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THREE WORLDS IN SIDNEY'S *DEFENCE*

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Sir Philip Sidney's *A Defence of Poetry*, probably written in the winter of 1579-1580, is the greatest of all Renaissance critical statements. The criticisms of the Italians Mazzoni and Tasso in the 1580's bear a close resemblance: the Neo-Platonic philosophy of the Florentine Academy informs its crucial arguments; mannerist stylistics can be discerned; the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Scaliger are directly evident; and the sixteenth century's concern for legitimate fiction finds advancement in it.¹ Its salient affinities, however, especially in its philosophy of practical wisdom, are with the intellectual milieu of the Northern Humanists.² The greatness of *A Defence of Poetry*, as Walter Jackson Bate has stated, is in its embracement, expression and transcendence of its historical context to such a degree that it signally presents "the basic source and inspiration of the classical tradition" and the new birth of that powerful vision of human perfectability in literature, philosophy and the arts which is the quintessence of the Renaissance.³

This vision of man dominates *A Defence of Poetry* and is central to it. It is a complex image, most strikingly dramatic and autobiographical, acting in the historical "first world" of courts and camps, and it is also creative, professional, abstract and representative in the "second world" of human knowledge, art and literature. Ultimately, it is a sublime image of man's capabilities, an heroic conception from the "green" or "golden world" of poetry.⁴ The relationship of these three worlds constitutes the patterns of Renaissance imagination in *A Defence of Poetry*.

Sidney's experience at the court of Maximilian II begins in history. It is depicted as an historical representation. At the same time, the *Defence* itself is beginning in historical fact, and later, when Sidney commences his survey of "the state of the art," he again will have history for his point of departure. Yet the reminiscence about riding lessons with Jon Pietro Pugliano shifts rapidly from an historical setting to the subjectivity of Pugliano himself, and we are made intimate with what is, for him, a unified philosophy that he projects upon reality. Moreover, this "second world" of Pugliano's contains another "place of withdrawal" within his subjective field.⁵ These are the three significant fields of reference to be distinguished in the Pugliano paradigm—"first world," "second world" and "green world"—

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and I employ the Bergerian trinity because it permits distinctions among the categories of history, art and imagination. Berger discusses the twofold identification of "normal world" and "green world" that Northrop Frye presented in his essay, "The Argument of Comedy" (1949). Frye, for instance, would identify the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* as the "green world," but Berger modifies Frye's suggestion that the sanctuary of Duke Senior is at one remove only from a so-called "normal" or "first-world." Berger's positioning of the field of artifice as the "second world" between the "first world" of history and the "green world" of imaginary settings at another remove within a work of art allows for identification of those consciously designated and counterfactual forms created by Renaissance artists, and, I believe, by Sidney in his *Defence*, to demonstrate the relationships among fiction, representational reality, and reality.

The protean Sidney himself implicitly posits three spheres in his "nature," "second nature" and "another nature" that "the poet...doth grow...."⁶ As a man of action, he is the opposite of his portrayal of the moral philosopher with his "contempt of outward things" (*Defence*, p. 83), and his positive delight in worldly matters, a genuine Renaissance attitude, is ubiquitous to the *Defence*. More importantly, the earthly, objective world is the field of human realization. Sidney, like Aristotle with whom he concurs, champions *praxis* above *gnosis* (*Defence*, pp. 83, 91) as the supreme value of knowledge, and Sidney's discourse, in the rhetorical style of an oral delivery, repeatedly addresses itself to a practical audience.⁷

Sidney's knowledge of his "unelected vocation" (*Defence*, p. 73), poetry, is not the knowledge of the rhetoricians and grammarians, but the skill through practice of the born poet (*Defence*, p. 111), and because he wants to demonstrate the absolutely real value of imaginative works he could as soon write an unpoetic discourse as he could deny the possibility of poetry's ability to feed man's whole being. The mode of *A Defence of Poetry*, in this sense, is existential; that is, it is a testimony to poetic self-realization, and Sidney authenticates its lively force in his frank self-dramatization as poet-critic, the first in the extraordinary tradition of English poet-critics.⁸ Appropriately, since this demonstration is to assert and emphasize poetry's ontological and practical natures, the presentation of "some more available proofs" (*Defence*, p. 74) would include, in addition to rhetorically conventional ones, those kinds of examples, or fictionalizations, that the poet-critic could utilize to best recommend the claims of his profession. For Sidney, poetry is the educator of education, and it should come as no surprise that his treatise is an artistically executed one. Sidney "...beginneth not with obscure

definitions, which must blur the margin with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness; but he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion..." (*Defence*, p. 92), and this is precisely what the *Defence* does, by its organization of history, poetic knowledge and fictions, through its highly dramatic focus and form.

