when Amphialus' is killed beneath him, but this places him at the mercy of Philanax, whom he wounds slightly as he is passing by. His youth and comeliness win him Philanax's compassion, as Agenor's had for him, but his loyalty to Amphialus is ultimately poorly repaid. Philanax

seeing him so young and of a most lovely presence, ... rather took pity of him, meaning to make him prisoner and then to give him to his brother Agenor to be his companion because they were not much unlike, neither in years nor countenance. But as he looked down upon him with that thought, he spied where his brother lay dead... [and] Philanax blotted out all figures of pity out of his mind.⁷⁶

Not only does Amphialus kill and deface a boy he wishes to succour, but that killing induces the death of his beloved squire.

There are many strange reversals in this sequence, two of which concern misinterpreted oracles akin to Basilius' own

⁷⁵ *New Arcadia*, pp. 339-40.

⁷⁶ *New Arcadia*, p. 343.

interpretative failure.⁷⁷ Each serves to underscore the desperate upheaval engendered by Amphialus' fatal treasonous act, and reveals the indifference of the transcendent forces to the individual's efforts to defy them. Arguably the most poignant such reversal of the siege, and even of the *Arcadia* itself, is the deaths of Argalus and Parthenia. The Argalus and Parthenia story of Book I is the most representative of those passive virtues advanced by Craft of patience and endurance. For this reason the introduction of their tale at this point in the narrative is particularly significant, especially because the couple encapsulate the ideal union of heroic virtue and passive suffering that eludes Amphialus.⁷⁸ The set piece scene the two present as Basilius' messenger comes to call Amphialus to battle sharply delineates this perfection of virtue seated in married love.

The messenger made speed and found Argalus at a castle of his own, sitting in a parlour with the fair Parthenia; he reading in a book the stories of Hercules, she by him, as to hear him read-- but while his eyes looked on the book, she looked on

⁷⁷ These misread oracles follow the form discussed in the last section; in both, a situation is manifested in a manner not previously envisaged. Aeschylus thinks to die a peaceful death, since he has been told that he will perish in his son's arms. He does so, but only on the battlefield, with his son's death quickly following his own. Memnon believes himself to be safe in battle, for the prophet has assured him that he will only die at the hands of his companions. He is thrown from his horse by Amphialus, and when his friends come to his rescue, they unfortunately trample him in their haste.

⁷⁸ This point is made by Nancy Lindheim in *The Structures of Sidney's Arcadia*, when she cites the trials Parthenia and Argalus endure to overcome the obstacles placed in their way by Parthenia's mother: "the more virtuous Argalus was, the more she [the mother] hated him... Meanwhile, she used all extremities possible upon her fair daughter to make her give over herself to her direction--but it was hard to judge whether he in doing or she in suffering showed greater constancy in affection; for, as to Argalus the world sooner wanted occasions than he valour to go through them, so to Parthenia malice sooner ceased than her unchanged patience" (*New Arcadia*, p. 29).

his eyes, and sometimes staying him with some pretty question, not so much to be resolved of the doubt as to give him the occasion to look upon her-- a happy couple, he joying in her, she joying in herself (but in herself because she enjoyed him); both increasing their riches by giving to each other; each making one life double because they made a double life one, where desire never wanted satisfaction, nor satisfaction never bred satiety; he ruling because she would obey--or rather, because she would obey, she therein ruling.⁷⁹

The purity of their happiness stands against and defines the destructiveness of Amphialus' martial excellence. Ironically, Amphialus' reply to Argalus' pleadings to suspend his siege and his proposal of combat should reason not prevail with him, appeals precisely to Argalus' comprehension of the power of love. He argues, "love, which justifieth the injustice you lay unto me, doth also animate me against all dangers, since I come full of him, by whom yourself have been (if I be not deceived) sometimes conquered".⁸⁰ The combat between these two *New Arcadian* heroes thus occupies a central focal point in the *Arcadia*, for it juxtaposes the two brands of virtue we have been defining, and entrenches that aspect of Amphialus' tragedy which relates to his impotent position vis-à-vis the transcendent order.

The heroes' armour represents the first of these notions, that is, Amphialus' and Argalus' distinct depictions of virtue. Argalus comes arrayed in the symbolism of manly virtue married to womanly devotion. He arrives "in a white armour which was gilded over with knots of woman's hair," with a sleeve "full of bleeding hearts," and on his shield "two palm trees near one another, with a word signifying, 'In that sort flourishing'",⁸¹ twin palm trees being the stock

⁷⁹ *New Arcadia*, pp. 371-2.

⁸⁰ *New Arcadia*, p. 374.

⁸¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 374.

emblem of faithful, requited love. Amphialus' own garb, described earlier, features his decidedly martial orientation; his armour is tawny and gold "formed into the figure of flames," and his shield bears the symbol of the torpedo fish.⁸² The contrast the two provide in attire and in psychological development nevertheless collapses in their fight into a strange, antagonistic concord of inner feelings,

a notable example of the wonderful effects of virtue, where the conqueror sought friendship of the conquered, and the conquered would not pardon the conqueror, both indeed being of that mind to love each other for accepting but not for giving mercy, and neither affected to overlive a dishonour.⁸³

The combat itself has been described as the climactic one of the work, but what stands out the most about it is the sense of meaningless waste in the death of Argalus at its outcome. Parthenia's lamentation at the dying Argalus' side is the most moving articulation of the senseless loss.

O Parthenia-- no more Parthenia!...What art thou? What seest thou? How is thy bliss in a moment fallen! How art thou-- even now before all ladies the example of perfect happiness, and now the gazing-stock of endless misery? O God, what hath been my desert to be thus punished; or, if such have been my desert, why was I not in myself punished? O wandering life, to what wilderness wouldst thou lead me?⁸⁴

Sidney's masterstroke to pitch the impression of tragic waste that much higher is to place the comic battle between Dametas and Clinias immediately following Argalus' death. This ridiculous parody of a chivalric tournament joust largely subverts the sanctity of this masculine form of dealing with conflict and thus performs the double function of portraying

⁸² *New Arcadia*, p. 367.

⁸³ *New Arcadia*, p. 377.

⁸⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 378.

Argalus' death as that much more meaningless and wasteful, and lays this needless waste ultimately at Amphialus' door.

Parthenia's death, which soon follows, provides the impetus for Amphialus' self-recriminations and his beginning awareness of the extent of the wrong he has done. Her death at the hands of Amphialus is typical of all his thwarted endeavours: good intentions assume tragic manifestations. Having clearly bested Parthenia disguised as the Knight of the Tomb, he offers her mercy, "in the nobleness of his nature abhorring to make the punishment overgo the offence".⁸⁵ Her angry refusal breaks Amphialus' patience, and "abused kindness became spiteful rage".⁸⁶ Eventually he delivers the death wound and removes his opponent's helmet, only to be shocked and appalled to realise whom he has killed: "Amphialus was astonished with grief, compassion, and shame, detesting his fortune that made him unfortunate in victory".⁸⁷ So sublimely terrible is the loss of Parthenia, that it reverberates throughout the cosmos, and its effect articulates the tragic experience itself:

The very heavens seemed with a cloudy countenance to lour at the loss, and fame itself, though by nature glad to tell of rare accidents, yet could not choose but deliver it in lamentable accents. And in such sort went it quickly all over the camp, and as if the air had been infected with sorrow, no heart was so hard but was subject to that contagion, the rareness of the accident matching together the rarely matched together-- pity with admiration.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *New Arcadia*, p. 397.

⁸⁶ *New Arcadia*, p. 397.

⁸⁷ *New Arcadia*, pp. 397-8.

⁸⁸ *New Arcadia*, p. 399. McAlindon's *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos* stresses the importance of precisely this type of referral to the cosmic whole as symbolic of that aspect of the tragic experience dealing with the hero's intimate relation to the divine forces, and its revelation of the hero's greatness:

There is no parallel of this exquisite sense of loss in the whole of the *Old Arcadia*: the benevolent hand of Providence which compensates for human individual deficiencies in the miraculous restoration of Basilius is nowhere in evidence here. Instead, the transcendent order of the *New Arcadia* is most akin to the one operative in tragedy, which is both 'impersonal' and 'cruelly imperfect;' its own standards of order must be restored despite tangential concerns such as Amphialus' undeniable worthiness, and the unseemly loss of such virtuous characters as Argalus and Parthenia.

The greatest sense of privation and despair at the loss of the great couple is of course felt by Amphialus himself, who despite his tragic misunderstanding of the exigencies of love, nevertheless is endowed with a heightened sensitivity and apprehension of true virtue. His lamentation encapsulates the contentious relationship between himself and the forces that be and simultaneously provides valuable insight into the other half of his tragic characterization, which is the greatness and nobility embedded within the hero's fight against those forces. I will quote this passage at length, for it figures these two important aspects of Amphialus' tragedy.

"Shakespeare endows his principal characters with cosmic imagination. He makes them speak to and of the elements, the stars, the sun, the moon, and 'all the world.' This trait not only invests their situation with magnitude and intensity, it also illuminates it. It is part of an endeavour to connect the tragic fate of the individual with the structure and dynamics of universal nature" (T. McAlindon, *Shakespeare's tragic Cosmos*, p. 4).

This notion of the tragic hero's magnitude and intensity beyond the normal standard of human existence will be discussed further in the next section.

And then melancholy, only rich in unfortunate remembrances, brought before him all the mishaps with which his life had wrestled, taking this not only as a confirming of the former, but a presage of following misery; and to his heart already overcome by sorrowfulness, even trifling misfortunes came to fill up the roll of a grieved memory, labouring only his wits to pierce farther and farther into his own wretchedness... [he did] remember the mishaps of his youth; the evils he had been cause of; his rebelling with shame, and that shame increased with shameful accidents; the deaths of Philoxenus and Parthenia--wherein he found himself hated of the ever-ruling powers; but especially, and so especially as the rest seemed nothing when he came to that, his fatal love to Philoclea, to whom he had so governed himself as one that could neither conquer nor yield, being of the one side a slave, and of the other a jailer.⁸⁹

It is true that nowhere in the *Old Arcadia* do we witness the same sort of cruel indifference to individual efforts that the exterior order holds here, but equally true is the notion that the failings of the chief specifically *New Arcadian* hero, Amphialus, are nonetheless linked to a greatness and magnitude of character in the face of his tragic actions. This long enunciation of the ills that Amphialus has suffered is simultaneously a stirring indication of his grandeur, for it expands the perimeters of normal human experience. It is followed by one later of even more tragic sublimity, this coming after Amphialus has realised the extent of his unknowing mistreatment of the princesses. He finally learns of his mother's torturing of Pamela and Philoclea from one of her servants, and his rage and indignation carry him to seek her and then kill himself in front of her eyes. Even this act of self-annihilation proves yet more destructive than Amphialus envisages. Cecropia sees her son approaching her with a drawn sword, and correctly interprets that he has

⁸⁹ *New Arcadia*, pp. 400-01.

discovered her guilt but misinterprets his intentions. In her haste to escape what she thinks is Amphialus' murderous purport, she falls from the rooftop where he found her and dies before her astonished son. This crowning act of subversive disregard of his intentions by the higher powers stimulates Amphialus to reflect over his entirely tragic existence in one of the most moving passages of the *New Arcadia*.

Wretched Amphialus! Thou hast lived to be the death of thy most dear companion and friend, Philoxenus, and of his father, thy most careful foster-father. Thou hast lived to kill a lady with thine own hands-- and so excellent and virtuous a lady as the fair Parthenia was. Thou hast lived to see thy faithful Ismenus slain in succouring thee-- and thou not able to defend him. Thou hast lived to show thyself such a coward as that one unknown knight could overcome thee-- in thy lady's presence. Thou hast lived to bear arms against thy rightful prince-- thine own uncle. Thou hast lived to be accounted-- and justly accounted-- a traitor, by the most excellent persons the world holdeth. Thou hast lived to be the death of her that gave thee life. But ah! wretched Amphialus! Thou hast lived, for thy sake and by thy authority, to have Philoclea tormented.⁹⁰

By his own admission, Amphialus would rather die than have any of these things happen, and yet the repetition of the "thou hast lived" reflects the ultimate perversity of his life being more onerous than his desired death.

Amphialus' suicide is the perfect recapitulation in action of this verbal life summary. Just as he falls upon the point of his own sword, it swerves aside, this like all other of his intents symbolically undone. He then grasps Philoclea's knives, which he has worn since the beginning of the siege, and stabs himself repeatedly, crying out his shame and self-hatred.

⁹⁰ *New Arcadia*, p. 441.

O dear knives! You are come in a good time to revenge the wrong I have done you all this while... Alas, be witness with me yet before I die... that, by my consent, your excellent mistress should have had as much honour as this poor place could have brought forth for so high an excellency.⁹¹

The greatness of his soul shines through in this moment of desperation, "giving a pitiful spectacle, where the conquest was the conqueror's overthrow, and self-ruin the only triumph of a battle fought between him and himself".⁹² Here we witness Amphialus' nobility in the face of the intransigence of his tragic characterization. In the pursuit of his fated goals, his innate superiority achieves a type of transcendence over the transcendent order itself; in combating the forces above him, he raises himself above the level of the merely human. One last significant facet of Amphialus' suicide is that it brings him right back to where he started, in the unwanted arms of Helen. This classic piece of *peripeteia* completes the tragic cycle, and entrenches the notion of Amphialus' ultimate helplessness to resist the higher power's dictates, as well as suggesting that his intransigence toward Helen will now be tempered.

Let us then recapitulate the development of Amphialus' tragedy as we have been appraising it. We have first established that the impetus for his disastrous love relationship lies not simply in Philoclea's love for another, but rather within his characterization, and more specifically, in his inability to square his martially oriented brand of virtue to the different demands of selfless love. We have then witnessed that Amphialus' problematic

⁹¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 442.

⁹² *New Arcadia*, p. 442.

characterization relays to his position vis-à-vis the transcendent order. Amphialus' constant fight to overcome the results of his treason is poised against these superior forces which continually thwart them. The result is tragic reversal upon tragic reversal, ending in the deaths of all the people for whom the hero cares most. Lastly, we see that despite Amphialus' tragic characterization and contentious relationship to the ultimate powers he preserves and even intensifies his innate nobility.

Let us then compare these observations about the central character of the *New Arcadia's* last Book with our conclusions about the ending of the *Old Arcadia*. We deduced that Sidney's discussion of moral exigency was finally subordinated rather ambiguously to the uncertainty of the transcendent order's autonomous agenda. While human beings are pictured as obligated to the pursuit of virtuous action, their natural limitations place them in a dependent position to God's superior powers in establishing ultimate justice. This, then, was the central paradox discovered in the *Old Arcadia*. Humanity's own paradoxical nature, its "erected wit" and "infected will" translates into an ability to achieve great things, but a weakness that is only compensated for by the benevolent hand of God. In the *New Arcadia*, Amphialus' story becomes the chief preoccupation, with the tragic genre dominating the tone and action of the remainder of the work. The effect this has on Sidney's portrayal of ethics is that human limitations are no longer compensated for by some congenial order; rather, the order flagrantly disregards Amphialus' well-meaning intentions and his innate excellence

in its own preservation. The paradox of this predicament is that man's stature is somehow increased in the face of his ultimate impotence. Amphialus' struggle brings him greater sorrow than any *Old Arcadian* character, but it also makes him stand above them. Sidney's revision, then, seems to credit human ability to achieve the moral good with both more and less efficacy than his original claimed. When a *New Arcadian* hero achieves greatness, as do Musidorus and Pyrocles, that virtue is a more holistic and comprehensive virtue than the sort typified by the same characters in the original. When a *New Arcadian* hero fails, however, in achieving the perfect heroic ideal, he plumbs depths not imaginable in the *Old Arcadia*. Even so, the great potential he embodies as a human being is never diminished; if anything, it is accentuated.

3

Genre and the Development of the Narrative Form

I mentioned earlier that Sidney's movement from one version of the *Arcadia* to the other can be seen in broader terms to summarise aspects of the development of the narrative form itself. Georg Lukács' influential *Theory of the Novel*⁹³ supports this view through its discussion of the types of mentality correspondent with specific genres of literature. While I make no attempt to equate Sidney's *Arcadias* with either the Greek epic or German Romanticism, or any of the other forms Lukács builds his argument around, I

⁹³ Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, A. Bostock (trans.), London: Merlin Press, 1971.

do feel that interesting parallels exist between his descriptions of philosophical frameworks and levels of self-consciousness with different literary forms.⁹⁴ This idea in fact has been suggested in the work of Fowler and others interested in genre theory who contest that generic signals largely communicate a work's meaning and basic assumptions. It is thus apparent that for this reason alone, some investigation into the different genres of the *Arcadia* is appropriate. Furthermore, such an investigation becomes specially exigent in the light of Sidney's curious blending of different genres in both versions of the *Arcadia*. We will return to this issue of genre and its relevance to the depiction of the Sidneian heroic ideal in Chapter V, where gender and genre intersect, but for now I wish to concentrate on how the *Old* and *New Arcadias'* different generic restrictions and stipulations relate to each's construction of an ethical universe as we have been describing them. I will therefore explore the parallels between Lukács' descriptions of earlier and later narrative forms and the different versions of the *Arcadia*, first laying out Lukács' general position.

Lukács argues that the historical period which produced the epic was defined by the human being's fundamentally

⁹⁴ Frederic Jameson among others acknowledges that the examples Lukács chooses himself to illustrate his ideas about naive consciousness must be taken liberally, for his nostalgia about the golden age of the Greeks is little more than a necessary organizational fiction, a "mythological framework, for the concrete analyses of the book" (Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, p. 179). It is in fact more important to understand the nature of the type of mentality he associates with Greek epic than to gauge its association with that particular form.

unproblematic relationship with the existent transcendental order. While he does not deny that such periods experience trauma and suffering, these negative experiences could always be explained with reference to an existing and unproblematic structure between the human and the absolute. What this suggests, then, is an underlying contiguity between human existence and his or her essence in the period of the epic:

When the soul does not yet know any abyss within itself which may tempt it to fall or encourage it to discover pathless heights, when the divinity that rules the world and distributes the unknown and unjust gifts of destiny is not yet understood by man, but is familiar and close to him as a father is to his small child, then every action is only a well-fitting garment for the world. Being and destiny, adventure and accomplishment, life and essence are then identical concepts.⁹⁵

With the dissolution of such contiguity, when "meaning and daily existence have become opposed to each other," as Jameson puts it in his *Marxism and Form*, the epoch of tragedy begins.⁹⁶ Here, the collapse of life into essence occurs only in moments of the tragic crises itself, "when the hero holds them together for an instant in his own agony, maintaining his absolute demands on life, his ultimate passion for meaning, even on the point of destruction by that meaningless outside world which denies him".⁹⁷

The next stage of alienation between human beings and their essence is of course the complete evacuation of meaning in the actual materials of life advocated in the notion of Platonic forms, where meaning exists only in the transcendence of the temporal and the tangible. The human being's response to regain the sense of immediacy available

⁹⁵ G. Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 30.

⁹⁶ F. Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 170.

⁹⁷ F. Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 170.

in the epic form of narration is in the development of the novel, which in its essential interiority attempts to explore the new meaningfulness of the self's journey to understand itself:

We have found the only true substance within ourselves: that is why we have to place an unbridgeable chasm between cognition and action, between soul and created structure, between self and world, why all substantiality has to be dispersed in reflexivity on the far side of that chasm; that is why our essence had to become a postulate for ourselves and thus create a still deeper, still more menacing abyss between us and our own selves.⁹⁸

The hero of the novel searches to recapture the contiguity, but always fails to achieve it. The novelist, however, in the very process of narrating that failure, does execute the act of reconciling matter and spirit which eludes his own hero.⁹⁹

Since, as Lukács asserts, the difference between genres lies in the "historico-philosophical realities with which the authors were confronted",¹⁰⁰ we may assume that Sidney's decision first to change and then to amalgamate genres reflects precisely such a shift in his philosophical apprehension of reality.¹⁰¹ It also seems correct to assume that the move from *Old* to *New Arcadia* sketches the general transformation of the epic into the novel, the focus moving from a free and unproblematic relationship to the absolute to

⁹⁸ G. Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 34.

⁹⁹ Space does not permit here a discussion of the role of the romance in the transition from the epic to the novel.

¹⁰⁰ G. Lukács. *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 56.

