

THE CONTEMPORARY STATUS AND FUNCTION
OF THE
ELIZABETHAN SONNET

by

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Arts
of
London University

May 1966

Bedford College, London

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to present Elizabethan views upon the sonnet, both as a literary form and as a poem of society, and following from this, the uses to which it was adapted.

Chapter One examines contemporary definitions of the "sonnet", to determine the breadth of meaning which the term had for the Elizabethans, and to establish the literary and social over-tones important to the following chapters.

Chapters Two to Four discuss the literary aspects of the quatorzain. They describe the influence of Renaissance critical theory upon the Elizabethan attitudes to the stanza, and seek to show that the enthusiasm for and later revulsion against the poem resulted firstly from the importance of Petrarchanism in establishing a modern vernacular literature, and secondly from the consequent rejection of this when the task was completed. Within this framework attention is drawn to the importance of the theoretical criticism of the classicists (Chapter Two), and the influence of practical criticism of the sonneteers and their artistry upon writers and readers (Chapters Three and Four).

The two following chapters examine the reaction of Elizabethan society to the Petrarchan sonnet, Chapter Five stressing its relevance for the courtier class, and seeking to indicate those points which gained favour or opprobium for the verse; Chapter Six describing the factors which probably influenced religious opinions

on the quatorzain, and those which played a part in the later conversion of the sonnet to devotional use.

The remainder of this thesis attempts chiefly to illustrate that the Elizabethans found the flexibility of the Petrarchan sonnet suitable for conveying feelings both public and private.

The seventh chapter studies the role of the stanza in Petrarchan love in literature and life, examining its dual functions as a personal and generalized poem; whilst Chapter Eight considers the quatorzain as a poem of compliment and abuse in sixteenth-century society, dependent in each instance upon Petrarchan expression.

Chapter Nine examines in particular the religious sonnet, emphasizing the influence of Petrarchanism upon the language of devotion, but also discussing the moralistic quatorzain briefly.

Chapter Ten explores the relationship of the sonnet and music in literature and in actual settings, illustrating some points of musical treatment.

The Conclusion endeavours to bring together the main points of this study, to clarify the Elizabethan conception and understanding of the quatorzain.

NOTE

The texts referred to in this enquiry have been chiefly confined to those by English writers who composed during the reign of Elizabeth I, exceptions being made to include occasional reference to the writings of James VI of Scotland, and to some outside the period which throw light upon Elizabethan attitudes to the sonnet. These limits have been imposed because the emphasis of this thesis falls upon the importance of the quatorzain, literary and otherwise, for this society. Consequently, although the attempt has been made to indicate the by-ways along which the sonneteer ventured, most detailed examination has been given to the stanza as a Petrarchan poem. The aim has not been to impose a predominant pattern upon the Elizabethan sonnet, but to bring into relief the important lines of this pattern against the literary and social background of the age.

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CHAPTER ONE

Elizabethan Definition of the Sonnet

The term "sonnet" in Elizabethan usage is both interesting and perplexing. It is interesting because the word was capable of conveying meanings beyond the formal description of that particular type of poem to which it is confined today; and it perplexes, because the sixteenth-century writer did not always indicate which meaning he had in mind, and later readers are frequently left to unravel the precise definition from the context, where this is possible, or to hazard a guess, in those cases in which the context is also amorphous. In this study upon the Elizabethan sonnet, part of which attempts to clarify contemporary attitudes to the poem, it is essential to be aware of the various senses which the term held for the Elizabethan, and an examination of the shades of meaning which the sonnet had in sixteenth-century writings is a necessary foundation for such an enquiry. The investigation reveals that the quatorzain was not considered to be an isolated form, but took its place amongst other types of verse with which it shared characteristics of form, subject matter, and adjuncts. These relationships are of importance in understanding the Elizabethan

approach to the regular sonnet, and the contemporary versatility of this complex poem.

The New English Dictionary gives two definitions of the sonnet. The first is descriptive of the particular verse form associated with the quatorzain, and the second offers a general description of the flexible nature of the term:

1. A piece of verse (properly expressive of one main idea) consisting of fourteen decasyllabic lines, with rimes arranged according to one or other certain definite schemes.
2. A short poem or piece of verse; in early use especially one of a lyrical and amatory character.

These senses outline the basic technical and extended meanings of the word, but they do not provide the details required to fully understand the Elizabethan usage of the term.

Contemporary critics showed little desire to define the sonnet. Most were more concerned with the morality of poetry than with the definition of its forms, and of those writers interested in the practice, rather than in the justification, of poetry, only Gascoigne and James VI of Scotland gave formal descriptions of the poem. In view of the current flexible practice, Gascoigne was tentative in proposing his definition:

some thinke that all Poemes (being short) may be called Sonets, as in deede it is a diminutiue worde deſiued of Sonare, but yet I can beſte allowe to call thoſe Sonnets whiche are of fourtene lynes, euery line conteyning tenne ſyllables. The firſte twelue do ryme in ſtaues of foure lines by croſſe meetre, and the laſt two ryming together do conclude the whole. There are Dyſſaynes, and Syxaines, which are of ten lines, and of ſixe lines,

commonly used by the French, which some English writers do also term by the name of Sonettes.⁽¹⁾

The young Scottish king, on the other hand, made no concession to English vagaries, in defining "Sonet verse" as "of fourtene lynis, and ten fete in euery lyne."² However, few Elizabethans elected to follow such precepts wholeheartedly, and it is only possible to be sure that a writer was thinking specifically of the regular sonnet if he used the term in a context which clearly indicated this (as in the passage quoted above from Gascoigne, or in Daniel's Defence of Ryme, when he answered Campion's attack on the poem³), or if he referred to the "quatorzain" itself. The Posies, 1575, which Gascoigne reprinted from the earlier Hundreth Sundrie Flowres, 1573, as his own composition, upheld the practice he advocated in the "Certayne Notes of Instruction" of the later volume, for only those poems which are technically sonnets were so termed. In this, the work followed the principles of the earlier book, which, if not Gascoigne's own collected work, reflected a similarity of approach to the poem between the soldier-poet and the editor of A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres.⁴ The Vannetyes and Toyes of Sir Arthur Gorges also demonstrates a strict use of the term, for the quatorzain "is the

¹ Certayne Notes of Instruction, 1575, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, I, 55.

² Ane schort Treatise, 1584, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 223.

³ Eliz.Crit.Essays, II, 365.

⁴ For the question of authorship of this volume, see the edition by B.M. Ward, 1926, pp. [vii] ff.

only form in the whole manuscript to receive the title Sonnet".¹ Francis Davison showed a strong tendency towards a scrupulous approach in The Poetical Rhapsody, 1602, in which, whilst not every quatorzain is graced with the name of sonnet, it is only applied to this poem, and three others closely related to the form: one is a quatorzain which has an extra couplet; nine are eighteen-line sonnets from Watson's Hekatompathia; and one is a piece of verse of twelve lines, which, although not metrically connected with the regular sonnet, is a "reporting" poem, as are some quatorzains.² In general, however, the Elizabethans were indiscriminate in the use of the term, and, as Gascoigne tells us, employed the word to cover any short poem.³ Their practice is typified by Breton's Passionate Shepheard, 1604, in which only numbers 6 and 10 of the "Sundry sweet Sonnets and Passionated Poems" are quatorzains, but all eleven poems are headed "sonet".⁴

The arrangement of the fourteen-line sonnets is further proof of the freedom with which the Elizabethans approached the form, which received some strange interpretations at their hands. Some stanzas do not qualify for inclusion under a strict definition of the form

¹The Poems of Sir Arthur Gorges, ed. H.E. Sandison, Oxford, 1953, p. xxx.

²ed. H.E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, I, nos. 54; 220-21, 223-29, 162. For a "reporting" sonnet, see The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. A. Feuillerat, Cambridge, 1962, II, 53.

³cf. B. Googe, Eglogs, Epytaphes and Sonettes, 1563, sig. [Ev verso] ff; A. Gorgious Gallery, 1578, ed. H.E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1926, pp. 31, 93; Brittons Bowre of Delights, 1591, ed. H.E. Rollins, Huntington Library Publs., Cambridge, Mass., 1933, pp. xx-xxi.

⁴The terminology here may be influenced by the fact that all are love poems. See also below, p. 19.

at all, as, for example, the six poems of twelve unrhyming decasyllabic lines and a concluding couplet which Gabriel Harvey included in his Four Letters and Certain Sonnets, 1592¹; or the three very irregular quatorzains supplied to Harvey by the unknown Gentlewoman in Pierces Supererogation, 1593, which show a strong bias towards the couplet: AABBCDCDEEFGFG; ABABCCDDEFFEGG; ABBACCDDEFFEGG.² Poems consisting of seven rhyming couplets, in poulter's measure, appeared as "sonnets"; one in the Bowre of Delights (6), and the other, more significantly, in Sir Arthur Gorges's Vannetyes and Toyes (73). The insatiable Elizabethan appetite for metrical experiment produced some one hundred and seventeen different rhyme-schemes for the quatorzain, ninety-one of which occur once only, or only within the work of one poet. It is generally those sonneteers who favoured, or had leanings towards, the Petrarchan form, who employed diversity of rhyme arrangements. In their collected quatorzains, Constable, Alabaster, Sidney, and Barnes, used respectively eight, seventeen, twenty-two, and thirty-seven, different schemes. Barnes has some eccentric patterns in Parthenophil and Parthenophe. In several sonnets, he has three different rhyme words within the second quatrain, and occasionally he uses four within these four lines.³

¹ 11-15, 22.

² The Works of Gabriel Harvey, ed. A.B. Grosart, Huth Library, 1884, II, 17f. cf. ibid., p.340; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 1593, 9, 94, Elizabethan Sonnets, ed. S. Lec, 1904, I; The Sonnets of William Alabaster, ed. G.M. Story and H. Gardner, Oxford English Monographs, Oxford, 1959, 3, 4, 8, 10, 14, 16.

³ Sonnets 10, 12, 17, 42, 59, 84; 47, 99.

Most sonneteers were more conservative, and the majority preferred the Shakespearean quatorzain, of which there are more than eight hundred Elizabethan examples. The three quatrains and a couplet made it an easier form to master than the complex Petrarchan poem, which calls for strictly disciplined thought, and considerable metrical skill; the latter particularly in a language like English, which is not as rich in rhyme words as is the Italian tongue. The Shakespearean is the arrangement favoured by Shakespeare and two other major Elizabethan sonneteers, Daniel and Drayton, and by a host of lesser poets. The variations upon this pattern are necessarily limited in character, and generally directed towards confining the sonnet to fewer rhymes, as in the fifth quatorzain of Idea, 1619, which follows the scheme ABABBABABCBCAA; or in Zepheria, 1594, the nineteenth sonnet of which runs ABABACACCACADD. The most interesting variant is the inverted Shakespearean form which appears as the epitaph of Philenia and Minecius in Thomas Lodge's A Margarite of America, 1596. The couplet is placed after the first quatrain, and these six lines are set out typographically as a sestet, which is followed by the other two quatrains: ABABCC: DEDEFGE. The arrangement is clearly meant to be symbolic of the disruptive fate which overtook the two young lovers.¹ The most widely used variant is the rhyme scheme ABBACDDCEFFEGG, which

¹p.31, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, Glasgow, 1883, III. (The works in the four volumes of this edition are all paginated separately)

occurs in eleven different poets, including Drayton, Barnfield, Lodge and Watson.¹

The Petrarchan sonnet is chiefly represented by the form ABBAABBACDCDEE. It is the form employed for more than half the quatorzains of Astrophil and Stella, and is Constable's favourite arrangement. It is popular with Barnes, who has nine examples in Parthenophil and Parthenophe,² and ninety-three amongst his Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets, 1595,³ and this pattern occurs widely in the Poetical Rhapsody.⁴ There are some thirty-two other regular sonnet stanzas of the Petrarchan variety, which are in general confined to Constable, Sidney, Alabaster, Barnes, and The Poetical Rhapsody. Sidney has several poems in which he varies the rhyme scheme of the octet to ABABABAB and ABABBABA,⁵ but no other sonneteer, using the regular Petrarchan form, alters the deployment of the first eight lines. The sestet exhibits the customary flexibility; one interesting manifestation of the sonneteer's ingenuity being demonstrated by Alabaster, who, in ten of his quatorzains, limits the rhymes of the sestet to two instead of the usual three.⁶ Several poems outside the works of these

¹Ideas Mirrour, 1594, 5,6,9,21,22,36,47, The Works of Michael Drayton, ed. J.W. Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, I; Cynthia, 1595, in all sonnets, The Poems of Richard Barnfield [ed. M. Summers], 1936; Phyllis, 1593, Eliz.Sonnets II; Tears of Fancie, 1593, ibid., I.

²25, 93-97, 100, 101, 104.

³All except 20, 33, 55, 94, 96, 98 and 99.

⁴ed. Rollins, I, nos. 13,14,17,55,59,60,62,63,64,65,67,68.

⁵Astrophil and Stella 1,3,7,24-26,35,50,73,88,103; 5,6,43,75,87, The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. W.A.Ringler, Jr., Oxford, 1962; Prose Works, ed. Feuillerat, II, 32; 8, 24, 26.

⁶Sonnets, ed. Story and Gardner, 23,28,33,35,39,45,58,59,63,64.

writers would be regular Petrarchan sonnets, except that they employ four rhyme words in the octet, following the form ABBACDDC.¹ There are also three interesting hybrids, which open in the manner of the Shakespearean quatorzain, but have a Petrarchan sestet. They are Lodge's "Such darke obscured clouds" (ABABCDCEFGEGF); his "O shadie vales" (ABABCDCEFGGERG)²; and "Ambitious Love hath forced me to aspire" (ABABCDCEFEFGFG) from Byrd's Psalmes, Sonets & songs, 1588.³

Least popular was the Spenserian sonnet, which combines the disadvantages of the Shakespearean arrangement with a constant referring to the previous quatrain, which slows down the movement of the poem, and makes it ponderous. Few poets, apart from Spenser himself, followed this pattern. Lok employed it most heavily, writing the first part of his Sundry Sonnets of Christian Passions, and fifty-nine of the complimentary verses accompanying Ecclesiastes, 1597, in this stanza. Barnes appears to have attempted the form in Parthenophil and Parthenophe, where sonnet 23 follows the Spenserian pattern through the first twelve lines, but the two final ones are unrhymed; and in sonnet 11, he returns to the Petrarchan deployment in the sestet: ABABBCBCDCDEDE.

Occasionally, the sonnet of fourteen lines turned to other lyric stanzas for its inspiration. The "sonnets" in Greene's Philomela,

¹G.Gascoigne, The Posies, ed.J.W.Cunliffe, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge, 1907, p.59; W.Byrd, Songs of sundrie natures, 1589, nos. 36 and 37, English Madrigal Verse, ed.E.H.Fellowes, Oxford, second ed. repr. 1950, p.59; The Poems of Queen Elizabeth, ed.L.Bradner, Rhode Island, 1964, p.8; T.Lodge, Margarite, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, III, 16, 78.

²William Longbeard, 1593, Complete Works, op.cit., II, 36; A Margarite, p.78, ibid., III.

³No.18, Eng.Mad.Verse, p.40.

1592, "On women Nature did bestow two eies", and "Nature forseeing how men would deuise", are simply two verses of rhyme royal; a form found also in Phyllis 13, and Sidney's "Wyth two strange fires of equall heate possest".¹ Two of Gabriel Harvey's quatorzains are built upon the ABABCC stanza, repeated once, and concluded by a couplet.² Barnes and Lok used a different six line unit, ABBAAB, with a concluding couplet, in Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 31, and sonnets 101-120 of the "Peculiar Prayers". Couplets and quatrains form the basis of Gascoigne's "Love, hope and death", rhyming AABCBCDDEFEEFGG, which makes the poem a pleasant lyric, but is destructive of the true sonnet movement.³

The Elizabethans were more faithful to the precept of the ten-syllable line, which is the length usually employed in the quatorzain. It is sufficiently long to allow the poet the scope to work out the intellectual content of his poem, and also to experiment with subtle variations of metre; Sidney, Shakespeare, Daniel and Drayton are particularly rich in the variety of their verbal music. Variations on the length of line generally indicate a movement towards a more purely lyrical expression, as in the hendecasyllables of Wilbye's "Of joys and pleasing pains I late went singing",⁴ and in sonnets

¹The Life and Complete Works, ed. A.B. Grosart, Huth Library, 1881-1886, XI, 142, 149; Arcadia, 1593, Prose Works, ed. Feuillerat, I, 310.

²Works, ed. Grosart, I, 295; II, 338.

³Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p. 394.

⁴First Set of English Madrigals, 1598, nos. 26 and 27, Eng.Mad.Verse, p. 237.

of twelve-syllable lines, such as Lodge's "These fierce incessant waves that stream along my face", or Sidney's "She comes, and streight therewith her shining twins do move/Their rayes to me", and "Whose lookes, whose beames be jdy, whose motion is delight", which become poems of mood, of sadness, joy, and anticipation.¹ A line longer than twelve syllables tends to be unsatisfactory; the unusual fourteen-syllable units of Gorges's "O love how my sweete Mistres in bewty all excellethe" captures the exquisite rapture and pain of love at first, but becomes tiresome before it ends.² Those sonnets which employ lines of varying length are closer to the lyric proper than to the intellectual quatorzain, as the last six lines of "Unhappy Eyes, the causers of my paine" clearly show:

The sighs that from my Heart ascend,
Like winde disperse the flame throughout my brest,
No part is left to harbour quiet rest,
I burme in fire, and do not spend;
Like him, whose growing maw,
The vulture still doth gnaw.(3)

In using the resources of the lyric, the Elizabethans were making a logical approach to the sonnet, for it is a lyric form; and they did not recognize any reason to regard the stanza as sacrosanct. The poet was at liberty to make the poem a fifteen-line stanza, either on the Petrarchan pattern, as in Phyllis 17 (ABBAABBACDCDEE), or on the Shakespearean one, as in Parthenophil

¹Phyllis 37; A & S 76, 77. But contrast A & S 1, 8; and the different effect achieved in 6.

²Poems, ed. Sandison, 71.

³Poetical Rhapsody, ed. Rollins, I, no. 91, ll. 9-14.

and Parthenophe 2 (ABABCDCDEFEF~~F~~GG) and Zepheria 23 (ABAB~~A~~CDCDEFEF~~F~~GG). If the regular fourteen lines were insufficient to contain the whole of his thought, he could add an extra couplet to them, as Walter Davison did in "Fayre is thy face" (ABBAABBACDDCEEFF). This type of sixteen-line sonnet also occurs in Love's Labour's Lost, "So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not" (ABABCDCDEFEF~~F~~GGHH).¹ The eighteen-line sonnet is represented in Drayton's Ideas Mirrour, 1594, by Amours 15 and 16, and the prefatory verse by "Gorbo il fidele", of four quatrains and a concluding couplet; but the most popular eighteen-line form was that based on the ABABCC "Sixaine" stanza.² This may have influenced the terminology of this particular type of poem, but a stronger influence was probably exerted by the sonnets in this pattern by Thomas Watson, whose Hekatompathia, 1582, was in vanguard of the new Petrarchan movement in England.

The Elizabethan "sonnet", therefore, has connotations of intricacy and artifice, and was as applicable to the graceful lyrics in which the period was so rich, as to the quatorzain itself. Grace and metrical virtuosity are found at their highest in Lodge's Rosalynde, 1590, where twelve of the twenty verse divertissements are called by the term "sonnet", or by the Italian form, "sonnetto".³

¹ ibid. 54; IV, iii, 26 ff, The Works of William Shakespeare, ed. W.G. Clark and W.A. Wright, The Globe Edition, second ed., repr. 1923.

² See G. Whetstone, An Heptameron of Ciuill Discourses, 1582, sigs. [Ci verso, Giiiij verso, Piiiij] and xi (B.M. Press Mark C.59.ff.21); R. Greene, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, VII, 89, 90, 136; VIII, 166; XII, 73; N. Breton, Bowre, ed. Hollins, 14, 42, 45, 54; T. Lodge, Forbonius and Priscerra [1584], p.55, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, I,

³ pp. 25, 48, 61, 71, 74, 76, 100, 102, 109, 127, 129, 130, Complete Works, op.cit., I.

The verse of Greene's Francescos Fortunes, 1590, is also outstanding for its variety and metrical skill, notably Isabel's "sonnet", which consists of three stanzas of nine lines, the first six having four stresses, which are followed by two lines of two stresses, and a concluding one of four stresses again, rhyming ABCABCDDDB.¹ The "sonnet" was merely one of the terms which were used to describe such verses, and took its place beside other indeterminate genres of the Elizabethan critical vocabulary, as the last-mentioned work by Greene indicates; another poem in Francescos Fortunes is called a "fancie" (p. 175), a "Canzon" (p. 179) and a "Sonnet" (p. 180).²

The word could also be used more generally to mean "witty and ingenious verse", and this is its implication in the following passage from The Pilgrimage to Parnassus, ?1598/1599; Consiliodorus is describing the rewards awaiting the young aspirants of poetry when Mount Parnassus is reached:

There may youe bath youre lipps in Helicon
 And wash youre tounge in Aganippes well
 And teach them warble out some sweet sonnetes
 To ravishe all the fildes and neighbour groues,
 That aged Collin, leaninge on his staffe,
 ...May wonder at your sweete melodious pipe
 And be attentiu to youre harmonie.(3)

The term is also open to this interpretation in Gabriel Harvey's Letter-Book, where, after the long passage in English hexameters

¹Complete Works, ed. Grosart, VII, 167.

²cf. ibid., "Radagon in Diñnem", pp.212, 215.

³I, ll. 41-45, 47-48: The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. J.B. Leishman, 1949.

describing the Italianate Englishman, the writer continues: "Nether will I here kepe from mi g^hetle masters on other sonnet".¹ This other sonnet, "Hungry vertu/Verbally praysid", could qualify as a "sonnet" by its shortness, but the ingenuity and wit of employing classical metres in English seem to be the ideas uppermost in Harvey's use of the term in this instance.

Wit is another characteristic which the quatorzain shared with its fellow sonnets; it is one, moreover, which it also shared with the epigram. The two poems are not unrelated:

The epigram is written in Greek in the elegiac verse, and among the Greek epigrams one finds poems very like the sonnets of modern poetry. The sonnet is lyric in form...[and corresponds] to the Greek epigram.(2)

The sixteenth century was aware of this correspondence, and one French critic declared that "Sonnet n'est autre chose que le parfait epigramme de l'Italien".³ The amended definition, offered by Professor H.H. Hudson⁴ of Sense 2 of the "epigram" in the New English Dictionary, indicates the broad area which both poetic forms have in common:

A short poem ending in a witty or ingenious turn of thought [or sententious comment], to which the rest of the composition is intended to lead up.

¹The Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey, A.D.1573-1580, ed. E.J.L. Scott, Camden Soc., New Series LXXIII, 1884, p. 98.

²W.P. Ker, Form and Style in Poetry, ed. R.W. Chambers, 1928, p.156.

³T. Sebillet, L'Art Poetique Françoys, 1548, ed. F. Gaiffe, Paris, 1910, p.115.

⁴The Epigram in the English Renaissance, Princeton, 1948, p.4.

The disposition of the Shakespearean sonnet, in particular, with its division into three blocks of four lines and a couplet, or one block of twelve lines and a concluding two, further emphasises the connection between the sonnet and the epigram. For the Elizabethan, there was no formal distinction between the two, and Sir John Harington, who occasionally used the quatorzain for his epigram,¹ distinguished the one from the other purely on the grounds of content:

Once, by mishap, two Poets fell a-squaring,
The Sonnet, and our Epigram comparing;
And Faustus, hauing long demurd vpon it,
Yet, at the last, gaue sentence for the Sonnet.
Now, for such censure, this his chiefe defence is,
Their sugred taste best likes his likresse senses.
Well, though I grant Sugar may please the taste,
Yet let my verse haue salt to make it last. (2)

The two poems were never considered quite synonymous, and even the amatory epigram, which, one would suppose, should correspond very closely to the sonnet, was marked out by its pungency, for Dickenson speaks of the "sharp-cutting conceitfull Epigrams, limiting delight in compendious sweetnesse".³ "Sharp-cutting" is not an epithet which the Elizabethan would have applied to the conceitful love sonnet, which also limits delight in compendious sweetnesse.

The sweetness of the sonnet results from its content, and the word often meant "love poem", a description which is equally suitable for the majority of both Elizabethan quatorzains and other lyrics.

¹The Epigrams of Sir John Harington, [n.d.], ed. N.E. McClure, Philadelphia, 1926, nos. 77, 116, 146, 147, 158, 247, 321, 349, 398, 426.

²ibid., no. 38.

³Arisbas, 1594, p. 78, Prose and Verse, ed. A.E. Grosart, Occasional Issues of Unique or Very Rare Books, VI, 1878. (The works in this volume are all paginated separately.)

The connotations of passion which the term had, made it applicable to the most unlikely forms; thus item 80 of Watson's Hekatompathia describes the following "Pasquine Piller erected in the despite of Loue" as a "sonnet", and the Latin verses, "Foelices alij inuenes, quos blandula Cypria/Aptos fecit amoribus" (45), also merit this designation. The poems of the little volume are, indeed, termed "passion" or "sonnet", or occasionally both, indiscriminately. Greene applied the term, with no sense of anachronism, to classical poetry:

Who so readeth the Romish Records, and Grecian Histories, and turneth ouer the volumes filled with the reports of passionate louers, shall find sundrie Sonnets sawsed with sorrowful passions. (1)

Subject matter overrode considerations of length in Gabriel Harvey's long satirical poem on the two extremes of Petrarchan passion, which he called "An amorous odious sonnet".²

Like the quatorzain, the sonnet was particularly connected with the lover's own composition.³ Those born under the sign of Venus were known for "applying their mind^s to songs & sonets"⁴, and the poem was one of the kinds of verse which, according to Puttenham, expressed "the many moodes and pangs of louers".⁵ In one of the

¹Morando (Part I), 1587, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, III, 63.

²Letter Book, ed. Scott, p.101. cf. also ibid., p.90; Pierces Super-erogation, Works of Gabriel Harvey, ed. Grosart, II, 92; P. Sidney, An Apologie for Poetrie, 1595, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 191,201; J. Lyly, Euphues, 1578, Works, ed. R.W.Bond, Oxford, 1902, I, 224,251,252,287; the lyrics of Breton, Lodge and Greene, referred to above, pp.9, 17f, and footnotes; see also below, p.22f

³See also below, pp. ~~9-17f~~. 141f, 159, 163, 244ff.

⁴R. Greene, Planetomachia, 1585, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, V, 103.

⁵The Arte of English Poesie, ed. G.D. Willcock and A. Walker, Cambridge 1936, p45.

speeches delivered before the Queen during her visit to Bisham in 1592, Pan rebuked the virgins who had rejected love:

How doe you burne time, and drowne beauty, in
pricking of clouts, when you should be penning of
Sonnets? (1)

In the Apologie, Sidney called down a humorous curse on the opponents of poetry:

that while you liue, you liue in love, and neuer
get fauour for lacking skill of a Sonnet. (2)

As a poem of courtship, the sonnet sometimes incurred opprobrium from the moralists, and the term is used with a pejorative meaning in William Vaughan's Golden Grove, 1600, when he condemns "baudy sonnets and amorous allurements".³ Sidney had met such criticism on its own ground in his Apologie, by declaring that Plato did not banish poets from his commonwealth because of their immorality, as the sage allowed "communitie of women":

So as belike this banishment grewe not for affeminate
wantonnes, sith little should poetically Sonnets be
hurtfull when a man might haue what woman he listed. (4)

Against the background of the controversy over the morality of love poetry, the word is given an interesting satirical turn in All's Well that Ends Well, 1602/1603, when Parolles, his knavery laid bare, is further discomfited by the request of the First Lord for a copy of

¹J. Nichols, The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, [second ed.], 1823, III, 133. For the opposite view, see J. Lyly, Gallathea, ?1584/1585, III, iv, 46 ff, Works, ed. Bond, II.

²Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 207.

³ibid., II, 326.

⁴ibid., I, 191. cf. also p. 186.

the "sonnet" sent by the soldier to Diana, on Count Rousillon's behalf.¹ This poem of nine lines of unabashed crudity and villainy, is the furthest remove imaginable from the graceful and alluring love poetry of the Petrarchan tradition.²

As the sonnet belongs to the family of the lyric - Sidney wrote of "that Lyricall kind of Songs and Sonnets"³ - it was connected with music; for to the Elizabethan, the lyric signified "a short, metrical composition for singing".⁴ Music, the sonnet, and love, were all related, for love itself gave rise to music:

either it mittigateth the passions wherewith men are perplexed, or else augmenteth their pleasure, so that dailie they invent diuerse kindes of instruments, as Lutes, Citrons, Violles...whereon they plaie Midrigalls, Sonettes, Pauins, Measures, Galiardes, and all these in remembrance of Loue. (5)

For as Erasmus hath it, MUSICAM DOCET AMOR ET POESIN, Love will make them Musicians, and to compose Ditties, Madrigals, Elegies, Love Sonnets, and sing them to several pretty tunes. (6)

In such contexts, the term "sonnet" can be defined as "love song". Aliena, in Rosalynde, "intreate[d] MONTANUS to sing some amorous Sonnet",⁷ and in the same book, the disdainful Phoebe "scornefully warbled out this Sonnet",⁸ "Downe a downe,/Thus Phyllis sung." In

¹IV, iv, 354 ff, Works, Globe ed.

²For the discussion of morals and the love sonnet, see below, pp.131ff,151ff.

³Apologie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 201.

⁴C. Ing, Elizabethan Lyrics, 1951, p.70.

⁵R.Greene, The Debate Betweene Follie and Loue [1587], Complete Works, ed. Grosart, IV, 212.

⁶R. Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed.A.R.Shilleto,1896,III,203.

⁷p.55, The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge, Hunterian Club, I.

⁸ibid., p. 102.

John Dickenson's Arisbas, a welcome visitor to the shepherd rejected by Amaryllis was Hyalu^s, who would

sit with him and sing, tying his angels voyce to
the obseruations of musick, recording the skilfull
Swaines sweete ditties in heauenly notes: for he
loued him for his pleasing grace in passionate Sonets. (1)

The songs were frequently accompanied by the lover's instrument, the lute:

at such time as Prisceria solitarily solaced her
selfe at her windowe: in mournfull melodye (making
his Lute tunable to the straine of his voice)
[Forbonius] recorded this Sonet. (2)

glad that time had gi^ven him opportunitie to shew
his cunning before this Goddess, hee began to play,
and sung a sonnet to this effect. (3)

They were sometimes given other musical descriptions as well.

Montanus's "sonnet", "A Turtle sate vpon a leaeless tree", was also called a "mournfull Dittie"⁴; and Lentulus, in Greene's Tullies Loue, 1589, attempted to

prooue the force of beauty by a sonet...tuning
therefore his Lute to his voyce he sung this ditty.(5)

In the same book, "Fond faining Poets make of Loue a God" is termed both a "Sonet" and a "roundelet"; and "Sitting and sighing in my secret muse" receives both designations, in Greenes Neuer to late,

¹p.62, Prose and Verse, ed. Grosart.

²T. Lodge, Forbonius and Prisceria, p.55, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, I.

³R. Greene, Orpharion, 1599, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, II, 73. cf. also Greens Groats-worth of Wit, 1596, ibid., XII, 113.

⁴T. Lodge, Rosalynde, p.100, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, I. Mrs. Ing defines "ditty" in Elizabethan usage as "A song, or words for a song" (Eliz.Lyrics, p.67).

⁵Complete Works, ed. Grosart, VII, 133. cf. also Perimedes, ibid., p. 79 f.

1590.¹ Another of Greene's songs, "When Flora proude in pompe of all her flowers", is described as "a Sonnet written in the form of a Madrigale".²

The connection between the sonnet and music in the Elizabethan mind was so strong that the term was occasionally used with the meaning of "popular ballad", a sense not recorded in the New English Dictionary. William Webbe wrote disparagingly of

ryming Ballet makers and compylers of senceless Sonets...many such can frame an Ale-house song of fiue or sixe score verses, hobbling vppon some tune of a Northern Iygge, or Robyn hoode, or La lubber etc., and perhappes obserue iust number of sillables, eyght in one line, sixe in an other, and there withall an A to make a iercke in the ende. (3)

This pejorative usage was echoed by Nashe in the Anatomie of Absurditie 1589, when he spoke of the

Songs and Sonets, which euery rednose Fidler hath at his fingers end, and euery ignorant Ale knight will breath foorth ouer the potte. (4)

This meaning did not occur widely, but that it occurred at all is further evidence of the flexible nature which the term "sonnet" had in the Elizabethan period.

To the Elizabethan, therefore, the "sonnet" rarely signified that poetic form alone with which it is usually associated today.

¹Ibid., p.136; VIII, pp. 91, 93.

²Francescos Fortunes, ibid., VIII, 207.. cf. also Alcida, 1617, ibid., II, pp. 99, 100.

³A Discourse of English Poetrie, 1586, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 246.

⁴The Works of Thomas Nashe, ed. R.B. McKerrow, 1958, I, p.23 f. cf. also The First Return from Parnassus, ?1599/1600, II, i, 816 ff.; V, ii, 1503 ff. (The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. Leishman.)

The ^tTerm was chiefly descriptive of a genre of lyric poetry of delicacy and ingenuity: short poems in which the Elizabethan could demonstrate his "conceit". The subject matter, as most frequently in lyric verse, was generally of love; and when the term "sonnet" was used unspecifically, it usually had the connotation of "love poem", and was so used to denote all kinds of amatory verse. As a lyric, it was ipso facto considered to be suitable for singing, and the word "sonnet" was therefore to the Elizabethan an apt term for the (love) song. The sense of "light verse for singing" was even extended, in a few instances, to include the trivial popular ballads.

This last meaning had no connection with the quatorzain; but the poem belonged to the other categories which the sonnet included. Despite its fixed form, the fourteen-line poem was used with as much subtlety and skill as any other lyric by the greatest Elizabethan poets, and with a pleasing grace by many others; and no other form, perhaps, provided such a good schooling in disciplined control of measure and content. Like its fellow sonnets, the quatorzain was usually a poem of love, and one which expressed all the joys and vicissitudes experienced by the Petrarchan lover.¹ It was also connected with music, for it was a literary tradition that love lyrics should be sung, and the fourteen-line sonnet was duly included amongst them, and appeared, to a lesser extent, in the song-books.²

¹See below, p.280ff.

²See below, p.385ff

Although we cannot be sure that, when an Elizabethan wrote of the "sonnet", he meant the quatorzain, we can be sure that he would not have excluded that poem from the general category. Thus it is justifiable in this study to interpret the general remarks made by the Elizabethans about the "sonnet" as inclusive of the quatorzain, and therefore relevant to the examination of their attitudes to the poem, which were as various as the different shades of meaning of the term "sonnet" indicate.

CHAPTER TWO

Elizabethan Critical Attitudes to the Sonnet (1):The Sonnet Form

The sonnet was not a popular form in the published verse of the early and middle parts of Elizabeth's reign. It was to be found in Tottel's Miscellany, which, first published in the year preceding the Queen's accession, remained the most popular anthology until it was eclipsed by the Phoenix Nest, 1593¹; but the sonneteers of the Songs and Sonettes belonged to an earlier generation, and their example did not inspire the writers of the "drab age" verse. Apart from its appearances in A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres, 1573, and Gascoigne's Posies, 1575, and to a lesser extent in The Paradise of dainty deuices, 1576, and A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions, 1578, the poem was virtually unknown amongst Elizabethan poetry, until Newman's pirated edition of Astrophil² and Stella, 1591, supplemented by other of Sidney's verses and some of Daniel's quatorzains, inaugurated the flow of sonnet sequences from the press.

¹Nine known editions of Tottel's Miscellany were published between 1557 and 1587. See Tottel's Miscellany (1557-1587), ed. H.E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1929, II, 7 ff.

²Following the example of W.A. Ringler, Jr., in his edition of The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, Oxford, 1962, the form "Astrophil" has been preferred throughout this thesis.

The response of both readers and poets to the sonnet in the fifteen nineties makes it unlikely that the form had previously been as neglected as the facts of publication suggest; for, from being represented by only examples of mediocre poetry, the quatorzain became overnight the most sophisticated and graceful of English lyric forms, and one which could take its place beside those of Italy and France. The Elizabethans had plenty of opportunity to make the acquaintance of the latter at first hand. Many courtiers, following the Queen's example, spoke fluent Italian and French, and young men of this class completed their education with the grand tour of Europe, which brought them into contact not only with the legal and political writings of the countries they visited, but also with the fashionable verse of the day. Because of its association with Petrarchan love, the sonnet was a courtly poem, and therefore a particularly appropriate form for those of gentle blood to attempt. Evidence that they did so is furnished by Sir Philip Sidney, whose quatorzains in Arcadia and Certaine Sonnets were all written before 1581,¹ and bear the marks of experiments in translation and metre. Sir Arthur Gorges provides similar proof in the sonnets of his Vannetyes and Toyes, the majority of which were probably composed before 1584, the year in which he married Douglas Howard.² There was probably much pioneering work on the

¹See The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Ringler, "Commentary", pp. 365, [423].

²See The Poems of Sir Arthur Gorges, ed. H.H. Sandison, Oxford, 1953, "Introduction", p. xxviii f.

principles of translation and versification carried out quietly in the study during the fifteen seventies and eighties, the results of which would be seen only by the poet's circle of intimate friends; for to have published his verse would have compromised the courtier's status as a gentleman.

There is, moreover, a growing body of evidence and conjecture which seeks to establish an early date of composition for some of the published sequences. Much of Delia, and all Constable's secular sonnets, were written by 1590¹; and 1590, or 1591, was the probable date of composition of Ideas Mirrour.² Some critics believe certain of the quatorzains of the Amoretti to belong to the period of Spenser's unhappy love for "Rosalind",³ and, more controversially, Dr. Leslie Hotson has offered the years 1586-1589 for the friendship celebrated in the sonnets of Shakespeare's sequence.⁴ It now seems likely that Nashe's remark in the preface to Newman's edition of Astrophil and Stella,

Put out your rush candles, you Poets and Rimers,
and bequeath your crazed quatorzaynes to the Chaundlers,⁵

¹See The Poems of Henry Constable, ed. J. Grundy, Liverpool, 1960, "Introduction", pp. 59 f, 74 f.

²See B. Newdigate, Michael Drayton and his Circle, Oxford, 1941, p. 44.

³See P. Long, "Spenser and Lady Carey", MLR, 1908, III, 257 ff.; J.C. Smith, "The Problem of Spenser's Sonnets", ibid., 1910, V, 275 ff.; J.W. Lever, The Elizabethan Love Sonnet, 1956, p. 97 ff.

⁴Shakespeare's Sonnets Dated, 1949, p.35. This theory has recently been expanded, and a candidate for the friend put forward, in Dr. Hotson's Mr. W.H., 1964. C. Schaar, Elizabethan Sonnet Themes and the Dating of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Lund and Copenhagen, 1962, examines Shakespeare's poems in relation to other Elizabethan sequences and literary works, and believes the majority of the sonnets belong to the early fifteen nineties (see Eliz.Sonnet Themes, p.183 ff. in particular).

⁵The Works of Thomas Nashe, ed. R.B. McKerrow, 1958, I, 330.

was more than a piece of empty bravado, or advertising technique, and actually referred to the experiments in the form which were being made at this time. His advice was not taken, for the time had come for the sonnet to leave the seclusion of the study and the groups of private friends, and to receive full public acclaim.

That the poem was successful was due in large measure to its social prestige and functions,¹ and also to the strong appeal it had for poets on the continent and in England. The major Elizabethan poets all employed the stanza, and Daniel and Drayton, in particular, showed a marked interest in the form, both re-writing, cutting, and adding sonnets through several editions. Daniel's most drastic changes occurred in the second edition of 1594, but he continued to work at the sequence until 1601. Drayton's preoccupation with the poem was more prolonged, for the last radical alterations to Idea were completed in 1619, long after the sonnet had ceased to be fashionable. To this edition belongs one of the finest of all Elizabethan sonnets, "Since ther's no helpe" (61); it is the culmination of Drayton's powers as a sonneteer, and a vindication of his years of devotion to the quatorzain.

In spite of the attraction which the poem had for the poets, there was little critical discussion of the sonnet in Elizabethan writings. One reason for this lay in the fact that the major issue of Elizabethan poetics was the attack upon and justification of poetry, which was a moral rather than a literary argument, and one in which

¹See below, p. 129 ff.

the sonnet was unlikely to figure to its advantage. As it was primarily a poem of love, it was ipso facto condemned by the opponents of poetry in their attack on amatory verse; and for the same reason, it was avoided by the defenders, for the quatorzain offered them no grounds on which to base their defence. In marked contrast to the critics of France and Italy, the Elizabethans showed a surprising reticence about discussing the poem as a form. After the definitions given in passing by Gascoigne and James VI,¹ there was a silence on the subject of the stanza which was not broken until Campion's attack upon the quatorzain in 1602 drew a reply from Daniel, published three years later. This reticence about the poem cannot be ascribed to lack of interest in lyrical forms, for no one who is unaware of the subtleties and requirements of the stanza can write a successful sonnet, and the Elizabethans wrote many. The reason must lie, therefore, in the critical theory of the age, as it is not to be accounted for by the practice of the poets.

The literary theory of the sixteenth century sprang ultimately from the classics, and it was in the Renaissance application of these to modern literature that the Elizabethan attitudes to the sonnet form were founded.

The growth of the new learning in Europe had awakened interest in concepts of form and modes of art unknown to the previous age, and consequently there had grown up a school of thought which believed

¹See above, pp. 7, 8.

that modern poets could achieve the perfection of the Ancients only by strict imitation of Latin and Greek forms. This rigid view, however, contained within itself the seeds of a more liberal doctrine of imitation, for the study of classical forms led in turn to an interest in those of the vernacular, through the influence of a classical appreciation of order.¹ Classicism, therefore, had a two-fold application, one bringing classical forms into vernacular poetry, and the other causing vernacular forms to be judged from and evaluated by the standards set by the works of the Ancients. Critics tended to support whichever application they considered to answer their national need; and here it is interesting to contrast the attitudes of the Italian and French theorists against those of the Elizabethan critics.

In Italy, who considered herself the cultural descendant of Rome, regard for the classics was equalled by pride in her own achievements, and manuals commending vernacular poetry and native forms, including the sonnet, abounded in the sixteenth century. The Italians saw the latter as a vindication of their language, and a poem which had, moreover, the authority of Dante and Petrarch, men who were distanced enough in time to be recognised as classics in their own right, and yet close in spirit to the modern age.² Their practice was always referred to in the handbooks of Italian verse

¹See J.E. Spingarn, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, New York, 1899, p.126 f.; A.J. Smith, "Theory and Practice in Renaissance Poetry: Two Kinds of Imitation", Bull. John Rylands Library, 1964-1965, XLVII, 213 f.

²See V. Hall, Jr., Renaissance Literary Criticism, New York, 1945, p.61.

composition; for example, Trissino rejected the three quatrains and concluding couplet sonnet form, because Dante and Petrarch used the Italian arrangement¹; and in his discussion of the stanza, Equicola commanded the aspiring poet to follow the example of Petrarch alone, if he wished to reach the heights of perfection:

Il Petrarca, il qual sole riduſe à somma eccellentia
il poetico stile volgare, à cui solo sono obligate
le Muse materne Italice, le quali se colessero parlare,
altramente poetando non parleriano, il qual solo chi
imiterà, so conoscerà eſſer tra gli altri eminente. (2)

In the beauty of its form, the sonnet was held to be comparable with the classical ode,³ and one critic went further, and declared that it surpassed all classical forms.⁴ A combination of national pride, therefore, and their highly developed aesthetic sense, led the Italians to favour a liberal approach to classicism.

They were followed in this by the Pléiade, for the aim of this school, as set forth in du Bellay's La Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Françoise, 1548, was to beautify the French language by borrowing from both classical and later kinds of poetry. Italy was to be the beacon to guide poets in their practice, and du Bellay had no reserve about advocating the imitation of the Italians and the use of their elegant forms: "Pour le sonnet donques tu as Petrarque et quelques modernes Italiens".⁵ Although Barthélemy Aneau

¹Tutte le Opere, [ed. Marquis S. Maffei], Verona, 1729, II, 44.

²Institutioni...al comporre in ogni sorte di Rima della lingua volgare, Milan, 1541, sigs. [Fij verso] - Fiiij.

³ibid., sig. [Ciiij].

⁴G. Ruscelli, Del Modo di Comporre in Versi nella Lingua Italiana, Venice, 1559, p. CXLII ff.

⁵ed. H. Chamard, Paris, 1904, p. 224 f.

protested against the introduction of foreign poems, and commended native verses, "qui toutesfois en toute perfection d'art, et d'invention excèdent tes beaux Sonnets, et Odes",¹ the Pléiade satisfied the national honour by pointing to the Provençal origin of the quatorzain, which Petrarch had later adapted so admirably.² The French critics further demonstrated their kinship with the Italians, by also linking the sonnet and the ode, thus giving the former poem the status of a modern classical form.³

The lack of such discussion of the sonnet, and of lyrical forms in general, in the English criticism of the sixteenth century, indicates that the Elizabethans favoured a stricter interpretation of the doctrine of imitation. The classical world had obvious attractions for this nation, eager to play its part in the modern age. In the Romans in particular, the Renaissance ideals of the man of action and the man of letters were united, and the ambition of the Elizabethans for honour in arms was equalled only by their zeal for renown in literature. It is therefore hardly surprising that they should have seen the imitation of the classics as the means to this end. The works of the Ancients offered the qualities of perfection and permanence, firm bases on which to build a literature which was to take its place beside those of Italy and France.

¹Le Quintil Horatian, 1550, Deffence et Illustration, ed. E. Person, Paris, 1878, "Appendice", p. 202. (Author given as "Charles Fontaine")

²J. Vauquelin de La Fresnaye, L'Art Poétique, 1605 (written 1574-1578), pub. A. Genty, Paris, 1862, pp. 28, 82.

³ibid., p. 17; J. du Bellay, Deffence et Illustration, ed. Chamard, p. 221 f.

The sonnet was at a disadvantage whder such circumstances. Moreover, it lacked the conscious national appeal, which it had on the continent, to overcome this set-back. The poem was a distinctly alien form, and Chaucer, the only older English poet comparable with Dante and Petrarch, had unfortunately not naturalised it. Wyatt and Surrey, whose translations first established the quatorzain in England, were highly praised by Puttenham for their contribution to native poetry in general; they were recognised as "the first reformers of our English meetre and stile",¹ and "the two chief lâternes of light to all others that haue since employed their pennes vpon English Poesie",² but they were nowhere credited with the supreme authority accorded to Petrarch by the Italians. Petrarch himself was not always considered to be above reproach. It is noticeable that, when the classicist Gabriel Harvey praised the Italian poet, it was for the delicacy and rarefied nature of his passion, rather than for the form of his verse.³

The reverence of the Elizabethans for ancient literature resulted in the rejection of modern forms by the classical purist, and doubts about the validity of these forms were experienced by the more liberal-minded critics. Sir John Harington related how, during the translation of Orlando Furioso, he pictured his tutor

¹The Arte of English Poesie, 1589, ed. G.D. Willcock and A. Walker, Cambridge, 1936, p. 60.

²ibid., p. 62.

³Pierces Supererogation, 1593, The Works of Gabriel Harvey, ed. A.B. Grosart, Huth Library, 1884, II, 92 f. See also below, p. 164.

rebuking his old pupil for betraying his education:

... 'was it for this that I read Aristotle and Plato to you, and instructed you so carefully both in Greek & Latin, to haue you now become a translator of Italian toyes?' (1)

George Chapman voiced the opinion of the classical purist, when he said that modern stanzas were a violation of the principles of the Ancients:

for talke our quidditical Italianiates of what proportion soeuer their strooting lips affect, vnlesse it be in these coopplets into which I haue hastily translated this Shield, they shall neuer do Homer so much right, in any octaues, canzons, canzonets, or with whatsoever fustian Epigraphes they shall entitle their measures. (2)

The classicists' attitude was pardied by Shakespeare in Love's Labour's Lost, when Holofernes was made to pass censure on Biron's intercepted sonnet:

Here are only numbers ratified; but, for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poetry, caret. Ovidius Naso was the man. (3)

Later, the pedant undertook to

prove those verses to be very unlearned, neither savouring of poetry, wit, nor invention. (4)

The poem lacked the sanction of a classical form.

Belief in the innate superiority of the classics was at the heart of Elizabethan criticism, and this is shown most clearly in

¹ A Briefe Apologie of Poetrie, 1591, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, II, 220.

² Achilles Shield, 1598, "To the Wnderstander", Eliz. Crit. Essays, II, 306 f.

³ IV, ii, 125-127, The Works of William Shakespeare, ed. W.G. Clark and W.A. Wright, Globe edition, second ed., repr. 1923.

⁴ ibid., IV, ii, 163-165.

the strength of the movement to introduce the quantitative measures of the Ancients into English poetry.

Interest in reformed versifying grew after the publication of Roger Ascham's The Scholemaster in 1570, and was not confined to academic circles, but was felt by the leading poets of the day.

Spenser wrote to Gabriel Harvey that Sidney and Dyer

have proclaimed in their ἀπεὶπαύω a generall surceasing and silence of balde Rymers, and also of the verie beste too: in steade wherof, they haue, by autho[r]itie of their whole Senate, prescribed certaine Lawes and rules of Quantities of English sillables for English Verse, hauing had thereof already greate practise, and drawn mee to their faction. (1)

The subsequent publication of the Spenser/Harvey correspondence on reformed versifying, the additional chapter incorporated into The Arte of English Poesie,² and the metrical experiments of Stanyhurst's Aeneid, all testify to the widespread interest and support the new poetry aroused and won.

The case for the movement rested upon the syllogism that the Ancients wrote good poetry; the Ancients wrote in quantitative verse; if English poetry was written in quantitative measures, English poetry would be as good as that of Greece and Rome. It is a false argument, but, at the time when it was propounded, the Elizabethans did not have a body of native English verse with which to gainsay the proposition. The change in ideas and language from

¹Two other very Commendable Letters, I, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 89.

²Ch. XII [XIII].

the medieval age to the Renaissance made the older English poets seem more alien in some respects than the Ancients. The failure of these poets to attain the perfection found in Latin and Greek verse was seen as the result of their dependence on rhyme:

...if soch good wittes, and forward diligence, had bene directed to follow the best examples, and not have bene caryed by tyme and custome, to content themselues with that barbarous and rude Ryming, emonges their other worthy praises, which they haue lustly deserued, this had not bene the least, to be counted emonges men of learning and skill, more like vnto the Grecians, than vnto the Gothians, in handling of their verse. (1)

In his Discourse of English Poetrie, 1586, Webbe echoed Ascham,² and made a humble appeal to the "learned Lawreat Masters of Englande" to affect reformed versifying, to "winne credite" to their language, and to wipe out the "enormities" of English verse.³ Even the moderate Puttenham, a supporter of rhyme on the sensible, and Horatian, ground\$ of custom, was of the opinion that

if mens eares were not perchance to daintie, or their iudgements ouer partiall, [classical measures] would peradventure nothing at all misbecome our arte, but make in our meetres a more pleasant numerositie then now is, (4)

although he finally dismissed the experiment of reformed versifying as

but to be pleasantly scauned vpon, as are all nouelties so friuolous and ridiculous as it. (5)

¹R. Ascham, The Scholemaster, The English Works, ed. W.A. Wright, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge, 1904, p. 289.

²Eliz. Crit. Essays, I, 278.

³ibid., I, 229.

⁴Arte of English Poesie, ed. Willcock and Walter, p. 113.

⁵ibid., p. 119.

However, the weight of classical opinion was with Harvey, when he described the difference between "Barbarous and Balductum Rymes" and "Artificial Verses" as

the one being in manner of pure and fine Goulde, the other but counterfet and base ylfauoured Copper. (1)

The purist, therefore, could not allow rhyme at all, not even "the verie beste". Ascham condemned this failing in Chaucer and Petrarch, and rebuked those readers who

Be not able to make trew difference, what is a fault, and what is a iust prayse, in those two worthie wittes. (2)

It was in the form of his poetry that Petrarch was at fault, he was not sufficiently classical. Ascham compared the Italian poet's practice unfavourably with that of Felice Figliucci of Sienna, a translator of Aristotle:

And when soeuer he expresseth Aristotles preceptes, he translateth them, not after the Rymes of Petrarce, but into soch kinde of perfite verse, with like feete and quantitie of sillables, as he found them before in the Greke tonge. (3)

The classicist could not forgive this weakness. More than forty years after the publication of The Scholemaster, Drummond of Hawthornden recorded this remark of Ben Jonson's, "he cursed petrarch for redacting Verses to Sonnets".⁴

The evils of rhyme blinded the upholder of classical measures

¹Three Proper and wittie familiar Letters, 1580, "A Gallant Familiar Letter", Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 101.

²The Scholemaster, English Works, p. 290.

³ibid., p. 292.

⁴Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford and F. Simpson, Oxford, 1925-1952, "Conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden", I, 133.

to the beauty of the balanced proportion of the sonnet structure, if we may believe Campion to be speaking for the purists in his Observations in the Art of English Poesie:

But there is yet another fault in Rime altogether intollerable, which is, that it inforceth a man oftentimes to abriue his matter and extend a short conceit beyond all bounds of arte; for in Quatorzens, methinks, the poet handles his subiect as tyrannically as Procrustes the thiefe his prisoners, whom, when he had taken, he vsed to cast vpon a bed, which if they were too short to fill, he would stretch them longer, if too long, he would cut them shorter. (1)

This, the one direct attack upon the sonnet form in the Elizabethan period, did not pass unanswered, and the reply is the more interesting because it was made by a poet, himself a master of the quatorzain. It is justifiable to assume that Daniel was voicing the views which the other serious sonneteers held, but did not care to make public.