The artistic, dramatic and fiction-like aspects of the *Defence* have been recognized and acknowledged in different ways by many critics, and although one recent critical commentary approximates my interpretation, it stops with the recognition of the centrality of fictions and fictionalizations in the *Defence*, rejecting the view of the *Defence* inherently exemplifying the theory of imagination that it advocates.⁹ Two main reasons why this interpretation of self-exemplification in the *Defence* goes unacknowledged are an insufficient appreciation for the pervasive drama in the *Defence*, particularly the interaction between Sidney and the audience which he regularly addresses, and an incomplete account of the role assigned to the Renaissance conception of fiction, especially, as it applies to fictional expression in the *Defence*, fiction's intrinsic profit for the audience as manifested in its indicators of dependency upon the living world into which it finally enters.¹⁰ This interpretation, however, is much more complex than any straightforward employment of poetry as denominated by Sidney, and the *Defence's* aesthetic value is of a much different order than a simply logical application of his view of poetry, which is essentially mimetic, but also surreal and intuitional. For Sidney, there is a relationship with which he is very concerned in the *Defence*, between knowing only, knowing and doing, and what constitutes true learning. Knowing only would not actually be satisfactory learning. The *Defence*, then, epitomizes his own philosophy of putting into action his poetic knowledge and his poetry by means of accomplished artistry. On the other hand, this represents a distinction between Sidney's metaphysics and aesthetics, and since Sidney's philosophy embraces a noble, heroic, active, aristocratic view of man, he is hardly guilty of the "vulgar didacticism" of which he has been accused.¹¹ Apart from the "right virtuous" use that he recommends, his aesthetic is virtually an autonomous one. He characterizes what poetry was for the Greeks and the Romans, for instance, "in a full wrong divinity" (*Defence*, p. 80), and he stresses repeatedly throughout his discourse a difference between how poets may use poetry and "...the material point of poesy" itself (*Defence*, p. 117; also, pp. 79, 87, 89, 97, 104, 108). A corollary to this foremost mission to which Sidney personally assigns poetry is his candid admittance of self-interest and the defending of his profession as poet, and in addition, the didactic aspects of the *Defence* also can be

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seen partially as a typical Renaissance strategy of enhancing the value of fictions by countering the charge of frivolity.¹²

After the very brief *exordium* about his experiences with Pugliano, which is recounted in a direct, first-person, almost lyrical voice, Sidney immediately confronts the reputation of poetry as "the laughing-stock of children" by turning to his audience:

And first, truly, to all them that, professing learning, inveigh against poetry may justly be objected that they go very near to ungratefulness, to seek to deface that which, in the noblest nations and languages that are known, hath been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges. And will they now play the hedgehog that, being received into the den, drave out his host? Or rather the vipers, that with their birth kill their parents? (*Defence*, p. 74)

This audience is comprised of various groups. There are the potential learners, the enemies of poetry in particular, and, in a broader historical sense, humankind in general, for in such terms as "den," "host," "vipers," and "kill" in the context of the two metaphorical aphorisms, the images and tones resound powerfully in a Hebraic and Biblical scope.

This segment of poetry's detractors is essentially ignorant and cannot even recognize a good thing such as the works of "right poets":

For these indeed do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach; and delight, to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved—which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to bark at them. (*Defence*, p. 81)

Just as conflicts between social classes are strongest where the differences are slightest, so, too, do these "hedgehogs," "vipers," and "dogs" attack the unaffected life:

Is it then the Pastoral poem which is misliked? (For perchance where the hedge is lowest they will soonest leap over.) (*Defence*, p. 94)

To appreciate the positive values of the arts and poetry is beyond this group of scoffers who are sick and tired of learning—and living:

But truly I imagine it falleth out with these poet-whippers, as with some good women, who often are sick, but in faith they cannot tell where; so the name of poetry is odious to them, but neither his cause nor effects, neither the sum that contains him, nor the particularities descending from him, give any fast handle to their carping dispraise. (*Defence*, p. 98)

They are a formidable opposition to poets, against whom "they cry out with open mouth as if they had overshot Robin Hood, that Plato banished them out of his commonwealth" (*Defence*, p. 102), showing "their mistaking of Plato (under whose lion's skin they would make an ass-like braying against poesy)" (*Defence*, p. 108), but this opposition is against more than poetry, and it perpetrates such prejudices against all learning and human decency that this antagonism begins to appear as human ignorance rather than mere critical senselessness:

First, truly I note not only in these *misómousoi* [transliteration mine], poet-haters, but in all that kind of people who seek a praise by dispraising others, that they do prodigally spend a great many wandering words in quips and scoffs, carping and taunting at each thing which, by stirring the spleen, may stay the brain from a through-beholding the worthiness of the subject. (*Defence*, p. 99)

This is not merely an entertaining game among critics, nor, as T. S. Eliot asserts, are Sidney's "*misomousoi* against whom he defends poetry...men of straw."¹³ Eliot, characterizing Sidney as secure in his assumptions about poetry, is hardly aware of the real sixteenth-century battles between historical and literary forms of representation. Sidney's observations are applied to human nature in general when a larger historical background of pillage and destruction is sketched:

Marry, this argument, though it be levelled against poetry, yet is it indeed a chainshot against all learning, or bookishness as they commonly term it. Of such mind were certain Goths, of whom it is written that, having in the spoil of a famous city taken a fair library, one hangman (belike fit to execute the fruits of their wits) who had murdered a great number of bodies, would have set fire in it: no, said another very gravely, take heed what you do, for while they are busy about these toys, we shall with more leisure conquer their countries. This indeed is the ordinary doctrine of ignorance, and many words sometimes I have heard spent in it. (*Defence*, p. 105)

Images of books and libraries in flames easily come to mind. Sidney's classical oration is clearly, on this level, a sustained discussion about the human condition. This is the "first world" of the *Defence*. It is that field of the historical about which the discourse is explicitly concerned and to which, in one direction, its commentary is massively aimed.

This temporal setting includes "the most barbarous and simple" (*Defence*, p. 76), and Sidney's anthropological survey of uncivilized peoples near the beginning of his *narratio* is one view of the image of man. The universal image of human perfectability, positively affirmed in the *Defence* with an optimism characteristic of the Renaissance, finds its complement in these impressions of animalistic degeneration, for "our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it" (*Defence*, p. 79). These divergent human images reflect a Biblical version of history and mankind and generally correspond to the late medieval and Renaissance attitude towards human depravity and the will of God. This bifurcated concept of history is a combination of the Augustinian interpretation of human events and destiny as a fulfillment of the divine plan of the Judeo-Christian diety and a Boethian explanation for man's experience of the randomness of existence. Sidney places a supreme value in, and throughout the *Defence* is highly sophisticated with, his religious intelligence, as in one of his discussions of "the holy David":

...for what else is the awaking his musical instruments...but a heavenly poesy, wherein almost he showeth himself a passionate lover of that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only cleared by faith? But truly now having named him, I fear me I seem to profane that holy name, applying it to poetry, which is among us thrown down to so ridiculous an estimation. But they that with quiet judgements will look a little deeper into it, shall find the end and working of it such as, being rightly applied, deserveth not to be scourged out of the Church of God. (*Defence*, p. 77)

These "quiet judgements" of looking "a little deeper" to "find the end and working of it" refer, in one way, to the difference between the nature of religious, or revealed truth, which is epistemically prime, though hermeneutic, and that kind of historically verifiable truth which came to acquire such a dominant position in the epistemologies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In another way, they refer to poetry's useful value in relation to the appearance of revealed truth, and these ideas are not incompatible with St. Augustine's:

For even the stories of the poets and the masters of literature are better than these deceitful traps. Verses, poems, and "Medea flying through the air" are undoubtedly of more use to one man than the Five Elements, variously tricked out to correspond with the Five Dens of Darkness—all of which have no existence at all and are death to the believer. For I can turn verses and poems into true nourishment, and if I declaimed "Medea flying," I was not asserting a fact, nor, if I heard someone else declaiming the lines, did I believe them to be true.¹⁴ (*Confessions*, III, 6)

In such a cosmology, counterfactual forms like the ones that Sidney promotes are potentially closer to truth than other forms of knowledge that abstract data from nature according to qualified, validly constructed methods. In terms of the Boethian vision of human destiny, where fortune deals good and bad luck, provoking man to utilize a sensibility for paradox,

The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows
himself to be a fool. (*As You Like It*, V, II)