¹⁰¹ Jameson makes this connection between forms and socio-philosophical developments as well in his analyses of *The Theory of the Novel*, when he remarks that for Lukács, "the transformation of the novel into epic has as its precondition not the novelist's will but the transformation of his society and his world. The renewed epic cannot come into being until the world itself has been transfigured, regenerated" (F. Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 178).

the problems posed by complete interiority. The *Old Arcadia's* overall thematic and rhetorical structure divulges Sidney's more naive, idealistic understanding of political reality; the work's conclusion, which has proven troublesome for many of its readers, is so simply because its relative ambiguity jives uncomfortably with its otherwise linear development.¹⁰² Sidney's own discomfort, in other words, with the *Old Arcadia's* affirmation of the felicitous cooperation of the pervading order with human virtuous impulses is sounded in his problematic ending. The benevolent divinity which "distributes the unknown and unjust gifts of destiny" operative in the *Old Arcadia's* romance mutates somehow into the more tragic cosmos of the revision. Instead, the depiction of the soul's struggle against itself and the outside world becomes a central preoccupation of the author in the *New Arcadia*, which is the natural result of his modified conception of ethical endeavours. The hermeneutical problematics of human agency that we have discovered in the *New Arcadia* are aligned with and predicated upon the perceived fissure between the subject and his or her world. Sidney's decision to recast the *Arcadia* along tragic lines thus indicates his more modern conception of the human position in the world, for it underscores his acknowledgement of both the greater perils and rewards attached to the individual's struggle to define him or herself. The world of

¹⁰² Elizabeth Dipple in her article "'Unjust Justice' in the *Old Arcadia*" remarks that the tone of the narrator recounting the judgement of Gynecia is "pettish, impatient, and negative," while there are "moral ambivalences and strong emotional reactions that surround the Arcadian nobility and the young princes" at the conclusion of the *Old Arcadia* (M. Dipple, "'Unjust Justice' in the *Old Arcadia*, pp. 85;87).

the *New Arcadia*, like the modern world, "has become infinitely large and each of its corners is richer in gifts and dangers;" it is that in which the soul knows the "abyss within itself which may tempt it to fall or encourage it to discover pathless heights".¹⁰³ In this way, the tonal and schematic differences we've been tracing between the two versions of the *Arcadia* may be understood as participating in Sidney's overall maturing vision of his literary project which is seconded and concretised in the alterations he effects in his choice of genre. Sidney did not set out to write a completely new and different work when he produced the *New Arcadia*; he was, after all, *revising* his *Old Arcadia*. This rather obvious point does nevertheless lead to interesting conclusions about his developing conception of the nature of heroic behaviour. We may as a result deduce that the changes he made were deliberate rejections of what he set out in his original work. The added characters and events of the *New Arcadia* such as we've discussed all serve to expand and qualify the type of ethical ideal that Sidney expounds and advocates. Equally, then, the decision to alter the generic structure of his *Arcadia* must be seen in this light. The different genres that Sidney works with are chosen and rejected for what they allow him to express. The subject of genre will, as I've indicated, be taken up again in the next chapter, but I wish for now to underline the congruence between the problematic characterisation of Amphialus and the generic form of the *New Arcadia*.

¹⁰³ G. Lukács. *The Theory of the Novel*, pp. 34; 30.

PART TWO: GENDER

Chapter V

GENDER AND THE HEROIC IDEAL IN THE *NEW ARCADIA*

In the previous examination of Sidney's construction of an ethical framework, as principally accomplished through his manipulation of rhetorical figures and schemes, a picture of the *Arcadia's* increasing complexity emerged. This complexity was steeped in the deployment of 'difficult' rhetorical figures that bespoke and mirrored a parallel complexity in the conception of the character of ethical behaviour itself. The relatively simple and straight-forward formulations of rhetorical *sententia* in the *Old Arcadia* gave way to more problematic utilisations of figures like *contentio* and *paradoxon* in the *New*, coupled with plot and character developments (particularly as in the case of Amphialus) which surpassed the neat problem-resolution structure of the original. An absolutely key dimension of this problematical handling of issues of political and social ethics in the *New Arcadia* still, however, remains to be explored. This concerns the unusually complicated representation of gender roles assigned to the *New Arcadia's* central characters. That is to say, the ambiguous and often enigmatic treatment of gender roles, most notably attested to in the Amazon disguise of Pyrocles, impacts significantly on the way in which the *New Arcadia* envisions both individual and political ethics. While Pyrocles' transvestism is also a feature of the *Old Arcadia*, it is my argument that the *New Arcadia's* complex treatment of gender issues is significantly more developed than in the original version, and that Sidney actively explores gender roles and definitions to deepen and enrich his delineation of

heroic behaviour in the revision. For this reason, I propose now to investigate the governing principles of gender depictions and their ensuing repercussions for the discussion of ethics in the *New Arcadia*.

The necessity of this investigation into the role of gender in the *Arcadia* is seconded by the nature of the tactics I have been employing in my reading of Sidney's work. Throughout my discussion of the *Arcadia's* rhetorical strategies and their consequent depiction of Sidney's moral and ethical ideals, I have insisted on Sidney's keen sensitivity to his own readership. Now here I do not mean simply that Sidney was aware that his work had a specific audience (though this is obviously true, and will be discussed shortly), but that the very idea or notion of that audience could be seen as a formative principle of the *Arcadia* itself. That is, insofar as I've primarily described the *Arcadia* as a didactic work, the object of that didacticism (the readership) must play a key role in the work's construction. In conducting my exploration of the *Arcadia's* didacticism I have therefore been employing techniques similar to those particular to reader-response criticism in general as, on a most basic level, the reader assumes prime importance in the understanding of the literary text.¹ This connection between reader-response practices and

¹ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980. Fish's well-known position pivots on the temporal journey of the reader through the text, and how this constitutes the 'meaning' of the literary work. Here and elsewhere he emphasises the role of interpretation on the part of the individual reader as well as collective groups of readers or 'interpretive communities'. Terence Hawkes has similarly argued the primacy of the role of the reader in the construction of meaning in

my own approach to the *Arcadia* is also suggested by my emphasis on Sidney's rhetoricism. This trait which defines the audience's response as the ultimate gauge of the orator's success has important affinities with the type of readings provided by the likes of Fish, a point noted by Jonathan Culler in his evaluation of reader-response theory. Culler describes this correlation between rhetoricism and aspects of reader-response theory when he remarks,

The structuralist emphasis on literary codes, the constructive role forced on readers by certain experimental fictions, and the need to find ways to talk about the most refractory contemporary works have all contributed to a change in the reader's role, but one should not overlook an aspect of that change that is easily ignored. For the rhetoricians of antiquity and the Renaissance, and for many critics of other times, a poem is a composition designed to produce an effect on readers, to move them in certain ways; and one's judgement of a poem depends on one's sense of the quality and intensity of its effect.²

Patricia Parker seconds the link Culler makes between rhetoric and reader-response theories in her introduction to *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, where she describes "affective stylistics" as a "dimension of reception which might be said to have been included in the Renaissance with the implied psychology and manipulative power of rhetoric itself".³ Indeed, what holds true in general for rhetoricians of antiquity and the Renaissance is especially so for Ciceronian rhetoricism which puts particular emphasis on the persuasive, epideictic function of rhetoric. My earlier discussion of Sidney's Ciceronianism is certainly predicated

literature. See Terence Hawkes, *Meaning By Shakespeare*, London: Routledge, 1992.

² Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism*, London: Routledge, 1983, p. 39.

³ Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (eds.), *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, London: Methuen, p. xi.

on such a concern with moving and persuading a given audience or readership.⁴

Given this shared overt preoccupation with the role of the reader that has been established, then, several questions subsequently arise that must be addressed concerning the characterisation of the reader. It has now become essential to question the nature and constitution of any readership in the light of much recent commentary on the methodological problems involved in reader-response theory. On the whole, critics of reader-response theory have pointed out the inherent fallibility of a brand of reader-orientated criticism which takes for granted or assumes the homogeneity of the audience to which a literary work is addressed. In other words, such critics rightly fault reader-response theorists who take as given the socio-sexual makeup of a readership.⁵ Just as reader-response theory has been subject

⁴ See Chapter One, Section One, especially pp. 6-9.

⁵ Schweickart's "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading" is one such critical review of the bulk of reader-response criticism which commits exactly this mistake of assuming an unspecific, 'ungendered' reader. "The different accounts of the reading experience that have been put forth," she writes, "overlook the issues of race, class, and sex, and give no hint of the conflicts, sufferings, and passions that attend these realities" (P. Schweickart, "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading" in R. Warhol and D. Price Herndl (eds.), *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p. 529). She forcefully argues the case for reader-response criticism to engage feminist criticism, as both seek to affirm that the reader is an active producer of meaning, and she states firmly that "Reader-response critics cannot take refuge... in the idea that a gender-neutral criticism is possible. Today they can continue to ignore the implications of feminist criticism only at the cost of incoherence or intellectual dishonesty" (P. Schweickart, "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of reading", p. 531). Jonathan Culler argues much the same point in his *On Deconstruction*, where he recalls Elaine Showalter's contention that "the hypothesis of a woman reader changes our apprehension of a given text, awakening us to the significance of its sexual codes," (J. Culler, *On*

to an investigation as to its conception and definition of the reader, so should my own discussion of Sidney be exposed to this same type of inquiry. As a result, then, some investigation must be made not only into how our reading of Sidney's Arcadia is affected by the notion of a female reader, but also into how we can best describe the historical constitution of Sidney's readership. Much valuable work has been done on this subject by Mary Ellen Lamb, who in her book *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* explores the significance of the Countess of Pembroke as the most highly profiled historical reader of the *Arcadia*, a subject we will return to momentarily. It is this consideration of the *Arcadia's* potentially feminine readership which impacts significantly on the description of ethics and ultimately on the Sidneian heroic ideal which we've gradually been constructing.

1

Readers of the *Arcadia*

Let us begin first by rehearsing some of Lamb's important insights into the *Arcadia's* signalled audience. She begins by making the observation noted above of the Countess

Deconstruction, p. 50). He asserts that reader-response criticism must pose the following questions to itself, If the experience of literature depends on the qualities of a reading self (an assumption underlying all of reader-response theories), ... what difference {does} it make to the experience of literature and thus to the meaning of literature if this self, were for example, female rather than male. If the meaning of a work is the experience of a reader, what difference does it make if the reader is a woman? (J. Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p. 42)

of Pembroke's privileged status as reader, indicated by the very title of Sidney's romance. "Since", Lamb argues, "it [the title] identifies the work as in some sense hers, it asserts the importance of her reading in the book's production".⁶ This evident signalling of a specifically feminine reader is iterated in the *Old Arcadia's* address to the 'fair ladies' to whom Sidney's work is directed.⁷ In addition to these specifically mentioned women readers, Sidney's *Arcadia* has long been seen on a more general level as a text historically read by women. The Countess of Pembroke was of course the very first woman (or person, for that matter) to read the *Arcadia*, receiving the sheets, as Sidney tells us, literally as he finished writing them.⁸ She is however followed and imitated not only by her immediate friends, the aforementioned "fair ladies", but by many other women readers in the seventeenth century and then in the eighteenth century who likewise displayed keen interest in Sidney's *Arcadia*. Dennis Kay in his excellent introductory article to *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism* articulates this view of Sidney's readership. He remarks,

⁶ Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p. 72.

⁷ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 72.

⁸ In the dedication to the *Arcadia* Sidney writes to his sister, "it [this work] is done only for you, only to you: if you keep it to yourself or to such friends who will weigh errors in the balance of goodwill, I hope, for the father's sake, it will be pardoned, perchance made much of, though in itself it have deformities... Your dear self can best witness the manner, being done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence; the rest by sheets sent unto you as fast as they were done" (*New Arcadia*, p. 506). Mary Sidney's role in the actual production of the most widely read edition of the *Arcadia* is of course well-known, as Hugh Sanford's "To the Reader" acknowledges (*New Arcadia*, p. lxi).

women readers, although excluded from formal education, were drawn to Sidney. The *Arcadia* had both a specific (the Countess of Pembroke) and a general (the 'dear ladies' whom the narrator regularly addresses) female audience. From its beginning, the novel or prose romance addressed women readers... Court ladies, like Ben Jonson's Saviolina, derived skill in speech from Sidney: the courtier Fastidius Briske comments that her wit 'flowes from her like nectar... she doth obserue as pure a phrase, and vse as choise figures in her ordinary conferences, as ay be i' the *Arcadia*'.⁹

Kay goes on to cite other instances in which Sidney's popularity with female audiences is evinced, such as in Clara Reeve's remarks in *The Progress of Romance*. Kay quotes Reeve's defence of the *Arcadia* from Walpole's criticisms where she protests, "'has a woman nothing to say in defence of a work that has always been a favourite with her sex?'"¹⁰ Reeve's remarks bear testimony to what Kay calls the "peculiar suitability of Sidney for the sensibilities of women".¹¹

The *Arcadia* found resonance with female literary figures as well. Sidney's niece Lady Mary Wroth modelled her own *Countess of Montgomerie's Urania* on her uncle's romance, and the American poet Anne Bradstreet was also so impressed by the *Arcadia* as to write "An Elegy Upon That Honorable And Reknowned Knight Sir Philip Sidney, Who Was Ultimately Slain At The Siege Of Zutphen, Anno 1586", in which she indicates her assessment of Sidney as the greatest English poet. There is in addition of course the figure of Mrs. Stanley, whose 1725 'modernization' of the *Arcadia* we discussed earlier.

⁹ Dennis Kay, (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, p. 21.

¹⁰ D. Kay, (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, p. 35.

¹¹ D. Kay, (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, p. 27.

Seen in this light, Mrs. Stanley is just one link in a chain of other female Sidney enthusiasts. Lamb picks up on this point and cogently describes how the *Arcadia's* historical feminine readership was widely acknowledged by male critics, and how they then saw Sidney's romance as a negative, potentially dangerous influence on young women.¹² Especially interesting is Thomas Powell's opinion of the *Arcadia*, quoted by Lamb, as improper reading material for middle-class women. Powell advises the men responsible for these women readers to "Let them learne Cookery and Laundrye. And instead of reading Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, let them learn the grounds of good huswifery", thus indicating how the *Arcadia* was seen very much as the reading material of women who ought to be doing other things.¹³

Suggestively, Clark Hulse has made a very similar assertion about Sidney's feminine readership, chiefly though in relation to *Astrophil and Stella*. He contends that in the sonnet sequence, the female reader, easily identified as Penelope Rich, plays the key role in the creation of the poems through the very act of her reading the text. Penelope Rich, the 'target' reader of the sequence, is not a type of blind for a more sophisticated (supposedly male) reader as has been widely assumed by critics of *Astrophil and Stella* throughout history. For Hulse she is the most important reader of the work insofar as he regards *Astrophil* as what it declares itself to be: an impassioned address to a woman, the poet's beloved. He writes,

¹² M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 113.

¹³ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 114.

the historical audience, the ideal reader, and the principal reader described within the poems are all one person, Penelope Devereaux Rich. From that obvious fact flows a series of consequences: that the poems themselves derive from her authority as well as his; that the love game enacted in the sonnets is a struggle between her and Sidney for control not only over their relationship but over the poems as well; and that this struggle follows a pattern that characterizes the political milieu of the Elizabethan court.¹⁴

Hulse furthermore extends this description of the female addressee's power and influence in the creation of the literary work to many other Renaissance texts. He points out that the women to whom many Renaissance poets dedicated their works- Lucy, Countess of Bedford, the Countess of Pembroke, and indeed Elizabeth herself- were all well-educated, informed and capable critics. Far from assuming some nominal, conventional role as gracious patronesses, then, Hulse argues that these women exercised considerable influence on those same works created in their name, just as he maintains the real-life Stella directly influenced the creation of *Astrophil and Stella*.¹⁵ Lamb echoes this conception of the active, subjective role played by the women readers named in Renaissance texts when she describes the part played by Sidney's sister in the writing of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. She writes, "*The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*... bestows a position as subject to a woman; it grants to her reading a determinative role in the very production of that

¹⁴ Clark Hulse, "Stella's Wit: Penelope Rich as Reader of Sidney's Sonnets", in M. Ferguson M. Quilligan, and N. J. Vickers, (eds.), *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 273.

¹⁵ T. Hulse, "Stella's Wit: Penelope Rich as Reader of Sidney's Sonnets", p. 272.

work".¹⁶ What both Hulse and Lamb emphasise, then, is that Sidney's literary works must be read and understood with this historically feminine readership in mind; they agree that both *Astrophil and Stella* and the *Arcadia* were digested by women readers in the first instance and continuously thereafter and that this must have its consequent implications in terms of the works' 'meaning'. While male critics have generally acknowledged that Sidney's poems and his romance were read by women, they have failed to take this into consideration when discussing the literary significance of these works, much to the diminishment of their ensuing interpretations.

Lamb is one of the first readers of Sidney to rectify this situation in probing the significance of the *Arcadia's* overtly feminine readership. For her, the awareness of the femininity of Sidney's audience provides a critical means of regarding the *Arcadia* as a work that is particularly suggestive and meaningful for the common experiences of women. That is, it allows the possibility of considering Sidney's work as something other than a manual from which (mainly) young men may acquire images of martial and political virtue to implement in active life, even though she does not deny that this is one perfectly valid means of categorising the *Arcadia*.¹⁷ Lamb wishes, thus, to offer an alternative to the these more usual critical readings of the *Arcadia* which are mainly accomplished through an examination of the work's political and religious concerns, concerns

¹⁶ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 22.

¹⁷ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 74.

which she reminds us lay largely beyond the scope of most women of the period. Lamb proposes instead to read the *Arcadia* as its many women readers might have done, as a work addressing and expressing feminine notions of virtue applicable and relevant to their lives.

In brief, she suggests that the revised version of the *Arcadia* represents characteristics traditionally understood as female, such as patience and endurance, as truly heroic and worthy of the greatest respect and emulation by its audience. That is, the *New Arcadia* presents the elements of patience and tolerance which many women well might have to demonstrate in their lives, especially in relation to the common event of enforced and undesired marriage, as the material of great moral fortitude. She reaches this conclusion from the implications of the long episode of Book 3 in which the Arcadian princesses and Zelmane are held captive by Cecropia and Amphialus and are forced to endure various forms of torture and both mental and physical abuse. Lamb writes,

By the captivity episode in book 3, the revised *Arcadia* endorses compassion as a response appropriate to men as well as women. In addition, the revised version provides a viable form of women's heroism in the ability to endure misfortune, especially domestic misfortune, reflecting domestic predicaments of women readers of the time.¹⁸

Very clearly then, the *New Arcadia* may equally be seen to provide images of virtue to its feminine readership as well as to its masculine one, images that young women may well emulate in their own particular *vita activa* in the

¹⁸ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 24.

endorsement of compassion and endurance as heroic virtues. This treatment of the traditionally feminine value of compassion is very different, Lamb feels, from the way in which the *Old Arcadia* presents femininity and displays of feminine character traits. According to Lamb the *Old Arcadia*, far from supporting the heroic and virtuous nature of compassion, performs a sustained critique of just that characteristic. The narrator of the *Old Arcadia* first tempts his audience into a compassionate and understanding stance towards the follies of the young Arcadian lovers, but then ultimately chastises both his female and male readers for their failure to be critical of his flawed characters and indulging in what becomes the moral weakness of compassion and sympathy. Lamb's argument runs as follows:

The 'fair ladies' addressed by the narrator of Sidney's unrevised *Arcadia* function as alluring bait to entrap the reader. Proceeding from their own sexual complicity, their indiscriminating compassion guides the reader to sympathize with the morally precarious actions of the royal protagonists in the first three books. The last two books, in which all addresses to fair ladies drop out, present a rereading of these actions by the judges-- Divine Providence and Euarchus. This reader entrapment brings perceptions of rational (just) male readings and emotional (compassionate) female readings into direct and unresolved conflict.¹⁹

Presumably, then, it is the 'emotional (compassionate) female' response that comes off the worse in this conflict with 'rational (just) male readings'. So the *Old Arcadia* attempts to show up as unworthy and undesirable the compassion that 'faire ladies' and all like-minded readers, both male and female, display for the trials and tribulations

¹⁹ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 23.

of the two princes. The *New Arcadia*, in an almost antithetical movement, valorizes the very same trait of compassion. Displayed by the princesses in the captivity episode of Book 3, most movingly enacted in the case of Pamela, compassion becomes a female form of heroism.²⁰

Lamb's assessment of the effect of Sidney's female readership is satisfying insofar as it describes how the *Arcadia* might be read from a gendered, female point of view; she adequately and eloquently provides a woman's reading of the *Arcadia*. In doing this, however, she assumes a fairly traditional and unchallenging schematic of gender associations and definitions. That is, Lamb's reading of the *Arcadia* is premised on the view that women would obtain one type of apprehension of the work dictated by their given, determined socialization while men would obtain quite another one, one that is more in keeping with their greater involvement with social and political issues. Although she stresses that the *New Arcadia's* validation of compassion as an heroic ideal is available to both male and female readers, she concludes that this valorisation of compassion is especially meaningful and important for women readers who

²⁰ Lamb's reading of the importance of the element of compassion in the *New Arcadia* has been voiced by others. Elizabeth Dipple makes similar claims, though paradoxically in relation to the concluding scene of the original *Arcadia* in her article "'Unjust Justice' in the *Old Arcadia*" in *Studies in English Literature*, 10 (1970). Here Dipple argues that it is only through the exertion of sympathy and compassion that brings about the resolution of the ending of the *Old Arcadia*, in contrast to the power of absolute justice, embodied in the figure of Euarchus. Similarly, Constance Jordan in her book *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* contends that "Sidney's *Arcadia* demonstrates that the best form of justice embraces the feminine element of equity" (C. Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 137).

have had to exercise those qualities to survive in their historical domestic situations. Ultimately, thus, Lamb provides a type of alternate reading of the *Arcadia*, a reading for women (and presumably mostly by women) that lies at the side of other, equally valid, readings of Sidney's masculinist political and ethical agenda laid out in the *Arcadia*.

For Lamb, in effect, these different readings coexist without meaningfully impinging on each other; interpretations of the *Arcadia's* political and ethical agenda are 'male' readings that however legitimate are not at issue to most women. She acknowledges this juxtaposition in the passage I alluded to earlier. When Lamb asserts, "modern critics have convincingly read Sidney's text as immersed in the religious and political concerns of his day, concerns for which ordinary women have appeared to play only a peripheral role", she passively accepts the supposition that since women on the whole played no major role in politics, they were consequently not interested in matters political.²¹ Likewise, one assumes, since men enjoyed a larger degree of freedom to pursue extramarital love interests, they would not on the whole be quite so moved by the spectacles of compassion and emotional endurance provided by the Arcadian princesses. We are thus left with the conclusion that biologically determined socialization is the key element in evaluating what the *Arcadia* has to offer its particular readership.²²

²¹ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 74.

