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Cupid's Victimization of the Renaissance Male

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English
British Literature

by

Wendy Withers

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Abstract

Following the path of the use of the Petrarchan sonnet in Renaissance England, this article explores why this specific form was so prevalent from the court of Henry VIII to that of his daughter, Elizabeth I. The article pays specific attention to the works of Sir Philip Sidney, Shakespeare, Richard Barnfield, and Lady Mary Sidney Wroth, paying close attention to social, political, and gender issues of the period.

Comparative Literature, English Renaissance, Petrarch, Petrarchan Sonnet, Cupid, Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella*, Richard Barnfield, *Certain Sonnets*, Shakespeare, Lady Mary Sidney Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*

Introduction

To ask the questions "Who is Cupid?" creates more questions than answers. Throughout the ages, the Greek god has been transformed depending on artistic fashions. He is god, symbol, child, sturdy youth, vulnerable infant, and the god who can best all of those who dwell on Olympus. In the post-postmodern period, we can view his likeness on tacky cardboard greeting cards and view animated, digital video of him shooting arrows at unsuspecting cartoon cats. We still recognize his power, though often at his expense, and recognize illustrations of a winged baby with arrow and quiver as Venus' child and a servant of love. It is this chameleon quality of Cupid's that has made an ancient pagan deity easily recognizable even to the youngest modern schoolchildren and what enamored him to artists and writers spanning from the Italian to the English Renaissance, allowing courtiers to depict the complex dance of courtship while outwardly exhibiting cultural norms.

Depictions of Cupid fluctuated wildly between the Tudor and the Jacobean court, depending on accepted values; however, it is the works created during the Elizabethan period that clearly show how monarchic authority influenced the creative works of the time. In the painting *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses*, Cupid is not depicted as an imposing figure. Attributed to Hans Eworth, circa 1569, the painting shows a childlike Cupid clinging to his mother, the Greek goddess Venus. Standing in front of Venus are her fellow goddesses Juno and Athena, and the trio is facing a stoic and stern Queen Elizabeth I, who is followed by her ladies in waiting. The goddesses' purpose in visiting the queen is unclear, but Juno is waving in her direction, perhaps to motion the queen forward to join the deities and take her rightful place at their side. The painting subtly demonstrates Elizabeth's power while allowing her to keep a

feminine demeanor; she is not engaged in battle or matters of state but is still engaged with the divine as an equal or, in the eyes of the members of the Elizabethan court, a superior.

It is telling that Elizabeth can stand her own against the deities, especially Cupid, who had been determining the course of British courtly love poetry since King Henry VIII's reign. While the depiction of Cupid as a child was not uncommon in Eworth's day, his choice of Cupid as a cowering child says much about the queen and her ability to control herself in the face of love. Elizabeth was the virgin queen, immune to Cupid's arrows and Venus' temptations of the erotic and romantic. Because Cupid is represented as a child, he poses no challenge to the queen's authority; neither do the female goddesses in the painting who face her looking unperturbed and regal.

As Cupid as child demonstrates the submissive aspect of love Eworth needed to represent Elizabeth's agency over both love and the gods, the vision of Cupid as a strong, capable youth provides a completely different aspect of the deity. In *The Combat of Love and Chastity* by Gherardo di Giovanni del Fora, painted at the turn of the sixteenth century, Cupid is depicted as a healthy, athletic young man. This Italian artist based his painting on the concept of Cupid found in Petrarch, which influenced the sonnets of the Elizabethan court. Del Forca's Cupid faces a personified female Chastity with drawn bow and flying arrow. He is a Cupid ready for battle and willing to force his will upon others. This is the standard that Elizabeth's male courtiers drew upon in their own artistic works, which makes Eworth's painting even more striking. The Cupid of her father's day was this violent, cunning Cupid and, as imagined by Sir Philip Sidney, lived on as a force that could best the most virtuous courtier and undermine his intentions in favor of desire. Yet, in the Elizabethan court, fashions were changing with the works of Shakespeare and Richard Barnfield, and Cupid was becoming a tamer force whose victory was no longer assured.

This vulnerable god is much different than his depiction in the classical work that informed the Renaissance's views of the ancient gods: Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.

Ovid's Cupid is the able youth that would later be used to propel the love behind both Petrarch's sonnets and those of the sonneteers of the English Renaissance. As scholar Wade Stephens wrote in his 1958 essay "Cupid and Venus in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*," Cupid proves he is "supreme" of all the gods when he bests Apollo (289). Because he can chart the course of both man and deity alike, Cupid becomes a formidable adversary. In George Sandys's 1632 English translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it is "Not Chance but Cupid's wrath, that fury mov'd...Whose strong arme confounds/ Both Man and Beast, with never-missing wounds" (B1r). Cupid always hits his mark with his supernatural skill, and when he strikes Apollo, the Olympian god has no choice but to fall in love with Daphne. In his translation's commentary, Sandys explains that because of his wound, Apollo becomes "like a boy" and can now be "easily deceived, and refractory to reason" because Cupid is "armed with fire, in that he inflames the heart with ardent desires" (E1r). Cupid can unman one of the most powerful Olympians through the use of a single arrow, a power that writers and artists have romanticized. This being the Cupid the Elizabethans recognized, his depiction as a vulnerable child in Eworth's painting demonstrates the power of Queen Elizabeth through her ability to cow him.

The idea of Cupid as an all-powerful god continued through the works of Petrarch, whose *Il Canzoniere* provided a template for Western love poetry for generations to come. The work also created a way for courtiers to escape the constraints of courtly manners to vent frustrations without directly confronting their own inadequacies as men and lovers, a conceit the British would later make their own. Through his Laura sonnets, Petrarch channels what prolific Petrarch scholar Danijela Kambaskovic-Sawers calls "Petrarchan rage" (3), which allowed Petrarch and

his literary followers to blame failure in love on Cupid and fate, not on the men themselves. Petrarchan rage provided courtiers a way to control the conversation about love without having explicitly to deviate from society's expectations regarding gender dynamics, although the themes inherent in Renaissance poetry were often subversive because the lovers were led astray from ideals like peace and virtue as they battled Cupid and his supernatural forces.

Petrarchan themes directly influenced the creative works of the English Renaissance, as we can see in the paintings and written works depicting Cupid as youth and child, beginning with Sir Thomas Wyatt's translations of Petrarch during the Tudor period. When the English poets wrote about courtly love, they were working directly from the tradition begun by Petrarch, most notably in *Il Canzoniere*, a sequence of sonnets written about a woman named Laura and marked by the struggle the lover faces in his quest for the heart of an unobtainable woman. In *The Sidney Family Romance*, Gary Waller writes that Petrarch was important to these British writers because he created an "important literary space [and] a set of codes with enormously broad cultural impact" (133). Petrarch set the standards for courtly conduct specifically in the arena of unrequited love and defined the terms in which courtiers could address the power struggle between masculine and feminine forces in Early Modern courtship for generations to come.

According to Jack D'Amico, a modern translator who explores the similarities between Petrarchan sonnets and their English imitations in *Petrarch in England: An Anthology of Parallel Texts from Wyatt to Milton*, the Petrarchan style depends on this uncertain state of the male lover, and the wooing process is never smooth (13). Laura becomes not a pliable mistress but someone who must be convinced to show interest in the lover. In noted Early Modern Italian scholar Mark Musa's translation of *Il Canzoniere*, Petrarch writes in the opening lines of "Sonnet 153" "Go now, my sighs of warmth, to her cold heart/ and break the ice which fights against her pity."

Laura is not a woman who is easily swayed, but Petrarch will try, even going as far as relying on pity to warm her. Laura comes to represent both good and “an erotically enticing yet tantalizingly frustrating court lady to be wooed, complained at, or scorned” (Waller 134). Thus love becomes not a partnership, nor a dance, but a game to be won between two personalities where one of the players is so foreign that she can never be truly understood by her adversary.

For Kambaskovic-Sawers, this straying from a softer, warmer portrayal of love is evidence of Petrarchan rage, an aspect of Petrarchan love she describes as "a mix of erotic and poetic exultation, solipsistic tenaciousness, and extravagant adulation bordering on obsession" (3). Just as the English poets become an extension of Petrarch through the themes explored in his works, Petrarch becomes an extension of Dante, though this concept of Petrarchan hatred sets Petrarch apart from his predecessor (Kambaskovic-Sawers 3). No longer is the lover's beloved an ideal to be attained; now she can be seen as a adversary actively working against the speaker. In Musa's translation of Petrarch's "Sonnet 21," she is a "sweet warrior" (line 1), by "Sonnet 57," she is conspiring against him (line 11). For D'Amico, the language and the structure of Petrarch's sonnets signify a revolt of the lover against "lady or tradition" or both (19). However, in order to do this, Petrarch sometimes employs a more subtle means of subversion. By bringing Love, or Cupid, into his poetic discourse, he creates an environment where the lover never truly loses himself to Laura; instead he faces an other-worldly, male adversary. In "Sonnet 140," Love holds "the highest seat inside [his] heart" (Musa line 2) and "appears all armed upon my face,/ and there he camps, and there he sets his banner" (Musa lines 3-4), placing the movements of love squarely in a field of battle where the speaker moves from the feminine sphere of romance to the proper, masculine sphere of war. In lines nine and ten, love flees to the heart, where the speaker must do the honorable thing and stand by his master's side in battle; in the end the final line

states that he "who loves well dying comes to a good end," proving the speaker's character and noble masculinity to the reader.

For Kambaskovic-Sawers, this complicated notion of the speaker's place within the narrative, whether he is victim or aggressor, lover or hater, or masculine or emasculated, creates depth in the story but can divide the reader's loyalties (4-5). The persona becomes more than just the lovesick pursuer or other flat archetype. In fact, it is Kambaskovic-Sawers's contention that "the anger that the Petrarchan speaker feels legitimizes his quest to woo the beloved" (1). The speaker is scorned and must prove himself a man, and therefore he is free from some of the constrictions of society. Perhaps it is this righteous anger and need to prove oneself that made Petrarch's work so appealing to Sir Thomas Wyatt.

The English Renaissance poets borrowed heavily from Petrarch, translating his work and using it as a foundation for their own; according to Thomas Hyde in *The Poetic Theology of Love*, manuscripts of *Trionfi* and *Canzoniere* were so prized that they spawned multiple editions and were widely printed and well into the sixteenth century (58). In addition to English, Petrarchan imitations could be found in its original Italian, in Spanish, and in French (Waller 133); this reach is what allowed Petrarch to dominate this period's views on love across cultures. It was Sir Thomas Wyatt who introduced the Petrarchan sonnet to England, and, in scholar Joe Glaser's words, in translating Petrarch "Wyatt seems to have gone against the grain of his experience and personality," in part because the poet would have had more experience with classical and medieval literature (214). However, it becomes clear that a precise translation was not Wyatt's goal; in fact, the ways in which his texts differ from Petrarch's are conspicuous (Glaser 215). In Musa's edition of Wyatt's translations of Petrarch's "Sonnet 57," the poet grasps the theme of Cupid as adversary when he writes "love and my lady rightwisely/ Leve to conspire

against me wrongfully (lines 10-11). The use of an image of Cupid becomes so prevalent in poetry throughout the Renaissance that it cannot be pursued in detail (Hyde 72); Cupid is a convenient adversary for all manner of courtiers. Though it seems contradictory to have a pagan deity become a common element in the writing of Christian poets, Tudor courtiers use him and many of the Olympian gods as symbols and characters throughout their works. This is because Ovid's "work was thought to be more profoundly meaningful, even moral, when the reader went beneath its glittering surface" (Stephens 287). Educated readers were taught to look beneath the pagan surface of classical texts, which allowed Wyatt's Cupid to become a bridge between Petrarch's and Sidney's via the tyrannous overthrowing of a man's heart. Waller writes of gender politics during the Renaissance, "aristocratic males embody the society's most heroic values, which emerge as assertiveness, military courage, courtly gallantry towards decorative and subservient women, and the seemingly inborn assumption of the responsibilities of rank and birth" (62). By writing Cupid into love narratives, courtier poets ignore the problem of women's agency within a relationship and keep the narrative focused on the more masculine arenas of competition, gallantry, and war.