Sidney makes reference to Boethius (*Defence*, pp. 93, 94), and also to Erasmus (*Defence*, p. 100), and in his comical and paradoxical portrayals of the representatives of knowledge, the moral philosopher, historian, astronomer (who, "looking to the stars, might fall in a ditch") (*Defence*, p. 82), "...his cousin the geometrician" (*Defence*, p. 102), the other practitioners of the "serving sciences" (*Defence*, pp. 82, 84), and also, in the keen assertion "...that even our Saviour Christ vouchsafed to use the flowers..." (*Defence*, p. 99) of poetry, Sidney's witty and ironic intellectualizations derive less from any single work like Nicholas of Cusa's *De Docta Ignorantia* than they do from the sixteenth century's abiding consciousness of human folly. This theme is explicit in the important etymological passage on the historical and linguistic transmittance of the Greek derivative of "to make" as "poet":

...I know not whether by luck or wisdom, we Englishmen
have met with the Greeks in calling him a maker.
(*Defence*, p. 77)

"Luck or wisdom" invokes the dual, Augustinian and Boethian components of events, and also suggests the connection between the "first world" of history and the "second world" of human knowledge. Sidney, with Wotton and Pugliano at the court of the Emperor, almost could have been persuaded to have wished himself a horse, but being "a

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piece of a logician" (*Defence*, p. 73), he went ahead and framed his cavalier narrative in the form of a classical oration.

The classical form of the discourse is the basic structure of artifice in the *Defence*. The knowledge and allusions—classical, mythological, religious, literary, medieval, contemporary Renaissance—are rich and extensive, as scholarly source-studies have demonstrated, yet the style and tone in Sidney's discourse are playful, witty and entertaining, reflecting Sidney's attitudes towards knowledge and his objectives in the *Defence*. These tones are quickly introduced in the *narratio*, first, during the description of poets as the original deliverers of knowledge:

So, as Amphion was said to move stones with his poetry to build Thebes, and Orpheus to be listened to by beasts—indeed stony and beastly people— (*Defence*, p. 74)

Then Plato's writings are characterized:

...for all standeth upon dialogues, wherein he feigneth many honest burgesses of Athens to speak of such matters, that, if they had been set on the rack, they would never have confessed them.... (*Defence*, p. 75)

Immediately the historiographers are described:

...(although their lips sound of things done, and verity be written in their foreheads)...either stale or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles, which no man could affirm; or, if that be denied me, long orations put in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced. (*Defence*, p. 75)

Soon follows understatement:

But since the authors of most of our sciences were the Romans, and before them the Greeks, let us a little stand upon their authorities, but even so far as to see what names they have given unto this now scorned skill. (*Defence*, p. 76)

This is not "the philosopher, setting down with thorny arguments the bare rule" (*Defence*, p. 85), but is a much more lyrical, intelligent persona:

But truly now having named him, I fear me I seem to profane that holy name, applying it to poetry, which is

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among us thrown down to so ridiculous an estimation.
(*Defence*, p. 77)

It is a dramatic voice, the advocate arguing in the court of truth for his defendant:

...and if in neither of these anatomies he be condemnable, I hope we shall obtain a more favourable sentence....
(*Defence*, p. 82)

but:

...because we have ears as well as tongues, and that the lightest reasons that may be will seem to weigh greatly, if nothing be put in the counterbalance, let us hear, and, as well as we can, ponder what objections be made....(*Defence*, p. 99)

At other times it is the voice of an actor playing with other actors:

...the moral philosophers, whom, me thinketh, I see coming towards me with a sullen gravity.... (*Defence*, p. 83)

There is the deeply moving scene:

Alas, Love, I would thou couldst as well defend thyself as thou canst offend others. I would those on whom thou dost attend could either put thee away, or yield good reason why they keep thee. (*Defence*, pp. 103-104)

Frequently, it is a parody of the critic:

This much (I hope) will be given me, that the Greeks with some probability of reason gave him the name above all names of learning. (*Defence*, p. 79)

He says more or less than he knows:

...whereof Aesop's tales give good proof: whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts....
(*Defence*, p. 87)

The great authorities especially confound him:

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Thus far Aristotle: which reason of his (as all his) is most full of reason.... (*Defence*, p. 88)

and:

...far-fet maxims of philosophy, which (especially if they were Platonic).... (*Defence*, p. 93)

He has his quibbles:

But if (fie of such a but).... (*Defence*, p. 121)

and:

...I think (and think I think rightly).... (*Defence*, p. 99)

He is a bit of the bombastic buffoon:

But what? Methinks I deserve to be pounded for straying from poetry to oratory. (*Defence*, p. 119)

He speaks in the brassy tones of false modesty:

...I conjure you all that have had the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the nine Muses.... (*Defence*, pp. 120-121)