Daniel pointed out that Campion, in the first place, was confusing lack of skill in the poet with faultiness of the form:

And indeed I haue wished that there were not that multiplicitie of Rymes as is vsed by many in Sonets, which yet we see in some so happily to succeed, and hath beene so farre from hindering their inuentions, as it hath begot conceit beyond expectation and comparable to the best inuentions of the world. (2)

He acknowledged the virtue of the discipline which the fixed form imposed^d, and found the length of the sonnet suitable for the subjects of which it treated:

¹Eliz.Crit.Essays, II, 331.

²A Defence of Ryme, 1605, Eliz.Crit.Essays, II, 365.

Nor is this certaine limit obserued in Sonnets, any tyrannicall bounding of the conceit, but rather reducing it in giram, and a iust forme, neither too long for the shortest proiect, nor too short for the longest, being but only imployed for a present passion. (1)

Finally, Daniel turned to the aesthetic grounds upon which much of the appeal of the quatorzain is based:

Besides, is it not most delightfull to see much excellentlie ordred in a small roome, or little gallantly disposed and made to fill vp a space of like capacitie, in such soft that the one would not appeare so beautifull in a larger circuite, nor the other do well in a lesse? which often we find to be so, according to the powers of nature in the workman. (2)

This appreciative formal criticism is in the spirit of the liberal classicism of the continent,³ and it is noteworthy that it is not only the sole defence of the sonnet form, but also the only example of this approach to the lyric, in the English criticism of the age. The classicist was not to be convinced of its validity. Eleven years after Daniel's Defence of Ryme was published, Ben Jonson was adamant in his condemnation of the quatorzain:

he cursed petrarch for redacting Verses to Sonnets, which he said were like that Tirrants bed, wher some who were too short were racked, others too long cut short. (4)

It was an echo of Campion; the purist attitude remained unchanged.

The case against rhyme rested, therefore, upon its unclassical

¹ ibid., II, 366.

² idem.

³ cf. Ruscelli on the Sonnet, Del Modo di Comporre in Versi, Venice, 1559, p. CXLIII.

⁴ Ben Jonson, "Conversations", I, 133 f.

nature, and, as a corollary of this, its supposed connection with the ignorance and barbarism associated with the "Goths and Hunnes".¹ Poetry was debased, because rhyme put the art within the reach of every ignorant scribbler.² At its lowest, rhyme was associated with the popular song of the tavern, and "rhymers" was frequently a term of abuse in Elizabethan usage, often used for, or synonymous with "ballad-writer".³ The classicist saw the adoption of classical measures as the most effective means of ridding poetry of these parasites:

Thee reddyest way therefore too flap thesse droanes
from thee sweete senting hives of Poëtrye is for the
learned too aplye theym selues wholye...too thee true
making of verses in such wise as the Greekes and Latins,
thee fathers of knowledge, haue doone, and too leaue
too thesse doltish coystrels theyre rude rythming and
balductoom ballads. (4)

Such an argument had no relevance to the sonnet, which was as far beyond the ability of the Elderton fraternity as the classical metres were, and "riming and ballating" are terms which were never directly applied to the quatorzain. Nonetheless, there is a passage in Campion's treatise which indicates that, in the opinion of the strict

¹ See R. Ascham, The Scholemaster, English Works, p. 289; W. Webbe, Discourse of English Poetrie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 240; T. Blenerhasset, The Second Part of the Mirror for Magistrates, 1578, Parts added to The Mirror for Magistrates, ed. L.B. Campbell, Huntington Library Publs., Cambridge, 1946, "Induction" to the tragedy of Sigebert, p. 450.

² See R. Ascham, The Scholemaster, English Works, p. 290.

³ See W. Webbe, Discourse of English Poetrie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 227; J. Harington, Briefe Apologie, ibid., II, 197; W. Vaughan, The Golden Grove, 1600, ibid., II, 326; cf. N. Breton, No Whippinge, 1601, ll. 762 f., The Whipper Pamphlets, 1601, Part II, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool Reprints 6, Liverpool, 1951.

⁴ R. Stanyhurst, Aeneid, "Dedication", Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 141.

classicist, the sonnet was little better than the popular tavern-song. Following his attack on the former poem, which was delivered as the final crushing blow to rhyme, Campion concluded triumphantly:

Bring before me now any the most self-lou'd Rimer,
and let me see if without blushing he be able to reade
his lame halting rimes. Is there not a curse of Nature
laid vpon such rude Poesie, when the Writer is himself
asham'd of it, and the heavens in contempt call it
Riming and Ballating? (1)

Daniel chose to answer this sweeping condemnation in general terms,² but foremost amongst the poets whom he named in his reply was Petrarch, and he stressed the fact that the Italian master's vernacular poetry had won him more renown than his Latin writings.³

Daniel alone amongst the English critics claimed for rhyme a discipline comparable with that for which the classicists extolled reformed versifying:

Al excellencies being sold vs at the hard price of
labour, it followes, where we bestow most thereof
we buy the best successe: and Ryme, being farre more
laborious then loose measures (whatsoever is objected),
must needs, meeting with wit and industry, breed greater
and worthier effects in our language. (4)

However, others had remarked on the inapplicable nature of classical quantities to English syllables. Puttenham declared⁴ that our language had greater beauties than the classical ones, "by reason of our rime and tunable concordē or simphonie".⁵ Nashe rejected the

¹ Observations, Eliz.Crit.Essays, II, 331 f.

² Defence of Ryme, Eliz.Crit.Essays, II, 368 f.

³ ibid., II, 368.

⁴ ibid., II, 365.

⁵ Arte of English Poesie, ed. Willcock and Walker, p. 5.

hexameter verse, which Gabriel Harvey hoped to endenizen, as ugly and ridiculous,¹ and Joseph Hall made the same point about the experiments in Stanyhurst's translation of the Aeneid.² Common sense, and a growing belief in native poetry, contributed to this attitude, and some of those moderate critics who favoured classical imitation, modified their views for these reasons. After the first flush of his enthusiasm for reformed versifying, Sidney, in the Apologie for Poetrie, sought to have both classical measures and rhyme accepted in English poesy: "Truly the English, before any other vulgar language I know, is fit for both sorts",³ and Webbe, though strongly drawn to the security of the classics, nonetheless declared of rhyme:

certayne it is that in our Englishe tongue it beareth as good grace, or rather better, then in any other: and is a faculty whereby many may and doo deserue great prayse and commendation, though our speeche be capable of a farre more learned manner of versifying. (4)

In such statements can be seen developing an increasing pride and confidence in English as a literary language, both of which were to be fully vindicated in the fifteen nineties in the triumph of the English epic, in The Faerie Queene, of the English narrative poem, embracing historical and erotic narratives, and the verse

¹Strange Newes, 1592, Works, I, 298 f.

²Virgidemiarum, I, vi, The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool, 1949.

³Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 204 f.

⁴Discourse of English Poetrie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 240.

epistle, and, not least, of the English lyric, represented by the sonnet and many other intricate and ingenious forms. The disparity between the central literary theory of the critics and the practice of the poets, can itself be traced back to classicism, for the poets employed a more liberal interpretation of the doctrine of imitation than that which the purist advocated. In England, as on the continent, the tendency was to turn to modern forms. The two strands of classicism were therefore present in the English approach to form, as in that of Italy and France, but with one difference, for the Elizabethans did not attempt to make the claims for the lyric which the continental critics had made. In criticism, the Elizabethans were always on the defensive about the modern lyric, whether, as in Sidney's case, they saw it as a kind which could be better employed,¹ or, as in Daniel's, they met a direct attack upon a specific form. They had to be goaded into mentioning it, and did not discuss the lyric with the confidence and readiness of the Italians and French. It is reasonable to assume that the cause of this lay in the regard of the English for the classics, and rather than gainsay the purists, the poets preferred to keep a discreet silence on the matter of the imitation of modern poems, whilst employing the principles. Thus the strict views of the classicist had in practice little damaging effect upon the sonnet and its fellow lyrics, and indeed are to be

¹Apologie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 201.

more properly viewed as salutary, for the appreciation of order, gained from the study of the structures and methods used by the Ancients, led to the interest in and understanding of later forms. If the Elizabethan poets, with one exception, did not speak of the beauty of the sonnet, their practice indicated that, as much as their continental colleagues, they regarded it as one of the modern classical forms.

CHAPTER THREE

Elizabethan Critical Attitudes to the Sonnet (2):
The Evaluation of the Sonneteers and their Practice
of Imitation

The Elizabethan age spanned the extremes of doubt and confidence in English as a literary language. At first, the superiority of the classical tongues appeared overwhelming; so much so, that Ascham felt bound to apologize in Toxophilus for writing in his native language about an accomplishment as English as archery, because everything was done so excellently in Latin and Greek.¹ Such feelings had to be mastered, and the achievements of the Ancients brought into perspective, if an English vernacular literature was to be established; and this was accomplished by coming to terms with classical superiority, both by the obvious theoretical way of advocating the imitation of the Latin and Greek writers, and by the equally obvious practical way of following the new continental school of poets which came to birth in the Renaissance. Confidence in the potentiality of English as a literary language could only come from actual achievements, for, however immaculate the theories

¹"To All Gentlemen and Yomen of Englande", The English Works of Roger Ascham, ed. W.A. Wright, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge, 1904, p. xiv. The work was first published in 1545, and went through two further editions in Elizabeth's reign, in 1571 and 1589.

of the classically-minded critics might have been, only the work of the poets themselves could vindicate the language. For their guides, the contemporary writers turned to the proven successes of the continental poets, the basis of whose literary output was set firmly in Petrarchanism. The Elizabethan attitudes to the sonneteers must be seen as part of the process of the growth of confidence in English and of its vindication, which at the same time had to be made to square accounts with the Ancients, and also to bear some relationship to the moral justification of poetry. At times these requirements would clearly clash, and in some instances one would be stressed to the point of obscuring or suppressing the other. There was, however, a peculiar kind of integrity in the Elizabethans, which attempted to resolve all by the avoidance of descending to particulars, and therefore most references to the poets who wrote sonnets were made in general terms, which covered all their work, and aimed at a general assessment of their contribution to English verse.

By the end of the fifteen eighties, when the experiments in the use of classical metres, and the appearance of The Shepherds Calender, 1579, and the Hekatompathia, 1582, had brought some promise of the harvest to come, the Elizabethans were already thinking in the terms of assessing their achievements. Nashe did so in his preface to Greene's Menaphon, 1589, and Harvey followed suit during the course of his controversy with the pamphleteer .

Amongst those whom he singled out for praise, Nashe placed highly George Gascoigne, one of the earliest and certainly the most persevering of the sonneteers of the first part of Elizabeth's reign:

Who euer my priuate opinion condemne as faultie,
Maister Gascoigne is not to bee abridged of his
deserued esteeme, who first beate the path to that
perfection which our best Poets haue aspired to since
his departure. (1)

The publication of Astrophil and Stella, Daniel's sonnets, and the first three books of The Faerie Queene, had altered the perspective somewhat by 1593, and Gabriel Harvey had less respect for this pioneer, twice referring scornfully to his "sonnettinge".² This attitude was partly due to the fact that love poetry was morally indefensible, and partly to the related belief that poetic talent should have been put to better purpose, to vindicate both the art and the language.³ Harvey pointed out:

M. Gascoigne himselfe, after some riper experience, was glad to trye other conclusions in the Lowe Countreyes; and bestowed an honorable commendation vpon Sir Humfrye Gilbertes gallant discourse, of a discouery for a newe passage to the East Indyas. (4)

Nonetheless, Gascoigne was never insignificant in Elizabethan eyes, and in a more generous moment, Harvey placed him, along with Watson and Daniel, amongst those English writers in whom, in his opinion, "many things are commendable, diuers things notable, some things

¹The Works of Thomas Nashe, ed. R.B. McKerrow, Oxford, 1958, III, 319.

²Pierces Supererogation, The Works of Gabriel Harvey, ed. A.B. Grosart, Huth Library, 1884, II, 57, 96.

³See further below, p. 150ff

⁴Pierces Supererogation, Works, op.cit., II, 96.

excellent".¹ Watson, with scandalous piracy, adapted and hacked away at Gascoigne's Posies to provide much of the material of his Tears of Fancie, 1593,² which accounts for the old-fashioned tone of the sequence, and the early poet's influence is also evident in Diella, 1596.³ Such was Gascoigne's enduring reputation, that in 1601 Barnfield named him amongst other illustrious English poets:

Chaucer is dead; and Gower lies in grave;
 The Earle of Surrey, long agoe is gone;
 Sir Philip Sidneis soule, the Heauens haue;
George Gascoigne him beforne, was tomb'd in stone,
 Yet, tho their Bodies lye full low in ground,
 ...Their liuing fame, no Fortune can confound;
 Nor euer shall their Labours be forlorne. (4)

A slightly later poet, and one more important for the main stream of Petrarchan poetry in England, was Thomas Watson, whose dispassionate, academic approach to the new verse provided one of the stimuli for the renewal of vigour in English poetry. His Hekatompathia, 1582, was recognized for the innovation it was in the commendatory verses preceding the work:

You sacred Nymphes, Apolloes sisters faire,
 Daughters of Ioue, parentes of rare deuise,
 Why take you no delight in change of ayre?
 Is Helicon your onely paradise?
 Hath Britan soyle no hill, no heath, no well,
 No word, no wit, wherein you list to dwell?

¹Ibid., p. 290.

²See J.G. Scott, Les Sonnets Elisabéthains, Paris, 1929, pp. 64 ff. 307 f.

³See below, p.79f.

⁴Poems: In diuers humors, 1598, Sonnet 2, [ll. 1-5, 7-8], The Poems of Richard Barnfield, [ed. M. Summers], [1936].

Loe Watson prest to enterteine your powre
 In pleasante springs of flowing wit, and skill:
 If you esteeme the pleasures of his bower,
 Let Britan beare your spring, your grove and hill,
 That it hence fourth may of your fauour boast,
 And him, whome first you heere voutsafe for hoast.¹

To his friend, George Bucke, Watson held the promise of becoming the greatest English poet of the Renaissance for his achievement in the field of love poetry:

The starr's, which did at Petrarch's byrthday raigne,
 Were fixt againe at thy natuity,
 Destening thee the Tuscan's poesie,
 Who skald the skies in lofty Quatorzain,
 The Muses gaue to thee thy fatall vaine,
 The very same, that Petrarch had, whereby
 Madonna Laues fame is growne so $\frac{1}{2}$,
 And that whereby his glory he did gaine.

Bucke's enthusiasm was such, that he concluded his quatorzain thus:

In briefe, with Petrarch and his Laure in grace
 Thou and thy Dame be equall, saue percase
 Thou passe the one, and she excell's the other. (3)

Watson's reputation as a love poet, and as a writer of tragedy and of the pastoral, was high throughout the Elizabethan period.⁴ He was among the "professed sonnes" of the Muses whom Harvey

affectionately thancke[d] for their studious endeouours, commendably employed in enriching, & polishing their native tongue, neuer so furnished, or embellished as of late. (5)

¹[11.1-6,13-18] T. Watson, Poems, ed. E. Arber, English Reprints, no. 21, 1870, C. Downhall, "An Ode" [p.34]. cf. also the latin verses by the same author, ibid. [p.34]f.

²"A Quatorzain", [11.1-8], ibid., [p.33].

³ibid. [11.12-14].

⁴See "Some Account of the Writings of Thomas Watson", ibid., pp. 4, 11f, 13f, 16f.

⁵Four Letters and certaine Sonnets, 1592, Works, ed. Grosart, I, 218f. cf. also Pierces supererogation, ibid., II, 96, and p.49 above.

Both Spenser, in Colin Clout, 1595, and Nashe, in his Haue with you to Saffron-Walden, 1596, (the latter in an uncharacteristically sober, and therefore a more telling, tribute) mourned Watson's death and the consequent loss to English poetry:

Helpe, O ye shepheards helpe ye all in this.
 Helpe Amaryllis this her losse to mourne:
 Her losse is yours, your losse Amyntas is,
Amyntas floure of shepheards pride forlorne:
 He whilest he liued was the noblest swaine,
 That euer piped in an oaten quill:
 Both did he other, which could pipe, maintaine,
 And eke could pipe himselfe with passing skill. (1)

....Thomas Watson, the Poet. A man he was that I
 dearely lou'd and honor'd, and for all things hath
 left few his equalls in England. (2)

Watson's appeal to his contemporaries has been summed up thus by Frederic Ives Carpenter:

His literary and personal affiliations were with Spenser, Sidney, Lyly, Peele, the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Essex, and the Countess of Pembroke; and those who felt themselves in sympathy with this group would doubtless appreciate him none the less for his exclusive devotion to form and style, for his highly generalized manner, for the discouraging lack of reality or of personal accent in his verse, and for the pedantry of his method of Italianate imitation. So far as matter and manner can be dissexvered, Watson must be regarded as a minor master of metrical form in his day. He was one of the reformers of our versifying, although in the Italianate Petrarchan direction, rather than in the classical with others of the academic group of poets. He took up where Wyatt and Surrey left off the attempt to establish the Petrarchan tradition in English poetry. (3)

¹Colin Clout, 11.436-43, The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. J.C.Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford Standard Authors, 1959.

²Works, ed. McKerrow, III, 126f.

³"Thomas Watson's 'Italian Madrigals Englished', 1590," J.E.G.P., 1899, II, 323.

This was to be his most important contribution to Elizabethan literature, and it was not until the turn of the century, when after the glut of sonnet sequences, Petrarchanism had become a garment somewhat outworn, that a note of censure crept into the assessment of Watson as a poet; a man "of some desert, / Yet subject to a Critticks marginall".¹

The promise which Watson brought for the sonnet was fulfilled not in his work, but in that of others, particularly Sidney, Constable and Daniel. Constable, whose poetry had fallen into disrepute until Miss Grundy's edition of his Poems appeared in 1960, in which she convincingly discriminates between his authentic and doubtful sonnets, was held in high esteem by the Elizabethans. The same critic who rebuked Watson wrote lyrically of the poet of Diana:

Sweete Constable doth take the wondring eare,
And layes it vp in willing prisonment, (2)

and Drayton put him with Sidney and Daniel as one of the finest sonneteers of the age, in a quatorzain first published in the sonnets appended to Englands Heroicall Epistles, 1599, and included in the succeeding editions of Idea until 1619:

Many there be excelling in this kind,
Whose well trick'd rimes with all invention swell,
Let each commend as best shall like his minde,
Some Sidney, Constable, some Daniell.

¹The Second Return from Parnassus, ?1601/1602, I, ii, 241-42, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. J.B. Leishman, 1949.

²ibid., I, ii, 233-34.

That thus theyr names familiarly I sing,
 Let none thinke them disparaged to be,
 Poore men with reverence may speake of a king,
 And so may these be spoken of by mee. (1)

Both by the way in which the other sonneteers borrowed from and imitated him,² and by the praise which the Elizabethans bestowed on him,³ the regard of his contemporaries for Constable was shown:

Clearly he was considered to have the virtues proper to a sonneteer; he was an excellent example of his kind. They admired his sweetness and wit, the latter found in his conceits, the former in them and also in his language and versification. (4)

The prevalence of such opinions indicated that the critics had stopped regarding the new Petrarchan poetry as indicative of a promising future for the language, and had accepted the fact that English had come into its own as a vernacular literature. The reputation of Daniel in the Elizabethan age reflected this, in its progression from the cautious estimation of Gabriel Harvey that:

Fraunce, Kiffin, Warner, and Daniell, ... may haply finde a thankefull remembraunce of their laudable trauailes, (5)

to the highest of praise, as "Prince of English Poets".⁶ Two

¹Son. 3 [11.1-8], The Works of Michael Drayton, ed. J.W. Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, I, 485.

²The Poems of Henry Constable, ed. J. Grundy, Liverpool, 1960, "Introduction", p. 59 ff.

³ibid., p. 64 ff.

⁴ibid., p. 66.

⁵Pierces Supererogation, 1593, Works, ed. Grosart, II, 290. cf. also Foure Letters, 1592, ibid., I, 218.

⁶F. Davison, A Poetical Rhapsody, ed. H.E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, I, no. 49.

years after the publication of Pierces Supererogation, W.C.

wrote in Polimanteia, 1595:

vnlesse I erre, ... deluded by dearlie beloued Delia,
and fortunatelie fortunate Cleopatra; Oxford thou
maist extoll thy courte-deare-verse happie Daniell,
whose sweete refined muse, in contracted shape, were
sufficient amongst men, to gaine pardon of the sinne
to Rosemond, pittie to distressed Cleopatra, and
euerliuing praise to her louing Delia. (1)

In the same year appeared Spenser's earlier tribute to the
sonneteer:

And there is a new shepheard late vp sprong,
The which doth all afore him far surpasse:
Appearing well in that well tuned song,
Which late he sung vnto a scornfull lasse. (2)

Daniel's sequence was particularly dear to the Elizabethans,³ and
it was the one which especially determined the place of the sonnet
in vindicating the English language. His metrical dexterity was
a point to which his contemporaries continually referred. E.C.
promised Emaricdulfe:

Delias sweete Prophet shall the praises singe
Of bewties worth exemplified in thee,
And thy names honour in his sweete tunes ring,⁴

and Zepheria's poet appeared to employ a double entendre in using
"Delian" as an adjective referring to Apollos's island, Delos,
and to the fame and popularity of Daniel's sequence, when he
addressed the "modern Laureates":

¹Quoted in T. Watson, Poems, ed. Arber, p. 16.

²Colin Clout, ll.416-19, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors.

³See also The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel,
ed. A.B. Grosart, 1885-1896, "Memorial-Introduction II.-Critical", IV,
vii ff.

⁴A Lampport Garland, [ed. C. Edmonds], Roxburghe Club, 1881, 40,
[ll. 5-8].

Report, throughout our Western Isle doth ring,
 The sweet tuned accents of your Delian sonnetry,
 Which to Apollo's violin, ye sing¹ (1)

Both Sir John Davies in Orchestra, 1596, and John Weever in his Epigrammes, 1599, regretted that their verses lacked the grace and nobility of Daniel's:

O that I could....
 ... smooth my rimes with Delia's servant's file. (2)
 I cannot reach vp to a Delians straine,
 Whose songs deserue for euer your attention. (3)

In the final analysis, the success of the Elizabethan poet was measured by two factors, comparison with the Ancients, and contemporary popularity. Neither was lacking in Daniel's case. Both Richard Carew and Francis Meres demonstrated their faith in the new English literature by drawing up lists of corresponding modern and classical writers, in both of which the poet of Delia was represented, by Carew as the English Ovid,⁴ whilst Meres carefully noted:

As Parthenius Nicaeus excellently sung the praises of his Arete: so Daniel hath diuinely sonetted the matchlesse beauty of his Delia. (5)

With the exception of Lodge, Fletcher, and Spenser, almost

¹Zepheria, 1595, "Alli veri figlioli delle Muse", [11.14-16], Elizabethan Sonnets, ed. S. Lee, 1904, II.

²Orchestra, stanza 128, [11.5,7], The Complete Poems, ed. A.B. Grosart, Early English Poets, 1876, I, 212. (This verse is omitted in the version published in 1622.)

³Epigrammes, ed. R.B. McKerrow, 1911, Poem to the readers, [11.27-28].

⁴Epistle on the Excellency of the English Tongue, ?1595/1596, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, II, 293.

⁵Palladis Tamia, 1598, Eliz. Crit. Essays, II, 316. cf. Guilpin's praise of Drayton, Skiaethia, 1598, Sat.6, quoted below, p.60

every Elizabethan sonneteer whose sequences were published after Daniel's owed a debt to him, not only on the mechanical level of the borrowings of conceits and phrases,¹ but also on the higher levels of cadence and thought and feeling. This is found above all in those sonnets of Shakespeare which treat of the tragic vulnerability of beauty to the merciless savagery of time, and find the only lasting memorials of youth's spring to lie in the nature of true love, commemorated for ever in living verse. A rare combination of tenderness and detachment enabled both poets to face the challenge of change, to bow before its inevitability, but finally to overcome it by faith and art.² In this Daniel shared in, perhaps gave rise to the expression of, a sensibility felt by the greatest poet of his age.

Daniel's sequence was of its age in other respects, for it appealed not only to poets and critics, but also to the readers of fashionable literature, so that the sonnet heroine's name became a synonym for feminine perfection. Nashe complimented "THE NEW KIND-led cleare Lampe of Virginitie, and the excellent adored high Wonder of sharpe Wit and sweet Beautie, Mistres ELIZABETH CAREY"³,

Miraculous is your wit; and so is acknowledged by
the wittiest Poets of our age, who haue vowed to
enshrine you as their second DELIA. (4)

¹See J.G.Scott, Les Sonnets Elisabéthains, Paris, 1929, "Appendice", p.317 ff.

²See Delia, 1592, 30-37, 42, 43, 46, 48, Poems and A Defence of Ryme, ed. A.C.Sprague, 1950; The Sonnets of Shakespeare, ed.H.C.Beeching, Boston and London, 1904, 15, 18, 54, 55, 60, 63-65, 81, 107, 108.

³The Terrors of the Night, 1594, "Dedication" Works, ed.McKerrow, I [34]

⁴Ibid., I, 342.

A similar connotation lay in the same author's light-hearted use of the name in the story of Hero and Leander, which he recounted in his Lenten Stufe, 1599:

Two faithfull louers they were ... the one dwelt at Abidos in Asia, which was Leander: the other, which was Hero, his Mistris or Delia, at Sestos in Europe, and she was a pretty pinckany and Venus priest. (1)

A passage in Jonson's Cynthias Revels, 1600, points to the same conclusion: Phila^utia is admiring herself in her finery:

This tire (me thinkes) makes me looke very ingeniously, quick, and spirited, I should be some LAVRA, or some DELIA, me thinkes. (2)

The most exalted heroine of the Elizabethan sequences was, however, not Delia, but Stella, from her position as Astrophil's beloved; "Petrarch's Laura made him so famous, Astrophel's Stella", wrote Burton, commenting upon the lover as a poet in the Anatomy of Melancholy.³ Sidney occupied a position apart from the other Elizabethans, by whom he was regarded with affectionate awe, which resulted possibly as much from his noble birth and rank, and his untimely, valiant death, as from his generosity of personality and exceptional poetical gifts. He marked the summit of Elizabethan achievement in light and graceful vernacular literature; he towered above his fellow Englishmen as an "Inglish Petrarch",

a singular Gentleman, and a sweete Poet; whose verse singeth, as valour might speake; and whose ditty, is an Image of the Sun, voutsafing to represent his

¹ ibid., III, 195.

² IV, i, 32-34, Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford and P. Simpson, Oxford, 1925-52, IV. cf. also the collection of sonnets commemorating the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, Atropofon Delion, or the Death of Delia, by T.N. Gent.

³ ed. A.R. Shilleto, 1896, III, 210.

glorious face in a clowde. (1)

Nashe termed Sidney "Englands Sunne"², whilst to Guilpin he was "Wits Caesar",³ and to Weever, "Wittes-mirroure".⁴ Sir John Davies praised him for his many veins:

... Astrophell might one for all suffize,
Whose supple Muse Camelion-like doth change
Into all formes of excellent deuise, (5)

and Joseph Hall lauded Sidney as "ye Prince of prose & sweet conceit",⁶ which recalled Carew's all-embracing praise:

Will yow haue all in all for prose and verse? take
the miracle of our age Sir Philip Sidney. (7)

Sidney was the complete man of letters; everything he turned to became gold beneath his touch. His death left a gap which was not to be filled.

Nonetheless, Weever presented a candidate for his successor in the person of Drayton:

¹G. Harvey, Pierces Supererogation, 1593, Works, ed. Grosart, II, 93.

²"Preface to 'Astrophel and Stella'", 1591, Works, ed. McKerrow, III, 330.

³Skialethia, 1598, ed. G.B. Harrison, Shakespeare Association Facsimiles, 2, 1931, Sat. 6, [sig. E verso].

⁴Epigrammes, ed. McKerrow, "The firste weeke", 23, [1.2].

⁵Orchestra, 1596, stanza 130, [11.1-3], Complete Poems, ed. Grosart, I, 213. (This verse is omitted in the version published in 1622.)

⁶The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool, 1949, "To Camden", 1.3, p.105.

⁷Epistle on the Excellency of the English Tongue, ?1595/1596, Eliz.Crit.Essays, II, 293.

The Peeres of heau'n kept a parliament,
 And for Wittes-mirroure Philip Sidney sent,
 To keep another when they doe intend,
 Twentie to one for Drayton they will send,
 Yet bade him leaue his learning, so it fled,
 And vow'd to liue with thee since he was dead. (1)

This correspondence between the two poets lay in the variety of their literary activities, a quality which Lodge recognized early in the young poet of The Harmonie of the Church, Idea The Shepheardes Garlande, and Ideas Mirroure, when he addressed Drayton in an epistle of A Fig for Momus, 1595:

Michael, as much good hap vnto thy state,
 As Orators haue figures to dilate:
 As many crownes, as Alchymists haue shifts,
 Briefly, so many goods, as thou hast gifts. (2)

Guilpin was enthusiastic in the praise of Drayton's versatility in his Skialethia, 1598, when he referred, in classical terms, to the poet's three-fold achievement, in the spheres of lyric, narrative, and dramatic, poetry:

Like to a worthy Romaine he hath wonne
 A three-fold name affixed to the Sunne,
 When he is mounted in the glorious South,
 And Drayton's iustly sirnam'd Golden-mouth. (3)

His verse was felt to have an immediate appeal which was hard to resist:

Draytons sweete muse is like a sanguine dy,
 Able to rauish the rash gazers eye, (4)

¹Epigrammes, ed. McKerrow, "The first weeke", 23.

²Epistle, 5, [ll. 1-4], The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge, Hunterian Club, Glasgow, 1883, III, 60. (The works in this volume are all paginated separately.)

³Sat. 6, Shakespeare Assoc. Facs, 2, [sig. E verso]. cf. also F. Meres, Palladis Tamia, Eliz. Crit. Essays, II, 316.

⁴The Second Return from Parnassus, Iii, 246-47, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. Leishman.

and Weever commended to his readers

....Draytons stile, whose hony words are meete
For these your mouths. (5)

In the works of Sidney, Daniel, and Drayton, therefore, the Elizabethans saw exhibited some aspects of the triumph of English, and it was no longer necessary for them to state that these poets embellished and beautified the language; the poetry spoke for itself. The doubts and hopes of the earlier part of the reign were replaced by a pride in and an appreciation of definite achievements.

The strength of Elizabethan literature, which gave rise to this confidence, lay in its variety. The poets sought to embrace the best of the ancient literatures, in the pastoral, the drama, the heroic narrative, culminating in the Elizabethan epic, The Faerie Queene; but in all these fields they were influenced by the treatment of these kinds by the continental writers of the Renaissance, and they did not hesitate to combine the old with the best of the new. They recognized that a modern literature had to be comprehensive, hence the unlikely coupling of classical and modern poets, which resulted in such statements as Meres's:

the sweete wittie soule of Ouid liues in melifluous and
hony-tongued Shakespeare, witnes his Venus and Adonis,
his Lucrece, his sugred Sonnets among his priuate friends, &c.(2)

¹Epigrammes, ed. McKerrow, Poem to the readers, [11.29-30].

²Palladis Tamia, Eliz.Crit.Essays, II, 317.

Lodge was rebuked in The Second Return from Parnassus for having "his oare in euery paper boate",¹ but this was in effect what every Elizabethan writer attempted, and most of the major poets, besides many lesser ones, employed the sonnet amongst their other verses. Other poems were considered to be superior to the quatorzain from the points of view of edification and of artistry; The Faerie Queene was clearly Spenser's greatest triumph on both counts, and there appears to be no direct reference in Elizabethan writings to his Amoretti as a work which marked him out for fame.² The more serious forms of poetry were the ones which would win an immortal name for their writers:

Like Spenser euer, in thy Fairy Queene,
 ...And Daniell, praised for thy sweet-chast verse:
 Whose Fame is grav'd on Rosamonds blacke Herse.
 Still mayst thou liue: and still be honored,
 For that rare Worke, The White Rose and the Red.
 And Drayton, whose wel-written Tragedies,
 And sweete Epistles, soare thy fame to skies.
 Thy learned Name, is aequall with the rest. (3)

Despite the lack of classical precedent and of moral sanction, the sonnet could not be ignored; the example of continental practice

¹I, ii, 243, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. Leishman.

²In the year in which Amoretti was published, however, W.C. refers to Spenser in the following terms: "Let other countries (sweet Cambridge) envie, (yet admire) my Virgil, thy petrarch, diuine Spenser" (Polimanteia, 1595, quoted in "Some account of the writings of Thomas Watson", in Arber's edition of Watson's poems, p.16). The passage implies that Spenser combines the virtues of the two greatest ancient and modern poets.

³R. Barnfield, Poems: In diuers humors, 1598, "A Rembrance of some English Poets", [ll. 1, 5-11], Poems, [ed. Summers].

was too strong, and too successful, for the poem to be passed over by the poets. Clearly modern forms had to be assimilated to produce a modern literature, and if, for ethical reasons, the Elizabethans did not refer to this in more than general terms, their delight in their sugared sonnets indicates that they were aware of the part the quatorzain had in vindicating the English language.

If the Petrarchan sonnet helped to bring to fulfilment the hopes of the Elizabethans for vernacular literature, it also brought its pitfalls, which, ironically enough, sprang from the very policy of imitation which had given life to the tradition as it had developed in the hands of Petrarch's followers. In the attempt to capture Petrarch's perfection, the early Italian sonneteers, such as Bembo and della Casa, counselled and carried out an imitation of the master which determined the future direction of the Petrarchisti:

Their sonnets play delicate variations on petrarchan themes, for the most part in Petrarch's very language; in such niceties as modulation of cadence, variation of textures, and the shifting of the caesura lay the only originality they deemed worthwhile. Succeeding poets and theorists made the obvious inference; and thus began that categorization of the matter of the Canzoniere which would make every situation, every conceit, every epithet in Petrarch available to anybody who wished to re-use and re-work it. (1)

¹A.J. Smith, "Theory and Practice in Renaissance Poetry: Two Kinds of Imitation", Bull. John Rylands Library, 1964-1965, XLVII, 215.

At its worst, this resulted in so much dead wood, mere collections of formulae repeated from the great poet, lacking the soul and inspiration which would give them life. This can be seen from a comparison of one of Petrarch's well-known sonnets, "S'una fede amorosa, un cor non finto", with the equally well-known imitation of this poem by Desportes in his Diane.¹ The original has dignity and self-restraint; the poet views his sorrows, not dispassionately, but with an almost clinical precision, which arises from his knowledge of the truth of his devotion. As this feeling originates from Laura herself, she is addressed with the same dignity which informs the poet's attitude, and which results in the perfect structural, syntactic, and emotional balance of the last line. Desportes's version is but a pale reflection indeed. It is a fairly accurate, line by line, word for word, translation, but the effect of the original is adulterated. "Si la foye plus certaine" lacks the deep personal conviction of Petrarch's sonnet, and lacking this, it misses its dignity; both in small ways, as in the rendering of the controlled, passionate line "Pascendo^S di duol, d'ira e d'affanno", by the colourless "Faisant de sa douleur nourriture et bruvage", and in a more heinous manner, by turning the proud suffering of Petrarch's final lines into a sentimental whine:

¹Texts of the poems used were from Canzoniere, 224, Le Rime di Francesco Petrarca, ed. G. Carducci and S. Ferrari, Florence, 1899, and P. Desportes, Les Amours de Diane, I, 8, Textes Littéraires Francais, publ. V.E. Graham, Geneva and Paris, 1959.

Son le caxion ch'amando i' mo distempere;
 Vostro, donna, il peccato, e mio fia 'l danno. (1)

Sont cause que je meurs par default de merci,
 L'offense en est sur vous, et sur moy le dommage. (2)

Good poets were naturally aware of this kind of danger, and took care to avoid it; but once the form of poetry had been categorized and formulated to the minutest detail, the components were temptingly at hand for versifiers of all calibres to appropriate. The fashionable Petrarchan tradition encouraged too many of the poorer sort of writer, and the noble doctrine of Petrarchan imitation became degraded either to the soulless repetition of commonplaces, as in Desportes, or to nothing less than wholesale plagiarism, entirely lacking in art or wisdom. During the vogue of the published sonnet sequences, following Astrophil and Stella, in the fifteen nineties, both trends could be found in English quatorzains, and were duly castigated, particularly in the satire which arose at the height of the sonneteering folly.

The danger of the popular appeal of the Petrarchan tradition had long been recognized. In his "amorous odious sonnet", Gabriel Harvey wrote:

At Petrarche and Boccace I must haue a flynge.
 Every idiott swayne
 Can commende there veyne, (3)

¹Canzoniere, 224, ll. 13-14, Rime, ed Carducci and Ferrari.

²Diane, I, 8, ll. 13-14, Textes Litteraires Francais.

³The Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey, ed. E.J.L. Scott, Camden Soc., New Series XXXIII, 1884, p. 134.

and Sidney issued a warning in Astrophil and Stella that mere imitation without the informing power of feeling and inspiration was artistically and morally bad:

 You that poore Petrarch's long deceased woes,
 With new-borne sighes and denisend wit do sing;
 You take wrong waies, those far-fet helpes be such,
 As do betray a want of inward tuch:
And sure at length stolne goods do come to light. (1)

The correct application of the "inward tuch" was outlined in the first sonnet of the collection:

 I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
 ...Oft-turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
 Some fresh and fruitfull showers upon my sunne-burn'd
 braine. (2)

The original source material was to be used to stimulate the poet's own inspiration, not to supply his deficiency. In a more crude rendering, this idea of imitation became cheapened to Barnes's:

 Where shall I Sonnets borrow?
 Where shall I find breasts, sides, and tongue,
 Which my great wrongs might to the world dispense? (3)

which indicates the kind of interpretation we may expect to find in the lesser sonneteers.

The moral obligation laid upon the imitator was one which related to artistry rather than to copyright:

 originality lay not at all in what you said but in the
 way you said it, or at least, in the new use you made
 of old matter. (4)

¹ Son.15, ll.7-11, The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. W.A.Ringler, Jr. Oxford, 1962.

² ibid., l, ll. 5-7.

³ Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 1593, Mad.1, [ll.5-7], Eliz.Sonnets, I.

⁴ A.J.Smith, "Theory and Practice in Renaissance Poetry", Bull. John Rylands Library, XLVII, 216.

Donne castigated most severely that type of poet

who (beggarily) doth chaw
Others wits fruits, and in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things out-spue,
As his owne things; and they are his owne, 'tis true,
For if one eate my meate, though it be knowne
The meate was mine, th'excrement is his owne. (1)

Sir John Harington, in his epigram "Of honest theft", addressed to Samuel Daniel,² justified his own use of Roman writers as it was done "by wit, and Art!"³ It was in this direction that the soul-searching of the poet was to lie when he confronted his material. In 1594, Drayton prefaced Ideas Mirrour with a quatorzain in which he declared his independence of the two chief continental sources in the following terms:

Yet these mine owne, I wrong not other men,
Nor trafique further then thys happy Clyme,
Nor filch from Portes nor from Petrarchs pen,
A fault too common in thys latter tyme.
Divine Syr Phillip, I avouch thy writ
I am no Pickpurse of anothers wit. (4)

He did not reject imitation as such in this verse, merely in his own case confining it to his native country, and illustrating this with a concluding line taken straight from sonnet 74 of Astrophil and Stella, but he did claim to have created his material anew. It was the servility implied in the filching from Desportes and Petrarch which digusted him as a poet, and which also repelled

¹Satyre 2, ll. 25-30, written ?1594, The Poems of John Donne, ed. H.C.Grierson, Oxford Standard Authors, 1960.

²For the charge of plagiarism against Daniel, see below, p.72.

³The Epigrams of Sir John Harington [n.d.], 126, [l. 10], ed. M.E. McClure, Philadelphia, 1926.

⁴Dedicatory sonnet, [ll. 9-14], Works, ed. Hebel, I.

others less amicably disposed to the Petrarchan tradition. This was the basis of the charge of plagiarism which Hall twice brought against the sonneteer in his satires. In the attack upon the upstart in Book IV, he rebuked Lollo's pretentious son for his reaction to the greeting of a rustic from Lollo's parish:

Could neuer man worke thee a worser shame
Then once to minge thy fathers odious name,
Whose mention were alike to thee as leeuē,
as ...
...an Hos Ego, from old Petrarchs spright
Vnto a Plagiarie sonnet-wright. (1)

In another satire, he mocked Labeo who would

... filch whole Pages at a clap for need
From honest Petrarch, clad in English weed. (2)

After the hey-day of the sonnet had passed, Jonson wrote in Volpone of the relationship between Petrarch and his English imitators, that "In dayes of sonetting, [he] trusted 'hem with much".³ This dangerous availability of subjects and stylistic devices is one of the reasons which caused both Hall and Jonson to dislike the Petrarchan sonnet.⁴

Translation was not considered bad in itself by the Elizabethans, for it was necessary to the doctrine of imitation,⁵ and, from a practical point of view, it was a good discipline; but

¹Virgidemiarum, IV, ii, 79-84, Collected Poems, ed. Davenport.

²ibid., VI, i, 251-52.

³III, iv, 94, Ben Jonson, ed. Herford and Simpson, V.

⁴For Jonson's views on the sonnet form, see above, p.41.

⁵Lodge referred to Desportes's "Poeticall writings being alreadie for the most part englished", without any indication that this was undesirable; A Margarite of America, 1596, p.79, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, III. (The works in this volume are all paginated separately.)

it had clearly defined limits. Commenting on Soowthern's "pety larceny" of Ronsard, Puttenham concluded:

as I would wish euery inuẽtour which is the very
Poet to receaue the prayses of his inuention, so
would I not haue a trãslatour be ashamed to be
acknowen of his translation. (1)

"Invention" was the transforming factor in the use of one's material. In the sonnet in which he acknowledged "Oft turning others' leaves", Sidney continued:

But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame studie's blowes,
And others' feete still seem'd but strangers in my way. (2)

The presence or absence of invention in a writer's handling of his source distinguished the poet from the hack. The derivative nature of Petrarchan verse was all too tempting to the untalented poet and easily led him into piracy, to "filch whole pages at a clap!"

It was such verbatim borrowing that Jonson denounced in the Quarto text of Every Man in his Humour, 1601, when the gull Matheo reproduced the sonnet, "Vnto the boundles Ocean of thy beautie", the first poem of Daniel's popular sequence:

Cle[ment]: ... is this your owne inuention?

Mat[heo]: No sir, I translated that out of a booke,
called Delia. (3)

Lorenzo iunior then burst into a passionate denunciation to Giuliano of such falsely assimilated poetry, which degraded the majesty and

¹The Arte of English Poesie, 1589, ed. G.D. Willcock and A. Walker, Cambridge, 1936, p. 253.

²Astrophil and Stella, 1, ll. 9-11, Poems, ed. Ringler.

³V, iii, 288-89, Ben Jonson, ed. Herford and Simpson, III. The play was first performed in 1598.

nature of the art:

Indeede if you will looke on Poesie,
As she appeares in many, poore and lame,
Patcht vp in remnants and olde worne ragges,
Halfe starud for want of her peculiar foode,
Sacred inuention, then I must conferme,
Both your conceite and censure of her merrite. (1)

He went on to describe the true function and beauty of poesy,
affirming

Nor is it any blemish to her fame,
That such leane, ignorant, and blasted wits,
Such brainlesse guls, should vtter their stolne wares
With such aplauses in our vulgar eares:
Or that their slubberd lines haue currant passe,
From the fat iudgements of the multitude. (2)

The exclusion of this speech from the folio edition of his works
leaves little doubt that Jonson had Petrarchan poets particularly
in mind here. Once the vogue had passed, the lines lost their
immediate application.

The gull was one of the stock figures of the satirists, and,
following Jonson's Matheo, he was frequently shown as a literary
pirate. Marston's Castilio also appropriated sonnets:

Tut, he is famous for his reueling,
För fine sette speeches, and for sonetting;
...And yet's but Broker of anothers wit. (3)

Gullio of The First Return from Parnassus, ?1599/1600, joined the
august company. Like Marston's Luscus, he spoke, in print⁴ and
recited a sample speech of courtship for the edification of

¹ ibid., V, iii, 318-23.

² ibid., V, iii, 334-39.

³ Pigmalion and Certaine Satyres, 1598, sat. 1, ll.41-42, 44, The Poems of John Marston, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool, 1961.

⁴ The Scourge of Villanie, 1598, [sat. xi], l. 44, Poems, op.cit.

Ingenioso, employing lines from Venus and Adonis, The Spanish Tragedy, and Romeo and Juliet. Ingenioso turned to the audience with this aside:

Marke Romeo and Iuliet: o monstrous theft, I thinke
he will runn throughe a whole booke of Samuell
Daniells. (1)

This remark may have been intended to recall the plagiarism of Jonson's Matheo. (In his introduction to The Three Parnassus Plays, J.B. Leishman points out that Gullio, and Amoretto, whom Ingenioso reviled as "the chiefe Carpenter of Sonets",² "are presented in a thoroughly Jonsonian fashion",³ and that Gullio exhibits many of the characteristics of the Jonsonian gull.⁴) Each one of the plagiarist gallants stood condemned by his own defective powers and his pretensions to poetry. They all lacked a properly serious approach to the art.

When, however, criticism assumed such a distorted shape as satire, clear and necessary distinctions between legitimate use of the corpus of Petrarchan material and simple plagiarism became blurred. Whilst the critics rightly drew attention to the faults of the latter, which cover the scissors-and-paste method of Watson's Tears of Fancie, and William Smith's technique of wholesale appropriation,⁵ they gave a keener edge to the interest in the

¹ III, 49-992-94, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. Leishman.

² The Second Return from Parnassus, ?1601/1602, IV, ii, 1682, ibid.

³ p.52.

⁴ ibid., p. 52 ff.

⁵ See below, p.75ff

sonneteers' sources which tended to emphasize the importance of the original at the expense of the later poets' re-creation.

Daniel suffered most unjustly from this; for in The Second Return from Parnassus, Judicio's praise was tempered with a mild censure:

Sweete hony dropping Daniell may wage
Warre with the proudest big Italian
That melts his heart in sugred sonetting:
Onely let him more sparingly make vse
Of others wit, and vse his owne the more,
That well may scorne base imitation. (1)

In her recent book on the poet, Mrs. Rees had^s pointed out that

the lines produce on the whole a misleading
impression of excessive dependence on models. (2)

She goes on to illustrate how independent Daniel was in handling his material, showing that he had a careful regard for form and structure, and for the requirements of individual phrases, so that he had no hesitation in abandoning lifeless commonplaces for his own truly poetic interpretation of the requirements of the emotion, as when line 3 of Desportes's Diane, I, 29, "s'égarer solitaire en rêvant", becomes "Haunting untroden pathes to waile apart" in Delia, 9, line 10.³ He had assimilated his material, and subjected it to the dictates of wit and art, which Sir John Davies named as the transforming factors of one's source material, in the epigram "Of honest theft", addressed "To my good friend Master Samuel Daniel".⁴

¹I, ii, 235-40, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. Leishman.

²Samuel Daniel, Liverpool, 1964, p.22. cf. also J. Buxton, Sir Philip Sidney and the English Renaissance, 1954, p.192.

³Samuel Daniel, p. 22 ff.

⁴See above, p.67.

The conflicting views on imitation affected another important sonneteer. Guilpin wrote in Skialethia:

Drayton's condemn'd of some for imitation,
But others say t'was the best Poets fashion. (1)

It has been suggested that Hall was the critic who thus castigated Drayton, under the name of Labeo in Virgidemiarum, Book VI, Satire 1, when he accused the bad poet of filching whole pages from Petrarch.² Whether Drayton was under attack here or not (his editor, Professor K. Tillotson, thinks Labeo was a type rather than an individual³), the criticism could be applied with some justice to Ideas Mirrour:

his determination not to filch from Petrarch and Desportes did not prevent [Drayton] from freely borrowing lines, phrases, and conceits, from his English predecessors. If his sonnets have no sources in the sense that all Lodge's have, it is because he preferred to work in patchwork. (4)

Nonetheless, Drayton frequently employed his borrowings in a way that suggests he was finding his own style through the synthesis of those of others, and that his material was being subdued to that end. An examination of the relationship between isolated lines from four sonnets of Daniel's sequence and Ideas Mirrour, Amour 41, illustrates this process at work:

¹Sat. 6, Shakespeare Assoc. Facs., 2, sig [E verso].

²See The Works of Michael Drayton, ed. Hebel, vol. V, page 138, and "Introduction", The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall, ed. A. Davenport, p. L ff., for the summary and assessment of the case for and against identifying Drayton with Labeo. Both Prof. Tillotson and Mr. Davenport incline to the view that the satire is general ~~not~~ rather than particular, although Mr. Davenport thinks that, if the attack is against any of the sonneteers, it is more likely to be against Daniel than Drayton.

³Works, op.cit., V, 138, note 5.

⁴ibid., V, 14.

If so it hap this of-spring of my care,^s
 These fatall Antheames, sad and mornefull rongs:
 (Delia, 3 [ll. 1-2]) (1)

My ioyes abortiue, perisht at their byrth
 (Delia, 50 [l. 11]) (1)

With interrupted accents of dispayre
 (Delia, 2 [l. 6]) (1)

... her frownes should be
 To my infant stile the cradle, and the graue
 (Delia, 49 [ll. 11-12]) (1)

Rare of-spring of my thoughts, my deerest Love,
 Begot by fancy, on sweet hope exhortive,
 In whom all purenes with perfection strove,
 Hurt in the Embryon, makes my joyes abortive.

And you my sighes, Symtom^as of my woe,
 The dolefull Anthems of my endlesse care,
 Lyke idle Ecchoes ever aunswering: so,
 The mournfull accents of my loves dispayre.

And thou Conceite, the shadow of my blisse,
 Declyning with the setting of my sunne,
 Springing with that, and fading straight with this,
 Now hast thou end, and now thou wast begun.
 Now was thy pryme, and loe, now is thy waine,
 Now was thou borne, now in thy cradle slayne.

(Ideas Mirrour, 41) (2)

Drayton's greatest debt to Daniel in this poem is in the tone, although, on account of the diffuseness of Drayton's structure, this is more languishing than Daniel at his best. The parts of lines and words from the earlier sequence serve the poet of Ideas Mirrour with echoes, or spark off a thought which expands and dilates upon Daniel's original idea, as the last six lines, with the addition of the shadow conceit, play

¹Poems, ed. Sprague, pp. 12, 35, 11, 35. The analogies are pointed out by Professor Tillotson in the notes on Drayton's poem, Works, V, 17.

²Works, ed. Hebel, I.

variations on the theme of the birth/death motif of Delia, 49 (and^d 3). There are better poems in Ideas Mirrour which show the young poet moving towards an individual style (Amour 22, for example, where the central image is based again on Daniel¹), but none which demonstrate so clearly the process of assimilation at work.

When the minor sonneteers are examined, however, the strictures of Hall, and the portraits presented by Jonson, Marston, and the authors of The Parnassus Plays, are seen to be fully justified, particularly in those sequences in which the poet made his one brief appearance in print. Such was the pull of fashion that Percy, Smith, E.C., Griffin, and the anonymous author of Zepheria, felt as constrained to publish as those more literary men, Lodge and Fletcher.² The valuable research into sonnet sources by Sir Sidney Lee, L.E. Kastner, and Miss J.G. Scott in particular has revealed much "petty larceny" amongst the weaker poets. The collection of quatorzains written by William Smith affords a good example of the depths to which some sonneteers were sometimes forced to go to piece out their poor invention. In his ninth sonnet, Smith opens with a banal quatrain, employing an allusion to the classical myth of Diana and Actaeon:

¹See the notes on this poem, Works, ed. Hebel, vol. V, ed. Tillotson, p.16.

²See Fletcher's epistle "To the Reader" prefacing Licia, 1593: "For this kind of poetry wherein I wrote, I did it only to try my humour", Eliz.Sonnets, II, 30.

Unto the fountain, where fair DIANA chaste
The proud ACTEON turned to a hart,
I drove my flock that water sweet to taste;
'Cause from the welkin, PHOEBUS 'gan depart. (1)

The slender inspiration has clearly spent itself by the fourth line, and so the poet turns to Lodge's Phyllis, sonnet 9, "The dewy roseate Morn", for his next seven lines:

Smith: There did I see the Nymph whom I admire,
Lodge: When as she spied
Smith: Remembering her locks; of which the yellow hue
Lodge: Combing gold
Both: Made blush the beauties of her curled wire,
Smith: Which JOVE himself with wonder well might view.
Lodge: heaven itself might behold
Smith: Then red with ire, her tresses she berent;
Lodge: shame, her reverend Lockes she rent
Both: And weeping hid the beauty of her face:
Smith: Whilst I, amazed at her discontent,
Lodge: The flower of fancy wrought such discontent (2)

Apart from the alterations dictated by the circumstances of his poem, Smith's verbal changes are trivial and insignificant variations of Lodge's words, of the type which Matthew (the Matheo of the Quarto text) made in the revised version of Every Man in his Humour of 1616,

¹Chloris, 1596, 9, [ll. 1-4], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

²Italicized words are Smith's own. The text of Phyllis, 9, is taken from Eliz.Sonnets, II.