²² The issue of biological determinism versus a more fluid understanding of gender differences, principally defined by many French feminists as unessential, is quite a contentious one. At the obvious risk of over-simplification, I will

Ironically, Lamb describes how the *Arcadia's* historical reception has been based on an all too conservative picture of the effect of gender on reading that nevertheless mirrors her own neat depictions of gender-related attitudes to the *Arcadia*.

Generally, men read the *New Arcadia* as a serious work, revealing either political insights about the 'growth, state, and declination of Princes, change of Government, and laws,' or moral guidance, 'Examples, (as directing threads) to guide every man through a confusing Labyrinth of his own desires, and life.' The *New Arcadia* as read by women would hardly seem to be the same book... As represented by seventeenth-century male writers, the primary response of women readers to Sidney's *Arcadia* was sexual arousal".²³

Lamb criticises this historical failure to discern a female response to the *Arcadia* based on its depiction of the feminine heroism of compassion and patience versus that of sexual arousal, but without challenging the fundamental

elaborate on this source of contention. On the one hand, many (chiefly Anglo-American) feminists tend to view the different socialization of the female subject as standard and fixed enough to engender a type of specific female identity. That is, it is possible to speak of a 'woman's point of view' as opposed to a man's, in that women on the whole have experienced a particular process of identity formation in a patriarchal society which produces a distinct female essence or mentality. This, of course, is radically different from a masculine essence or identity produced by the same patriarchal society. Many (chiefly French) feminists dispute this neat distinction between masculine and feminine identities with their respectively distinct desires, interests, and concerns. They critique, that is, essentialist definitions of masculinity and femininity, preferring instead to consider these terms as free from specific biological reference. Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985) succinctly describes these discrepant feminist positions. Lamb's own assumption of the distinct experiences and needs of Renaissance women readers argues for her sympathy with Anglo-American feminist paradigms. Her claims about the *New Arcadia's* validation of compassion as available to both male and female readers are, however, thus tempered by her premise of their different socially-determined interests.

²³ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 112-13.

notion that women would derive a different meaning from Sidney's work based on their different socio-sexual identity. In the end, then, Lamb seems to depart too little from the historical means of reading the *Arcadia* as a text catering for two distinct sets of gender-related responses: moral and political from men, and amatory, compassionate from women, or possibly, from men who leave behind their masculine political agendas.

Lamb furthermore works on this set of assumptions regarding the polarity of masculine and feminine readings in her discussion of the *Arcadia's* overall treatment of gender issues. That is, she draws out the binary opposition of the political/ masculine and the amatory/ feminine in her assessment of the *Arcadia's* structuring of hierarchies of gender. In particular, the section headed "Reason: Passion:: Male: Female" attempts to establish and explore these dichotomies supposedly underlining the *Arcadia*, dichotomies, it must be emphasised, that pervade western thought from Aristotle onward.²⁴ It is her contention that the *Arcadia* ultimately supports this controlling set of analogies, although it first problematizes it, through its fundamental construction of the femininity of its compassionate readers-readers who are historically signalled as women, and whose femininity is also already implied by the disjunction between

²⁴ Here Lamb draws upon the work of feminist thinkers such as Helene Cixous who have long investigated the western patriarchal association of women with passion and men with reason. She notes in particular Cixous' "Sorties" in *The Newly Born Woman*, Betsy Wing (trans.), Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986. See also Shoshana Felman's "Women and Madness: the Critical Phallacy" in *Diacritics* (Winter 1975): pp. 2-10 for a discussion of deconstructive critiques of western metaphysics and their repercussions for feminist theory.

reading (feminine) and doing (masculine). In Lamb's opinion, that is to say, Sidney's *Arcadia* suggests that reading itself is the diametric opposite of masculine heroic action and is thus essentially a feminine or effeminizing activity, effeminizing in this context clearly assuming pejorative connotations. For this she turns to the passage in the *Old Arcadia* where Histor relates the exchange between Plangus and Boulon concerning Plangus' fears for his beloved Erona. Here Boulon warns the enamoured Plangus of the dangers encountered when men listen to the tales of woe of women, and is apparently supported by both the local narrator, Histor, and the authorial narrator, Sidney. Lamb comments on the episode thus:

Histor's account of the interchange between Plangus and Boulon implicates Sidney's own narrative, itself reporting the adventures of lovers to a courtly audience. If we are to hold with the 'wise Boulon' that a real man does not 'yield to female lamentations' in sympathy for such tales, then what are we to make of the male reader or, even more, of the writer of the *Arcadias*? If we believe that the sentiments of the 'wise Boulon' were entertained even partly in the Renaissance and by Sidney, then responding to the *Arcadias* themselves may have posed a challenge to the masculinity of male readers. Its challenge to the masculinity of a male writer becomes clearer in the reworking of Histor's account in the *New Arcadia*, where Plangus' tale remains unchanged, but the narrative situation is altered in various ways that mark the importance of gender".²⁵

Even to read the *Arcadia*, then, is to deviate from more masculine traditions of virtue through active accomplishment. As further evidence for this claim, Lamb refers to the author's biography and his supposed personal disdain for both reading and producing literature. The writing of the *Arcadias*

²⁵ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 86.

was accomplished during Sidney's retreat at Wilton, a fact that leads her to pose the question, "Is it possible that his narrator's addresses to 'fair ladies' in the *Old Arcadia* represented not only a strategy of entrapment, but also Sidney's judgement of his own narrative as effeminizing?"²⁶ She introduces the well-known piece of *sprezzatura* with which Sidney prefaces the *Arcadia*, preferring instead however to take his words as less ironic than is usual. So, in other words, Sidney's description of the *Arcadia* in the dedication as a "trifle, and that triflingly handled", is accepted by Lamb at face value as an indication of the author's guilty awareness that for him, at least, literary activity is the (unhappy) effeminate alternative to the *vita activa*.

²⁶ M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 87. Sidney's enforced retirement from active court life, occasioned by his unwelcome advice to Elizabeth concerning her proposed marriage to the Duke of Anjou, permitted him the time with which to write the *Arcadia* at his sister's home Wilton. In 1578, the same year he began the *Old Arcadia* at Wilton, he writes a letter quoted by Lamb to his friend Hubert Languet in which he remarks, "to what purpose should our thoughts be directed to various kinds of knowledge, unless room be afforded for putting into practice, so that public advantage may be the result, which in a corrupt age we cannot hope for" (M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, p. 89). This Lamb sees as evidence of his dissatisfaction with the role of author and his categorisation of literary activity as inferior because juxtaposed to the realm of action and thus effeminizing. Alan Hager's article "The Exemplary Mirage: Fabrication of Sir Philip Sidney's Biographical Image and the Sidney Reader" in *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, provides very similar interpretations of Sidney's rhetorical *sprezzatura*. Hager also sees Sidney's many expressions of irony vis-à-vis his writing as a type of double bluff for a very real dissatisfaction with his career and achievements. Katherine Duncan-Jones is another who supports this view. Her article "Philip Sidney's Toys", also in *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, argues that all Sidney's poetry was to a significant degree early and immature work, insofar as the author died before the age of thirty-two. She concludes as well that the author's expressed modesty toward his work was largely genuine, and a signal of his disregard for literary versus political achievement.

If we take Sidney seriously in his *Defence of Poetry*, however, we may reach a very different conclusion. Instead of discussing poetry or literature as the antithesis to active political achievement, Sidney images the two as correlates that work to one purpose, the furthering of the social good. Indeed, it is the poet's ability actively to move others to virtue that sets him apart from and above philosophers and historians who may practice their disciplines without immediate concern for their audience and for their lives in the world; the poet on the other hand is in Sidney's words "the right popular philosopher," who cannot do so.²⁷ Sidney clarifies this active good exercised by the poet in a passage of the *Defence* I quoted earlier, where he insists that the highest knowledge, of which poetry is the vehicle, properly ends in ethical and social action:

This purifying of wit-- this enriching of memory, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit-- which we commonly call learning... the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of... So that the ending end of all earthly knowledge being virtuous action, those skills, that most serve to bring forth that have a most just title to be princes over all the rest.²⁸

It may also be argued that this too is a piece of self-justification on the part of Sidney, the frustrated statesman, who has curiously "slipped into the title of a poet".²⁹ Nonetheless, Sidney's obvious rhetoricism again counters attempts to establish his disregard for literary didacticism as a poor alternative to active doing. Indeed, his Ciceronian bias, which I've delineated earlier, forges

²⁷ *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 34.

²⁸ *A Defence of Poetry*, pp. 28-9.

²⁹ *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 18.

exactly this definition of writing as a form of well-doing. I will recall Cicero's edict on the subject, endorsed by Sidney:

our Oratory [must] be conducted out of this sheltered training-ground at home, *right into action*, into the dust and uproar, into the camp and fighting-line of public debate; she must face putting everything to the proof and test the strength of her talent, and her secluded preparation must be brought forth into the daylight of reality.³⁰ [my emphasis]

It is hence apparent that Lamb's contention that literary (rhetorical) work is somehow opposed to virtuous doing is at least questionable in the light of Sidney's Ciceronian conception of literary didacticism.

Lamb's juxtaposition, then, of reading and doing is a significant parallel to her similar polarisation of feminine (compassionate) and masculine (political, ethical) readings of Sidney. In each case, it becomes difficult to envisage a discussion of political ethics that is affected by feminine constructs and that is relevant to women's lives, or a reading of the *Arcadia's* valuation of feminine traits such as compassion that has important implications for Sidney's conception of heroic, political ethics. I wish, however, to provide a means of regarding Sidney's ethical and political concerns in a way that does not position them over and against issues of 'feminine' qualities of compassion. I wish to explore, then, how the notion of a feminine readership might be interpreted in more general and broad terms, and how it might be then possible to envision the *Arcadia* as a text that performs a revaluation of traditional masculine conceptions of virtue and ethics.

³⁰ Cicero, *De Oratore*, p. 109.

2

Martial Activity and Femininity: The Amazon

The most obvious way in which the *Arcadia* contests the set of analogies suggested by Lamb of masculinity:action::femininity:passion is its treatment of its central character's role as an Amazon. Sidney's utilisation of this figure immediately questions the rigorous association of marital activity with the masculine sex, and by extension, the correlation of activity itself with masculinity. Clearly, no other single figure could so categorically deny the conception of military action as a masculine domain than that of the Amazon, since simply by definition the Amazons are a race of martial women. As the most extreme version of the virago or warlike woman, the Amazon is thus seen by critics such as Constance Jordan as fundamentally subverting the equation of biological sex with fixed gender roles that lies at the heart of Lamb's reading.³¹ The power and suggestiveness of this figure seems undeniable given the number of instances in which the Amazon features in literature contemporary to Sidney. While no one disputes the importance of Amazons in literary texts up until and including the Renaissance, the significance of the figure

³¹ Jordan describes the importance of the virile woman or the virago in the Renaissance as articulating a key distinction between sex and gender; that is, the virago represents the possibility of envisaging typically gender-specific roles (such as the martial hero) as independent of biological sex, thereby presenting women with alternate social roles. See Section 3, "Sex and Gender" of her *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*.

remains difficult to establish for different writers of the period. Celeste Turner Wright was one early critic to explore this controversial subject in her article "The Amazons in Elizabethan Literature". Wright views the Amazon as a primarily positive image for women in the period, remarking that the Amazons represented "the foremost ancient examples of feminism".³² For her, the figure of the Amazon was a handy vehicle to express the possibility of affirmative female power. She reaches this conclusion by pointing to the proliferation of Amazons in classical literature (Penthesilea and Hippolyta being the two most outstanding) and their depiction in the Renaissance, which for the most part describe these women as examples of great heroic virtue.³³

Wright argues strongly that the Elizabethans idealized the Amazon in basically two ways. Firstly, the Amazons were esteemed on an aesthetic level since they conformed with the contemporary preference for tall women. Indeed, many tall Elizabethan women happily adopted the title of Amazon to describe their physique. Underlying this aesthetic admiration of tall Amazonian women, Wright contends, was the notion of their physical superiority over other women, and the common assumption of the genetic superiority of any offspring produced by them.³⁴ Wright is supported in this view by

³² Celeste Turner Wright, "The Amazons in Elizabethan Literature" in *Studies in Philology*, 37 (1940), pp. 433.

³³ Wright notes how Penthesilea in particular received generous treatment at the hands of many Renaissance writers. She remarks, "Penthesilea is celebrated by Painter, Spenser, Gibson, Heale, and Rich as an almost matchless example of woman's ability in war; and by Jonson as an example of heroic virtue. Sidney, Shakespeare, and Shirley mention her casually, as if confident of being understood" (C. T. Wright, "The Amazons in Elizabethan Literature", p. 438).

³⁴ C. T. Wright, "The Amazons in Elizabethan Literature", p. 442.

Sidney's characterisation of Zoilus in the *New Arcadia*, and the opinions he offers in contemplation of the fruits of his union with Pyrocles/Zelmana.³⁵ Conjoined with this admiration of the Amazon's physical superiority was, most importantly, the Amazon's acknowledged moral and spiritual fortitude. Amazons, Wright asserts, "serve as models of female magnanimity and courage and are even included, with no comment upon their sex, among many male examples of valour and 'civil nobility'".³⁶

Curiously, however, Wright sees this apparent adulation of the Amazon as restricted to writers and theoreticians of the period. While the Amazon is glorified in literature for her physical and spiritual strength, "the vast majority of Elizabethans are unalterably opposed to woman's meddling with weapons".³⁷ This opposition to Amazonian behaviour is ultimately embedded in the particular difficulties that arise from the Amazon's differing from 'normal', established ideas of femininity. That is, when Amazonian behaviour is not simply depicted in fictional literary works, but is experienced in everyday life, it ceases to hold much of its appeal. Battle, for instance, with an Amazon becomes more problematic than it initially appears. In respect to the

³⁵ The episode which Wright refers to occurs in the final section of the Book III fragment of the *New Arcadia*, where Zoilus rather comically attempts to woo the unwilling Zelmana thus: "'Darling!' said he, 'Let thy heart be full of joy! And let thy fair eyes be of counsel with it, for this day thou shalt have Zoilus, whom many have longed for-- but none shall have him but Zelmana. And oh! how much glory I have to think what a race will be between us! The world, by the heavens! the world be too little for them!'" (*New Arcadia*, p. 460).

³⁶ C. T. Wright, "The Amazons in Elizabethan Literature", pp. 442-3.

³⁷ C. T. Wright, "The Amazons in Elizabethan Literature", p. 445.

rules and regulations of warfare, special considerations arise with a female opponent that are otherwise irrelevant to the mechanics of combat. A battle enjoined between two male contestants, equal or unequal, will of course end in defeat for one, yet the proven skill and stamina of the winner should qualify the resultant disappointment for the loser. In other words, the loser should not suffer overdue shame since he has been bettered by a highly skilled and thus virtuous man. We need only recall the opening words exchanged by Amphialus and Argalus at the commencement of their battle to see this point illustrated.³⁸ On the other hand, defeat at the hands of a woman, however strong and warlike she may be, remains a particular blow to masculine pride that is not allayed by the recognition of the proven skill of the female victor.³⁹ Again, such an attitude is articulated by the character Zoilus of the *New Arcadia*. Zoilus' defeat by Zelmane leads his brother Anaxius to block off the scene of their battle "to conceal the shame of his brother, slain by a woman".⁴⁰ Should defeat by a woman be avoided, the ensuing rewards did little to make up for the possible risks of humiliation. Victory over a woman warrior was often belittled

³⁸ Argalus attempts to persuade Amphialus to relinquish the captive Arcadian princesses, the cause of the disagreement, to prevent their battle. Amphialus refuses, but stipulates, "I, whom never threatenings could make afraid, am now terrified by your noble courtesy, for well I know from what height of virtue it doth proceed, and what cause I have to doubt such virtue bent to my ruin.... I will therefore attend your appearance in the isle carrying this advantage with me, that, as it shall be a singular honour if I get the victory, so there can be no dishonour in being overcome by Argalus" (*New Arcadia*, p. 374).

³⁹ C. T. Wright, "The Amazons in Elizabethan Literature", p. 446.

⁴⁰ *New Arcadia*, p. 461.

as no great feat.⁴¹ Most problematically of all, even to engage in battle with a woman was to transgress the rules of gallantry and chivalry which of course positioned the woman as the victim to be defended, not as an equal to be challenged. All these practical considerations made the reality of Amazonian contestants undesirable.

Part and parcel of the Amazon's uneasy position vis-à-vis chivalric rules of behaviour is her questionably femininity. That is, because Amazons do not easily assume the traditional passive role allotted to the female sex, their femininity is challenged by those who view the link between sex and gender roles as unequivocal. The well-known Amazonian ritual of chopping off one breast to facilitate movement in battle is a physical symptom of such supposed 'unsexing' that a woman must undergo to become an Amazon. Clearly, then, Amazonian women were distrusted and disliked for their uncomfortable relation to established codes of behaviour, an important point that will be returned to later. Thus, while Wright first asserts and delineates the Amazon's exemplarity for writers of the period, she also declares the figure's unpopularity with Elizabethans wary of the Amazon's difficult relationship to traditional, established notions of masculinity and femininity.

Simon Shepherd works out this ambivalent, uneasy attitude in the Renaissance towards the figure of the martial woman in his book, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*. The very title of Shepherd's book establishes the varying perceptions of

⁴¹ C. T. Wright, "The Amazons in Elizabethan Literature", p. 446.

viragos in the late Renaissance, and the essentially bifurcated attitude toward martial women. Shepherd seconds the opinion of Wright that the Renaissance held mixed feelings toward the virago, but he views the fissure as operating between two distinct figures, not as representing the ambiguous meaning of the same figure as Wright concludes. Chapter 1, "Warrior Meets Amazon Woman", attempts to describe these two versions of the virago as opposing aspects of the same principle. Simply put, the warrior woman and the Amazon can be seen as mirror images of each other, the former assuming positive characteristics and potentialities, the latter the threat or destruction of those same potentialities. For Shepherd, hence, the idea of the strong or warlike-woman was always mediated by its manifestation into either a positive force that had the power to save society (the warrior woman) or the negative power to erode proper social values (the Amazon).

For Shepherd, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* best exemplifies just such a split in the two figures of Britomart and Radigund. Britomart, the representative of chastity, is a warlike woman who unites the aggression of a warrior with the typically feminine attributes of beauty and obedience to voices of authority. Britomart, in other words, is a capable and valiant fighter who never bends her talents in a way that threatens traditional social structures. She never, for instance, questions her lover Artegall's sway over her. Instead, she acts in accord with the famous passage in the *Faerie Queene* in which Spenser comes very near to questioning the right of the real-life Fairy Queen, Elizabeth, to rule

England: "vertuous women wisely understand,/ That they were borne to base humilitie,/ Unlesse the heavens them lift to lawful soverainitie".⁴² Indeed, after her victory over her rival, Britomart takes control of Radigund's band of followers and returns them to their 'natural' social position: "And changing all that forme of common weale,/ The liberty of women did repeale,/ Which they had long usurpt; and them restoring/ To mens subjection, did true Justice deale".⁴³

Radigund, on the other hand, is a female warrior who shares in a community of other warlike women who have rejected patriarchal society in favour of an all-woman society, the Amazons. As an Amazon, Radigund subjects Artegall, her captive, to the humiliation of total social subjugation; male captives of Radigund's band are dressed in women's clothing and forced to spin cloth, clearly referring to the Hercules motif, key to the *New Arcadia*.⁴⁴ Radigund is warlike and beautiful just as Britomart is, but she does not observe the same respect for patriarchal authority that her close counterpart does; she defies and ridicules it. Indeed, it is this characteristic Amazonian defiance that is

⁴² *Faerie Queene*, V.v.25.

⁴³ *Faerie Queene*, V.vii.42.

⁴⁴ Briefly, Hercules was forced by Omphale to exchange clothes with her, giving her his lion's skin while he wore her feminine attire. He was also forced to spin cloth with the women as a symbol of his degeneration and humiliation. Pyrocles' emblem in the *New Arcadia* depicts this episode in Hercules' life. The tale is a bewildering one, as Victor Skretkovicz demonstrates in his article "Hercules in Sidney and Spenser" in *Notes and Queries*, 225, (1980), pp. 306-10, and is further complicated by a confusion between the figures of Omphale and Iole, both of whom Sidney refers to in the *Arcadia*. Pyrocles' association with the figure of Hercules is central to our discussion of gender in the *Arcadia*, and will thus be discussed further shortly.

responsible for her unpopularity with the average Elizabethan: a defiance of traditional, patriarchal social values. Shepherd writes,

the refusal of obedience is at the core of Elizabethan distress about Amazons.... These are women not committed to the ideal of the family and yet at the same time are very capable of surviving and governing themselves. In almost every way feasible they are hateful to Elizabethan and Jacobean patriarchal concepts.⁴⁵

Shepherd comes very near here to Wright's own observations about the objections Elizabethans had toward Amazonian behaviour: the Amazon's essentially uncomfortable relationship to patriarchy and its central institutions, such as chivalry, marriage and the family. Britomart, on the other hand, is the proponent of those very values. Britomart, the representative of chastity in the *Faerie Queene*, binds her martial prowess to the values of patriarchy; she uses her skill to conquer the seditious Radigund and restore Artegall, the principle of justice, to proper authority. Britomart is the necessary palliative to the destructive force of Radigund: united with Artegall and conquering his foe, she brings about the ordered society of which her marriage with Artegall is the bedrock. Shepherd sees the struggle between Radigund and Britomart over Artegall as the centre-piece of the poem in its importance. He concludes,

In conquering the Amazons Britomart shows herself equal to the activities of the ancient male heroes, Theseus and Hercules. It is a climax to her career almost more important than the fight with her lover, for she not only enters the 'male' world and carries out its activities successfully, but she is necessary to that world. Her civilising partnership with Artegall cannot become operative until Amazons

⁴⁵ Simon Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981, p. 14.

are destroyed..... The Amazon is selfish and inarticulate, the warrior intervenes".⁴⁶

The division between Radigund and Britomart is thus this clear-cut for Shepherd. As the author states it at the very beginning of his book, "Radigund is an Amazon, the baddie; against her is the virtuous female warrior... Britomart".⁴⁷ For Shepherd, then, it is as simple as this: aggressive women who use their skills to defend society and its mainstream values are 'good'; warlike women who adopt aggressive attitudes to threaten or upset such common norms are 'bad'.⁴⁸

Strangely enough, Shepherd sees no difficulty in discerning such a definitive antinomy despite the number of references to virtuous Amazons. Nor, must it be said, does he seem to be troubled in his discussion of Elizabeth I's self-portrayal as a virtuous warrior-woman by the contemporary description of her as an Amazon Queen. That is, at one moment he attempts to describe Elizabeth as self-consciously

⁴⁶ S. Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, p. 17.