When Sidney takes Wyatt's lead and uses the Petrarchan sonnet to frame his own writing, he is "following the fashion of the time," according to Theodore Banks (412). While the political climate differs from the time of Wyatt to the time of Sidney, it varies even more wildly from that of Petrarch to both of the English poets. The similarities of the three can be attributed to the desire of Wyatt, Surrey, and Sidney to emulate the master Petrarch, but it can be concluded that mimicry with no understanding of the subject matter would result in failure. Something besides the exploration of social climbing must have been at work in these poets' sonnets. According to D'Amico, "within the context of the court, the Petrarchan rhetoric and Petrarchan attitude have a

social as well as literary significance" (20). Poets like Petrarch and Wyatt pursue a vein of discovery similar to Sidney's, not because they were being oppressed by a woman ruler but because they were suffering from yearnings they could not control in a setting where, by writing about these urges and instilling them with the weight of tradition, they regained lost agency, or, in Waller's concise formulations, they are caught between "fascination for and fear of women" (71). Wyatt's translation of Petrarch created an English literary tradition that allowed this process of exploring the transforming power dynamic between men and women to emerge into the public sphere while allowing men to depict women in new, less positive ways.

The tyranny of women becomes a theme that is carried through the works of Petrarch and is continued through Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey's of these works. The theme is apparent in D'Amico's version of Wyatt's translation of Petrarch's "Sonnet 21" when he describes the speaker's love as a "dere and cruell foo" (line 1) and again in his translation of "Sonnet 153" when he asks Cupid to instill pity into her "frosen hert" (lines 1-2). This is not a virtuous and caring woman but one who is acting in opposition to the speaker's goal. Going back to Petrarch's "Sonnet 140," Wyatt translates the poem to read that Cupid "in myn hert doeth kepe his residence/ Into my face preseth with bold pretence,/ And therin campeth, spreding his baner." (lines 2-4). Though it seems like the speaker's love will be established as his opposition in Wyatt's poetry, in this sonnet Cupid sets up camp within Wyatt, possessing him by physically camping inside of him and then in line nine Cupid flees as he did in Petrarch's version of this sonnet, though the emphasis in the last line moves away from loving well to living faithfully in order to live a good life. This shows a decided shift to the emerging English Protestant religious values of the time period while, according to Waller, evoking the common militaristic setting that so often dominated literature and defined the ideal of the masculine for centuries (63). For

the Earl of Surrey, who took Wyatt's lead in translating Petrarch and keeping the militaristic overtones, there is a fatalistic bent to these verses. The translation of Surrey's "Sonnet 140" found in *Petrarch in England* features Cupid "[building] his seat within my captiue brest,/ Clad in the armes wherein with me he fowght,/ Oft in my face he doth his banner rest" (lines 2-4). Surrey describes an even more helpless speaker who has a captive breast and has actively fought with Cupid, while Wyatt's language is much more neutral. As William Harris explains in a 1969 analysis of Surrey's use of Petrarch, "the speaker is a captive, defeated by a conquering interloper who has built his own throne, from which he now reigns" and continues "Surrey alone creates a sense of conflict between the speaker and love, his overlord by force" (Harris 300). While Petrarch is the master and Wyatt the English poet who rediscovered him for a new generation, Surrey is the man who escalates the conflict between man and love and turns Cupid into an enemy who can unman a Tudor courtier through manipulating his emotions. This is yet another bridge to Sidney's works; Surrey goes farther still than Wyatt when he describes "cowarde Love" in line nine who "taketh his flight, where he doth lurke" in line ten. For Surrey, in the last line "sweet is the death that taketh end by love." The words "taketh end" imply Cupid, or love, taking a more active role in the speaker's death, or at least the speaker seeing a more final end to his conflict.

Wyatt, then Surrey, creates an English tradition in which Petrarchan conceits are utilized in English literature, though they were constrained by their source material. Sidney then followed their example by making Petrarchan conceits his own, especially in his treatment of Cupid. Hyde explains that, during the Renaissance, "no longer a specious but handy justification for inconstancy or license, [Cupid] becomes a far more malevolent figure, subduing diverse individual wills to the same low servitude, where before he had liberated them from the restraints

of sexual morality” (59). Petrarch paved the way for a hero who will never achieve romantic relations with the woman he obsesses over while offering Sidney an antagonist who can malevolently control the characters in a story based on his own fickle wants. Sidney uses this trope of Cupid as antagonist over and over again within the work *Astrophel and Stella*.

The Victimization of Astrophel

For members of the Elizabethan aristocracy, romantic love was frightening; despite the period's rigid social norms paired with a caste system that separated nobles from commoners, love had the potential to counteract the status quo. Cupid's arrow hitting the wrong mark could result in adultery, star-crossed love, or unrequited love; Love, personified as a male Cupid, was dangerous because he could not recognize the strict moral and hierarchical code mere mortals lived by. Worse still, love subverted gender roles, creating scenarios in which women seemed to assert their dominance within courtly relationships. In this Petrarchan literary tradition, Love did not play by the rules; however, Cupid offered a masculine foe for courtiers to blame for their transgressive feelings and for the shifted power dynamic between men and women. Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* was England's first major Petrarchan sonnet sequence, and the Cupid found within its sonnets undermines masculinity, reveals the extent to which men feared women's power, and demonstrates how differently men and women viewed love during the Renaissance.

Hyde states that "love is a human experience, while in medieval and Renaissance literature we [also] meet Love as a god or demon" (13). Both the definition of love as experience and Love, or Cupid, as a personified deity, apply throughout Sidney's sonnet sequence.

Throughout this section, "love" will refer to the act of being in love while "Cupid" and "Love" will refer to the deity. For Hyde, that love can be seen as experience and as divine influence within the same poem shows the complexity of a poet's work; he states that this juxtaposition of personification and abstraction is often crucial to the poem's meaning (19). This is important to note because Sidney uses the nuances of the English language to his advantage to create ambiguity; the definition of love within a line of a sonnet depends on the context of how the word "love" is used and the connotations of the words around it, not a clear definition of the word itself. Elizabethans valued poetry where "readers [could] create multiple meanings from language" (Waller 155); therefore, Sidney's ability to create an intricate web of meanings inside of his poetry was seen as admirable. In addition, the act of being in love in the Renaissance is different from the psychological and emotional experience we view as love in modern Western society. As Jefferson Fletcher states in "Did 'Astrophel' Love 'Stella'?", "the duty of the lover is service and honor...adapted to the new social environment of the court; the reward of the right lover is intellectual communion with his lady through conversation;" the pinnacle of the experience, achieved by a lucky few, is a kiss from the beloved lady (5). This is the form of love embodied within the chivalric code, which emphasized chastity and purity and only dealt in ideals of human conduct. Chivalry was neither natural nor guided by human nature; instead it was muddled by "contradictions within the chivalric male ideals by which young aristocrats were educated, and the distinctive place of women within that ideology and its attendant fantasy structures" (Waller 72). Adherents the chivalric codes of the time were bound to fall short, which gave poets an easy scapegoat to explain these transgressions with Cupid.

Cupid as adversary is a theme that could serve as a desirable explanation for unrequited love to an Elizabethan courtier. A courtier was a "courtly lover" who was a poet and who was

expected to live a moral and "deep inner life" that helped him find mastery through poetry because, as the phrase "courtly lover" implies, the courtier's success at court depended on the women he could impress and woo (Bates 1-2). The idea that courtiers were expected to charm the ladies of the court with their wit and intellect placed some control in the hands of these women, and this shift in gender roles lowered men to an uncertain position in the social order. This uncertainty caused some ambivalence and resentment on the part of the courtiers as evidenced by their treatment of romantic love within Petrarchan sonnets but did not make true love an unfathomable experience for the men of the Renaissance (Henderson 378). The conventions of courtly love combined with the era's changing religious mores created an atmosphere in which love, though held to an impossible ideal, became terrifying when it skirted convention. Elizabeth's court was only a few year's removed from that of her father, Henry VIII, where "courtiers who guessed wrong about politics or even love affairs...regularly found themselves in prison or on the scaffold" (Glaser 221). In Sidney's time, working within the boundaries of the courtly love system could mean the difference between a relatively safe life or one of social uncertainty and turmoil.

Considered an English Petrarch (Waller 138), Sidney explores a similar power inversion to that of the women and men engaged in courtly love in the sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella*. From the first sonnet, the reader gains the impression that the power dynamic between Astrophel and the object of his love is the key to understanding the the meaning of the sonnets' narrative. In fact, Waller states that Petrarchism provides Sidney "a rhetoric for declaring passionate but frustrated love" (135). From the second line, Astrophel proclaims that he hopes Stella will take some pleasure from his pain (sig. B1r), immediately focusing on the frustration of the speaker in his inability to woo Stella. To highlight the protagonist's suffering, Sidney

continues in line four "Knowledge [of his pain] might pittie winne, and pittie grace obtain," realizing this, the narrator "sought fit wordes, to paint the blackest face of woe,"(sig. B1r), which shows how far their relationship has strayed from what the speaker sees as right and proper. Astrophel is debasing himself by searching for any way to gain Stella's attention. He desires her pleasure but will accept her pity as long as this causes her to grace him with some kind of recognition. In a society where men were the pursuers and aggressors, the sense of helplessness he describes would have been unseemly and effeminate; this shows how far the Petrarchan ideal deviates from the social structure of the Early Modern Period. In Elizabethan society, it is not Astrophel who should be the helpless victim, but Stella. And, in fact, by writing down his experience with Stella as a poem, by seeking words to not only paint Stella but also the way he feels about her, he is controlling the discourse about her. He controls how she is immortalized.

During the Renaissance, the male voice was normally responsible for directing the discourse on love; Waller describes writing as "traditionally a world dominated by male assumptions" (45). By portraying woman as the stumbling block to love, Sidney shows that she is less desirable because she has broken the code of male entitlement. Astrophel's constant suit of the uninterested Stella, for he feels he must persuade her that they are meant to be together, shows that he feels a sense of ownership over her and his love for her. Waller explains that in Petrarchan poetry, "the real focus is on [the female object of desire's] effects on the poet himself; she is the means by which his identity and autonomy can be established" (135). The woman becomes other, and she is allowed to recede into the background of her own love story even as she provides a means for the poet to discover himself.