Vnto the boundlesse Ocean of thy face,
Runnes this poore riuer charg'd with streames of eyes. (1)

Vnto the boundles Ocean of thy beautie
Runs this poore riuer, charg'd with streames of zeale
(Delia, 1592, 1, [11.1-2])

Miss Scott accurately assessed Smith's ability when she
said of him:

....Smith est doñé d'une très grande impuissance
créatrice. Il ne peut guere composer sans copier.
Il a essayé de donner un peu de variété a ses plaintes
amoureuses par l'emploi de la pastorale, mais il suit
son maître, Lodge, d'une façon bien servile. Il s'est
efforcé aussi de rehausser son style par des invocations
et des allusions mythologiques. (2)

An unusual example of sonnet "carpentering" can be seen in
Watson's Tears of Fancie. Miss Scott gives details of the poet's
adaptations, or in some cases, unashamed lifting, of Gascoigne's
poetry,³ but a close examination of two sonnets of the Tears
sheds an interesting light on Watson's approach to his material
and the quatorzain. The poems, 47 and 48, are both on the same
theme, the renewal of life in Spring, and the contrasting
barrenness and desolation of the lover's state. The reason for
this repetition is made clear when the sonnets are compared with
the poem by Gascoigne from which they are taken:

(... behold eche pleasaunt greene,
Tears, 47, (Will now renew his sommers livery,
ll. 1-4 (The fragrant flowers, which have not long bene seene,
(Will flourish now, (ere long) in bravery:

¹V, v, 23-24, Ben Jonson, ed. Herford and Simpson, III. Jonson's dis-
like of the Petrarchan sonnet, and perhaps his personal animosity
towards Daniel, asserted themselves in the new comment of Edward
Kno'well (Lorenzo iunior), "A Parodie! a parodie! with a kind of
miraculous gift, to make it absurder then it was." (V, v, 26-27).

²Les Sonnets Elisabethains, p.200. For a full account of Smith's
debt to Lodge and other sonneteers, see ibid., pp. 197 ff., 321 f.

³ibid., pp. [65] ff, 307 f.

- Tears, 48
1. 1 The tender buddes, whom colde hath long kept in,
- Tears, 48,
1. 3 Will spring and sproute, as they do now begin.
- Tears, 47
11.5-8 (But I (alas) within whose mourning minde,
(The graffes¹ of grief, are onely given to growe,
(Cannot enjoy the spring which others finde,
(But still my will, must wither all in woe:
- Tears, 48
11.5 The² cold of care, so nippes my joyes at roote,
- Tears, 48
1. 7 No sunne doth shine, that well can do them boote.
- Tears, 47
11. 9-14 (The lustie Ver, which³ whilome might exchange
(My grieffe to joy, and then my joyes⁴ encrease,
(Springs now elsewhere, and showes to me but strange,
(My winters woe, therefore can never cease:
(In other coasts, his sunne full cleare doth shine,⁵
(And comforts lends to ev'ry mould but mine.
- Tears, 48
11. 9-14 (What plant⁶ can spring, that feels no force of Ver?
(What floure can flourish, where no sunne doth shine?
(These Bales (quod she)⁷ within my breast I bea⁸fe,
(To breake my backe, and make my pith to pine:
(Needes must I fall, I fade both roote and kinde,
(My branches bowe at blast of ev'ry winde.⁸

This scissors-and-paste method left Watson to write only lines 2, 4, 6, and 8 of sonnet 48 to complete his two quatorzains.

These lines of Gascoigne's are interesting, for they furnished

¹Gascoigne: "graffes", Watson: "graftes".

²Gascoigne: "The", Watson: "But".

³Gascoigne: "which", Watson: "that".

⁴Gascoigne: "then my joyes", Watson: "and my delight".

⁵Gascoigne: "full cleare doth shine", Watson: "doth clearly shine".

⁶Gascoigne: "What plant", Watson: "For what".

⁷Gascoigne: "(quod she)", Watson: "deare loue".

⁸UA loving Lady being wounded in the spring time...doth therefore thus bewayle", [11.19-42] Posies, ed. J.W. Cunliffe, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge, 1907, p.334. Gascoigne's lines are themselves based on the theme of Petrarch's "Eefiro torna".

another sonneteer with material for one of his poems. R.L.'s Diella, 1596, contains a quatorzain based upon the first three verses of the above quatorzain^{quotation}:

When FLORA vaunts her in her proud array,
 clothing fair TELLUS in a spangled gown;
 When BOREAS' fury is exiled away,
 and all the welkin cleared from angry frown:
 At that same time, all Nature's children joy;
 trees leave, flowers bud, plants spring, and beasts
 increase.
 Only my soul, surcharged with deep annoy,
 cannot rejoice, nor sighs nor tears can cease:
 Only the grafts of sorrow seem to grow,
 set in my heart, no other spring I find.
 Delights and pleasures are o'ergrown with woe,
 laments and sobs possess my weeping mind.
 The frost of grief so nips Delight at root:
 No sun but She can do it any boot. (1)

That R.L. went directly to Gascoigne rather than to Watson's adaptations² seems to be clearly indicated in the movement of the poem; the thought moves straight on into the second quatrain, pausing after the sixth line (to introduce the complementary theme), thus reproducing the movement of Gascoigne's sixaine stanza. The last six lines similarly follow the second verse, with the first line becoming the twelfth in R.L.'s sonnet and the awkward gap between the two blocks, lines 7 and 8 of the quatorzain filled by what appears to be an amalgam of "My griefe to joy, and then¹ my joyes encrease" and "My winters woe, therefore can never cease",

¹Son. 10, Eliz.Sonnets, II.

²For an account of R.L.'s debt to Watson, see Scott, Les Sonnets Elisabethains, pp. 195 f., 322. R.L.'s first-hand knowledge and use of Gascoigne is further demonstrated in Diella, 16, where ll. 1-4 are a re-working of [ll. 57-60] of Gascoigne's "A Lady being...wronged by false suspect", Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p. 339. Miss Scott does not give a source for these lines of Diella.

the second and fourth lines of Gascoigne's third stanza.

R.L.'s dependence on his source was not as shamelessly plagiaristic as Watson's, but it was not free from servility. The sonneteer studiously attempted to rewrite the verses in the new Petrarchan style, employing the device of paraphrase throughout, and replacing the homely terms of the "pleasaunt greene", and "sommers livery" by the heightened phraseology of Flora in proud array, and Tellus "in a spangled gown", and rendering the "colde" more grandly by "BOREAS' fury". The opening lines are successful to a degree, and have a pleasing verbal melody; but thereafter the poem descends only to stylistic improvement, with the emphasis on the avoidance of the alliteration which was old-fashioned when Watson reproduced it in The Tears of Fancie:

Delights and pleasures are o'ergrown with woe
(Dellila, 10, [l. 11])

But still my will must wither all in woe
(Tears, 47, [l. 8])

R.L. made a genuine attempt to recast his source material as his own. He fell short, however, not in intent but in ability; and this failing in Petrarchan poets, expanded by the satirists until it became, as well as included, plagiarism, was the basis of critics' attack. The wide range of their assault is a reminder that even the true poet had to be careful not to betray his "inward tuch" in his zeal to write in the popular Petrarchan vein. The dangers of plagiarism, or of servile imitation, were ones of which the sonneteer had to be particularly aware.

CHAPTER FOUR

Elizabethan Critical Attitudes to the Sonnet: (3):
Criticism of Petrarchan Themes, Conventions, Conceits, and
of Points of Style

In the days of Wyatt and Surrey, the love sonnet had been largely responsible for the introduction of Petrarchan poetry into England, and this pattern was repeated more vigorously with the growing popularity of the quatorzain in the last two decades of the sixteenth century. This poem, which was the one particularly associated with Petrarch, offered at its best the finest expression of those thoughts and feelings which he first experienced and set down in the Canzoniere. At the same time, the dictates of what had become the "most absolute of literary tyrannies",¹ with their insistence upon an in-bred and derivative tradition, imposed set patterns upon the poet's work which it was impossible to ignore or to break away from. In the first stages of establishing a modern literature, this was an advantage; but once the early struggles were over, and the foundations laid and built upon, the tempting facility of the mechanics of the tradition could be viewed in a fresh light. This led not only to the appraisal of the sonneteer's approach to his source material, as we saw in

¹A.J. Smith, "Theory and Practice in Renaissance Poetry: Two Kinds of Imitation", Bull. John Rylands Library, 1964-1965, XLVII, p.214f.

the last chapter,¹ but also to an examination of the way in which he used the components of this material, and of the stylistic devices which he employed. Since the emotion of Petrarchan poetry was distinctively rarefied, subtle, and sinewy, it demanded from the poet who wrote in that vein a particular understanding of its nature, and an artistry exacting enough to convey this in his verse, otherwise his poetry was only an absurd posturing. Similarly, from the reader, Petrarchanism demanded an appreciation of true emotion and artistry, or else the poems seemed extravagant and ridiculous. Both of these virtues and defects were to be found amongst the Elizabethan poets and critics, and both influenced the criticism of those aspects of the sonneteer's artistry to be examined in this chapter.

One of the difficulties confronting the Petrarchan sonneteer was the predictability of much of his work. His subjects, the conventions he used, and to a large extent the types of conceit by which he expressed these conventions, had been laid down for him by the Petrarchan tradition. In one sense, the tradition was a great stay, but it easily became a crutch supporting the weaker poets. The inherent weakness of Petrarchanism was its tendency towards exaggeration, combined with an underlying commonplaceness, which were supplemented by the efforts of the ungifted. Recognition of this by the critics led not only to particular attacks upon specific

¹See above, p.65ff

faults of certain poets, but also to general condemnations of sonneteers as a class, regardless of individual merit.

On account of the popularity of Petrarchan poetry, the stock situations of the sonnet sequence could be mocked for their conventionality. This Nashe proceeded to do in The Unfortunate Traveller, 1594, in those pages which described the course of the Earl of Surrey's passion. The Earl claimed to be metamorphozed by Love,¹ he apostrophized Hampton Court, the place where he first saw his Geraldine²; he left her to travel, thus introducing the theme of absence.³ Seeing the image of Geraldine in her sick-bed in Cornelius Agrippa's magic glass, "he must forthwith frame this extemporal dity", and declaimed a poem upon his lady's suffering in her sickness.⁴ When Surrey and Wilton were imprisoned with Diamante, the Earl craved her favour as if she were indeed his lady:

He praised, he praied, he desired and besought her
to pittie him that perisht for her. From this his

¹The Works of Thomas Nashe, ed. R.B. McKerrow, Oxford, 1958, II, 243. cf. F. Petrarch, Canzoniere, 23, Le Rime, ed. G. Garducci and S. Ferrari, Florence, 1899. A common theme in English sequences, see below, p. 88ff

²ibid., II, 243. Petrarch has several poems celebrating the time and place where he first saw Laura: Canzoniere, 13, 61, 85, 126, Le Rime, op.cit. cf. H. Constable, Diana, II, iii, 5, The Poems, ed. J. Grundy, 1960, p. 156.

³ibid., II, 244. cf. F. Petrarch, Canzoniere, 124, 127, 129, 130, 226, 227, Le Rime, op.cit. For the theme of absence in Elizabethan sequences, see L.C. John, The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences, New York, 1938, pp. 110 ff, 196.

⁴ibid., II, 254. cf. F. Petrarch, Canzoniere, 31, 32, 135, Le Rime, op.cit.; P. Sidney, Astrophil and Stella, 101, 102, Poems, ed. W.A. Ringler, Jr., Oxford, 1962; H. Constable, Diana, III, i, 5, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 163; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, Mad. 20, ed. S. Lee, Elizabethan Sonnets, 1904, I; T. Lodge, Phyllis, 7, ibid., II; G. Fletcher, Licia, 20, 24, ibid., II.

intranced mistaking extasie could no man remoue
 him. Who loueth resolutely wil include euery thing
 vnder the name of his loue. (1)

Later, Jack Wilton recorded how he prevented his master from making
 a spectacle of himself by addressing Geraldine's house:

hee was so impassioned that in the open street,
 but for me, he would haue made an oration in prayse
 of it. (2)

The page was able to restrain the Earl until they reached the
 room where Geraldine was born:

In prayse of the chamber that was so illuminatiuely
 honored with her radiant conception, he penned this
 sonet.

Faire roome, the presence of sweet beauties pride. (3)

This satire is the best of its kind on the Petrarchan lover.
 It is essentially good-humoured and affectionate, and if the Earl
 of Surrey is laughed at for his ridiculous idealism, Jack Wilton
 is not spared because he is a pragmatist. Nonetheless, when the
 most noble English sonneteer, and one of the first, was reduced to
 appearing as the hero of a burlesque episode, it indicates that
 the Petrarchan situations, by over-use and unfortunate treatment,
 had lost their first impeccable brilliance and had become tarnished
 by exaggerated and heightened effects.

¹ibid., II, 262. cf. F. Petrarch, Canzoniere, 16, Le Rime, op.cit.;
 P. Sidney, A & S, 91, Poems, ed. Ringler.

²ibid., II, 270. cf. F. Petrarch, Canzoniere, 117, 209, Le Rime,
op.cit.

³ibid., II, 270.

This can be seen in the triviality of some of the subjects which became part of the Petrarchan tradition. Nashe hinted at the prevalence of criticism of this feature when, in the justification for writing upon so slight a subject as the red herring, he cited the trends followed by contemporary poets:

the wantonner sort of them sing descant on their
mistris gloue, her ring, her fann^e, her looking glasse,
her pantofle. (1)

Whilst the "pantofle" and the fan apparently escaped the attention of the Elizabethan sonneteers whose work has survived, Constable had a sonnet upon his lady's glove,² one of E.C.'s mentioned a ring given to him by Emaricdulfe,³ and Daniel and Spenser both wrote quatorzains upon their ladies' mirrors:

O why dooth Delia credite so her glasse
(Delia, 1592, 29.)

Leaue lady in your glasse of christall clene,
Your goodly selfe for euermore to vew...
(Amoretti, 1595, 45.)

Success or failure with such subjects depended on the poet's ability, but one reason why such themes were attacked by the critics was that they offered the gull the opportunity to make baseless pretensions to wit and learning. In The Second Return from Parnassus, ?1601/1602, Ingenioso scathingly described Amoretto as:

one that loues no scholler but him whose tyred eares
can endure halfe a day together his fliblowne sonnettes

¹Nashes Lenten Stoffe, 1599, Works, ed. McKerrow, VII, 176.

²Diana, I, iii, 2, Poems, ed Grundy, p. 131.

³Emaricdulfe, 1595, 13, A Lamport Garland, [ed. C. Edmonds] Roxburghe Club, 1881.

of his mistres, and her louing pretty creatures, her
 numckey and her puppet. (1)

Ingenioso, whose fate it was to be bedevilled with such gulls, had
 in the previous play endured the bragging of Gullio:

And for matters of witt, oft haue I sonnetted it in
 the commendacõns of her squirill. (2)

Clearly, poetry written about the lady's pets was the nadir of
 frivolity to the young men of Cambridge. Although Sidney's sonnets
 in Astrophil and Stella on his lady's sparrow (83) and her dog (59)
 have grace and humour, such subjects treated without both deserve
 the scorn poured upon them by the authors of the Parnassus Plays,
 as Tofte's poem, in which he wishes himself Laura's "little whelp",
 demonstrates.³

The critics also objected to the exalted treatment that such
 insignificant subjects were given. A favourite theme of the poets
 which received this censure was that of the lady's kiss, lauded
 both for its sweetness and power.⁴ Nashe made references to both
 properties in The Unfortunate Traveller. The poem on Geraldine's
 sickness, concludes "Hir lips one kisse would vnto Nectar melt",⁵

¹ III, iv, 1369-72, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. J.B. Leishman, 1949.

² The First Return from Parnassus, III, i, 889-90, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. Leishman.

³ Laura, 1597, II, 25, Eliz. Sonnets, II.

⁴ See P. Sidney, A & S, 73, 74, 79-82, Song 2, Poems, ed. Ringler; H. Constable, Diana, III, i, 3, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 161; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, Mads. 13, 16, Eliz. Sonnets, I; G. Fletcher, Licia, 4, 16, 52, ibid., II; E. Spenser, Amoretti, 64, The Poetical Works ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford Standard Authors, 1959; Zepheria, 23, Eliz. Sonnets, II; R.L., Diella, 31, 52, ibid., II; W. Drummond, Poems, 1616, I, son. 40, Poetical Works, ed. L.E. Kastner, Manchester, 1913, I.

⁵ Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 255.

whilst in the parody, "If I must die, O, let me choose my death", the author employs the motif of the soul leaving the body with the exchange of kisses:

Sucke out my soule with kisses, cruell maide,
In thy breasts christall bals enbalme my breath,
Dole it all out in sighs when I am laide (¶)

Nashe may have had Sir Thomas Wyatt's "Alas, Madame, for stealing of a kiss"² particularly in mind here, but the theme is also to be found in Fletcher's Licia, 1593:

That time, fair LICIA, when I stole a kiss
From off those lips where CUPID lovely laid,
I quaked for cold: and found the cause was this:
My Life which loved, for love behind me stayed. (3)

The gentle ridicule of Nashe's criticism of this Petrarchan subject was later reinforced by a more virulent attack from Marston's pen:

If Lauras painted lip doe daine a kisse
To her enamor'd slaue, ô heuens blisse
(Straight he exclames) not to be match'd with this!
Elaspheming dolt, goe three-score sonnets write
Vpon a pictures kisse, ô rauing spright! (4)

Mr. Davenport, Marston's editor, has suggested that the satirist had an actual sonneteer in mind:

Thomas Watson's Tears of Fancy, 1593, has in fact 60 sonnets, and sonnet 59 could have suggested line 142:
"Thy picture yea thy fierie darting eien,
Hee carrie painted in my griued mind."
...Watson's lady was Laura (Hekatompathia, 97) and he has a sonnet on her kiss (ibid., 20). (5)

¹ibid., II, 262 f. In italics throughout. cf. J.Weever, Epigrammes, 1599, ed. R.B.McKerrow, 1911, "The fifth weeke", Epig. 18.

²Tottel's Miscellany, ed.H.E.Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1928, I, no.54.

³Son. 19, [ll. 1-4], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

⁴The Scourge of Villanie, 1598, Sat.8, ll.138-42, Poems, ed.A.Davenport Liverpool, 1961. cf. also The Pilgrimage to Parnassus, ?1598/1599, IV, ll. 378-82, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. Leishman.

⁵Poems, "Commentary", p. 345.

Nonetheless, the evidence is far from conclusive, and the attitude was so general amongst Petrarchan poets that it could have been applied to all who wrote on this theme.

The Petrarchan conventions were as open to misuse by the poets and ridicule from the critics as were the subjects of the sonnets, and one convention particularly prone to attack was that of the transformation of the lover.

The metamorphosing power of love was an accepted tradition of the sixteenth century. Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, a repository of Elizabethan lore, recorded that "As it makes wise men fools, so manytimes it makes fools become wise",¹ and Hall, no friend to Petrarchan lovers, conceded that the passion could raise the ignoble to fine poetic expression.² Nashe introduced the transformation convention into his portrait of the Earl of Surrey:

Ah, quoth he, my little Page, full little canst thou
perceive howe farre Metamorphozed I am from my selfe.
...There is a little God called Loue...hee it is that,
exercising his Empire in my eyes, hath exorcized and
cleane coniured me from my content. (3)

The alteration of character was accompanied by an alteration of appearance, and in his Arcadia Sidney neatly employed both aspects of the metamorphosis effected by love in both the change of heart of, and the disguises assumed by, the two heroes. This was underlined

¹ed. A.R. Shilleto, 1896, III, 197.

²Virgidemiarum, 1598, I, vii, 3-4, The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool, 1949. Quoted below, p.143.

³The Unfortunate Traveller, Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 243.

in the case of Pyrocles, whose disguise as the Amazon Zelmane was the more radical of the two, by the sonnet, "transformd in shew, but more transformd in minde".¹ The lover was generally, however, recognizable in life and literature by certain well-known and obvious signs. He had learned

to wreathe [his] arms, like a malcontent; to relish a love-song, like a robin-redbreast; to walk alone, like one that had the pestilence; to sigh, like a schoolboy that had lost his ABC; to weep, like a young wench that had buried her grandam; to fast, like one that takes diet; to watch, like one that fears robbing; to speak paling, like a beggar at Hallowmas. (2)

Within the sonnets, these attitudes were rendered frequently, often monotonously, by expressions of despair, and recourse to lines about sighs and tears. The association between the conventional accents of misery and the Petrarchan lover led to Mercutio's humorous conjuring of Romeo; "Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh!",³ and Marston attacked the metamorphosis of the lover on the same grounds:

I cannot choose but bite
To view Nauortius metamorphiz'd quite
To puling sighes, & into (aye me's) state. (4)

¹The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. A. Feuillerat, Cambridge, 1962, I, 76.

²W. Shakespeare, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, 1594-1595, II, i, 17-25, Works, ed. W. G. Clark and W. A. Wright, Globe edition, second ed., repr. 1923. For other details of the lover's appearance, see As You Like It, 1599-1600, III, ii, 392-401, ibid., R. Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 174, 201 ff.

³W. Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, 1594-1595, II, i, 8, Works, Globe ed

⁴Scourge of Villanie, Sat. 8, ll. 50-52, Poems, ed. Davenport.

For the alterations in his state, the sonneteer could cite classical authority, and in particular the example of Jupiter, as did Lodge and Barnes, in "I would in rich and golden-coloured rain"¹ and "Jove for EUROPA's love, took shape of Bull".² The use of such references was mocked by both Shakespeare and Sidney. In A Winter's Tale, 1610-1611, Florizel justified his shepherd's attire to Perdita in the following terms:

The gods themselves,
Humbling their deities to love, have taken
The shapes of beasts upon them: Jupiter
Became a bull, and bellow'd; the green Neptune
A ram, and bleated; and the fire-robed god,
Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
As I seem now. (3)

Sidney's ridicule of this convention occurred in Astrophil and Stella, where amongst other features of contemporary poetry that he condemned, there was a reference to this kind of classical allusion:

Some one his song in Jove, and Jove's strange
tales attires,
Broadred with bulls and swans, powdered with golden raine. (4)

Fulke Greville's editor, Professor Bullough, has suggested that these lines may refer to a sonnet of Sidney's friend, in which he employed these same images, "although Greville's use of them [was] unconventionally ironic"⁵:

¹ Phyllis, 34, Eliz.Sonnets, II. Gorges's Vaunetyes and Toyes, 46, is a translation of the same poem of Ronsard's, see The Poems of Sir Arthur Gorges, ed.H.E.Sandison, Oxford, 1953, "Commentary", p.201.

² Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 63, Eliz.Sonnets, I.

³ IV, iv, 25-31, Works, Globe ed.

⁴ son.6, ll.5-6, Poems, ed. Ringler.

⁵ Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, 1938, I, "Commentary", p.246.

Must Danaes lap be wet with golden showers?
 Or through the seas must buls Europa beare?
 Must Leda onely serue the higher Powers? (1)

If Sidney was laughing at his friend, and this seems quite likely, Greville's approach to his material perhaps indicates that he shared Sidney's views in this matter, and was himself referring to the current fashion in his own individual manner, combining criticism of this with the criticism of his worldly mistress.

With the increasing popularity of Petrarchan poetry, the search for novelty introduced new and not altogether happy transformations or desired metamorphoses. Nashe ridiculed this tendency in The Unfortunate Traveller, when, in one of the sonnet parodies, the Earl of Surrey desired of his lady: "Like Circes change me to a loathsome swine",² and Sir John Davies introduced a similarly bathetic note into the metamorphosis in his first gulling sonnet, by which the celestial powers eased the lover's oppression:

By there decree he soone transformed was
 into a patiente burden-bearing Asse. (3)

Eccentricities took their place beside the more conventional wished-for transformations, as Burton indicated in his comments on this aspect of the lover's distemper in The Anatomy of Melancholy:

¹Caelica, 33, ll. 9-11, Poems and Dramas, op.cit., I.

²Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 263.

³Son. 1, [ll.13-14], The Dr. Farmer Chetham Ms., Part I, ed. A.B. Grosart, Chetham Soc. Publs. LXXXIX, Manchester, 1873, p. 77.

he is an Oven, a Salamander in the fire, so scorched
with love's heat; he wisheth himself a saddle for her
to sit on, a posy for her to smell to. (1)

The absurdity and prevalence of such metamorphoses led Marston
to compile a list of the more ridiculous in his satire upon
"Inamorato Curio". Amongst the items are two which possibly refer
to Barnabe Barnes and Parthenophil and Parthenophe:

Another [would be] his sweet Ladies verdigall
To clip her tender breech ...
Here's one would be his Mistres neck-lace faire,
To clip her faire, and kisse her azure vaine. (2)

The likelihood of Barnes's sixty-third sonnet being Marston's
immediate target is increased by a similar burlesquing which occurs
in J.M.'s The Newe Metamorphosis, 1600:

one while he wisht that he were made a Glove
to kisse my handes, so to expresse his love,
the Chaine of pearle that compassed my necke
so that he might embrace it w[i]thout checke
or to a precious Belt of beaten gold
that so he might me in his armes enfold. (3)

These lines follow Barnes's poem very closely:

Would I were changed but to my Mistress' gloves,
That those white lovely fingers I might hide!
That I might kiss those hands, which mine heart loves!
Or else that chain of pearl (her necke's vain pride)
Made proud with her neck's veins, that I might fold
About that lovely heck, and her paps tickle!
Or her to compass, like a belt of gold! (4)

¹ed. Shilleto, III, 194.

²Scourge of Villanie, sat.8, ll.131-32, 134-35, Poems, ed Davenport.
Mr. Davenport notes that the necklace transformation might be a hit
at Lodge for a sonnet in A Margarite of America, 1596; see "Commentary"
p. 345.

³Quoted in J.H.H.Lyon, A Study of The Newe Metamorphosis, New York,
1919, p. 168.

⁴[ll. 5-11], Eliz.Sonnets, I. cf. R. & J, II, ii, 23-24, Works of
William Shakespeare, Globe ed.: "O, that I were a glove upon that
hand, / That I might touch that cheek!"

It seems that the poet's unfortunate ingenuity in the use of this convention marked him out as the typical exponent of ridiculous metamorphoses, and sonnet 63 of Parthenophil and Parthenophe was to blame for this in one of the other desires it expresses. The poet wishes that he were:

...that sweet wine, which down her throat doth trickle,
To kiss her lips, and lie next at her heart,
Run through her veins, and pass by Pleasure's part! (1)

Marston clearly had these lines in mind when he attacked Barnes thus:

Parthenophall, thy wish I will omit,
so beastly tis I may not vtter it. (2)

Nashe had less delicacy in this matter, delighted at the opportunity afforded him of having a fling at Gabriel Harvey's protégé:

if you would haue anie rymes to the tune of stink-a-pisse,
hee is for you; in one place of his Parthenophill and
Parthenope wishing no other thing of Heauen but that
hee might beentransformed to the Wine his Mistress drinks,
and so passe thorough her. (3)

Campion also referred to this unhappy wish in one of his epigrams.⁴ Barnes deservedly suffered much ridicule for what was a lapse both of taste and artistry, and one which the critics did not choose to ignore.

The transformation was desired either to gain some way into the mistress's favour, or to win some relief from the lover's

¹[ll. 12-14], Eliz.Sonnets, I.

²Scourge of Villanie, sat.8, ll. 126-27, Poems, ed. Davenport.

³Have with you to Saffron-walden, 1596, Works, ed. McKerrow, III, 103.

⁴Epigrammatum, 1619, I, no. 17, Works, ed. A.H. Bullen, 1889, p.268 f.

suffering. The extent of the latter was a subject of which the sonneteer never tired of telling and on which he employed a range of conceits, from those dealing with his own state: sleeplessness, weeping, thoughts in absence; to comparisons which dramatized these states, taken from every field of literature and life.¹ The impression gained from the sonnets is often a cumulative one, and Sir John Davies opened his Gullinge Sonnets, ?1595, on this theme:

The Louer Vnder burthen of his Mris loue
 Wch lyke to AEtna did his harte oppresse:
 did give such piteous grones yt he did moue
 the heau'nes at length to pittie his distresse. (2)

If any particular sonneteer is the victim here, Thomas Watson seems the most likely candidate. His Tears of Fancie, 1593, is aptly named, in that it is one of the most lacrymose and melancholy of the sequences, and there are two references in it to Etna: the motto on the title-page, "A^aEtna gr^uius Amor", and in sonnet 18, where his heart is "like to AEtna burning".³ Furthermore, the contents of sonnet 42 seem closely related to Davies's quatrain; they include an invocation, and bewail the burden of love:

O Thou that rulest in Ramnis golden gate,
 Let pittie pierce the vnrelenting mind:
 Vnlade me of the burthen cruell fate,
 (Fell enuious fates too cruell and vnkind)

¹ See L.C. John, Eliz.Sonnet Sequences, pp. 87 ff., 196 ff. See also below, p. 229f

² son. 1, [ll. 1-4], Dr. Farmer Chetham Ms., Part I, Chetham Soc.Publs., LXXXIX, p. 77. cf. ibid., son. 4.

³ [l. 7], Eliz.Sonnets, I. Pointed out by A. Davenport, Poems of John Marston, "Commentary", p. 345.

Haue heapt vpon me by too froward loue,
 ...Whose fierce assaults my hart (too late) did proue,
 My sillie hart which sorrow did importune. (1)

However, the reference to Etna was by no means confined to Watson, although it was one he employed in Hekatompathia, 58; it can also be found in Phyllis, 2, Chloris, 5, and Parthenophil and Parthenophe, Elegy 9, and appeared later in Drummond's sequence:

...bid them if they would moe AETNAS burne,
 In Rhodopee or Erimanthe mee turne. (2)

The appearance of the allusion in The Anatomy of Melancholy testifies to its conventionality.³ The great weight of love was a theme which Watson also shared with others; Barnes referred to his passion as "A burden whose weight is importable",⁴ whilst the poet of Zepheria, who was attacked elsewhere in Davies's sonnets,⁵ wrote a poem in terms of similar import:

But, if, with error and unjust suspect,
 Thou shalt the burden of my grievance aggravate!
 Laying unto my charge thy love's neglect
 (A load which patience cannot tolerate!)
 First, to be ATLAS to my own Desire,
 Then, to depress me with unkind construction;
 While to mine owne griefs may I scarce respire:
 This is to heap Ossa on Pelion! (6)

The application of Sir John's mockery may therefore have been general, and suitable for all who used these hyperbolic terms.

¹[ll. 1-5, 7-8], ibid., I.

²Poems, I, son. 29, ll. 13-14, Poetical Works, ed. Kastner, I.

³ed. Shilleto, III, 171.

⁴Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 49, [l. 5], Eliz.Sonnets, I.

⁵See below, pp. 116f, 120.

⁶canzon 36, [ll. 1-8], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

When all else failed, the lover could always call on his lady to take his life. It was a convention that death at her hands was desirable:

Those who were condemned to be smothered to death by sinking downe into the softe bottome of an high built bedde of Roses, neuer dide so sweet a death as I shoulde die, if hir Nose coloured disdain were my deathes-man. (1)

The impractical and absurd nature of the lover's death-wish was tilted at by Burton:

it would not grieve him to be hanged, if he might be strangled in her garters; he would willingly die to morrow, so that she might kill him with her own hands. (2)

Nashe in fact devoted a sonnet in The Unfortunate Traveller to illustrating the exaggeration implicit in this convention. One manner of death succeeded another, gradually increasing the outrageous effect. The first method needed no heightening in itself, and had already been used by Wyatt, and was again used later by Drummond:³ "Sucke out my soule with kisses".⁴ The next was an addition to the sonneteer's repertoire: "Crush out my winde with one strait girting graspe",⁵ and the third manner of execution added a little embellishment to the murdered heart theme: "Stabs on my heart keep time whilest thou doest sing".⁶ Finally, Nashe made minor

1. T. Nashe, The Unfortunate Traveller, Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 243.

² The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 194. cf. Greville, Caelica, 2, Poems and Dramas, ed. Bullough, I; A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 62, Poems, ed. Sandison; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Farthenophe 87, Eliz. Sonnets, I; T. Lodge, Phyllis, 19, ibid., II; G. Fletcher, Licia, 16, 19, ibid., II; W. Drummond, Poems, I, son. 34, Poetical Works, ed. Kastner, I.

³ Poems, I, son. 4, Poetical Works, op.cit.

⁴ Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 262.

⁵ ibid., II, 263.

⁶ ibid., II, 263.

alterations to two conceits, tipping the balance between heightened language and absurdity. The lady's eyes, often accused of darting deadly arrows at her lover,¹ and her hair, sometimes described as a net or snare,² became in the satirist's hands "searing yrons" and an enveloping blanket.

Thy eyes lyke searing yrons burne out mine,
In thy faire tresses stiffl me outright. (3)

Nashe then went on to point out that these impossible and highly unlikely means of death were not in reality desired at all:

Like Circes change me to a loathsome swine,
So I may liue for euer in thy sight (4)

a fact which seems to be borne out by the unwillingness death showed to come to the lover's aid ~~and~~ as in the sequences of Watson and

R.L.:

Patience wants power to appease my weeping,
And death denies what I haue long beene seeking. (5)

...DEATH is deaf! for well he knows my pain,
my slackless pain, hell's horror doth exceed. (6)

In his attack on the conventional seeking of death by the lover, Marston ridiculed both the exaggeration of the poet's declarations,

¹ See M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 1594, 26, 42, The Works, ed. J.W.Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, I; B.Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 26, 60, 67, 87, 94, Eliz.Sonnets, I; E. Spenser, Amoretti, 57, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors; H. Constable, Diana, 1594, VI, 8, 9, Poems, ed. Grundy, p.207 f. See also below, p.iii, and ibid., note 6.

² See L.C.John, Eliz.Sonnet Sequences, pp.144, 243 note 17. cf. also W.Drummond, Poems, I, son. 48, Poetical Works, ed. Kastner, I.

³ Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 263. In italics throughout.

⁴ ibid., II, 263. In italics throughout.

⁵ Tears of Fancie, 57, [ll. 13-14], Eliz.Sonnets, I.

⁶ Diella, 29, [ll. 5-6], ibid., II.

and the placing of the power over life and death in the lady's hands:

Sweet-fac'd Corinna, daine the riband tie
 Of thy Cork-shoee, or els thy slaue will die:
 Some puling Sonnet toles his passing bell,
 Some sighing Elegie must ring his knell,
 Vnlesse bright sunshine of thy grace reuiue
 His wambling stomach, certes he will diue
 Into the whirle-poole of deuouring death,
 And to some Mermaid sacrifice his breath. (1)

The absurdity of such attitudes withered instantly under the icy blast of Marston's ridicule.

The major condemnation of the sonneteer's hyperbolical treatment of convention was made against the exalted praise which he accorded to his mistress, which was beyond reason and credence, as the critics pointed out:

His lips with thousand kisses courtes her hand,
 And sonnets forth her beawty to the skyes,
 Where if her comelines be rightly scand,
 Shees neither vertuous, beawtifull, nor wise,
 And all her grace is but to seem precise. (2)

Nashe was similarly scornful of the claims which the upstart in Pierce Penillesse, 1592, makes^d for his lady:

Sometimes (because Loue commonly weares the liuerey of Wit) hee will be an Inamorato Poeta, & sonnet a whole quire of paper in praise of Lady Swin-snout, his yeolow fac'd Mistres. (3)

¹ Scourge of Villanie, Sat.8, ll. 7-14, Poems, ed. Davenport. For sonnets proclaiming the lady's power of life or death over her lover, see A.Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 69, Poems, ed. Sandison; H.Constable Diana, I, i, 4; I, ii, 2, 5; Diana, 1594, IV, 5, 7; VII, 7-9, Poems, ed. Grundy, pp:118,123,126,195,198,213,214; E.Spenser, Amoretti, 2, 36,38,47,49, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors; B.Griffin, Fidessa, 24,47,48,59,62, Eliz.Sonnets, II; W.Smith,22,24,41,ibid., II.

² W.Rankins, Seven Satires, 1598, ed.A.Davenport, Sat.5, ll.29-33, Liverpool Reprints, 1, Liverpool,1948.

³ Works, ed. McKerrow, I, 169.

Hall rejected the Petrarchan convention outright for its lack of truth:

Nor list I sonnet of my Mistresse face,
To paint some Blowesse with a borrowed grace. (1)

The monotonous repetition of these exalted claims, demanding a recognition of extraordinary qualities in ordinary or imaginary young women, and made by spiritless and sometimes untalented young men, not unnaturally provoked this strong reaction against the convention of the perfection of the Petrarchan Mistress. Shakespeare himself made use of this rejection of hyperbole in his sonnets treating of the rival poet, particularly where he implied a direct contrast between the extravagant bombast exercised by his rival, and the simplicity with which he himself approached his verse:

I never saw that you did painting need,
And therefore to your fair no painting set;
I found, or thought I found, you did exceed
The barren tender of a poet's debt. (2)

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain rehearse,
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew? (3)

In Shakespeare's poems, there is a more complex variety of feelings than in the execrations of the mere satirists; his deepest feelings, and his belief in the friend, had been wounded, and his artistic pride hurt, because the young man preferred the scheming adventurer versifier, before Shakespeare, a true poet and friend. Shakespeare

¹Virgidemiarum, I, i, 5-6, Collected Poems, ed. Davenport.

²The Sonnets of Shakespeare, ed. H.C.Beeching, Boston and London, 1904, Son. 83, ll. 1-4.

³ibid., Son. 86, ll. 1-4.

successfully re-worked legitimate criticism of the bad Petrarchan poet into his sequence, using it to enhance the strength of his emotion and the outstanding beauty of his friend.

For the beloved of every Petrarchan lover was a non-pareil, as Mercutio mocked at Romeo:

Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in:
 Laura to his lady was but a kitchen-wench; marry, she
 had a better love to be-rhyme her; Dido a dowdy;
 Cleopatra a gipsy; Helen and Hero hildings and harlots;
 Thisbe a grey eye or so, but not to the purpose. (1)

Burton compiled a similar list in The Anatomy of Melancholy, indicating that such comparisons were commonplace:

let Paris himself be Iudge) renowned Helena comes short,
 that Rhodopeia Phyllis, Larissaeon Coronis, Babylonian
Thisbe, Polyxena, Laura, Lesbia, &c. your counterfeit
 Ladies were never so fair as she is. (2)

Bucke's commendatory sonnet to Hekatompathia declared that Watson's Laura surpassed Petrarch's,³ and Barnes placed Parthenophe above both Laura and Stella.⁴ Daniel, with more restraint, made his mistress the equal of Petrarch's "Thou thou a Laura hast no Petrarch founde".⁵ The judgement of Paris, and variations upon this theme, can be found in Sidney's "Phoebus was judge betweene Jove, Mars, and Love", in Gorges's "Mistres, thinke note it is alone the flattringe Chue", in the "In Ida Vale three Queens, the Shepherd saw" of Fletcher,

¹ W. Shakespeare, ^{R&J,} II, iv, 39-45, Works, Globe ed. cf. also Love's Labour's Lost, 1594-1595, IV, iii, 117-18, ibid.

² ed. Shilleto, III, 179.

³ See above, p.51

⁴ Parthenophil and Parthenophe, Mad. 14, Eliz.Sonnets, I. cf. ibid., Son. 95.

⁵ Delia, 1592, 35, l.3; Poems and A Defence of Ryme, ed. A.C.Sprague, 1950, p. 28.

and in Griffin's sonnet "Three playfellows.../...upon a summer's day";¹ these, and the many others praising the lady, point to her being matchless in the poet's eyes. All lovers reached the conclusion which is well exemplified in these lines of William Drummond:

All other Beauties how so e're they shine
 In Haires more bright than is the golden Ore,
 Or Cheekes more faire than fairest Eglantine,
 Or Hands like Hers who comes the Sunne before:
 Match'd with that Heauenly Hue, and Shape diuine,
 With those deare Starres which my weake Thoughts adore,
 Looke but like Shaddowes, or if they bee more,
 It is in that that they are like to thine. (2)

However much the sonneteer's mistress may have outshone all other ladies, she was virtually indistinguishable from her companion Petrarchan heroines, sharing with them such conventional descriptions as detailed by Drummond. This in itself produced an anti-Petrarchan reaction from the critics. Hall deplored the fact that

Be shee all sootie-blacke, or bery-browne,
 Shees white as morrows milk, or flaks new blowne. (3)

In Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost, Biron mocked the conventional idea of beauty, ruefully exclaiming:

And I, forsooth, in love! ...
 ...And, among three, to love the worst of all;
 A wightly wanton with a velvet brow,
 With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes. (4)

¹A & S, 13, Poems, ed. Ringler; Vannetyes and Toyes, 29, Poems, ed. Sandison; Licia, 11, Eliz.Sonnets, II; Fidessa, 1596, ibid., II. cf. also B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 72, ibid., I.

²Poems, I, son.20, Poetical Works, ed. Kastner, I.

³Virgidemiarum, I, vii, 21-22, Collected Poems, ed. Davenport.

⁴III, i, 176, 197-99, Works, Globe ed.

later in the same play, R^avarre bantered his friends Longaville and Dumain for their description of their loves: "One, her hairs were gold, crystal the other's eyes".¹

A favourite device of the Petrarchan lover was the one that listed his lady's beauties point by point. Olivia jibed at this method in Twelfth Night, 1599-1600:

I will give out divers schedules of my beauty: it shall be inventoried, and every particle and utensil labelled to my will: as, item, two lips, indifferent red; item, two grey eyes, with lids to them; item, one neck, one chin, and so forth. (2)

All too often, the inventory was as hyperbolic in treatment as the other expressions of the lover's devotion, and Nashe pointed to this failing in one of his Petrarchan parodies in The Unfortunate Traveller:

Her praise I tune whose tongue doth tune the spheres^a
And gets new muses in his hearers eares.[^]

Starres fall to fetch fresh light from hir rich eyes,
Her bright brow driues the Sunne to cloudes beneath,
Hir haires reflex with red strakes paints the skies,
Sweet morne and euening deaw flows from her breath:

...Hir daintie lims tinsill her silke soft sheets,
Hir rose-crownd cheekes eclipse my dazeled sight. (3)

In Love's Labour's Lost, Biron commented drily on Dumain's rapturous description of Kate, turning the Petrarchan hyperboles into anti-Petrarchan bathos:

¹IV,iii, 142. ibid. For full details of the conventional idea of beauty in the sonneteers, see L.C.John, Eliz.Sonnet Sequences, p.139ff

²I, v, 262-67, The Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed. cf. R & J, II, i, 17-20, ibid. cf. also the burlesque treatment of the list in the hands of Launce in TGV, III, i, 273 ff. ibid.

³Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 254. In italics throughout.

Dum. Her amber hair for foul hath amber quoted.
Biron. An amber-colour'd raven was well noted.
Dum. As upright as the cedar.
Biron. Stoop, I say;
Her shoulder is with child.
Dum. As fair as day.
Biron. Ay, as some days; but then no sun must shine. (1)

This type of criticism eventually found its way into the sonnet sequence, in a quatorzain which appeared in Drayton's collection of 1619, where the list of conventional descriptions was treated ironically, even bitterly, in the sonnet on the poet's mistress in her old age:

There's nothing grieves me, but that Age should haste,
That in my dayes I may not see thee old,
That where those two cleare sparkling Eyes are plac'd,
Onely two loope-holes, then I might behold.
That lovely, arched, yvorie pollish'd Brow,
Defac'd with Wrinkles, that I might but see;
Thy daintie Hayre, so curl'd, and crisped now,
Like grizzled Mosse upon some aged Tree;
Thy Cheeke, now flush with Roses, sunke, and leane,
Thy Lips, with age, as any Wafer thinne,
Thy Pearly Teeth out of thy Head so cleane,
That when thou feed'st, thy Nose shall touch thy Chinne. (2)

The breadth of the Petrarchan tradition is shown by the way in which it could accommodate such attacks on its basic conventions, and make them part of itself. The lady was tabled both in the conventional comparisons, and in the equally conventional rejection of these. The two could exist happily side by side:

¹LLL, IV, iii, 87-91, The Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed.

²Idea, 8, [ll. 1-11], Works, ed. Hebel, II.

All the gracious Eulogies, Metaphors, Hyperbolical comparisons of the best things in the world, the most glorious names; whatsoever, I say, is pleasant, aimable, sweet, grateful, and delicious, are too little for her. ...Stars, Suns, Moons, Metals, sweet-smelling Flowers, Odours, Perfumes, Colours, Gold, Silver, Ivory, Pearls, Precious Stones, Snow, painted Birds, Doves, Honey, Sugar, Spice, cannot express her. (1)

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
....And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare. (2)

This is the most famous of all anti-Petrarchan sonnets, and deservedly so, but it is not the sole expression of these sentiments either in Shakespeare's sequence or in those of others. Shakespeare early rejected hyperbolical descriptions in the sonnets addressed to the friend, refusing to make

....a couplement of proud compare
With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems,
With April's first-born flowers, and all things rare
That heaven's air in this huge rondure hems. (3)

He would only commit himself to homely truth:

... my love is as fair
As any mother's child, though not so bright
As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air. (4)

¹R. Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 180f.
cf. also B. Riche, Allarme to England, 1578, sig. Hiiij.

²W. Shakespeare, Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 130, ll. 1-10, 13-14.

³ibid., 21, ll. 5-8.

⁴ibid., ll. 10-12.

John Davies of Hereford rejected a similar list, though for a different reason:

For, those Similitudes I much mislike
That are much vsed, though they be diuine (B)

and in another quatorzain, turned the criticism of the use of such hyperbole against himself:

When I assaie to blaze my louely Loue
And to expresse Hir al in Colors quaint
I rob Earth, Sea, Aire, Fire, and all aboue
Of their best Parts, but her worst parts to paint.
Staidnesse from Earth, from Sea the cleerest part,
From Aire her subtilty, from Fire her light,
From Sonne, Moone, Stars, the glory they impart:
So, rob and wrong I All to do her right. (2)

The sonneteers, in fact, anticipated the satirists themselves in some instances. Before Rankins deplored the way in which the lover

... perfumes with roses his rude rimes,
With pearles and rubyes makes her monuments,
Comparing heauen to her habillaments (3)

William Smith in a poem of unusual originality had rejected the use of flowers and gems to express the beloved:

My love, I cannot thy rare beauties place
Under those forms which many Writers use.
Some like to stones, compare their Mistress' face.
Some in the name of flowers do love abuse.
Some make their love a goldsmith's shop to be,
Where orient pearls and precious stones abound.
In my conceit these far do disagree
The perfectt praise of beauty forth to sound. (4)

¹Wittes Pilgrimage, ?1605, I, son.74, [ll. 7-8], The Complete Works, ed. A.B.Grosart, Chertsey Worthies' Library, Edinburgh, 1878, II. cf. M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 31, Works, II, quoted below, p.126.

²ibid., I, son. 39, [ll. 1-8], Complete Works, op.cit., II.

³Seven Satires, ed. Davenport, Sat.5, ll. 24-26.

⁴Chloris, 1596, 18, [ll. 1-8], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

An earlier example of the exploitation of such conventions for satirical effect can be found in Sidney's burlesque description of Mopsa in The Arcadia:

Her forehead jacinth like, her cheekes of opal hue,
 Her twinkling eies bedeckt with pearle, her lips as
saphir blew:
 Her hair like Crapal-stone; her mouth O heavenly wide;
 Her skin like burnisht gold, her hands like siluer ure
untryde. (1)

As for comparing heaven to the lady's habiliments, this was so common a convention that it is found in all Petrarchan poetry. The lady was the sun, the moon, a star;^{1a} or she surpassed the sun, the moon, and the stars;² her eyes were suns, moons, or stars.³ The lover was sure to use one or more of these terms, as Hall pointed out:

tho she be some dunghill drudge at home,
 Yet can he her resigne some refuse roome
 Amids the well-known stars. (4)

The sun was the most popular comparison of the sonneteers; Shakespeare wrote "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun",⁵ and Nashe used the sun image in his satire upon the Petrarchan lover in The Unfortunate Traveller:

¹Prose Works, ed. Feuillerat, I, 21.

^{1a}See L.C.John, Eliz.Sonnet Sequences, pp.155 ff., 199.

²A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 58, Poems, ed.Sandison; H.Constable, Diana, I, ii, 7, Poems, ed.Grundy, p.128; S.Daniel, Delia, 1592, 44, Poems ed.Sprague, p.32; T.Lodge, Phyllis, 9, Eliz.Sonnets, II; G.Fletcher, Licia, 15, 43, ibid., II; T.Watson, Tears of Fancie, 55, ibid., I; W.Drummond, Poems I, son.44, Poetical Works, ed.Kastner, I; F.Greville, Caelica, 4, Poems and Dramas, ed.Bullough, I; B.Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 95, Eliz.Sonnets, I.

³See L.C.John, Eliz.Sonnet Sequences, pp.150 ff., 199.

⁴Virgidemiarum, I, vii, 23-25, Collected Poems, ed.Davenport.

⁵Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 30, l. 1.

Her high exalted sunne ~~beames~~ haue set the Phenix
neast of my breast on fire. (1)

It was also one of the conventional conceits employed by Longaville in Love's Labour's Lost, providing him with a spurious reason for his perjury:

Vows are but breath, and breath a vapour is:
Then thou, fair sun, which on my earth dost shine,
Exhalest this vapour-vow; in thee it is:
If broken then, it is no fault of mine. (2)

The whole planetary convention was mocked in this play, in the scene in which the three young men visit^{ed} their ladies in disguise. Navarre petitioned the masked Rosaline, whom he believed to be his princess:

Vouchsafe to show the sunshine of your face,
That we, like savages, may worship it. (3)

Rosaline answered planet with planet:

My face is but a moon, and clouded too. (4)

The king tried again, addressing her and her ladies:

Vouchsafe, bright moon, and these thy stars, to shine,
Those clouds removed, upon our watery eyne. (5)

Rosaline took full advantage of being the moon to demonstrate the planet's inconstancy, by first agreeing to Navarre's suggestion of dancing a measure and then altering her mind: "no dance! Thus

¹Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 243. Marston makes the lover refer to "the sunshine of his mistress's grace"; and Sir John Davies includes a reference to the lady's "sunbrighte eye" in his gulling sonnets. See above, p. 98, and below, p. 111.

²IV, iii, 68-71, Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed.

³ibid., V, ii, 201-2.

⁴ibid., I, 203.

⁵ibid., II, 205-6.

change I like the moon."¹ It was after this scene, in which the ladies had so much the better of the "Muscovites", that Biron forswore:

Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
Figures pedantical ... (2)

The unwarranted hyperbole of other conventional descriptions of the Petrarchan mistress also annoyed or amused the critics. Hall jibed at "the love-sicke Poet":

Then can he terme his durtie ill-fac'd bride
Lady and Queene, and virgin deifide. (3)

Mr. Davenport has put forward the points which make it possible that Drayton was under attack here;⁴ in Ideas Mirrour, 1594, "Gorbo il fidele" refers to Idea as a queen, and the reference occurs again in Drayton's Amour 13; she is a goddess in Amours 26 and 40; she is "deified" in his verse in Amour 4; he refers to her "divinity" (4, 23), and applies the terms "sacred" and "celestial" to Idea in Amour 2. Mr. Davenport goes on to point out that Daniel qualifies equally for condemnation on Hall's grounds;⁵ but if Drayton was specifically attacked here, it is interesting that Burton ended a similarly anti-Petrarchan outburst in The Anatomy of Melancholy with a couplet from one of Drayton's sonnets

¹ ibid., l. 212.

² ibid., V, ii, 406-8.

³ Virgidemiarum, I, vii, 19-20, Collected Poems, ed. Davenport.

⁴ ibid., "Introduction", p. L.

⁵ ibid., p. L ff.

in Idea, 1619, sonnet 30:

Though she be nasty, fulsome, as Sostratus's bitch, or
Parneno's sow: thou hadst as lieve have a snake in thy
bosom, a toad in thy dish, and callest her witch, devil,
hag, with all the filthy names thou canst invent: he
admires her, on the other side, she is his Idol, Lady,
Mistress, Venerilla, Queen, the quintessence of beauty,
an Angel, a Star, a Goddess.

"Thou art my Vesta, thou my Goddess art,
Thy hallowed Temple only is my heart." (1)

However, such terms were common amongst sonneteers, as Miss L. C. John's researches have shown.² Shakespeare reflected this Petrarchan attitude in a piece of dialogue between Proteus and Valentine in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, which illustrates its conventionality:

Pro. Was this the idol that you worship so?
Val. Even she; and is she not a heavenly saint?
Pro. No; but she is an earthly paragon.
Val. Call her divine ...
... if not divine,
Yet let her be a principality,
Sovereign to all the creatures on the earth. (3)

The full implication of the use of such religious terminology is discussed elsewhere in this thesis⁴; here it is enough to note such terms were censured for their conventional hyperbole. Shakespeare himself rejected the convention in Sonnet 130:

I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground. (5)

Within the Petrarchan tradition itself, therefore, there was a recognition of the irrational attitude of the sonneteer, even

¹ed. Shilleto, III, 182.

²See Eliz.Sonnet Sequences, pp. 160 f., 199.

³II, iv, 144-47, 151-53, Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed.

⁴See below, p.206ff.