Other times the voice is hardly a parody of "*pedenteria*" (*Defence*, p. 73). It is more akin to Sidney's own literary voice, brilliant with *sprezzatura*, giving the appearance and effect of ease and spontaneity while conveying important points in the arguments and designs:

...glad will they be to hear the tales of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas; and, hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valour, and justice; which, if they had been barely, that is to say philosophically, set out, they would swear they be brought to school again. (*Defence*, p. 92)

His description of the satirist is terse and incisive:

...who sportingly never leaveth till he make a man laugh at folly, and at length ashamed, to laugh at himself, which he cannot avoid without avoiding the folly.... (*Defence*, p. 95)

There is a discussion of "rebel Caesar" (*Defence*, p. 90) and his theories about the lessons of history, images of noses and ears amputated, children preferring "their physic at their ears than at their mouth" (*Defence*, p. 92), "...the hard-hearted evil men...content to be delighted...as if they took a medicine of cherries" (*Defence*, p. 93), "Alexander and Darius, when they strave who should be cock of this world's dunghill" (*Defence*, p. 95), a clown thrust in "by head and shoulders" (*Defence*, p. 114), "Sphinx" (*Defence*, p. 105), the "Tower of Babylon's curse" (*Defence*, p. 119), and many more instances of humor and wit, of which the above examples are but a small group.

The dramatic, highly self-conscious artifice is everywhere apparent in the treatise. For Sidney, all human knowledge is "art delivered to mankind" (*Defence*, p. 78), and those that profess those knowledges are "actors and players" (*Defence*, p. 78). Sidney has taken the Aristotelean theory of imitation and given it an artistic treatment to the extent that he has transformed a rhetorical discourse into a well-defined "heterocosm" which he has furnished with his own aesthetic and intellectual conceptions and expressions.¹⁵ The implications of subjectivity and relativity in the Aristotelean explanation of branches of knowledge as specific imitations of aspects of nature have become a rationale for eccentricities in literary doctrine. In the "second world" of knowledge, where consciousness is conditioned, the artistic impulse is to match wit and will alongside limitations. A large part of Sidney's discourse covers the fictions in other supposedly truthful knowledges, especially history and moral philosophy, and in the dramatic heterocosm of the "second world" of his discourse proper he acts the curator in a mansion of curios and artifacts, making comparisons among originals, imitations and fakes, asking his audience to consider alternatives and make choices. All this is done in the self-consciously ironic and frankly undermining tones of the often humorous arguments.

These qualifications and developments of Sidney's own branch of knowledge establish an aesthetic boundary around the "second world." This "second world," which Sidney turns into a showcase for his own purposes, connects with the "first world" of history in the dramatic language of Sidney as narrator and finds its place with respect to man's limited understanding of events and existence. Sidney establishes a relationship between an audience existing in the somewhat incomprehensible real world of history and his ambitious fiction from the representational world of poetic knowledge. He has aesthetically heightened his subjective treatment of his topic in order to project even more intensified images.

These images are identifiable by their *energia*. Sidney uses the concept *energia* once in the *Defence*, wittily supplying an instance of it before the term appears:

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...so coldly they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather read lovers' writings—and so caught up certain swelling phrases which hang together like a man that once told my father that the wind was at northwest and by south, because he would be sure to name winds enough—than that in truth they feel those passions, which easily (as I think) may be bewrayed by that same forcibleness or *energia* (as the Greeks call it) of the writer. (*Defence*, p. 117)

Sidney had translated at least two books of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* where *energia* is the definition for images of activity, metaphors of action, exclamation, direct address, direction of speech to inanimate objects, dialogue; its strongest effects are visual, but it appeals to all of the senses. Sidney was also indebted to Scaliger's concepts. *Energia* primarily gives visible form to emotions, and as a dramatic and narrative technique it was very important for Sidney's purposes. Meter, rhyme and the moving power of music were also parts of Sidney's concept of *energia*.¹⁶

These dramatizations of strong feelings and images of persuasive forcibleness are omnipresent in the *Defence* and represent a main, if untrumpeted, component of its poetics. Some of Sidney's grander, more complex designs and their implications for his aesthetics would be revealed, I believe, by determining the patterns of *energia* and imagery in the *Defence*, but of immediate significance in relation to the heterocosm of the "second world" of discourse are those bolder, more elaborate and consciously mounted vignettes of *energia*, or idealizations, in the *Defence* that comprise its "green," or "golden" (*Defence*, p. 78) "world."