Given the long tradition of poets displaying the maneuverings of couples in love through their verse, it can be difficult for modern scholars to accept this subversion of gender roles in the

love poetry of the Renaissance. For Catherine Bates, this break from the traditional view of male-female relations proves that Sidney was not writing about true love but was instead working through his emotions about navigating the Elizabethan court. Bates writes that the act of composing poetry restores Sidney's virility within this system, that "the courtly lover might be slave to his mistress, but the poet is master of his text" (2). While the poet exerts complete control over his words, Sidney discredits this notion of mastery through Astrophel's lament over his inability to articulate his feelings. Later in "Sonnet I," Astrophel's desire for Stella is so strong that she unmans his pen. Stella causes Astrophel to have a "sunburnt" brain and a massive case of writer's block in which the "words come halting out" of him (sig. B1r). He is helpless in the face of her; he wants to speak so much that he feels pregnant with the words that will not emerge (sig. B1r). Because this sonnet series exists in Astrophel's voice, it is clear that this condition is not permanent, but the poet's fear of losing his ability to communicate exudes from the page. Fortunately for Astrophel's masculine pride, by the second sonnet a new power struggle emerges that eclipses the one experienced by Astrophel and the object of his desire.

It is not Stella who forces Astrophel to fall in love with her. Instead, the god Cupid is set up as the driving force behind Astrophel's feelings for Stella. By the second sonnet, Sidney begins to illustrate the speaker's view of love, which has nothing of Stella at its core. In the second line, Astrophel says that "Love gave the wound, which while I breath will bleede" and in line four states that love has got "full conquest" over him (sig. B1r). He is conquered by a new, masculine foe, and to prove that Stella's feminine wiles have not overpowered Astrophel's masculinity, this love occurs in degrees until, in the final line of this sonnet, Astrophel is suffering under Cupid's tyranny (sig B1r). While Bates, in "Astrophil and the Manic Wit of the Abject Male," details the ways in which Stella appears to dominate the relationship, writing "the

courtly lover is explicitly a man who is subjugated to a woman--a situation which puts at stake not only his self-possession but his virility and phallic power" (1), the use of Cupid as the controlling tyrant is less threatening to a man who would otherwise have to live down the shame of being bested by a woman. Bates is comparing the subjugation of a lover to his beloved to the Elizabethan courtier having to bow to Elizabeth (3). Astrophel is not subjugated by a woman but by a man, and a god; the troublesome act of a woman gaining agency over a man is now moot. While the tensions between courtier and queen did influence the works of the Renaissance, the presence of Cupid within the text counters the notion that this is the foundation of the power relationships within the sonnet series. Almost despite himself, Astrophel falls in love with Stella, though the guiding force behind this love is Cupid.

The Renaissance view of love is complex, but to argue that "the sonneteer enacts his subordinate position and rehearses, in the courtly lover's timeworn complaints, his own condition of disempowerment" (Bates 3) trivializes the Elizabethan poet's concept of love. To equate Sidney's extensive exploration of love in sonnet form with Sidney's reactions to social climbing through a system ruled by a queen ignores the crippling effect love must have had on the men of his era as it forced them to rethink the social and religious mores of their time, or at least ignore them when they fell under love's power. That Hyde describes the "dangerous old religion of love" (Hyde 181) in reference to the convention of using Cupid as a character in poetry highlights the undercurrents of peril written into these stories about letting inconvenient emotions take over. The Renaissance ideal of love has too much of a foundation in tradition to merely be a reaction to the necessity of social climbing.

For the Elizabethan courtier, Cupid was a convenient scapegoat. Use of the deity linked the poet's writing to classical mythology and its long literary tradition, and use of Petrarchan

conventions provided an enemy readers could visualize in Cupid (Kingsley-Smith 70). Envisioning Cupid as a youth shooting an arrow at an unsuspecting poet allows the reader to see love as an adversary. Suddenly, Astrophel's plight is more immediate; the poor hero is in real danger. This differs from the classical interpretation of Cupid as a child sitting in his mother's lap or needing to be consoled by her, as is pictured in *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses*. Instead, Sidney's Cupid is fully formed, a soldier and a huntsman, a worthy foe for a courtier. This depiction differs from the more vulnerable depiction of Cupid that we will explore later in a work by Sidney's niece, the lady Mary Sidney Wroth. In the first sonnet of the opening sonnet sequence in Josephine Roberts's compilation of Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Cupid is described as submissive to his mother, sitting at her feet inside her chariot and "adding fire/ To burning hearts which she did hold above" (lines 5-8). In Sidney's sonnet sequence, Cupid takes center stage and directs the action. Even with Wroth's childlike and subservient depiction of Cupid, much of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* can be seen as a homage to Astrophel and Stella, including a mention of "two starrs of Heaven, sent downe to grace the earth," in line nine of the second sonnet, a direct link to the lovers in Sidney's narrative. Wroth does exhibit the need to pit her lovers against a masculine master as Sidney does, but as a woman writer she is not inhibited by the need to make the masculine dominant at all times. Venus is clearly her son's mistress in Wroth's narrative, and by extension her lovers are controlled by the goddess, not the young Cupid. In Sidney's sequence, Cupid has his own agency, which he uses against Astrophel.

Cupid's malevolence is clear from the way in which Sidney describes him. In "Sonnet IV," line three, Astrophel says that vain love has oppressed his simple soul (B1v). This can be read in one of two ways or in both at once. In the first, Astrophel finds the act of being in love oppressive, since he is acting without agency. In the second, Cupid the deity is oppressing him,

literally taking away his agency. What once would have been a sign of idolatry, using Cupid as a physical presence within a poem, is now acceptable within Sidney's work but complicates the language in which the word "love" can relate to the deity or the concept. Even referencing to the god itself can become confusing because, as Hyde notes, "the correspondence of macrocosm and microcosm has a ... subtle effect on Cupid; it links Cupid the god to Cupid the personification" (95). The Renaissance allowed poets like Sidney to use ancient gods as characters in their poetry while still linking them to larger themes, thus love and Love become almost interchangeable.

While the Petrarchan concept of Cupid provided Sidney with a convenient antagonist, his view of love was too complex to be limited to the portrayal of love as evil. For Diana Henderson, in part because of Elizabeth's rule, "Sidney provides one of the best cases for those who argue that love poetry was a rhetorical means to political ends: his romantic hopes, rejection, and marginalization nicely figure his tenuous hold on courtly power and position;" however, she feels that the scope of his work makes it impossible to read any single meaning into *Astrophel and Stella* or the poet's concept of love (384). While *Astrophel* describes Cupid as a malevolent force, he often paints Stella in more glowing terms. She is not the enemy. And, while Bates does often describe Stella as a dominant woman, the critic does introduce the concept of "universal castration" (8), freeing Stella momentarily from being cast as the villain. While Cupid is an oppressive tyrant, Stella is redeemable, for she is also a victim of Cupid, and a beautiful one at that. Sidney allows the object of *Astrophel's* love often to shine in a positive light.

It is clear from *Astrophel's* words that he finds Stella beautiful. One way Sidney shows this is an adaptation of a Petrarchan sonnet: in "Sonnet VIII," a connection can be made in line nine with Petrarch's "Sonnet 140," where Cupid flees from the camp he has made in Petrarch's speaker's face and retreat's to his heart. In *Astrophel and Stella*, Cupid flees and can be found in

Stella's face. The speaker continues to describe her: she has fair skin and beaming eyes in line nine, beams that are like "morning sunne in snow" (B2v). This sets up Astrophel's complaint throughout the sonnet series. Stella is fair. She holds his attention through the power of her gaze, the beams that emanate from her eyes, penetrating him. Yet these beams, though they do shine, are chilly like the winter morning sun. They only hint at the warmth that lies behind them. Astrophel wants to know Stella's true warmth, but she is aloof and chilly, keeping herself just out of reach, as is proper for the moral codes governing her life. This scene also shows how the Petrarchan woman is overvalued and, as Waller puts it, fetishized (184). She commands attention and holds Astrophel prisoner in the power of her beauty, even though she does not show him the warmth that is necessary for a true romance to develop. It is her parts, not their sum, that holds his interest. This fetishization continues as Stella is described in more detail.

The next sonnet is a blazon in which Stella's face is compared to Queen Vertue's court and is described in terms of an exquisitely detailed building, with an alabaster front, a golden roof, a red door with pearly accents, and a porch that provides red marbled "cheeks" (B2v). By comparing Stella to the building of the queen's court, decked out in expensive finery, the speaker is showing how much he values her, how much her beauty is worth. Though he is objectifying her by equating her value with that of worldly goods, he is praising her and attributing to her the role of queen by comparing her to Queen Vertue. During the Renaissance, it was common to think of women as "belonging" to men as a possession with marked value (Waller 96). This sonnet allows the reader to more clearly see Stella's worth in a concrete and physical sense while demonstrating why a male reader would want to own her. Sidney is simultaneously equating her with virtue, adding a chivalric and religious value, though this association is only skin deep. In truth, another force lies under the surface of her skin.

In what is perhaps the strangest visual image evoked in the poem, in “Sonnet XII” we see Cupid peeking, or shining, through Stella's eyes in a double blazon (B3r). Suddenly, now Cupid is escaping free through her eyebeams, and her lips swell with desire, and Astrophel takes note of her sweet breath and her breasts (B3r), but at the same time he notices how all of these aspects of Stella reflect Cupid. Instead of using a description of riches to help the reader visualize Stella, we now know that she is a hollow vessel being filled not with love for Astrophel, but by Cupid himself. We are shown the measure of Cupid as well as the measure of his control. Now, instead of being compared to Vertue's court, Stella is, in line twelve, compared to a citadel. She is Cupid's citadel and, in line thirteen, is fortified against Astrophel (B3v). This is more problematic than earlier descriptions because of the way it objectifies Stella and shows the control Cupid has over both the lovers; he owns Stella and fortifies her against Astrophel while he controls Astrophel's desire for her and compels him to try to break through her defenses. At the same time, it allows Stella to keep the feminine virtues that would make her attractive to Renaissance readers. She can still be “chaste, decorative, inspiring, and...constant” (Waller 99) while Cupid takes on the less attractive male aspects that would invalidate her as a suitable conquest for Astrophel. As we saw Cupid possessing the speakers of Wyatt and Surrey's poetry, now we see Stella possessed by Cupid. She is not in control, therefore she does not serve as a threat against Astrophel. That role is reserved for Cupid; Stella is a tool for Cupid that can be used both as a weapon and in defense.

In the next sonnet, this theme of Stella-as-Defense continues when Cupid fashions her face into his shield in line ten (B3v). This image works in two ways. First, Cupid is physically hiding behind Stella's face; we know this to be true because we know he is peeking out from behind her eyes. Second, Stella's beauty is a distraction. By using her as his shield, Astrophel

will see her instead of Cupid, so Cupid will have time to prepare himself for his offensive. Cupid readies his weapons, and in "Sonnet XVII," Stella's eyebrows become bows and her eyebeams become arrows in line ten (B4v). As Cupid readies himself for battle, it becomes clear that he is a weathered soldier, not the cherubic child he is usually imagined to be. Cupid is declaring war on poor Astrophel who, though he can see Cupid's manipulations, cannot build up an adequate defense.