⁵ll. 11-12, Sonnets, ed. Beeching.

if reason and logic were finally rejected for the cause of love. The lover had to maintain that his judgements were correct, and that the standards of the world were wrong and misguided:

Falselye doth envie of youre prayses blame
My tongue my pen my heart of flatterye
Because I sayd there was no sunne but thee
...Witness myne eyes I say the truth in this
They haue thee seene and know that so it is. (1)

He alone was clear-sighted enough to recognize his lady's true desert:

The world that \ cannot deeme of worthy things,
when I doe praise her, say I doe but flatter:
...But they that skill not of so heauenly matter,
all that they know not, enuy or admyre,
rather then enuy let them wonder at her,
but not to deeme of her desert aspyre. (2)

His attitude had to be the reverse of the one held by the world, which was summed up in these words of Speed's in The Two Gentlemen of Verona: "If you love her, you cannot see her...Because Love is blind".³

Other conventional themes of the Petrarchan sonneteer came under attack more particularly on account of the conceits by which they were expressed, which were condemned for their triteness, their hyperbolical treatment, or their introduction of ill-chosen novelty. This censure is found in its most concentrated form in Sir John Davies's Gullinge Sonnets, ?1595, written to mock "the

¹H. Constable, Diana, I, ii, 7, ll. 1-3, 13-14, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 128

²E. Spenser, Amoretti, 85, ll. 1-2, 5-8, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors.

³II, i, 74-76, Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed.

fond admirers of lewde gulleries".¹

The third gulling sonnet contains a notable collection of commonplace conceits. There is an allusion to the eagle gazing on the sun, a common Petrarchan image, and to be found in the sonnets of Barnes, Daniel, and Drayton who might be Davies's chief target here²; the lady's eyes are "sunbrighte" (lines 1 and 2)³; the lover endures a living death, undergoes changes but remains unchanged⁴; he is faithful unto death; his lady moves all mortal hearts⁵; and from her eyes Cupid shoots his arrows.⁶

These were themes found everywhere in Petrarchan poetry. Hardly less common was the personification of the lover's thoughts as animals, usually sheep or hounds⁷; and Davies took this conceit to demonstrate the exaggerated treatment such a theme received at the hands of the sonneteer, who would never express a thought in the mean if a more exalted way lay to hand. Elevated to the

¹ Dedicatory sonnet to Sir A. Cooke, Dr. Farmer Chetham MS., Part I, Chetham Soc. Publs., LXXXIX, p. 76.

² Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 102, Eliz. Sonnets, I, Delia, 1592, 3, Poems, ed. Sprague, p. 12; Ideas Mirrour, 3, Works, ed. Hebel, I. See The Works of Michael Drayton, V, ed. K. Tillotson and B.H. Newdigate, p. 138.

³ See above, p. 106.

⁴ cf. B. Griffin, Fidessa, 53, [ll. 13-14], Eliz. Sonnets, I.

⁵ See H. Constable, Diana, I, ii, 1, 5; II, iii, 6, Poems, ed. Grundy, pp. 122, 126, 157; T. Watson, Tears of Fancie, 17, Eliz. Sonnets, I; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 95, ibid., I; G. Fletcher, Licia, 10, 39, ibid., II; Zepheria, 13, ibid., II; E. Spenser, Amoretti, 10, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors.

⁶ See P. Sidney, A & S, 17, 20, Poems, ed. Ringler; F. Greville, Caelica, 15, Poems and Dramas, ed. Bullough, I; T. Watson, Tears of Fancie, 6, Eliz. Sonnets, I; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 26, 94, ibid., I; T. Lodge, Phyllis, 13, ibid., II; Zepheria, 3, ibid., II; W. Percy, Coelia, 14, ibid., II; E. Spenser, Amoretti, 7, 12, 16, 26, 57, Poetical Works, op. cit.; W. Drummond, Poems, I, son. 5, Poetical Works, ed. Kastner, I.

⁶ See L. C. John, Eliz. Sonnet Sequences, p. 118.

heavens, but, owing to Davies's clarity and control, never lost in the upper atmosphere, the first part of the sonnet moves steadily through the hyperbole:

As when ye bright Cerulian firmament
 hathe not his glory wth black cloudes defas'te
 Soe were my thoughts voyde of all discontent;
 and wth noe myste of passions ouercast
 they all were pure and cleare. (1)

The inappropriate nature of such a conceit is withheld until the final couplet, when the import of the main theme is worked out to its bathetic conclusion:

then as it chauncethe in a flock of sheepe
 when some contagious yll breedes first in one
 daylie it spreedes & secretly doth creepe
 till all the silly troupe be ouergone.
 So by close neighbourhood wth in my brest
 one scuruy thoughte infecteth all the rest. (2)

The lengths to which the sonneteer would go to give a few turns to an old conceit were mocked in Sir John Davies's fourth gulling sonnet. He employed the conventional comparison of the lady's obduracy to unrelenting stone,³ and its less common, but equally obvious counterpart in the lover, that of his faith to steel. The intervention of the celestial powers transforms their hearts to the appropriate constituents for producing a spark:

then hers as hard as flynte, a Flynte became
 and myne as true as steele, to steele was turned
 and then betweene or hartes sprange forthe the flame
 of kindest loue (4)

¹Gullinge Sonnets, 2, [ll.1-5], Dr. Farmer Chetham MS., Part I, Chetham Soc.Publs., LXXXIX, p. 77.

²ibid., [ll. 9-14].

³See L.C. John, Eliz.Sonnet Sequences, pp.165, 199f.

⁴Gullinge Sonnets, 4, [ll. 5-8], op.cit., p. 78.

As in all Petrarchan love affairs, the happiness is short-lived:

... my folly did her fury moue
to recompence my seruice with despighte
and to put out wth snuffers of her pride
the lampe of loue wch els had neuer dyed. (1)

Perhaps it was Barnes who occasioned the choice of this conceit, for the flint/steel motif is not a common one in Elizabethan sequences,² and the twenty-fourth sonnet of Parthenophil and Parthenophe could have suggested this parody to Davies:

... my faith's true steels,
Tempered on anvil of thine heart's cold Flint,
Strike marrow-melting fire into mine eyes;
The Tinder, whence my Passions do not stint
As Matches to those sparkles which arise
Which, when the Taper of mine heart is lighted,
Like salamanders, nourish in the flame. (3)

If the sonneteer felt any reservations about the conventional nature of his conceits, this often served only to encourage him to vary them with new images which were unusual, but not necessarily wisely chosen. Shakespeare parodied both the contortion of logic and imagery, and the absurdity into which this led the poet, in the sonnet which Navarre recited in Love's Labour's Lost.⁴ The poem is constructed around the themes of the beauty of the lady's face and the lover's tears. In the first quatrain, the lady's looks are more lovely than the early rays of the sun kissing the dew-drops on the rose, when they glance upon "The night of dew" which flows down her admirer's cheeks. In the next four lines,

¹ ibid., [ll. 11-14].

² Used elsewhere only by W. Smith, Chloris, 39, Eliz. Sonnets, II. But cf. W. Shakespeare, TV, I, i, 148-49, Works, Globe ed.: "Give her no token but stones; for she's hard as steel".

³ Son. 24, [ll. 4-10], Eliz. Sonnets, I.

⁴ IV, iii, 26-41, Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed.

the image is changed: the lady's face becomes the moon, and his tears the ocean; and then, under the steady flow of the melodious verse, a simple but outrageous transition of the conceit is affected:

Thou shinest in every tear that I do weep:
No drop but as a coach doth carry thee;
So ridest thou triumphing in my woe. (1)

Biron picked out this most ingeniously extravagant conceit in his banter of the discomfitted king:

Your eyes do make no coaches; in your tears
There is no certain princess that appears. (2)

The exploitation of the sonneteer's ingenuity, which led to him

In songs and sonnets taking such a grace,
As if he delu'd for gold in Indian mines (3)

brought about some curious results. Sir John Davies was scornful of Drayton's search for novelty to find a new expression of praise for his lady in *Amour 8 of Ideas Mirrour*, "Unto the World, to Learning, and to Heaven":

Audacious painters have Nine Worthies made;
But poet Decius, more audacious farre,
Making his mistris march with men of warre,
With title of "Tenth Worthy" doth her lade.
He thinkes that gull did use his tearmes as fit,
Which tearm'd his loue "a gyant for her wit". (4)

There is evidence that this blow struck home, for Professor Tillotson notes that Drayton "revised the sonnet, no doubt because of Sir John

¹ibid., ll. 33-35.

²ibid., IV, iii, 155-56.

³W. Rankins, Seven Satires, ed. Davenport, "Sat. Peregrinaⁿas", ll. 45-46.

⁴Epigrammes, [n.d.], Epig. 25, Complete Poems, II, ed. A.B. Grosart, Early English Poets, 1876.

Davies's epigram", and points out that he defended himself twice in Endymion and Phoebe.¹

Drayton may have fallen foul of the critics for the use of another far-fetched conceit, that which employed astronomical terms. Amour 47 of Ideas Mirrour described the course of the heavenly bodies between the Spring and Autumn solstices; and in his Virgidemiarum, Hall devoted a passage to the ridicule of conceits taken from astronomy.² Drayton's poem was not reprinted. Hall's shafts may equally well have been directed against Barnes, however, who had twelve sonnets following the course of his love through the signs of the zodiac;³ but the use of this type of conceit can be found elsewhere in Elizabethan sonnets.⁴

One of the new conceits introduced into the sonnet sequences was that which took its imagery from the legal profession. Its popularity was widespread, and it can be found in the quatorzains of Sidney, Daniel, Constable, Barnes, Griffin and Shakespeare,⁵

¹ Works, vol.V, ed. Tillotson, p.16, note to Ideas Mirrour, 8.

² II, vii, 47-64, Collected Poems, ed. Davenport.

³ Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 32-43, Eliz.Sonnets, I.

⁴ cf. P. Sidney, A&S, 22 (humorously), Poems, ed. Ringler; Zepheria, 9, Eliz.Sonnets, II; R. Tofte, Laura, I, 29, ibid., II.

⁵ A & S, 73, Poems, ed. Ringler; Delia, 1592, 8, 26, Poems, ed. Sprague, pp. 14, 23; Diana, III, iii, 3, 4, Diana, 1594, IV, 5, Poems, ed. Grundy, pp. 175, 176, 195; Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 4, 6-11, 15, 16, 20, 73, Eliz.Sonnets, I; Fidessa, 5, 6, 41, ibid., II; Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 30, 49, 87, 107, 117, 125. cf. also W. Percy, Coelia, 1, 7, Eliz.Sonnets, II.

but it was most unhappily employed by the anonymous poet of Zepheria,¹ who was definitely a victim of Sir John Davies's eighth gulling sonnet, "My case is this, I loue Zepheria brighte". The last three of Davies's sonnets all mock the use of legal conceits, and the parodist, himself a student of law, brings an especial zest to these poems.

Sonnet 7 dresses the conventional description of Cupid entering the lover's heart and causing havoc² in legal terms. The poet's heart becomes "the middle Temple" to which the little god of love is admitted as a conscientious student, only to reveal his true nature by his unruly behaviour:

Longe tyme he cloak'te his nature with his arte
and sadd and graue and sober he did sitt
but at the last he gan to reuell it,
to breake good rules and orders to peruerte. (3)

Sentence is swift and sharp, passed by Reason, "that old Bencher graue", who is always the opponent of the lively Love⁴:

That loue and witt, for euer shold departe
out of the Midle Temple of my harte. (5)

The eighth sonnet plays a legal variation upon the exchange of hearts theme.⁶ Davies implies a court-room setting for this poem,

¹Canzons 12, 15, 20, 21, 37, 38, Eliz.Sonnets, II.

²For this theme and some of its variants, see P. Sidney, A & S, 8, 65, Poems, ed. Ringler; F. Greville, Caelica, 12, Poems and Dramas, I, ed. Bullough; R.L., Diella, 7, 18, Eliz.Sonnets, II; B. Griffin, Fidessa, 22, ibid., II; M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 23, Works, ed. Hebel, II

³[ll. 5-8], Dr.Farmer Chetham Ms., Part I, Chetham Soc.Publs.LXXXIX, p.8

⁴See P.Sidney, A & S, 10, Poems, op.cit.; F.Greville, Caelica, 10, 25, Poems and Dramas, op.cit., I; W.Constable, Diana, III, iii, 3, Diana, 1594, VI, 5, 8, Poems, ed. Grundy, pp.173, 205, 207; B.Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 17, Eliz.Sonnets, I; M.Drayton, Idea Mirrour, 31, Works, op.cit., I; W.Drummond, Poems, I, sons.2, 24, Poetical Works, ed.Kastner, I.

⁵[ll.13-14], Dr.Farmer Chetham Ms., op.cit., p.80.

⁶See L.C.John, Eliz.Sonnet Sequences, p. 97 ff.

in which Zepheria's lover presents a plea for the return of his heart which the beloved has unlawfully impounded:

but quick conceite wch nowe is loue's highe Sherife
retornes it as esloynde, not to be founde. (1)

so the lover closes his case with this proposed settlement:

Then wch the lawe affords I onely craue
her harte for myne in wit her name to haue. (2)

Davies's final quatorzain employs another legal situation. The poet here describes himself as the vassal of love,³ who had the wardship of the sonneteer's wit until his coming of age, but the cruel lord does not allow his follower to attain the freedom of his majority:

But why should loue after minoritye
when I am past the one and twentieth yeare
perclude my witt of his sweet libertye
and make it still ye yoake of wardshippe beare. (4)

Tilting at what he sees as the stupidity of the Petrarchan lover, the parodist concludes:

I feare he hath another title gott
and holds my witt now for an Ideott. (5)

¹[ll. 11-12], ibid., p. 80.

²[ll. 13-14], ibid., p. 80.

³Typical attitude of the Petrarchan lover; see W.Shakespeare, TGV, II,iv,136-39, Works, Globe ed. The convention is included in Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller, Works, II, 243: "There is a little God called Loue...one that proclaimes himselfe sole King and Emperour of pearcing eyes, and cheefe Soueraigne of soft hearts". cf. W.Shakespeare, LLL, III, i, 183-88. cf. T.Watson, Hekatompathia, 1582, 56,60, Poems, ed.E.Arber, English Reprints, 21, 1870; P.Sidney, A & S, 28,49,50, Poems, ed.Ringler; T.Lodge, Phyllis,9,Eliz.Sonnets II; W.Smith, Chloris,11, ibid.,II; E.Spenser, Amoretti,10, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors.

⁴Gullinge Sonnets, 9,[ll.9-12],Dr.Farmer Chetham MS., Part I, Chetham Soc.Publs.,LXXXIX,p.81. Barnes, in Parthenophil and Parthenophe,22, [l.5],refers to being of age: "For now mine age have thrice seven winters run", Eliz.Sonnets, I.

⁵[ll.13-14].

This was the basis of the case against the sonneteer as an artist in his use and treatment of his subjects, conventions, and conceits. Ready-made patterns encouraged the suspension of judgement in the less talented writer, and the gull, attracted by the fashionable vogue of the sonnet, was all too easily persuaded to blossom forth in print. He exploited the commonplace and conventional hyperboles until these became monotonous, and then varied the monotony by the exercise of an ingenuity often far from happy, because he lacked the critical acumen which enabled the true poet to distinguish between the ridiculous and the artistically acceptable flight of fancy.

The critics' assessment of the failure of the sonneteer in the handling of his material led inevitably to their examination of the more purely technical aspects of his artistry. The points they raised confirmed the judgements given above, namely, that the cardinal sins of sonneteers were ineptitude, triteness, affectation, and absurd hyperbole: a general tendency to heighten the trivial, arising from a lack of poetic integrity. The barbs were directed, therefore, in most cases, against the worst excesses of style, and consequently appertained to the less able poets, although on occasion the critics appear to have condemned all sonneteers indiscriminately.

This latter tendency can be seen in the satire directed against

the Petrarchan lover's diction, which was recognized as being as hyperbolical as the conceits it expressed. Commenting on the exaggerated praises which Surrey accorded to his lady, Nashe's Jack Wilton remarked:

The alumie of his eloquence, out of the incomprehensible drossie matter of cloudes and aire, distilled no more quintessence than would make his Geraldine compleat faire. (1)

Various factors contributed to this effect, such as the contemporary fondness for classical allusions, mocked at by Sidney,² and by Nashe;³ and the delight in compound epithets, which came under attack in Hall's satire upon Labeo, the bad poet, who "marred" "that new elegance" of style "with much liberty".⁴ Over-indulgence in such devices, caused by the dictates of fashion rather than by those of artistry and taste, deserved such strictures, although in their general condemnation of the fault the satirists did not always differentiate between the two.

Perversity of diction was, however, a more obvious and less indisputable target for attack, and the author of Zepheria, the most graceless of the sonneteers, was ridiculed for his absurd language by Donne and Davies and possibly also by Marston. Donne

¹The Unfortunate Traveller, Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 270.

²A & S, Son.6, ll.5-6, Poems, ed. Ringler. See above, p.90.

³The Unfortunate Traveller, op.cit., II, 270.

⁴Virgidemiarum, VI, i, 255 ff., Collected Poems, ed. Davenport. cf. also T. Nashe, The Unfortunate Traveller, op.cit., II, 243, ll. 27, 29; 244, l. 25; J. Davies, Gullinge Sonnets, Sons. 1, [l. 14]; 3s, [ll. 2, 3]; 7, [l. 3], Dr. Farmer Chetham Ms., Part I, Chetham Soc. Publs., LXXXIX.

and Sir John Davies both drew attention to this writer's ridiculous use of legal terms in his love poetry. Donne's Coscus "wooes in language of the Pleas, and Bench", a brilliant parody of the terminology and awkward rhythms of Zepheria:

A motion, Lady; Speake Coscus; I have beene
 In love, ever since tricesimo of the Queene,
 Continuall claimes I have made, injunctions got
 To stay my rivals suit¹, that hee should not
 Proceed; ...

... words, words, which would teare
 The tender labyrinth of a soft maids eare. (2)

The second of Davies's attacks upon the use of legal conceits, which contains an overt reference to the anonymous poet, has, like Donne's satire, a court-room setting: "My case is this, I loue Zepheria brighte"³, and mocks the legalistic bent of the diction of the sequence. Marston's assault was directed more widely at the writer's language as a whole:

Here's one, to get an vndererud repute
 Of deepe deepe learning, all in fustian sute
 Of ill-plac'd farre-fetch'd words attiereth
 His period, that all sence forswearth. (4)

"Ill-plac'd farre fetch'd words" are present in abundance in Zepheria. As Miss Scott has pointed out, the main features of

¹There is a rival in Zepheria, see Canzons 30, 31. The rival is a common feature of Petrarchan sonnet sequences, and receives its most original treatment in the rival poet of Shakespeare's collection.

²Satyre 2, ?1594, ll. 49-53, 57-57, Poems, ed. H.C.Grierson, Oxford Standard Authors, 1960. Professor Grierson identifies Coscus as the poet of Zepheria, ibid., "Introduction", p. xxv.

³Gullinge Sonnets, Son. 8, Dr. Farmer Chetham Ms., Part I, Chetham Soc.Publs., LXXXIX, p. 80. See also above, p.116f

⁴Scourge of Villanie, Sat.6, ll. 55-58, Poems, ed. Davenport. See also ibid., "Commentary", p. 324.

this poet's diction, beside legal terms, include borrowings from French, scholastic terms, Chaucerian words, and his own coinages.¹ He was also liable to fall into the trap his extraordinary language set, and abandon sense altogether, as in the line, "When ye full soomed in Winter's new doon mootung",² besides which Sir Sidney Lee put an editor's bewildered "sic".

Another point of the style of the Petrarchan poet which drew adverse criticism was the use of invocation. Sir Philip Sidney was one sonneteer who, in his "Let daintie wits crie on the sisters nine",³ had deliberately avoided to

... implore the heathen deities
To guide his bold and busie enterprise, (4)

and in this he was later followed by Drayton.⁵ Drayton himself, however, might have been the target for another form of invocation attacked by Hall in his satire upon Labeo:

Lastly he names the spirit of Astrophel:
Now hath not Labeo done wondrous well? (6)

The dedicatory sonnet to Ideas Mirrour concludes with the lines:

Divine Syr Phillip, I avouch thy writ,
I am no Pickpurse of anothers wit (7)

¹ Les Sonnets Elisabethains, p. 183 f.

² Zepheria, 9, [l. 10], Eliz. Sonnets, II.

³ A & S, 3, Poems, ed. Ringler.

⁴ J. Hall, Virgidemiarum, VI, i, 249-50, Collected Poems, ed. Davenport.

⁵ Ideas Mirrour, 18, Works, ed. Hebel, I. cf. also W. Drummond, Poems, I, son. 27, Poetical Works, ed. Kastner, I.

⁶ Virgidemiarum, VI, i, 263-64, Collected Poems, ed. Davenport.

⁷ Works, ed. Hebel, I.

but Barnes, or the poet of Zepheria,¹ could be equally indicted of the fault.¹ Hall may have meant that to call upon Sidney was a fashionable habit of the contemporary poet. The subject of similar criticism from Marston seems more readily identifiable:

Another yet dares tremblingly come out,
But first he must invoke good Colyn Clout.²

Marston's editor repeats Grosart's suggestion that the satirist was referring to William Smith.³ Smith addressed Spenser under his pastoral name of Colin in the two dedicatory sonnets, and closed his sequence with a quatorzain commending his "maiden verse" to the protection of Spenser's "grave Shepherdhood". So tremblingly did Smith come out, that he craved celestial approval, and also the favour of "all Shepherds in general", and the indulgence of poets and lovers.⁴

Another defect of style which the critics attacked was an over-reliance upon the more facile and less pleasing rhetorical figures. Sidney had warned against this practice in Astrophil and Stella:

You that do search for everie purling spring,
Which from the ribs of old Farnassus flowes,
And everie floure, not sweet perhaps, which growes
Neare therabout, into your Poesie wring;
... You take wrong waies.⁵

¹ See Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 98; Zepheria, "Alli veri figlioli delle Muse", [ll. 22-23], Eliz. Sonnets, II.

² Scourge of Villanie, Sat.6, ll. 37-38, Poems, ed. Davenport.

³ ibid., "Commentary", p.324. Mr. Davenport also suggests that the lines might refer to Hall.

⁴ Chloris, "To all Shepherds in general"; sons. 1,48, Eliz. Sonnets, II.

⁵ Son;15, ll. 1-4, 9, Poems, ed. Ringler.

In another sonnet he himself mocked at the figures of paradox and oxymoron,¹ the use of which, in moderation, could be justified in that they expressed the basic situation of Petrarchism²; but Sir John Davies, writing in the period of the Elizabethan sonnet's popularity, chose to ridicule the tedious and less artistically justifiable figures of andiplos^sis, parison, and the "reporting" device.³ In none of the extant quatorzains are these figures found employed to the lengths that they are in the Gullinge Sonnets, but Davies's point is clear: such pitfalls were likely to attract the gull.

The effect of the critics upon the sonneteers themselves is, with one exception,⁴ difficult to judge. The majority of the sequences had been written by the time that Hall, Marston, and Sir John Davies, attacked the Petrarchan poet, and ~~of~~ later collections, those of Davies of Hereford, 1605, and of Drummond of Hawthornden, 1616, the influence of earlier Elizabethan sonneteers, in Davies's case, and of Sidney and continental poets in Drummond's, is paramount.⁵ Perhaps the sane approach

¹A & S, 6, ll. 1-4, Poems, op.cit.

²See below, p.134ff

³Gullinge Sonnets, 3, 6, 5; Dr. Farmer Chetham Ms., Part I, Chetham Soc.Publs., LXXXIX, p.78. cf. also the commentator's note on andiplosis in T. Watson's Hekatompathia, 41, Poems, ed. Arber.

⁴See below, p.125f.

⁵See J.G. Scott, Les Sonnets Elisabethains, pp. 277 ff., 330 f.

to the sonnet in Davies's Wittes Pilgrimage owes something to the criticism of the previous decade, as well as to the poet's inclination to follow Spenser, Sidney, and particularly the later style of Drayton.¹ As Sidney showed in Astrophil and Stella, written early in the fifteen eighties, a good poet knew what excesses to avoid. Shakespeare gives perhaps another example of the intuitive skill of the artist, for, for all his good-natured mockery of the Petrarchan conventions, he adapted them to his own purposes in his sequence, and transformed commonplace themes into ones of great dramatic and emotional intensity. One feels he did not need a Hall to teach him his art. The satirists appear to have had little effect upon Daniel, who was always his own severest critic; the weakest of his sonnets, such as "The onely bird alone that Nature frames" (a poem on the phoenix), "The slie Inchanter", or "Way but the cause, and giue me leaue to plain me", marked by a strain of triteness and youthful fretfulness, were not reprinted after 1591. Later revisions have been shown to be those which modified the personal tone of the quatorzains, or which amended his poetry in the spirit of Daniel's own critical tenets.²

¹Davies of Hereford owes a different debt to each of the three poets. That to Spenser is mainly one of theme; particularly of the virtuous nature of love, Wittes Pilgrimage, Part I, Sons. 4, 8, 16, 17; of the place of woman in the love match, Son. 36; that not to love is to frustrate nature, Son. 76. His debt to Sidney is one of verbal reminiscences, Sons. 23, 40, 54; whilst to Drayton, Davies owes occasional inflections of tone, Sons. 8, 95; and the individual nature of his conceits, Sons. 28, 29, 56, 75.

²See E.H. Miller, "Samuel Daniel's Revisions in *Delia*", J.E.G.P., 1953, LIV, 58 ff.; J. Rees, Samuel Daniel, Liverpool, 1964, p.21.

However, with Drayton it is a different matter. Ideas Mirrour, his earliest collection, was published in 1594; and between its appearance and the revised sequence of 1599, the Gullinge Sonnets of Sir John Davies, written probably in 1595 or soon after, Marston's Scourge of Villanie, 1596, and, above all, Hall's satires, 1597 and 1598, had appeared. Professor Kathleen Tillotson has shown that the attacks on conventional conceits, hyperbole, the use of astronomical and religious imagery, plagiarism, compound epithets, and the generally lacrimose spirit of Petrarchan poetry, whether directed in part against Drayton or not, influenced the poet's revisions of Ideas Mirrour.¹ In 1599, he claimed a new approach to his verse:

Into these Loves, who but for Passion lookes,
At this first sight, here let him lay them by,
...No farre-fetch'd Sigh shall ever wound my Brest,
Love from mine Eye a Teare shall never wring,
Nor in Ah-meas my whyning Sonnets drest,
(A Libertine) fantastickly I sing. (2)

Professor Tillotson writes:

The new sonnets are intellectually lively, colloquial and intimate in style, original in substance; they recall not Barnes and Daniel, but Sidney and even occasionally Shakespeare. ...Conceits are still used, but they are used dramatically. (3)

Drayton obviously resented being classed with the weaker Petrarchan poets, and with some justice, for there are many good quatorzains in Ideas Mirrour. The criticism of the satirists stung him into indignation. He addressed the "crooked Mimicke":

¹Works of Michael Drayton, ed. Hebel; vol. V, ed. K. Tillotson, p. 137 ff

²Idea, 1619, "To the Reader", [ll. 1-2, 5-8], Works, ed. Hebel, II. In italics throughout, except for the word "Ah-meas".

³Works, op.cit., V, 138 f.

Think'st thou, my Wit shall keepe the pack-Horse Way,
 That ev'ry Dudgeon low Invention goes?
 Since Sonnets thus in Bundles are imprest,
 And ev'ry Drudge doth dull our satiate Eare;
 Think'st thou my Love shall in those Ragges be drest,
 That ev'ry Dowdy, ev'ry Trull doth weare? (1)

Nonetheless, the emancipation from the bondage of Petrarchanism which arose out of this indignation was worth the heart-searching the critics imposed upon the poet:

Clearly, it was in 1599, and partly thanks to the satirists, that Drayton found himself in the sonnet form. (2)

Therefore, whilst the inartistic handling of material, sources, and style was rightly castigated, the general attitude of the critics was not entirely fair to the individual achievements of some of the sonneteers. Antipathy to the sonnet was to a certain extent the result of temperament. Jonson was too imbued with the noble classical tradition, and Marston and Hall were too prosaic, to respond fully to the appeal of Petrarchanism, which required an understanding of, and sympathy with, the nature of the feeling underlying the poetic expression, as Drayton declared:

Thou Leaden Braine, which censur'st what I write,
I marvell not, thou feel'st not my Delight,
 Which never felt'st my fierie touch of Love:
 But thou, whose Pen hath like a Packe-Horse serv'd,
 Whose Stomack into Gall hath turn'd thy food,
 Whose Senses, like poore Pris'ners, hunger-starv'd,
 Whose Griefe hath parch'd thy Body, dry'd thy Blood;
 Thou, thus whose Spirit Love in his fire refines,
 Come thou and reade, admire, applaud my Lines. (3)

¹Idea, 1619, 31, [ll. 7-12], ibid., II. First added 1599.

²Works, op.cit., V, 139.

³Idea, 1619, 49 [ll. 1, 3-8, 13-14], Works, op.cit., II. First added in 1599. For a more analytical approach to this subject, see F. Greville, Caelica, 80, ll. 1-6, Peems and Dramas, ed. Bullough, I.

Other critics, such as Mashe, the authors of the Parnassus plays, and Shakespeare in his drama, responded as wholeheartedly to fashion for satire, and to the opportunity for exploiting this in the ridiculousness of the Petrarchan lover, as the gulls did to the appeal of the popular sonnet. Concern for true poetry and artistry was not always paramount, therefore, in the enthusiasm for the sonnet, nor in the reaction against it.

The effect of the critics on the standing of the Petrarchan sonnet appears to have been twofold. There can be little doubt that they checked the trend towards absurdity in the quatorzain which the popularity of the form in the fifteen nineties encouraged, and they probably restrained the gulls' eagerness to hasten into print. From being the admiration of the fashionable world, the sonnet became the laughing-stock of the satirist and a lure to trap the gull. The attack on the quatorzain was one manifestation of the hostility towards Petrarchan poetry which arose towards the end of the sixteenth century, and one which the excesses of the poem had helped to foster. Petrarchanism withered beneath the icy blasts of ridicule, but it had provided the seeds for the anti-Petrarchan, metaphysical poetry of the succeeding century.

CHAPTER FIVE

Elizabethan Social and Moral Attitudes to
the Sonnet

In the fifteen nineties, the Petrarchan sonnet enjoyed a popularity unrivalled by any other verse form of the Elizabethan age. From 1591, the date of Newman's pirated edition of sonnets by Sidney and Daniel, until the end of Elizabeth's reign in 1603, no fewer than twenty-one sonnet sequences, including revised and augmented editions, were published.¹ The courtly anthologies of the new Petrarchan poetry, The Phoenix Nest, 1593, Englands Helicon, 1600, and Davison's Poetical Rhapsody, 1602, contained respectively fifteen, ten, and forty-three quatorzains, whilst William Jaggard's venture, The Passionate Pilgrim, 1599, included sonnets by Barnfield and Griffin,² sonnets 138 and 144 of Shakespeare's sequence, which

¹1592: S. Daniel, Delia, two eds.; H. Constable, Diana, 1593; T. Watson, The Tears of Fancie; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe; T. Lodge, Phyllis; G. Fletcher, Licia. 1594: Delia, another ed.; Diana, augmented; M. Drayton, Idea Mirrour; W. Percy, Coelia; Anon., Zepheria. 1595: E. Spenser, Amoretti; R. Barnfield, Cynthia; E.C., Emaricdulfe. 1596: B. Griffin, Fidessa; W. Smith, Chloris; R.L., Diella. 1596: R. Tofte; Laura (not regular sonnet form). 1599: Idea, appended to Englands Heroicall Epistles. 1601, 1602: Delia, revised in Works.

²"If Musicke and sweet Poetrie agree"; "Venus with Adonis sitting by her". Facs. reprod. of the Folger Shakespeare Library copy, ed. J.A. Adams, New York and London, 1939, nos. 8 and 11.

was not published in full until 1609, and, ironically, two quatorzains from Love's Labour's Lost, which were originally written as part of the satire of the play upon the Petrarchan lover.¹ The stanza also occurred in some of the prose romances published in the last decade of the sixteenth century, notably in Sidney's Arcadia,² and in Lodge's Marguerite of America.³ In the latter work, published in 1596 at the height of the vogue of the sonnet, Lodge testified to the collections of the favourite quarry of Elizabethan sonneteers, Desportes, being "englished, and ordinarilie in euerie mans hands",⁴ and in a quatorzain which first appeared in 1599, Drayton acknowledged that

....Sonnets thus in Bundles are imprest,
And ev'ry Drudge doth dull our Satiated Care.⁵

The appeal of the Petrarchan quatorzain was, however, limited to the upper strata of society; to the nobility, and to those members of the middle class who by virtue of their wealth and education belonged, or had pretensions, to courtly circles. Sonnets were written for themselves and their friends by gentlemen⁶ who were, in

¹"Dyd not the heauenly Rhetoricke of thine eie"; "If loue make me forsworne", ibid., nos. 3, 5. See below, p. 143.

²Written in the late fifteen seventies (see The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. W.A. Ringler, Jr., Oxford, 1962, "Commentary", p. 365), but not published until 1590 and 1593.

³For other works by Lodge, and for those of Greene, containing sonnets, see below, p. 380, note 1.

⁴p. 79, Complete Works, ed. Hunterian Club, Glasgow, 1883, III. (The works in the four volumes are all paginated separately.)

⁵Idea, 1619, 31, [11.9-10], Works, ed. J.W. Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, II.

⁶See below, p. 261ff.

their own eyes at least, courtiers first and poets second, amongst whom may be numbered Gorges, Sidney and Greville, Constable, and probably A.C. Quatorzains were also composed by professional poets, some of whom, such as Gascoigne, Daniel, Drayton, Spenser and Shakespeare to some extent, were connected with the wealthy and influential classes by patronage or bonds of friendship; whilst others, including Lodge,¹ aimed at a wider audience amongst the nobility.

One reason why interest in the sonnet was restricted to these groups of people lay in the difficulty of its form. The poem, sophisticated and intellectual in structure, could only be appreciated by those poets and readers who had some degree of sophistication and intellectual acuteness, qualities encouraged and refined by education. The difficulties of naturalizing this foreign stanza, moreover, and the necessary dependence on French and Italian models which this entailed, along with the specialized knowledge of such branches of learning as mythology and natural history, further emphasized the fact that the sonnet was the preserve of the educated man, who belonged to the upper and middle classes of society.

Nonetheless, the difference in the quality of the verse, and the

¹In William Longbeard, 1593, Lodge prefaced a collection of poems by Longbeard, which opened with two sonnets, with the words: "whose amorous passions, since they are of some regard, I haue heer set downe for the courtliest eare to censure of", p.18, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, II.

diversity of ability amongst the sonneteers who enthusiastically composed this poetry, indicate that the attraction of the form was not entirely literary or intellectual, for it appealed equally to the man of discriminating taste and to "the fond admirers of lewde gulleries".¹ The sonnet became fashionable beyond the extent of a fashion in literature. Clearly, therefore, the poem must have expressed truths about a state of affairs, and attitudes and emotions, which the Elizabethans found to be basic to the society in which they lived.

In his article, "Sex and the Sonnet",² G.M. Matthews has examined the nature of the relationships which formed the social background of the Petrarchan sonnet. He has pointed out that the two extremes of Petrarchanism and anti-Petrarchanism, the hyperbolic praise of an ideal lady, and the equally excessive berating of woman as a fallen creature, had a basis in the situations of the sexes in society during the Renaissance. On the one hand, unmarried girls of the upper classes were closely guarded from the company of young men, for chastity was of marketable value, and marriage was a business transaction arranged by parents and guardians for financial gain. Thus set apart by the strong pressure of economic morality, the

¹ Sir J. Davies, Gullinge Sonnets, Dedicatory sonnet, [l. 4], The Dr. Farmer Chetham Ms., Part I, ed. A.B. Grosart, Chetham Soc. Publs., LXXXIX, Manchester, 1873, p.76.

² Essays in Criticism, 1952, II, 119-37.

aristocratic lady would easily acquire the aura of mystery, and the distant bearing, which are to be found in the traditional attitude of Petrarchanism.¹ On the other hand, female company for young men denied friendship with girls of their own class was provided by the large number of prostitutes, often accomplished women,² which this situation encouraged. The idealized chastity of the remote, lofty, Petrarchan mistress was therefore countered by the easy virtue of the accessible courtesan who frequented the play-houses and taverns. Neither the enforced segregation from unmarried women of his own class, nor the opportunities for sowing his wild oats which prostitution afforded, provided the nobleman with an outlet for emotion. Nor did the arranged marriage, the ~~legal~~ state of which made the satisfaction of physical desire legal, necessarily accommodate feelings of love, since its aims were the aggrandisement of family fortunes and the continuance of the family name. Affection was not ruled out, but it was more likely to be of the kind stemming from the mutual goodwill and fellowship which grows up between two people living in close proximity. Passion had no place here, any more than it had in the cursory relationships offered by the inhabitants of the houses of ill repute. The only

¹cf. R. Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. A.R.Shilleto, 1896, III, 120. Burton pointed out that in the England of his day, betrothed couples were allowed to meet and spend some time in one another's company before marriage; perhaps in the manner of Juliet and the County Paris in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

²cf. Lamilia, the courtesan in Greens Groats-worth of Wit.

women with whom a relationship could be established which was not dictated as such by economic considerations or by physical desire were the married ladies of the court, often themselves young girls newly freed from the strict conventions surrounding the life of the unmarried girl of good family. Placed beyond the courtier's reach by the code of morality and inclined to chastity by upbringing, such a girl could offer the nobleman his one opportunity for disinterested passion.¹ This was the situation which Petrarch had recognized, and for which he had provided a philosophy of love based on neo-Platonism, which transformed the carnal aspects of amour courtois into an idealized passion where the object of love was perfect and therefore unobtainable, but whose influence ennobled the lover in every respect.² The baser elements had no part in this emotion; it belonged entirely to those of air and fire.

Nonetheless, since passion had been denied its existence within the functioning of society, it was inevitable that an opposition would exist between the values that Petrarchanism and society each held. Laura's beauty of body and character might have been reflections of the Divine Beauty, but they were at the same time enclosed in human form, to be perceived by human eyes and understanding. To deny pure love, born of the recognition of good and not of selfish desire, its fulfilment in human terms, therefore, seemed a travesty,

¹See G.M. Matthews, "Sex and the Sonnet", Essays in Crit., II, 129.

²See below, pp. 138ff, 147f, 165ff.

for love is vindicated in mutual giving. The desire for consummation runs throughout the "In Vita" sequence of the Canzoniere, ceasing only after the death of Laura, when Petrarch becomes reconciled to raising his passion to love for God, thus moving on up the Platonic ladder of affection. Desire had to remain unconsummated, because the lover and his beloved existed in the context of society, and society and its moral tenets forbade the union. Indeed, Petrarchan passion depended on this opposition for its very existence.¹ The enjoyment of love was confined ~~to~~ either ^{to} an unhallowed consummation which destroyed virtue and the great moral power of the lady,² or to satisfaction within a comfortable marriage, an institution which, for all its good qualities, is never amicable to romantic love.³ In the basic antagonisms between love and virtue, beauty and chastity, passion and reason, and in contrasting images such as light and darkness, calm and storm, Petrarch expressed^d the poignant tension between passion and what Mr. Matthews has termed "institutional virtue". The success of Petrarchan poetry, which resulted in a sometimes slavish imitation of the master, indicated that poets and courtly lovers found literary and emotional fulfilment in this type of verse which illustrated one aspect of their society so clearly.

¹ See G.M. Matthews, "Sex and the Sonnet", Essays in Crit., II, 127; and p. 123, quoted below, p.162.

² See below, p.199f.

³ The love-match made between Sir Arthur Gorges and Douglas Howard was an exception that proved the rule; the necessary stimulus of opposition from the establishment being provided by the vigorous attempts of Viscount Bindon to stop his daughter's marriage. (See The Poems of Sir Arthur Gorges, ed.H.E.Sandison, Oxford, 1953, "Introduction", p.xvi ff)

The sonnet, a stanza which Petrarch used extensively in the Canzoniere, was especially suitable for this purpose because the stresses and delicate balance of the structure of the poem corresponded to the tensions of the lover's position in the conflict between his emotions and the code of social behaviour. This was especially true of the Italian arrangement of the sonnet, with its interlocking rhyme-schemes for both octet and sestet, which gave a clear formal expression to the opposing pulls of love and virtue, and illustrated that they had to remain always unreconciled:

Each day new proofes of new dispaire I find
 That is new death: No mervayle then if I
 Make exile my last helpe, to th'end myne eye
 Should not behold the death to me assign'd

 Not that from death absence could saue my mynde
 But that I might take death more patientlye
 Like him which by the iudge condemn'd to dye
 To suffer with lesse ~~of~~^{please} his eyes doth blinde

 Youre lips in skarlet clad my iudges be
 Pronouncing sentence of eternall no
 Dispaire the hangman which tormenteth me

 The death I suffer is the life I haue
 For onlye life doth make me die in woe
 And onlye death I for my pardon craue (1)

The Shakespearean form of the quatorzain was not so beautiful formally; its three quatrains and a couplet structure favoured a less intense concentration of thought, relying on a cumulative effect reached over fourteen lines rather than on the immediate as well as cumulative impact of the Italian poem:

He that can count the candles of the sky,
 reckon the sands whereon Pactolus flows,

¹H. Constable, Diana, III, iii, 4, Poems, ed. J. Grundy, Liverpool, 1960, p. 174.

Or number numberless small atomic[s],
 what strange and hideous monsters Nilus shows,
 What mis-shaped beasts vast Africa doth yield,
 what rare-formed fishes live in the ocean,
 what coloured flowers do grow in Tempe's field,
 how many hours are since the world began:
 Let him, none else, give judgement of my grief!
 let him declare the beauties of my Love!
 And he will say my pains pass all relief:
 and he will judge her for a Saint above!
 But, as those things, where's no man can unfold
 So, nor her Fair, nor my Grief may be told! (1)

In this example, as in many sonnets of this kind, the final truth of the Petrarchan impasse is reserved until the concluding couplet, not fully stated from the beginning.² Although the Shakespearean form, the Elizabethans' favourite version of the sonnet, was not so technically apposite to the emotion as the Italian, it nonetheless accommodated the Petrarchan attitudes which they sought to express, and could at times convey a nobility and solemnity outstanding even in that literary age:

Care-charmer sleepe, sonne of the Sable night,
 Brother to death, in silent darknes borne:
 Relieue my languish, and restore the light,
 With darke forgetting of my cares returne.
 And let the day be time enough to morne,
 The shipwrack of my ill-aduentred youth:
 Let waking eyes suffice to wayle their scorne,
 Without the torment of the nights vntruth.
 Cease dreames, th'ymagery of our day desires,
 To modell foorth the passions of the morrow:
 Neuer let rysing Sunne approue you lyers
 To adde more grieffe to aggrauat my sorrow.
 Still let me sleepe, embracing clowdes in vaine;
 And neuer wake, to feele the dayes disdayne (3)

¹R.L., Diella, 30, Elizabethan Sonnets, ed. S. Lee, 1904, II.

²cf., for example Shakespeare's eighty-seventh sonnet.

³S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 40, Poems and A Defence of Ryme, ed. A.C. Sprague 1950, p.33. For further discussion of the relations of form and context in the sonnet, see G.M. Matthews, "Sex and the Sonnet", Essays in Crit., II, 130 ff.

Both types of sonnet stanza were vindicated in English by the earliest of the published sequences, those of Sidney and Daniel, but the attraction of these collections for the Elizabethan reader /^{probably} lay in the import of their contents. In Astrophil and Stella the Petrarchan situation was presented in an immediate, dramatic manner in the terms of the poet's own day, with the lover seen fulfilling his role as courtier by engaging in politics and martial exercises as a background to his passion,¹ whilst in Delia was to be found a quintessence of the fervent hopes, always to be dashed, and the sweet melancholy, of the relationship between the lover and his lady. Both sequences were relevant to courtly life for those who aspired to it or were engaged in it.

The popularity of the quatorzain, which the publication of the poem both encouraged and attested to in the fifteen nineties, suggests that the Petrarchan attitudes it portrayed had acquired a wider significance than that of the immediate personal and moral problem it posed; as Mr. Matthews has suggested:

Based on this real dilemma, the situation passed easily into a fashion, and fashion found its literary expression in the sonnet. (2)

Although it can be artificially created, a fashion always attempts to say something meaningful to the society from which it springs; if it succeeds, this is because it presents an image which that particular society believes to be important and therefore desires to project.

¹Sonnets 23, 30, 51; 41, 53.

²"Sex and the Sonnet", Essays in Crit., II, 127.

Petrarchanism was successful in the sixteenth century because, in the first place, it expressed the emotional condition and type of devotion peculiar to the courtly classes at that time; as Burton wrote, love

....rageth with all sorts and conditions of men, yet is most evident among such as are young and lusty, in the flower of their years, nobly descended, high fed, such as live idly, and at ease; and for that cause ... is named ... Heroical Love, and ... amor nobilis ... because Noble men and women make a common practice of it, and are so ordinarily affected with it (1)

Secondly, Petrarchan affection, as the quotation from Burton suggests, became part of the code of social behaviour of the nobility. The idealistic nature of this kind of love, imposed first by the nature of the relationship between the courtly lover and his mistress, and reinforced by the neo-Platonic concepts which Petrarch brought to this situation, made Petrarchanism as equally appropriate to the game of courtly compliment as to the serious expression of personal emotion. For the code of Petrarchan love, like that of its predecessor, courtly love, fulfilled a genuine function in society. It provided a place for woman in the predominantly masculine world of the court, which was primarily occupied with the unfeminine pursuits of politics and military matters, by setting her not only apart from but above such affairs, in a sphere from which she rained down her ennobling influence upon her devoted servant, inspiring him to try to attain all good qualities. For the Petrarchan lady was the refining and civilizing influence upon the courtier, and to her the

¹R. Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 62; cf. ibid. III, 43.

lover bent all his zeal and respect, thus creating a relationship which was given its finest expression in the account in The Courtyer of the court of Castiglione's beloved Duchess of Urbino. From such a relationship came the desire to cultivate those graceful skills which were necessary accomplishments of the gentleman, and which made him pleasing to the ladies:

Do you not see that of all comelye exercises and whiche delite the worlde, the cause is to be referred to no earthlye thyng, but to women? Who learneth to daunce featlye for other, but to please women? Who applyeth the sweetenesse of musicke for other cause, but for this? Who to write in meeter, at the least in the mother tung, but to expresse the affections caused by women? (1)

Therefore, for the sixteenth-century courtier, the key to pleasant social intercourse lay in the code of Petrarchan behaviour, founded as it was on the idealized, different, and complementary qualities of the two sexes. The adoption of Petrarchan attitudes became a necessary courtesy of the gentleman towards the lady in whose company he was, for it was a sign that her beauty of soul and body compelled every man to serve her.² To profess this kind of love, the motions of which were good in themselves, and the effects of which were the ennobling of the lover's affections and the development of his personality and gifts, was therefore proper to the upper classes:

¹B. Castiglione, The Courtyer, trans. T. Hoby, 1561, Tudor Translations, XXIII, 1900, p. 265. cf. ibid., quoted below, p. 262; R. Greene, Morando, Pt. I, 1587, Life and Complete Works, ed. A. B. Grosart, Huth Library, 1881-1886, III, 90 f.; R. Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. ed. Shilleto, III, 200, 203 f., 205 f.

²See P. Siegel, "The Petrarchan Sonneteers and Neo-Platonic Love", Studies in Philology, 1945, XLII, 176.

if I loue, it is the signe of good nature: if I loue
not, of a Cynicall nurture: ... not to loue is the signe
of a discourteous pesant. (1)

Since from love came "All manner of civility, decency, compliment,
and good behaviour, plus salis et lenoris, polite graces, and merry
conceits",² thus it was that when reference was made to the social
life of the court it was frequently stated in the terms of Petrarchan
love, although censure of this feature was not lacking³:

... loue most aboundeth there,
For all the walls and windows there are writ,
All full of loue, and loue, and loue my deare,
And all their talke and studie is of it.
Ne any there doth braue or valiant seeme,
Vnlesse that some gay Mistresse badge he beares:
Ne any one himselfe doth ought esteeme,
Vnlesse he swim in love vp to the eares. (4)

And as to be bald among the Micanyans it was accounted
no shame, because they were all balde: so to be in
loue among courtiers it is no discredit: for that they
are al in loue. (5)

The courtier was expected to be a lover, and to show that he was
one, to be socially acceptable:

¹R. Greene, Morando, Pt.I, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, III, 83 f. cf.
also J. Lyly, Euphues and his England, 1580, Complete Works, ed. R.W.
Bond, Oxford, 1902, II, 80.

²R. Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 200.

³See also below, pp.145, 158ff.

⁴E. Spenser, Colin Clout, 1595, ll. 775-82, Poetical Works, ed. J.C.
Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford Standard Authors, 1959.

⁵J. Lyly, Sapho and Phao, 1584, III, i, 33-36, Complete Works, ed. Bond,
II. cf. also Euphues and his England, ibid., II, 48,57; T.Lodge,
Rosalynde, 1590, pp.108,110, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, I;
Euphues Shadow, 1592, p.8, ibid., II; R.Greene, Greenes farewell to
Folly, 1591, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, IX, 244.

Because I breathe not love to everie one,
 Nor do not use set colours for to weare,
 Nor nourish speciall lockes of vowed haire,
 Nor give each speech a full point of a grone,
 The courtly Nymphs, acquainted with the mone
 Of them, who in their lips Love's standerd beare;
 "What he?" say they of me, "now I dare sweare,
 He cannot love: no, no, let him alone" (1)

As a lover, the courtier had to don the persona of a poet, for poetry served to woo the lady and to entertain her, and also offered an opportunity for the graceful self-display of wit by her admirer.² Therefore it added to the pleasures of social intercourse, as Florio intimated when he commented upon the Petrarchan vogue during the "stirring time" of invention in 1591:

Some more active gallants made of a finer molde, by
 devising how to win their Mistrises fauours, and how
 to blaze and blanche their passions, with aeglogues,
 songs, and sonnets, [write] in pitifull verse or
 miserable prose, and most for a fashion: is not Loue
 then a wagg, that makes men so wanton? yet loue is
 a pretie thing to giue vnto my Ladie (3)

Whilst the structure of the sonnet was fitting to convey the paradoxes and tension of the lover's position,⁴ the ingenuity of the form and its especial connection with Petrarch, the lover par excellence, made the poem particularly suitable for fulfilling the courtier's role in society:

The sonnet was the vehicle of courtly compliment. By its means, the courtier paid homage to his mistress and displayed his wit. ... The flattery lay not so much in the hyperbole, which was taken ~~fr~~ granted, as in the

¹P. Sidney, Astrophil and Stella, 54, ll. 1-8, Poems, ed. Ringler.
 cf. also T. Lodge, Rosalynde, p.110, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, I.

²See below, p.26ff.

³Florios Second Frutes, sigs. A2 f.

⁴See above, p.135ff

presentation of the poem as an ingenious filigree which the author had constructed as a tribute to his love. The Petrarchan sonnet was written in the spirit of gallantry; it was part of the entire aristocratic art of making love. (1)

Once Atrophil and Stella and Delia had established the popularity of the quatorzain, the need for the Petrarchan lover to be a poet became synonymous with the need for the poet to be a sonneteer.²

This meant that the same pitfall awaited the courtier in both his roles. The heightened fervour of Petrarchan devotion with its idealistic claims for the virtues of the lady, and the lover's attempts to prove himself worthy of her affection by his suffering, required a sensitive spirit and discriminating taste to prevent Petrarchanism degenerating into mere absurdity. At this extreme, the Petrarchan lover became the caricature represented by Marston's "inamorato Lucian":

His chamber hang'd about with Elegies,
 With sad complaints of his loues miseries:
 His windowes strow'd with Sonnets, and the glasse
 Drawne full of loue-knots. I approcht the Asse,
 And straight he weepes, and sighes some sonnet out
 To his fair loue. And then he goes about
 For to perfume her rare perfection
 With some sweet-smelling pinck Epitheton.
 Then with a melting looke he writhes his head,
 And straight in passion riseth in his bed;
 And hauing kist his hand, stroke vp his haire,
 Made a French conge, cryes, O cruell feare
 To the antique Bed-post. (3)

There was a basic absurdity in the attitudes of even those who could

¹P. Siegel, "The Petrarchan Sonneteers and Neo-Platonic Love", SP., XLII, 169.

²For discussion of whether the picture there presented was fact or fiction, see below, p.244ff.

³Pigmalion and Certayne Satyres, 1598, Sat.3, ll. 59-71, The Poems of John Marston, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool, 1961.

adopt the pose gracefully, and the extravagance of the Petrarchan lover made him a ready target for the satirists. Yet this very extravagance was itself a protection against the barbs of ridicule, and made the lover a difficult figure to caricature, as he had deliberately placed himself beyond the reach of conventional standards. Thus in Love's Labour's Lost, Biron, anti-Petrarchan critic and Petrarchan lover, combined the two functions to act as commentator on the absurdity of those in love, a part so necessary that outside the structure of the play, ^{his} sonnet and Longaville's were accepted as straightforward Petrarchan quatorzains.¹ In view of this, Sir John Davies's prefatory lines to his Gullinge Sonnets contained a prudent warning against taking the latter seriously, for once the Petrarchan conventions had been accepted, almost any extravagance could follow, its absurdity undetected by the gull.²

For loue, how-euer in the basest brest
It breeds high thoughts that feede the fancy best,
Yet is he blinde, and leades poore fooles awrie,
While they hang gazing on their mistres-eie. (3)

One result of this situation was the adoption of the pose of sonneteer merely for fashion's sake:

....your true melancholy, breeds your perfect fine wit
sir: I am melancholie my selfe diuers times sir, and then
do I no more but take your pen and paper presently, and
write you your halfe score or your dozen of sonnets at
a sitting. (4)

¹See above, p.128f. cf. also Nashe's method of emphasizing the ridiculousness of the Petrarchan lover, by contrasting Surrey's exalted passion with Jack Wilton's earthy approach to life in The Unfortunate Traveller.