One of the greatest of these imaginative vignettes is finally projected into the heterocosmic "second world" of discourse after careful preparations. First:

Let us but hear old Anchises speaking in the midst of Troy's flames.... (*Defence*, p. 86)

Then:

Who readeth Aeneas carrying old Anchises on his back, that wisheth not it were his fortune to perform so excellent an act? (*Defence*, p. 92)

The fuller vignette is then projected:

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Only let Aeneas be worn in the tablet of your memory, how he governeth himself in the ruin of his country; in the preserving his old father, and carrying away his religious ceremonies; in obeying God's commandment to leave Dido, though not only all passionate kindness, but even the human consideration of virtuous gratefulness, would have craved other of him; how in storms, how in sports, how in war, how in peace, how a fugitive, how victorious, how besieged, how besieging, how to strangers, how to allies, how to enemies, how to his own; lastly, how in his inward self, and how in his outward government—and I think, in a mind not prejudiced with a prejudicating humour, he will be found in excellency fruitful.... (*Defence*, p. 98)

The vignette of Anchises and Aeneas is but one prominent fictionalization in the *Defence*. Its special place in the argument, and its significance and contribution to Sidney's expressions, in this case, about the Heroical, are other aspects of the *Defence's* complex order and structure, and can be only generally illustrated here. The Aeneas vignette is in a "second world" context of historical and poetical contrasts that balance Sidney's praise of *Chevy Chase* and the Hungarian ballads with his accusations of triviality in the actions of military figures like Philip of Macedon, Alexander and Darius, and in the subjects of the poet Pindar. Great men are expected to perform great acts, and great men must celebrate worthy subjects in order to be memorable, and it is the matter of memorability that follows Sidney's conclusions to the final and foremost of the genres, the heroical. In projecting his "green world" image of the hero Aeneas, Sidney has strikingly compared it with inferior versions, "second world" failures, or inadequate representations, of eloquence without valor and heroes without heroic deeds. The technique of contrast is a device directed to the realistic capacities of the literal-minded of the "first world," the "hedgehogs," "vipers" and "dogs" attacking the Pastoral; "the backbiters" and hypochondriacs critical of art, learning and living. The "golden" image of Aeneas is not only contrasted with the other "second world" subjects, but this higher order of fiction is distinguished from the merely representational and linguistic orders. As an idealization of a hero, it is an intuitional embodiment of human perfection that is not imitative of the "first world," but is rather a parody, a surreal portrayal of sublime action analogous to "first world" processes as they might appear in the "second world." The effect is more heightened, controlled and intelligent in its differences and similarities to real experience than if it were a poetical example introduced into a conventionally more factual treatise. These kinds of relationships throughout the *Defence* indicate that deeper level of highly differentiated sensibilities that is the

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undercurrent to Sidney's poetics in the *Defence*, which is one of its unexplored aesthetic (in contrast with its metaphysical and strictly literary) dimensions.

We have already observed "...the holy David's...awaking his musical instruments...telling of the beasts' joyfulness and hills leaping..." (*Defence*, p. 77). The fictionalizing is compounded when we come upon this scene:

The other is of Nathan the prophet, who, when the holy David had so far forsaken God as to confirm adultery with murder, when he was to do the tenderest office of a friend in laying his own shame before his eyes, sent by God to call again so chosen a servant, how doth he it but by telling of a man whose beloved lamb was ungratefully taken from his bosom: the application most divinely true, but the discourse itself feigned; which made David (I speak of the second and instrumental cause) as in a glass see his own filthiness.... (*Defence*, pp. 93-94)

This passage is dense with telescoping fictions within structures of artifice, "the disclosure itself feigned" in several directions, again intensified by visual framings and effects "as in a glass."

Sidney's development of the image of the poet follows a similar pattern. There is the introduction of some of the first of his train:

...the philosophers of Greece durst not a long time appear to the world but under the mask of poets. (*Defence*, p. 75)

Soon, the poet is gloriously characterized:

Only the poet, disdainful to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden. (*Defence*, p. 78)

The "right poets" (*Defence*, p. 80) are described:

For these...but range, only reined with learned discretion,
into the divine consideration of what may be and should
be. (*Defence*, p. 81)

This "learned discretion" is the rationale for the "anti-mystical" and "severely practical" emphases that A. C. Hamilton describes in Sidney's view of poetry.¹⁷ Yet Sidney's discretion derives from genuine valor. Though "reined," this poet's great strength is displayed:

...for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of
that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish
description, which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess
the sight of the soul so much as that other doth. (*Defence*,
p. 85)

At last he is received into the dramatic setting of the *Defence's* heterocosm:

...but he cometh to you with words set in delightful
proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the
well enchanting skill of music; and with a tale forsooth he
cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from
play, and old men from the chimney corner. (*Defence*,
p. 92)

He is a hero among heroes. Other imaginative characters and scenes that are introduced and developed in comparable patterns are philosophers, painters, lawyers and advocates, horses and soldiers, beasts, Xenophon's Cyrus, Ulysses, children, physicians, Jesus Christ, the Alexander of legend, and the "mongrel tragi-comedy."