⁴⁷ S. Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Shepherd is partly contested in his reading of Radigund as the clear 'baddie' of the *Faerie Queene* by Susanne Woods. In her article "Amazonian Tyranny: Spenser's Radigund and Diachronic Mimesis" in *Playing with Gender: A Renaissance Pursuit*, Jean R. Brink et al, (eds.), Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991, Woods admits that in "book 5 of the *Faerie Queene*, Radigund is without question a dangerous threat to the social order" (Woods, "Amazonian Tranny: Spenser's Radigund and Diachronic Mimesis", p. 53). She nevertheless holds that it is possible to see this Amazon and her disturbing actions as partially a product of circumstances over which she has no control and therefore as somewhat less blameworthy than Shepherd for one suggests. Woods writes, "our late twentieth-century perspective allows us to see something about Radigund's badness that Spenser's readers may have perceived but not found easy to state directly, given their cultural assumptions about gender roles; Spenser presents Radigund as a victim, and as someone who must use indirection and the power of her sexuality to find authority in a cruel world of male power" (Woods, "Amazonian Tranny: Spenser's Radigund and Diachronic Mimesis", p. 53).

assuming the role of a warrior woman, a Britomart figure, while simultaneously citing depictions of her as one of Radigund's Amazonian countrywomen. For example, Shepherd states, "the habit of seeing Elizabeth as a female warrior was quite common," yet he goes on to illustrate the point by citing the following description by Haywood of Elizabeth's visit to Tilbury in August 1588 to bolster the troops fighting the Armada: the Queen came "habited like an Amazonian Queene, Buskind and plumed, having a golden Truncheon, Gantlet, and Gorget; Armes sufficient to expresse her high and magnanimous spirit".⁴⁹ This he claims is proof of Elizabeth's association with the figure of Britomart. He does suggest later that Elizabeth may in a way be associated with facets of Radigund, but these he argues are only the potentially negative aspects of Elizabeth's behaviour in respect to her ambiguous position vis-à-vis the Catholic question prominent in Spenser's thoughts at the time.⁵⁰

Winfried Schleiner's article "*Divina Virago: Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon*" directly questions Shepherd's stance outlined above. She also notes Celeste Turner Wright's portrayal of the Elizabethan anxiety toward the figure of the Amazon, but she qualifies Wright's reading by remarking that this apprehension was largely based on the bad press that Amazons received during the period due to their association with the enfranchisement of women, a radical and unpopular notion for most Elizabethans.⁵¹ Instead, Schleiner lays the

⁴⁹ S. Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, p. 22.

⁵⁰ S. Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, p. 27.

⁵¹ Winfried Schleiner, "*Divina Virago: Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon*," in *Studies in Philology*, 75, (1978), p. 163.

emphasis on the Amazon's suggestiveness to the Elizabethans as a figure appropriate to express the unique strengths and qualities a female ruler such as Elizabeth embodied. While she admits that direct comparisons of Elizabeth to Amazons were sparse, she nonetheless contends that Elizabeth herself was not entirely averse to such an analogy, and indeed that the queen actively cultivated an Amazonian image particularly in relationship to her military role in the conflict with the Spanish.

The first piece of evidence Schleiner offers which refutes Shepherd's contention that the Amazon was not a positive figure to be emulated in the Renaissance is a drawing of Elizabeth wearing the garb and the armour of an Amazonian queen. Moreover, it is clear that the image was not simply portraying Elizabeth as a warrior woman in general terms, a valiant Britomart. She is carefully and precisely associated with Amazons since she is depicted with a single bare breast, the defining characteristic of the Amazon as the word literally means something like 'without a breast'.⁵² More importantly, Elizabeth's subjects *did* envision her as an Amazonian queen, especially in respect to the visit to Tilbury in August 1588 mentioned earlier. In more than one account of the event Elizabeth is directly likened to the Amazon Penthesilea in her efforts to defend Troy from the Greeks.⁵³ References to Elizabeth as an Amazon continued

⁵² W. Schleiner, "Divina Virago: Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon", pp. 164-7.

⁵³ Schleiner cites an account of the scene given by James Aske in *Elizabetha triumphans* (1588), and a poem in a collection of Greek and Latin writings called *Triumphalia de victoriis Elizabethae* by a poet using the pseudonym Eleutherius, amongst others (W. Schleiner, "Divina Virago: Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon", pp. 170-1).

after her death, and indeed her appearance at Tilbury acquired more and more Amazonian detail and flavour the longer after the event.⁵⁴ Schleiner notes that the association of Elizabeth with Amazons is mostly particular to this episode, and to the Queen's military role in relation to Spain, but if anything, she argues, this is because Elizabeth herself preferred to be considered as a peaceful monarch.⁵⁵ In any case, it seems clear from Schleiner's observations that the Amazon did not assume the overwhelmingly pejorative connotations that Shepherd suggests. On the contrary, the figure was evoked when subjects and queen alike wished to express the unique potentialities of female rule.⁵⁶ Schleiner's arguments, together with others, thus present a picture difficult to reconcile with the many critical portrayals of the Amazon's bogey-like status for the

⁵⁴ W. Schleiner, "Divina Virago: Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon", pp. 175-6.

⁵⁵ W. Schleiner, "Divina Virago: Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon", p. 179.

⁵⁶ Schleiner seems to be supported on this point by Leah Marcus who also sees Elizabeth I as actively tapping the capacities and potentialities of androgyny for political purposes. While Amazons and androgynes are not exactly the same thing, both figures share a subversion strict, traditional gender roles. In her article "Shakespeare's Comic Heroines, Elizabeth I, and the Political Uses of Androgyny", Leah Marcus argues that the Queen promoted images of herself as both masculine and feminine, in an image not unlike Schleiner's depiction of her Amazonian persona. "Queen Elizabeth presented herself to the nation as both man and woman, queen and king, mother and firstborn son," Marcus contends, "Especially in years of particular crisis and at the end of her reign, we can observe her building the myth of her own androgyny in order to palliate political anxieties aroused by her presence as a 'frail' woman on the throne" (L. Marcus, "Shakespeare's Comic Heroines, Elizabeth I, and the Political Uses of Androgyny", in Mary Beth Rose (ed.) *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986, p. 137). Certainly such a rebuff of feminine frailty is also accomplished through the Queen's adoption of Amazonian qualities.

Elizabethans. It is not clear, in other words, how to square Louis Montrose's opinion that "the attitude toward the Amazons expressed in such Renaissance texts is a mixture of fascination and horror"⁵⁷ with Gabriele Bernhard Jackson's contention that "Elizabethan stage Amazons are all either neutral or positive, an evaluative convention generally in line with their ever more frequent mention in Elizabethan non-dramatic literature".⁵⁸ All that does seem clear is that one cannot definitively establish Renaissance attitudes towards the Amazon. Some critics see this figure as radically undermining important social values while others argue that Elizabethans were favourably disposed toward this symbol of female strength that served to underscore their own ruler's singular and exceptional power.

Given this confused and at times conflicting picture of the Amazon's import in the Renaissance, how then does Sidney approach this figure in the *Arcadia*? What are we supposed to

⁵⁷ Louis Montrose, "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture", in *Representations* 1:2 (Spring 1983), p. 66. Significantly, the figure of the Amazon is closely associated with another suggestive figure for Sidney, Hercules. Montrose cites William Painter's "Novel of the Amazones" which begins the second book of *The Palace of Pleasure* (1575) where the author comments,

If they [the Amazons] were delivered of males, they sent them to their fathers, and if by chaunce they kept any backe, they muredred them, or else brake their armes and legs in sutch wise as they had no power to beare weapons, and served for nothyng but to spin, twist, and doe other feminine labour (L. Montrose, "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture", p. 66).

Hercules' own fate at the hands of Omphale or Iole clearly parallels that of the male victims of the Amazons. We will return to the significance of the figure of Hercules in the *Arcadia* shortly below.

⁵⁸ Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, "Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc," in *English Literary Renaissance*, 18, (1988), p. 51.

obtain from one of the main heroes' adopting the garb and role of an Amazon princess? What are the ethical implications of this act? Pyrocles and Musidorus debate just this issue to considerable length in both versions of the *Arcadia* themselves. The harangue Musidorus delivers upon the notion of his friend in Amazonian dress is, as we have seen, fundamentally predicated upon the traditional heroic ideal of martial accomplishment over and against passion or love for a woman.⁵⁹ Musidorus articulates in both versions of the *Arcadia* the dangers of succumbing to what may potentially be a self-indulgent and hence socially undesirable preoccupation. Let us now examine how this particular issue of Pyrocles' Amazonian identity is raised in each version of Sidney's work and what differences arise between the two *Arcadias'* treatment of the controversial issue. While the body of material narrating the disclosure of Pyrocles' new feminine role remains largely identical in each Book I of the *Old* and *New Arcadia*, I hope to establish that there are nonetheless suggestive alterations in Sidney's introduction and development of the Amazonian motif.

The first distinctive aspect of Sidney's original version of the episode is that it is handled and treated as one singular debate concerning the negative consequences of romantic love. That is, the whole debate is one extended discourse on this basic point. In Pyrocles' and Musidorus'

⁵⁹ This particular passage was discussed in Chapter One in the light of the specific rhetorical figures' role in Sidney's depiction of an ethical ideal. See in particular pp. 18-22. We will now explore how the depiction of gender roles works in concert with the overall rhetorical strategy previously outlined.

debate in the *Old Arcadia*, the subject of the elder prince's discomfort is primarily his cousin's amatory indulgence, "this bastard love" as Musidorus labels it. In the *Old Arcadia's* depiction of the encounter, Pyrocles informs Musidorus that the source of his new melancholy is the fact that he has fallen in love with the picture of Philoclea. For Musidorus, Pyrocles is culpable for giving in to 'so hateful a humour', since

the matter it works upon is nothing but a certain base weakness, which some gentle fools call a gentle heart; as his adjoined companions be unquietness, longings, fond comforts, faint discomforts, hopes, jealousies, ungrounded rages, causeless yieldings; so is the highest end it aspires unto a little pleasure, with much pain before, and great repentance after.... it [love] utterly subverts the course of nature in making reason give place to sense, and man to woman.⁶⁰

It is while still recovering from the Pyrocles' admission of his love for the Arcadian princess that Musidorus is also told of his cousin's plan to dress as an Amazonian lady in order to approach Basilius' daughter. Musidorus reacts unfavourably to this specific development as well, but mostly as it is part and parcel of the younger prince's general abdication of traditional heroic activity. It is in reply to Pyrocles' overall disclosures that Musidorus delivers his well-ordered rhetorical oration discussed earlier condemning his cousin's behaviour. It is then significant that the dispute between Pyrocles and Musidorus concerning the deleterious effects of passionate love takes place in the *Old Arcadia* before Pyrocles assumes his Amazonian disguise, before, in other words, his adopted role can constitute a

⁶⁰ *Old Arcadia*, p. 18.

separate bone of contention between the two. The proposed change of dress and gender role is thus considered much as a compounding of Pyrocles' recent laxity, as a superficial sign of the young prince's fall from grace, but not as a fundamentally distinct aspect of his changed values and priorities.

In the revision, on the other hand, the role and import of Pyrocles' Amazon disguise assumes a much more prominent and crucial role, and establishes a distinct aspect of the young prince's transformation. In the *New Arcadia*, Musidorus and Pyrocles discuss the latter's new apathy and indifference toward his former heroic pursuits first without addressing the topic of Amazonian disguises. Musidorus is simply concerned at his friend's lack of interests in his old pursuits, and the two argue about the various merits of the *vita contemplativa* versus those of the *vita activa*. Kalander's appearance interrupts them and brings this part of their discussion to a close. Musidorus is then prevented from continuing their discourse by the sudden disappearance of his cousin, and with no idea of his strange future plans. Musidorus is never informed in the *New Arcadia* of Pyrocles' intentions to adopt the role of an Amazon as he is in the *Old Arcadia*, but stumbles across the fugitive Pyrocles, already transformed, while searching for him. Musidorus delivers the same verdict on the unfavourable effects of love cited above in the *New Arcadia* as well, but it is issued as a direct result of Musidorus' shock at seeing his cousin in the dress of an Amazon.

This in itself is a significant aspect of the way in which Sidney handles Pyrocles' assumed role in the *New Arcadia* versus its treatment in the *Old Arcadia*. The narrative techniques involved here in the disclosure of Pyrocles' Amazonian role assures that his change of dress becomes more symbolic in the *New Arcadia* than it is in the *Old Arcadia*. In other words, because Musidorus is simply informed in the *Old Arcadia* of Pyrocles' intentions, which are presented as a necessary manoeuvre to gain access to his beloved, the change of garb is merely perceived as a means to an end. In the *New Arcadia*, however, Musidorus' discovery of Pyrocles' Amazonian disguise is made when he recognises the voice of his cousin singing the following revealing and suggestive song.

Transformed in show, but more transformed in mind,
 I cease to strive, with double conquest foiled;
 For (woe is me) my powers all I find
 With outward force and inward treason spoiled.

For from without came to mine eyes the blow,
 Whereto mine inward thoughts did faintly yield;
 Both these conspired poor reason's overthrow;
 False in myself, thus have I lost the field.

Thus are my eyes still captive to one sight;
 Thus all my thoughts are slave to one thought still;
 Thus reason to his servants yields his right;
 Thus is my power transformed to your will.

What marvel, then, I take a woman's hue?
 Since what I see, think, know, is all but you?⁶¹

The song's description of Pyrocles' inner as well as outer transformation informs Musidorus as well as the reader of the significance of his change of dress. Cleophila also sings the same song in the *Old Arcadia*, but it does not have the same

⁶¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 69.

acutely revealing resonance that it does here since we have already been told of Pyrocles' transformation and Cleophila is merely whiling away the time. The song there reaffirms what we already know, but it is not the instrument that conveys to us what has happened to our hero. In this way, the disclosure of Pyrocles' Amazonian adopted role in the revision acquires the same type of pictorial impact that is at the core of the *New Arcadia's* overall rhetorical strategy; and for that same reason it is more poignant and telling. I do not wish to suggest that Musidorus is thus in the original version much more amenable to the notion of his friend's adoption of an Amazonian role, but that on the contrary, the issue of Amazonia is much less central to the development of the heroic ideal in the *Old Arcadia*. The figure of the Amazon is, in other words, much less significant in the *Old Arcadia* since it is not a distinct and separate issue in the mind of the wise Musidorus from his cousin's moral lapse. Nor is the change given the same dramatic and narrative impact that it is in the revision.

Before we can go on to examine the passage in question itself, we must first address an aspect of Pyrocles' new role that has not yet been touched upon. It is difficult to weed out the discussion's particular attitudes toward Amazons since, in true Sidneian style, it is not only the issue of Amazons which is involved here. Pyrocles is, of course, a man adopting this persona, not a woman. He thus invokes questions of the meaning and morality of transvestism as well by proposing to don a woman's dress, no matter how masculine that womanly attire might be. Pyrocles is, in other words, a

transvestite Amazon: a man pretending to be a woman, but specifically a type of woman who transgresses traditional notions of femininity. The issue of transvestism is at least as weighted as that of Amazons in the Renaissance, and is equally difficult to reach conclusions about. Without fully investigating this wide topic, it must be said that critical attempts to locate Renaissance attitudes toward transvestism seem to encounter very similar problems to those discussed earlier. There is, in other words, a fundamental disagreement about whether or not transvestism had mainly negative connotations, or if the notion opened the positive potential of sexual liberation.

That there is such a similarity in critical dilemmas is unsurprising, given the affinities shared between Amazons and transvestites in respect to traditional, patriarchally determined gender roles. Both the Amazon and the transvestite stand as symbols for a non-essentialist conception of gender. Simon Shepherd, echoing Mary Jordan's description of the virago as one who upsets neat and definitive sexual roles, claims that the notion of transvestism likewise threatened the established ordering of gender hierarchies. He writes, "The scandal of women wearing 'male' clothing was that... it upset the ordered scheme that depended on each sex maintaining its proper place".⁶² Moreover, such an idea proved insupportable to those who relied upon rigid gender definitions to preserve a semblance of fixity and stability which represented tokens of social harmony and order. Thus, any transgression of determined gender roles such as

⁶² S. Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, p. 67.

transvestism, Shepherd argues, embodied a type of monstrosity alien to all natural behaviour. To illustrate this point he quotes Averall's 1588 denunciation of transvestites as "'Androgini, who counterfaying the shape of either kind, are in deede neither, so while they are in condition women, and would seeme in apparell men, they are neither men nor women, but plaine Monsters'".⁶³ Indeed, such a troubled attitude seems to support Mary Jacobus' description of the "primordial chaos of transvestism or genderlessness".⁶⁴ Mary Beth Rose likewise contends in her article "Women in Men's Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in *The Roaring Girl*" that "the figure of the female in male apparel emerges from the documents of this controversy much as... an embodiment of female independence boldly challenging established social and sexual values".⁶⁵ In any case, what appears incontrovertible about transvestism in the Renaissance is that there are comparatively few examples of males sporting feminine attire versus the relatively frequent instances of women adopting male clothing.⁶⁶ A likely reason for such imbalance is the

⁶³ S. Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, p. 67.

⁶⁴ Mary Jacobus, "Reading Woman (Reading)" in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, p. 946.

⁶⁵ Mary Beth Rose, "Women in Men's Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in *The Roaring Girl*," in *English Literary Renaissance*, 14, (1984), p. 368.

⁶⁶ This point holds true for real-life Elizabethans as well as the obvious plethora of literary female transvestites in Shakespeare and elsewhere. In his article "Sidney's Womanish Man", Mark Rose remarks that in respect to Renaissance transvestism "usually the examples consist only of women dressing as men. Instances of this kind of transvestism are common, but instances of men dressing as women are in Elizabethan literature much more rare" (Mark Rose, "*Sidney's Womanish Man*", *Review of English Studies*, 15, (1964), p. 353). Similarly, Rudolph M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol argue in their book *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* that the "fact that at present transvestism is associated with men, and among women rare or

association of feminine dress with subservience, a position not many would actively seek out.⁶⁷ Thus, women sought to escape from the social subjection they interpreted as linked to their customary attire, while men did not often choose to cross-dress since such a change would only afford them likely ridicule and embarrassment. It thus seems all the more remarkable that Sidney should then decide to impose such a role upon his key protagonist, and that much more problematic to interpret the significance of his young hero's actions.

A large part of the debate itself on Pyrocles' course of action concerns the various merits of womanly behaviour, and in particular, the possibility of feminine virtue. Musidorus is most concerned about Pyrocles' feminine garb, since for him it is tangible proof of his cousin's departure from masculine forms of heroism, and indeed to his mind, from heroism itself. Musidorus claims that Pyrocles' love for a woman betrays his true masculine self and is the route toward the moral and spiritual weakness of women, since

true love hath that excellent nature in it that it doth transform the very essence of the lover into the thing loved, uniting and as it were incorporating it with a secret and inward working.

lacking altogether, is a complete contrast to the situation before 1800, when men dressing as women were seldom found, whereas there did exist a tradition of cross-dressing among women" (Dekker and van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe*, London: Macmillan Press, 1989, p. 54)

⁶⁷ Dekker and van de Pol suggest as much when they write, Transvestism of men was considered much more objectionable than that of women. The man was demeaned, while the woman strove for something higher. An extremely negative opinion of men who took on a female role is also clear from the many popular prints ridiculing and censoring married couples who did not keep within the proper gender boundaries (Dekker and van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe*, p. 55).

And herein do these kinds of loves imitate the excellent, for as the love of heaven makes one heavenly, so doth the love of the world make one become worldly-- and this effeminate love of a woman doth so womanize a man that, if you [Pyrocles] yield to it, it will not only make you an Amazon, but a launder, a distaff-spinner, or whatsoever vile occupation their idle heads can imagine and their weak hands perform.⁶⁸

For Musidorus, then, Pyrocles' proposed change of dress follows logically from his new absorption in one particular woman. It is also clear that for the elder prince, such a 'womanizing' of his cousin is a wholly negative development as is also his specific Amazonian guise. Womanly work, such as spinning, is demeaning to any man and is specially lowering for a noble and erstwhile heroic man. Pyrocles' reply to the attack is what may be seen as a defence of woman that finds its place amongst the best of other contemporary defences of women. Pyrocles insists that he is not straying from the path of virtue by taking on the role of an Amazon princess, but that on the contrary, he is acting in keeping with his earlier heroic aspirations. I will quote the passage at length for it is a sustained rejection of Musidorus' disbelief in female virtue.