²Dedicatory sonnet, Dr. Farmer Chetham Ms., Part I, Chetham Soc. Publs., LXXXIX, 76.

³J. Hall, Virgidemiarum, 1590, I, vii, 3-6, Collected Poems, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool, 1949.

⁴B. Jonson, Every Man in his Humor, Quarto, 1601, II, iii, 77-81, Ben Jonson, ed. C. H. Herford and P. Simpson, Oxford, 1925-52, III.

The fact that Mattheo's quatorzains were copied out of Daniel's *de Delia*¹ demonstrates that, despite the philosophy of Petrarchan love, not all its adherents could fulfil this part of their persona unaided. Two ways lay open to them: they could either filch another man's verse, as Mattheo, Gullio in The First Return from Parnassus, and Amoretto in The Second Return, all did²; or commission a poet to write sonnets for them.³ The latter alternative called an epigram from Sir John Marington, on the plagiarist "Don Pedro":

His verses all abroad are read and showne,
And he himselfe doth sweare they are his owne.
His owne? 'tis true, for he for them hath paid
Two crownes a Sonnet, as I heard it said. (4)

He followed this with a quip against the suppliers:

Verses now are growne such merchantable ware,
That now for Sonnets, sellers are, and buyers. (5)

Such criticism is indicative of the fact that the influence of Petrarchanism, and consequently of its metrical expressions, was lessened by its fashionable appeal to those who were unable to appreciate the real values it encompassed.

¹ ibid., V, iii, 284-89; see also above, p. 69.

² See above, p. 70 f. . . cf. also T. Dekker, The Gull's Hornbook, 1609, ed. R.B. McKerrow, The Kings Classics, 1905, p. 51 f.

³ See The First Return from Parnassus, ?1599/1600, III, i, 1015 ff, The Parnassus Plays, ed. J.B. Leishman, 1949; M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 21, Works, ed. Hebel, II.

⁴ Epigrams [n.d.], ed. N.E. McClure, Philadelphia, 1926, Pt.I, 40, [ll. 3-6]. cf. also Cynthias Revels, performed 1600, III, i, 60-65, Ben Jonson, ed. Herford and Simpson, IV.

⁵ ibid., Pt.I, 41, [ll. 3-4].

however, there were other points concerning the role of the courtier in society which contributed to the adverse opinion of the Petrarchan quatorzain and what it stood for, and which occasioned a small but important body of criticism which had probably been present in some form from the inception of this stylized passion, but which appears to have increased with the popularity Petrarchanism attained. For one of the great criteria of the sixteenth century was utility, and all things were measured by this yard-stick. Petrarchan love could prove its worth by enhancing the courtier's personality and social standing, helping him to become a pleasant fellow to be with in company, but the value of this, though not unrecognized,¹ had its limitations. More importantly, it presented a temptation to over-indulge in pursuits that bore no profit if followed to the exclusion of all else; and as the cardinal virtue of the Elizabethans was utility, so its corresponding vice was vain living. If the pleasures of the social life of the court were allowed to overshadow its more important aspects, then clearly the courtier, whose special privilege it was to serve his prince in person, was neglecting his duty. The way of life of the good courtier was described by Spenser in Mother Hubberds Tale, 1591. He was to be conversant with home and foreign affairs so that he could advise his ruler if required so to do, and to be practised in arms, to be ready to do service in the field.² The pleasures of social intercourse were strictly reserved

¹See above, pp. 139, 141f.

²ll. 735-93, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors.

for recreation after court business was completed:

... with Loues, and Ladies gentle sports,
The ioy of youth, himselfe he recomforts. (1)

The bad courtier, on the other hand, frittered away his time in frivolities, including the dishonorable pursuit of love,² thus abjuring his duty, and living vainly. The courtly game of love was held to encourage this when practised without discretion. Love led by folly, wrote Robert Greene, in the person of Apollo:

will bring great idlenesse, accompanied with ignorance, that hee will cause yong Gentlemen to leaue festes of armes, to forsake the seruice of their Prince, to reiect honourable studies; and to applie themselues to vaine songs and Sonets, to chambering and wantonnesse, to banketting and gluttonie, bringing infinite diseases to their bodies, and sundrie dangers and perills to their persons. (3)

Love was therefore frequently associated with idle living throughout this period:

Aske what loue is? it is a passion,
Begun with rest, and pampered vp in play. (4)

Its easie to blasphemee the name of Loue,
And say its but the worke of Idlenesse:
The Slipps of Fancie which oft mortall proue,
The mothe of Strength, and strength of Foolishnesse. (5)

¹ibid., ll. 757-78.

²ibid., ll. 797-810.

³The Debate Betweene Follie And Loue, 1587, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, IV, 215. cf. T. Beard, The Theatre of Gods Iudgements, 1597, p.366.

⁴T. Hrocter], A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions, 1578, ed. H. E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1926, p.58, ll.22-23. cf. J. Lyly, Euphues, Complete Works, ed. Bond, I, 321; R. Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 62, quoted above, p. 138.

⁵J. Davies of Hereford, Wittes Pilgrimage [1605], Pt. I, son. 57, [ll.1-4], Complete Works, II, ed. A. B. Grosart, Chertsey Worthies Library, 1878. cf. also ibid., Pt. I, son. 94; R. Greene, Mamillia, 1583, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, II, 21: "shee knowing idlenesse to be the nource of Loue"; The Debate Betweene Follie And Loue, ibid., IV, 220.

From this association, the passion was considered to be "this vpstart loue", and was described comprehensively as "court, camp, and countrie's guiler".¹

Such criticism was not without foundation. Leaving aside for the moment the aspects of personal morality which it raised,² the effects of Petrarchan love upon the man of policy and of action were not always salutary, as Sidney, critic as well as lover, honestly illustrated in his sonnet sequence. Sonnet 23 describes the conjectures made by the courtiers about the cause of Astrophil's abstracted air. Some

....because the Prince my service tries,
Thinke that I thinke state errours to redresse. (3)

He has to admit ruefully to himself that it is nothing of the sort:

... alas the race
Of all my thoughts hath neither stop nor start,
But only Stella's eyes and Stella's hart. (4)

The danger of Petrarchanism lay in the fact that the intelligent lover willingly, even wilfully, accepted the inertia the state of loving could produce:

I do not envie Aristotle's wit,
Nor do aspire to Caesar's bleeding fame,
Nor ought do care, though some above me sit,
Nor hope, nor wishe another course to frame,
But that which once may win thy cruel hart:
Thou art my Wit, and thou my Vertue art. (5)

¹J. Weever, Faunus and Melliflora, 1600, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool Reprints, 2, Liverpool, 1943, ll. 523, 527.

²See below, p.155f.

³ll. 7-8, Poems, ed. Ringler.

⁴ibid., ll. 12-14.

⁵P. Sidney, A & S, 64, ll. 9-14, Poems, op.cit.

However, perhaps because Petrarchanism was essential to satisfy the emotional needs of the sixteenth century, theorists who supported Petrarchan love on the grounds of its idealized, Platonic nature, hailed it as an important, and therefore useful, philosophy of society:

if we rightlie consider the force of loue, we shall find that there is nothing which so pleasureth a man, and profiteth the common wealth as loue. (1)

The particular virtue of Petrarchan affection in the latter respect was that it was held to inspire valour in the lover:

certesse it is not possible, that in the hart of man, where once is entred the flame of love, there should at any time reigne cowardlynesse. For he that loveth, alwaies coveteth to make himself as lovely as he can, and evermore dreadeth that he take no foyle, that should make him litle set by of whom he desireth to be much set by: and passeth not to go a thousande times in a daye to his death, to declare himselfe woorthye of that love. (2)

It followed that an army of lovers would be of service to the state,³ and in the courtly world portrayed in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, 1601-1602, Agamemnon replied idealistically to Hector's challenge, addressed to any lover of the Grecian camp:

... we are soldiers;
And may that soldier a mere recreant prove,
That means not, hath not, or is not in love! (4)

Thus inspired, Astrophil acquitted himself honorably on the tourney

¹R. Greene, Morando, Pt. I, Complete Works, ed Grosart, III,89.

²B. Castiglione, The Courtyer, trans. Hoby, Tudor Translations, XXIII, p.264. cf. also R.Greene, Morando, Pt.I, op.cit., p.90; R. Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 197 ff.

³idem.; cf. also R. Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, op.cit., III, 199.

⁴I, iii, 286-88, Works, ed. W.G.Clark and W.A.Wright, Globe edition, second ed., repr. 1923. cf. B. Castiglione, The Courtyer, trans. Hoby, Tudor Translations, XXIII, p.264.

field, because:

Stella lookt on, and from her heavenly face
Sent forth the beames, which made so fair my race. (1)

The doctrine that Petrarchan love was a force for social good had, however, the flaw shared by all philosophies which base their premises on the idealization of self-interest: success depended largely on the temperament of the individual, rather than on the strength of the doctrine itself. The lover had to be circumspect in the government of his affection, as Claudio in Much Ado, 1598-1599, who, before undertaking Don Pedro's wars

...look'd upon [Mero] with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love. (2)

That pleasure had to wait until the action was concluded. (3) Such admirable self-control as Claudio displayed was not always within the power of the lover, as Sidney, who entered on love equally cautiously,⁴ showed in Astrophil and Stella, sonnet 53. At a crucial moment, Love distracted the courtier's attention from the tourney:

... I look'd, and Stella, spide,
Who hard by made a window send forth light.
My heart then quak'd, then dazled were mine eyes,
One hand forgott to rule, th'other to fight. (5)

¹P. Sidney, A & S, 41, ll. 13-14, Poems, ed. Ringler.

²I, i, 300-302, Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed., cf. T. Lodge, Robert Duke of Normandy, 1591, p.10, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, II.

³ibid., I, i, 303-307.

⁴See A & S, 2, Poems, ed. Ringler.

⁵ll. 8-11, Poems, op.cit.

Emotional stability was not a characteristic of Petrarchan passion; the lover see-sawed between hope and despair, joy and sorrow. It is not surprising, therefore, that some Elizabethans accounted love to be a danger not only to the personal honour of the man of arms,¹ but also to national defence.

The threat of Petrarchan attitudes fostering effeminacy must have appeared very real to the Elizabethans, with the fear of attack or invasion from Spain overshadowing much of the reign. There seems to have been genuine foreboding that the enthusiasm and vigour put into the game of courtesy would sap the more manly, warlike qualities of the gentry:

Gentlemen that are descended of honourable families, in these dayes, giue themselues rather to become Battalus knightes, then Martiall wights, & haue greater desire to be practised in Carpet trade, then in that kind of vertue, which extendeth it selfe to the common profite, and preseruacion of the countrie. (2)

Thus Barnabe Riche writing in 1578: four years later, Gosson, who stressed the threat from the south,³ spoke of love as something to be avoided by the soldiery.⁴ The dangers of ^{passion} lessening military ardour continued to be voiced in the literature of the years preceding and beyond the Armada,⁵ when the English victory of 1588

¹ See the anecdote told of Clitomachus the wrestler by S. Gosson, The Schoole of Abuse, 1579, [ed. J.P. Collier], Shakespeare Soc., 1841, p.20. cf. also Romeo's reaction to Mercutio's death wound, Romeo and Juliet, III, i, 114-20, Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed.

² Allarme to England, sig. [Giiij verso]. In black letter, except for the word "Battalus".

³ Schoole of Abuse, [ed. Collier], p. 38 ff.

⁴ ibid., p. 24.

⁵ See J. Lyly, Campaspe, 1585, IV, iii, 6 ff, Complete Works, ed. Bond, II; R. Greene, Planetomachia, 1585, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, V, 39, 59; Tullies Loue, 1589, ibid., VII, 135; A Quip for an Vpstart Courtier, 1592, ibid., XI, 234 f.

secured the country from invasion. Defence of the realm remained important, with the continuance of the war in the Low Countries, and as late as 1598, Marston began the section of the eighth satire of The Scourge of Villanie on the debilitating effect of love upon the soldiery with an attack on Mavortius, the Petrarchan lover, "metamorphiz'd quite / To puling sighes, & into (aye me's) state".¹ A more light-hearted jibe at the military prowess of the lover was made by Shakespeare in Love's Labour's Lost, when Don Armado renounced his profession for his passion:

Cupid's butt-shaft is too hard for Hercules' club; and therefore too much odds for a Spaniards' rapier. ...Adieu valour! rust, rapier! be still, drum! for your manager is in love; yea, he loveth. Assist me, some extemporal god of rhyme, for I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise, wit; write, pen; for I am for whole volumes in folio. (2)

Petrarchan poetry, so closely connected with the lover, is implicitly under reproach in such criticisms. Gosson held that it was the erotic note which had entered poetry that accounted for the falling away from valour in his day,³ and when Sidney sought to answer the charge,

howe both in other Nations and in ours, before Poets did soften vs, we were full of courage, giuen to martiall exercises, the pillars of manlyke liberty, and not lulled a sleepe in shady idlenes with Poets pastimes (4)

it was by means of the noble epic, and not of the light lyric, that

¹ll. 51-52, Poems, ed. Davenport.

²I, ii, 180-82, 186-91, Works, Globe ed.

³Schoole of Abuse, [ed. Collier], pp. 15, 24.

⁴An Apologie for Poetrie, 1595, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, I, 183 f.

he sought to prove that "Poetrie is the companion of the Campes".⁴
 Gosson's criticism was later echoed by Guilpin, who also wanted
 more martial verse in place of the current effeminate poetry:

Fie on these Lydian tunes which blunt our sprights
 And turne our gallants to hermaphrodites. (1)

He railed against the perpetrators of this abuse, the poets:

Their whimpring Sonnets, puling elegies
 Slauder the muses: make the vworld despise
 Admired poesie, warre Resolutions ruffe,
 And melt true valour with lewd ballad stufte. (2)

By providing the amatory verse inextricably connected with
 Petrarchan love, the poets, therefore, bore some of the responsibility
 for diverting the interest and enthusiasm of gentlemen away from those
 pursuits necessary for the defence of the country. They should instead
 have been exhorting the young to undertake those exercises which
 would benefit the country, as did the poets of old:

all generallie aimed at an vniuersall profit of their
 countrey, and how to keepe youth from any touch of
 idle vanities. None in their writings discoursed
 either of loue or hir lawes ... if then Ethnik
 Philosophers, who knewe not God, but by a naturall
 instinct of vertue, sought so carefully to auoid such
 vanities, & only bent the sum of their wits to their
 countries profit: thẽ how blamworthy are such as
 endeauour to shew their quicke capacitiesⁱⁿ such wanton
 woorkes, as greatly periudice the state of the
 commonwealth. (3)

Poets theoretically occupied an important place in Elizabethan society;

¹ Skialethia, 1598, ed. G.B. Harrison, Shakespeare Assoc. Facs. 21, 1931,
 Sat. Preludium, [ll. 1-2], sig.[B8].

² ibid., [ll. 11-14], sig.[B8].

³ R. Greene, Greenes Vision 1592, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, XII,
 217 f.

their function was to "teach and delight",¹ and in an age which placed great emphasis on utility, the stress fell heavily on the word "teach".² The main critical controversy of the period, the attack on and justification of poetry, was centred upon the primarily moral issue of how far poets fulfilled, or failed to fulfil, this role. It was an unsatisfactory debate, because both sides agreed upon the basic grounds that poetry was good in itself, and that it was open to abuse; they were viewing the same problem through different ends of a telescope, as it were, as this remark of Sidney's demonstrated, when he set out to establish "not ... that Poetrie abuseth mans wit, [Gosson's argument] but that mans wit abuseth Poetrie".³

Both attackers and defenders were agreed that:
Poesie ought not to be abased and imployed vpon
any vnworthy matter & subiect, nor vsed to vaine
purposes, which neuertheless is dayly seene, and
that is to vtter conceits infamous & vicious or
ridiculous and foolish, or of no good example &
doctrine. (4)

The great abuse that the adverse critics chose to castigate was the theme of love which had entered all kinds of verse, and which was a subject manifestly unprofitable:

¹See P. Sidney, Apologie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 158, 159; W. Webbe, Discourse of English Poetrie, 1586, ibid., I, 234. cf. also T. Lodge, Defence of Poetry, 1579, ibid., I, 75; G. Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie [1589], ed. G.D. Willcock and A. Walker, Cambridge, 1936, pp. 7, 9.

²See P. Sidney, Apologie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 1⁵89, 184; W. Webbe, Discourse of English Poetrie, ibid., I, 250, 251.

³Apologie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 186. cf. also W. Webbe, Discourse of English Poetrie, ibid., I, 252.

⁴G. Puttenham, Arte of English Poesie, ed. Willcock and Walker, p. 23.

...as I cannot but commend his wisdom which in banquetting feedes most upon that that doth nourishe best, so must I dispraise his methode in writing which, following the course of amorous poets, dwelleth longest on those points that profit least, and like a wanton whelpe leaveth the game to runne riot. (1)

The gifted man, as Lyly's Euphues declared, had a duty to use his talents upon more worthy material:

If witte be employed in the honest study of learning what thing so pretious as witte? if in the idle trade of loue what thing more pestilent than witte? (2)

This made the defence of love poetry difficult to uphold, and only Puttenham, whose chief interest was in courtly verse which, from its functions in society, was of this nature, would allow poetry a role other than didactic:

being vsed for recreation onely, [it] may allowably beare matter not alwayes of the grauest, or of any great commoditie or profit, but rather in some sort, vaine, dissolute, or wanton, so it be not very scandalous & of euill example. (3)

Therefore the writers of such light verse felt obliged to apologize for their poetry, as George Gascoigne did in the "Epistle Dedicatorie" before The Steele Glas, 1576, and in the letters preceding the revised Posies, 1575⁴; or else they excused their work as a trifle, as Thomas Watson, in the quatorzain to his book of love passions:

¹S. Gosson, Schoole of Abuse, [ed. Collier], p.9. cf. also R.Greene, Greenes Vision, quoted above, p. 151.

²Euphues, Complete Works, ed. Bond, I, 241.

³Arte of English Poesie, ed. Willcock and Walker, p.24. cf. ibid., p.23.

⁴The Posies, ed. J.W.Cunliffe, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge, 1907, p. 3 ff.; The Glasse of Governement, etc., ed. Cunliffe, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge, 1910, p. 135 f.

If thou be much mislik't. They are to blame,
 Say thou, that deedes well donne to euill wrest:
 Or els confesse, A Toye to be thy name:
 This trifling world A Toye beseemeth best. (1)

The Petrarchan sonnet by its very nature was subject to the reproaches cast at love poetry in general. The one attempt to offer a comprehensive answer to this attack on behalf of the quatorzain was made by Giles Fletcher, in his letter to Lady Molyneux preceding Licia, 1593. He was at pains to find a useful justification of Petrarchan love:

I take the passion in itself to be of that honour and credit as it is the perfect resemblance of the greatest happiness; and rightly valued at his just price, in a mind that is sincerely and truly amorous, an affection of the greatest virtue, and able of himself to eternize the meanest vassal. (2)

He then asserted that his sequence was not written at the expense of his scholarly interests,³ and answered the charge that such a subject as love was unsuitable for a scholar by pointing out the fact that there were

not only others in other countries, as Italy and France, Men of Learning and great parts to have written Poems and Sonnets of Love: but even amongst us, men of best nobility and chiefest families to be the greatest Scholars and most renowned in this kind. (4)

However, despite his assertiveness and a certain pomposity of tone,

¹Hekatompathia, 1582, "A Quatorzain of the Authour", [ll. 11-14], The Poems of Thomas Watson, ed. A. Arber, 1870, English Reprints 21, [p. 36]. cf. also Peele's commendatory poem, ibid., p.36; T. Lodge, Phyllis, 40, Eliz.Sonnets, II.

²Eliz.Sonnets, II, 26.

³ibid., II, 26-27.

⁴ibid., II, 27.

Fletcher was nonetheless defensive in his approach:

My resolute purpose was to proceed so far as the indifferent Reader might think this small pains to be rather an effect, than a cause, of idleness. (1)

Not until 1602, when almost all the great Petrarchan poetry had been written, and Petrarchanism itself was going into decline, did another defence appear of the lyric, accused by Gosson of being "larded with passionate Sonnets".² In the preface to A Poetical Rhapsody, 1602, Davison based his argument on virtually the same points as Fletcher had done:

Love being virtuously intended, & worthily placed, is the whetstone of witt, and Spurre to all generous actions: and that many excellent spirits with great fame of witt, and no staine of indgement, haue written excellently in this kind, and specially the eucr-praise worthy Sidney. (3)

The vanity of love poetry was not the only indictment brought against verse; there was also felt to be a strong danger to personal morality from the amorous works of the time. Being intent upon delighting rather than teaching, their writers tempered the "gall" of their poetry with distracting "honey", and the unsuspecting were therefore more easily led astray:

pul off the visard that poets maske in, you shall disclose their reproch, bewray their vanitie, loth their wantonnesse, lament their folly, and perceive their sharpe sayinges to be placed as pearles in dunghils, fresh pictures on rotten walles, chaste matrons apparel on common curtesans. (4)

¹ ibid., II, 26.

² P. Sidney, Apologie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 186.

³ ed. H.E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, "To the Reader", I, 5.

⁴ Schoole of Abuse, [ed. Collier], p. 10.

Gosson concluded the paragraph by declaring that it was no wonder that Plato banished poets from his commonwealth, because, amongst their other shortcomings, they were "utter enemies to vertue!"¹ In his reply, Sidney named the charge of moral turpitude as the chief one brought against poetry:

how much it abuseth mens wit, trayning it to wanton
sinfulnes and lustfull loue: for indeed that is the
principall, if not the onely abuse I can heare alledged. (2)

Gosson was by no means alone in his views on the danger of writings on love; warnings about and execrations against bawdy and wanton books occurred throughout Elizabeth's reign,³ and many must have subscribed to such opinions as:

Iigges and ditties of fond loues,
Youth to mickle follie mooues. (4)

Well said the poet, that a wantom speache
Like dallyinge fingers tickles vp the luste.
Chast thoughtes can lodge no longer in that soule
That lendes an eare to wantom poseie. (5)

By implication, the courtly sonnet was as guilty as the lewd ballad; Guilpin condemned the poets whose "whimpring Sonnets" were "Panders

¹ ibid., p. 11.

² Apologie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 186.

³ See P. Stubbes, The Anatomie of Abuses, 1583, ed. F.J. Furnivall, New Shakespeare Soc., Series VI, no. 4, 1877-1879, p.185; G. Babbington, Treatise on the Ten Commandments, 1588, ibid., "Appendix to forewords", p.85*; E. Dering, A Briefe and Necessarie Catechisme, 1590, first published 1572, sigs. [A verso]- A2. See also the summary of the main points of W. Alley, The Poore Mans Library, 1563, in E.N.S. Thompson's The Controversy between the Puritans and the Stage, New York, 1903, p.44; and J.O.W. Haweis, Sketches of the Reformation and Elizabethan Age, 1844, p. 148.

⁴ R.Greene, Greenes Vision, "Greenes Ode", Complete Works, ed. Grosart, XII, 199. In italics throughout.

⁵ The Pilgrimage to Parnassus, ?1598/1599, IV, 490-93, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. Leishman.

vnto lusts",¹ and William Vaughan concluded The Golden Grove, 1600, with the statement that:

many of our English rimers and ballet-makers deserue for their baudy sonnets and amorous allurements to bee banished, or seuerely punished. (2)

The dangers were easily perceived; they could not be so easily refuted. Sidney's statement that man's wit abused poetry in this respect,³ and Spenser's stout denial of the name of poesie to verse written for immoral ends,⁴ did no more than acknowledge the abuse and proclaim the high standards of these two poets. A more ambitious defence was that based on the premise that the evil lay in the eye of the beholder, not a fully convincing argument:

Indeede if leachers reade a wanton clause
It tickles vp each lustfull impure vaine,
But who reades poets with a chaster minde
Shall nere infected be by poesie. (5)

Sir John Harington made a tentative attempt to put forward the Horatian dictum of "teach and delight" for the justification of love poetry, though his diffidence indicated he was not wholehearted about his stand:

As for the Pastorall with the Sonnet or Epigramme,
though many times they sauour of wantonnes and loue
and toying, and, now and then breaking the rules of
Poetry, go into plaine scurrilitie, yet euen the worst
of them may not be ill applied and are, I must confesse,
too delightfull. (6)

¹Skialethia, ed. Harrison, "Sat. Preludium" [ll. 10,11], sig. [B8].

²Eliz.Crit.Essays, II, 326.

³Quoted above, p1151.

⁴Mother Hubberds Tale, ll.810-20, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors

⁵The Pilgrimage to Parnassus, V, 536-39, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. ed. Leishman. cf. also W.Webbe, Discourse of English Poetrie, Eliz.Crit.Essays, I, 252.

⁶A Briefe Apologie of Poetrie, 1591, Eliz.Crit.Essays, II, 209.

Judged by the standards of Elizabethan morality, the best of this light verse could be considered but as trifles:

Even amorous Sonnets, in the gallantest and sweetest
ciuill veine, are but daintyes of a pleasurable witt,
or iunkets of a wanton liuer, or buddes of an idle
head: whatsoeuer sprouteth farther, would be lopped. (1)

Apart from the obvious licentiousness of some of the erotic narrative poems, the moral evils which the Elizabethans saw in love poetry as a whole seem rather unreal at this distance of time. However, the dangers were clearly considered to be as important then as are those of television or the cinema today by the guardians of public morality. This points again to the influence of poetry in society in the sixteenth century, particularly in the expression of Petrarchan love which was the preserve of the courtly circles. Petrarchanism could become literally a way of life.

The allure of the court, with its excitement, its promise of opportunities, the magnificence of its ceremony, and the gay and easy intercourse possible for the personable young man, offered a strong temptation to the wealthy members of the gentry who were bored with a quiet life in the country. It constituted a threat to the whole life of the estate, which is perhaps comparable with that which London, still considered to be the city of promise and opportunity, holds for the life of provincial towns today. The court was felt to be the place where one could cut a dash, make one's fortune, gain the interest of a patron who would prefer one

¹G. Harvey, Pierces Supererogation, 1593, Works, ed. A.B. Grosart, Huth Library, II, 92.

to a position, or merely have a good time; and all this was true. Nonetheless, when faced by the glitter surrounding the courtiers, and their self-assurance, it was all too easy for the young man, fresh to this life, to find himself out of his depth, and to succumb to its superficial pleasures:

The stately pompe of Princes and their peeres,
 Did seeme to swimme in flouddes of beaten goulde,
 The wanton world of yong delightfull yeeres,
 Was not unlyke a heaven for to behoulde.
 Wherin did swarme (for every saint) a Dame,
 So faire of hue , so freshe of their attire,
 As might excell dame Cynthia for Fame,
 Or conquer Cupid with his own desire.
 These and suche lyke were baytes that blazed still
 Before myne eyes to feede my greedy will. (1)

Whilst the court business was carried on by the distinguished few with ability, dedication, and ambition, the great majority of those attending had nothing more to do than to pass their time in attiring themselves sumptuously, and enjoying the social life which the presence of others similarly unoccupied offered. This meant adopting the conventional attitudes acknowledged by that society, particularly those of Petrarchan love:

It is common, yea, and lamentable to see that if a younge youth haue the giftes of Nature, as a sharpe witte or of Fortune, as sufficient wealth to mainteine them gallauntly, hee employeth the one in the vaine inuentions of loue, the other in ye vile breuery of pride, the one in the passions of his minde and prayses of his Ladye, the other in furnishinge of his bodye and furtheringe of his lust. Heereof it cometh that such vayne ditties, such idle sonnets, suche inticinge songes, are sette foorth to the gaze of the worlde and griefe of the godlye. (2)

¹G. Gascoigne, Posies, Son. 1 [11.5-14] on the theme "Sat cit, si sat bene", Cambridge English Classics, ed. Cunliffe, p. 66.

²J. Lyly, Euphues, Complete Works, ed. Bond, I, 287; cf. also ibid., p. 241.

Under these circumstances, Petrarchanism could easily degenerate. On the one hand, it might become an empty pose adopted for form's sake:

whylest I liued in the court I knew not Loues cumber,
but I held affection as a toy, not as a maladie ...
I liked al because I loued none, and who was most faire
on her I fed mine eye: but as charely as the Bee, that
assoone as shee hath suckt honnie from the rose, flies
straight to the next Barigold. Liuing thus at mine own
list, I wondred at such as were in loue, & when I read
their passions, I tooke them only for poems that flowed
from the quicknesse of the wit not from the sorrowes of
the heart. (1)

Whilst this attitude was damaging enough to the noble ideals of Petrarchan affection, the alternative one which the fashionable nature of the game of love encouraged was worse: the courtiers could reduce love solely to an earthly amour courtois:

For with lewd speeches and licentious deeds,
His mightie mysteries they do prophane,
And vse his ydle name to other needs,
But as a complement for courting vaine.
So him they do not serue as they professe,
But make him serue to them for sordid vses. (2)

This approach to the social code of love derived, as Paul N. Siegel has pointed out, from the Italian tradition of free love,³ and was introduced into England by young travellers on their return from the continent: "For commonlie", wrote Ascham, "they cum home,

¹T. Lodge, Rosalynde, 1590, p.110 f, Complete Works, Hunterian Club, I. cf. also P. Sidney, A & S, 16, Poems, ed. Ringler; R. Greene, Mamillia, 1583, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, II, 94 f, p.111; Greenes Carde of Fancie, 1587, ibid., IV, 107.

²E. Spenser, Colin Clout, ll. 787-92, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors.

³"The Petrarchan Sonneteers and Neo-Platonic Love", SP, XLII, 166.

common contempters of marriage and ready persuaders of all other to the same".¹ Siegel associates this chivalric love with members of the older nobility, who adopted Italianism as a mark of their emancipation from morality.² He contrasts the attitude of the new Tudor aristocracy, whose Protestant idealism was more attracted to the nobler neo-Platonic strain in Petrarchan love. Accordingly, Mr. Siegel divides the Elizabethan sonneteers into two classes, as they showed sympathy with, served, or belonged to, either party; as a result, Sidney and Spenser stand alone as the representatives of idealized, aesthetic love, against the main body of the other poets.³ His conclusion that "most of the sonnet-cycles ... contain sonnets that are highly sensual, erotic or smutty"⁴ is perhaps one which would have been endorsed by Elizabethan moralists, but it does not take full account of the delicate balance between idealism and desire, and the broad area which, as Mr. Siegel himself points out, existed between chivalric and Petrarchan love.⁵ Spenser and Sidney stand alone because they consistently refer their passion to the values of neo-Platonic theory, and thus bring a positive approach to the problem of morality and love.⁶

Moreover, however accurate in defining the actual intent of

¹The Scholemaster, The English Works of Roger Ascham, Cambridge English Classics, ed. W.A.Wright, Cambridge, 1904, p.235.

²"The Petrarchan Sonneteers and Neo-Platonic Love", SP, XLII, 167 f.

³ibid., pp. 164, 181 f.

⁴ibid., p. 173.

⁵ibid., p. 164.

⁶See below, p.165f

some of the more dissolute young members of the gentry Paul R. Siegel may be, he does not offer an explanation of the situation facing other lovers. G.H. Matthews comes nearer to the heart of this problem when he relates it to the conflicting aims of the individual and society¹:

the personal emotion of love and the public institution of marriage were dissociated: individual love was habitually opposed to the social structure; and it seems more than likely that this antithesis lies at the root of the sonnet. A choice of two main alternatives faced the genuine lover. He could exercise the institutional virtues and aim at sublimating the illicit passion; or else he could exercise the emotional virtues and lay siege to his lady-love according to the prescribed etiquette of courtly love, developed and refined for the use of a centralized aristocracy out of medieval Frauendienst. (2)

Therefore, several interpretations of Petrarchan passion and its poetry lay before the Elizabethans. They could regard Petrarchanism as a polite game, the correct form of courtly compliment³; as the expression of an idealized emotion; or as an intentional temptation to unchastity. This ambiguity partly explains the recurrence in the poetry and prose romances of the day of the unfaithful lover as a type, and the frequent reluctance of the lady to accept her admirer's protestations at their face value; the special language and behaviour which covered all three intentions required careful scrutiny before heart and hand were committed. It is not surprising that the Elizabethans were sensitive to the idea of betrayal, and the consequent damage to reputation, nor that

¹See also above, p.131 ff.

²"Sex and the Sonnet", Essays in Crit., II, 123.

³See further below, p.304 ff

they were suspicious of the verse which bore a part in this:

Fratling Poets I call those who hauing authoritie with
Painters to faine, lie, and disseable, seek with Syrans
songs and enchanting charms of diuellish inuention, to
bewitch the mindes of young and tender virgines, vnder
the colour of loue to draw them to lust, painting out in
songs and Sonets their great affection, and deciphering
in fained rimes their forged fancie. (1)

How real the actual danger from the love sonnet was is difficult to assess; in those published sequences which have survived, the authors were sometimes at pains to declare the honourable nature of their affection:

Ne'er were the silvery wings of my Desire,
Tainted with thought of black impurity!
The modest blush that did my cheeks attire,
Was to thy virgin fears, statute security! (2)

The nature of the sonnets circulated privately might have altered considerably in the context of the relationship which the courtier was seeking to establish with his mistress, and some, never meant for publication and lost to us now, might have offered proof of the justice of the moral condemnation of songs and sonnets, as Lutesio's quatorzain in Greene's Philomela suggests.³ The dangers and miseries of adultery loom larger when the possibilities are placed within their social as well as literary environment. In a broad sense, the threat of the sonnet to the acknowledged standards of morality, to pre-nuptial chastity and to the sanctity of the marriage-vow,

¹R. Greene, Hamillia, Pt. 2, 1593, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, II, 258 f. cf. also T. Lodge, Rosalynde, p. 72 f., Complete Works, Hunterian Club, I

²Zepheria, 15, [ll. 1-4], Eliz. Sonnets, II. cf. also S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 12, Poems, ed. Sprague; B. Griffin, Fidessa, 10; W. Smith, Chloris, 22, 43.

³Complete Works, ed. Grosart, XI, 142. For the efficacy of sonnets in winning love, see below, p. 278.

lay in its general contribution to the climate of the time, to the talk of "loue, loue, and loue my deare", and to the idleness felt to be conducive to unchastity.¹ In a narrower application, the peril lay in the use of the sonnet to obtain immoral ends. The only way in which the poem, as a representative of the tradition which accommodated the extremes of chastity and lust, could be justified was by referring to the aesthetic values for which true Petrarchanism stood:

Petrarckes Inuention, is pure Loue it selfe; and
Petrarckes Elocution, pure Bewty it selfe: His Laura
was the Daphne of Apollo, not the Thisbe of Pyramus:
... a nimph of Diana, not a Curtisan of Venus. ...
Petrarcks verse, a fine loouer, that learneth of Mercury,
to exercise his fayrest giftes in a faire subiect; &
teacheth Wit to be inamored vpon Beautye: ... to make
Arte more excellent by contemplation of excellentest
Nature. (2)

Petrarch had infused into the sonnet the values of neo-Platonism; love and beauty became the Ideals which ennobled, and the lady the remote, untouchable being who purified the lover's affection and made his verse sublime. There could be no moral reproaches for love poetry of this kind:

Petrarck was a delicate man, and with an elegant
iudgement graciously confined Loue within the limits
of Honour; Witt within the boundes of Discretion;
Eloquence within the termes of Ciuility. (3)

If, therefore, many of his followers adopted only the outer trapping of the master's poetry, the terms and the imagery, the true

¹See T. Beard, The Theatre of Gods Iudgements, p. 366.

²G. Harvey, Pierces Supererogation, Works, ed. Grosart, II, 92 f.

³ibid., II, 93.

Petrarchists were those who accepted his neo-Platonic concepts as well. These men were bound to be few, for such delicacy of temperament was inevitably rare; but on them rested the burden of proving that Petrarchan love was indeed the great force for good.

The only Elizabethan sonneteers who consistently attempted to view their passion in the light of neo-Platonic philosophy with any degree of success¹ were Sidney and Spenser, both of whom belonged to the staunchly Protestant group which believed fervently in the sanctity of marriage and, of particular importance in Spenser's case, the goodness of married love.² Both poets affirmed the power of love to raise man above his animal nature, and their affirmations indicated their approach to the problem of love and virtue in their sonnet sequences. Sidney's unwillingness to dismiss passion expressed in love poems as lust is clearly shown in this passage of his Apologie for Poetrie:

grant loue of beautie to be a beastlie fault
 (although it be very hard, with onely man and no
 beast, hath that gyft to discerne beauty. Grant
 that louely name of Loue to deserue all the hatefull
 reproches (although euen some of my Maisters the
 Phylosophers spent a good deale of theyr Lamp-oyle
 in setting foorth the excellence of it. (3)

¹For Petrarchanism and neo-Platonism in Fulke Greville's Caelica, see below, p. 192ff

²cf. E. Spenser, Colin Clout, ll. 861 ff., and An Hymne in Honour of Love, ll. 99 ff; Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors. All further reference to Spenser's works in this chapter is made to this edition.

³Eliz. Crit. Essays, I, 186A.

Characteristically, Spenser's attitude embraced both the physical and spiritual aspects of love. Man's desire is of a higher nature than that of the animals, for in him there is a greater force at work:

For hauing yet in his deduced spright,
Some sparks remaining of that heauenly fyre,
He is enlumind with that goodly light,
Vnto like goodly semblant to aspyre:
Therefore in choice of loue, he doth desyre
That seemes on earth most heauenly, to embrace,
That same is Beautie, borne of heauenly race. (1)

Theoretically, therefore, these two poets held that love and virtue were not incompatible within the Petrarchan love patterns which governed the attitudes to courtship of their day. It is in their sonnets that we can expect to see this theory at work.

The problem of reconciling love and virtue, enemies as natural as chastity and beauty within the Petrarchan code, occurs early in Astrophil and Stella, with Sidney at first appearing to acquiesce to the general opinion that the two are incompatible, as he does in the passage from the Apologie quoted above²:

Vertue alas, now let me take some rest,
Thou setst a bate betweene my will and wit,
If vaine love have my simple soule apprest,
Leave what thou likest not, deale not thou with it. (3)

The use of the conditional "if", and the adjective "vaine", are however the key words here; the sonnet is a summary of the ethical question, can love and virtue exist together? which ^sAstrophil, unlike

¹Hymne of Love, ll. 106-12.

²See above, p.165. ~~Son.4, ll.1-4, Poems, ed. Ringler~~

³Son.4, ll. 1-4, Poems, ed. Ringler. All further reference to Sidney's works in this chapter is made to this edition.

most courtly lovers, felt bound to ask himself at the outset of his passion. Somewhat wearily, and a little truculently, he has answered in the affirmative, and although his impatience indicates the decision was not easy to make, Astrophil is sustained by his belief that his love is not ignoble. Therefore, although he sarcastically declines from virtue,¹ the poet only withdraws from the popular view that love is necessarily lust. He is in fact eager to prove his affection virtuous and consequently reasonable:

But if that needs thou wilt usurping be,
 The little reason that is left in me,
 And still th'effect of thy persuasions prove:
 I swear, my heart such one shall shew to thee,
 That shines in flesh so true a Deitie,
 That Vertue, thou thy selfe shalt be in love. (2)

The truculent tone falls away as Sidney states his belief in his ideal, thus enforcing the poet's sense of conviction. Unlike the majority of sonneteers, Sidney does not use the terms of divinity lightly; Stella may be "so right a Princesse",³ but she is never a goddess. Thus "Deitie" is not to be regarded as an empty compliment here, since it is from the context an integral part of the poet's philosophy of love, expressed in the terms of neo-Platonism. Beneath Stella's physical beauty, Astrophil has discerned a reflection of that Ideal Beauty which Spenser declared to be irresistible:

¹ ibid., ll. 7-8.

² ll. 9-14.

³ Son; 107, l. 1.

For sure of all, that in this mortall frame
 Contained is, nought more diuine doth seeme,
 Or that resembleth more th' immortall flame
 Of heauenly light, then Beauties glorious beame.
 What wonder then, if with such rage extreme
 Fraile men, whose eyes seek heauenly things to see,
 At sight thereof so much enrauisht bee? (1)

Sidney attempts in his sonnet, however, to pass over what is for Spenser the rational physical aspect, and to state the proposition only in the terms of Platonic abstracts: Beauty is Good; it is only reasonable to love the Good; therefore it is reasonable to love earthly beauty for its reflection of the greater Good; hence loving is itself virtue.

If virtue and love are to be thus reconciled, then virtue and beauty must also be made to agree. In the following sonnet, in which he reviews the situation more calmly, Astrophil makes it clear that his neo-Platonism is specifically Christian; man's true aim in life is set forth, with right reason claiming him as a spiritual being, and condemning chivalric love for drawing him away from his proper goal.² This poem, with its final statement which seems to imply that Astrophil's passion is in fact contradicting all the preceding values, "True, and yet true that I must Stella love",³ appears to accept once more the principle rejected in Sonnet 4. However, the sonnet does bring beauty and virtue into a new relationship in the sequence, shifting the emphasis from the lover's virtue to the beloved's:

¹E. Spenser, Hymne of Love, ll. 113-19.

²See below, p.224.

³Son. 5, l. 14.

True, that true Beautie vertue is indeed,
Whereof this Beautie can be but a shade,
Which elements with mortall mixture breed. (1)

If this could be proved to be the case, then the poet is entitled to love his mistress for the virtue reflected in her, as long as he is aware that this is only a step on the way to "in soule up to our countrey move",² and the last line takes on an ambiguity which declares both the need to accept this position, and also the danger of so doing.

The explicit association of beauty and virtue in Stella first occurs in sonnet 9, "Queene Vertues court, which some call Stella's face".³ As G.M. Matthews has pointed out, virtue here is the courtly virtue of amour courtois,⁴ but in the work of a neo-Platonist this idea is bound to be influenced by the belief that the body is a reflection of the ^Soul.⁵ This is affirmed strongly in neo-Platonic terminology later in the sequence, when Stella becomes virtue embodied, and therefore an object rightly to be loved:

The wisest scholler of that wight most wise
By Phoebus' doome, with sugred sentence sayes,
That Vertue, if it once met with our eyes,
Strange flames of Love it in our soules would raise;
... Vertue of late, with vertuous care to ster
Love of her selfe, takes Stella's shape, that she
To mortall eyes might sweetly shine in her.
It is most true, for since I Her did see,

¹ ibid., ll. 9-11.

² ibid., l. 13.

³ "Sex and the Sonnet", Essays in Crit., II, 123 f.

⁴ See B. Castiglione, The Courtyer, trans. T. Hoby, Tudor Translations, XXIII, pp. 348, 350; E. Spenser, Hymne of Love, ll. 106-12, quoted above, p. 166.

Vertue's great beautie in that face I prove,
And find th' effect, for I do burne in love. (1)

The reference to Plato, and the words, "It is most true", recall sonnet 5, but here the tone of assurance indicates that Astrophil has fully come to terms with his reason, and justified his love on the grounds of virtue. A passion so inspired is not only good in itself, but also proves itself so by its effects, as the poet has declared in answer to his friend's "Rubarb words":

If that be sinne which doth the maners frame,
Well staid with truth in word and faith of deed.
Readie of wit and fearing nought but shame:
If that be sinne which in fixt hearts doth breed
A loathing of all loose unchastitie,
Then Love is sinne, and let me sinfull be. (2)

Astrophil is aware of the pitfalls of sensual love, but believes his affection to be of such a temper that the baser elements are foreign to it. Yet the ambiguous half-line of sonnet 25, "I do burne in love", suggests that the lover's feelings are not so rarefied as he protests they are.

Beneath the variety of tone of the next twenty or so sonnets there gathers a weariness of passion long unrequited; longing and frustration are voiced in such sonnets as 31, 33, 38, 39, 44 and 45. Although Astrophil still wonders at Stella's perfection, in whom "Cupid is sworne page to Chastity",³ and praises her eyes,

Who while they make Love conquer, conquer Love,
The schooles where Venus hath learn'd Chastitie (4)

¹Son.25, ll. 1-4, 9-14.

²Son;14, ll. 9-14.

³Son.35, l. 8.

⁴Son. 42, ll. 3-4.

his approach to love is not as cerebral as in the earlier poems. There, he was intent on analyzing his motives and the part the passion played in his life; here, his emotions are more obviously in command, and draw him into a more subjective approach. Natural instinct takes the place of purely intellectual analysis almost without the lover realizing it. Thus it is that desire, whilst implicit in earlier poems, is not overtly mentioned until sonnet 46:

... O Love, a Rogue thou then shouldst be
 If Love learne not alone to love and see,
 Without desire to feed of further grace. (1)

The balance between intellect and emotion is restored again in the succeeding poems, but at a cost. Rage and hurt pride blaze as the lover determines to break his yoke of slavery, and in his anger, he reverts to the position rejected in sonnet 4:

Vertue awake, Beautie but beautie is,
 I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
 Leave following that, which it is gaine to misse, (2)

but this rejection fails in Stella's presence, when Astrophil is again won over by the contemplation of fairest nature.³ This results from the ennobling influence which his lady has upon his love and even his suffering:

Soule's joy, bend not those morning starres from me,
 Where Vertue is made strong by Beautie's might,
 Where Love is chastnesse, Paine doth learne delight,
 And Humblenesse growes one with Majestie. (4)

¹ll. 6-8.

²Son.47, ll. 9-11.

³ibid., ll. 12-14, quoted below, p.191.

⁴Son.48, ll. 1-4.

However, the earlier outburst has proved that desire cannot be eliminated from their relationship, and that it is an uneasy partner with Astrophil's purely neo-Platonic affection.

The tension is overtly expressed in sonnet 52, "A strife is growne betweene Vertue and Love", which ends on a frankly sensual note, and effects a divorce between the two:

Well Love, since this demurre our sute doth stay,
Let Vertue have that Stella's selfe¹; yet thus,
That Vertue but that body graunt to us. (2)

Love and virtue are recognized as being incompatible; and here, as G.M. Matthews has said, Sidney

is expressing the basic antithesis behind the sonnet-form itself - sanctified institution versus passion. (3)

The equilibrium which Astrophil worked so hard to attain in the earlier stage of the sequence is shattered, and never again regained convincingly. He knows himself to be embroiled in "tempests of vaine love",⁴ and is unable to comply with Stella's exhortation to love virtuously:

Thy reasons firmly set on Vertue's feet,
Labour to kill in me this killing care:
O thinke I then, what paradise of joy
It is, so faire a Vertue to enjoy. (5)

For a while, it seems that his attempt might succeed, for in 71, the values and beliefs of sonnet 25 are stated once again, and more fully:

¹"That vertuous soule, sure heire of heav'nly blisse", Son.52, l. 7.

²ibid., ll. 12-14.

³"Sex and the Sonnet", Essays in Crit., II, 124.

⁴Son.62, l. 10.

⁵Son.68, ll. 11-14; cf. also Son.62, ll. 12-14.

Who will in fairest Booke of Nature know,
 How Vertue may best lodg'd in beautie be,
 Let him but learne of Love to reade in thee,
Stella, those faire lines, which true goodnesse show,
 There shall he find all vices' overthrow,
 Not by rude force, but sweetest soveraigntie
 Of reason, from whose light those night-birds flie;
 That inward sunne in thine eyes shineth so.
 And not content to be Perfection's heire
 Thy selfe, doest strive all minds that way to move,
 Who marke in thee what is in thee most faire. (1)

Stella is here declared to be the embodiment of Ideal Beauty, Goodness and Virtue, the great abstract Platonic truths. Astrophil then sums up the effect of such perfection upon the beholder:

So while thy beautie draws the heart to love,
 As fast thy Vertue bends that love to good (2)

but the sting lies in the tail:

"But ah", Desire still cries, "give me some food". (3)

The insistent voice of desire cannot be stilled. It has indeed become an integral part of the lover's attitude to his passion, as he now recognizes:

Desire, though thou my old companion art,
 And so oft^{so} clings to my pure Love, that I
 One from the other scarcely can descricie,
 While each doth blow the fier of my hart. (4)

The fruits of neo-Platonic love, once so satisfying, no longer yield full content:

Service and Honor, wonder with delight,
 Feare to offend, will worthe to appeare,
 Care shining in mine eyes, faith in my sprite,

¹Son.71, ll. 1-11.

²ibid., ll. 12-13.

³ibid., l. 14.

⁴Son.72, ll. 1-4.

These things are left me by my only Deare
 But thou Desire, because thou wouldst have all,
 Now banisht art, but yet alas how shall? (1)

The ensuing poems give the answer that the "old companion" cannot be banished by Astrophil. Passion gathers in force from the second Song, reaching its climax in the fourth Song, where desire has its head, only to be repulsed by the painfully gentle refrain, "No, no, no, no, my Deare, let be". As the traumatic effects of the repulse become tempered, Sidney turns again to the more intellectual medium of the sonnet form, and to the processes of self-analysis,² but with the tension between desire and virtue shattered by the crisis and therefore no longer relevant, this part of the sequence assumes a new character:

Gradually what is finest in [Astrophil's] love for Stella takes on an impersonal genuinely sublimated character. In the concluding sonnets of the sequence it is associated with the beauties of nature, with alternatives of night and day, with rainfall and flowers, with bird-song, winds, and flowing water. (3)

Thus Mr. Lever. . . But these quatorzains are also poems of emptiness and defeat, and the beauties of nature emphasize the distance which has separated Astrophil and Stella. An exclusively idealistic love failed to hold in check the sensual elements in the lover's nature, and sensual passion failed him in the presence of "Tyran Honour". Astrophil and Stella is the record of a man's attempt to prove the sufficiency of neo-Platonic affection, an attempt which failed

¹ ibid., ll. 9-14.

² cf. R.L. Montgomery, Symmetry and Sense: The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney, Austin, Texas, 1961, p. 115 f.

³ J.W. Lever, The Elizabethan Love Sonnet, 1956, p. 81.

when he discovered that he himself must love body and soul. The closing quatorzains betray the hollowness of an ideal love without hope of reward. The sequence ends, however, not with disavowal of love, but on the true note of the Petrarchan impasse:

So strangely (alas) thy works in me prevaile,
That in my woes for thee thou art my joy,
And in my joyes for thee my only annoy. (1)

The rejection of desire and the religious apotheosis of "Thou blind man's marke" and "Leave me o Love", have no place here, and indeed have been proved by Sidney's latest editor, Professor W.A. Ringler, to belong to an earlier period²; stylistically and from the point of view of their form, they would be an anomaly to Astrophil and Stella.³ Whether or not at a point of time removed from the experience of the sequence Astrophil would have subscribed again to their import is perhaps another matter:

Desire, desire I have too dearely bought,
With price of mangled mind thy worthlesse ware,
Too long, too long asleepe thou hast me brought,
Who should my mind to higher things prepare. (4)

Within the situation described in the sequence, a clash between love and morality, passion and institutional virtue, was inevitable. The passion which Stella as a married woman could accept had to be on a spiritual level; and since Sidney found, perhaps partly as a result of his Protestant background, that love for him had to be fulfilled in its physical aspect as well, the result of the

¹Son.108, ll. 12-14.

²See Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, "Commentary", p. 423.

³See R.L. Montgomery, Symmetry and Sense, p. 117 f.

⁴Certain Sonnets, 31, ll. 5-8.

fulfillment would have had to have been adultery. Stella's married state frustrated the possible virtuous outcome of Astrophil's love which, in other circumstances, as he himself hints in sonnet 33, might have ended in matrimony.

The circumstances of the Amoretti, a sequence written by a poet who held similar ethical and religious views to those of Sidney, appear to offer no such hindrance. The volume containing the sonnets also included the Epithalamion, and appeared about the probable time of Spenser's courtship of and marriage to Elizabeth Boyle, with whom the collection has been popularly connected.¹ If this were so, the lady of the Amoretti was as free to be wooed and won as the poet was to win her; the inclusion of the Epithalamion suggests, though it does not prove, that matrimony was the end to which the lover's passion was directed. In this case, it would make the Amoretti unique amongst Elizabethan sonnet sequences. The poet thus would have a different aspect to explore of the conflict between love and morality in the sonnet, that of the balance of passion and chastity in the love which could form the basis of Christian marriage.

Spenser was as convinced as Sidney of the nobility of the passion recorded in his collection, as the four introductory sonnets indicate; each establishes a different facet of the nature of his love. Thus in the first, the exalted character of the lady is placed before the reader; the second expresses the depth of

¹See below, p. 183, and note 3 to that page.

the poet's affection; the third indicates that this love is refined by the lady, whilst the fourth turns from the purely spiritual to the physical elements of the passion, with its imagery of new birth, and offers the lady an invitation to love.¹ Strongly stressed are the beloved's "souerayne beauty" and "celestiall hew", and their power for effecting good in the admirer, by raising him from things purely mundane.² The spiritual goodness which is inherent in beauty is the cause of this train of heightened feelings and thoughts in the lover, as reference to the Hymne in Honour of Love illustrates:

The flaming light of that celestiall fyre,
Which kindleth loue in generous desyre,
And makes him mount aboue the native might
Of heaueie earth, vp to the heauens hight. (3)

Thus, at the outset of his quatorzains, Spenser establishes the aesthetic neo-Platonic basis of the affection stirred in him by his lady.

In Spenser's scheme, however, the lady is not merely an embodiment of neo-Platonic philosophy; she is also a human being capable of arousing desires but, like Stella, is inimicable to impure ones:

...in those lofty lookes is close implide,
scorn of base things, and sdeigne of foule dishonor:
thretning rash eies which gaze on her so wide,
that loosely they ne dare to looke vpon her. (4)

¹See also below, p.184f, and cf. son. 19.

²Amoretti, 1595, 3, [ll. 1-8], quoted below, p.229. cf also Amoretti 35, 33.