These counterfactual forms within the deliberate artifice of Sidney's "second world" of discourse can be seen as configurations of a "green world," since they represent a further dimension of recessed space within the heterocosm. These are examples of "an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention" (*Defence*, p. 103), just as Pugliano's conceit of the horse stirred Sidney to take up his defense of "poor poetry," because they are dramatized symbols organized with respect to the historical world and its contiguous relation to the world of artifice. Their place in Sidney's dramatic oration assumes a surreal validity that reflects back on the hypothetical qualities of mind and psychological projects, ultimately referring back to the activity of life.¹⁸

In Sidney's metaphysics, these "profitable inventions" will be "right virtuous" (*Defence*, p. 73) idealizations of classical and Biblical heroes, and in his aesthetic executions the contingencies of the

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historical foreground of the audience will be unified with the recessional and sublime images from his "golden" world of mythology, classical literature and Scripture. Nevertheless, the architectural structuring of the historical, artificial and "green," or "golden," settings creates a specific aesthetic with its inherent psychodynamics and sensibilities.

The heroic virtues are Sidney's objectives, but his aesthetic achievement is a theatre of human thought and emotion, a vitalized mode of being:

For as in outward things, to a man that had never seen an elephant or a rhinoceros, who should tell him most exquisitely all their shapes, colour, bigness, and particular marks, or of a gorgeous palace, an *architector*, with declaring the full beauties, might well make the hearer able to repeat, as it were by rote, all he had heard, yet should never satisfy his inward conceit with being witness to itself of a true lively knowledge.... (*Defence*, p. 85)

This "true lively knowledge" is not a representation of matters but is "figured forth" (*Defence*, p. 86) from insights into human experience, for "the poet...doth not learn a conceit out of a matter, but maketh matter for a conceit" (*Defence*, p. 99), "making things...such as never were in nature...by delivering them forth in such excellency as he hath imagined them" (*Defence*, pp. 78-79).

Sidney's emphasis upon the artist and his "fore-conceit" (*Defence*, p. 79) adds a mannerist slant to his arguments, and many passages of prose embellished by *sprezzatura*, play, wit and other techniques deliberately draw attention to a prevalent and cultivated artistic self-consciousness in the *Defence*. The *maniera* is adeptly executed, and Sidney mentions his favorable estimates of Pietro Bembo (*Defence*, pp. 110, 121) and Marc-Antoine Muret (*Defence*, p. 110).¹⁹ The *Defence* is predominantly a Renaissance, and not a Mannerist work, however, because of its ascendant configurations and inspirations. In addition to the classical form of the oration, which stands as elemental structure outside of the architectonics of the "three worlds," the resultant pattern and design are in keeping with High Renaissance theories that encompassed the aesthetic techniques of visual space.²⁰ With the exploitation of space as a new material in artistic design came the development of two-dimensional heterocosms in painting that required the viewer to properly locate himself in relation to the framed image in such a way that the painting evoked an experience of the real scene. The recessional technique produced a surreal, intuitive perception in the viewer. The hallmark of the Renaissance poetic imagination, however, comes less from the idea of conscious fiction than it does from the

inclination to differentiate fields of experience.²¹ The importance of the relationship between "second world" and "green world," or fiction within fiction, resides not so much in the complexity of fictional technique itself as it does in the genius of the Renaissance imagination to construct fictions containing inner fictions which are capable of mirroring the outer fictions in such a way that the fictional world itself becomes more clearly distinguishable from the real world. The objective of these arrangements, as Sidney states, is "...clearly to see through them" (*Defence*, p. 86).

The literary implications to be explicated out of the "house of many mansions" that is the specific patterning in the *Defence* are yet to be done. The *Defence* has been treated in terms of its definitions of poetry, for its poetics, and for its historical significance, but its aesthetic import in terms of its higher order of artistry occurring simultaneously with critical contexts has not been fully articulated. The critical insights among "worlds," actors, voices, arguments, images, legends, myths, histories, biographies, portraits and tales are extraordinarily complex. Both of the dramatic heterocosms of *Astrophel and Stella* and the *Arcadia* possess similarly rich intricacies and implications.