Cousin, whatsoever good disposition nature hath bestowed upon me, or howsoever that disposition hath been by bringing up confirmed, this I must confess: that I am not yet come to that degree of wisdom to think light of the sex of whom I have my life; since if I be anything (which your friendship rather finds, than I acknowledge), I was to come to it born of a woman, and nursed of a woman. And certainly (for this point of your speech doth nearest touch me) it is strange to see the unmanlike cruelty of mankind, who not content with their tyrannous ambition to have brought the others' virtuous patience under them, like childish masters think their masterhood nothing without doing injury to them, who (if we will argue by reason) are framed of nature with the same parts of

⁶⁸ *New Arcadia*, pp. 71-2.

the mind for the exercise of virtue as we are. And for example, even this estate of Amazons, which I now for my greatest honour do seek to counterfeit, doth well witness that, if generally the sweetness of their disposition did not make them see the vainness of these things which we account glorious, they neither want valour of mind, nor yet doth their fairness take away their force. And truly, we men and praisers of men should remember, that if we have such excellencies, it is reason to think them excellent creatures of whom we are, since a kite never brought forth a good flying hawk. But to tell you true, as I think it superfluous to use any words of such a subject which is so praised in itself as it needs no praises, so withal I fear lest my conceit, not able to reach unto them, brings forth words which for their unworthiness may be a disgrace to them I so inwardly honour. Let this suffice: that they are capable of virtue, and virtue, you yourselves say, is to be loved; and I, too, truly.⁶⁹

It may well be said that Pyrocles is here raising these arguments solely to save him embarrassment from his cousin's strictures against dressing as a woman, but it is also true that he comes to appreciate the truth behind them as a result of his Arcadian adventures.

Margaret Sullivan provides an interesting approach to the issue of Pyrocles' disguise in her article "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Role in Sidney's *New Arcadia*".⁷⁰ Sullivan suggests a specific historical background informing Sidney's portrayal of his hero as an Amazon, one that is connected to his personal identification with his mother and his keen interest in preserving the notion of matrilineal power. Sullivan asserts that the ending of the *Old Arcadia* dealing with the supposed death of Basilius and Eurachus' judgement of the lovers negates the notion of female authority. The princesses are

⁶⁹ *New Arcadia*, pp. 72-3.

⁷⁰ Margaret M. Sullivan, "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Role in Sidney's Revised *Arcadia*", in *Playing With Gender: A Renaissance Pursuit*, pp. 62-81.

allowed no say in the proceedings of the trial as their letters are destroyed by Philanax, but most importantly, the heir to the Arcadian throne, Princess Pamela, is stripped of her inherited position as head of state. As Sullivan notes, in the *Old Arcadia's* concluding scene, "Pamela's status as heir to her father's power contradicts the very basis on which Philoclea is sentenced: it seems all women are property except those who are patrilineally privileged in lieu of male heirs".⁷¹

For Philip Sidney, who displayed as Sullivan puts it, an "unusually strong pride in his matrilieal heritage", the notion that one derived authority and status only from the position of one's father was unwelcome.⁷² Sidney drew his own social consequence mainly from the fact that his mother was a Dudley, and his own father impressed upon him the duty he owed to his mother's name. It is this interest in asserting matrilineal power which, according to Sullivan, underscores the revisions Sidney make to his *Arcadia*; "Sidney's desire to explore both the basis of male property rights to women and the limits on those rights," she writes, "led to the revisions that became the *New Arcadia*".⁷³ These revisions provide a means by which feminine authority is made possible. In particular, it is Sidney's exploration and expansion of the role of the Amazon Zelmane which facilitates the notion of female authority. The Amazon is a 'female' defender of the princesses who intervenes when they are physically threatened

⁷¹ M. Sullivan, "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Role in Sidney's Revised *Arcadia*", p. 66.

⁷² M. Sullivan, "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Role in Sidney's Revised *Arcadia*", p. 68.

⁷³ M. Sullivan, "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Role in Sidney's Revised *Arcadia*", p. 70.

with violence. Unlike Pamela and Philoclea, an Amazon is given the martial training to defend herself against attack. This does not mean to say that the princesses are thus weak, but simply that they have been deliberately excluded from such knowledge in order to perpetuate the idea of their subordination. The fact that Pamela and Philoclea prove themselves immune to physical torture in Book III of the *New Arcadia* serves only to emphasise their innate strength; "they defeat all the stereotypes of feminine frailty that were used to justify the subjection of women".⁷⁴ The function performed by the Amazon disguise in the *New Arcadia* is then to critique how "a male-dominated society systematically denies martial training to women to create a physical weakness that lends credence to the metaphysics of gender difference".⁷⁵ The Amazon, as a martial female, provides an image of the possibility of a female strength. Moreover, by presenting us with an Amazon who betters many worthy male opponents, "the myth of the Amazon inverts the dominance/submission polarities of gender formation in a patriarchal culture".⁷⁶ Whether or not it is Sidney's personal need to establish the viability of matrilineal power in order to justify his own noble status which engenders the expansion of the Amazon role in the *New Arcadia*, Sullivan's observations about the significance of Pyrocles' Amazonian disguise hold true.

Sullivan is also correct in assessing how the *New Arcadia* develops added episodes which draw out the full

⁷⁴ M. Sullivan, "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Role in Sidney's Revised *Arcadia*", p. 73.

⁷⁵ M. Sullivan, "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Role in Sidney's Revised *Arcadia*", p. 74.

⁷⁶ M. Sullivan, "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Role in Sidney's Revised *Arcadia*", p. 74.

implications of the role of the Amazon. Pyrocles' insistence on the concurrence of femininity and virtue seen early in Book I in the debate between the two cousins discussed above is evinced in many of the episodes related in the rest of the Book in the *New Arcadia*, which largely relate the princes' dealings immediately prior to their arrival in Arcadia. The same is also true for much of the *New Arcadia's* retrospective narrative of Book II. The various stories of the princes' adventures throughout Asia Minor which occupy the greatest share of the second Book's material consistently investigate situations in which ethical dilemmas are met and overcome by exhibitions of womanly virtue. Perhaps the most telling and suggestive episodes, however, that reveal the extent to which the *New Arcadia* explores and depicts the relationship of femininity to the definition of the heroic ideal are to be found in the final and incomplete Book III fragment. Let us now examine how the *New Arcadia* tests and redefines heroism in relationship to femininity, and how "added episodes in the *New Arcadia* turn the Amazon costume into a vehicle for exploring the cultural construction of both femininity and masculinity".⁷⁷

⁷⁷ M. Sullivan, "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Role in Sidney's Revised *Arcadia*", pp. 70-1.

3

Femininity and Heroism in the *New Arcadia*

The first episode of the *New Arcadia* which marks a distinction from its precursor is of course the opening sequence of Strephon and Claius' lament over their love for Urania. We discussed this passage earlier in regard to the *New Arcadia's* more rhetorically complex manipulation of contentiously poised forces, but ultimately underpinning this sequence is the ideal of selfless love often classed as a particularly feminine virtue. The *sententia* that is eventually reached by the two ideal (male) shepherds as they discuss their difficult situation articulates Sidney's ethical vision in a manner that is wholly faithful to the feminine heroism of patience and endurance described by Lamb. The passage is worth recalling for it serves as an immediate herald of the *New Arcadia's* wider exploration of the relationship of heroism and femininity. Claius urges his friend,

let us think with consideration, and consider with acknowledging, and acknowledge with admiration, and admire with love, and love with joy in the midst of all our woes; let us in such sort think, I say, that our poor eyes were so enriched as to behold, and our low hearts so exalted as to love a maid who is such that, as the greatest thing the world can show is her beauty, so the least thing that may be praised in her is her beauty.... Hath not the only love of her made us, being silly ignorant shepherds, raise up our thoughts above the ordinary love of the world so as great clerks do not disdain our conference? Hath not the desire to seem worthy in her eyes made us, when others were running at base, to run over learned writings; when others to mark their sheep, we to mark our shelves? Hath not she thrown reason upon our desires and, as it were, given eyes unto Cupid? Hath in any, but in her,

love-fellowship maintained friendship between
 rivals, and beauty taught the beholders
 chastity?⁷⁸

The passage is also illuminating in terms of Pyrocles' and Musidorus' own discussion about the merits and defects of love, as Claius more or less articulates Pyrocles' own arguments about the probity of loving virtue embodied by and in a virtuous woman. As the very first episode of the *New Arcadia*, then, Strephon and Claius' story informs much of the rest of the work. While neither Strephon nor Claius can realize their love for Urania because of their mutual, worthy love for each other, the two embody a difficult yet admirable brand of selflessness and endurance that will be frequently emulated by heroes and heroines throughout the *New Arcadia*.

Such selflessness and patience is soon after explored with greater scope in the Parthenia and Argalus storyline of Book I which we have discussed earlier. In this story depicting the ideal of married love Sidney creates two of his most perfect characters who significantly define their perfection in terms of their sacrifice for each other. Argalus, as we have seen, is an early characterisation of mature heroic behaviour that stands as a model to be emulated by the young princes. He is first described by Kalandar's steward as the two princes' rightful exemplar, "a gentleman indeed most rarely accomplished... valiant so as, for my part, I think the earth hath no man that hath done more heroical acts than he, howsoever now of late the fame flies of the two princes of Thessalia and Macedon, and hath long done of our noble Prince Amphialus".⁷⁹ Argalus has the

⁷⁸ *New Arcadia*, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁹ *New Arcadia*, p. 27.

solemnity and seriousness of maturity, being "sober and somewhat given to musing",⁸⁰ yet Argalus' most definitive characteristic is his steadfastness and constancy. We are informed by Kalandar's steward that "such a man was, and I hope is, Argalus as hardly the nicest eye can find a spot in - *if the over-vehement constancy of yet spotless affection may not in hard-wrested constructions be counted a spot*"⁸¹ (my emphasis). Argalus' fame, and indeed the fame which he brings to his country, is thus specially rooted in his extraordinary fidelity and steadfastness.

This remarkable constancy of affection is directed toward his beloved Parthenia, whose virtue is likewise primarily defined by her resolution and dedication. When Parthenia's mother attempts to force her marriage to the vain and callous Demagoras, she proves her spiritual fortitude by patiently resisting all efforts to shake her dedication to Argalus: "the more she [Parthenia's mother] assaulted, the more she taught Parthenia to defend; and the more Parthenia defended, the more she made her mother obstinate in the assault".⁸² Parthenia's mother counters her daughter's unflappable resistance by assigning dangerous tasks to Argalus in the hopes that he might perish in her service, yet Argalus consistently accomplishes his Herculean tasks and proves himself ever more worthy. In doing so, ironically, he merely serves to fuel his would-be mother-in-law's resentment against him. At the same time, Parthenia herself is subjected to all means of persuasion to change her mind in a manner

80 *New Arcadia*, p. 27.

81 *New Arcadia*, p. 27.

82 *New Arcadia*, p. 29.

that strongly foreshadows the predicament of Pyrocles/Zelma and the Arcadian princesses in the climactic captivity episode of Book III. Argalus and Parthenia persevere in their increasingly difficult positions, he in performing martial deeds and she in resisting extreme methods of persuasion, until Parthenia's mother dies with the disappointment at being unable to break their devotion to each other.

Parthenia and Argalus thus embody the same virtues of patience and constancy, even while their particular circumstances dictate to him a more aggressive and to her a more passive means of proving that ideal. What Sidney stresses is their similarity of character and purpose demonstrated by the *repetitio* employed to narrate their developing love for each other; Kalander's steward remarks, "I think... that these perfections meeting could not choose but find one another and delight in that they found, for *likeness* of manners is *likely*, in reason, to draw *liking* with affection"⁸³ (my emphasis). The *repetitio* of the word 'like' insists on the essential sameness of virtue exemplified in both Argalus and Parthenia. Argalus further entrenches his characterisation as a hero who situates his valour in the typically feminine demonstration of patience and acceptance when his hoped for marriage with Parthenia is spoiled by Demagoras. Demagoras destroys Parthenia's beauty with poison, knowing she would not wish to offer herself so defiled to Argalus. Argalus of course loves Parthenia with a fidelity which thinks little of the loss of superficial physical

⁸³ *New Arcadia*, p. 28.

beauty, but the still hoped for marriage is prevented by Parthenia herself who leaves the country in shame. Argalus' steadfastness is again tested and proven when he refuses to accept a woman exactly identical to his beloved in her original physical beauty, and is rewarded when he is told that this woman is indeed Parthenia herself. Parthenia herself must then recognise and thank "that most noble constancy in you, my Lord Argalus".⁸⁴ Argalus' heroism is thus manifested in a patience, endurance, and constancy which is married to his acknowledged and unsurpassed martial bravery. Significantly, Argalus consistently puts Parthenia and her real good above all else, including honour and reputation. When first hearing of Parthenia's poisoning, Argalus "deferred his intended revenge upon Demagoras, because he might continually be in her presence, showing more humble serviceableness and joy to content her than ever before".⁸⁵ Such a moving example of true selflessness will serve later as a striking counterpoint to Amphialus' misinformed demonstration of love for Philoclea in Book III.

Argalus in his symbiotic union with Parthenia proves a suggestive counterpoint to Amphialus in more than one way. It is precisely Amphialus' failure to exhibit true selflessness in love in the fashion demonstrated by Argalus which is the root of his own misfortune. It may also be seen as the source of all the destruction he later unwillingly perpetuates; Amphialus' failure to transcend lesser considerations of pride and reputation is the initial impetus for his deadly

⁸⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 43.

⁸⁵ *New Arcadia*, p. 31.

course of action.⁸⁶ In this respect he is again poised against Argalus who puts the needs of Parthenia above questions of honour and revenge as we have seen above. Hence, it is Amphialus' refusal to accept the love of the deserving if somewhat erring Queen Helen which is largely responsible for the ensuing tragedy which is a central concern of the *New Arcadia*.

The first time Queen Helen of Corinth is mentioned in the *New Arcadia* is significantly in reference to Parthenia, whose husband, as we have seen, is so closely associated with Helen's own love Amphialus. Parthenia is described by Kalanders' steward as "fair indeed (fame, I think, itself not daring to call any fairer, if it be not Helena, Queen of Corinth, and the two incomparable sisters of Arcadia)".⁸⁷ Queen Helen is again linked to the spiritually laudable Parthenia when she is described as "a lady of great beauty, and such beauty as showed forth the beams both of wisdom and good nature".⁸⁸ Like Parthenia, Helen receives unwanted attention from suitors desiring her hand, although there is one who displeases her less than the others. This suitor, Philoxenus, senses the Queen's preference for him which he interprets as approval, and decides to send his dearest friend Amphialus to her to plead his cause. Helen falls in love instead with the noble and virtuous Amphialus, who

⁸⁶ We have discussed before in Chapter 4 Amphialus' tragic characterisation as pivoting upon his inability to square his martially-orientated conception of valour with the demands of selfless love. I wish to emphasise here that Amphialus' defective conception of heroic action serves to focus Sidney's overall concern in the *New Arcadia* to define heroism as intimately related to feminine forms of behaviour.

⁸⁷ *New Arcadia*, p. 28.

⁸⁸ *New Arcadia*, p. 58.

understandably feels bound by loyalty to his friend and benefactor. He disappears from the scene, hoping Helen will forget him and accept his friend instead. Helen proves as constant in her love for Amphialus as Parthenia or Argalus, and informs Philoxenus that her heart is given to his friend. The fight that ensues between the erstwhile friends results in the unintended death of Philoxenus, and by consequence, the death from sorrow of Philoxenus' father and Amphialus' benefactor. Amphialus holds Helen responsible for these horrific events and, far from accepting and returning her love, vows his hatred for her.

Argalus' complete lack of pity and compassion for the truly loving Helen is criticised by Helen's characterisation as a worthy and fit mate for him. Later in Book II, Helen's court is described as a harmonious society promoted by her great wisdom and judgement; Corinth is depicted as a golden Elizabethan world where the ideals of courage and valour are wedded to those of chastity, prudence and temperance. Helen is indeed an example of great womanly virtue, for

as her beauty hath won the prize from all women that stand in degree of comparison... so hath her government been such as hath been no less beautiful to men's judgement than her beauty to the eyesight; for being brought by right of birth (a woman-- a young woman-- a fair woman) to govern a people in nature mutinously proud, and always before so used to hard governors as they knew not how to obey without the sword were drawn, yet could she for some years so carry herself among them that they found cause, in the delicacy of her sex, of admiration, not of contempt; and which was notable, even in the time that many countries were full of wars... so handled she the matter that the threatens ever smarted in the threateners-- she using so strange and yet so well-succeeding a temper that she made her people (by peace) warlike, her courtiers (by sports) learned, her ladies (by love) chaste; for, by continual martial exercises without blood, she made them perfect in that bloody

art; her sports were such as carried the riches of knowledge upon the stream of delight; and such behaviour both of herself and her ladies as builded their chastity, not upon their waywardness, but by choice of worthiness; so as it seemed that court to have been the marriage place of love and virtue, and that herself was a Diana appavelled in the garments of Venus"⁸⁹.

Queen Helen here is very much more than a simple characterisation of feminine patience and endurance; she exemplifies how 'masculine' forms of virtue (e.g. courage and martial expertise) are best and most productively grafted to virtues traditionally seen as feminine. In this way she recalls Elizabeth I herself, who consciously propagated images of herself as 'bride' and 'mother' of the English nation, as well as its 'prince' and 'king'.⁹⁰ The picture of Helen's court is also easily reconciled with the positive images of Amazons in the Renaissance discussed earlier. The notion of martial prowess bonded to womanly grace often personified in the Amazon seems to be what the Corinthian court has achieved through the wise and judicious rule of its queen. The fact that Amphialus rejects marriage to this worthy Queen further emphasises his negation of necessary and positive feminine aspects of virtue which lies at the heart of his tragic characterisation.

Sidney fortifies our developing awareness of Amphialus' masculinist conception of valour through the revealing events of Book III as we have seen. In particular, however, it is Amphialus' association with Anaxius which definitively categorises him as defective in his inability to embrace a

⁸⁹ *New Arcadia*, pp. 253-4.

⁹⁰ See Leah S. Marcus' article "Shakespeare's Comic Heroines, Elizabeth I, and the Political Uses of Androgyny" for a discussion of Elizabeth I's gendered political images.

combination of masculine and feminine qualities to shape his behaviour. It is chiefly in this respect that Amphialus differs from the two main princes, but especially from his immediate rival Pyrocles. The Amazonian role taken on by Pyrocles signals his willingness to embrace femininity in a way that enhances, and not detracts from, his heroic stature. Amphialus' failure to grasp what Pyrocles learns early on in the *New Arcadia* - that the highest ideal of married love directed toward and by virtue is only achieved through the recognition of the equal importance of femininity and masculinity in behaviour- constitutes his tragic flaw. The contrast Sidney effects between these main heroes of the *New Arcadia* underscores the work's insistence on the ideal of married love as the very foundation of ethical behaviour on both the personal and political levels. Both Pyrocles and Amphialus wish to marry the Arcadian princess Philoclea, but only one can realize a fruitful and positive marriage with her because of his true understanding of what the marriage ideal symbolizes.⁹¹ Not only is such understanding requisite for the personal happiness found in marriage, but the stability of the political state also rests on the same

⁹¹ This is basically Constance Jordan's main point in her discussion of the *New Arcadia* in *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*. Jordan writes
Sidney's genius was to see that the conventional analogies between marriage and the state, between relations of sex and gender and political relations, allowed certain major features of marriage and political doctrine to be elucidated. He understood that the true point of comparison between both orders-- the ethical, embodied in the personal relations between man and woman; and the political, embodied in the civic relations between magistrate (typically, the monarch) and the people- was in their exemplification of the figure of oxymoron (C. Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*, p. 221).

principles structuring Sidney's vision of properly grounded love.

As we have seen, Argalus and Parthenia are the *New Arcadia's* primary models of ideal married love. It is thus significant that these exemplars are ultimately destroyed by Amphialus and his treason against Basilius in Book III. I will not cite again the tableau presented by Parthenia and Argalus as Basilius' messenger comes to request Argalus' aid in the cause against Amphialus, but I will recall how the two are emblematic of the values that escape Amphialus: reciprocity and selflessness. Especially suggestive in this context is the battle between Argalus and Amphialus, and the armour each chooses to represent his inward impetus and frame of mind. Amphialus chooses armour the militant colour of flames with a torpedo fish on his shield, while Argalus' armour bears the motif of the twin palms and love knots, standard symbols of married love.⁹² In the battle between Argalus and Amphialus, then, we see the contest between selflessness and the true married ideal in the former, and masculinist pride and militancy in the latter. Amphialus not only kills his opponent in this battle, but as a result, precipitates Parthenia's death as well. By killing her mate, he has in a way already killed her, as is made clear in the armour Parthenia wears in her challenge to Amphialus. Amphialus' actual defeat of Parthenia in their battle is almost gratuitous since he has already defeated what she metaphorically stood for-- selflessness and reciprocity. The contests between Argalus and Amphialus and Amphialus and

⁹² See above pages 140-5 for a more complete discussion of the Argalus/ Amphialus battle.

Parthenia thus indicate Amphialus' negation of the *New Arcadia's* central definition of heroic behaviour.