³ll. 186-89.

⁴Son.5, [ll. 5-8].

She is following the behaviour Spenser advocates for the "faire Dames" in An Hymne in Honour of Beautie, when he bids them shun "disloiall lust" which would "quench the light" of their inner beauty, their "bright shyning starre".¹ In the succeeding sonnet, the poet treats the lady's pride from a slightly different angle,² and clarifies the end to which his passion is directed; not merely to possession of the beloved, but to possession within a lasting relationship:

...thinke not long in taking litle paine,
to knit the knot, that euer shall remaine. (3)

In view of Spenser's religious beliefs, there is a strong likelihood that this refers to Christian marriage, but in any case, he makes it clear that his love is not against the established ethical code, in the eighth sonnet of the sequence, which restates neo-Platonic values in Christian terms, and emphasizes the essentially virtuous nature of his love:

Through your bright beames doth not the blinded guest,
shoot out his darts to base affections wound:
but Angels come to lead fraile mindes to rest
in chaste desires on heauenly beauty bound.
You frame my thoughts and fashion me with in,
you stop my tounge, and teach my hart to speake,
you calme the storme that passion did begin,
strong through your cause, but by your vertue weak. (4)

In the first eight sonnets, therefore, the lover has examined his emotion on the philosophical, moral, and religious grounds on which

¹ll. 169-75.

²See below, p. 185f.

³Son. 6, ll. [13-14].

⁴ll. [5-12].

it is founded in the beloved, and asserted the purity of his affection in each respect.

On these levels, there is no necessary conflict between morality and love, because passion is described in a context which controls desire, and circumscribes it within its proper part in human love. For Spenser, Love is the great force which created the world,¹ the generative power of which is handed down to beasts and man in their desire and ability to beget their kinds²; and beauty, the lure to love,³ plays its part by drawing man to the sexual as well as the spiritual expression of affection.⁴ At the same time, since the origin of beauty is divine, the virtue inherent in it prevents the lover's passion from degenerating into lust. Therefore, although in his version of the conventional sonnet on the lady's kiss, Spenser intimates by his evocative use of flower imagery that the kiss is a symbol of greater joys to come,⁵ this poem is immediately followed by one which discourses upon the perfect relationship between man and woman:

There pride dare not approach, nor discord spill
 the league twixt them, that loyal loue hath bound:
 but simple truth and mutuall good will
 seekes with sweet peace to salue each others wound. (6)

¹See Colin Clout, ll. 341 ff., and Hymne of Love, ll. 64 ff. W.Nelson in The Poetry of Edmund Spenser, New York, 1963, p.100, points out that the Hymne of heavenly Love does not contradict this or offer another explanation of the creation of the world.

²Hymne of Love, ll. 99-105.

³ibid., 106-19, quoted above, pp.166, 168.

⁴Colin Clout, ll. 871-78.

⁵Amoretti, 64.

⁶Son.65, [ll. 9-12].

The basis of this amity is summed up in the couplet:

There fayth doth fearlesse dwell in brasen towre,
and spotlesse pleasure builds her sacred bowre. (1)

Faith and chaste love, neither commonly associated with the chivalric expression of Petrarchan love, fit comfortably into the ethics of Christian neo-Platonism (and perhaps here are extended to include those of Christian marriage). This in turn belongs to a wider concept of charity, as Spenser shows in the easy shift he makes in the couplet of the Easter day sonnet:

So let vs loue, deare loue, lyke as we ought,
loue is the lesson which the Lord vs taught. (2)

Having demonstrated the purity of his intentions, and established the place of love in the Divine Scheme, the poet can indulge in day-dreams of his future happiness in a manner more exotic than in 63. The sonnet "Fayre bosome fraught with vertues richest treasure" at first sight appears to suggest that such sensuous contemplation is dangerous:

How was I rauisht with your louely sight,
and my frayle thoughts too rashly led astray? (3)

However, beauty, as we have seen, is allowed to inspire this desire, and the beloved's bosom as well as holding physical promise⁴ is also "the sacred harbour of that heuenly spright".⁵ This union of physical

¹ibid., [ll. 13-14].

²Son.68, [ll.13-14]. See also below, p.232f.

³Son.76, [ll. 5-6].

⁴Son.76, [ll. 2-3].

⁵ibid., [l. 4].

and spiritual which rules out the conflict between love and virtue is made more explicit in the following sonnet in which the lady's breasts are metaphorically described as "two golden apples":

Exceeding sweet, yet voyd of sinfull vice,
That many sought yet none could euer taste,
sweet fruit of pleasure brought from paradise
by loue himselfe, and in his garden plaste. (1)

The complex relations of love as lord and primogenitor, and between pleasure and virtue, explored in detail in the Garden of Adonis in Book III of The Faerie Queene, are simplified in this allegorical picture. Such chaste pleasure cannot be reprehensible, and the seeming self-rebuke of lines 5-6 of sonnet 76, is revealed as Spenser's lament that as yet he can only enjoy the beloved in his imagination.

Sweet thoughts I envy your so happy rest,
which oft I wisht, yet neuer was so blest. (2)

Chastity must be carefully nurtured if the true balance of love and virtue is to be kept. Lust is to be held in check both because of the divinity of the "glorious image of the makers beautie"³ and the womanly modesty of his lady who, like Amoret, is easily startled into fear:

Let not one sparke of filthy lustfull fyre
breake out, that may her sacred peace molest:
ne one light glance of sensuall desyre
Attempt to work her gentle mindes vnrest.
But pure affections bred in spotlesse brest,
and modest thought breathed from well tempred sprites
goe visit her in her chast bowre of rest,
accompanyde with angelick delightes. (4)

¹Son.77, [ll. 9-12].

²ibid., [ll. 13-14].

³Son.61, [l. 1]. See further below, p.230.

⁴Son.84, [ll. 1-8].

The chastity of his love is again affirmed by the poet in the last two sonnets of the sequence. Written in the pain of separation, they turn from the sensuous imagery of the "love granted" phase, the flowers and fruit and gems, to the light images with which the Amoretti opened,¹ and this heralds a return to the restatement of the neo-Platonic and Christian reconciliation of love and virtue.

The familiar Petrarchan image of the lady as the sun or a star gives Spenser his starting point. Estranged from her "light", he wanders "as in darknesse of the night", and the sun itself seems

but th' onely image of that heauenly ray,
whereof some glance doth in mine eie remayne. (2)

He then turns directly to Platonic statement:

Of which beholding the Idaea playne
through contemplation of my purest part:
with light thereof I doe my selfe sustayne,
and thereon feed my loue-affamisht hart. (3)

This is the end towards which Sidney strove, but which proved unsatisfactory because it admitted no physical relief; and Spenser too reaches the same conclusion:

But with such brightnesse whylest I fill my mind,
I starue my body and my eyes doe blynd. (4)

Purely intellectual love is not enough, man needs other fulfilment. The final quatorzain vindicates a full spiritual and physical love, within the proper bounds of the relationship between the Creator

¹Sons. 1, 3, 7-9.

²Son.88, [ll. 7-8].

³ibid., [ll. 9-12].

⁴ibid., [ll. 13-14].

and his creatures:

He loy of ought that vnder beauen doth houe,
can comfort me, but her owne ioyous sight:
whose sweet aspect both God and man can moue,
in her vnspotted pleasauns to delight. (1)

Thus Spenser ends where he began. His philosophy of love had been considered and formulated before he wrote his sequence, in such works as Colin Clout, the neo-Platonic Hymnes, and constantly illustrated in The Faerie Queene.² In the Amoretti, he exhibits it from different angles, throwing each of its points into relief.

This does not mean, however, that Spenser was unaware of the elements in human nature that were inimic^Lable to this high and noble form of love, nor are these excluded from some of the sonnets of the collection as it stands. In a number of the quatorzains, Spenser's Petrarchanism appears to be of the kind unregenerated by the concepts of neo-Platonism, and this has led in later years to controversy as to whether or not there are two or more sequences represented in the Amoretti; an early one, chivalric in tone, and related to the time of the poet's love for Rosalind; and a later, neo-Platonic sequence, recording his devotion to Lady Carey, or his mature love of Elizabeth Boyle.³ Spenser's known habit of

¹Son. 89, [ll. 9-12].

²Detailed illustration has been limited to the Hymnes and Colin Clout because in these poems Spenser expressed his philosophy in its clearest outlines.

³See The Works of Edmund Spenser, Variorum ed., The Minor Poems, ed. C.G.Osgood and H.G.Lotspeich, Baltimore, 1947, II, 631 ff. P.W.Long, "Spenser and Lady Carey", Modern Language Review, 1908, III, pp.257-65, and J.C.Smith, "The problem of Spenser's Sonnets", ibid., 1910, V, 273-81, are of particular interest. See also J.W.Lever, The Elizabethan Love Sonnet, 1956, p.96 ff. The anomalous sonnets are: 10,12,18,20, 25,31,32,38,41,47-49,53,54,56. In addition, Mr. Lever considers 23 and 37 to be out of place.

re-working earlier verse¹ makes this likelihood possible, but it is only of critical importance if there is a serious discrepancy in tone within the Amoretti.² A case can be made for the unity of the sequence on the lines suggested recently by an American critic in his reading of the sonnets:

important to the structure of this work is its pattern of thematic oppositions, traditional in amatory sonnets but here most strongly emphasized: appearance and essence, earth and heaven, pain and ecstasy, despair and hope, separation and union, lust and love, smile and frown. (3)

Viewed in this light, the anomalous quatorzains can be seen as part of this pattern of paradoxes.

Both the lover and his lady are shown to be subject to human failings when the mystical natures of love and beauty are temporarily ignored. Thus whilst the traditional pride of the Petrarchan mistress is given a lofty explanation in sonnet 5, and a spiritual definition in sonnet 13, Spenser hints that there is nonetheless a point at which such pride is no longer praiseworthy when, in sonnet 6 he refers to it as "rebellious".⁴ To shun loyal love is in its way as pernicious as to give way to disloyal lust:

Therefore to make your beautie more appeare,
It you behoues to loue, and forth to lay
That heauenly riches, which in you ye beare,
That men the more admyre their fountaine may,

¹As the sonnets in S.J. van der Noodt's A Theatre for Worldlings, 1569.

²J.W. Lever, The Elizabethan Love Sonnet, p. 97 f., feels this to be the case.

³W. Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser, p. 88.

⁴[1. 2].

For else what booteth that celestially ray,
 If it in darknesse be enshrined euer,
 That it of louing eyes be vewed neuer? (1)

It is not only an offence against the mystic nature of the soul,
 but also against natural law, as the sonnet heralding the return
 of Spring implies:

Therefore O loue, vnlesse she turne to thee
 ere Cuckow end, let her a rebell be (2)

and also against the commandment of God.³ This pride is not that
 which seeks to keep the heavenly seal of beauty from foul blot,
 but of another baser kind. The two are set side by side in
 sonnets 58 and 59. 59 makes it clear that correct self-assurance
 is that which comes from within:

Thrise happie she, that is so well assured
 Vnto her selfe and settled so in hart (4)

but 58 suggests a very human reliance of the lady upon her own
 attractiveness:

Weake is th' assurance that weake flesh repositeth
 In her owne powre, and scorneth others ayde:
 that soonest fals when as she most supposeth
 her selfe assur'd, and is of nought affrayd.
 All flesh is frayle, and all her strength vnstayed,
 like a vaine bubble blowne vp with ayre:
 deuouring tyme and changeful chance haue prayd
 her glories pride that none may it repayre
 ...Why then doe ye proud fayre, misdeeme so farre,
 that to your selfe ye most assured arre. (5)

The opening lines of sonnet 29,

¹An Hymne in Honour of Beautie, ll. 183-89.

²Son.19, [ll. 13-14], cf. also son.4.

³Son.68, [ll. 13-14], quoted above, p. 180. See also below, p.231f

⁴[ll.1-2].

⁵[ll. 1-8, 13-14], cf. Hymne of Beautie, ll. 64 ff.

Men call you fayre, and you doe credit it,
For that your selfe ye dayly such doe see (1)

tell us that Spenser's mistress was well aware of her own beauty,
and elsewhere he rebukes her for her exultation in this:

Faire proud now tell me why should faire be proud,
Sith all worlds glorie is but drosse vncleane:
and in the shade of death it selfe shall shroud,
how euer now thereof ye little weene. (2)

The lady had, therefore, a more carnal side to her nature which
at times she was willing to exploit at the expense of her lover:

And that same glorious beauties ydle boast,
is but a bayt such wretches to beguile:
as being long in her loues tempest tost,
she meanes at last to make her piteous spoyle. (3)

His mistress thus abjures her higher role of ennobling the poet,
she exults in "the huge massacres which her eyes do make",⁴ and
deceitfully sets about "ambushing her defenceless admirer."⁵ The
influence for good removed, the lover is unable to withstand the
purely sexual attractions which the lady joys in:

Too feeble I t'abide the brunt so strong,
was forst to yeeld my selfe into their hands:
who me captiuing streight with rigorous wrong,
haue euer since me kept in cruell bands. (6)

From his miserable position, the poet sometimes calls on his cruel
mistress to remember the correct exercise of her power:

But mercy doth with beautie best agree,
as in theyr maker ye them best may see. (7)

¹[11. 1-2].

²Son.27, [11. 1-4].

³Son.41, [11. 9-12]. cf. also sons. 53, 55.

⁴Son.10, [1. 6].

⁵Son.12.

⁶ibid., [11. 9-12].

⁷Son.53, [11. 13-14].

O fayrest fayre let neuer it be ¹named,
 that so foyre beauty was so fowly shamed. (1)

However, whilst the blame for this onslaught upon the virtuous nature of the poet's love rests chiefly on the lady, Spenser does not minimize the temptations which beset the lover from within when he is off his guard. Sonnet 16 describes such a moment when, in an unwary look at his mistress's eyes,

I mote perceiue how in her glauncing sight
 legions of loues with little wings did fly. (2)

Luckily, the "twinkle of her eye" saves the lover from a deadly wound, and he emphasizes the fact that by himself he has no power to withstand the darts of the tiny Cupids.³ In this sonnet, as in 24, the mistress is blameless, and wholly unaware of the desires she arouses in her lover:

When I behold that beauties wonderment,
 And rare perfection of each goodly part:
 of natures skill the onely complement,
 I honor and admire the makers art.
 But when I feele the bitter balefull smart,
 which her fayre eyes vnwares doe worke in mee:
 that death out of theyr shiny beames doe dart,
 I thinke that I a new Pandora see;
 Whom all the Gods in councill did agree,
 into this sinfull world from heauen to send:
 that she to wicked men a scourge should bee,
 for all their faults with which they did offend. (4)

Later, the two conflicting elements in his nature are described as

¹Son.41, [ll. 13-14].

²[ll. 5-6].

³ibid., [ll. 13-14].

⁴Son.24, [ll. 1-12].

...this continuall cruell ciuill warre,
 the which my selfe against my selfe doe make:
 whilst my weak powres of passions warreid arre,
 no skill can stint nor reason can aslake. (1)

/ The pure and virtuous love which Spenser extolled at the beginning of the sequence cannot be vindicated until both the lover and his lady have put aside respectively their aggressive and selfish desires. On account of the powerful position of the Petrarchan mistress in the lore of love, the initiative lies with her: "Make peace therefore, and graunt me timely grace".² This quatorzain is followed by the two poems on self-assurance, the second of which, sonnet 59, indicates that the lady is returning to her proper state of mind, and this is confirmed in sonnet 61, by the lover's recognition once again and this time finally that his mistress's pride is founded on the correct values.³ Whilst the lady leads the poet to the higher love, she can respond to him only when he has put aside his baser desires, as Spenser's version of Petrarch's "candida cerva" sonnet illustrates:

So after long pursuit and vaine assay,
 when I all weary had the chace forsooke,
 the gentle deare returnd the selfe-same way,
 thinking to quench her thirst at the next brooke.
 There she beholding me with mylder looke,
 sought not to fly, but fearlesse still did bide:
 till I in hand her yet halfe trembling tooke,
 and with her owne goodwill hir firmly tyde. (4)

The lover has learned the lesson of the final episode of the third book of The Faerie Queene. Whilst Scudamour, passionate in his

¹Son.44, [ll. 9-12].

²Son.57, [l. 13].

³[ll. 1-8] in particular.

⁴Son.67, [ll. 5-12].

love, tried to storm through the flames to reach Amoret in
 Lusirayne's house, he augmented the fierceness of the blaze;
 Britomart, the symbol of chastity, alone was able to pass unscathed
 through the fire, free the lady, and, in the first ending of the
 book, reunite the lover and his bride. Passion for Spenser has
 to be subordinated to the nobler aims of love before the equilibrium
 between love and chastity can be achieved. The Amoretti shows that
 it is not easy, but that it is the only sure foundation for the
 lasting affection which is above reproach. For Spenser, as for
 Sidney, the moral problem facing the sonneteer as Petrarchan lover
 is not love itself, but the distortion of the emotion which man's
 carnal side effected. Sidney's attempt to resolve this by Christian
 neo-Platonism was doomed to failure on account of the truly
 Petrarchan nature of the situation of the lover and his lady;
 Spenser's essay, based on the same philosophical tenets, held
 the prospect of success, perhaps partly by virtue of the more
 favourable circumstances of his later courtship. The exceptions
 in fact proved the rule, that love and morality were basically
 at conflict in Petrarchan passion.

The standards which the courtier adopted when he became a
 Petrarchan lover, whether or not he accepted them seriously, were
 by their nature opposed to those of society. Whilst this fact

constituted a danger to morality, it was a teasing threat, for the flouting of convention was an attitude which could at best provide the lover with vicarious pleasure. The Petrarchan situation was one of constant request by the man and constant denial by the lady; if she gave way, and acquiesced to the lover's desire, then the situation at once ceased to be Petrarchan. The literary expression of this development resulted in the bitter denunciation of women in anti-Petrarchan poems, which Mr. Matthews has referred to another feature of the relationship between the sexes in the Renaissance, the prevalence of prostitution.¹

Inevitably, a woman desired and won outside the recognized and permitted ways of society, with the concomitant moral blemishes of unchastity and adultery, would become linked in the lover's mind with the courtesans who simulated fine ladies in the sumptuousness of their attire and the quality and extent of their social graces, women who went out of their way to excite as well as to satisfy desire. This is perhaps why heroines in Elizabethan literature who grant their lovers' wishes, such as Shakespeare's Cressida, Elinor of The Adventures of Master F.J. in Gascoigne's Posies, or Maudelin in Lodge's William Longbeard, were shown as unfaithful; having become the illicit lover of one, they could become that of many. Seen in this light, women became the anti-Petrarchan monsters who exploited men's affection:

¹"Sex and the Sonnet", Essays in Crit., II, 121 f., 129 f.

So soone kills not the Basilisk^e with sight,
 The Vipers tooth is not so venomous,
 The Adders tung not halfe so dangerous,
 As they that beare the shadow of delight,
 Who chaine blinde youths in tramels of their haire,
 Will wast bring woe, and sorrow hast despaire. (1)

This knowledge of the "true" nature of womankind was voiced to some extent within the Petrarchanism of the sonnet sequences themselves. For all women were the daughters of Eve; all shared, in some degree, the desire to entice and destroy.² The anti-Petrarchan reaction was sometimes no more than a recognition of this truth, its realization made more telling by the lover's feeling that his devotion was directed towards a worthless object. This belief lies behind Astrophil's repudiation of Stella in Sidney's, "What, have I thus betra yed my libertie?", though the last lines reverse the lover's resolution:

...want I sence to feele my miserie?
 Or sprite, disdaine of such disdaine to have?
 Who for long faith, the dayly helpe I crave,
 May get no almes but scorne of beggerie.
 Vertue awake, Beautie but beautie is,
 I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
 Leave following that, which it is gaine to misse.
 Let her go. Soft, but here she comes. Go to,
 Unkind, I love you not: O me, that eye
 Doth make my heart give to my tongue the lie. (3)

More often, the poet wrote in resentment of the lady's indifference to his plight, knowing that under the exterior of cold chastity the

¹R. Greene, Greens Groatsworth of Wit, 1596, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, XII, 130. In italics throughout.

²See also pp. 184ff

³A & S, 47, ll. 5-14, Poems, ed. Ringler. For the place of this sonnet in the conflict between love and virtue in Sidney's sequence, see above, p. 171.

lady exulted as much in her lover's captivity as her less noble sisters did in their power over their dotting lovers. Barnes tells himself that his mistress is

" Siren which, within thy breast, doth bathe her;
 A Fiend which doth, in Graces' garments grath her,
 A Fortress, whose force is impregnable:
 From my love's 'lembic, still 'stilled tears. (1)

Drayton's beloved Idea is termed in one sonnet a cockatrice, a syren, and a crocodile; in another, a bastard²; and although the poet later realized that such verses were in questionable taste, for he did not reprint them, the quatorzains are not remarkable for their ferocity. Fletcher, R.L., Griffin, Smith, and Spenser, all have recourse to images of similar import, in describing their ladies as wild and savage beasts.³

In this form, anti-Petrarchanism became rarefied and literary; the lady's continuing in her impeccable chastity aroused frustration in her lover which found expression in these outbursts. Only in the sequences of Fulke Greville and Shakespeare did anti-Petrarchanism strike through this artifice and relate more immediately to the basic features of infidelity and unchastity in society which the inversion of Petrarchanism implied.

This is a marked characteristic of the love poetry of Caelica, Fulke Greville's collection of sonnets and short poems, and arises

¹Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 49, [ll. 6-9], Eliz.Sonnets, I.

²Ideas Mirrour, 30, 40, The Works of Michael Drayton, ed. J.W.Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, I.

³See L.C. John, The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences, New York, 1958, pp. 165, 200.

out of the discrepancy he found between ideals and reality. Like his friend, Sir Philip Sidney, Greville was an idealist. He too attempted to bring to his Petrarchan passion the concepts of neo-Platonism, not because of the same desire to justify the virtue of love,¹ but rather on account of a need to find a basis of constancy in the relationship between man and woman, which the atmosphere of court life frequently seemed to invalidate. This instability was the reality which Greville could not ignore, and which gave him something of the Elizabethan ironic misogynism which Donne was later to transform in some of his poems. As a result, one critic has with justice been led to say that "It is indeed a fair question whether Caelica is a cycle of love or of anti-love",² for the discrepancy between his beliefs and the outcome of the actual events led Greville into writing a sequence strongly anti-Petrarchan in tone.

Greville is caught ⁱ on a cleft stick from the start of his love, adhering both to contemporary views on the weakness of women and to the perfection of the object of neo-Platonic love. He declares he has found one woman who is perfect, that is, his mistress:

Loue, the delight of all well-thinking minds;
 Delight, the fruit of vertue dearely lov'd;
 Vertue, the highest good, that reason finds;
 Reason, the fire wherein mens thoughts bee prov'd;
 Are from the world by Natures power bereft,
 And in one creature, for her glory, left.

¹See above, p. 166ff.

²M. Croll, quoted in Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, ed. G. Bullough, 1938, "Introduction", I, 45.

beutie, her couer is, the eyes true pleasure;
 In honours fame she liues, the eares sweet musicke;
 Excesse of wonder growes from her true measure;
 Her worth is passions wound, and passions physicke;
 From her true heart, cleare springs of wisdom flow,
 Which imag'd in her words and deeds, men know.

Time faine would stay, that she might never leave her,
 Place doth reioyce, that she must needs containe her,
 Death craues of heauen, that she may not bercaue her,
 The Heauens know their owne, and doe maintaine her;
 Delight, Loue, Reason, Vertue let it be,
 To set all women light, but only she. (1)

The lady embodies all the permanent values that Greville needs and desires; she is an ideal, rather than a human being, and has to be treated accordingly.² Real women were known to be other than this; the women of the northern climes were noted for their lust and shame³; the sex as a whole was comprised of dissemblers, who were anathema even to the devil,⁴ and they covered their faults with a specious sophistry.⁵ The anguish which becomes increasingly the dominant tone of the sequence grows out of the dawning realization that the lover's lady also shares the characteristics common to womankind, and that she does not in fact comprise in human form permanent and unchanging values.⁶

Change, in different manifestations, is the major preoccupation of the poet, and comes to override all other aspects of his attitude

¹Caelica, 1, Poems and Dramas, ed. Bullough, I. All further references to Greville's sequence in this chapter is made to this edition.

²cf. ibid., 10; see also below, p.226f.

³ibid., 11.

⁴ibid., 21.

⁵ibid., 36.

⁶See Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, ed. Bullough, "Introduction", I, 46.

to love, even that of morality. Greville willingly undertakes a bargain with Cupid

To ruine honour, with whose frozen Art
She tyranniz'd thy Kingdome of desire (1)

only to find that Cupid's arrows are for him feathered not with desire, but with "feare".² This circumspect withdrawal is metaphorically described in the following sonnet in the terms of Cupid's complete rejection of his nature:

You faithlesse Boy, perswade you me to reason?
With vertue doe you answere my affection?
Vertue, which you with liuerie and seisin
Haue sold and changed out of your protection. (3)

Greville's sudden tendency towards "vertue" does not come, however, from any humility about his right to tempt the exalted being whom he loves, but from his own haunted fear of change:

I tooke your oath of dalliance and desire,
Myra did so inspire me with her graces,
But like a Wag that sets the straw on fire,
You running to doe harme in other places,
Sware what is felt with hand, or seene with eye,
As mortall, must feele sicknesse, age and dye. (4)

Inevitable physical decay, challenging enough to the concepts of Platonic ideals on which his love is founded, is not the only blow which the poet's passion suffers. The behaviour of the lady herself is revealed as part of this distressing pattern of instability.⁵

¹Caelica, 27, ll. 7-8.

²ibid., ll. 13-14.

³Son.28, ll. 1-4.

⁴ibid., ll. 9-14.

⁵Professor Bullough has suggested that the names Myra, Cynthia, and Caelica, may have been used to represent different aspects of the same woman, Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, "Introduction", I,43.

She is inconstant, and to cover her fault she accuses her lover of neglect or too much devotion,¹ employing sophistry and attitudes which prove her kinship with the women of sonnets 11 and 21, whilst in another quatorzain, Myra's changeable nature is sarcastically put to the account of Cupid and Venus, in an ominous foreshadowing of sonnet 36:

Now as they wrong themselues, that for it thunders
 Blame skye, or ayre, wherein these tempests blow:
 So doth he that at Womens changes wonders,
 Since strange it should not be that all men know:
 Therefore if Myra change as others doe,
 Free her; but blame the Sonne, and Mother too. (2)

The moods of the love sequence vary from pain,³ to bitterness:

Caelica, when I did see you euery day,
 I saw so many worths so well vnited,
 As in this vnion while but one did play;
 All others eyes both wonderd and delighted:

When I conceau'd you of some heauenly mould,
 Since Loue, and Vertue, noble Fame and Pleasure,
 Containe in one no earthly metall could,
 Such enemies are flesh, and blood to measure.

And since my fall, though I now onely see
 Your backe, while all the world beholds your face,
 This shadow still shewes miracles to me,
 And still I thinke your heart a heauenly place:
 For what before was fill'd by me alone,
 I now discerne hath roome for euery one. (4)

Passion is finally brought to a state of bewilderment, voiced both by Cupid,⁵ and by the poet:

¹Son. 18.

²Son. 32, ll. 9-14.

³Son. 39, 41, 43.

⁴Son. 64, cf. also son. 38.

⁵Son. 71, ll. 9-18.

Caelica, you that excell in flesh and wit,
 In whose sweet heart loue doth both ebb and flow
 Returning faith more than it tooke from it,
 whence doth the Change, the world thus speakes on, grow:

If Worthinesse doe ioy to be admired,
 My soule, you know, onely be-wonders you;
 If beauties glorie be to be desired,
 My heart is nothing else; What need you new?

If ¹ Young ioy of worths beloued be,
 And ioyes not simple, but still mutuall,
 Whom can you more loue, than you haue lou'd me?
 Vnlesse in your heart there be more than all;
 Since Loue no doomes-day hath, where bodies change,
 Why should new be delight, not being strange? (1)

The truth of neo-Platonic concepts are not questioned; Greville is dazed and surprised that they have failed. Myra is given the last word, and in her reply states and accepts the principle of change which is so hostile to her lover's beliefs:

Myraphill, 'tis true, I lou'd, and you lou'd me,
 My thoughts as narrow as my heart, then were;
 Which made change seeme impossible to be,
 Thinking one place could not two bodies beare.
 This was but earnest Youths simplicitie,
 To fadome Nature within Passions wit,
 Which thinks her earnestnesse eternity,
 Till selfe-delight makes change looke through it:
 You banish'd were, I grieu'd, but languish'd not,
 For worth was free and of affection sure;
 So that time must be vaine or you forgot,
Nature and Loue, no Vacuum can endure;
 I found desert, and to desert am true,
 Still dealing by it, as I dealt by you. (2)

The two narrative poems which follow contain the basic moods of the love sequence. Greville's aspirations and inhibitions, the lady's inconstancy and sophistry, are assembled in them, and the sense of pain is awakened again. Greville's different, anti-Petrarchan

¹Son.72.

²Son.73.

heroine has presented her lover with a new aspect of the Petrarchan impasse, and he learns of Cupid in its full import a fact which he has known but refused to accept from the early stages of the sequence:¹

... Desire is neuer wise,
But warres with Change, which is her paradise. (2)

The poet's impassioned need to find the unchangeable in this changeable world is denied him in the field of love, and his anti-Petrarchanism leads him later to find satisfaction in an entirely different direction.³

In Shakespeare's sequence also the theme of change plays a large part, both in its physical aspect of youth drawing on to age, and in the spiritual aspect of the alteration of affection. The most painful sonnets are, perhaps, those which fear a change in the friend's love, and suspect the betrayal of the lover by both his friend and his mistress. Most damaging, however, is the effect of the inconstancy of his lady upon the poet. Here, as in Greville's collection, we find that she is not the perfect being whom the Petrarchan lover usually extols, but Shakespeare never makes such a claim for her. Indeed, he categorically refutes it, in the sonnet, "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun". For all the contradictions of conventional terminology, this poem succeeds in being one of the most flattering and complimentary of

¹See Son. 5.

²Son. 76, ll. 13-14. In italics throughout.

³See below, p.228f

love sonnets:

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare. (1)

It seems for a moment as if the masks of the Elizabethan lover and his lady are to be put aside, and that the real man and woman underneath will emerge. However, that is not to be; for the tradition in which the poet is writing, and the values it entails, to which he inevitably consents, determine the form that this rejection of hyperbolic praise must take. If the lady is not a good angel, then she must be a bad angel.² There is no place for the mean in Petrarchan affection, with the mistress either refusing to succumb to the desire, or consenting, and becoming an adulteress. Shakespeare's mistress must still be addressed in the conventional manner for, whilst, like Greville's *Caelica*, her affection is not confined to her lover, it must still be sought after.³ The Dark Lady is voracious in her pursuit of love, and deliberately revels in the pain it causes the poet:

Love is my sin and thy dear virtue hate,
Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving:
O, but with mine compare thou thine owne state,
And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;
Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments
And seal'd false bonds of love so oft as mine,
Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents.
Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee:

¹The Sonnets of Shakespeare, ed. H.C.Beeching, Boston and London, 1904, son. 130, ll.13-14. All further reference to the sequence in this chapter is made to this edition.

²*ibid.*, son. 144; and see below, p.220.

³There is, however, no mention of adultery in *Caelica*.

Root pity in thy heart, that when it grows
 Thy pity may deserve to pitied be.
 If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,
 By self-example mayst thou be denied! (1)

By such behaviour, the lady has removed the refining distance between her and the poet which nobility and perfection gave to the Petrarchan mistress; she is no longer a being to whom the lover can look up, but is on the same level as, or rather lower than, her admirer.² As the Petrarchan lady had an influence for good over her lover, so Shakespeare's anti-Petrarchan mistress has a debasing effect on her dotting poet. The lady's dark hair, eyes, and complexion, constantly stressed by Shakespeare, are more than the outer reversal of the traditional fair beauty; in Renaissance philosophy of love, the beloved's looks were a reflection of soul, and therefore beauty was the rational lure to neo-Platonic and, to some extent, Petrarchan affection.³ The Dark Lady is not beautiful by the conventional standards and opinions of the age,⁴ yet such is the attraction that she exercises over the poet that he must constantly compromise his reason and make invalid the evidence of his eyes to affirm this attraction in the terms of Petrarchanism:

Then will I swear Beauty herself is black
 And all they foul that thy complexion lack. (5)

¹Son. 142.

²See also sons. 151, 152.

³See above, pp. 166, 167ff, 177f.

⁴See sons. 127, 131, 137, 141, 148.

⁵Son. 132, ll. 13-14.

A love so based on transparent self-deception, on both the lover's and his mistress's part,¹ cannot by its nature be emotionally satisfying. The poet himself desires more than a sensual relationship,² but the power to effect this should be with the lady, and she is singularly lacking in this respect:

O, from what power hast thou this powerful might
 With insufficiency my heart to sway?
 To make me give the lie to my true sight,
 And swear that brightness doth not grace the day?
 Whence hast thou this becoming of things all,
 That in the very refuse of thy deeds
 There is such strength and warrantise of skill
 That, in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds?
 Who taught thee how to make me love thee more
 The more I hear and see just cause of hate?
 O, though I love what others do abhor,
 With others thou shouldst not abhor my state:
 If thy unworthiness raised love in me,
 More worthy I to be beloved of thee. (~~X~~)³

As for Creville, so for Shakespeare the question of morality becomes bound up with the theme of change, though in Shakespeare's case change is represented entirely by the unfaithfulness of the mistress. He does not lay upon himself any rebuke, nor even undertakes the analysis of desire as in "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action" which is placed earlier in the sequence; the ungovernable passion is part of the lover's subjection to his unworthy mistress, and she determines the quality of the poet's affections, as does the noble Petrarchan heroine:

¹ See son. 138.

² Son. 141.

³ Son. 150.

Love is too young to know what conscience is;
 Yet who knows not conscience is born of love?
 Then, gentle chester, urge not my amiss,
 Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove:
 For, thou betraying me, I do betray
 My nobler part to my gross body's treason;
 My soul doth tell my body that he may
 Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason,
 But, rising at thy name, doth point out thee
 As his triumphant prize. Proud of this pride,
 He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
 To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.
 No want of conscience hold it that I call
 Her "love" for whose dear love I rise and fall. (1)

The full eclipse of the Petrarchan sonnet was to come in the
 seventeenth century, when, as G. M. Matthews rightly stresses,²
 altered social conditions made the situation it expressed no longer
 relevant to the life of the time; then the Petrarchan tradition was
 gradually laid aside, for it failed to fulfil its function in society.
 Before that, however, the beginnings of this decline were to be seen
 in Elizabethan poetry. The sonnet itself ceased to flourish in such
 profusion after the mid fifteen-nineties, until in 1605, Ben Jonson
 could talk of the poem as the manifestation of a literary fashion
 that had passed.³ Serious poets, such as Daniel and Drayton,
 perhaps Shakespeare, and the Scottish sonneteers, were still
 writing quatorzains, and continued to do so; but it was nevertheless
 true that the impetus of Petrarchan writing had diminished. This

¹ Son. 151.

² "Sex and the Sonnet", Essays in Crit., II, 129, 134. See also below,
 pp. 241ff

³ Volpone, III, iv, 93-94, Ben Jonson, ed. Herford and Simpson, V.

was partly because the efforts of the versifiers had brought the poem into disrepute, and partly because this in turn resulted in the satire upon the stanza and its writers, as we have seen in the two preceding chapters; but a further explanation probably lay in the strain the Petrarchan relationship placed upon the courtly lover. Unless he assumed his passion as a literary or social affectation,¹ or unless he were able to sublimate emotion until it became purely spiritual, he was doomed to suffer agonizing frustration. Love needs the comfort of being returned in the same kind and degree, otherwise it becomes destructive to itself and turns to poison in the lover. The Elizabethan descriptions of love as a malady were psychologically true of unfulfilled Petrarchan affection. Complete sublimation of passion, or a nice balance of physical and spiritual love such as Spenser upheld, were states that it was not within the power of many men to achieve; and in the end, Sidney was probably not alone in his plea to his mistress to dismiss her servant:

O let not fooles in me thy workes reprove,
And scorning say, "See what it is to love". (2)

Anti-Petrarchan outbursts brought some relief to this oppression,³ though their very inversion of Petrarchan values points to the

¹The word is not used here in its pejorative sense; Petrarchanism was too important a social phenomenon to be dismissed so lightly.

²A & S, 107, ll. 13-14, Poems, ed. Ringler.

³See below, p. 288f

strength which the tradition had as a social and a literary phenomenon. Anti-Petrarchanism could exist only as long as Petrarchanism was valid for the courtly world. The school of metaphysical poets, especially Donne who is nearest, and indeed partly belongs, to the Elizabethan period, was therefore working within the current tradition to some extent.¹ However, they did have a contribution to make to the situation; their approach offered the lover a means of liberation from the oppression of hopeless passion. Woman's inconsistency, which Greville treated with an irony charged by bitterness on account of the crushing effect this fickleness has on the lover, is in Donne's verse approached with light scepticism:

Now thou hast lov'd me one whole day,
To morrow when thou leav'st, what wilt thou say? (2)

If the lady is inconstant, it is of no importance, for he may be so too: he has thrown off the shackles of service without reward:

Vaine lunatique, against these scapes I could
Dispute, and conquer, if I would,
Whiche I abstaine to doe,
For by to morrow, I may thinke so too. (3)

The values of neo-Platonism remain,⁴ but the body is admitted to its full part in the satisfaction of passion:

¹ See A.J. Smith, "Theory and Practice in Renaissance Poetry: Two Kinds of Imitation", Bull. John Rylands Library, 1964-1965, XLVII, 226 ff. Miss A.M.C. Latham, in her introduction to The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh, The Muscus Library, 1951, p. xxxiv f., has suggested that the sharp division between Elizabethan and metaphysical verse would be blurred if more poetry of the courtly writers had survived.

² Songs and Sonets, "Womans constancy", ll. 1-2, The Poems of John Donne, ed. H.C. Grierson, Oxford Standard Authors, 1960.

³ ibid., ll. 14-17.

⁴ See "The good-morrow", "The under-taking", "The Sunne Rising".

Love's not so pure, and abstract, as they use
 No say, which have no Mistresse but their muse,
 But as all else, being elemented too,
 Love sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do. (1)

This affirmation removes the distance between the lady and her servant as effectively as the anti-Petrarchanism of Shakespeare's sonnets of the Dark Lady do, but in Donne's poetry the lovers are partners and equals.² How far the situations in his poems can be accepted as reflections of actual social behaviour is however another matter; the very literary quality of metaphysical verse suggests that it offered relief chiefly as a literary game. The Petrarchan impasse still remained, but the lover could recover a little of his masculine dominance by contradicting the concepts to which he subscribed. Love and morality, desire and possession, dream and reality, existed at opposite poles in both Petrarchanism and anti-Petrarchanism, and this situation, basic to the Elizabethan love sonnet, retains its poignancy even today, when the society which produced it has passed away.

¹"Loves growth", ll. 11-14, Poems, ed. Grierson.

²See "The Extasie".

CHAPTER SIX

Elizabethan Religious Attitudes to
the Sonnet

Society adopts the moral values which serve its immediate situation, but underlying its code of ethics there is usually a doctrine of a higher principle than that of utility alone, upon which the code is based and by which it is ultimately to be judged. Elizabethan morality derived from Christianity, which informed the sixteenth-century attitude to all spheres of life, as the contemporary interest in collections of sermons and in the handbooks which Louis B. Wright describes as "guides to godliness",¹ illustrated. Whatever the attitude of certain individuals might have been, Elizabethan society as a whole accepted Christian values as the basis of its approach to the problems confronting it, and this property of sixteenth-century thought must be taken into account in examining contemporary views of the sonnet, a poem which moved from the celebration of human love to the praising of divine love during the Elizabethan period.

The course of Petrarchan love ran contrary to the accepted

¹Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England, New York and London, 1958, p. 228 ff.

codes of Christian behaviour in respects other than moral ones. The Christian faith sees the purpose of man's existence as beginning and ending in God, whose infinite love for the creature He has made should be gratefully recognized by man's attempt to devote all his efforts and his talents to the service of the Creator, so that as a true child of the Father he may inherit the bliss of the kingdom of Heaven for all eternity. Petrarchanism, on the other hand, advocated a course which bore no relation to Christian beliefs, but employed language and attitudes which directly contravened them. The supreme authority of God was ignored, and the lover confessed faith in Cupid alone "Cupid is God, And there is none but he",¹ or he went further, and dethroned the winged boy in favour of his own mistress:

Cupid, dumbe Idoll, peevisch Saint of love,
No more shalt thou nor Saint nor Idoll be,
No God art thou, a Goddess shee doth prove,
Of all thine honour shee hath robbed thee. (2)

Such terms as Drayton uses here were frequently accorded to the Petrarchan lady in the sonnets,³ and were apparently quite acceptable to her as part of the convention. Juliet evinced no surprise upon being addressed as "Dear saint" by Romeo at their first meeting,⁴

¹T. Watson, The Tears of Fancie, 1593, 59 ll. 14], Elizabethan Sonnets, ed. S. Lee, 1904, I. cf. also Zepheria, 28, [ll. 5-8], ibid., II; W. Shakespeare, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, iv, 129-42, Works, ed. W.G. Clark and W.A. Wright, Globe edition, second ed., repr. 1923.

²M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 1594, 26, [ll. 1-4], Works, ed. J.W. Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, I. cf. G. Fletcher, Licia, 1593, 5, Eliz. Sonnets, II, where the lady is exalted in Venus's stead.

³See above, p. 108f, and L.C. John, The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences, New York, 1938, p. 160ff, 199. cf. W. Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, I, ii, 312, "Women are angels, wooing", Works, Globe ed.

⁴W. Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, I, v, 105, Works, op. cit. cf. also ibid., II, ii, 56, 61.

and in one of his sonnets to Lady Arabella Stuart, Constable felt bound to apologize for comparing her to Vittoria Colonna, rather than to a more exalted spirit:

But thinke not strange that thy divinitie
I by some goddesse title doe not blaze:
But through a woemans name thy glorie rayse.
For things vnlike of vnlike prayses be. (1)

Whilst the meaning of such phraseology may be no more than graceful compliment it became part of a religious devotion which the lover bore towards his mistress. Exalted as a celestial being, she was duly worshipped with sacrifices of prayer and praise. The lover was advised to write

...wailful sonnets, whose composed rhymes
Should be full-fraught with serviceable vows.
...Say that on the altar of her beauty
You sacrifice your tears, your sighs, your heart. (3)

The ritual could be paralleled in current sonneteering practice:

I build ... a Temple to your name,
Wherein my thoughts shall daily sing your praise;
And will erect an Altar for the same,
Which shall, your virtues and your honour raise. (3)

Sighs as incense, and tears as oblations,⁴ were offered to the lady

¹The Poems of Henry Constable, ed. J.Grundy, Liverpool, 1960, II, ii, 4, ll. 5-8, p.148.

²W.Shakespeare, TGV, III, ii, 69-70, 73-74, Works, Globe ed. cf. also Orsino's rebuke to Olivia in Twelfth Night, V, i, ll5-18, ibid.; and I & C, I, ii, 303-9, ibid.; M. Drayton, Idea's Mirrour, 1, [ll.9-14], 2, [ll. 7-14], Works, ed. Hebel, I.

³G. Fletcher, Licia, "To Licia", [ll. 5-18], Eliz.Sonnets, II. cf. B. Griffin, Fidessa, 1596, 36, [ll. 1-3], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

⁴S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 8, ll, 21, 39, 40, Poems and A Defence of Ryme, ed.A.C.Sprague, 1950, pp.14,16,21,30; G.Fletcher, Licia, 17, Eliz. Sonnets, II; Zepheria, 1594, 15, ibid., II; W.Percy, Coelia, 1594, 4, 16, ibid., II; R.L., Diella, 1596, ll, ibid., II; W.Smith, Chloris, 1596, 4, ibid., II.

crowned with the final offering of the lover's life:

If these to get thy grace may not suffice,
my heart is slaine, accept that sacrifice. (1)

Lodge joyfully embraces a glorious death, exhorting all "To die for such a saint or love no more",² and Daniel declares "My martyrdom exceeds the highest stile".³

Technically, therefore, the sonneteer as Petrarchan lover was in fact turning Christian values and rites into pagan ones, honouring not the Divine Being but a profane mistress. If the ancient poets of pre-Christian times could be held to have belied God and to have robbed Him of His honour by exalting Cupid and by lauding unworthy beings as gods and goddesses,⁴ then in theory those who were fortunate enough to know God's truth as revealed by His Son would be guilty of a greater blasphemy if they used such terms in the manner in which the Petrarchan sonneteer did. The teaching of all branches of the Christian Church was clear upon the issue of idolatry, and neither the sixteenth-century Anglican nor Catholic would have quarrelled with the interpretation of this point given by William Perkins, a Puritan, when he allowed "Adoration meerly civill", that is, a due regard for goodness and the rank of those in authority,

¹E.C., Emaricdulfe, 1595, 7, [ll. 13-14], A Lamport Garland, [ed. C. Edmonds], Roxburghe Club Publ. 109, Manchester, 1881.

²Phillis, 1593, 10, [l.8], Eliz.Sonnets, I; cf. M.Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 39, Works, ed. Hebel, I.

³Son.25, l.14, of his sonnets appended to Newman's unauthorized edition of Astrophel and Stella, 1591 (see Poems, ed. Sprague, p.180). This line and the one which precedes it were revised for Delia, 1592, 50.

⁴See S.Gosson, A Short Apologie of the Schoole of Abuse, 1579, The Schoole of Abuse and A Short Apologie, ed. E.Arber, English Reprints, 3, 1868, p.67 f.

"But for worship, either simply religious, or mixt, it is in no sort to be yeelded them".¹

However, criticism of the irreligiousness of Petrarchanism was conspicuously absent from the writings of the churchmen and devout laity who composed treatises and manuals describing both the imperfections and the ideal behaviour of their generation. It is unlikely that these zealous men would have remained silent if they had thought that there was a real danger to the Christian faith in this form of worship; they did not hesitate to castigate what they saw as threats to the standards of Christian morality, such as the play-houses or amorous books. Petrarchan devotion as such must certainly have been displeasing to them, but it was an attitude rather than a profession of faith in many cases, and those who accepted it seriously did so within the context of neo-Platonism,² a philosophy which accorded with the ideals of Christianity. The virtue of esteeming worth (as well as position) was an essential quality of character which the Elizabethans had or acquired; it was a necessary characteristic, in an age when advancement depended on patronage, but it was also one which was in keeping with the magnanimity with which they endowed all that they undertook. It seems quite possible, therefore, to account for the silence of the Church on the subject of Petrarchan devotion as a reflection of a general acceptance of the principle of giving honour in the highest

¹The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience, 1608, p. 156.

²See below, p.224 ff.

terms, and treating its expression, even in religious phraseology, as purely conventional.

The satirist, however, could not be expected to overlook such a feature, as it presented them with an admirable opportunity to exercise ridicule. Even so, their attacks were not very fierce, and lacked virulence. This practice of idolatry furnished Hall, future bishop of Norwich, with another instance of the absurd hyperbole of the Petrarchan poet:

Then can he terme his durtie ill-fac'd bride
Lady and Queene, and virgin deifide (1)

and he laughed at the way in which the lover would "Saint her in his Calendere".² Marston also attacked the ridiculous nature of the convention in his satire upon Mavortius, the soldier turned carpet-knight, for his Petrarchan vocabulary:

... Fayre saint, my woe compassionate,
By heauen thine eye is my soule-guiding fate (3)

but in addition he pointed out the blasphemy of holding the lady's kiss to be sweeter than the joys of heaven, a typical Petrarchan attitude.⁴ If Petrarchan idolatry was considered to be really dangerous and corrupting, it is surprising that these two severe critics did not reprehend the fault more strongly and at greater length. Other satirists more kindly disposed to Petrarchanism

¹Virgidemiarum, 1598, I, vii, 19-20, The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall, ed. A.Davenport, Liverpool, 1949.

²ibid., l. 26. See also above, p.108.

³A Scourge of Villanie, 1598, Sat.8, ll. 54-55, The Poems of John Marston, ed. A.Davenport, Liverpool, 1961. In italics throughout.

⁴See above, p.87.

treated the devotion in such a manner as to suggest that it was indeed accepted as conventional. It was so integral a part of Petrarchan tradition that Nashe included it amongst the other facets which he ridiculed in The Unfortunate Traveller, 1594, satirizing the neo-Platonic expressions accompanying the exaltation of the Petrarchan lady. The Earl of Surrey's claims for his Geraldine followed a rising scale. At first, he was content to declare her merely immortal: "All soule, no earthly flesh"¹: soon she was the only way to eternal happiness:

Into heauens ioyes none can profoundly see,
Except that first they meditate on thee (2)

and finally "Geraldine was the soule of heauen, sole daughter and heir to primus motor".³ In Christian terms, Surrey, the type of the Petrarchan lover, usurped the place of Christ Himself for his Mistress, to whom all the Earl's religious activity was directed: "then did his mouth ouerflow with magnificats".⁴ Similarly culpable were the young men in Love's Labour's Lost, 1594-95, who also followed this part of Petrarchan tradition. In the fine comic scene in which the love-sick young men were discovered one by one, Biron commented upon the blasphemous nature of their passion. Longaville, the first offender, used the convention in his sonnet to excuse his perjury:

¹The Works of Thomas Nashe, ed. R.B. McKerrow, Oxford, 1958, II, 254.

²ibid., II, 263, in italics throughout.

³ibid., II, 270.

⁴idem.

A woman I forswore; but I will prove,
 Thou being a goddess, I foreswore not thee:
 My vow was earthly, thou a heavenly love;
 Thy grace being gain'd cures all disgrace in me. (1)

Biron remarked:

This is the liver-vein, which makes flesh a deity,
 A green goose a goddess: pure, pure idolatry.
 God amend us, God amend! We are much out o' the way. (2)

The use of the plural indicates that the censure extended beyond the limits of the play: it was his generation which stood indicted of this lapse from Christian conduct. The Petrarchan lover could hardly hope to escape this fault; even a mild ejaculation like Dumain's "O most divine hate!"³ was revealed as blasphemous affectation by Biron: "O most prophane coxcomb!"⁴ His mockery was good-humoured, however, for he was as guilty as his companions, as Rosaline was to confirm:

...I have verses too, I thank Biron:
 The numbers true; and, were the numbering too,
 I were the fairest goddess on the ground. (5)

Whilst the blasphemy of the sonnet was accepted as conventional, and laughed at for its absurdity, this aspect of Petrarchan devotion may have had a particular odium for the sixteenth-century Protestant, for it bore the smack of the hated Popery. Nurtured in Catholic Italy, the devotion of the sonneteers naturally followed the practices of the Roman Church, and in receiving the tradition into their

¹IV, iii, 64-67, The Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed.

²ibid., IV, iii, 74-76.

³ibid., IV, iii, 83.

⁴ibid., IV, iii, 84.

⁵ibid., V, ii, 35-37. cf. Biron's sonnet, ibid., IV, ii, 109 ff.

customs, language and verse, the English also accepted the Petrarchan attitudes based on that branch of the Christian religion. Outwardly, there was nothing to distinguish between the rituals acknowledged by the Petrarchan poet and those Catholic practices condemned by Elizabeth's bishops in 1562, when they discredited:

The Romish Doctrine concerning ... Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques,¹ and also invocation of Saints, ... a fond thing vainly invented, and ... repugnant to the Word of God. (2)

The connection between Petrarchanism and Roman Catholicism was pointed out at an early date in George Whetstone's Rocke of Regard, 1576, in a gloss to one of the verses of P. ¹Plasmos's recantation of the course of Petrarchan courtship which he followed: "The religion / of wanton / lovers like the papistes".³ In a more subtle manner, Nashe also intimated that there was a strong link between the religious conventions of the sonneteer and what the sixteenth century regarded as popish idolatry, when he made the Earl of Surrey honour Geraldine's birthplace as a shrine:

Prostrate, as holy ground Ile worship thee;
Our Ladies chappell henceforth be thou namd:
Here first loues Queene put on mortalitie,
And with her beautie all the world inflamd. (4)

This calls to mind the devotion of the Catholic Church to the Blessed Virgin Mary, a cult particularly odious to the Protestant, joining to it the absurd blasphemy of Petrarchanism. Nashe, however, did

¹cf. H. Constable, Diana, I, iii, 2, Poems, ed Grundy, p. 131.

²"The Thirty Nine Articles", art. 22, The Book of Common Prayer.

³[ed. J.P. Collier, 1870], p. 304.

⁴The Unfortunate Traveller, Works, ed. McKerrow, II, 270. In italics throughout.

not take the criticism any farther. It was Marston who most clearly defined the relationship between Catholicism and Petrarchanism, when at the height of the sonneteering vogue, the satirist scourged one Publius:

Publius hates vainely to idolatries,
And laughs that Papists honor Images,
And yet (ô madnes) these mine eyes did see
Him melt in mouing plaints, obsequiously
Imploring fauour, twining his kind armes
Vsing inchauntments, exorcismes, charmes.
The oyle of Sonnets, wanton blandishment,
The force of teares, & seeming languishment,
Vnto the picture of a painted lasse:
I saw him court his Mistres looking-glasse,¹
Worship a busk-poynt, ...

... to her eyes
I heard him swear his sighes to sacrifice.
But if he get her itch-alleying pinne,
O sacred relique, straight he must beginne
To raue outright. (2)

However unjust the coupling of Catholicism and Petrarchanism was to the Roman Church, this attitude illustrates another aspect of the apparent contradiction of the Christian ethic by Petrarchan practices, to which the Elizabethans could draw attention if they so desired.