The imagery of war and fortification continues when, in "Sonnet XXIX" Stella becomes Cupid's frontier camp. While Astrophel cannot bring himself to believe that Cupid has taken Stella over entirely, her eyes serve Cupid as shot, her lips are his heralds, her breasts are his tents, her legs are his chair, her skin his armor, and herself his food (C3r). Cupid is possessing Stella; she is housing him to the point where her eyes are her weapon, her eyebeams literally shooting out of her. Her lips are his heralds, delivering his message. Her breasts are his tents, protecting him from the elements. Her legs are his chair, something to support him and hold him up. Her skin is his armor, protecting him from any offensive action Astrophel can muster. And, finally, she is his food, sustaining him through whatever siege Astrophel can manage. Just as a soldier's camp provides everything he needs as he fights in a war, Stella provides Cupid with protection and ammunition to battle Astrophel. Sidney has successfully moved the act of falling in love from the realm of the feminine to that of the masculine. Cupid is in control, and Stella's involvement becomes important only as a staging ground for battles between two masculine forces.

As Cupid and Astrophel battle, Stella recedes into the background. "Sonnet II" establishes the role Cupid takes on through the rest of the cycle. It is Cupid Astrophel will have to best, whether the narrator wants to woo Stella or get over his obsession with her. Stella is not

his true adversary. Because this sonnet appears directly after Sidney sets up his first premise, that Stella bewitches him and fills his thoughts to the point that he cannot even communicate clearly through poetry, the poem undermines both the first sonnet's conceit and the role of Stella as an independent individual throughout the entire sonnet series. In "Sonnet I," Astrophel is vying for Stella's attention, but, in "Sonnet II," he explains how he first began to love her. This love was nurtured by degrees and occurred because of Cupid's arrow, not because of Stella herself. In the second line of "Sonnet II," Astrophel says "Love gave the wound," not Stella gave the wound. In line five he says "I sawe and lik'd, I lik'ed but loved not," and in stanza six he has changed his tune once again to "I lov'd but did not straight what love decreed" (B1r). This was not love at first sight; Cupid's arrow did not even hit during the first moment Astrophel meets Stella. This shows that Stella is valued even less as an autonomous, powerful individual. Though Astrophel is now trying to woo her, Stella matters very little within her own love story. Neither the hero nor the heroine can act to change the way Astrophel feels about Stella.

Stella's absence is felt the most in "Sonnet XX," when Sidney takes the image of Cupid as a real enemy to Astrophel and expands the idea so that the conflict between the men overshadows that between Astrophel and Stella. This sonnet in particular reveals a sense of personified Love as a criminal and Astrophel as his helpless victim. It consistently presents a mood of fear and loathing for a force that makes men love against their will by allowing readers to see, in their minds, a scene of how Cupid operates. The visuals of Cupid shooting Astrophel with his arrow paired with Astrophel's fear and emotional helplessness allow the reader to glimpse the psychological impact an unbidden infatuation would have had on a courtier, who was expected to keep his station and duties in mind when interacting with women. It is clear from this sonnet that love, when steered by Cupid, often harms the men involved.

Astrophel's first words in "Sonnet XX" are a plea to his friends to fly from Cupid: "Fly, flye my friendes, I have my deathes wound flye; / See there that boy, that murdering boy I fay, / Who like a thiefe hid in a bush doth lye" (C1r). This sonnet establishes Cupid's low character and clearly states Astrophel's position as a victim, albeit a heroic one who manages to sound warning to other men. Cupid is a murdering boy who has dealt the hero a death wound. There is no help for Astrophel; he will die in Stella's thrall due to Cupid's arrow. He wants his friends to save themselves from being bested by Love. This theme continues in lines eight through nine as Cupid, a stealthy hunter lying in wait for prey to come to him, shoots poor Astrophel, who is an innocent passerby (C1r). This takes away the lover's autonomy and shows that he has no ownership or responsibility for his feelings; Cupid as hunter has all of the power. Therefore, it is not Astrophel's fault for falling in love with someone promised to another. That Astrophel is just walking by when the arrow strikes also points to the possibility of fate as aggressor, but because fate and Cupid are both supernatural forces Astrophel still has no say in whether or not he falls in love with Stella.

Though Cupid's arrows are a classical convention, the violence of Cupid's role in creating love is apt when placed in context with the idea that love can be a dangerous emotion. For Astrophel, this is not a pleasant or clean process. In order to love Stella, he must first be shot by one of Cupid's arrows. Even then, as mentioned before, he falls in love by degrees. In order to sustain his love, Cupid must be ever present, directing Stella's actions to the point of possessing her. Stella and Astrophel become like puppets or game pieces, mere toys for Cupid to use based on his own whims and motivations. The characterization of Cupid as blind fits well with Sidney's narrative; Cupid is blind to Stella's dismissal of Astrophel's love and blind to Astrophel's ambivalence about his feelings for her. Here he plays with the speaker and his love for his own

entertainment. He has no empathy for the lovers. Cupid controls everything regardless of what they want.

The framing of the poem reinforces this power dynamic. Astrophel's is a cautionary tale; he does not want his friends to suffer his fate. His tale ends with Love wounding him and forcing him to love when it would be in his best interest to move on and find another object of desire. Love is the victimizer, the tyrannical criminal who has attacked him. His helplessness is compounded by the divine status of Cupid and fate, who are conspiring against him. For Hyde, it is the divine status of Cupid that is the most telling because of the power it gives Cupid over gods and mortals alike; this makes Astrophel, or, as Hyde reads into it, Sidney, "the passive victim of [an] accidental intervention" (129). Whether Cupid's actions are those of a hunter stalking an intended prey or an obfuscated hunter accidentally hitting whatever passes by, the outcome for Astrophel is the same. Still, that Cupid becomes so involved in Astrophel's love at every step in the process points to a Cupid who knows exactly what he wants and exactly what he is doing; he is not blind or capricious but instead is calculating. Cupid wants Astrophel's submission, just as he wanted Apollo's and as he wants the subordination of all lovers to him, and no matter how much Astrophel laments and pleads and pines, Cupid shows no mercy.

Within the larger sonnet series of "Astrophel and Stella," "Sonnet XX" serves as a backstory to show Astrophel's true feelings about Cupid and the moment the god's arrow hit him. It also gives the needed context of the part Astrophel plays; nothing he could have done would have saved him from his feelings. If we accept Bates's concept of universal castration, where neither lover has agency to sway the hero's feelings for Stella, then here is proof, as Cupid serves as master over them both.

Taken out of context of the sonnet cycle, "XX" serves as a cautionary tale for men to avoid love as long as possible to avoid being mastered in this way. It warns of Cupid's stealth and argues that once Love has a man in its grasp, it is too late for him to act in his own defense or self interest. This contradicts the normal function of a sonnet as a love poem because it does not address the supposed beloved but instead converses with a group of men, Astrophel's friends, who can either be seen as confidantes or spectators. This brings the particulars of Astrophel's love out of a private sphere containing him and Stella and into the public sphere. Through "Sonnet XX," the entirety of the sonnet series is opened up for analysis and discourse by a select group of Sidney's peers. It is also noteworthy that this is a sonnet where men talk about men; Astrophel is discussing the actions and dangers of Cupid. They are moving the discourse away from the feminine and towards the masculine. Once again, Astrophel gains agency, this time by whom he chooses to tell his story to and how he frames the narrative. He has not chosen to break society's rules; the action has been forced upon him unexpectedly. He is not warning ladies about possible loss of virtue; he is warning courtiers about possible loss of power. This discourse makes sense within the perspective of Sidney's experiences at court because, as a courtier, As Waller notes, Sidney's social interactions would have been spread amongst a small social circle of men who were constantly "hunting, singing, flirting, and quarreling with each other. Their daily lives consisted of a succession of interlocking games and sports, tournaments, visits, dinners, negotiating dynastic marriages and the acquisition of land and political power" (Waller 82). When he was writing, these men were his audience, his friends, his influential peers, and the community he needed to warn about the dangers of love. When Astrophel warns his circle to avoid love, he is explaining the reasons for his actions without having to concede his power to Stella and lose face within his social group, and once again she is left without a voice of her own.

Whether Astrophel's adversary is Cupid or fate as it guides Cupid's arrow is of little consequence. What is telling is that Stella is missing entirely from this sonnet. When Cupid, or fate, can subvert gender norms, Stella need not be involved. So, while gender norms will be subverted if Stella can control Astrophel and his affections once he has been pierced by Cupid's arrow, there is still a male versus male power dynamic at the story's core. Stella becomes almost as helpless as Astrophel; it is only through Cupid's power that she can assert her own dominance. She can affect the outcome of her interactions with Astrophel but not set the terms for the battle. Sidney sets up a universe in which, even in love, the battlefield is populated by men. That he is speaking to a group of men also undermines Stella's importance. He does not warn Stella to steer clear from love. Perhaps it was easier for Sidney's contemporaries to believe that women wish to fall under Cupid's power or at least are complicit when Cupid forces men to love them.

As the poem evolves, Cupid dominates Astrophel to the point where he is completely dehumanized. In "Sonnet XLVIII," Astrophel becomes Cupid's horse to ride, a beast of burden, lowered to the status of an animal that needs to be broken of its will. He compares himself to his own horse and states in line one and two "I on my horse, and Love on me doth trie our horsemanship" (D2v). Astrophel is reined in by thoughts and curbed by his own fear. Cupid "spurres with sharpe desires my hart,/ He sits me fast how ever I doe sturre" (D3r). This masochistic scene shows the hero completely at Love's mercy and is explicit in its homoerotic overtones and Astrophel's submissiveness (Bates 18). Cupid cannot be thrown, no matter how violently Astrophel stirs, which could refer to Astrophel trying to fight off his rider. It could also refer to the sexual stirring of Astrophel's genitals, which plays more to the masochistic, homoerotic scene Bates reads into this sonnet. Either way, Cupid is clearly the master of this scene, and the passage stands out within the cycle for this over mastery. Once again, Stella is

pushed out. Perhaps it is because of her virtue or because of her status as someone to be pined over instead of physically won, but even at a time when a man's touch on Astrophel's body would be inappropriate, Cupid takes the reins. It is also possible that, as the submissive party, Astrophel has taken on Stella's role in the narrative. Therefore, she is no longer necessary. His inability to throw off his rider is similar to Stella's inability to persuade Astrophel to drop his suit. Astrophel is no longer a man but an animal to be broken of its will, just as Stella must be broken of hers, though all of the violence of the subsumption of Stella's will takes place between Cupid and Astrophel. Astrophel's strategy with Stella revolves around slowly wearing her down and relying on an appeal to her pity for him.

Now, in lines seven and eight Astrophel's relationship with Love is beginning to change because he has given up every shred of his self and has come to the realization that Stella is unnecessary. In the final lines of the sonnet, he concludes with the masturbatory assertion "And now hath made me to his hand so right, / That in the manage I my selfe delight" (D3r). Once again, Stella is lost from the scene and, once again, Astrophel is pitted against Cupid. But, now it is revealed that only through Cupid and himself can Astrophel find pleasure. Stella is not even needed for sexual fulfillment. At a time when her presence may have tempered Astrophel, he is lost to the frenzy of being ridden by a masculine entity. Freshly ridden and spurred, Astrophel has put himself in Cupid's hands for self delight. At this point, Stella's presence would be an unwelcome intrusion into an erotic male realm.