Not only does Amphialus destroy the *New Arcadia's* ideal lovers, he aligns himself with characters who challenge and subvert the values they embody. Anaxius more than any other Arcadian character represents courage without compassion and martial skill devoid of sympathy, patience, and humility, and it is Anaxius who is Amphialus' key ally in his rebellion against Basilius. Amphialus' alliance with Anaxius is also noteworthy in that Anaxius proves to be one of Pyrocles' main opponents. We are first introduced to Anaxius in Book II when Pyrocles recounts some of his past adventures in Asia to Philoclea. Pyrocles describes Anaxius as one

to whom all men would willingly have yielded the height of praise, but that his nature was such as to bestow it upon himself before any could give it, for of so unsupportable a pride he was that, where his deed might well stir envy, his demeanor did rather breed disdain... nothing seemed hard to him, though impossible, and nothing unjust while his liking was his justice.⁹³

Anaxius is a perfect example of a military man whose value system is solely determined by the strict rules of warfare; he allows "no other weights but the sword and the spear in the judging of desert".⁹⁴ For Anaxius, victory over an opponent signifies his uncontestable superiority over that fighter, even when the opponent in question is someone with as high a martial reputation as Amphialus. Pyrocles remarks that

Amphialus, who for some years hath universally bourn the name of the best knight in the world, had divers times fought with him (Anaxius) and never been able to master him, but so had left him that

⁹³ *New Arcadia*, pp. 234-5.

⁹⁴ *New Arcadia*, p. 235.

every man thought Anaxius in that one virtue of courtesy far short of him, in all other his match-- Anaxius still deeming himself for his superior.⁹⁵

Anaxius' pride and lack of courtesy reflect his poor judgement and ethics, but we may also infer that Amphialus' inability to defeat Anaxius can be attributed to his own imperfect understanding of true heroic behaviour. Anaxius challenges Pyrocles who has slain Anaxius' uncle, and the young prince accepts, eager to prove his martial skill and maturity. Pyrocles does indeed prove both, but not in a way that the simple and injudicious Anaxius can easily understand or recognise. On his way to meet his challenger, Pyrocles encounters the strange sight of a man bound and bleeding being attacked by nine gentlewomen with bodkins. This situation, discussed earlier, is specially strange and unusual for Pyrocles (and indeed for most readers of Renaissance literature) since it is much more customary to see the perpetrators of aggression as male and its victims as female. Pyrocles, for the first time without his older cousin's company and advice, has his judgement immediately challenged by the unexpected situation. The traditional rules of chivalry demand that a knight assume a protective stance toward all gentlewomen, and yet so should the weak and the defenceless (and this man Pamphilus is indeed defenceless) be protected. Pyrocles must demonstrate here the quality of compassion glaringly absent in his foe Anaxius, and deficient as well in Anaxius' associate Amphialus. Moreover, Pyrocles must transcend simple conceptions of gender roles to resolve the dilemma.

⁹⁵ *New Arcadia*, p. 235.

His compassion for Pamphilus leads him to free him from the women, yet the matter is further complicated when he discovers the nature of the dispute. Pyrocles discovers that the 'victim' he has saved was responsible for many faithless and cynical affairs, the aim of which was the discredit and humiliation of the women involved. The positions of victim and culprit and not just reversed here; Pyrocles also discovers that Pamphilus' victims have been largely complicit in their degradation since vanity and pride have blinded their judgement of Pamphilus' defects. Pyrocles is thus left with the difficult position where there is no blameless victim to defend, nor a clear culprit to defeat. The situation is specially unusual and problematic since the character flaws exhibited subvert their traditional gender associations. In other words, it is the female Dido and her cohorts who display violence and pride, where the male Pamphilus is guilty of the 'feminine' moral weakness of inconstancy (see fig. 1 for an emblem depicting the femininity of inconstancy). Pamphilus more than any other Arcadian character embodies that sin of inconstancy, as Sidney underscores in the following rhetorical use of *repetitio* and ironic *adnominatio*: Dido remarks "I shall never forget how he [Pamphilus] would prove it was no inconstancy to change from one love to another, but a greater constancy; and contrary, that we call constancy, to be most changeable".⁹⁶ Pyrocles is thus confronted with a situation where right and wrong are not established absolutely, and

⁹⁶ *New Arcadia*, p. 239.

No Emblem, can as full declare,
How fickle, Minds-unconstant are.



ILLVSTR. XXIII.

Book. 4

Some, thinke this *Emblem* serveth to expresse
No more, but onely *Womens* ficklenesse;
And, they will most desire to have it so,
Who, like those best, that most inconstant grow.
Although my *Fortunes* were, in some things, bad,
I never in my life, experience had
Of an *inconstant woman*: Wherefore, then,
Should I condemne the *Females*, more than men?
I heare some talke, that *Women* fickle be:
And so I thinke, and so I know are wee.
And (being put together) say I dare,
That, they and wee, in equall manner, share
A *giddinesse*, and *ficklenesse* of minde,
More wavering, than a *Feather*, or the *Winds*.
The *Woman*, heere, is plac'd, to typifie
A minde distracted with much levitic:
Not, that the womans *Wav'rings* are the more;
But, for this cause: Most *Vices*, heretofore,
And *Vertues* too, our *Ancestors* did render,
By words declined in the *female-gender*.
The *winged-Ball*, (whose tottering Foundation,
Augments the causes of our *variation*)
Meanes, here, those uselesse, and vaine *temp'rall things*,
That come and goe, with never-staying *wings*;
And, which (if thereupon our hearts we set)
Make *Men* and *Women*, the *Vertigo* get.
Hereafter, then, let neither *Sexe* accuse
Each other; but, their best endeavours use,
To cure this *Maladie* in one another,
By living well, and lovingly together.

Fig. 1. From
George Wither,
A Collection
of Emblems
[1635]

where traditional assumptions about gender-related vice are equally questioned.

Pyrocles ultimately arranges a peace of sorts between Dido and Pamphilus and proceeds to his appointed match against Anaxius. The battle enjoined between the two is fierce and well-balanced. When Pyrocles appears finally to be gaining the advantage, he spies Dido being led captive by Pamphilus who now has the help of his friends in revenging himself against his former tormentor. Again the young prince finds his code of heroic behaviour under question. It is against all rules of combat to abandon the fight while it still remains unresolved. It is also impossible not to aid someone in distress. Anaxius fails to recognise the conflict between opposing aspects of truly heroic behaviour and refuses Pyrocles a pause in their fight to defend Dido. Pyrocles nonetheless abandons the fight to help her and executes what appears to the watching crowd to be a cowardly escape from Anaxius. Unlike Anaxius, or indeed Amphialus in respect to Queen Helen, Pyrocles appreciates that "the lady's misery overbalanced [his] reputation".⁹⁷ Pyrocles recognises the need to confront Anaxius and what he represents and to triumph over him, but he also recognises that if he is truly to defeat Anaxius and to prove himself Anaxius' superior, he cannot separate martial victory from moral exigencies. In this episode between Pyrocles and Anaxius, then, Sidney accentuates the heroic stature of his chief protagonist through his combination of martial ability and courage with compassion and sympathy. He also criticises a brand of valour

⁹⁷ *New Arcadia*, p. 243.

which is not allied to feminine behaviours, such as that represented by Anaxius. As a result, Sidney breaks down gender-associated vices and criticises one-dimensional conceptions of heroism as a display of martial force.

The confrontation between two opposing conceptions of heroism witnessed in Pyrocles' and Anaxius' ongoing battle reaches its conclusion in the *New Arcadia's* final episode. This episode involves Pyrocles' battle to free himself and the Arcadian princesses from Amphialus' fortress. In this encounter, however, Pyrocles is no longer dressed as himself but has acquired his new Amazonian identity. It is as a woman that he issues his challenge to Anaxius, who has taken control of the fortress after Amphialus has fatally wounded himself. Anaxius is suggestively impervious to the possibility that a woman might prove a worthy opponent to him, and simply marvels at what he understands to be the anomaly of a well-reasoned and courageous woman.

It is particularly appropriate that Pyrocles issue his final challenge to Anaxius in the dress and role of a woman, for it crystalises the difference between the two valiant men. Pyrocles has come to recognise that true heroism involves the concordance of bravery and compassion, of feminine as well as masculine behaviours. Pyrocles has, in other words, fully absorbed and interiorised his Amazonian role. The braggart and bully Anaxius, on the other hand, is simply the obvious target of an Amazon's valour. Simon Shepherd remarks, the "warrior woman... belongs to the gender that is on the receiving end of the oppression and brutality that is contained in the unchivalrous male's behaviour... A

breach of the rules is more than an offence against propriety; it is a potential violence and rape".⁹⁸ Pyrocles, having been imprisoned and rendered powerless to defend himself or the princesses, has a far more acute understanding of the conditions of average feminine experience than he had before he adopted the role of Zelmane. Indeed, he is subjected to the type of violence and male aggression that Shepherd speaks of above when Anaxius' brother Zoilus attempts his forceful seduction of the Amazon. Pyrocles/Zelmane's climactic fight with Anaxius, which ironically is interrupted literally mid-sentence just as Zelmane gains the upper hand, is the final revision Sidney makes to his *Arcadia*. In this last battle, we see what Shepherd describes as the quintessential challenge presented by warrior women. The "particular target of the warrior woman [is] the overmanly 'macho' male... the braggart", and in the battle between Anaxius and Zelmane we clearly have both types.⁹⁹ We thus see enacted one of the *New Arcadia's* major re-evaluations of the heroic ideal. Anaxius' brutal masculinist valour is deemed deficient and is ultimately (we must infer) defeated by that which it threatens and negates-- feminine heroism.

In this way, then, Sidney presents a vision of heroic behaviour radically modified from that depicted in the *Old Arcadia*. Nowhere in Sidney's original version is there such concern with the relationship of virtue to gendered behaviour. In the *Old Arcadia* Pyrocles' Amazonian disguise

⁹⁸ S. Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, p. 11.

⁹⁹ S. Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, p. 11.

serves merely as plot device that occasionally assumes comic dimensions, such as in Basilius' courtship of Cleophila. In the *New Arcadia*, however, and especially in its last scene, Pyrocles' Amazonian role assumes pivotal importance in defining what the young prince has come to understand throughout the progress of the romance: that heroism and femininity are wholly concordant. If we return to Pyrocles' Amazonian dress itself, we see how Sidney coalesces the development of the prince's heroism in the device he adopts for his new role. In the *Old Arcadia*, Pyrocles' device simply expresses his new subjugation engendered by his love for Philoclea; it also reveals the superficiality of the change the prince has undergone. The device Pyrocles chooses depicts "an eagle covered with the feathers of a dove, and yet lying under another dove, in such sort as it seemed the dove preyed upon the eagle, the eagle casting up such a look as though the state he was in liked him, though the pain grieved him".¹⁰⁰ The eagle puts on the feathers of a dove, but it remains otherwise unaltered. It is still an eagle at the mercy of a dove. In the *New Arcadia*, however, Pyrocles adopts a device that aptly reflects his true transformation, and one that is also appropriately responsive to the issue of heroism that is underwriting his change. Pyrocles/ Zelmane's device pictures "a Hercules made in little form, but set with a distaff in his hand (as he once was by Omphale's commandment), with a word in Greek, but thus to be interpreted: 'Never more valiant'".¹⁰¹ Here Pyrocles directly likens his position to that of the quintessential hero and

¹⁰⁰ *Old Arcadia*, p. 24.

¹⁰¹ *New Arcadia*, p. 69.

especially to Hercules' adoption of feminine dress at the command of Omphale. While it is debatable whether or not Hercules is meant to be degraded by this act,¹⁰² Sidney removes much of the ambiguity in this instance by Pyrocles' verbal comment on his situation: "Never more valiant". Not only does Pyrocles choose in the *New Arcadia* to link his disguise to the very notion of heroism by invoking the figure of Hercules, he also redefines that ideal by commenting on the traditional interpretation of transvestism and insisting on its positive potential.¹⁰³ He also simultaneously

¹⁰² Victor Skretkowicz explores the connotations of the Hercules and Omphale myth in his "Hercules in Sidney and Spenser" in *Notes and Queries*. Skretkowicz notes that for both Iole and Omphale Hercules dressed in women's clothing and spun cloth, but that the major difference seems to be that Hercules was forced to do so by Omphale, and willingly volunteered for Iole.

¹⁰³ Some critics view Pyrocles' motto as an ironic and defiant rejection of what he supposedly knows in his heart to be true: that he has degraded himself in his passionate love for Philoclea. Mark Rose argues this case in his article "Sidney's Womanish Man". Rose contends that Sidney's attitude toward passionate love in the *New Arcadia* remains disapproving, and thus that the motto 'Never More Valiant' can represent no more than Pyrocles' own foolish thought, a misrepresentation of the Hercules and Omphale myth that Elizabethan readers would have found amusing" (Rose, "Sidney's Womanish Man", p. 362). We will return to Rose's understanding of Pyrocles' femininity later in respect to questions of reading that problematise the reception of the *Arcadia*. I wish here, however, to counter Rose's view of Pyrocles' device and motto in the *New Arcadia* simply by stressing that Sidney made the hero a year older and thus more mature in the revision than he was in the original. Likewise, the situations encountered by Pyrocles in the *New Arcadia* are of a greater complexity as we've seen, and thus argue for a spiritual and psychological maturity that do not sit well with depictions of his foolish disingenuousness such as Rose provides. Furthermore, we have in the *New Arcadia* an example of transvestism that symbolizes an admirable selflessness that Pyrocles actively emulates, much to his credit. This is of course the real Zelmane whose love for Pyrocles asks for nothing in return except to serve him faithfully, and it is in honour of her memory that Pyrocles adopts her name. Critics such as Jon Lawry have seen the real Zelmane as one of the prime moral exemplars of the *New Arcadia*, which further undermines Rose's opinions. See Jon S.

valorizes femininity and its affinity with virtuous behaviour.¹⁰⁴

This understanding about heroism and femininity echoes and reinforces what Mary Ellen Lamb contests in her *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*. She argues, as we've seen, that the Arcadian princesses assume heroic stature themselves in the *New Arcadia's* final Book and embody the possibility of a feminine heroism in patience and endurance. In the *New Arcadia* the nature of that heroism is not, however, particular to feminine experience as Lamb suggests. On the contrary, as we've seen in the actions and character

Lawry Sidney's *Two Arcadias: Patterns and Proceeding* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), especially pages 229-44.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Kimbrough makes this point as well in his *Shakespeare and the Art of Humankindness: The Essay Toward Androgyny* (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1990). Kimbrough regards Pyrocles' device in the *New Arcadia* as a suggestive signal of his revaluation of the feminine in the revision. This constitutes a departure from the prince's attitude in the *Old Arcadia*, where his device of the eagle and the dove served to reinforce the polarity of masculinity and femininity by referring to the antithetical figures of Mars and Venus. Kimbrough writes, "Pyrocles, who is made a year older by Sidney in this second version, is no longer perplexed and uncomfortable, but is proudly proclaiming that he is as good a man as a woman as he ever was as only a man" (Kimbrough, *Shakespeare and the Art of Humankindness: The Essay Toward Androgyny*, p. 40). He continues,

What Pyrocles can be said to have faced could be called a new choice for Hercules. The traditional choice facing Hercules at the crossroads had been between the active and the passive lives, the heroic and the amorous, the doing and the knowing, the masculine and the feminine. Here our new Hercules has a new choice: to be both feminine and masculine, knowing and doing, amorous and heroic, passive and active at the same time. By drawing on a fuller potential for human development than merely from the readily available supply of masculine traits and behaviors, Pyrocles is moving toward a fuller realization of his human being (Kimbrough, *Shakespeare and the Art of Humankindness: The Essay Toward Androgyny*, p. 41)

Kimbrough thus emphasises as well the positive valence that is attributed to Pyrocles' Amazonian disguise in the revision, which is predicated on a greater acceptance of the value of feminine behaviour and its accordance with heroism.

development of Pyrocles, it is wholly appropriate and even requisite to the depiction of the heroic ideal to which men also aspire. Pyrocles' feminine disguise thus collapses martial (masculine) virtue with compassionate (feminine) virtue in one heroic persona. His exploits in the *New Arcadia* require a similar collapsing of masculine and feminine aspects of behaviour to overcome the particular challenges he is presented with. Those characters in the *New Arcadia* who do not reflect the same understanding of gender and heroism are ultimately seen to be deficient and lesser than those who embrace femininity as a necessary dimension of virtuous behaviour.

4

Gender, Rhetoric, and Genre

Pamela is another character who, like Pyrocles, does realize this *New Arcadian* vision of heroism. She unites feminine grace and constancy with a masculine mental rigour that stands out as one of the *New Arcadia's* most formidable examples of spiritual fortitude. Pamela's moral debate with Cecropia concerning the existence of God constitutes one of the major focal points of the last Book, and her victory over sophistry and cynicism is clearly another highpoint of the *New Arcadia*. Pamela's moral victory over Cecropia is also specially important for it highlights an aspect of the work's conception of gender that is relevant to both the *Old* and *New Arcadias*. Pamela's verbal triumph is of course achieved

through a masterful manipulation of rhetoric that is at least as well-reasoned and constructed as Philanax's counsel to Basilius. It is probably, in fact, Sidney's rhetorical masterpiece, and has rightly been considered as the *Arcadia's* finest achievement. I do not want to examine the form or content of Pamela's defence of God, but I wish to draw attention to the figure that Pamela presents here. As the ideal female orator, Pamela symbolises how rhetoric itself was conceived and imaged. The civilising force that rhetoric represented from antiquity through to the modern period was often figured in the shape of a woman (see fig. 2). Indeed, Sidney himself in the *Defence* speaks of "that honey-flowing matron Eloquence".¹⁰⁵ Notably, the figure of rhetoric was a martial woman, not unlike the type of warrior woman or Amazon discussed above. In this way, then, Sidney plays upon the underlying assumptions about rhetoric and its ability to better human society.

We have encountered such a conception of the feminine civilising force of rhetoric earlier in Cicero's account of the purpose of rhetoric. I will repeat the citation, for it emphasises the active, martial nature of rhetoric as well as its underlying femininity.

our Oratory [must] be conducted out of this sheltered training-ground at home, right into action, into the dust and uproar, into the camp and fighting-line of public debate; she must face putting everything to the proof and test the strength of her talent, and her secluded preparation must be brought forth into the daylight of reality.¹⁰⁶ (my emphasis).

¹⁰⁵ *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁶ Cicero, *De Oratore*, p. 109.



Fig. 2. From Christophoro Giarda, *Bibliothecae Alexandrianae Icones Symbolicae* [Milan 1628]

This description of a feminine and martial rhetoric corresponds well with Pamela's militant rejection of Cecropia's arguments in the *New Arcadia*.

Such an association of eloquence and femininity has a confused and perplexing background, for as surely as rhetoric was imaged as a woman, the study of oratory largely remained an exclusively male occupation. Patricia Parker in her *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* remarks, "What, we might ask, do women have to do with rhetoric? The answer-- in countless Renaissance conduct books and treatises-- is that they should have nothing whatsoever to do with it, that rhetoric is one thing women should not be taught, even in the view of male authors who would leave other branches of study open to them".¹⁰⁷ The reason behind this exclusion of most women from the study of rhetoric rested upon oratory's *public* forum. In other words, rhetoric was a skill exercised in the public domain, as Cicero attests above, and women on the whole were restricted to private occupations. As Parker demonstrates, the restriction of women from the practice of oratory stems from fears about the ungovernable sexuality of women who trespass into the public domain; the "relation between a potentially uncontrollable female sexuality, a woman speaking in public, and a woman usurping her proper place" unite to bar women from instruction in the public art of oratory.¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth I was of course a notable exception to the rule, but then she was

¹⁰⁷ Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, London: Methuen, 1987, p. 104.

¹⁰⁸ P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, p. 106.

also exceptional in that she was a public figure of authority.

Paradoxically, the very foundation of rhetoric, its troping or turning of 'non-figurative' language into a figurative language, again forges a connection with femininity despite the historical exclusion of women from rhetorical learning. Because rhetorical troping has been defined against 'plain speaking', it has consequently assumed connotations of artificiality or unnaturalness. This artificiality is also closely linked with the function of cosmetics, a feminine art of disguising or masking. In addition, women have an established association with the vice of loquacity which heightens the affiliation of femininity with rhetoric, or the abuse of rhetoric that is excessive copiousness.¹⁰⁹ Parker writes,

Women, then, are figured in discussions of rhetoric in ways which evoke links with the 'far-fetched,' with uncontrollable and even indecent garrulity or speaking out, and with the 'mooveable' transportability of certain tropes. These associations join the more direct association of women with cosmetics, clothing, and decoration, and hence with tropes seen as secondary to the literal or 'proper,' and relating to it as 'clothing,' 'cosmetic,' or 'ornament poeticall'.¹¹⁰

Thus, at a very basic level the consciously artificial, figural nature of rhetoric recalls aspects of femininity

¹⁰⁹ Neil Rhodes discusses the point in his *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (London, Simon and Schuster, 1993). Rhodes remarks, "loquacity is a peculiarly feminine perversion and subversion of the great power of language to produce both civil conversation and civil order" (Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature*, p. 173). Rhodes also posits the femininity of rhetoric, most particularly in its manifestation of *copia* or copiousness (Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature*, p. 182).

¹¹⁰ P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, p. 110.

which also require proper subjugation to masculine discipline. That is, if eloquence is to remain distinct from loquacity, it must bind its feminine *copia* to a masculine rigour. Such is the combination of gender characteristics embodied in the figure of Rhetorica. In the ideal image of rhetoric, the disciplined martial woman of Rhetorica, the greatest potential for social betterment is envisioned by that fusion.