The upshot of the "three worlds" is for the pleasure and profit of the courtier or person of action to move away, back into individual concerns, but with fresh thoughts for new experiences. Man makes himself; reality is changing; the future is open. The "three worlds" allow for "review" and "recreation." Especially this latter term, I believe, goes far in suggesting Sidney's ethos of fictions, and the Renaissance's, too, for, as Edmund Spenser wrote to Sir Walter Raleigh, it is "the use of these dayes," to have delightfulness.²²

NOTES

¹For a discussion of the Platonic, Aristotelean and Christian ideas in Mazzoni's and Tasso's criticisms see Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1961), 1: 324-328, 628-632; 2: 636-646, and Baxter Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism: The Late Renaissance in Italy* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1962), pp. 118-158. The Neo-Platonic premises in Sidney's primary arguments and their contemporary background are demonstrated by John P. McIntyre, S. J., "Sidney's 'Golden World'," *CL*, 14 (1962), 356-365. Geoffrey Shepard, ed., *An Apology for Poetry* (London, 1965), p. 66, offers a concise conclusion about the *Defence's* mannerist theories. Sidney's incorporation of the theories of Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Scaliger and the *Defence's* relationship to their works is discussed by Walter Jackson Bate, ed., *Criticism: The Major Texts* (New

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York, 1970), p. 82. The *Defence's* central position in the sixteenth century debate between history and fiction is treated by Walter R. Davis, *Idea and Act in Elizabethan Fiction* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 28-54, and William Nelson, *Fact or Fiction: The Dilemma of the Renaissance Storyteller* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), pp. 38-55.

²Shepard, p. 22; Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten, eds., *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 63-64; D. H. Craig, "A Hybrid Growth: Sidney's Theory of Poetry in *An Apology for Poetry*," *ELR*, 10 (1980), 193.

³Bate, p. 82.

⁴Harry Berger, Jr., "The Renaissance Imagination: Second World and Green World," *CenR*, 9 (1965), 47. See my previous paper, "Patterns of Renaissance Imagination in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*," *MSE*, 8 (1982), pp. 36-41, for my indebtedness to and my discussion of Berger's theories as they apply to Sidney's *exordium* and to the *Defence* in general.

⁵Berger, p. 48.

⁶Sir Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry* in *Miscellaneous Prose*, Duncan-Jones and Van Dorsten, pp. 78-79. Other page notations in the text from *A Defence of Poetry* will refer to this edition.

⁷Kenneth Myrick, *Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman* (Lincoln, Neb., 1965), pp. 46-83; Duncan-Jones and Van Dorsten, p. 64.

⁸Bate, 77.

⁹Ronald Levao, "Sidney's Feigned *Apology*," *PMLA*, 94 (1979), 231.

¹⁰Berger, p. 75; Davis, pp. 43-44; Nelson, pp. 59-64.

¹¹Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (Garden City, 1964), p. 194.

¹²Nelson, pp. 49-50.

¹³T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1946), p. 24.

¹⁴Rex Warner, trans., *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (New York, 1963), p. 59.

¹⁵"Heterocosm," a term M. H. Abrams uses in his consideration of fictional worlds, indicates "a second nature," and it

is a neutral designation for the hypothetical field devoid of the actual content of a "second world," in *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York, 1958), pp. 272-285.

¹⁶For an excellent discussion of the concept of *energia* see Neil L. Rudenstine, *Sidney's Poetic Development* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), ch. X.

¹⁷*Sir Philip Sidney: A Study of His Life and Works* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 120.

¹⁸Berger, pp. 73-74; Davis, pp. 281-282.

¹⁹See John Shearman, *Mannerism* (Harmondsworth, 1967), Ch. 1, for an outstanding analysis of Pietro Bembo, *maniera* and the historical background of High Renaissance and post-High Renaissance Italian literary styles in the setting of the plastic arts; on Marc-Antoine Muret's career and impact upon the development of European prose style, see Croll's classic study in J. Max Patrick, Robert O. Evans and John M. Wallace, eds., "*Attic*" and *Baroque Prose Style: The Anti-Ciceronian Movement: Essays by Morris W. Croll* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 107-162.

²⁰Berger, pp. 52-53; for a discussion of Sidney's use of visual perceptions in the *Defence*, see Forrest G. Robinson, *The Shape of Things Known: Sidney's Apology in its Philosophical Tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), pp. 97-136.

²¹Berger, p. 48.

²²Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London, 1962), 1: 2.