In a rare instance, Astrophel does seem to hint that he is facing Stella in his battle against love in "Sonnet XXXVI." He addresses her by name and speaks of her armies risen against his conquered and yielding heart when he asks "Stella, whence doth these new assaults arise, / A conquered, yeelding, ransackt hart to win?" (C4r). It appears that he has yielded to her, though

with his ransacked heart he has already been used up. What weakens this image is his reference, once again, to Stella's eyebeams, which have overpowered his own battered eyes and, in line four, allowed her army of beauties to enter into him (D4r). The act of Stella's eyebeams piercing Astrophel has sexual connotations that cannot be ignored.

Stella has penetrated Astrophel. He is now being victimized by her in an inversion of the sexual conquest that should be taking place. In line thirteen of the sonnet, he repeats that her eyebeams have forced his conquest (D4v). This would be a fascinating reversal of sexual roles if Stella's role had not already been invalidated. Since we have already determined that Stella's eyebeams are Cupid's arrows and that Cupid has been known to shine through her eyes, it is clear that it is not really Stella that is piercing Astrophel. Even when it appears that Stella once again has a part to play within the narrative, she is pushed to the sidelines by the male personalities who do not need her to participate, whether it be a sexual conquest or a battle of wills. Because of this conflict, this sonnet is reminiscent of Petrarch's "Sonnet 140." With Cupid raising his banner and setting up a field of battle inside of a human being, the themes found in Petrarch's verse and, later used in Wyatt and Surrey's interpretations, are repeated. Sidney is more like Surrey because it is clear that Cupid is an enemy forcing Astrophel's love against his will. Words like "assault" and "ransack" hold negative connotations beyond the literal interpretation of Petrarch and the more biased but literary interpretation of Wyatt. Through this violent imagery that focuses on Stella as a tool to fit Cupid's needs, once again Stella's needs and desires recede into the background.

The idea that Stella may have even a small amount of agency is repeated in "Sonnet XLI" which asserts that Stella might actually have some power over Astrophel. Once again, her abilities revolve around her eyes, the spheres of beauty that in line two "move whose beames all

joyes, whose joyes all vertues be" (D1r). The telling line is three, in which the beams, "who while they make love conquer, conquer love" (D1v). Throughout the rest of the sonnet, Astrophel begs for these eyebeams to wash over him, even if it means his mortal death (D1v). Once again, Stella seems to be in control. She is a conqueror, and this sonnet is perhaps the strongest proof that Stella is responsible for Astrophel's feelings for her. The largest problem in this sonnet lies in the fact that it is Stella's eyebeams that conquer love, the eyebeams that, up to this point, have been described as chilly and deceptive as the winter sun. They act as a window for Cupid, who lives within Stella, and allow him to escape. They act as his arrows and pierce, or penetrate, Astrophel. Thus, Astrophel is asking Stella to penetrate him, something she cannot do without Cupid's help. The evidence throughout the rest of the poem that Cupid replaces Stella as antagonist cannot be ignored, especially when Sidney goes on to craft a rebuttal to the idea that Stella could ever sway Astrophel's feelings.

Once again, Stella's agency is shattered when, in the next sonnet, the focus turns to Cupid. Instead of pleading directly to Stella, Astrophel prays in the first lines, saying "Faire eyes, sweet lips, deere hart, that foolish I / Could hope by Cupids helpe, on you to pray" (D1v). He is either praying to Cupid to help him or is hoping that Cupid will help him prey *on* Stella. While Sidney makes it clear that Cupid is the mastermind behind Astrophel's love, Stella is still its object. Astrophel wants to claim agency over the one thing he can, Stella, but in order to do so he must curry Cupid's favor. Even when Stella is directly addressed, the focus revolves around male-on-male relations. In this sonnet, Astrophel also concedes, in line seven, that everyone must surrender to Love in order to be with his beloved (D1v). Once again, Stella's heart is Cupid's sanctuary where, in the final line, "no man to him can come" (D1v). Even if Astrophel wants to surrender to Cupid, he must actively pursue him in order to do so, leaving Stella behind.

By sonnet "LXVII," it is hard to believe that Astrophel sees Stella as someone who is worthy of him. When he states that Stella is the only planet of his light and she is the only thing he lives for in the first two lines (E2v), it is hard to believe him. Throughout the entire series, it is his relationship with Cupid that takes center stage as they match wits and brawn. By now, it is clear that he wants to best Cupid, that Stella is secondary and not a true threat. Sidney has set up a system in which Cupid is the determiner of who loves whom making Sidney less than believable when he attempts to assure readers that Stella is the center of Astrophel's world. She has been in the background for so long that, in the sonnets where she is present and active, her participation seems hollow. In a series where Sidney begins by depicting Stella as a cruel mistress then systematically undermines her supposed manipulation, Stella loses her role as mistress, villainess, and or even love interest.

Though it is clear that Stella does not exert influence over Astrophel, the two characters are connected. Astrophel means star-lover, and Stella star. Therefore, by their names alone, Astrophel's role is to serve, or love, Stella. This fact proves that neither Stella nor Astrophel have true agency. She has not set out to snare him as much as her nature requires her to do so. We could say that it is fate that sets up these lovers to orbit each other; fate draws Cupid's arrow to Astrophel. The name Astrophel could also be a play on the words "Astro fell," implying either that Astro fell from grace, perhaps from his desires or unwanted advances, or that he literally fell from the sky, away from his love. Additionally, if Astrophel and Stella are fated to be together, then they truly have no agency over their love. The universe, acting through Cupid, will bring them back together no matter what happens. In this scenario, some of the threat from Cupid himself is taken away as he becomes a middleman, bringing the lovers together at the command of a greater power.

The interplay of fate and the lover's connection to one another mirrors how Sidney himself may have felt due to his complex romance with Penelope Devereaux. Devereaux, who was once promised to Sidney, eventually married Lord Rich, a fact that Sidney plays with in obvious puns on the word "rich." Most scholars agree with this biographical reality, but Theodore Banks resists because he believes this argument ignores the nuance and complexity of Sidney's work (403). The traditional argument is that Sidney understands the turmoil he ravages his hero with because he lived through similar circumstances. To complicate matters, from historical accounts as recounted by historian David Atkinson, it appears that Penelope was forced by her family to marry Lord Rich against her will because of his wealth (485). Thus, in his own life, Sidney was a victim of Cupid.

In some ways, the Sidney biographical debate mirrors the debate over the sincerity of Renaissance love in the mercurial political climate of the Elizabethan era. Some scholars argue that the emotional intensity of Sidney's verse proves he had experiences similar to Astrophel's, especially when his situation with Devereaux is taken into account, while Banks believes it is not realistic that Sidney would have pined over a married woman and that the assertion the sonnet series is autobiographical ignores the nature and complexities of lyric poetry as well as Sidney's assertion that all poets are liars (404-405). The use of "rich," to Bates refers not to Lord Rich but to Stella's right to a wealthy husband, and the punning of "rich" also allows Sidney to address the Petrarchan conceit that "avarice has no place in love" (410). Thus, Petrarchan wordplay is not used to prove Stella is really Penelope Devereaux but that she might not be. Still, the backstory of Sidney and Penelope is compelling. Whether or not Penelope and Sidney were in love, and whether or not she is the subject of the series, they are now forever connected through Sidney's work. Penelope has been immortalized through her connection to Sidney, though, if the poem is

about her, Sidney controlled the message that has been transmitted about her throughout the centuries.

The use of the word "rich" does open up this thread of discourse to a new possibility. Perhaps Sidney is arguing against the strict moral and social system that is keeping him from someone he is meant to be with, just as the "star" is related to her "star-lover." A star lover is always in an indirect relationship with his star, though to take the definitions of these terms literally implies a situation in which the star lover, if he is a mere mortal as Astrophel is, can never be in close proximity to the object of his love. While Astrophel is always striving to be closer to Stella, he can never bridge the emotional chasm that keeps them apart. While a member of Sidney's society may love someone just out of reach either morally or socially, propriety would always serve to keep this love from being physically consummated and celebrated. While a courtier might have loved a woman who was not his wife, the propriety of the era demanded the potential lovers keep their distance, though illicit romances were often carried out with varying degrees of stealth. While critics focus on the triangle formed by Sidney, Penelope, and Lord Rich, history proved the importance of a different combination of lovers. Lord Rich did divorce Penelope for adultery, but it was with a different man than Sidney, Lord Mountjoy, whom society shunned with Penelope after he married the divorcee (Atkinson 485). Due to this period's views on arranged or even forced marriage, it was the divorce and remarriage that became shameful, not Penelope's loveless marriage to Lord Rich (Atkinson 486). If the sonnet series is biographical, it is possible that it acts as a critique of the institutions that kept Penelope away from Sidney, the man she was supposed to love. What happened between her and Mountjoy is simply proof that the courtly love system never would have allowed for her and Sidney to openly live and love within it.

In perhaps what would have been seen as the most dangerous interpretation of Sidney's poetry in his day, it is possible that Sidney's sonnet series is a critique of the social institution of marriage during the Renaissance. If *Astrophel and Stella* does serve as a critique of marriage, then Sidney was not alone. Writing parody and satire about views of marriage during the Renaissance was common in his day (Atkinson 487). The view of Cupid as adversary fits neatly into this sub-genre. Because Cupid is a god, he can make those who are soul-mates recognize their destiny, even when society forbids it. Cupid can make Astrophel realize this fate against his will and send him after Stella even though she rejects her suitor. He can continue to exert his will even after Stella's proper suitor has been introduced to the reader. In doing so, Cupid becomes an enemy of the state as well as an enemy of man. If the queen is seen as divine and Cupid is seen as divine and Cupid rejects the norms and standards set forth by the queen, then Cupid is acting in direct opposition to the queen's will. Suddenly, Cupid has become a means for Sidney to hide his own subversive views behind a character who can act on many levels within the same poem and distract the reader from blaming Sidney for what he is trying to say about love, fate, and society.

The only argument that truly calls into question the notion that writing about a personified Cupid who meddled in the affairs of mortal men allowed Renaissance courtiers to place their grappings with love in the realm of the masculine instead of in what they saw as the inferior feminine is that of Fletcher and revolves around the theoretic love within the Early Modern Period, when "union of pure spirit was incompatible with the grosser spirit of matrimony" (258). If this is true, then there is no reason why Sidney, or Astrophel, could not have loved a married woman. The problem with this explanation is that, if Sidney were truly writing about an idealized version of love that transcends the messy physicality of being human,

then Astrophel would not have fought with himself so much over the desire he felt when thinking of Stella and her beauty. Her husband would not have been another adversary in Astrophel's pursuit, and he would not have fought against Cupid for so long and hard. The sonnet series would have been much simpler and much shorter.

It is obvious that Sidney often used wordplay to his advantage. In "Sonnet XLVIII," when Astrophel is ridden by Cupid, the words "spur" and "stir" take on both literal and sexual meanings, as Astrophel is both physically ridden and sexually aroused by the ministrations of a violent, dominant male entity. With this in mind, it is hard to paint a clear picture of Cupid and what Sidney was trying to do within *Astrophel and Stella*. Astrophel and Cupid are often at odds within the series, but so are Astrophel and Stella as well as Stella and Cupid. When concepts like love and desire are mixed, the results are even more confused. Yet, though his use of imagery and words with multiple meanings, one thing does become clear. The role of Cupid within these sonnets is to act as an antagonist towards all of the characters involved. It is Cupid who is found at the series's center. It is Cupid who lets loose the arrow, shines forth through Stella, rides Astrophel like a horse, and continues to manipulate throughout. It is Cupid's needs that are met, even though they seem to change as the series progresses and Stella begins to recognize Astrophel's desires, though she will not allow him to act on them.