Sidney actively works upon this perception of rhetoric and gender in his *Arcadias*, and especially in his second version where that ideal is most intensely distilled into the figure of the Amazon. Yet another level on which Sidney explores this theme is in the overall consideration of genre. Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* makes it clear that the author is highly sensible of the definitions and characteristics of genre distinctions. The *Defence* also announces Sidney's concern with decorum, and the necessity of understanding not only the structure of genres, but also the didactic possibilities attached to specific generic forms. In his discussion of different forms of poetry (which include as well certain examples of prose writings) Sidney expresses an open mind not only to the possibility of meshing verse and prose, but of mixing different genres fruitfully. Here, the necessary codicil is that such blending should be undertaken with a careful consideration of the ethical implications of the trespass against decorum. Sidney deplures instances where

plays be neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters with neither decency nor discretion, so as neither the admiration and commiseration, not the

right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained.¹¹¹

On the other hand, Sidney recognises that when generic blending is attempted with foresight, the result can be extremely positive as is the case of his precursor Sannazaro.¹¹²

Stephen Greenblatt helpfully comments on Sidney's own deliberate disregard of strict generic distinctions in his article "Sidney's *Arcadia* and the Mixed Mode". Greenblatt sees Sidney's decision to mix the heroical, the pastoral, the romantic, the tragic, and the comic as a signal of the insufficiency of one genre to handle his vision of a didactic work. "Sidney seemed instinctively to feel," writes Greenblatt, "that for the world he wished to portray, there could be no unified, pure form with a single style, a uniform set of characters, and a fixed perspective".¹¹³ The lack of a simple, single generic style to suit the *Arcadia's* purposes is moreover related directly to Sidney's complex ethical universe. As Greenblatt remarks, "in playing off one genre against another, Sidney always pushes beyond aesthetics into the realm of ethics, for he treats the genres, not only as literary categories, but as 'strategies for living'".¹¹⁴ An intricate and multifarious generic structure is then the immediate result of an equally complex ethical framework.

The congruence between ethics and genre is also suggested by Patricia Parker, who ultimately holds that the

¹¹¹ *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 67.

¹¹² *Defence of Poetry*, p. 43.

¹¹³ Stephen J. Greenblatt, "Sidney's *Arcadia* and the Mixed Mode" in *Studies in Philology*, 70, (1973), p. 271.

¹¹⁴ S. Greenblatt, "Sidney's *Arcadia* and the Mixed Mode", p. 272.

romance itself implies femininity. Parker's underlying contention is that genres assume certain gender connotations by their formal characteristics as well as by their purpose, strategy, and typical subject matter. She arrives at this conclusion through her reading of the romance genre in her book *Inescapable Romance: The Poetics of a Mode*. Parker argues that a romance such as Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* contains within its very format a willing delay of its own narrative conclusion, a delay that will finally be seen to be a feminine principle. The formal characteristics of a romance, its wandering, many-layered, intersecting plot lines, represents for Parker a quintessential aspect of the genre's purpose and meaning-- its basic affirmation of open-endedness and delay. The refusal of a romance to 'get to the point' of a story by simultaneously following many digressive plot lines is opposed to the genre of epic, which according to Parker conversely drives toward the hero's reaching of his destiny. The fact that the *Orlando Furioso*, like the *New Arcadia*, contains elements of both romance and epic constitutes the work's central dilemma. The digressive, 'errant' aspects of Ariosto's work continually contest the epic drive toward fullness, conclusion, and closure. The "constant divagations of the romance form", Parker writes, "keeps its fiction going and defers... the fateful moment of truth".¹¹⁵ In Ariosto, the epic form ultimately intervenes to force a narrative conclusion to the work; "it is not surprising that Ariosto's own exercise of closure on his

¹¹³ Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, pp. 31;37.

errant poem should take the form of a movement back towards epic," Parker argues, since epic was "the genre which Renaissance critics as readily assimilated to reason in the hierarchy of the faculties as they accused romance of pandering to the erring senses".¹¹⁶

In this last assessment of Parker's we see the seed of her overall belief in the essential femininity of the romance genre. Since romance is traditionally associated with the senses, it is also connected with the body. In particular, romance is associated with the female body because of its dillatory, copious nature described above. Parker notes in her *Literary Fat Ladies* that the digression or "dilation" typified in romance may actually be related to the female body and its traditional connotations of excess and vagrancy. She describes how "pervasive and multivalent this entire complex of 'dilation' in the Renaissance actually was and how frequently associated with figures of the feminine. This is a link which arises out of romance itself".¹¹⁷ Romance delays its own conclusion through the dilation or expansion of the story, the uncontrolled propogation of the "implicitly female, and perhaps hence wayward, body of the text itself".¹¹⁸ Parker attests to the latent gender associations of genres when she reads the *Aeneid* as

commenting, in what we would now call self-reflexive fashion, on the differing tendencies and gender associations of both epic and romance: the resolutely teleological drive of epic in its repeated injunctions to 'break off delay'... and

¹¹⁶ P. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode*, p. 38.

¹¹⁷ P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁸ P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, p. 11.

the Odyssean or romance delaying tactics which make it the long poem that it is and which disrupt or postpone the end promised from the beginning.¹¹⁹

For Parker, then, romance's femininity is established through its connection to images of the female body, as the epic likewise assumes masculine gender associations through its own linkages to 'male' teleological directness and linearity.

The notion put forth by Parker that the romance genre 'pandered to the erring senses' is one that we have encountered before in relationship to Sidney's critical reception. One of the main reasons underlying critical disapproval of the *Arcadia* as the reading material of women was the assumption that as a romance, it could do little to improve the mental or moral life of weak-minded women. Such is the logic behind Thomas Powell's injunction against the reading of the *Arcadia* by young, impressionable female minds quoted above. Milton more or less makes the same judgement of the *Arcadia's* relative sensuousness and frivolity in his *Eikonoklastes*, where he censures Charles I's recitation of Pamela's prayer on the night before he was beheaded. Milton condemns Charles I for his injudicious admiration of "the vain and amatorious poem of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*-- a book in that kind full of worth and wit, but among religious thoughts not worthy to be named".¹²⁰ Clearly, Milton's disdain for Charles I's reading matter is founded on the pagan backdrop of the work, but also on its nature as a romance. Milton deplores the "refuse of *Arcadias* and romances" as they are well beneath the seriousness and

¹¹⁹ P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, p. 13.

¹²⁰ John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, M. Y. Hughes, (ed.), New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1985, p. 793.

sententiousness of Christian gospel, and certainly unfit to be recited and offered to God before one's death.¹²¹

Milton's opinion of the *Arcadia* as "vain and amatorious" thus rehearses the general conception of romance as sensuous, undisciplined, and by inference, feminine. Another feminine dimension of romance's reputation is that it represents a waste of time, a notion that follows closely from the delaying aspect of the genre we discussed earlier. Engaging in the reading or writing of romance literature is often viewed as time better spent in other activities, whether those activities are constituted by the creating or consuming or more 'serious' forms of literature (epic or devotional), or even better, the active accomplishing of worthy and valuable deeds. As Parker comments in her *Literary Fat Ladies*, "indulgence in romance was a form of dilatoriness or dalliance, preventing all such latter-day Aeneases from getting on with the business more proper to them."¹²² Here we return again to that series of dichotomies outlined by Lamb where reading is envisaged as the negative pole of the reading/ doing divide. That is, to read or write romance is seen as not only a less valuable, less socially imperative form of literary activity, but simply as literature, romance may be characterised as opposed to active doing itself. As I suggested earlier, however, Sidney's own definition of poetry as a form of active doing defies that established set of analogies. Just as Sidney dismantles the bipolar juxtaposition of active doing versus passive reading or writing, so does he also combine the sensuous femininity of

¹²¹ J. Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, p. 794.

¹²² P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies*, p. 11.

romance with the imperative masculinity of epic in his *New Arcadia*. Sidney combines elements of pastoral with those of epic heroism and the romance form to create a hybrid that comprehends the multifarious value systems those generic descriptions imply. Sidney meshes, in other words, the feminine dilatoriness of romance with the masculine martial heroism of epic in his one work. In this way, then, the complex generic structure of the *New Arcadia* reflects on the formal level what the figures developed within the narrative (such as the Amazon or the transvestite) suggest at a more particular level: the congruence of masculinity and femininity in the creation of a wholistic heroic ideal.

It is absolutely key to understanding the *New Arcadia's* conception of ethics to take seriously the author's combination of generic structures as a significant reflection of the work's attitude toward gender. It is when Sidney's meshing of genres is considered a serious and deliberate decision that his treatment of issues of transvestism and Amazonia is best appreciated. John F. Danby's *Poets on Fortune's Hill: Studies in Sidney, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher* provides valuable insight into Sidney's attitude toward gender and ethics, but fails to draw out the full implications of such local observations to Sidney's overall project in the *New Arcadia*. Danby rightly observes the conjunction of traditionally opposed value systems in the *New Arcadia*, where the

external sphere is heroical, [and] the internal one amatorious. In the one are required the active virtues of courage, mental fortitude, command over men and events; in the other the passive and maybe unrewarded virtues of singleness, self-devotion, command over one's will and one's possible self-

division... One is the especially masculine world, the other the world in which womanly nature finds its supreme expression.¹²³

Danby also correctly reads Pyrocles' disguise in the *New Arcadia* as indicating his positive femininity; his "dress adds to rather than diminishes his merely masculine virtue".¹²⁴ Nonetheless, Danby fails to square such observations with Sidney's generic choices. Danby insists that "In spite of its title and its reputation, the elements of Romance and Pastoral in the *Arcadia* are not of primary importance".¹²⁵ He labels the elements of romance as "furniture" that are not significant to the ethical vision of the work. On the contrary, Sidney's highly developed interest in generic forms and their ethical connotations that is evinced in the *Defence* makes it difficult to accept a nonchalant attitude toward genre in his work. Michael McCanles agrees that Sidney's mixing of genres is both deliberate and suggestive. In *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World* McCanles insists that "the generic form of a work-- and this holds particularly for works like the *Arcadia* where several genres are juxtaposed-- becomes itself a vehicle of meaning, a complex sign conveying its own range of values and judgements".¹²⁶ McCanles ultimately concludes that the *Arcadia's* generic structures reiterate what he sees as the work's overall dialectical binarism; he argues that the heroic epic aspects of the *Arcadia* are in dialectical

¹²³ John F. Danby, *Poets on Fortune's Hill: Studies in Sidney, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher*, London: Faber and Faber, 1952, p. 51.

¹²⁴ J. F. Danby, *Poets on Fortune's Hill: Studies in Sidney, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher*, p. 56.

¹²⁵ J. F. Danby, *Poets on Fortune's Hill: Studies in Sidney, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher*, p. 47.

¹²⁶ M. McCanles, *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, p. 7.

opposition to its comic pastoral impulses. This is a dialectic of mutual exclusion and implication, where then vying value systems embodied in each genre exist as a function of the other. McCanles writes,

The interplay of generic ingredients in the new *Arcadia* makes the following point: the values, motivations, and actions of the heroic life embodied in the epic romance both exclude and consequently imply the values, motivations, and actions of the erotic life embodied in the pastoral genre.¹²⁷

While McCanles rightly points to the importance and significance of generic blending as a meeting of different value systems, he nevertheless rules out any mutual modification and interaction between the generic modes. That is, he repeats the type of binarism latent in Mary Ellen Lamb's reading of the *Arcadia* which sees no meaningful exchange or interaction between the different modes; the epic and the pastoral coexist but do not impinge significantly on each other in McCanles' reading. I propose on the contrary that the *New Arcadia* especially posits the insufficiency of either generic world to convey Sidney's vision of heroism, and thus that the blending of genres mirrors Sidney's critique of masculinist versions of ethical behaviour.

Bringing together the various levels at which Sidney portrays the relationship of gender and ethics, then, reveals what Kay describes as the "peculiar suitability of the *Arcadia* for the sensibilities of women".¹²⁸ Sidney not only envisages the possibility of a form of heroism in patience and endurance available to his historical women readers as

¹²⁷ M. McCanles, *The Text of Sidney's Arcadian World*, p. 143.

¹²⁸ D. Kay, (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, p. 27.

Mary Ellen Lamb evidences, but he also valorises the feminine itself as a necessary dimension of all heroic behaviour. It is his acceptance and valorisation of femininity which constitutes his suitability for the sensibilities of many women, and which is also related to his reputation as an effeminate man.¹²⁹ The notion that the *Arcadia* appeals specially to feminine sensibilities must then be extended to incorporate the 'femininity' of readers who are amenable to such a vision of gender and ethics. In other words, the *New Arcadia's* feminine readership includes all readers, irrespective of sex, who respond to the work's depiction of the concordance of femininity and heroism. Constance Jordan's *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* suggests much the same thing. Jordan sees the *Arcadia* primarily as drawing a distinction between biological sex which is a given, and gender which is socially determined and which is defined irrespective of sex. She writes, "Sidney posits androgyny as the rule of gender in contrast to sex; masculine and feminine behaviors that are not specifically procreative are not restricted to sex".¹³⁰ For her, Pyrocles' transvestism represents the positive valence of gender which

¹²⁹ Simon Shepherd in his article "What's So Funny About Ladies' Tailors? A survey of Some Male (Homo)Sexual Types in the Renaissance" (*Textual Practice*, Spring 1992) draws a connection between perceived effeminacy of men and their over-indulgence in sexual intercourse. He discusses figures such as tailors who were ridiculed "both as heterosexually lecherous and (mainly) effeminate" (Shepherd, "What's So Funny About Ladies' Tailors?", p. 19). Sidney's death, commonly described as a heroic self-sacrifice on the battlegrounds of Zutphen, was however occasioned by his sexual indulgence with his wife after being wounded against his doctor's orders, which classifies him as 'effeminate' in the sense outlined by Shepherd.

¹³⁰ C. Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*, p. 225.

characterises him as "both virile and feminine... The androgyny Zelmane incarnates is of course positively exemplary for both man and woman".¹³¹ To respond positively to Pyrocles/ Zelmane's transvestism and its significance is then to exhibit femininity; as Mary Ellen Lamb suggests in her *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, the examples of feminine heroism displayed in the *New Arcadia* grants the opportunity to male readers to "'read like a woman,' to come into contact with that 'female' aspect of themselves capable of compassionate responses to a text".¹³²

In this light, I would like to return to Mark Rose's article "Sidney's Womanish Man" Rose views Pyrocles' Amazon disguise as an indication of Sidney's condemnation of romantic love. He argues that the embarrassment felt by Sidney's critics is wholly natural, and an essential part of the author's strategy:

Their [the critics'] sensibilities tell them there is something unseemly in the sight of a man dressing as a woman. Their critical assumptions, however, assure them that as Pyrocles is intended to represent the perfect prince and lover, no action of his is likely to be improper. According to the critics, it is only the modern mind which finds Pyrocles' dress unseemly;... Sidney, I believe, intended his readers to find Pyrocles's disguise offensive.¹³³

Rose contends that the hero's disguise is meant as a signal that his behaviour in the *New Arcadia* constitutes an unwholesome departure from his former worthwhile, heroic life, for in "Sidney's romance passionate love is no

¹³¹ C. Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*, p. 225.

¹³² M. E. Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, pp. 107-08.

¹³³ M. Rose, "Sidney's Womanish Man", pp. 353-4.

ennobling emotion".¹³⁴ Clearly, for Rose, Pyrocles' disguise is an apt representation of his spiritual state, and for that same reason suggests his ethical poverty: "Pyrocles' womanish dress, then, is the mark of that spiritual effeminacy which has resulted from his allowing his reason to be ruled by passion".¹³⁵ Mark Rose does not seem to consider that Sidney's immediate readership was predominantly female. In other words, Rose's contention that Sidney's readers were meant to find the hero's wearing of feminine dress and his consequent defence of women absurd seems less tenable with Lamb's assertion of the femininity of the Sidneian audience. Unless Sidney's feminine readership completely abhorred their own femininity, Rose's position is shaky indeed.

The reason I draw attention to Rose's article is that his position seems to mirror much of the historical disparagement of the *Arcadia* which develops from questions of the politics of reading. Rose seeks only to alleviate the discomfort of Sidney's critics by suggesting that Sidney's portrayal of the central hero was wholly ironic and not a serious depiction of valour. In the same vein did Mrs. Stanley feel obliged to rehabilitate the *Arcadia* by removing its heavy rhetorical 'dress' to release the true value of the work. The same may also be said of Hain Friswell who likewise attempted to revalue the *Arcadia*, in his case by depicting the work itself as interesting insofar as it was produced by a famed and worthy man. Friswell, Stanley, and Rose, then, approach the *Arcadia* as work whose most characteristic aspects, its rhetoricism and its complex depiction of gender,

¹³⁴ M. Rose, "Sidney's Womanish Man", p. 355.

¹³⁵ M. Rose, "Sidney's Womanish Man", p. 357.

require explaining away or simplification. In a way, this is not entirely surprising since the overt rhetoricism of the *Arcadia* and its valorisation of *copia* are feminine aspects of the work which may be linked to the *Arcadia's* valorisation of femininity as a component of heroism. It is possible to read the *Arcadia* positively without performing the plastic surgery of Mrs. Stanley, and without regarding Sidney's treatment of his main hero as predominantly ironic and disparaging. Such a reading, however, must appreciate the value both of Sidney's deliberately copious rhetoricism and his unusual development of relatively controversial gender roles as they equally serve key functions in Sidney's vision of ethics, a vision of ethics which revalues heroism as a conjunction of masculine and feminine aspects of behaviour.

Conclusion

Sidney's Gendered Rhetoric

While I mentioned in the preface that parts of my examination of gender roles in the *Arcadia* has been accomplished independently from the larger exploration of the work's rhetorical underpinning, I wish now to develop some of the stronger parallels between these two principal areas which we touched upon in the last chapter. These parallels surfaced first in the nature of remarks made by rhetoricians during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries who rejected earlier rhetorical valorisations of *copia*. If we recall, in our study of the history of the *Arcadia's* reception it became apparent that Sidney's reputation fluctuated in direct relationship to the fortunes of rhetoric itself. That is, when rhetoric was subjected to strict criticism in respect to its disjunction from the 'pure' language of scientific knowledge and positivistic methodology, there was an historically correspondent decline in the reputation of Sidney's *Arcadia*. It is important, however, to consider this correspondence between rhetoricism and the *Arcadia* in closer detail. We must ask specifically what *type* of rhetoric has the *Arcadia* been associated with, and thus, what particular aspects of the *Arcadia's* rhetoricism have been responsible for its long periods of unpopularity?

The key to these questions are lodged, as I suggested, in the remarks of those rhetoricians we discussed earlier, John Lawson and Thomas Gibbons. These rhetoricians attempted to redefine the quality and scope of rhetoric in their period

to suit changing philosophical and epistemological circumstances. To recall briefly, both of these rhetoricians responded to the dictates laid out first by Francis Bacon and later by The Royal Society in general. As we discovered, the inauguration of the scientific method consequently spelt the demise for the kind of copious rhetoric which derived its strength, power and success from a fertile and imaginative proliferation of figures. In other words, the Sidneian brand of rhetoric, with its stress on abundant figuration, was seen as inappropriate to the positivistic mindset of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

As a result, rhetoricians like Lawson and Gibbons redefined their art in a way that resided more comfortably with the language of scientific method. John Lawson described and advocated a brand of rhetoric whose primary defining characteristics were brevity, purity, and simplicity, these characteristics arising naturally from Lawson's governing principle that "Reason is more exercised than Invention. Attached to what is solid, we neglect Ornament"¹. Lawson's polarisation of rhetorical ornament and the solid ground of reason is Baconian in the extreme. Lawson's rhetoric, however, is more than just Baconian; his brand of rhetoric is also clearly masculinist. Hand in hand with his support for a restrained and simple rhetoric based on reason is his affirmation of a "strong, pure, and masculine Stile" [my emphasis]². It is my contention that such a correlation between the rhetoric of self-restraint and reason with

¹ J. Lawson, *Lectures Concerning Oratory*, p. 4.

² J. Lawson, *Lectures Concerning Oratory*, p. 78.

masculinity is a pervasive one deeply-rooted in the traditions of patriarchy.

Christopher Norris' article "Post-structuralist Shakespeare: Text and Ideology" supports this view through the author's assessment of Johnson's reading of Shakespeare. Norris points out that Johnson's judgement of Shakespeare is scored through by a fundamental contradiction, one that arises from Johnson's nationalist demands upon Shakespeare's oeuvre. The desire to establish Shakespeare not only as a national poet but as the font of a definitive 'Englishness' runs across special difficulties when such a project is attempted in Johnson's neo-classical age. What Norris terms the "luxuriant native wildness" of Shakespeare's language encounters very similar difficulties to those Sidney met during the same period, and for the same reasons. As Norris observes,

On the one hand Shakespeare has to be accommodated to the eighteenth-century idea of a proper, self-regulating discourse which would finally create a rational correspondence between words and things, language and reality. From this point of view Johnson can only deprecate the tiresome 'quibbles' and redundant wordplay which so flagrantly transgresses the stylistic norm. On the other hand, allowances have to be made for the luxuriant native wildness of Shakespeare's genius, its refusal to brook the 'rules' laid down by more decorous traditions like that of French neo-classicism.³

Johnson's unease with Shakespeare's uncontrolled and undisciplined language springs from the desire for a one-to-one correspondence between word and thing that is nearly a mirror replicate of Thomas Sprat's nostalgia for a time "when men deliver'd so many things, almost in equal number of

³ Christopher Norris, "Post-structuralist Shakespeare: Text and Ideology", in John Drakakis (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares*, London: Methuen, 1986, p. 49.

words".⁴ Norris echoes the correlation I made above between positivist method and neo-classical literary tastes when he writes that Johnson's eighteenth-century

Propriety of style is a matter of observing the economy of reference which ideally should relate words and things in a one-to-one system of disambiguated usage. In this respect Johnson stands squarely within the Lockean tradition of positivist thinking about language, logic and epistemology.⁵

Moreover, Norris forges an important connection between the language of logic and reason with ideas of the nature of civilisation itself. Shakespeare's transgressions against linguistic decorum, his "'quibbles', 'clinches', 'idle conceits'" represent for Norris "a constant threat to the civilized consensus which works to maintain this proper economy".⁶ To enact Shakespearian forays into linguistic excess is thus to court primitive or uncivilised behaviour. Norris continues: "Disorders of reference-- brought about by figural excess-- are simultaneously felt as disorders of identity, breaking or suspending the privileged tie between words and expressive intent".⁷ These "disorders of identity" thus threaten the notion of Shakespeare as quintessentially and unambiguously English; Shakespeare's excessive linguistic tendencies undermine his position as the voice of the English language as a result of the consequent blurring of the boundaries between civilisation and barbarism. In other words, Shakespeare's linguistic vagrancy is read as

⁴ T. Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 113.