Nonetheless, since, as we saw in the previous chapter, love was allowed little part in the functioning of Elizabethan society, passion was bound to run counter in some respects to the religion which provided that society with the principles for its code of behaviour. If pursued other than as a courtly ^{pastime} ~~past-time~~ and as the expression of good manners, Petrarchan affection ignored or

¹"Allen points out that sonnets 23 and 24 in Thomas Watson's Hekatompathia, 1582, are about the looking-glass of his mistress", Poems of John Marston, ed. Davenport, "Commentary", p. 342.

²Scourge of Villanie, sat. 8, ll. 84-94, 98-102, Poems, op.cit.

contravened the concept of Christian marriage; and although it would be grossly unfair to blame Petrarchanism for the temptation to unchastity which Elizabethan society presented to some of its members, it nevertheless could be an aid to adultery, or used as a cloak for it. Such emotion, having no definite and prescribed place within society; menaced the stability of its structure, Love was therefore a dangerous passion, and only quite unimpeachable when directed towards the Creator; even the legitimate affection of husband and wife could interfere with this duty of His children towards God. The God of the Elizabethans was indeed a jealous God.¹ From a practical point of view, therefore, the lover spent his time, talent, and substance, in the service of a woman,² instead of devoting them to the glory of God, pursuing a course that could end in moral degradation or, if the lady remained the unobtainable Petrarchan mistress, in the misery of unfulfilled desire "the Prologue hope, the Epilogue dispaire".³ By accepting Petrarchanism he might follow this unprofitable course, and reject the firm promise of fulfilment and eternal happiness which devotion to God would bring him. It is hardly surprising that to the sixteenth century there was a strong antithesis between earthly and heavenly love:

The Ladyes spend the morning in deuout prayer, not resembling the Gentlewoemen in Greece & Italy, ... vsing sonets for psalmes, & pastymes for prayers, reading ye Epistle of a Louer, when they should peruse the Gospell of our Lorde. (4)

¹J. Donne, The Divine Poems, ed. H. Gardner, Oxford, 1952, son. 1 (Westmorland MS.), p. 14.

²See above, p. 145ff. cf. also B. Greene, Morando, Pt. I, 1587, The Life and Complete Works, ed. A. B. Grosart, Huth Library, 1881-86, III, 86; The Debate betweene Follie and Loue, 1587, ibid., IV, 220.

³T. Nashe, Preface to Astrophel and Stella, 1591, Works, ed. McKerrow, III, 329

⁴J. Lyly, Euphues and his England, 1850, Works, ed. R. W. Bond, Oxford, 1902, II, f. 198, f.

Since Petrarchanism demanded the same kind of whole-hearted devotion as the love of God, there were ostensibly no grounds on which the two could be reconciled. At some point, therefore, the lover as a man or woman of the age inevitably came to the point at which the antithesis had to be resolved by his choosing either sacred or profane love:

Sith I repent, no shame it is to wray
 My former life how far from grace it swerv'd:
 Although from truth I, silly sheepe, did stray,
 As good men God, so I my goddesse serv'd. (1)

I meane so to mortifie my selfe that in stead of
 silkes I will weare sackcloth, for Owches and
 Bracelettes, Leere and Caddys, for the Lute, vse
 the Distaffe, for the Penne, the Needle, for louers
 Sonettes, Dauids Psalmes. (2)

There can be little doubt as to wherein lay the better part in Elizabethan eyes.

The conflict, however, was not usually a feature of the Elizabethan sonnet, both on account of the nature of Petrarchanism, which worked within its own scale of values, and also on account of the superficial handling of the tradition by the minor sonneteers. As representatives of the Petrarchan poet, they occasioned the criticisms of blasphemy and idolatry, and did not seek to make amends in any way. However, there were instances in which the poet recognized the implications of the conventions in which he was writing, and attempted to come to terms with them.

¹G. Whetstone, Rocke of Regard, [ed. Collier], p. 304.

²J. Lyly, Euphues, 1578, Works, ed. Bond, I, 224.

On the purely technical level, this can be seen in the revisions which Drayton made to his sonnets in 1599, following the attacks upon the Petrarchan poet by the satirists, of which he was probably a victim.¹ Certain sonnets which used excessively religious language were rejected, as Amours 23 and 29 of Ideas Mirrour, which contained such phrases as "Wonder of Heaven, glasse of divinitie", "Celestiall Image"²; "That luckie Load-starre of eternall light", and, "crowne of heaven above".³ In others, the devotional tone was muted by Drayton's revisions, as in the case of the seventh line of "My faire, had I not erst adorned my Lute"⁴:

My soule had ne'er felt thy Divinitie
which became

I had beene buried to posteritie

in the 1599 version. Most striking of all were the alterations made to Ideas Mirrour, 12, which in 1594 was belligerently blasphemous in tone:

Some Athiest or vile Infidell in love,
When I doe speake of thy divinitie,
May blaspheme thus, and say, I flatter thee.⁵

In the later version, these opening lines were wisely modified:

¹See above, pp. 108, 125f.

²Amour 23, [ll. 1, 6], Works, ed. Hebel, I.

³Amour 29, [ll. 2, 9]; cf. ^{also} ibid. [ll. 11, 12], the exclusion of Amours 5 and 19, and Professor Tillotson's note to Ideas Mirrour, 5, Works, op.cit., V, 15.

⁴Not included in Drayton's collection after 1603.

⁵[ll. 1-3].

Some misbeleeving, and pronhane in Love,
 When I doe speake of miracles by thee,
 May say, that thou art flattered by mee. (1)

Whilst not entirely abandoning the religious phraseology associated with the early sonnets and his love for Anne Goodere,² Drayton did not repeat his affectation, and the sequence gained from the tightening of such artistic slackness.

This stylistic and linguistic approach to the problem of blasphemy and the exaltation and honouring of the Petrarchan beloved was only a partial solution, however. The full answer to the question of how to do justice to the object of devotion and to the quality of love itself without perverting religious practices could only be found from within the convention, transforming the blasphemous elements into something different, as we find in Shakespeare's sequence.

In these sonnets, the poet succeeds in propounding the higher feelings which religious phraseology to some extent expressed, without having recourse to the usual manner of presentation to which the convention was subject. The rejection of the claim for the lady's divinity in the anti-Petrarchan sonnet 130³ is more than the conventional refusal to accept set attitudes; it is indicative of a desire to seek the truth underlying the relationship which the Petrarchan sonnet explores, without substituting convention

¹ Idea, 1619, 35, [ll. 1-3], Works, ed. Hebel, II. cf. also the closing line of this poem in both versions; and cf. also Ideas Mirrour, 6, with Idea, 16.

² See Professor Tillotson's introduction to Ideas Mirrour, Works, op.cit. V, 14.

³ See above, p.109.

for authenticity. An absence of incense-laden language is a feature of the sonnets. The character of the Dark Lady facilitates this approach; there is little of the goddess in Shakespeare's mistress as we see her in the latter part of the sequence. When religious phrases are used, it is in a very different manner from that generally employed by the Petrarchan lover, as sonnet 144 illustrates:

Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,
 Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
 The better angel is a man right fair,
 The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
 To win me soon to hell, my female evil
 Tempteth my better angel from my side,
 And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
 Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
 And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend
 Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
 But being both from me, both to each friend,
 I guess one angel in another's hell:
 Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
 Till my bad angel fire my good one out. (1)

The subtle mingling of Petrarchan and anti-Petrarchan attitudes, and the conscious double meanings which the strong sexual overtones give the poem, transform the convention utterly, and place this sonnet, set so firmly in the antipathies of spiritual and physical love, and anguish and jealousy, beyond all charge of blasphemy.

It will have been noticed that the poet uses here the usual terms of "(good) (better) angel", and "saint", to describe the Friend; he it is who in this sequence represents all the good qualities associated with the beloved of the Petrarchan poet. Yet

¹The Sonnets of Shakespeare, ed. H.C. Beeching, Boston and London, 1904. All further reference to the sequence in this chapter is made to this edition.

Shakespeare deliberately refrains from employing religious language to express the devotion the young man has inspired, whilst remaining fully aware of the difficulty of voicing his emotion without recourse to this convention:

Let not my love be call'd idolatry,
Nor my beloved as an idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be
To one, of one, still such and ever so. (1)

His answer is partially found, as Miss Scott has pointed out,² in a neo-Platonic approach to those virtues of the Friend which arouse affection:

"Fair, kind, and true" is all my argument,
"Fair, kind, and true" varying to other words;
And in this change is my invention spent,
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.
"Fair", "kind", and "true", have often lived alone,
Which three till now never kept seat in one. (3)

Beneath the assertion of the Platonic absolutes lies the hint of religious terminology, but it is successfully held in abeyance, and moulded into a confession of faith in human love. The idea of trinity and the mystery of the three in one are evoked to give the sonnet its richness and depth, but it is a strictly secular poem. Shakespeare retains the metaphysical connotations to give a dimension beyond the physical to human love but does not commit himself to the confines which a religious application would impose upon him. This higher, secular love is fully vindicated in sonnet 116

¹Son. 105, ll. 1-4.

²Les Sonnets Elisabethains, Paris, 1929, p. 232 f.

³Son. 105, ll. 9-14.

where the nature of the relationship is illuminated without recourse to any devotional imagery. This is new to the Petrarchan convention, and radically alters it; for here the lover is no longer merely a petitioner for love, but also one who acquiesces in and grants a love of greater power than that which the poet or the beloved could have rendered on their own. It is an affirmation approaching the true concept of Platonic love; and is only possible, perhaps, because the object of love is a man and not a woman, so that emotion becomes elevated beyond the physical to the pure, ethereal, and unfathomable passion which is both immediate and unchanging:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove:
 O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wandering bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved. (1)

The love which Shakespeare celebrates in his sonnets to his Friend is of a special metaphysical kind rarely experienced,² yet it is clearly not altogether alien to the Petrarchan tradition, or it could not have found expression in this form.

¹F.T.Prince, Shakespeare: The Poems, British Council Pamphlet "Writers and their Work", no.165, 1963, p.40, points out the absence of Christian influence upon Platonism in Shakespeare's sonnets, and repeats Mr. J.B. Leishman's comment that his love does not stretch beyond the grave.

²See W.H. Auden's analysis in "Shakespeare's Sonnets" - II", The Listener, LXXI, 1964, no. 1841, p. 45 f.

A devotion capable of ennobling, even altering radically, the character of the lover¹ had a spiritual as well as a carnal side, and the concept of neo-Platonic love which was part of the Petrarchan tradition emphasized this fact. For those sonneteers concerned with the relationship between Petrarchan and Christian love, neo-Platonism offered a possible solution to the conflicting priorities of duty to God and to one's mistress. In the eyes of the Christian, all love that is good comes from and tends towards the Creator; and therefore theoretically there should have been no reason why the affection of the noble lover for his lady should not have led him to the higher contemplation and thus to union with God. Precedent for this could be found in Petrarch's own verse, when, after Laura's death, his passion reached upward through her to the love of God Himself; but it is not without significance that this extension of the direction of love took place after the beloved had died. The chief obstruction in the way to perfect spiritual love was man's physical nature, and the difficulty of subduing or relegating it to its subordinate place in neo-Platonic passion. The issue was further complicated by the moral question, from which it is not completely separate,² which arose in the Petrarchan love situation, and therefore the same poets who attempted to view the sonneteer's passion in the light of the expression of Christian neo-Platonism, Sidney, his friend Greville, and Spenser,³

¹See above, pp. 109, 154f, 165ff.

²See above, p. 159.

³See above, p. 165ff, 192ff.

also sought to reconcile the conflicting ethics of Petrarchan and Christian love by the aid of neo-Platonic philosophy.

In Sidney's sequence, the emphasis is placed rather upon the reconciliation of these discordant elements through the ennobling power of love than upon its religious aspects:

The hallowed conflict of reason and passion, based on the putative superiority of man's rational understanding over his animal lust, thoroughly informs Astrophel and Stella. (1)

The poet recognizes Petrarchan affection unregenerated by any higher philosophy to be pernicious; on its own, it is unreasonable, for a rational approach to life declares that man's intelligence and emotions should be directed to serving God, his real goal:

It is most true, that eyes are form'd to serve
The inward light: and that the heavenly part
Ought to be king, from whose rules who do swerve,
Rebels to Nature, strive for their owne smart.
It is most true, what we call Cupid's dart,
Our image is, which for our selves we carve;
And, fooles, adore in temple of our hart,
Till that good God make Church and Churchman starve.
...True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
And should in soule up to our countrey move:
True, and yet true that I must Stella love. (2)

Except as a manifestation of right reason, religion does not enter the poems in earnest, for the antipathy between duty to God and love of one's lady does not exist if, as Sidney hints here, each can be seen as part of man's reasoning faculty. The affirmation

¹R.L. Montgomery, Jr., Symmetry and Sense: The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney, Austin, Texas, 1961, p. 103.

²Astrophil and Stella, 5, ll. 1-8, 12-14, The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. W.A. Ringler, Jr., Oxford, 1962. All further reference to Sidney's work in this chapter is made to this edition.

is made in the tenth sonnet, "Reason, in faith thou art well serv'd", where, despite the poet's desire to separate the roles of understanding and emotion

I rather wisht thee clime the Muses' hill,
Or reach the fruite of Nature's choicest tree,
Or seeke heavn's course, or heavn's inside to see (1)

the two in practice appear to be indivisible, on account of the nature of the lady herself. With one look from Stella's eyes

Reason thou kneel'dst, and offeredst straight to prove
By reason good, good reason her to love. (2)

The victory proves, however, to be but a partial and a short-lived one; Sidney's element of "animal lust" is stronger than he realizes, and the sequence closes on the authentic note of the Petrarchan impasse.³ The situation cannot be resolved on the higher spiritual plane of neo-Platonic philosophy, and the bewilderment with which the sonnets close underlines the isolation of Petrarchan passion from other codes of love. Such an end has been foreseen in the two concluding poems of the Certain Sonnets, which Professor Ringler's dating, based on manuscript evidence, now proves to be earlier than Astrophil and Stella⁴; but in those sonnets, the poet is led to reject the "love that reachest but to dust",⁵ and to direct his mind to higher things⁶:

¹ll. 3-5.

²ll. 13-14.

³See above, p.175.

⁴See The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, "Commentary", p. 423.

⁵Certain Sonnets, Son. 31.

⁶ibid., 31, l.8.

Draw in they beames, and humble all thy might,
 To that sweet yoke, where lasting freedoms be:
 Which breakes the clowdes and opens forth the light,
 That doth both shine and give us sight to see.

O take fast hold, let that light be thy guide,
 In this small course which birth drawes out to death,
 And thinke how evill becommeth him to slide,
 Who seeketh heav'n, and comes of heav'nly breath.
 Then farewell world, thy uttermost I see,
 Eternall Love maintainethy life in me. (1)

Fulke Greville, Sidney's friend and contemporary, also brings neo-Platonic philosophy to the contemplation of his love in the irregular sequence, Caelica. More aloof and reserved in temperament than Sidney, he chooses to analyze his feelings and motives in the form of abstractions, and thus demonstrates clearly how the neo-Platonic conception of the lady as a reflection of divine perfection breaks down in the face of human weakness. Whilst Greville's ideals remain abstract, his philosophy and its Christian application are sure:

More than most faire, full of that heauenly fire,
 Kindled aboue to shew the Makers glory, ...
 ...Thou window of the skie, and pride of spirits,
 True Character of honour in perfection,
 Thou heauenly creature, Iudge of earthly merits,
 And glorious prison of mans pure affection. (2)

Yet, like Sidney, Greville is unable to keep his love upon the ethereal plane; it gets out of hand, and upsets the true order of man's rational being.³ The poet has to exhort love to return to its proper sphere:

¹Certain Sonnets, 32, ll. 5-14.

²Caelica, 3, ll.1-2, 7-10, The Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, ed.G. Bullough, 1938, I. All further reference to Greville's sequence in this chapter is made to this edition.

³ibid., 10, ll. 10-14.

...goe backe vnto that heauenly quire
 Of Natures riches, in her beauties placed,
 And there in contemplation feed desire,
 Which till it wonder, is not rightly graced;
 For those sweet glories, which you doe aspire,
 Must, as Ideas only be embraced
 Since excellence in other forme enjoyed,
 Is by descending to her Saints destroyed. (1)

The situation is not only complicated by the moral issues of the lady's inconstancy,² but also by the lover's fault in bringing to his passion a devotion of which Petrarchanism is unworthy. In Sonnet 41, Greville rejects the idea that his adherence to Cupid can justify the misuse of his "honour":

What shall be thy excuse, what canst thou say?
 That thou hast erred out of Loue and wonder?
 No hereticke, thou Cupid dost betray
 And with religion wouldst bring Princes vnder. (3)

Such an unsatisfactory state of affairs cannot endure for ever, and in the end Greville applies his own words,

Vnconstancy and doublenesse depart,
 When man bends his desires to mend his heart, (4)

and closes the section of Caelica concerned with human love with a farewell to Cupid, rejecting his old attitude of devotion:

Thy playes of hope and feare were my confession,
 ... But Cupid now farewell, I will goe play me,
 With thoughts that please me lesse, & lesse betray me. (5)

¹ ibid., ll. 17-24.

² See above, p. 196f.

³ ll. 13-16. Professor Bullough glosses line 15 and 16, "he has made a false religion of love, instead of treating it like Cupid, lightly", and "He has set an ideal devotion above fealty to inconstant Cupid", Poems and Dramas, I, "Commentary", p. 249.

⁴ Son. 67, ll. 17-18.

⁵ Son. 84, ll. 11, 13-14.

Like his friend, Greville has had his ideal love betrayed by human weakness; by his own, for succumbing to the Petrarchistic influence and revering human love as something divine, and by his mistress's typically feminine, changeable nature. In the Christian neo-Platonic Ideal Love which he chooses instead, he finds the peace and stability he has not known in his profane affection:

Constant, because it sees no cause to varie,
 A Quintessence of Passions ouerthrowne,
 Rais'd aboue all that change of objects carry,
 A Nature by no other nature knowne¹:
 For Glories' of eternitie a frame,
 That by all bodies else obscures her name. (20)

The agonies of Petrarchan love are seen with a fresh objectivity as the manifestations of man's carnal nature:

Man torne with Loue, with inward furies blasted,
 Drown'd with despaire, with fleshly lustings shaken,
 Cannot for this with heauen be distasted,
 Loue, furie, lustings out of man are taken. (3)

There are two alternatives to this unhappy state of affairs, either to endure,⁴ or to choose the better part:

Or Man, forsake thy selfe, to heauen turne thee,
 Her flames enlighten Nature, neuer burne thee. (5)

By Greville, as by Sidney, the religion of the Petrarchan lover is found to be that of the natural man and irretrievably tied to the

¹The editor refers to Caelica, Son.70, ll.5-6: "Apollo saith, Loue is a Relatiue, / Whose being onely must in others be".

²Son.85, ll. 9-14. The last two lines are in italics.

³Son. 86, ll. 5-8.

⁴ibid., ll. 9-12.

⁵ibid., ll. 13-14.

flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the spirit is spirit"; Greville and Sidney demonstrate how, in Elizabethan eyes, despite efforts to combine the two propositions, they must remain separate and contradictory.

The attempt to reconcile Christian and Petrarchan attitudes by the agency of neo-Platonism was not completely abortive in the Elizabethan sonnet, however, but was vindicated in Spenser's sequence. The probable connection of Amoretti with the poet's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle¹ may have facilitated this, since part of the moral pressure upon the situation would have been relieved if the lady were free to be wooed and won, but the Christian neo-Platonic tone of the sonnets is in keeping with the Spenserian philosophy of love as it is expressed in Colin Clout, The Faerie Queene, and The Fowre Hymnes.²

Like Sidney and Greville,³ Spenser sees the lady in relation to the Platonic scale of perfection; she raises his thoughts to higher things:

The souerayne beauty which I doo admyre,
witness the world how worthy to be prayzed:
the light wherof hath kindled heauenly fire,
in my fraile spirit by her from basenesse raysed.
That being now with her huge brightnesse dazed,
base thing I can no more endure to view:
but looking still on her I stand amazed,
at wondrous sight of so celestiall hew. (4)

¹See above, p. 183.

²See above, p. 176 ff.

³See above, pp. 169 ff. 194.

⁴Amoretti, 1595, 3, [ll. 1-8], The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford Standard Authors, 1959. All further reference to Spenser's works in this chapter is made to this edition.

Neo-Platonism is fused with Christianity, for the lady's beauty is a reflection of the perfect beauty of the Almighty; she is, in words almost identical with those of Greville quoted above,

More than most faire, full of the liuing fire,
Kindled aboue vnto the maker neere (1)

and "The glorious image of the makers beautie".² Later in the sequence, in the sonnet "Men call you fayre", Spenser looks beneath the surface, and discerns that the nature of this relationship to the Creator lies in "the gentle wit, and vertuous mind" of his beloved:

That is true beautie: that doth argue you
to be diuine and borne of heauenly seed:
deriu'd from that fayre Spirit, from whom al true
and perfect beauty did at first proceed.
He onely fayre, and what he fayre hath made,
all other fayre lyke flowres vntymely fade. (3)

With the nature of the Petrarchan mistress so changed, the nature of the poet's love is also transformed. Spenser is free to translate Petrarchan terms into Christian ones, and that which in other sonneteers would be "pure, pure idolatry" becomes part of the embracing vision of love:

Her temple fayre is built within my mind,
in which her glorious ymage placed is,
on which my thoughts doo day and night attend
lyke sacred priests that neuer thinke amisse. (4)

¹ Amoretti, 3, [ll. 1-2]. For a discussion of the relationship between Spenser's and Greville's poems, see Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, ed. Bullough, "Introduction", p. 38.

² Amoretti, 61, [l. 1].

³ Son. 79, [ll. 9-14]. cf. also Sonnets 9 and 15, and An Hymne of Heavenly Love, ll. 22-28, 106-19.

⁴ Son. 22, [ll. 5-8].

This reverence is seen as falling within the framework of universal Christian obligation, and there is no clash between duty to God and honouring the lady:

This Holy season fit to fast and pray,
 Men to deuotion ought to be inclynd:
 therefore, I lykewise on so holy day,
 for my sweet Saynt some seruice fit will find. (1)

Because of the lady's heavenly origin, the sharp antagonism between human love and love of God becomes transmuted to a state where the relationship between the two is stressed, as in sonnet 72, in which the poet uses the description of the common failure of the Christian to reach the highest communion with the Creator to explain how his "fraile fancy" often cannot pass beyond a sensuous reverie upon his lady's beauty to the contemplation of the loftier aspects of love.² Yet such is Spenser's philosophy of love that he not only allows for this "burden of mortality", but considers it to be part of the fulfilment of this love:

Hart need not with none other happinesse,
 but here on earth to haue such he^uens blisse. (3)

There are, therefore, two factors present in Spenser's approach to the Petrarchan situation as a Christian. The lady, "full of the liuing fire", does more than ennoble her lover, she increases his capacity for spiritual development:

Through your bright beames doth not the blinded guest,
 shoot out his darts to base affections wound:
 but Angels come to lead fraile mindes to rest
 in chast desires on heauenly beauty bound. (4)

¹ibid., [ll. 1-4].

²[ll. 1-12].

³ibid., [ll. 13-14]. See also above, p. 180f.

⁴Son. 8, [ll. 5-8].

She is thus truly the superior being whom the sonneteers always declared their ladies to be, and what was selfishness in them becomes a proper pride in the lady of Amoretti:

For being as she is diuinely wrought,
and of the brood of Angels heuenly borne:
... what reason is it then but she should scorne
base things, that to her love too bold aspire? (1)

Nonetheless, although the poet concludes that

Such heauenly formes ought rather worshipt be,
then dare be lou'd by men of means degree (2)

he sees woman's love to be won as part of the practice of Christian charity. For love to be perfect, it must be all-inclusive; and therefore the lady must be loved in ^a human as well as in a spiritual manner. For the Christian, love is vindicated in Jesus Christ, who is Perfect Love itself, and Spenser emphatically places noble human passion within and growing out of the manifestation of Divine Charity in his prayer to the risen Saviour on Easter Day:

And that thy loue we weighing worthily,
may likewise loue thee for the same againe:
and for thy sake that all lyke deare didst buy,
with loue may one another entertayne. (3)

He then turns naturally and easily to address his mistress:

So let vs loue, deare loue, lyke as we ought,
loue is the lesson which the Lord vs taught. (4)

¹Son. 61, [ll. 5-6, 11-12]. For the other kind of pride found in the lady, and the relation between the two, see above, pp. 184 ff, 188.

²ibid., [ll. 13-14].

³Son. 68, [ll. 9-12].

⁴ibid., [ll. 13-14].

The example and commandment of Divine Love, as personified in the risen Christ, who symbolizes the renewal and creation of life, link the human and spiritual aspects of love. Spenser's neo-Platonism is successful because it falls within the broad limits of his interpretation of the workings of that pure love, physical and spiritual, which is a gift of God.

The vision, however, remained one peculiar to this poet; for although Davies of Hereford later took over the theme that Divine Beauty and Grace were to be seen in his beloved, it became one thread amongst many in Wittes Pilgrimage, and not an informing philosophy, as in Spenser's sequence.¹ Certainly no other Elizabethan was so bold as to declare his acquiescence in the proposition stated by the poet at the close of *Amoretti* 72.² Although a valuable solution, Spenser's must be admitted to have been his alone.

The antipathy of duty to God and the devotion of Petrarchan love naturally affected sixteenth-century attitudes to the writing of the poetry which was considered to be part of the lover's persona.³ From one point of view, love poetry was seen as another

¹ See Pt. I, sons. 22, 39, 55, 72, in particular; Complete Works, ed. A.B. Grosart, Vol. II, Chertsey Worthies' Library, Edinburgh, 1878.

² See above, p. 231. Contrast Alabaster's view in Divine Meditations, 23, The Sonnets of William Alabaster, ed. G.M. Story and H. Gardner, Oxford, English Monographs, Oxford, 1959.

³ See above, p. 141ff, and below, p. 245ff.

manifestation of the misuse of talent,¹ or at best as a misdirection of the same:

What greater infamy, than to conferre the sharpe
wit to ye making of lewde Sonnets, to the
idolatrous worshipping of their Ladies...? (2)

Other sorts of Poetry almost haue we none, but that
Lyricall kind of Songs and Sonnets: which, Lord, if
he gaue vs so good mindes, how well it might be
imployed, and with howe heauenly fruite, both priuate
and publique in singing the prayses of the immortall
beauty, the immortall goodnes of that God who gyveth
vs hands to write and wits to conceiue. (3)

The issue for Sidney, writing in the early fifteen ~~nineties~~^{eighties}, was barely more than a peripheral one of the ethical difficulties facing the apologist in general; by the time the Apologie came to be published, in 1593, its implications had become more serious, and his exhortation was soon to be acted upon.

Petrarchan poetry, including the popular sonnet, had come into full flower, and the religious man was confronted by a situation in which, as Southwell complained,

Stil finest wits are 'stilling Venvs' rose,
In Paynim toyes the sweetest vaines are spent;
To Christian workes few haue their talents lent. (4)

¹See above, p. 153ff.

²J. Lyly, Euphues, Works, ed. Bond, I, 252.

³P. Sidney, An Apologie for Poetrie, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, I, 201.

⁴Saint Peters Complaint, 1595, "The Avthor To The Reader", ll. 16-18, The Complete Poems of Robert Southwell, S.J., ed. A.B. Grosart, The Fuller Worthies' Library, 1872; cf. also ibid., "The Author To His Louing Cosin", p. 4; N. Breton, The Longing of a Blessed Heart, 1601, [ll. 141-47], The Works in Verse and Prose, ed. A.B. Grosart, Chertsey Worthies Library, Edinburgh, 1879, vol. I; ?G. Markham, Marie Magdalen's Teares, 1601, "Preface", ed. A.B. Grosart, Miscellanies of The Fuller Worthies' Library, 1871, II, 538, 539.

The popularity of religious poetry in the Elizabethan period cannot be doubted: the sombre Paradyse of dainty devises went through ten editions between 1576 and 1606¹; but such verse, when placed beside the secular poetry of the time, exhibits one fault: it is old-fashioned: "it does not represent anything like a renaissance of devotional verse".² The Paradyse clearly offered nothing to allure the "finest wits" away from Petrarchan poetry, which represented the highest summit of composition at that time. The solution which Robert Southwell proposed followed the lines lightly sketched out by Sidney; he was to encourage a better frame of mind in other poets by putting before them "a new webbe in their owne loome".³ His Saint Peters Complaint employed the devices of the long erotic poem in the form of a religious narrative, and thus struck a blow against the supremacy of secular poetry. The true use of the poet's gift was vindicated.

However, before Southwell made the declaration of his intention to adopt profane verse to secular use, a step had already been taken in this direction by a writer of Christian sonnets, Henry Lok, who published a collection of two hundred and four quatorzains in 1593, which were reprinted in 1597 with the addition of another hundred and twenty three stanzas.

¹See The Paradise of Dainty Devices (1576-1606), ed. H.E.Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1927, "Introduction", p. xiii ff.

²L.L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, New Haven, 1954, p.180-1.

³Saint Peters Complaint, "The Author To His Loving Cosin", Complete Poems, ed. Grosart, p. 5.

Lok gave no direct indication that his purpose was, like that of Southwell, to weave a new web in the old loom, although he hinted at this, saying that "style and phrase" put to the end of glorifying God could merit no reproach.¹ In keeping with this, the poet made no overt reference to contemporary fashions in literature, explaining his writing in verse in the following manner:

for that I find many oftentimes - speciallie such as
had most neede to praie and meditate - to reade bookes
rather for the affection of words than liking of matter (2)

and giving a purely utilitarian reason for his choice of form:

for my deducing these passiōs and affections into Sonnets,
it answereth best for the shortnesse, to the nature,
and common humor of men, who are either not touched
with so good motions, or by their worldly affaires not
permitted to continue much reading. (3)

Two points concerning Lok's collection, however, appear to indicate that there were other considerations behind the publication of his work. In the first place, he called his sonnets "Passions", and presented them in two main groups in 1593, and three in 1597, consisting of a hundred stanzas each; thus in title and arrangement his sequences bore a relationship to Thomas Watson's Hekatompathia, A Passionate Century of Love. This suggests that in 1593 Lok saw himself as the innovator of a new kind of religious poetry as Watson was acknowledged to have been of profane verse in 1582.

¹See Sundry Christian Passions, 1597, "To the Christian Reader", The Poems of Henry Lok, ed. A.B. Grosart, Miscellanies of The Fuller Worthies' Library, 1871, II, 146. (Pagination refers to that of the volume, not of the individual work.)

²ibid., p. 147.

³idem.

Moreover, in several sonnets Lok appears to attempt to implement Sidney's suggestion, by asserting the superiority of heavenly over earthly beauty:

If beautie be as men on Earth suppose,
 The comely shape and colours which agree,
 In true proportion to the thing we see,
 Which grace and fauor both do neuer lose:
 If white and red be borrowed from the rose,
 If bright and shining to the sunne compar'd,
 If high and straight to goodlinesse w' award,
 And beautie haue such base descriptions chose;
 Then let the wise this beautie true regard,
 Where all perfections in one subiect be,
 Surpassing frute of the forbidden tree,
 Which - but to tast - man suffred death's reward;
 Which is prepar'd, and offred to our sight,
 In Christ to loue and feed vs day and night. (1)

More specifically, he acknowledged that he was writing to redress the balance of foolish writers:

It is no light or curious conceipt,
 O Lord Thou knowst, that maketh me to straine
 My feeble powres, which blindfold did remaine,
 Vpon thy seruice now at length to waight:
 But onely shame to see man's nature fraight,
 So full of pregnant speech to little vse,
 Or rather oftentimes to Thy abuse,
 Whilst to deceiue, they laie a golden baight:
 And do not rather thinke it fit to chuse,
 By praises Thine, true praise themselues to gaine,
 And leaue those fond inuentions which do staine
 Their name, and cause them better works refuse:
 Which doth abuse the gifts Thou doest bestow,
 And oftentimes Thy high contempt do show. (2)

Like Southwell, and as Barnes and Breton after them, Lok asserted that another of his aims was to draw men to write on heavenly subjects.³

¹ Sundry Christian Passions, Pt.II, son.33; cf. also ibid., Pt.II, sons. 31, 32, 34, Poems, ed. Grosart, pp. 247-49.

² ibid., Pt.II, son. 76, Poems, op.cit., p. 279.

³ See ibid., pt. II, 7, 93, "Sundry Affectionate Sonnets of a feeling Conscience", 1, pp.230,292,299; cf. also B. Barnes, A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets, 42, 45, 52; N. Breton, The Soules Harmony, 1602, "Prayse in the highest of the height of prayse", "O that my heart could hit vpon a strayne", p.6, vol.1, Works, ed. Grosart, 1. (The works in this volume are all paginated separately.)

To do so, the poet, who was neither unaware of nor inattentive to the trends of his age, as his adoption of Petrarchan attitudes in his dedicatory quatorzains was to illustrate,¹ was as prepared as Southwell to profit from the achievements of secular poetry, and this can be seen in the sonnet quoted above on page 237.² If Lok chose not to emphasize this aspect of his approach to the sonnet in his preface, it was because he wished to direct his readers' attention away from the mechanics and outer form of his poetry to the good motions of the spirit which it described.

In 1595, Lok's pedestrian collection was followed by one more poetic in character by Barnabe Barnes, author of Parthenophil and Parthenophe. This sequence also bore a strong resemblance to amatory ones, and had the significant title of A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets. By exhorting his fellow poets to turn their art to its true end, Barnes showed he belonged to the party of Lok and Southwell; he several times referred to his own earlier reprehensible verse,³ and made a disavowal of love poetry. In the traditional manner of recantations, he was aware that he was choosing the better part:

No more lewde laies of Lighter loues I sing,
 Nor teach my lustfull Muse abus'de to flie,
 With Sparrowes plumes and for compassion crie,
 To mortall beauties which no succour bring.
 But my Muse fethered with an Angels wing
 Diuinely mounts aloft unto the skie.
 Where her loues subiects with my hopes doe lie:

¹See below, p. 317f.

²See further below, pp. 346, 348f, 352, 354.

³Sons. 1, 38, 50, 56.

For Cupids darts prefigure hell's sting.
 His quenchlesse Torch foreshowes hell's quenchles fire,
 Kindling mens wits with lustfull laies of sinne:
 Thy wounds my Cure, deare Sauour I desire
 To pearce my thoughts thy fierie Cherubinne,
 (By kindling my desires) true zeale t' infuse,
 Thy Loue my theame and holy Ghost my muse! (1)

The devotional attitudes of the secular sonnet facilitated its adoption as a sacred form.² At its highest and most neo-Platonic, Petrarchan love exhibited religious devotion; it portrayed, in the words of a later neo-Platonist, "The devotion the heart lifts above, / And the heavens reject not". Although when ill applied this could be the chief ground for the charge of blasphemy, it could also form the basis of the poets' review of contemporary literature, when he bade himself and others undertake a new approach to love poetry. It is not without significance that when, in the early seventeenth century, the young George Herbert questioned the pre-eminence of secular verse, he did so in sonnet form, addressing himself to God:

Doth Poetry
 Wear Venus Livery? only serve her turn?
 Why are not Sonnets made of thee? and layes
 Upon thine Alter burnt? Cannot thy love
 Heighten a spirit to sound out thy praise
 As well as any she? (3)

Herbert was marking out the future direction of his own poetry; but at the same time he was re-affirming the principle of Southwell, and the practice of those Elizabethan sonneteers who had written religious quatorzains, and who shared his awareness that it was a Christian's duty and privilege to praise God.

¹ Divine Centurie, 1, The Poems of Barnabe Barnes, ed. A.B. Grosart, Occasional Issues of Unique or Very Rare Books, Manchester, 1875, I.

² See further below, p. 344

³ Poems from Walton's Lives, "My God, where is that ancient heat towards thee", (written 1609/1610) ll. 3-8, The Works of George Herbert, ed. F.E. Hutchinson, Oxford, 1953, p. 206.

Furthermore, as the quotation from Herbert suggests, the carrying out of this duty was made easier by the language common to religion and Petrarchanism.¹ The new web could be woven in the old loom both because the vocabulary was taken from religion in the first place, and because the Renaissance mind readily accepted the interchange of terms between divine and profane matters, of which the acceptance of the interpretation of the erotic Song of Solomon as an account of the relationship between Christ and His Church is an obvious example. Divine and profane could be weighed against one another precisely because the same terms might be used for both, although they only attained full validity when the underlying value of the spiritual was asserted against the secular:

The Tyrant loue, that martyrs stil the Mind,
 We make a God, to which our Pens & Tongues
 Do sacrifice their Labours, il assign'd;
 And so ore-right the Author of our Wrongs:
 Then, this Affections floud we ought to turne
 Into the Channel of Celestial Loue;
 Sith Angels swim stil in that blessed Boorn
 (Leander-like) to Grace by whom they moue!
 Where Light of truth (the Land-mark) nere goes out,
 And still the Current runs as calm, as cleare:
 Where no misfortunes Flawes, Feare needs to doubt:
 Sith holy Loues smooth Flood, excludeth Feare:
 This Loue alone, (did our Muse rightly sing)
 Should be the Plaine-song of his descanting. (2)

The quatorzain, therefore, was well equipped to make the transition from the celebration of profane to secular love, as we shall see later in the chapter upon the sonnet's functions as a reflective poem.

¹ See further below, p.345 ff.

² J.Davies, Wittes Pilgrimage, Pt.I, Son.99, Complete Works, ed.Grosart, II. cf. also ibid., Pt.II, "Other Sonnets vpon other Subiects", Sons.1 and 44; B.Barnes, A Divine Centurie, Son.23 (cf. G.Herbert, Poems from Walton's Lives, "Sure, Lord, there is enough in thee to dry / Oceans of Ink", WORKS, ed. Hutchinson, p.206).

There was not a direct influence of religious attitudes upon the sonnet until the movement towards devotional verse began in the mid fifteen nineties. Until then, criticism of Petrarchan idolatry on religious grounds remained an undercurrent, rising to the surface now and then; there was more emphasis laid on the adverse effect of Petrarchanism on the accepted ethical code.¹ This was perhaps the correct emphasis, for the devotional expressions and themes were taken over by the poets as part of the Petrarchan tradition, and frequently used with a blandness which suggests that some of the sonneteers had little notion of the full import of the language they use. Others attempted to come to terms with this situation, but their success was generally limited.

The height of the vogue of the Petrarchan sonnet coincided with the full bloom of Elizabethan Petrarchan poetry. Literary movements cannot stand still, their momentum must carry them on either into decline or in a new direction. Elizabethan poets reacted against amatory verse, and turned instead to that of devotion, converting the sonnet to this end along with other poetic forms. That this particular change should ^{have} come about, however, must have been the result of more than the development of a poetic trend, and must have been related to a change in temper of the time.

The explanation for this would seem to lie in the assumption that the Elizabethans no longer found Petrarchanism a satisfactory

¹See above, p. 155ff.

philosophy, or pseudo-philosophy, of life.¹ Highly polished, sophisticated, and artificial, it accorded well with the mannered formality and glittering quality of Elizabethan court life. But this was not to last. The shadow of the approaching end of a long reign lengthened; the age of gold was playing itself out to make way for the age of iron, and a consequent coarsening of courtly life. There was a certain restlessness and world-weariness, which found part of its literary expression in the satire of the same years which saw the new bias towards religious poetry; a realization that the old values were fading, and that there was a need to find better, more permanent ones which could withstand the uncertainty of the times. The Elizabethans occupy a Janus-like position, looking back to the Middle Ages on the one hand, and towards the modern age on the other. The time had come for the latter, which they had done so much to form, to assert itself; and it had no place for those decorative facets of the earlier age, for the elaborate tourneys and chivalric code, and consequently less for the code of Petrarchan love, that later development of amour courtois, in which the Elizabethans delighted. In view of this, it is not surprising that the Christian poets should have turned to seek deeper and unchanging truths, and to do so should have used the forms already at their disposal, ~~and~~ which had been tried in a devotion of similar intensity, but of a different intent. The fruit was to be gathered in the

¹See also above, p. 138ff

verse of the metaphysicals of the next century, but the seeds were set and watered in Elizabethan poetry, including the newly reclaimed Petrarchan sonnet.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Sonnet as a Poem of Love

"Sonets", wrote George Gascoigne, "serue aswell in matters of loue as of discourse",¹ and it is as a love poem that the Elizabethan sonnet is most familiar to us. The literary tradition for this was clear and well-marked, stretching back through the French and Italian poets to Petrarch himself; from the vast storehouses of their predecessors the Elizabethans were able to draw on every emotion and its expression that the Petrarchan lover required or could desire. In considering the Petrarchan sonnet, two questions inevitably arise: given the importance of the kind of emotion it described to Elizabethan society,² what part did the quatorzain itself play in this society? Was its composition in actual fact one of the lover's graceful accomplishments in the wooing of his lady?

It is difficult to come to any definite decision on these points after an interval of almost three centuries; most of the evidence is to be found in the literature of the period and whilst this would seem to indicate that the sonnet was written for and used in courtship, reservations have to be made about accepting literary conventions as those of society. Poetic talent is never

¹Certayne Notes of Instruction, 1575, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, I, 57.

²See Chapter Five.

a common gift in any age, and there is no reason to believe that ability to write quatorzains was one generally widespread amongst the Elizabethan gentry. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the poem was used to present courtly compliment¹; and ^{its} having been employed in this one instance suggests that it could have been in others as well, particularly since its vocabulary and the sentiment it expressed accorded with one of the emotional needs of the society of the day. If the courtly lover could not write his own verse, then as we have seen² there were various means of obtaining it, ranging from plagiarism to commissioning a professional poet, the latter being a time-honoured custom going back to the medieval period.³ In a situation in which the courtiers were surrounded by the social expression of Petrarchan conventions, and when the literature they read portrayed court life in these idealistic terms, it is not unlikely that some of them attempted to introduce the poet-lover pose of Petrarchanism into their modus vivendi. The exact proportion of those who were so inclined cannot be determined; it would depend upon temperament as well as upon circumstances; but if we accept the contemporary picture of the lover pouring out his passion in a torrent of moving sonnets as an ideal, we may at least allow the courtier some attempt to emulate this model.

¹See below, chapter Eight.

²see above, p.144.

³See J.Stevens, Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court, 1961, p.206.

He clearly had much literary encouragement to do so. Poetry was regarded as an inevitable outcome of being in love: "Sitting alone, Love bids me goe and write",¹ and the lover had no choice but to obey: "My verie inke turnes straight to Stella's name."² According to Burton, poetic aspiration was one of the distinguishing marks of the lover:

But above all the other Symptoms of Lovers, this is not lightly to be overpassed, that likely of what condition soever, if once they be in love, they turn to their ability, Rhymers, Ballad-makers, and Poets. (3)

Elizabethan fiction and drama bears out this statement with a pageant of lovers, aristocratic shepherd swains, nobles and gentlemen of all kinds, pretentious gallants and fools, amongst whom sonneteers appear as heroes or as figures of fun, according to the author's purpose at that moment.⁴ Poetry was ideally part of the lover's equipment, and time and care had to be taken to cultivate it. "The day in poems often did I passe",⁵ lamented the country swain in Greenes Mourning Garment,⁵ but others, including some sonneteers, saw this as an occasion for self-congratulation:

My days be spent in penning thy sweet praises!
In pleading to thy beauty, never matched! (6)

¹M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 38, [l. 1], Works, ed. J.W.Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, II.

²P.Sidney, Astrophil and Stella, 19, l.6, Poems, ed. W.A.Ringler, Jr., Oxford, 1962; cf. also B.Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 1593, sons. 12, 30.

³The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. A.R. Shilleto, 1896, III, 206.

⁴cf. Dorus in Sidney's Arcadia, the swains of Greene's Menaphon; Navarre and his friends in Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost, the sultan in Lodge's Robert Duke of Normandy, and the young men of Lyly's Euphues, reprehended for wasting their time in writing sonnets; Roberto in Greenes Farewell to Folly and Longbeard in the romance of that name by Lodge; the gulls of the satirists in drama, verse and prose; Shakespeare's Don Armado, and Jonson's Matheo.

[Notes 5 and 6 on next page]

How many golden days! have I set free
 From tedious travail in a sadder Muse,
 While I, of amours have conferred with thee! (1)

The tradition linking poetry and love was so strong that the lover felt bound to conform to it, even if, like Shakespeare's Biron, he was fully aware of the absurdity of the Petrarchan convention:

By heaven, I do love: and it hath taught me to
 rhyme and to be melancholy; and here is part of my
 rhyme, and here my melancholy. Well, she hath one o'
 my sonnets already: the clown bore it, the fool
 sent it, and the lady hath it: sweet clown, sweeter
 fool, sweetest lady! (2)

Benedick was another unwilling convert, manfully wrestling with the demands of convention:

Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme; I have tried; I can
 find out no rhyme to "lady" but "baby", an innocent
 rhyme; for "scorn", "horn", a hard rhyme; for "school",
 "fool", a babbling rhyme; very ominous endings; no,
 I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo
 in festival terms. (3)

However, before the end of the play he overcame his disinclination, for Claudio produced

... a paper written in his hand,
 A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
 Fashion'd to Beatrice. (4)

[From previous page]

⁵The Life and Complete Works of Robert Greene, ed. A.B. Grosart, Huth Library, 1881-1886, IX, 217.

⁶B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenopne, son. 83 [ll. 5-6], Elizabethan Sonnets, ed. S. Lee, 1904, I.

¹Zepheria, 1595, 29, [ll. 1-3], Eliz. Sonnets, II; cf. also ibid., 30; and T. Lodge, Euphues his Shadow, 1592, p.20, ed. Hunterian Club. Glasgow, 1883, III. (The works in the four volumes of this edition are all paginated separately.)

²Love's Labours Lost, IV, iii, 13-19, Works, ed. W.G. Clark and W.A. Wright, Globe ed., second ed., repr. 1923.

³Much Ado About Nothing, V, iii, 36-41, Works, op.cit.

⁴ibid., V, iii, 86-88.

In literature at least the tradition was alive; actual proof of the role of the quatorzain in courtship is unhappily sadly lacking. Most of the sonnets we still have are those of the published sequences, and leaving aside Shakespeare's collection which is so personal in tone as to strongly suggest that there was no immediate intention to publish by the author,¹ and Astrophil and Stella, printed surreptitiously five years after Sidney's death, and perhaps also the early sonnets of Daniel's Delia,² publication appears to have been at least one of the ends in view.³ Other quatorzains are to be found in anthologies, generally unsigned, and lacking their contexts; they are as tantalizing as the unidentified miniatures of the period. Indeed, the latter have been likened to these poems by at least one critic:

They are comparable to the sonnets, and are as highly wrought, as allusive, and as private. They were not meant, originally, for public exhibition, any more than the sonnet was intended for publication. We must think of them being looked at by candlelight in a curtained bed, or held in the hand in the window of a room, where they could quickly be hidden again in a boddice or doublet. ... The jewelled case, like the conceits in the phrasing of a sonnet, was intended to conceal from public gaze a private message between two lovers. (4)

It is hardly surprising that these remaining sonnets keep their

¹See Verity's comment on son. 32, l.3, The Sonnets, ed. H.E.Rollins, New Variorum ed., Philadelphia and London, 1944, I, 93; and J. Dover Wilson, Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Introduction for Historians and Others, Cambridge, 1963, p. 19 ff.

²See Delia, 1592, Dedication to Countess of Pembroke, Poems and A Defence of Ryme, ed. A.C. Sprague, 1950, p. 9.

³See J. Hall, Virgidemiarum, 1598, I, vii, 7-14, Collected Poems, ed. ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ A. Davenport, Liverpool, 1949, quoted below, p.267.

⁴J. Buxton, Elizabethan Taste, 1963, p. 121.

secrets so well, or that so few have survived: the sheets of paper on which they were written, folded and thrust into the bosom,¹ or slipped into a packet or book like a letter,² or left lying in an obvious place,³ to be pondered and poured over by the recipient, were fragile things unlikely to survive to be handed down to posterity. Some quatrains may even have ended as bottoms for sewing silk.⁴ Manuscripts and common-place books were also vulnerable, likely to be lost or destroyed unawares, even if the lover were so careful as to record his passions, as Greville and, it seems, Constable,⁵ were. However, one book has survived which apparently contains evidence that sonnets were written in the course of courtship; it is the commonplace book of Sir Arthur Gorges, which his editor, Professor Helen Sandison, has accepted as comprising his own poetry.⁶ Several of the Vannetyes and Toyes are easily identified with Gorges's first wife, Douglas Howard, addressed as "Daphne"⁷; and amongst

¹ See T. Lodge, A Margarite of America, 1596, p. 65, Complete Works, ed. Hunterian Club, III.

² cf. R. Greene, Morando, Pt. II, 1587, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, III, 143; J. Lyly, Euphues and his England, 1580, Works, ed. R.W. Bond, Oxford, 1902, II, 133.

³ W. Shakespeare, LLL, IV, iii, 42-43, Works, Globe ed.; The Gascoigne, The Posies, ed. J.W. Cunliffe, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge, 1907, p. 390; The Adventures of Master F.J.

⁴ The Adventures of Master F.J., op.cit., p. 388.

⁵ See The Poems of Henry Constable, ed. J. Grundy, Liverpool, 1960, "Introduction", p. 84 f.

⁶ See The Poems of Sir Arthur Gorges, ed. H.E. Sandison, Oxford, 1953, "Introduction", p. xxxiv ff.

⁷ ibid., p. xxviii f.

others, Professor Sandison has picked out a group of nine poems, which include seven sonnets, each marked in Gorges's autograph with a capital "D", which she believes to belong to the years close to the couple's marriage.¹ These quatorzains, with the exception of 48, embody themes common to many sonneteers, and several of them are translations of or borrowed from the French; 52 and 69 are declarations of the lover's constancy; 53 tells of the miseries of the lover, 57 balances suffering against the virtues of the lady, and 29 is a poem in praise of the lover's mistress, whilst sonnet 63 voices the poet's nightly desire. Many such ideas can be found amongst other quatorzains which lack a proven autobiographical application. The generalized situations of Petrarchan love poetry were therefore applicable to life from literature, and because their expression remained necessarily literary, this does not mean that the love sonnet could not fulfil a personal need, nor that it was never used for this end.

The Petrarchan tradition encouraged this ambiguity; indeed, it was a necessary part of that tradition. In a society in which passion was allowed no overt part, both the lover and his lady had to be protected by the conventions which let them indulge in emotion. Petrarchan service could on the one hand be no more than gallant compliment, which was ^{the} courteous interpretation of it, but at the same time it could be the outer prappings of a love physical as well as

¹ ibid., p. xxix.

spiritual.¹ The important point, as far as the world was concerned, was that the mask of courtesy had to be upheld at all times. (Thus it was that Penelope Rich's adultery with Lord Mountjoy could be tolerated, whilst her marriage to him resulted in banishment from the court for the couple. Such a blatant avowal of passion could not be sanctioned by authority.) When we read a sequence, therefore, in which the poet's main purpose appears to have been to present a courtly compliment, as in W.C.'s stanzas to Emaricdulfe (or Marie Cufeld or Cufand),² Barnes's amorous collection for a lady of the Percy family ("pierce-eye piercing eye"³), or Bartholomew Griffin's Fidessa, presumably addressed to a kinswoman of more elevated rank than the poet,⁴ we cannot dismiss the possibility that true emotion was present also. Even amongst the sonnets of Henry Constable, the most assiduous writer of complimentary quatorzains,⁵

there are...a few which have a more familiar tone than have those addressed to Lady Rich, and suggest a more intimate relationship. The lady addressed is called Grace, and probably had a real existence, although there is no means of assessing the reality of Constable's regard for her. (6)

Whilst Lodge and Fletcher seem to have written sonnets motivated

¹ cf. the situation of Ferdinando and the Lady Elinor, in The Adventures of Master F.J.

² See S. Lee, Eliz.Sonnets, "Introduction", p. cv, note 1.

³ The Poems of Barnabe Barnes, ed. A.B. Grosart, "Introduction", p. x f., Occasional Issues of Unique or Very Rare Books, Manchester, 1875, I.

⁴ See Fidessa, 1596, 1, 10, 39.

⁵ See below, p.307f.

⁶ Poems of Henry Constable, ed. Grundy, "Introduction", p. 76 f.

almost entirely by the desire for fame,¹ other sonneteers are known to have felt true emotion which they expressed in part in this form. In Ideas Mirrour, Michael Drayton celebrated a devotion to Ann Goodere, daughter of his first patron, which was to last his life long²; and only recently Mrs. Joan Rees has uncovered an autobiographical basis for the early sonnets of Delia, which is particularly interesting, as Daniel's dependence on foreign sources has made critics consider him one of the purely literary sonneteer-lovers.³ We cannot expect to find autobiography alone in the sonnet sequences, however, for that would make them merely documentary; it would, moreover, fly in the face of the social conventions of the age, and those of literature too; for in all things, the Elizabethans considered the artificial (in the good sense of the word) to be superior to the natural.⁴ Life had to be transformed by art, as indeed it must always be, to become literature.

This can best be illustrated, and a fruitful manner of approach to the personal sonnet worked out, along the lines by which Professor Ringler has linked these two facets of the Petrarchan sonnet in Sidney's sequence. This collection is the one with the most immediately convincing autobiographical basis; references to Sir Henry Sidney's governorship of Ireland (sonnet 30) and the puns on "Rich", Penelope

¹See below, p.268.

²B. Newdigate, Michael Drayton and his Circle, Oxford, 1941, pp.46 [223].