During the Renaissance, when aspects of society that used to be constant, like religious beliefs and social mores, were suddenly changing, it makes sense to modern scholars that one archetype would come to represent what was wrong. Cupid was pagan and sensuous. He had no regard for social rules or the desires of his victims. Sidney sets him up as something to be conquered, yet the god has multiple roles within the text. Cupid is presented as a god, someone who has a physical presence within the world. He is a malevolent spirit who can possess mere

mortals, yet he becomes a driving force behind human love, a force that leads men to desire what they should not want. He is a light that shines forth from the beauty of women; beauty can also compel men to act against their own self-interest. Cupid can also be a tool of fate, leading men to find their soul mates, even if society does not agree with Cupid's assessment. Sidney's depiction of Cupid is so layered that Cupid twists and turns and evolves throughout Sidney's pages.

Astrophel's role within this text is much more static. He is a would-be lover, a melancholy courtier who cannot be with the woman he professes to love. Astrophel is a victim, denied agency by Cupid over his own feelings yet ensnared by Stella and her beauty, her virtue, her intellect. With his desire to please and entertain her, he is fulfilling the role of a Platonic lover, more interested in her intellect, he would like us to believe, than in carnal knowledge of her. Sometimes this veneer slips, and we see the beastly man within, worked into frenzy by Cupid, but these moments do not afford him power over his love; in fact, they show how far he has sunk in his constant interactions with Cupid. It is Cupid who forces him to shed his moral, courtly personal and pursue Stella, whether she wants to be pursued or not.

While many critics have equated Stella with Bates's assessment of her role within this sonnet series, that she is a cruel mistress who debases the hero, she is as much of a victim of Cupid as Astrophel. From the first stanza, it is clear that she has been spurning Astrophel's advances, despite how hard he tries to seduce her. Yet he tries again and again, eventually wearing her down to at least humor him as much as her role as a married woman will allow. Until she reads Sidney's words, she has no way to know that Love shines through her face or that her eyebeams have penetrated Astrophel. She is the one who has to constantly endure Astrophel's advances and keep up appearances for society. It is Stella who will suffer the most if Astrophel succeeds, yet she is too often seen by Sidney's critics as a villainess in her own right.

Sidney creates these three characters with an expert eye, building a narrative in which both of the mortals emerge sympathetic, even though Stella is denying the advances of the speaker. As Astrophel laments his inability to possess Stella and continues to pursue her, he shows how flawed he is. Read from a modern feminist perspective, he becomes a stalker who cannot halt his urges to be near Stella, to be graced with her presence, even though he knows this is not the best choice he can make. The text echoes with Astrophel's compulsion to have her and his frustration as his every attempt is thwarted. This realistic portrayal of the ups and downs of unrequited love points to an autobiographical element on Sidney's part because of the similarities between the real and imagined lovers; it is a simple explanation for a complicated narrative.

It is possible for artists to create emotional works without experiencing the specific circumstances of specific parts of the whole. Yet this truth does not invalidate the possibility that Sidney understood Astrophel's turmoil on a personal level. Using Cupid as a scapegoat for unwanted emotion could have been a therapeutic way for Sidney to gain a feeling of agency while dealing with the reality of unrequited love. As noted before, it also allows him to control what is said about his love. He becomes the sympathetic hero, while the depiction of Stella can be viewed only with ambivalence. Because this cycle was written during a time where courtly intrigue was a source of amusement for courtiers and their ladies, Sidney would know that his audience would be naturally curious about who the lovers in the sonnet sequence represent. In this way, he immortalizes himself through the creative work he has produced but he also immortalizes Penelope, who is now tied to him in the annals of literary criticism and speculation. It is clear that Sidney holds his own ambivalence towards the work, as the emotional balance of the sonnet series swings wildly and as Sidney creates a protagonist who blames Stella and Cupid for the way he feels. The persona is ridden by Love, used up by Love, and pines for a woman he

knows can never be his. It is Cupid who is the master of the text, even though Astrophel tries to gain his power back by writing the events down and using them as a warning for others.

The text of *Astrophel and Stella* proves that love is a frightening concept during the Elizabethan period and that Cupid becomes an archetypal villain who forces men to feel. Even though Cupid is a fickle monster, losing oneself to Cupid is more attractive than the alternative: submitting to a woman. Inserting into love poetry or, in the case of *Astrophel and Stella*, a warning against love, must have been almost a relief to courtiers. It was a way to explain away emotions they knew they should not have. Using the sonnet form, which was intimately connected to the love poetry of the day, drew on the well received Petrarchan model but also attached Sidney's message to the familiar and the popular, assuring that his warning would be seen by those who needed it the most, educated courtiers who had their own Stellas to contend with.

Cupid and the Male Versus Male Power Dynamic

In *Astrophel and Stella*, we see how Cupid is used to protect men from losing face in a struggle against female agency. However, courtiers in the Renaissance were not always battling Cupid for the love of a woman. Sometimes male courtiers wrote of their love for other men. Shakespeare's sonnets do so, and the power dynamic between the speaker and Cupid changes accordingly. The sonnet cycle is addressed to a beautiful youth and a dark lady, and within their lines Shakespeare uses much tamer language than that of his predecessors. Because he is addressing a man for the first 126 of the 154 sonnets, he writes of two lovers on equal footing;

however, even when he is addressing the lady, Cupid takes a background role and is only summoned explicitly when necessary, allowing the woman involved to exert her own authority.

Shakespeare's sequence is radically different from Sidney's because his unnamed speaker describes unfulfilled love with both a man and a woman. His grief emanates from the triangle he is trapped in, addressing his first sonnets to the youth he loves then lamenting in "Sonnet XLII" "that thou hast her, it is not all my grief,/ And yet it may be said I lov'd her dearly" (lines 1-2) and "Thou dost love her, because thou knew'st I love her" (line 6). The speaker is torn between the man and woman he loves. There is betrayal on both sides and the woman steals his lover from him though, as he makes clear in line six, he also loves her and, just as the youth is taken away by her, the opposite also occurs. That the speaker is obsessed with both lovers at once complicates matters, and it is perhaps these complications that allow Shakespeare to write of a woman engaged in romantic manipulations directly with a man and not have Cupid take as active of a role as in previous writers' works.

Cupid does not take as active role in Shakespeare's sonnets because Shakespeare openly writes of the speaker's love for another man. The speaker does not need Cupid to master him, as Astrophel did, because Shakespeare's lover already has a master. Because the speaker's attentions are divided, the woman is pushed into what in Sidney's work would have been a male arena; Shakespeare's lover also has a mistress. The woman and the man of the speaker's desires are equals, both filling his thoughts as, in "Sonnet XVII" he asserts that, if he were to try to number the reasons why his male beloved is beautiful, "the age to come would say, this poet lies,/ Such heavenly touches ne'er touch'd earthly faces" (lines 7-8) while, in describing his mistress in "Sonnet CXXX," the speaker uses what her features are not, as in "my mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (line 1) to illustrate how common she is to others, though he still

contends “by heaven, I think my love as rare/ as any she belied with false compare” (lines 13-14). The love interests of Shakespeare’s sonnet do not need a god to embody them to gain the speaker’s attention; instead, he is focused on their actual effects on him.

The use of a male love within a Petrarchan sonnet is not unheard of, as evidenced later in this criticism by the works of Richard Barnfield and Mary Sidney Wroth, and it is clear that this male dynamic goes far to take the agency of the sequence away from Cupid. The role of the male youth in Shakespeare’s sonnets is ambiguous and, when not being recognized as a romance between two men, is often cited as the speaker’s desire to keep a good friend, which modern Shakespeare scholar Robert Matz calls academia’s “topsy-turvy” interpretation of the text (478). This would change the dynamic of Cupid within the series and would create a situation in which only the mistress is being romantically pursued, but this does not make sense because more of the sequence is dedicated to the speaker’s love for the man than for the woman. This is also the case in Barnfield’s sonnets, published at the end of *Cynthia*, Barnfield addresses a male love, explicitly making the relationship clear in “Sonnet XI,” writing about a man who sits by his love. When his love asks about the love that is making the man so sad, the original speaker replies “Looke in this glass...there shalt thou see/ The perfect forme of my faelicitie” (lines 10-11) then “He open’d it: and taking of the cover,/ He straight perceav’d himseife to be my Lover” (lines 13-14). Later, in “Sonnet XVII,” much as in Shakespeare’s series, the lover is described in terms that show how beautiful he is to the speaker; he is a “cherry-lipt Adonis” (line 1) who is “pure ivorie white” (line 2) “on whose faire front a Poets pen may write” (line 3). Once again, this dynamic is different than that of Wyatt, Surrey, and Sidney because the beloved is a magnetic personality who dominates the narrative, leaving little room for supernatural influences to sway the direction the narrative takes. Because the lover addressed in Barnfield’s sonnets is male,

Cupid is not needed to redirect the inherent struggle of masculine versus feminine in the arena of love.

This is not to say that Cupid is missing from either series. The speaker of Shakespeare's sonnets addresses Cupid in almost a derogatory tone in "Sonnet CXXXVII," saying "thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes/ That they behold and see not what they see?" (lines 1-2). This both acknowledges Cupid's power and sets the speaker above him. He recognizes that Cupid can make him see things differently than he otherwise would but, at the same time, the speaker is set apart. Cupid is not quite directing the action, he is just affecting it. The entire sonnet describes the battle waged between the speaker's heart and eyes, and though Cupid can sway the man's heart, he is not involved in the actual competition between the speaker's senses and emotions. Later, in "Sonnet CXLI," the speaker continues this theme when he asserts "I do not love thee with mine eyes,/ For they in thee a thousand errors note;/ But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise" (lines 1-3). This juxtaposition between what the speaker sees and what he feels is also mirrored in the use of the blind Cupid to blame for his own inability to see the truth; in this way Cupid does act as Shakespeare's scapegoat but in a completely different way than in the works of the other sonneteers: instead of residing within the object of the speaker's desire, Cupid is creating a battle within the speaker's own self, possibly because of the subversive undertones of the sequence in which Shakespeare is transgressing the accepted boundaries of male friendship and elevating it above the married sexual relationship (Matz 481). Though there are homoerotic undertones in Shakespeare's sonnets, the social upheaval is caused by the closeness of the men, not by the actions they are engaged in because of the closeness.

In Barnfield's sonnet, there is no animosity or power struggle between Cupid and the speaker, perhaps setting him furthest apart from the other poets surveyed in this paper. Instead, in

his “Sonnet IV,” Cupid’s power is benevolent: “Love’s piercing Darts, and Nature’s precious treasure/ Wither their sweet foode my fainting soule is fed” (lines 11-12). In Barnfield’s work, Cupid is a necessary force that is not set in opposition to but instead nurtures the speaker. As established in Petrarch and continued through the other male poets, the theme of “love as a battlefield” is prominent, even in Shakespeare, as the speaker fights the dark lady for his male beloved. However, this struggle is absent in Barnfield’s work, perhaps because there is no feminine energy to provide conflict within the series.