⁵ C. Norris, "Post-structuralist Shakespeare: Text and Ideology", pp. 49-50.

⁶ C. Norris, "Post-structuralist Shakespeare: Text and Ideology", p. 50.

⁷ C. Norris, "Post-structuralist Shakespeare: Text and Ideology", p. 50.

symptomatic of his cultural impurity, a point with suggestive repercussions for the critical reception of the *Arcadia*.

One last aspect of Norris' analysis of Johnson's reading of Shakespeare is relevant to our discussion of Sidney's rhetoricism. Norris works out the basic association, discussed in the last chapter, between rhetoric and femininity in a manner that brings to the fore the fears that such displays of eloquence traditionally has evoked. He pinpoints a major problem Johnson experienced in his reading of Shakespeare as pivoting on the dangerous sexuality that the latter's rhetoric represented, what Johnson describes as "the fatal *Cleopatra*" of rhetorical figuration for which Shakespeare was content to lose his claim to literary perfection. Norris writes,

In Johnson, this phenomenon is all the more disturbing for the sexual overtones-- of yielding, seduction, abandoned self-mastery-- which mark its emergence. The metaphor of word-play as a 'fatal *Cleopatra*' is just one of the many suggestions, in the *Preface* and elsewhere, that work to associate feminine wiles with the mischiefs created by unbridled linguistic figuration. The straightforward virtues of a 'manly' style-- vigorous, commonsensical, unembellished, plain-dealing-- are opposed to the weaknesses attendant upon metaphor and other such womanish devices. Rationality demands that the seductive ornaments of language be kept within bounds by a firm sense of masculine propriety and discipline. Otherwise, as Johnson repeatedly complains, good sense is all too often overwhelmed by the blandishments of figural language.⁸

⁸ C. Norris, "Post-structuralist Shakespeare: Text and Ideology", p. 51. It should nonetheless be noted that Johnson's particular 'quibble' with Shakespeare's style was the overuse of the pun.

The central point being made here is that linguistic excess, like sexual excess itself,⁹ is directly associated with femininity.

Patricia Parker too advances this argument, and significantly, also yokes the sexually charged nature of figural excess to depictions of uncivilised or un-Western behaviour. The rhetorical tendency on which Parker concentrates in this respect is *dilatatio*. Dilation as a method of *amplificatio* (amplification) typically involves spinning out a discourse to its greatest extent, a method of increasing and swelling the body of the text which Parker relates to the feminine generative process. She asserts that the

tradition of rhetorical *dilatatio*-- with its references to the 'swelling' style or its relation to the verbal 'interlarding' produced through an excessive application of the principle of 'increase'-- provides its own links between fat bodies and discoursing 'at large,' between the size of a discourse and the question of body size.¹⁰

The body of the pregnant woman is clearly one of these "fat bodies" that is tied to the activity of "discoursing 'at large'".

Moreover, Parker inherently connects the sexual femininity of copious rhetoric with Western conceptualisations of orientalism. That is, such an

⁹ Simon Shepherd's "What's So Funny about Ladies' Tailors? A Survey of Some Male (Homo)Sexual Types in the Renaissance" provides a discussion of the characterisation of excessive sexuality as an aspect of femininity. Shepherd notes that "In the early Renaissance a man's sexual passion for a woman could be said not so much to demonstrate his healthy masculinity as to effeminate him" (S. Shepherd, "What's So Funny about Ladies' Tailors? A Survey of Some Male (Homo)Sexual Types in the Renaissance", p. 19).

¹⁰ P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, p. 14.

overflowing and undisciplined usage of language is defined as belonging to un-Western and hence uncivilised societies. Such a polarisation of the masculinist rhetoric of the West (ideally seen as pure, vigorous and disciplined) with the feminine rhetoric of the East (imaged as impure, uncontrolled and licentious) is attested to in the names associated with these two opposite styles: the Attic and the Asiatic. Parker herself describes "anti-Ciceronian contrastings of a more effeminate Ciceronian or Asiatic style-- linked with 'bignesse' as well as prodigality-- to the more virile Attic".¹¹ While Parker does not actively explore the associations of effeminate rhetoric with the orient and masculine or virile rhetoric with Athens, the seat of Western civilisation, such linkages are nonetheless underwriting her discussion of anti-Ciceronian rejections of copious writing. She points out the characterisation of Ciceronian eloquence as immature by citing a source who simultaneously employs the weighted descriptive terms I laid stress on above.

Ciceronian copia in these discussions is both effeminate and the style of a more prodigal youth, to be outgrown once one had become a man: 'I used to imitate [Cicero],' writes Lipsius; 'but I have become a man, and my tastes have changed. *Asiatic* feasts have ceased to please me; I prefer the *Attic*'¹² [my emphasis].

What emerges then from both Parker's and Norris' discussions is a network of associations that serves to polarise two distinct styles of rhetoric, and to attach to each a distinct set of qualities. On the one hand, there is the rhetoric advocated by Sprat and Johnson, the rhetoric

¹¹ P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, p. 14.

¹² P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, p. 14.

which embodies a wholesome and unambiguous one-to-one correspondence between words and things. This brand of rhetoric is most usually characterised by a type of self-discipline which is implicitly allied to the masculine principle-- Lawson's "strong, pure, and masculine Stile". This style is then affiliated with the cultural purity and maturity of Western society, and for Johnson English culture in particular.

On the other hand, there is the wild and luxuriant rhetoric of a Shakespeare which "o'er flows the measure". Shakespeare's rhetoric, as Johnson saw it, threatened the author's position as wholly and definitively English. The element of Shakespeare's style which was seen to undermine his English cultural identity, his penchant for florid figuration, also served to categorize writing such as his as sexually effeminate. Abundant, copious rhetorical figuration acquires the status of the woman's inability to restrain her errant tongue. Significantly, this linguistic style marked by figural excess is labelled 'Asiatic'. Thus, there emerges a correspondence drawn through masculinity, maturity, sexual integrity and the culture of the Occident. These qualities and entities are all poised and defined against their polar opposites: femininity, immaturity, sexual excess, and foreign, exotic, Eastern culture.

The figure of Cleopatra invoked by Johnson in this matter is a suggestive one, for it proves a striking illustration of how these two issues of the sexual and cultural characterisation of rhetoric are intertwined. Cleopatra serves as the perfect embodiment of the twin fears

of excessive sexuality and the cultural deviance or difference of the East. In other words, the Eastern exoticism of Cleopatra also proves an effeminating force on the Roman Antony who has been 'womanized', made an effeminate "Strumpet's fool" to the extent that he "is not more manlike/ Than Cleopatra; nor the queen of Ptolemy/ More womanly than he" (I.iv.5-7).¹³ It is the insistent dwelling on what is seen as Cleopatra's verbal and sexual excess which provides a counterpoint to the Roman logic of a Caesar or Octavia's "holy, cold, and still conversation" (II.vii.122-3). Indeed Cleopatra is confident of her superiority over her rival Octavia, for Antony's wife is "dull of tongue, and dwarfish" (III.iii.16). Moreover, Cleopatra proves an all-round rhetorician, skilful in manipulating her audience to the desired effect through her knowledge and deployment of delivery-- *actio* or *pronuntiatio*. When she charges Charmian to tell Antony of her death, she commands her "Say that the last word I spoke was 'Antony,'/ And word it, prithee, piteously" (IV.xiii.8-9). Cleopatra the "Eastern star", then, embodies the seductive, manipulative, and effeminating force of rhetoric. Copious rhetoric, as Johnson characterised it, is thus both a foreign and effeminating corrosive agent.

Let us piece together some of these insights about the type of rhetoric most closely associated with Sidney's own writing. How applicable are the findings of Norris and Parker to the reading and reception of Sidney's *Arcadia* itself? If we trace some of the conclusions reached in this study, we

¹³ All citations from *Antony and Cleopatra* are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans (ed.), Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

find a remarkable congruence between traditional characterisations of the *Arcadia* and the types of judgements made above about the corrosive effect of ornately rhetorical language. For example, Virginia Woolf's well-known opinion of the *Arcadia* mentioned earlier is founded primarily on Sidney's voluptuous enjoyment of verbiage, in the sheer sensuousness of words; "Words in themselves delight him," she writes, "Look, he seems to cry, as he picks up the glittering handfuls, can it really be true that there are such numbers of beautiful words lying about for the asking? Why not use them, lavishly and abundantly? And so he luxuriates."¹⁴ The word Woolf chooses to describe Sidney's attitude toward his writing-- "luxuriate"-- is suggestive, for one of the etymologically related connotations of luxuriance is of course lechery and voluptuousness.¹⁵ Hence, Woolf here inherently draws upon that set of analogies we've delineated that characterises wordiness as a form of sexual excess. She continues in this vein when she remarks that

Often as we rush through them [Sidney's vast pages], half laughing, half in protest, the desire comes upon us to shut the ear of reason completely and lie back and listen to this unformed babble of sound; this chorus of intoxicated voices singing madly like birds round the house before anyone is up.¹⁶

¹⁴ Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader Second Series*, Andrew McNellie (ed.), London: The Hogarth Press, 1986, p. 43.

¹⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word luxurious as both "outrageous, extravagant, excessive" and "lascivious, lecherous, unchaste". Thus Antony accuses Cleopatra of "luxuriously" indulging in "hotter hours/ Unregist'ed in vulgar fame" whilst he was away from her (W. Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, III.xiii.118-20).

¹⁶ V. Woolf, *The Common Reader Second Series*, p. 44.

The desire to "shut the ear of reason" is clearly indicative of the perceived disjunction between Sidneian rhetoric and the masculine rhetoric of rationality.

The "unformed babble of sound" which Woolf deems Sidney's prose to be equally has interesting and provocative implications. We've discussed briefly earlier that loquacity or uncontrolled speech is commonly associated with the loose tongues of women. In his book *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* Neil Rhodes not only posits this correlation of women with loquacity, but significantly describes this specific form of feminine verbal excess as "a soft and fluid verbal meandering, or alternatively, a *shrill and repetitive babble*" [my emphasis].¹⁷ Clearly, then, Woolf's own description of Sidney's meaningless cacophony of babble matches traditional conceptualisations of the incessant chattering of women. Indeed, Rhodes' definition of feminine loquacity as "invertebrate discourse... formless chatter" again strikes a chord with the "unformed" quality of Sidney's language that Woolf diagnoses.

There is one more aspect of Woolf's reading of Sidney which I wish to concentrate on, one that reveals her affinity with other Sidneian critics who have reproached the *Arcadia* on the basis of its over-flowing, overwhelming rhetorical figuration. Woolf laments that the flashes of real psychological insight that Sidney provides into the characters he has created are hampered, fettered, and ultimately overcome by his inability to refrain from exhaustive rhetorical description. She claims that the

¹⁷ N. Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature*, pp. 172-3.

pleasure derived from the temporary escape afforded by the *Arcadia's* world of "roses and lutes" soon cloys; "we who wished to escape have been caught and enmeshed" by that Sidneian *bête noire* of linguistic excess:

softness has weighed down our steps; brambles have caught at our clothing. We have come to long for some plain statement, and the decoration of the style, at first so enchanting, has dulled and decayed.¹⁸

What is interesting about this statement is the imagery employed to describe Sidney's rhetoric. The heavy "softness" and the entangling "brambles" that impede the reader's progress have been alluded to before by that nineteenth-century editor of the *Arcadia*, Hain Friswell. Friswell acknowledges the then common perception of the *Arcadia's* stylistic awkwardness yet his response to such criticism was to ascribe such detractions not to Sidney himself, but to the ineptitude of his sister the Countess of Pembroke's editing of the text. Friswell's judgement as we saw runs as follows:

It is... known that the Countess of Pembroke added to the episodes, adventures, and strange turns,... Hence there is to be met with an Arcadian undergrowth which needs careful pruning; and this undertaken,... will leave the reader with all he desires of Sidney's own.¹⁹

I quote this passage again because it seems to bear marked resemblance to Woolf's criticism of Sidney's rhetorical style. Woolf's rhetorical "brambles" and Friswell's "Arcadian undergrowth" share a common heritage which serves to relate such linguistic excrescences to femininity. Friswell directly attributes the weedy excesses to Sidney's sister, and Woolf's language more generally recalls the association of verbal

¹⁸ V. Woolf, *The Common Reader Second Series*, p. 48.

¹⁹ P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), pp. xxviii-xxix.

overflow with women. Perhaps the most striking illustration of Friswell's conviction that the *Arcadian* wordy excrescences are the product of the feminine intervention of the Countess of Pembroke is his assertion that Sidney himself "does not waste words,... but goes at once to the heart of the matter" and that as a result, his work displays "an innate *manliness*" [my emphasis].²⁰

Woolf's characterisation of the *Arcadian* style as overflowing and entangling recalls yet another early Sidney critic who was unhesitating in his dismissal of the work's "quaint and pedantic style". Virginia Woolf directly harkens back to Hazlitt's attack on the *Arcadia* which we've explored when she ultimately judges Sidney's romance to be "long-winded and abstract and full of metaphors".²¹ This is a near repetition of Hazlitt when he identifies Sidney's "original sin" to be "alliteration, antithesis, and metaphysical conceit".²² The congruence does not end there, for Hazlitt, like Woolf, presents the *Arcadia's* rhetorical style as enmeshing and suffocating. He does this through the language and imagery in which he couches his criticism of Sidney. Let us recall some of the key images and metaphors Hazlitt employs in his discussion of the *Arcadia*. One figure which is linked to the depiction of *Arcadia's* style as something which restrains and hinders the reader's progress is the cobweb which Hazlitt likens Sidney's text to. He declares that "the Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*... is spun with great labour out of the author's brains, and hangs like a huge cobweb over

²⁰ P. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, H. Friswell (ed.), p. xviii.

²¹ V. Woolf, *The Common Reader Second Series*, p. 46.

²² W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 324.

the face of nature".²³ Hazlitt's cobweb, with its connotations of disfigurement and superfluity, also echoes the fears of rhetorical enveloping and enmeshing evoked by Woolf and Friswell. Moreover, Hazlitt contributes to the characterisation of rhetoric as artifice, and by extension, as a potentially feminine vice when he compares Sidney's romance to "the court dresses and preposterous fashions of the time which are grown obsolete and disgusting".²⁴ The association of overly ornate dress or clothing with the feminine sin of vanity is well-established. Lisa Jardine explicitly draws the connection between elaborate dress and rhetorical figures in her *Still Harping on Daughters* where she writes that "'Cloth of gold, sylver tissued, purple, silk' perform for the code of an individual's dress what figures of speech do for poetic speech" and where she also goes on to cite Puttenham's comparison of rich, florid language to magnificent court dress.²⁵

This link between sumptuous dress and copious rhetoric is then related to the realm of feminine excess by Simon Shepherd, who focuses on the fop as a figure representative of the essential effeminacy of concern with the superficiality of clothing. The fop, like the ladies' tailor, embodies for the Renaissance the feminine inability to restrain oneself in the matter of external appearance, as "In general, manhood was associated with reason and control, both

²³ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 320.

²⁴ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 319.

²⁵ Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983, p. 145.

internal and external".²⁶ Through his own preoccupation with sartorial ornament, the fop represents a moral weakness characteristic of the frailer sex.

The effeminate man upsets the natural hierarchy of man and woman, and in so doing represents a modern decadence which is contrasted with ancient heroic manliness.... The consistent feature of the picture of fops is not so much the sex object as the extravagant clothes; and the sex object may indeed be thought of as part of the other ornaments.... The consistent feature is a commitment to extravagance. The accompaniment by two sex objects is, in one respect, simply a marker of excess. The effeminate man does not know the restraint necessary in the productive monogamous marriage.²⁷

The fop thus trespasses against the image of manliness as restraint, and as a result is seen as effeminately excessive. In this context, Hazlitt's comparison of Sidney to the extravagant court dresses of his day, as well as his description of Sidney as "a complete intellectual coxcomb"²⁸ attaches to Sidney's style a distinctly feminine taint. As an intellectual fop, Sidney becomes like "The ladies' tailor... a sexual type which designates a man who shares the world of women's tastes (*extravagant, redundant ornament*)" [my emphasis].²⁹

One last aspect of Hazlitt's barrage against the *Arcadia* which I wish to highlight is his description of the muse guiding Sidney's writing. Hazlitt remarks that in the *Arcadia*, "Every page is 'with centric and eccentric scribbled

²⁶ S. Shepherd, "What's So Funny About Ladies' Tailors? A Survey of Some Male (Homo)Sexual Types in the Renaissance", p. 19.

²⁷ S. Shepherd, "What's So Funny About Ladies' Tailors? A Survey of Some Male (Homo)Sexual Types in the Renaissance", pp. 20-1.

²⁸ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 320.

²⁹ S. Shepherd, "What's So Funny About Ladies' Tailors? A Survey of Some Male (Homo)Sexual Types in the Renaissance", p. 22.

o'er;' his Muse is *tattooed and painted out like an Indian goddess*" [my emphasis].³⁰ This one statement of Hazlitt's collapses many of the observations we've been making concerning the inter-relationship of rhetoric, gender, and tangentially, culture. The image of Sidney's text as covered with meaningless, superfluous, and nonsensical scribbles relates back to the 'unformed babble of sound' that Woolf diagnosed in the *Arcadia*. Moreover, Hazlitt unequivocally relates this fatuous doodling of Sidney's to a foreign culture that represents a similar lack of cohesive, integral purity. To Hazlitt, the image of a tattooed and painted Indian goddess encapsulates his constitutional fear of language which transgresses, which becomes grotesque and uncivilised in its inability to respect proper distinctions. Just as an Indian goddess is covered all over with paint, and is often presented with many arms and legs, so Sidney's rhetoric embodies a like superfluity, an exceeding of what is natural and proper. The *Arcadia* is ultimately for Hazlitt obscene in its foreign, effeminate, unrestrained style.

Interestingly, Charles Lamb validates much of Hazlitt's assumptions about Sidney's work, despite his ostensible intention of reversing the negative impact left by the influential attack on the *Arcadia*. While Lamb proclaims himself hurt by the "wantonness... with which W. H. takes every occasion of insulting the memory of Sir Philip Sydney"³¹, he nonetheless unwittingly supports the nature of Hazlitt's criticism of Sidney. Lamb defends Sidney's literary

³⁰ W. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, (6), p. 320.

³¹ In E.M.W. Tillyard (ed.), *Lamb's Criticism: A Selection from the Literary Criticism of Charles Lamb*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923, p. 13.

production by claiming that these works were "written in the very hey-day of his blood", and that as a result,

They are stuck full of amorous fancies-- far-fetched conceits, befitting his occupation; for True Love thinks no labour to send out Thoughts upon the vast, and more than Indian voyages, to bring home rich pearls, outlandish wealth, gums, jewels, spicery, to sacrifice in self-depreciating similitudes, as shadows of true amiabilities in the Beloved.³²

Lamb's portrayal of the source of Sidney's linguistic bounty as the East, with its "rich pearls, outlandish wealth, gums, jewels, [and] spicery" reiterates Hazlitt's concern with the foreign and exotic quality of Sidney's work. However, where Hazlitt judged such writing to be threatening and corruptive, Lamb significantly excuses Sidney on the basis of his youth and erotic preoccupations. These "amorous fancies" recall the connection between feminine sexuality and verbal excess while the reference to the "hey-day" of Sidney's youth evokes the correlation drawn by Parker between spiritual immaturity and copious rhetoric-- the "Asiatic feasts" which Lipsius had outgrown. Thus, Lamb's description of Sidney's "Indian voyages" is very much in keeping with the historical characterisation of the Arcadian rhetorical style. Lamb reiterates and reinforces the same collective set of analogies which have been underwriting the traditional criticisms levelled at Sidney's particular approach to language and literature.

In conclusion, then, I hope to have demonstrated in part the nature of the extensive relationship of rhetoric and gender, and the significance of this relationship to the

³² In E.M.W. Tillyard (ed.), *Lamb's Criticism: A Selection from the Literary Criticism of Charles Lamb*, p. 8.

understanding of the *Arcadia's* historical reception. In the context of the long-standing characterisation of the dangerous sexuality of copious rhetoric, statements such as Milton's concerning Sidney's "vain and amatorious poem" are made more comprehensible. The sentiments expressed by Milton about this work which is "not to be read at any time without good caution"³³ articulate the general anxiety that writing such as Sidney's provoked. In particular, the *Arcadian* rhetoric and its embodiment of a feminine discourse plays part in the overall characterisation of Sidney's work as both the reading material of women, and the literary articulation of an ethical system which relies on aspects of feminine behaviour to depict the author's vision of a holistic moral good.

³³ John Milton, *Eikonoklastes*, in *John Milton: Complete Poems and Prose*, Merritt Y. Hughes (ed.), New York: Macmillan, 1985, p. 793.

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