Because Shakespeare uses the dark lady as his source of conflict, not Cupid, she becomes the woman Stella cannot be. Because she falls outside the boundaries of society’s norms, due to her sexual impropriety and unconventional beauty (Matz 483), she does not have to shrink into the background of the story. She has her own agency and directs her own actions. She does not act within the parameters the speaker would set for her and, in “Sonnet CXXXI,” is instead “as tyrannous...as those whose beauties proudly made them cruel” (lines 1-2). She does not need Cupid to shine through her eyes to be “the fairest and most precious jewel” (line 4) or make the speaker emit “a thousand groans” (line 10). This dark beauty tortures the speaker herself, and the only help she receives revolves around her commitment to his other love and that love’s commitment to her. Where Sidney only presented Stella as a centerpiece, a possession for a man to acquire and for male forces to bat between them in a supernatural struggle, this is a woman who can stand on her own against the masculine.

In “Sonnet CXXXIX,” this woman can not only stand her ground but also wound the speaker, with her eye, tongue, and cunning (lines 2-6). In fact, she might prove to be “more than [his] o’erpress’d defence can ’bide” (line 8). This makes her even more dangerous; in the works explored so far, it is always male battling male in fair combat, but in this sonnet there is the

possibility the woman will be victorious. Throughout this section of the sequence, the narrator pleads for the woman to have mercy with no masculine intermediary, asking her in “Sonnet CXL” to “be wise as thou art cruel” (line 1), not to “press [his] tongue-tied patience with too much disdain” (lines 1-2), and to “let sorrow lend [him] words” to “express the manner of [his] pity-wanting pain” (lines 3-4). This is reminiscent of Sidney’s opening stanza, when the speaker addresses his love to win her for him; the difference is that Shakespeare does not systematically invalidate the agency of his dark mistress.

Not only can this woman stand her ground, but when there are chances for Shakespeare to allow the speaker’s masculine love to take center stage as a natural adversary, it is instead the woman who is described as the foe. In “Sonnet CXLIV,” the speaker says he has two loves, “The better angel is a man right fair,/ The worser spirit a woman, colour’d ill” (lines 1-4). To explain the narrative as that between the speaker, an angel, and a devil, the speaker is using supernatural imagery and the woman’s dark beauty to mark her both as evil and as other. From this sonnet, the premise that the speaker is not in danger, but his male lover is, is clear when the speaker says the dark mistress “tempteth my better angel from my side/ And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,/ Wooing his purity with her foul pride” (lines 6-8). It is clear that this dark mistress is not fulfilling her duties as an Elizabethan woman; she is not trying to be virtuous or charitable; she is, in fact, a temptress. This inverts the power dynamic established in Sidney’s work entirely as the speaker takes the role of Astrophel, the male beloved becomes Stella, and the dark lady is thrust into the role of Cupid.

In Barnfield’s sequence, like Shakespeare’s, Cupid is mentioned fleetingly though to a much different effect. He is not a supernatural force at all but is instead a natural, nurturing power, so that Barnfield’s poetry becomes lighter in tone than those of the other sonneteers.

From the very first sonnet, his language is playful as he sets the scene when “sporting at fancie, setting light by love,/ There came a theefe, and stole away my heart” (lines 1-2). Instead of having the lovers in opposition, he compares the situation to that of a legal case, though “having leave, and free consent withall,/ Himselfe not guilty” (lines 7-8). So though he openly accuses his love of stealing his heart, he admit that he was complicit in the act. Even when he is setting up his love as someone with power, the speaker admits that he himself is the person with agency, he has given his power and love away freely to this man. This is in contrast to Shakespeare’s sonnets, where the female antagonist becomes the strongest character within the sequence’s story.

By the end of Shakespeare’s sequence, the dark mistress is even given more power than Cupid. Described as “too young to know what conscience is” (line 1) in “Sonnet CLI,” Cupid is described as a cheater (line 3). However, in the final two stanzas, the child god is taken advantage of by a female force as, in CLIII he falls asleep and his fiery arrow is quelled by cold water that is turned into a hot bath. However, “Cupid got new fire,--my mistress’ eyes” (line 14). Now Cupid is using Shakespeare’s mistress’s power for his own and, in fact, in “Sonnet CLIV,” when a nymph happens by and is heated by the desire of his arrow, she quenches the burn of desire in a well where “Love’s fire took heat perpetual,/ Growing a bath and a healthful remedy/ For men disease’d” (lines 10-12). Thence, the mistress’s power is just as potent as Cupid’s, her own fire burning from her eyes, and though it is desire that burns through her, not chastity or virtue, it is still benevolent enough to cure the sick (though it is telling that it is men diseased who reap the benefits).

For Shakespeare and Barnfield, the issues revolving around the male versus female power dynamic that are present in the Petrarchan sonnets of the Tudor courtiers and Sidney are

not as pressing. That they use male love interests creates a new dynamic not found in the works of their predecessors. This new angle to the sonnet does not create a new genre to be studied but instead places the sonnets of Shakespeare and Barnfield squarely along the same spectrum as Sidney and those who came before him. Barnfield even goes as far to dedicate his work *The Affectionate Shepherd* to Penelope Rich, connecting his work to Sidney's through association with Sidney's muse. So, while both authors break new ground in their treatment of love and Love within the sonnet, they do so within the parameters set by the form's tradition. It is the relationships found within the sequences that are novel.

Sidney's Legacy Continued

All of the works thus far discussed are written from a male point of view. The stated purpose of *Astrophel and Stella* is to sway the narrator's love to have pity on him; through his writing he immortalized his beloved. She literally has no say in this narrative that is supposed to be about a love she is involved in. The battle over her heart is between Astrophel and Cupid, with Stella added in almost as an afterthought, to remind the reader as to what is being fought over. This lack of female voice is consistent, to varying extents, of the heroines who appear in the works of Petrarch, Wyatt, and Surrey, Shakespeare, and Barnfield. However, one generation after Sidney's sonnet sequence was published, there is a glimpse into what Stella might have said if she had been given a voice. In 1621, Sidney's niece, Mary Sidney Wroth's, sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* was published. Split into sections of sonnets and songs, the work is the first Petrarchan sonnet sequence known to be written by a woman (Waller 109) and has many similarities reminiscent of her uncle's, including its form and its use of explicitly Greek names

(Roberts 42). There is another connection: Wroth's heroes' names also carry meaning; Pamphilia means "all-loving" while Amphilanthus means "lover of two" (Roberts 42), immediately setting up a major premise of the work, just as Sidney does with his title *Astrophel and Stella*. Still, Wroth's depictions of Pamphilia's interactions with Cupid vary greatly from those in Sidney's sequence where Astrophel and Cupid constantly grapple with their power struggle.

Though Wroth is seen by Early Modern literature scholars as continuing her family's legacy, her work was seen as marginalized in her own day; Petrarchan poetry was no longer *en vogue* by the time her sequence was published, and it was distributed with little notice and fanfare (Waller 191). As a married woman and court member, Wroth fulfilled some of the requirements the Renaissance era placed on its women, yet she also defied social conventions in others. Just by writing, Wroth stepped out of the expected feminine sphere and regained some of her lost agency. She also kept the name Sidney despite marrying into the Wroth family (Waller 116). Though her use of her maiden name places her outside of the expected norms of wifely conduct, it was her husband's death that resulted in her placement in literary history. According to Waller, it was her roles as "a widow, a lover, a mother, and a writer" that led to "the most eventful and satisfying period of her life" (120). Writing allowed her to create a "womanspace" in which she could explore her own psychological agency, connect herself to the historical legacy of the Sidney men, and eradicate the debt her husband left her with providing her with a kind of economic freedom (Waller 127). It was Wroth, not her cousin, and suspected lover, William Herbert, who was "inheritor of the family muse" (Waller 141), and she therefore was able to describe the experience of courtly love in her own terms and those of the women who were so often immortalized inside of a male narrative.

From the first sonnet of her sequence, we see variances between her Cupid and Sidney's. While Venus is mentioned in Sidney's sequence, she does not demand attention within his verse. However, Venus is immediately described with Cupid at her feet, "still adding fire/ To burning hearts which she did hold above" (lines 6-7). This description places Cupid in a submissive role as he clearly performs his mother's bidding. The speaker continues "Hee her obey'd, and martir'd my poore hart" (Wroth line 12), which further signifies Cupid's role as servant to the goddess of love. This first sonnet of Wroth's differs greatly from that of Sidney; there is no wheedling for the lover's attention and no description of the toil of immortalizing a lover through verse. Instead, the scene is set with "When nights black mantle could most darknes prove,/ And sleepe deaths Image did my senceses hie" (Wroth lines 1-2), first creating a dark and somber mood then establishing Venus's control over the rest of the events in the sequence. There is a clear lack of female agency in *Astrophel and Stella*, but this agency is established in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus's* within the first ten lines.

In the second song after "Sonnet 48," Wroth cements Venus' power even further by having her speaker approach Venus directly, though it is to complain that Venus has not been kind to her faithful servant. The speaker complains "how long have I lov'd, and serv'd you heere?/ Yett all my passions socrn'd or doubted although cleere" (lines 1-2). She seems to forget that only a few lines before she was telling Cupid that she did not want her tempers to cool and thus pleads "parswade thes flames in mee to cease, or them redress/ In mee, poore mee who stormes of love have in excess" (7-8). The speaker is subservient to both Cupid and Venus, though here, because she is addressing Venus directly, Cupid's subservient relationship to Venus is apparent. Though Ovid ranks him higher than the other gods and goddesses in his ability to force their love as easily as a mortal's, he is still his mother's son. Through his arrows, he can

either force love or its opposite, but once he has struck his mark only his mother can undo his work.

In addition to Wroth's use of Cupid and Venus to direct her story arc in several other ways, the sequence is connected to *Astrophel and Stella*. Wroth writes in the second sonnet of "Two starrs of Heaven, sent downe to grace the Earthe...Shining, and burning; pleasing yett theyr charmes" (lines 9-11). This correlates directly to the characters of Stella and Astrophel, the star and star-lover, and provides a complementary illustration of their relation to each other and noting the similarities that make them a good match for one another. In the third sonnet, there is an entreaty that parallels the first sonnet of *Astrophel and Stella*, though it differs in the way Pamphilia addresses her pleas. Instead of addressing her love directly, she addresses Cupid, asking Love to "play thy part/ Remember well thy self, and think on mee;/ Shine in those eyes which conquer'd have my hart" (lines 1-3). Cupid becomes the speaker's conspirator, and she is so sure that she is fated to be with her love that she believes that Cupid shining through his eyes will sway the course of events in her favor and force him to love her. Her love being possessed by Cupid is not the negative event that Sidney writes about in his sequence.

The pleading in "Sonnet 3" continues as the speaker, much like Sidney's speaker, describes her frustrations in loving someone who is unattainable. Pamphilia states "For thought of you, my spiritt soe distrest/ As pale, and famish'd, I, for mercy cry" (lines 10-11). She wants her lover to see her plight and have pity on her, much like Sidney's speaker, and she is not afraid to show the pain he is causing her. As Waller states, "some of these feelings are common to male protagonists of Petrarchan poems, but others seem to grow more directly from becoming conscious of what it is to be assigned the 'woman's part' in a relationship" (203). As the sonnet ends, the narrator asks "Will you your servant leave?" (line 13), placing her in a subservient role

to her lover and giving up her power completely. This connects her to Stella, who also had no power against the combined force of Cupid and Astrophel, who batted her between them in their own power struggles. In contrast, in writing her own story, Wroth's speaker reclaims agency Stella can never have. She controls a narrative that has the potential to live on for ages beyond the relatively short lifespans of the lovers themselves.

In Wroth's work, Cupid is an adversary but not in the same way he appears in *Astrophel and Stella*. While Cupid is working to bring the lovers together against their will in Sidney's sonnets, in Wroth's he is working to keep them apart. Just as Ovid writes about the two different tipped arrows, one for love and one for its opposite, Wroth seems to be placing Cupid in contention with the love that the speaker feels is natural for the protagonist and her beloved. She entreats Cupid in "Sonnet 7" to "leave to urge, thou know'st thou hast the hand;/ 'Tis cowardise, to strive wher none resist;/ Pray thee leave off, I yeeld unto thy band" (lines 1-3). Where Sidney's speaker resists Cupid's powers, Wroth's speaker asks for him to let his arrows fly, to shine through his eyes, to direct his actions so that they are more in line with the speaker's wishes. She is in direct opposition to the power dynamic Sidney creates because she is in charge of telling her own story, but she supports the dynamic because she relies on Cupid to sway her beloved. Waller describes this as indicative of "a discontented passivity" that is "given a distinctively masochistic edge" (205). This argument oversimplifies the emotions caused by unrequited love; the narrator is actively trying to affect her future with the man she loves by approaching Cupid directly, and though her love itself could be seen as masochistic because of its problematic nature, that her love is unrequited and she cannot let it go is more indicative of Cupid's sadistic personality than the narrator's masochism. Despite Cupid's violent and contrary nature, she wants him to work on her behalf, perhaps even with her and upon her.

While Cupid is an adversary in Wroth's cycle, he does not have the dangerous edge he does in the works of the male poets. Because Wroth is not using him in the same way as the male poets--to create a masculine force for the male hero to grapple with--she can assign the deity with new roles. In "Sonnet 2" of the second series of sonnets, Cupid becomes a juggler, cunning and in disguise (lines 1-6). In some ways, this scene is reminiscent of Sidney's "Sonnet XX," because Cupid is hiding unknown amongst the masses. This is not the hardened soldier standing his ground against another but instead a playful boy who can control others through his own guile and cunning over brute strength. This is the Cupid of Eworth's painting, though in Wroth's sonnet he is happy. He does not cower. He charms and, through his charms, takes control. Then, within the second song of the second sonnet sequence Cupid becomes something else: "Love a child is ever criing" (line one), who is "never satisfi'd with having" (line four). This makes him an even less threatening presence than the juggler; he is literally a squalling infant. Still, even in this more innocent, seemingly helpless state, Wroth makes sure to warn that "he will triumph in your wayling/ And yett cause bee of your fayling" (lines 13-14). Though Cupid as juggler was seen as a disguise, Cupid as a wailing child is less so because the wailing child represents the selfish and trifling aims of Cupid. Like a child, his actions seem random. By warning of his power even in this deceptive state, Wroth is demonstrating how important it is to always be on guard against a hidden, more subtle Cupid when it comes to matters of love.

Though Pamphilia asks Cupid to force her beloved to love her, Cupid is not truly her ally. In "Sonnet 11," she writes of his "endless torments that my rest oppress" (line 1) then asks "How long will you delight in my sad paine?/ Will never love your favour more express?" (lines 2-4). If her pleas succeed and Cupid accepts his role as her champion, then her torment will end. Since her beloved does not yet love her, this lack of love implies that Cupid has not taken on her

charge. She asks him to "nott long debate/ My needfull ayde, least help do come too late" (lines 13-14). Her ability to guide her own fate only extends as far as she can convince Cupid to act in her stead, since it would be impropriety for her to take the lead. Pamphilia laments in the second song "All night I weepe, all day I cry, Ay mee" (line 1) then "I sigh, I mourn, I say that still" (line 3), repeating "Ay mee" throughout the six stanzas of the song. She continues that "In coldest hopes I freeze, yett burne Ay mee;/ From flames I strive to fly, yett turne Ay mee;/ From grief I haste butt sorrowes hy" (lines 5-7). Being trapped in unrequited love creates a paradox for the narrator, who finds herself freezing and burning, flying and turning then running from grief but finding sorrow. There is nothing she can do to return to a true existence besides finding love with her beloved, through Cupid.

Sidney's themes continue as the speaker in Wroth's sonnets is conquered in "Sonnet 14," asking "Must I bee still while itt my strength devowres/ And captive leads mee prisoner, bound, unfree?" (lines 3-4). Now Cupid's darts seem dangerous because they "hinder happy howres" (line 8). What sets the speaker apart from Sidney's narrator is that she is willing to give up her freedom, saying "So farwell liberty" in line 14. She is much more accepting of her fate, as long as the result is for her to be joined with her beloved. While Astrophel is active in his role as Cupid's foe, Pamphilia is more passive. We learn that she is not complicit in her dealings with Cupid but, in a way, she acts as a victim and a prisoner of war. She accepts her role as conquered more readily than the male narrator in Sidney's work. Through these sonnets, as she pleads for Cupid to sway her beloved's heart, we gain the impression that he is simultaneously fulfilling the role of Astrophel and Stella from her uncle's work; he is battling Cupid to keep his own agency and stay aloof from the speaker's advances, yet at the same time he is the individual who is cold to her love. Wroth's speaker vacillates between seeing Cupid as an adversary and ally. Though

she is his prisoner, she wants him to show forth in her love's eyes just as Astrophel wants him to retreat from his love's. In this way, Wroth, unlike Sidney, acknowledges that her speaker has no control over her own future. While Sidney implies that Astrophel and Stella are pawns of fate, Wroth is more explicit when she imbues her speaker with passive acceptance.

This connection to fate becomes even more apparent in "Sonnet 31," when the speaker lies down to rest and is embraced by Fortune. Fortune says she will reward the speaker with joy, which will "bannish all clouds of doubt, all feares destroy/ And now on fortune, and on Love depend" (lines 11-12). Wroth's speaker is constantly being knocked back and forth between supernatural forces that are responsible for the rewards and trials in her life, taking responsibility for her actions away from her and placing it in their hands; if she can learn how to please them individually, she can find relief from her struggles. Later, in "Sonnet 33," the narrator blames Cupid for guarding people from their "most desired wish, and end" (lines 1-2). She mentions that those hit by Cupid's arrow often accuse him of the harms that they themselves have committed (line 10) then apologizes for her boldness, trying to placate him, saying "admire/ Thee sure wee must, or be borne without fire" (lines 13-14). For her it is better to suffer the whims of a blind and childish Cupid than to be born without the warmth of love. She is angry over her inability to find love in the man she pines over, but she is torn because, without her feelings for him, her life would be empty. This is why she accepts her captivity. She sees value in Cupid's rule over her.

In fact, Cupid's power takes on holy tones as the narrator proclaims that "His flames ar joyes, his bands true lovers might" (line 1) in "A Crowne of Sonnets Dedicated to Love." She continues "Noe staine is ther butt pure, as purest white" (line 2), creating a scenario in which the lover should worship Cupid and "glory in his might" (line 5). This is the strongest language yet in support of Cupid's actions, equating his work with holy work. This shows an acceptance of

Cupid's place within the world. Pamphilia is at peace with the lack of control his maneuvers involve, elevating the status of love to something much higher than in Sidney's work. The constant struggle against love simply is not present in Wroth's sonnets; instead the relationship he has with her female protagonist is far removed from the constant battle of wills he experiences with Astrophel as Wroth focuses on the internal struggles of the lover at the expense of external conflict, as Wroth scholar Josephine Roberts argues in *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (48). Wroth is not limited to the theme of might and battle but instead is free to explore a more personal aspect of the adversarial nature of a relationship with Cupid and his power.

In fact, the relationship Wroth's heroine has allows the woman some power. In the second sonnet of the second sequence in the crowne, she becomes maternal, finding Cupid wet, crying, and lost in the forest. She takes pity on him, hoping he will remember her kindly. She thinks "this service should my freedome still procure/ And in my armes I tooke him then unharmed" (lines 10-11). This passage shows how differently Wroth viewed Cupid than her uncle. Though they are writing about the same deity and the same trials of love, she is not bound by masculine conventions. Instead of showing a perpetual battle between man and god, her speaker can show mercy on Cupid, embracing him fully even after reveling in his glory. Wroth's protagonist is softer, more accepting of the god. Still, Pamphilia does not forget herself as the sonnet ends and he makes her "feeble his powre,/ Burning [her] hart who had him kindly warmed" (lines 13-14). Though he was, only a few lines before, crying and lost, he is still a god. He is still fickle and prone to his own impulses, and because of them the speaker is reminded of the dangers of letting her guard down against Cupid.

While the addition of the male persona in Shakespeare's sonnets creates a space of agency for the dark mistress, this is not accomplished in Wroth's work, even though she is writing from a

female perspective. While Shakespeare manages to approach his sequence in a novel way, Wroth's is couched in the language and situations of her uncle's sequence, her heroine trapped and dependent on Cupid as much as the players within Sidney's sequence. However, where in Shakespeare we find misogyny when describing the lady (Matz 480), in Wroth's work we find a true struggle between Pamphilia and her desire to be loved. Perhaps what is striking in Wroth's work is her lack of villain; it is neither god nor female competition that is working against her. Instead, it is the action of her trying to persuade Cupid to act on her behalf that is the crux of the story and, while Pamphilia cannot act on her own, Wroth has the power to direct the way in which the heroine is depicted.

Conclusion

At the time Sidney wrote *Astrophel and Stella*, the idea of a strong female personality directing the course of men's actions was a timely issue. When then sonnets were published in 1591, Elizabeth I had occupied her throne for thirty-three years, which was an event unprecedented in British history. While this is not the only influence on Sidney's work, the sequence did give the courtier a safe space to explore issues of male and female power and agency. That Sidney wrote this work in Petrarchan sonnets is also somewhat unextraordinary because, as Waller explains, "Elizabeth systematically encouraged her (male) courtiers to relate to her in the role of Petrarchan lovers, always in hope, caught between desire for advancement and fear of losing their places, singlemindedly devoted to the hopeless attainment of her favor,

and grateful for any token” (137). The Petrarchan sonnet was familiar to Sidney and favored by the queen; she was happy to take control of the men of her court in ways in which they were accustomed to and saw as socially acceptable.

It is perhaps telling of the influence Elizabeth I had on society’s views of what women were capable of that Wroth’s sonnet sequence was published after Elizabeth’s rule. Though Wroth’s poetry was derided, by the time of the Jacobean court, the population of England had already seen a queen take the throne and rule, setting up an atmosphere where a woman could become the inheritor of a literary tradition, as Wroth did when she built upon the work of Sidney. These artistic representations of women in control, both in Eworth’s painting, and in the sonnets spanning from Petrarch to Wroth, show how problematic the ideas of women’s power and women’s spaces were in the Early Modern period. As pawns, queens, villains, and victims, the roles of women changed with the fashions and the individuals writing their narratives. It is clear that both Petrarch and the queen left a lasting mark on the representations of women, both in their respective time periods and stretching through to the Western culture of today.

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