³Samuel Daniel: A critical and Biographical study, 1964, p. 13 ff.

⁴See G. Tillotson, Essays in Criticism and Research, Cambridge, 1942, "Elizabethan Decoration", p.5ff.

Devereux's married name (sonnets 24, 35 and 37), give grounds for identifying the lover-poet and his mistress. After examining the known historical evidence about the relations between the two families, Professor Ringler assigns a period of roughly four and a half months between the date of Penelope's marriage and the summer of 1582,¹ in which Sidney could have seen her, and the events of the sonnets could have taken place.² The editor also gives an account of Sidney's activities at this time, during which he was active in politics and in the affairs of friends and protégés, as well as having a range of interests, scholarly, scientific, and military. He was, moreover, concerned in negotiations regarding matrimony with Dorothy Devereux, Penelope's sister, and with Frances Walsingham, whom he subsequently married in 1583.³ Therefore, as Professor Ringler has written,

Astrophil and Stella is in no sense a diary, for in it Sidney did not write about the full range of his interests and activities, but only about those directly concerned with his love for Stella. ... Everything in his poem is focussed on his relations with Stella; everything in his experience during those months which did not directly relate to his central theme he ruthlessly excluded. Therefore, though the substance of his poem was autobiographical, mere fact was made subservient to the requirements of art. (4)

¹To which period Professor Ringler assigns the composition of Astrophil and Stella, Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, Commentary", p. 439 f.

²idem.

³ibid., p. 440 ff. Perhaps the wedding negotiations occasioned Astrophil's attempt to pacify Stella's jealousy in A & S, 91.

⁴ibid., p. 447.

The importance of recognizing this Elizabethan criterion of composition must not be underrated, particularly when considering Shakespeare's sonnets as fact and art.

The latter have been the centre of such controversy, and have occasioned speculation about a long procession of Fair Boys (the latest contender for the title being Dr. Hotson's William Hatliffe¹), Dark Ladies, and Rival Poets, that the pursuit of autobiography in Shakespeare's sonnets has long been recognized as a dangerous, and unrewarding, undertaking. There is, however, just sufficient hint of autobiographical detail to account for the great interest these poems have aroused,² combined with a tantalizing imprecision which suggests that the recipients knew the circumstances of these stanzas perfectly well and did not need to have them filled in. Moreover, as in Sidney's sequence, only those aspects of the poet's life which have a direct bearing upon his love are mentioned; his poetry is spoken of, but merely because it has the power to please the Friend,³ or to immortalize him,⁴ or because Shakespeare's own dissatisfaction with it fades into insignificance beside the quality of the Fair Boy's love.⁵ There are references to the cruelty of Fortune and the unhappiness of his lot, but only because the Friend can blot out their impression.⁶ Some kind of public disgrace is mentioned,

¹Mr. W.H., 1964.

²Speculation over the identity of the Petrarchan beloved in sonnet sequences has not been confined to the post-Elizabethan period; cf. Giles Fletcher's teasing remarks to his readers in the prefatory epistle to Licia, 1593, Eliz.Sonnets, II, 32.

³son. 38.

⁴sons. 19, 54, 55, 63, 65, 81, etc.

⁵son. 29.

⁶sons. 29, 30; 110-112.

since its possible effect is a parting for ever from the Friend.¹ We are not told if this disgrace is the stigma of the play-house, or if his plays are the means by which Shakespeare gored his own thoughts,² or if the journey (or journeys) were travels with the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and the fatiguing tasks of writing and acting the toil which wearies the poet, when his needed rest is disturbed by visions of his young Friend.³ The Rival Poet and Shakespeare's mistress enter that part of the sequence assumed to be about and addressed to ~~the~~ The Fair Boy, because they interfere with the mutual affection of the poet and the Friend. Similarly, the "man right fair" is mentioned in connection with the Dark Lady sonnets for the way in which she uses him, amongst others, to grieve Shakespeare, both by hurting the poet's sexual pride, and by attempting to foul the pure love between the two men.⁴

Moreover, when considering the nature of the relationships underlying the sonnets, it is important to remember that whatever their factual basis may have been, we see them in a literary context. Shakespeare's sequence reflects the two extremes of the Petrarchan tradition, the pure, higher love of virtue and spirit, and the abasing, lower desire of the flesh. In keeping with the concepts of Platonic philosophy, the first is possible through love of a man,

¹ sons. 29, 36.

² son. 110.

³ sons. 27, 28, 44, 45, 48, 50, 51, 61.

⁴ sons. 133, 134, 144.

whilst the second is brought about through love of a woman; in this respect Shakespeare is the most truly Platonic of the Elizabethan sonneteers.¹ The quality of the noble love is sorely tried, by separation, by disgrace, by rival bids for the Friend's interest and affection by another poet and by Shakespeare's mistress, all of which situations are germane in some form to the Petrarchan tradition. Even the poet's withdrawal from his Friend, and his eventual return, takes its seed from the lover's fruitless attempt to free himself from the bonds of love. Shakespeare could find everything he wished to express within the conventions and philosophy of Petrarchan love, even to the terms which set forth the nature of affection:

A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted
 Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;
 A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
 With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;
 An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
 Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
 A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
 Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.
 And for a woman wert thou first created;
 Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
 And by addition me of thee defeated,
 By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
 But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,
 Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure. (2)

This poem provides no proof of a homosexual relationship, as it has sometimes been claimed to do³ (lines 10-14 strongly deny this in fact); the Fair Boy's beauty is described in feminine terms partly because

¹See above, p.222.

²The Sonnets of Shakespeare, ed. H.C. Beeching, Boston and London, 1904, son. 20.

³See W. Shakespeare, The Sonnets, ed. Rollin§, New Variorum ed., I, 54 ff., II, 232 ff.

these were the ones used in the Petrarchan sonnet, and were the accepted ways of compliment within the tradition.¹ There is no sensuality in the quatorzains to the Friend, which contrast strongly in this respect with those of Richard Barnfield's Cynthia. It is the spiritual nature of the affection between the two men which causes Shakespeare's love to be able to withstand and overcome all assaults of time, fortune, and social difference.² It even overcomes the Petrarchan situation itself, by the involvement of both the Platonic lover and beloved in mutual suffering and mutual forgiveness.³ Set beside this pure and ennobling emotion, in its literary content the relationship with the Dark Lady, based on the destructive passion she deliberately arouses to the exclusion of all higher feelings which the poet could bring to his devotion,⁴ cannot but form a strongly anti-Petrarchan appendix to the sonnets celebrating the noble love which survives the vicissitudes of human weakness and of fortune.

The Petrarchan sonnet, as we have so far examined it, has emerged primarily as a poem written by the man, the courtly lover, or at any ^{by} rate [^] those who assumed this attitude; it has not appeared as a stanza composed by women. There are no surviving Elizabethan sonnets which were obviously written by ladies, and England does not have a poetess in this field to set beside Italy's Vittoria Colonna

¹See below, p. 279. 319f

²sons. 123-125. cf. also below, p. 279.

³sons. 119, 120.

⁴See above, p. 200ff.

or France's Louise Labé. The difficulty of the form may have deterred the dilettante, but Mary Sidney certainly had the technical skill to have attempted the poem; there is no evidence, however, that she ever did so. A better reason for ladies not composing quatorzains lay in the position that they occupied in the Petrarchan tradition. The poem was primarily one of humble approach by a petitioner to an exalted being, and in the social code of love, this role was taken by the lady¹; she it was who was sought after, she did not seek affection herself. In their sonnets, Vittoria Colonna and Louise Labé in effect assumed the role of petitioner generally taken by the courtly lover; the former lady writing most of her verses after the death of her husband, and in them looking forward to a reunion with him in the next world; the latter, writing to win the love of a fellow-poet; each accepted the Petrarchan situation of the lover yearning for a distant or remote fulfilment of love. Furthermore, to assume the lover's role the lady had to have something of the independence which generally in Renaissance times was allowed only to the male sex; the elevated position of the Marchesa of Pescara and the staunch unconventionality of Mademoiselle Labé won them freedom which no woman in England, except the Queen herself, was able to have. Elizabeth does not appear to have composed sonnets herself²; if she had done, they

¹See above, p. 138f

²The one sonnet doubtfully ascribed to Elizabeth is an elegy upon the Princess of Espinoye, The Poems of Queen Elizabeth I, ed. L. Bradner, Rhode Island, 1964, p. 8.

would have been closely guarded and as private as were some of the verses of courtly compliment written to her, such as Raleigh's poems; they would not have been for general view. Indeed, it seems doubtful to me whether the Queen would have used the highly personal sonnet form later than her rather dangerous association with Robert Dudley. For political reasons she had to remain always sought after and always unobtainable; to have written such sonnets would have been to have compromised her authority, as marriage itself would have done. She had to be the outstanding and perfect personification of idealized chastity,¹ and the ladies of her court emulated her in their respective estates, either single or married, as the stars emulate the brightness of the sun; to have sighed out love passions would have been to diminish the glory of their positions.

Women as well as men, however, must have found themselves longing for the unobtainable in that age of (sometimes crudely) arranged marriages; and if, as far as we know, they did not write sonnets in actual fact, their sisters in literature were not infrequently allowed the indulgence of a quatorzain.

In these instances, the lady was in a position comparable to that of the courtly lover. Once she too was afflicted with passion, her state was indistinguishable from his:

His hart has wound receaved from my sight:
My hart was wounded, with his wounded hart,

¹See further below, p.332f.

For as from me, on him his hurt did light,
 So still me thought in me his hurt did smart:
 Both equall hurt, in this change sought our blisse:
 My true love hath my hart and I have his. (1)

Such happy accord was as rare for the female lover as it was for the male, and more often the lady sonneteer, like her masculine counterpart, found herself playing the role of the lover scorned, or fearing that she would be despised. Beatrice in Shakespeare's Much Ado, as much afraid of Benedick's ridicule as he was of her scorn, wrote a "sonnet" of her affection for him, which was produced by Hero after Claudio had revealed Benedick's poetic labours.² Another Shakespearean heroine, Helena in All's Well, sent Bertram's mother a letter in sonnet form when, spurned and deserted by the Count, she decided to leave his home.³ Sidney's Arcadia affords other examples in the quatorzains of Zelmane, Philoclea, and Gynecia, all of whom feared to tell their love, or were afraid of being rejected.

Some sonnets were also written for the lady in her traditional part of the implacable Petrarchan mistress. These poems had a different character, and were generally presented as refuting sonnets, composed in reply to a preceding quatorzain by the lover, on the same lines as Raleigh's "If all the world and loue were young", his

¹P. Sidney, Arcadia, 1593, Prose Works, ed. A. Feuillerat, Cambridge, 1962, II, 17. In italics throughout.

²V, iii, 88-90, Works, Globe ed.

³III, iv, 4-17, Works, op.cit.

answer to Marlowe's "Come liue with mee, and b^ey my loue". Myra's reply to her lover's questions about her change of heart in Greville's Caelica is an example of this kind of refuting poem well integrated with its context,¹ but often these quatorzains were indulged in as rhetorical exercises, and must be regarded as effusions of wit, as Greene admitted when he referred to Philomela's reply to Lutesio's stanza:

she resolved to answere his sonnet as well to shew
her wit, as to choake his wantonnesse, and therefore
she writ this poeme. (2)

The desire attributed to the Petrarchan mistress to demonstrate her poetic ability again drew her position close to that of her lover, for he too wrote partly to show his wit, but with other ends in view than those of his lady.

The sonnet as a poem of love shared the ambiguities and paradoxes of the Petrarchan tradition. It was both a private and a public poem, as Professor Hallett Smith has pointed out³; intended in the first place for the beloved's eyes alone, the stanza aroused an interest which spread to wider circles, as a pebble dropped in

¹See above, p. 197.

²Philomela, 1592, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, XI, 149. For other refuting sonnets, see Rosalynde, 1590, p. 78, Complete Works, ed. Hunterian Club, I; F. Davison, A Poetical Rhapsody, 1602-1621, ed. H.E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, I, nos. 28, 29.

³Elizabethan Poetry, Cambridge, Mass., 1952, p. 139.

a stream sends its ripples ever outwards towards the bank. This outcome of writing poetry was expected by the lover, and in keeping with his role, for although he had to dissemble his passion from the world, at the same time he had to be immediately recognizable as a lover by certain uniform signs of appearance and behaviour,¹ amongst which, as we have seen,² was the writing of verse. One of his functions was to assume the part of courtly entertainer:

Let him much exercise hym selfe in poets,...and also in writinge bothe rime and prose, and especiallye in this our vulgar tunge. For beside the contentation that he shall receive thereby himselfe, he shall by this meanes never want pleasaunt interteinments with women which ordinarylye love such matters. (3)

The courtier-poet was therefore composing for at least two audiences; for his lady, and for their circle of friends and acquaintances; and with the vogue of the published sonnet, wittingly or otherwise, he wrote for the larger, impersonal audience of general readers as well, even perhaps for posterity.

Nonetheless, as a lover, the sonneteer wrote to give pleasure to his lady, bending all his endeavours and ability to that end:

¹See The Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, i, 16 ff.; As You Like It, III, ii, 392 ff., The Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed.

²See above, p. 246.

³B. Castiglione, The Courtyer, trans. T. Hoby, 1561, Tudor Translations, XXIII, 1900, p. 85. cf. the similar attitudes of the authors of Euphues, Euphues and his England, The Countess of Pembrokes Arcadia, and A Margarite of America, all written, in Lodge's words, for "Ladies Delight and Ladies Honour" (Margarite, p. 5, ed. Hungarian Club, III).

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fixe, her wits to entertaine. (1)

To thee, my thoughts are consecrate, dear Love!
my words and phrases bound to please thine ears! (2)

It was highly proper that this should have been the priority, for the lover's end was to persuade his lady of the strength of his affection and its truth.³ At the same time, whilst the lady as the chief person concerned alone could be expected to appreciate this element, the artistry employed to that end could be enjoyed by others without infringing ~~on~~ the privacy of the lovers. This can be seen in Gascoigne's The Adventures of Master F.J. At one of the "court of love" entertainments, the hero produced a sonnet in answer to a question asked him by his mistress, which he modestly excused as:

a peece of Cocklorels musicke, and suche as I might
be ashamed to publish in this company, yet bicause
my truth in this answeare may the better appeare unto
you, I pray you vouchsafe to receive the same in writing:
and drawing a paper out of his pocket, presented it to
hir... This sonet was highly commended... His dutie thus
perfourmed, their pastimes ended. (4)

The general language of Petrarchanism offered such a safeguard to lovers, that their secrets could be easily kept. After proof of Mistress Elinor's inconstancy, Ferdinando wrote an anti-feminist sonnet which, although she could not have failed to gather its rebuke to herself, Elinor was content to pass on to her company:

¹P. Sidney, A & S, 1, ll. 5-6, Poems, ed. Ringler.

²R.L., Diella, 1596, 27, [ll. 9-10], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

³See below, p.277f.

⁴Posies, ed. Cunliffe, pp. 394, 395.

he lost it, where his Mistresse found it, and she immediatly imparted the same unto Dame Pergo, and Dame Pergo unto others: so that it quickly became common in the house. (1)

In more honourable courtships, close friends of the lovers were sometimes permitted to enter the secret, and, like Lodge's Margarite, confidante of Minecius and Philenia, must have received additional pleasure from the poems by helping to bring the young man and woman together:

if at any time Minecius wrote an amorous sonnet, Margarita should see it: and if at any time Margarita read a sonet she would commend it to satisfie Philenia. (2)

The emphasis placed on the artistic attribute of the lover's persona left him at the mercy of certain dangers, the chief of which was that the poet might forget that his ostensible purpose in writing was to convince and please the beloved, and cause him to concentrate on wit and artistry for their own sakes; as Sidney pointed out in An Apologie for Poetrie:

But truely many of such writings as come vnder the banner of vnresistable loue, if I were a Mistres, would neuer perswade mee they were in loue; so coldely they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather red Louers writings, and so caught vp certaine swelling phrases. (3)

Ideally, the quality of the lover's affection had to be made apparent by art for the benefit of the lady, and for that of other readers as

¹ ibid., p. 450.

² Margarite, p. 12, Complete Works, ed. Hunterian Club, III.

³ Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. Smith, I, 201.

well, for then the artistry would be subservient to the situation of Petrarchan love. Therefore, some sonneteers assured their ladies that their sole purpose in writing was to provide them with occasions for pleasure, and not to fulfil any poetic ambitions of their own:

Stella/ thinke not that I by versæ seeke fame,
 ... If thou praise not, all other praise is shame.
 Nor so ambitious am I, as to frame
 A nest for ^many yong praise in Lawrell tree:
 In truth I sweare, I wish not there should be
 Graved in mine Epitaph a Poet's name. (1)

Nonetheless, the lover was naturally aware of the second audience of critical readers who would examine his poetry for the devices and conceits it employed,² and he reacted to its presence in different ways. As Hallett Smith says,³ Sidney, following his own critical tenet of the Apologie, dissociated himself from this other group, concentrating all his attention on Stella:

How falles it then, that with so smooth an ease
 My thoughts I speake, and what I speake doth flow
 In verse, and that my verse best wits doth please?
 Guesse we the cause: "What, is it thus?" Fie no:
 "Or so?" Much lesse? "How then?" Sure thus it is:
 My lips are sweet, inspired with Stella's kiss. (4)

In this, he was followed by Drayton,⁵ and by Shakespeare:

If my slight muse do please these curious days,
 The pain be mine, but thine be all the praise. (6)

¹P. Sidney, A & S, 90, ll. 1, 4-8, Poems, ed. Ringler. cf. als H. Constable, Diana, III, iii, 6, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 177; S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 4; M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 1594, 28; E. Spenser, Amoretti, 1595, 1.

²See H. Smith, Elizabethan Poetry, p. 147.

³ibid., p. 146.

⁴A & S, 74, ll. 9-14, Poems, ed. Ringler.

⁵Ideas Mirrour, 28, Idea, 1619, 24, 31, 49.

⁶Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 38, ll. 13-14.

Others were more accommodating towards other readers. Acknowledgement of the second audience was a feature of Daniel's sonnets from the time of the first surreptitious publication of the twenty-seven quatorzains after Sidney's Astrophil and Stella; poems like "Looke in my griefes, and blame me not to morne", "Reade in my face, a volume of despayres", and "Way but the cause, and giue me leaue to plaine me",¹ presupposed a more sympathetic class of reader than the obdurate Petrarchan mistress, from whom the poet could at least expect justice. It was to them that he directed his verses to

Sigh out a story of her cruell deedes,
With interrupted accents of dispayre:
A Monument that whosoeuer reedes,
May iustly praise, and blame my loueles Faire. (2)

The fact that Daniel took the reader's sympathy for granted suggests that his sonnets were written in the first place for himself, the lady, and his friends, and not for publication. In view of Mrs. Rees's recent findings,³ it would be churlish to doubt the truth of Daniel's assertions, although we need not expect to find the same integrity in all the sonneteers.

With the spread of the sonnet vogue in the fifteen-nineties, resulting in the proliferation of published sequences, it is natural to expect in some poets lower standards both of artistry and of intent than those which Sidney and the major Elizabethan sonneteers upheld. In his satire on the Petrarchan poet in The Unfortunate

¹Poems, ed. Sprague, pp. 22, 30, 192-93.

²Delia, 1592, 12, [ll. 5-8], Poems, op.cit., p. 11.

³Samuel Daniel, p.13 ff., particularly p. 20 f.

Traveller, Nashe slyly pointed out that fashion in part created the type:

Passion vpon passion would throng one on anothers
 necke, he wold praise her beyond the moone and
 starres, and that so sweetly and revishlyngly as I
 perswade my self he was more in loue with his own
 curious forming fancie than her face; and truth it is,
 many become passionate louers onely to winne praise
 to theyr wits. (1)

Writing four years later after the middle of the decade had brought such a glut of sonnet sequences, Hall was less good-humoured in his ridicule:

The loue-sicke Poet, whose importune prayer
 Repulsed is with resolute dispayre,
 Hopeth to conquer his disdainfull dame,
 With publique plaints of his conceiued flame.
 Then poures he forth in patched Sonnettings
 His loue, his lust, and loathsome flatterings:
 As tho the staring world hanged on his sleeue,
 When once he smiles, to laugh: and when he sighs, to grieuue.(2)

Love, as the anonymous author of Zepheria had admitted, was only one of the reasons for which the sonneteer might write:

another fashions
 Love to his lines, and he on Fame doth venture!
 And some again, in mercenary writ,
 Belche forth Desire, making Reward their mistress!
 And though it chance some LAIS patron it,
 At least, they sell her praises to the press! (3)

He himself sought fame, or at least a place amongst the sons of the Muses,⁴ and the same appears to be true of other poets of slender

¹Works, ed. R.B. McKerrow, Oxford, 1958, II, 262.

²Virgidemiarum, 1598, I, vii, 7-14, Collected Poems, ed. Davenport.

³Canzon 1, [ll. 3-8], Eliz.Sonnets, II. cf. also G. Fletcher, Licia, "Epistle Dedicatory", ibid., II, 28; B. Griffin, Fidessa, 1596, i; F. Davison, Poetical Rhapsody, ed. Rollins, I, no. 70.

⁴"Alli veri figlioli delle Muse", [ll. 27-33], Eliz.Sonnets, II, 156.

talent, William Percy,¹ William Smith, and Bartholomew Griffin, none of whom appeared in print again. The attitude of the more professional poets, whether dependent on patronage or solely on their own skills for supplying the reading public with what interested them, differed again. Barnabe Barnes, on the one hand, hoped that his collection of love poems would win him a patron,² and dedicated the volume accordingly to several lords and ladies; on the other, Thomas Lodge, a thorough professional, addressed himself primarily to his readers, including the lady merely as a matter of form:

Oh thou that canst, and she that may do all things,
Support these languishing conceits that perish!
Look on their growth; perhaps these silly small things
May win this worthy palm, so you do cherish.
Homer hath vowed, and I with him do vow this,
He^{will} and shall revive, if you allow this. (3)

Giles Fletcher alone admitted that he wrote to try his skill: "For this kind of poetry wherein I wrote, I did it only to try my humour",⁴ and openly stated that his desire to be a poet preceded his desire to be a lover.⁵ After the transparent subterfuge indulged in by some of the other minor poets, his direct approach is refreshing.

If the sonneteer were truly gifted, he had no need to seek for fame; it would come to him unsolicited as a result of his noble

¹See Coelia, 1594, "To the Reader", Eliz.Sonnets, II, [139].

²Parthenophil and Parthenophe, "Go, bastard Orphan!", [ll. 17-22], Eliz.Sonnets, I, 168.

³Phyllis, 1593, 40, [ll. 9-14], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

⁴Licia, "To the Reader", Eliz.Sonnets, II, 30.

⁵ibid., son. 1.

passion:

"Art not asham'd to publish thy disease?"
Nay, that may breed my fame, it is so rare. (1)

In this respect as in all others, the lover's fate stood in the power of fortune and the lady's grace. The Elizabethan age did not encourage false modesty; to carry out those offices or ply those accomplishments which belonged to a man's particular estate in that stratified society was no more than his duty:

I scarce term him a Scholar that hath not all the
accompliments of a Gentleman; nor sufficiently wise
that will not take opportunity in some sort to shew it. (2)

The problem was not how to avoid fame as a poet, but how to effect complete detachment from being interested in it, and to do this, the poet had to have a strong belief in the quality of his love, irrespective of whether it was an actual or a literary passion. If this was achieved, then the lover's talent was not only occasioned by the beloved, but was also being used to serve him or her in the present and in the future; for his poetry, thus inspired, would endure. The treatment of this theme in private sonnets and a published sequence can be demonstrated from early and later quatorzains of Daniel's Delia. The immortality which the poet's verse conferred was mentioned only once in the sonnets printed by Newman, and then it had a strictly personal application, solely for the benefit of the lady when her beauty had faded:

¹P. Sidney, A & S, 34, ll. 5-6, Poems, ed. Ringler.

²G. Fletcher, Licia, "Epistle Dedicatory", Eliz.Sonnets, II, 27.

Goe you my verse, goe tell her what she was,
 For what she was she best may finde in you.
 Your firie heate lets not her glorie passe,
 But Phenix-like to make her liue anew. (1)

In the later revised and authorized editions, Daniel did not present his verse as merely capable of capturing the perfections of the lady at a later date for her own pleasure, but also as able to blaze her beauty and virtue to future generations:

Thou canst not dye whilst any zeale abounde
 In feeling harts, that can conceiue these lines. (2)

The poet's concept of the second audience had changed radically; there had grown up an awareness of "ages yet unborn" which would receive verses in praise of Delia. Nonetheless, he felt bound to apologize to the lady for making the relationship which existed between them so widely known:

O be not grieu'd that these my papers should,
 Bewray vnto the world howe faire thou art:
 Or that my wits haue shew'd the best they could,
 The chastest flame that euer warmed hart. (3)

In the eternizing conceit lay Daniel's defence against selfishly pursuing fame:

None other fame myne vnambitious Muse,
 Affected euer but t'eternize thee:
 All other honours doe my hopes refuse,
 Which meaner priz'd and momentarie bee. (4)

¹ Sonnets after Astrophel, 1591, 26, ll. 11-14; Delia, 1592, 30. From 1592 onwards "may" (l. 12) was replaced by "shall", and "to" (l. 14) by "shall"; Poems, ed. Sprague, pp. 25, 184.

² Delia, 1592, 35, [ll. 1-2], Poems, op.cit., p. 28.

³ ibid. 36 [ll. 1-4], p. 28; cf. also Diana (augmented), 1593, VI, 6, Poems of Henry Constable, ed. Grundy, p. 206.

⁴ ibid., 48, [ll. 1-4], p. 34. cf. also M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 47,

Inevitably, since the lover's fate was inextricable from the fortunes of the beloved, Delia's immortality would confer the same reward upon her poet:

Thou maist in after ages ^{be} ~~him~~ esteem'd,
 Vnburied in these lines reseru'd in purenes;
 These shall intombe those eyes, that haue redeem'd
 Mee from the vulgar, thee from all obscurenes. (1)

These themes are met again in Shakespeare's sequence, where the poet's verse both defies and conquers time and change for his Friend and himself:

And all in war with Time for love of you,
 As he takes from you, I engraft you new. (2)

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
 Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rime;
 ... You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes. (3)

Now with the drops of this most balmy time
 My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
 Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rime. (4)

In such expressions, the subdual of personal ambition was perfectly attained, and any right desire for fame delicately and inextricably woven into the fabric of Petrarchan devotion and made fully subservient, through art, to the Petrarchan situation.

¹ibid., 36, [ll. 9-12], p.28. cf. also Delia, 1594, 51, Poems, ed. Sprague, p. 188f.

²The Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 15, ll. 13-14.

³ibid., son. 55, ll. 1-2, 14. cf. also sons. 18, 19, 54, 60, 63, 65, 81, 100, 101, 104.

⁴ibid., son. 107, ll. 9-11. cf. also M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 44.

The Elizabethans expected truth in the presentation of the emotion of Petrarchan love; it gave the correct setting to the rich and elaborate conceits in which they so delighted, as the exquisite case of the miniature contained and set off the painting inside. Passion had to have its place in Petrarchan verse, though for the general reader it should not have been of prime concern. For him, it was to play a subordinate part, informing not controlling the artistry.

Into these Loves, who but for Passion lookes,
At this first sight, here let him lay them by,
And seeke else-where, in turning other Bookes,
Which better may his labour satisfie. (1)

The emotion had to be convincing, whatever form of expression it took:

Yee shallow Censures, sometime see yee not,
In greatest Perils some Men pleasant be,
Where Fame by Death is onely to be got,
They resolute? So stands the case with me;
Where other Men in depth of Passion crie,
I laugh at Fortune, as in jest to die. (2)

Nonetheless, if a man did not adopt the usual attitudes of the Petrarchan lover, he could be rightly suspect. The false Arsadachus, accused by Margarita of neglect, replied to her in an anti-Petrarchan sonnet depreciating the general behaviour of lovers:

Not loue in me, that neuer may suffice.
The heart that hath the rules of reason knowne,
But loue in me which no man can devise:
A loue of that I want, and is my owne.

¹M. Drayton, *Idea*, 1619, "To the Reader", [ll. 1-4], *Works*, ed. Hebel, II, ~~XXXXX~~ (In italics throughout) Sonnet first published 1599.

²*ibid.*, 24, [ll. 9-14], *Works*, *op.cit.*, II. cf. also P. Sidney, *A & S*, 54.

Yet loue, and louers lawes I do despise.
 How strange is this? indge^{you}/that louers be,
 To loue, yet haue no loue concealed in me. (1)

But when Arsadachus finally fell in love with Diana, he was as Petrarchan as any other lover in plying her with sonnets.²

In poetry, the emphasis was always laid upon the artistic rather than upon the personal aspect of emotion, although in theory the two were concomitant. Eurimachus in Greene's Alcida, [?1588], discovered by his lady singing the sorrows of love, covered his confusion by disclaiming any personal basis for his song:

It was, Madam, to keep accord to my lute, not to
 discover any passions, for all the amordelays Orpheus
 played on his harp, were not amorous, nor euery sonet
 that Arion warbled on his instrument, vowed vnto Venus. (3)

His attempted deception ~~was~~ naturally transparent to his beloved Marpesia. And this brings us gradually back to the point at which this chapter began: only the lady to whom love sonnets were addressed was in a position to judge the validity of the emotion in the context of life rather than of literature alone; we, like the general reader of Elizabethan times, can only assess the success of passion in its literary expression. The ambiguity of Petrarchan love, essential to protect lover and beloved in their society, has to be respected as an integral part of its tradition. Thus whilst

¹T. Lodge, Margarite, p. 58, Complete Works, ed. Hunterian Club, III. "In" in first line of quotation printed as "im" in this text.

²See below, p.376.

³Complete Works, ed. Grosart, IX, 102. cf. T.Lodge, Rosalynde, 1590, p.111, Complete Works, ed. Hunterian Club, I, quoted above, p. 160

it is generally impossible to know whether the quatorzain was used to any great extent by the courtiers, or whether, in those instances which we do know of, it was a statement of genuine affection or only of courtly compliment and presented solely to please and entertain: two points emerge. We must show the Petrarchan poet the respect of accepting his role of lover as at least a valid literary convention; and if, in certain cases we have been given proof of an actual emotional situation for his Petrarchanism, we must accept this as a not unexpected basis for his verse. The emphasis must always be on the literary presentation of passion, but the human element has also to be observed.¹

When the lover became a poet, or when the poet became a lover (and neither was mutually exclusive), he had two ends immediately in view: to write for himself, and to write for his mistress. Generally the two merged at some point, for the Petrarchan situation was one based on the lover's need to petition: he was asking the beloved for grace for himself; but at the same time he was offering his duty and skills to please and convince her that he was not wholly

¹This is the approach of modern writers upon individual Elizabethan poets to the sonnet sequences, as for example, B. Newdigate's Michael Drayton and his Circle, and J. Rees's Samuel Daniel. The tendency to stress literature rather than autobiography, as in A.C. Sprague's introduction to Daniel's Poems and a Defence of Ryme, and in the bias of H. Smith's chapter on the sonnet, in his Elizabethan Poetry, pp.132 ff., has been a most useful corrective to Sidney Lee's identification of originality with sincerity, and, therefore, lack of originality with insincerity, in his "Introduction" to Elizabethan Sonnets.

unworthy of her favour. If the lady was in the position of becoming a possible patron, the lover was her willing and dutiful servant.¹ Most sonnets may be held to combine both of these attitudes.

There were occasions, however, when the lover was enforced by circumstances to write purely for himself alone:

Come let me write, "And to what end" To ease
A burthned hart. (2)

This occurred when he was isolated from the beloved, either because the situation in which he found himself made it impossible to voice his love,³ or because the lady had withdrawn her favour,⁴ or because she was for some other reason inaccessible to her lover. In Lodge's Robert, Duke of Normandy, 1591, the Sultan of Babylon, who had fallen in love with the reported virtues of Emine, daughter of the Roman Emperor, whilst waiting the outcome of his embassy to ask for her hand, passed his time in carving emblems of his state, and writing appropriate verses for each one. Two of the poems are quatorzains:

In these passions and fantasies consumed the Souldan
the most part of his time, now imagining hope of
successe, now fearing cause of repulse, adoring EMINE
as his Saint, and placing his sollace in his amorous
conceits, vntill such time as he heard the fatal message
of his ouerthrow. (5)

¹See below, p.306.

²P.Sidney, A & S, 34, ll.1-2, Poems, ed. Ringler. cf. also S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 4, [l.13]; B.Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, son.62, [l. 11]. cf. also the attitudes of Shakespeare's Don Armado, and Jonson's Matheo, quoted above, p.143, 150.

³Most of the sonnets of Sidney's Arcadia come under this head: as they are generally given as songs, they are treated below in ~~the following~~ Chapter Ten, see pp. 370 f., 374 f.

⁴See S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 49.

⁵p.55, Complete Works, ed Hunterian Club, II.

In the circumstances, he had no other way to win a little relief from the anguish and anxieties of love.

The sorrow of love was not the only pressure on the burdened heart; passion had its joys as well, which were to be remembered and savoured again in the privacy of the lover's chamber:

when he comes home,... 'tis all his meditation to recount with himself his actions, words, gestures, what entertainment he had, how kindly she used him in such a place, how she smiled, how she graced him, and that infinitely pleased him; then he breaks out, O sweet Areusa, O my dearest Antiphila, O most divine looks, O lovely graces, and thereupon instantly he makes an Epigram, or a Sonnet to five or seven tunes. (1)

Such outpourings were confined to secret utterance by the tradition governing the Petrarchan situation; for like the courtly lover before him, the Petrarchan lover had not to be a braggart of favours received²:

thus these two Lovers passed many daies in exceeding contentation, & more than speakable pleasures, in which time Ferdinando did compile very many verses according to sundrye occasions proffered, and they were for the most parte sauced with a taste of glory, as you know that in such cases a lover being charged with inexprimable joyes, and therewith enjoyned both by duety and discrecion to keepe the same covert, can by no meanes devise a greater consolation, than to commit it into some cyphred wordes, and figured speaches, in verse, whereby he feeleth his heart halfe (or more than halfe) eased of swelling. For as sighes are some present ease to the pensive minde, even so we find by experience, that such secreete ^{intercou}ncouning of joyes doeth encrease delight. (3)

¹R. Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 186.

²cf. F. Davison, Poetical Rhapsody, 1608, ed. Rollins, I, no. 193. Drayton's Ideas Mirrour, 1594, 46, praises "sweet secrecie" (not reprinted).

³G. Gascoigne, Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p. 416, The Adventures of Master F.J.

The narrator of this fable affirmed that he did not hold the heretical view that such joys should be made known to the world,¹

And yet for a man to record unto him selfe in the inward contemplation of his mind, the often remembrance of his late received joyes, doth as it were ease the hearte of burden, and ad unto the mind a fresh supplie of delight, yea, and in vearse principally (as I conceyve) a man may best contrive his waye of comfort in him selfe. (2)

The Petrarchan lover was rarely awarded the favours which occasioned this expression of comfort; usually his efforts were wholly bent towards attaining them. The thesis upon which his pursuit of grace was founded was that voiced by Walter Davison:

For in my Doome if Iustice been regarded,
My Loue with Loue againe shall bee rewarded. (3)

If the object of his desire remained ignorant of his affection, then obviously the lover's passion would always go unsatisfied; the lover had to bring his emotion to the notice of his lady. Success in love was partly to be gained by plying the beloved with poetry:

You must lay ^ltime to tangle her desires
By wailful sonnets, whose composed rhymes
Should be full-fraught with serviceable vows.

....For Orpheus' lute was strung with poet's sinews,
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones,
Make tigers tame and huge leviathans
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on the sands. (4)

¹ ibid., p. 416 f.

² ibid., p. 417.

³ Poetical Rhapsody, ed. Rollins, I, no. 53, ll. 17-18. cf. also S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 8; G. Fletcher, Licia, 38; Zepheria, 16; B. Griffin, Fidessa, 16

⁴ W. Shakespeare, TGV, III, ii, 68-70; 78-81, Works, Globe ed.; cf. also J. Lyly, Euphues and his England, 1580, Complete Works, ed. Bond, II, 119, 121; R. Greene, Morando, Pt. I, 1587, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, III, 106 f.

In view of the intractable nature of the Petrarchan mistress, a method of courtship with such extreme power was very necessary.

The exact measure of success the lover had with his poetry, and particularly the quatorzain, is obscure. Its efficacy was never doubted in theory, as Sidney's humorous curse on the opponents of poetry shows us:

that while you liue, you liue in loue, and never get
fauour for lacking skill of a Sonnet. (1)

The constant repulse the poets recorded in their sequences, and the lady's disregard of their lines,² were inevitably part of the nature of the Petrarchan situation, but limited victories befell Sidney, Greville, and Spenser, whilst in two of the prose romances of the period, sonnets played their part in bringing the lovers together. They were efficacious in winning for Master F.J. the joys of which he was to write in private,³ and more honourably so in encouraging the love which was to unite Minecius and Philenia in Lodge's A Margarite of America:

Many sych like [sonnets] were deuised by Minecius,
and allowed by Philenia, ~~thow~~ which, Loue, that
had newe burgend his wings, began to flie, and being
shut in close embers, brake not to open fire. (4)

¹An Apològie for Poetrie, 1595, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. Smith, I, 207.

²cf. P.Sidney, A & S, 44, 45; S.Daniel, Delia, 1592, 8,49. T. Lodge, Phillis, 4; E. Spenser, Amoretti,38; Zepheria, 20.

³G.Gascoigne, Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p.390, The Adventures of Master F.J.

⁴p.16, Complete Works, ed. Hunterian Club, III.

However, generally speaking, the Petrarchan lady, whatever her own inclinations were, was constrained to "dwell on form",¹ and it was the lover's task to win her in the manner dictated by convention. One of his first labours was to assure her of the unalterable nature of his affection:

Yff other love then yours do lodge within my Breste
 Let never pleasinge thought henceforth frequent my mynde
 Or iff my constant hope elsewhere do seke for reste
 let my desyres in wayne still stryve agaynst the winde
 ...But yow it is I love and yow I serve alone
 Agaynste all other lookes my harte is hardned stone. (2)

Time,³ absence,⁴ nor social difference could change the quality of his love:

Were I as base as is the lowly playne,
 And you (my Loue) as high as heau'n aboue,
 Yet should the thoughts of me your humble swaine,
 Ascend to Heauen, in honour of my Loue.
 Were I as hight as Heau'n aboue the playne,
 And you (my Loue) as humble and as low
 As are the deepest bottoms of the Mayne,
 Wherso'ere you were, with you my Loue should go.
 Where you the Earth (deere Loue) and I the skies,
 My loue should shine on you like to the Sun.
 And looke vpon you with ten thousand Eyes,
 Till heau'n wax't blind, and til the world were dun.
 Whereso'ere I am, below, or els aboue you,
 Whereso'ere you are, my hart shal truly loue you. (5)

In fact, nothing could move his fixed passion, not the lady's command

¹W. Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 88, Works, Globe ed. cf. also Troilus and Cressida, III, ii, 121 ff., ibid.

²A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 52, ll. 1-4, 13-14, Poems, ed. Sandison cf. also G. Gascoige, Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p.92, "That selfe same tonge which first did thee entreat"; G. Fletcher, Licia, 18; R.E., Diella, 33, 35.

³S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 33; W. Shakespeare, Sonnets 107, 108; M. Drayton Idea, 1619, 51.

⁴P. Sidney, A & S, 88; W. Shakespeare, Sonnets, 36, 109.

⁵F. Davison, Poetical Rhapsody, ed. Rollins, I, no. 168.

that he should not love her,¹ the knowledge that she would never grant him any affection,² nor despair itself.³

Nonetheless, the lover hoped that all such assurances and promises would win the mistress's sympathy; sympathy was indeed a feeling which the general reader could share with her in perusing amatory verse. The sonnet was one of the poetic kinds put forward by Puttenham to express "the many moodes and pangs of louers":

the poore soules sometimes praying, beseeching, sometime
hbnouring, auancing, praising: an other while railing,
reuiling, and cursing: then sorrowing, weeping, lamenting:
in the ende laughing, reioysing & solacing the beloued
again, with a thousand delicate deuises, odes, songs,
elegies, ballads, sonets and other ditties, moouing one
way and another to great compassion. (4)

The sonneteer might demand no more than pity from the lady addressed,⁵ particularly, we may suppose, when the love poem was primarily conveying courtly compliment, as in Constable's sonnets to Lady Rich, or when the distinction in rank between lover and beloved made the realization of his hopes impossible, as in the case of Drayton's affection for Anne Goodere:

¹H. Constable, Diana, III, iii, 2, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 172; F. Davison, Poetical Rhapsody, op.cit., I, no. 67.

²S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 40; T. Lodge, Phyllis, 28; W. Smith, Chloris, 32.

³M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 37.

⁴The Arte of English Poesie, ed. G.D. Willcock and A. Walker, Cambridge 1936, p.45. cf. also Walter Davison's "I haue entreated, and I haue complained", Poetical Rhapsody, ed. Rollins, I, no. 62.

⁵S. Daniel, Sonnets after Astrophel, 1591, 25, Poems, ed. Sprague, pp. 35, 190; W. Smith, Chloris, 2, 4.

Resolud to loue vnworthie to obtayne
 I doe no favoure craue but humble wise
 To thee my sighes in verse I sacrifice
 Only some pittie and no helpe to gayne. (1)

Goe you my lynes, Embassadors of love,
 With my harts trybute to her conquering eyes,
 From whence, if you one teare of pittie move
 For all my woes, that onely shall suffise. (2)

However, a natural development from this was the poet's desire for a greater reward; the plea for "mercy" or "grace" was often a euphemistic way of presenting the lover's desire for a physical consummation of his passion. This desire in English sonnets of the period^{was}, however, generally ethereally presented; there was nothing approaching the earthy sensuality to be found in some of Ronsard's verse, for example. Possession was a dream, its lack bewailed in the "fleeting weal! ah, sly deluding sleep!"³ poems; of such an aesthetic character that it easily lent itself to the conception of a higher love, and an adaptation of the convention can be found in Shakespeare's couplet:

Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter,
 In sleep a king, but waking no such matter. (4)

Occasionally, Elizabethan sonneteers voiced their desire more openly,⁵ and notably Shakespeare in the quatorzains to the Dark

¹H. Constable, Diana, I, i, 1 ll. 1-4, Poems, ed. Grundy, p.115.

²M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 51, [ll. 1-4], Works, ed. Hebel, I; cf. ibid., 38.

³T. Lodge, Phyllis, 17, [l. 1], Eliz.Sonnets II. cf. also A. Gorges, Vaunetyes and Toyes, 63, S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 16.

⁴Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 87, ll. 13-14.

⁵F. Davison, Poetical Rhapsody, 1608, ed. Rollins, I, no. 193; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, mad. 13.

Lady. The tone of these poems, "humorous, vulgar, ingenious, and cold",¹ befits the lower relationship the lady has established with her lover:

Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
 Shall will in others seem right gracious,
 And in my will no fair acceptance shine?
 Let no unkind no fair beseechers kill;
 Think all but one, and me in that one "Will".²

In spite of all obstacles, the sonneteer was committed to a declaration of faith in the power of his verse:

Write! write! help! help, sweet Muse! and never cease!
 In endless labours, pens and paper tire!
 Until I purchase my long wished Desire.
 Brains, with my Reason, never rest in peace!
 Waste breathless words! and breathful sighs increase!
 Till of my woes, remorseful, you espy her;
 Till she with me, be burnt in equal fire.
 I never will, from labour, wits release! (3)

The ways in which the lover hoped to win his lady were essentially simple, although they became elaborate in practice: they were praise of the beloved, and the presentation of his own sufferings:

they apply their wittes and wils to worke their owne woe, penning downe ditties, songs, sonnets, madrigals, and suche like, shadowed ouer with the pensell of flatterie, where from the fictions of poets they fetch the type and figure of their fayned affection: first, decyphering hir beautie to bee more than superlatiue, comparing hir face vnto Venus, hir haire vnto golde, hir eyes vnto starres: nay more,

¹H. Smith, Elizabethan Poetry, p. 193.

²Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 135, ll. 5-8, 13-14⁴. cf. also ibid., sons. 136; 150-152.

³B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, son. 18, [ll. 1-8], Eliz. Sonnets, I; cf. also W. Smith, Chloris, 29.

resembling hir chastitie vnto Diana...: then howe
 hir feature hath fired their fancie, howe hir sight
 hath besotted their sences, howe beautie hath
 bewitched them: ... they plunge in paine, they waile
 in woe, they turne the restlesse stone with Sisyphus,
 and alleage the tormentes of Tantalus, what grieffe,
 what payne, what sorrow, what sighs, what teares,
 what plaintes, what Passions, what tortures, what death
 is it not they indure till they optaine their mistresse
 fauour. (1)

This description, as Miss L.C. John's reseaxches have shown,² was
 certainly true in its details. The sonneteers were fully aware
 of these two aspects of their verse, and Barnes and Smith in
 particular laid emphasis on them:

If all the Loves were lost, and should be found;
 And all the Graces' glories were decayed:
 In thee, the Grace's ornaments abound!
 In me, the Loves, by thy sweet Graces laid! (3)

Thy beauty, subject of my Song I make;
 O Fairest Fair! on whom depends my life:
 Refuse not then the task I undertake
 To please thy rage, and to appease my strife! (4)

All the poets knew how to use "the pensell of flatterix^e" in
 generous, if not exorbitant, praise of their lady. They realized
 that "sweet words, and high prayses are two great arguments to winne
 womens wils",⁵ and that the best way to gain her interest was to

¹R. Greene, Greenes farewell to Folly, 1591, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, IX, 292 f.

²The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences, New York, 1938

³B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, son. 64, [ll. 1-4], Eliz. Sonnets, I. cf. also ibid., son. 1.

⁴W. Smith, Chloris, 2, Eliz. Sonnets, II. cf. also M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 1; Zepheria, 19, 20.

⁵R. Greene, Greenes Mourning Garment, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, IX, 153.

direct their energies to this end.¹ The description of the sonnet lady has been dealt with so fully in Miss John's Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences,² that it is hardly necessary to do more here than mention the main points. The lady was treated as an exalted being, a goddess, saint, angel, queen, or phoenix, and enjoyed unsurpassable beauty. Hair, eyes, hands, lips, cheek, teeth, voice, were all itemized and extolled; and conceits were ransacked to make her beauty known.³ Even the unconventional dark complexion was lauded, most notably by Shakespeare, in sonnet 130, and elsewhere:

..My mistress' brows are raven black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Slandering creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says beauty should look so. (4)

Beauty of the mind and soul were not neglected, and were, as Paul M. Siegel has pointed out,⁵ qualities emphasized by Sidney and Spenser, the most neo-Platonic of the sonneteers. Nonetheless, in spite of Mr. Siegel's thesis that appreciation of virtue was practically confined to these poets alone, the intangible beauties of character were widely lauded, and Fletcher's heading to the

¹ cf. W. Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, I, v, 287-95, Works, Globe ed.

² pp. [137] ff; 198 f.

³ L.C. John, Eliz. Sonnet Sequences, p. 146.

⁴ ~~"The Petrarchan Sonneteers and Neo-Platonic Love", SP, 1945, XLII, 182.~~

⁵ Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 127, ll. 9-14. cf. also ibid., sons. 131, 132; G. Gascoigne, Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p. 332, "The Thriftles thred which pampred beauty spinnes".

⁵ "The Petrarchan Sonneteers and Neo-Platonic Love", SP, 1945, XLII, 182.

dedicatory sonnet to Licia "the wise, kind, virtuous and fair"¹
summed up the conventional qualities of the sonnet mistress.²

In the face of so much perfection, the sonneteer not infrequently found his verse unable to do justice to the perfections of the beloved:

Alack, what poverty my Muse brings forth,
That having such a scope to show her pride,
The argument, all bare, is of more worth
Than when it hath my added praise beside! (3)

The lady's beauty in both its manifestations was one of the main reasons for his writing. E.C. declared that his "forlorne muse", "artles pen", and "louesicke heart"

Shall now learne skill my Ladies fame to raise,
Shall now take paines her vertues to record,
And honor her with more immortal praise,
Then euer heretofore they could affoord:
Both heart, and pen, and muse shall think it dutie,
With sigheswolne words to blaze her heauely beutie. (4)

To praise in verse was not only part of the lover's service to his mistress, it was also the one gift which he could give her which would outlast the ravages of time:

One day I wrote her name vpon the strand,
but came the waues and washed it away:
agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
but came the tyde, and madè my paynes his pray.

¹Eliz. Sonnets, II, 34.

²cf. also, A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 29; T. Lodge, Phyllis, 20; B. Griffin, Fidessa, 31; W. Shakespeare, Sonnets, 53.

³W. Shakespeare, Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 103, ll. 1-4; cf. T. Watson, The Tears of Fancie, 1593, dedicatory sonnet, and 33; Zepheria, 2; M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 57.

⁴Emericdulfe, 1595, 4, [ll. 9-14], A Lamport Garland, [ed. C. Edmonds], Roxburghe Club Publs., 109, Manchester, 1881. cf. also H. Constable, Diana, 1592, "To his absent Diana", Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 109; S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 1, 50; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, son. 104; G. Fletcher Licia "To Licia"; M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 1; Zepheria, 2, 13; W. Smith, Chloris, 41.

Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine-assay,
 a mortall thing so to immortalize,
 for I my selue shall lyke to this decay,
 and eek my name bee wyped out lykewize.
 Not so, (quod I) let baser things devise
 to dy in dust, but you shall liue by fame:
 my verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
 and in the heuens wryte your glorious name.
 Where whenas death shall all the world subdaw,
 our loue shall liue, and later life renew. (1)

Such nobility of sentiment informed the eternizing conceit in the works of the greatest Elizabethan sonneteers²; the minor versifiers kept a more selfish end in view. In their sequences, the theme frequently degenerated to a mild proposal of blackmail:

If you be kind, my Queen, as you are fair:
 And aid my thoughts that still for conquest strive:
 Then will I sing, and never more despair,
 And praïse your kindness whilst I am alive.
 ...Then grace me, Sweet, and with thy favour raise me:
 So shall I live, and all the World shall praise thee. (3)

O pity me, fair Love! and highest fame
 Shall blazed be, in honour of thy name. (4)

... if cruel She, no grace gouchsafe:
 Dead, may her Gravestone be her Epitaph! (5)

Similarly, the praise offered by the lover could be rendered as homage to the beloved, as in Shakespeare's sonnets to the young

¹E. Spenser, Amoretti, 75, Poetical Works, ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford Standard Authors, 1959. The "eternizing" conceit is further discussed in L.C. John's Eliz. Sonnet Sequences, pp. 126 ff.

²See above, p. 269 ff

³G. Fletcher, Licia, 49, [ll. 5-8, 13-14], Eliz. Sonnets, II.

⁴R.L., Diella, 36, [ll. 13-14], Eliz. Sonnets, II. cf. also W. Smith, Chloris, 44.

⁵Zepheria, 40, [ll. 15-16], Eliz. Sonnets, II.

man and, to mention just one non-Shakespearean example, Drayton's lovely "The glorious sunne went blushing to his bed"¹; or the poet could concentrate on the other cause of his writing, and attempt to persuade the lady to his suit. Therefore, pleas for mercy or grace were sometimes introduced into quatorzains lauding the mistress's qualities. Constable begged his "Lady in beautye and ⁱⁿfavoure rare" to

...grant this guift which guift when I possesse
Both I have life and yow no losse at all
For by your favoure only I may liue
And favoure yow may well both keepe and giue. (2)

The sonneteer would contrast the Petrarchan lady's outstanding virtues with the cruelty of her behaviour, in order to try to win her to a more gentle frame of mind:

Then as thy Beauty thus hath conquered me,
Fair! let relenting Pity conquer thee! (3)

In this way she was reminded that grace and virtue should be bountiful; the gifts which she possessed could only be retained and augmented by the act of giving.⁴

When the Petrarchan mistress remained impervious to praise and persuasion, as convention demanded that she must, the lover turned to reproaching, or even reviling, in his anguish. The

¹Ideas Mirrour, 25.

²Diana, I, ii, 2, ll. 11-14, Poems, ed.Grundy, p.123.

³R.L., Diella, 8, [ll. 13-14], Eliz.Sonnets, II. cf. also ibid., 6; S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 6; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, son.28; T.Lodge, Phyllis, 27; E. Spenser, Amoretti, 12; W. Smith, Chloris, 24; W.Shakespeare, Sonnets, 132.

⁴cf. the tenour of Shakespeare's sonnets urging the young man to marry.

psychology of this was sound both in its application to the lover's state and to that of the beloved; emotion continually rebuffed, and passion frustrated, would naturally be voiced and relieved by outbursts of anger or revulsion¹; and besides releasing the tension of the lover, there was also the possibility that reproach might act as shock treatment upon the beloved, accustomed to exorbitant praise, and might bring her to a more favourable disposition towards her admirer:

Late tyr'd with wo, even ready for to pine
 With rage of Love, I cald my Love unkind;
 She in whose eyes Love, though unfelt, doth shine,
 Sweet said that I true love in her should find. (2)

The rebuke could take the indirect form of a complaint about the lady's cruelty,³ and this was frequently the tenour of the poems addressed to her directly:

These first desires, which in my breast did boil,
 From which, thy loves (Unkind!) thou banished!
 Had not been such an exile to my bliss,
 If life, with my love's infancy, were vanished;
 It had not been so sore a death as this,
 If lionesses were, instead of nurses;
 Or night, for day! Thine hate deserves more curses! (4)

The Petrarchan mistress was reviled as a tyrant or a murderess,⁵ her

¹See above, p.191f

²P.Sidney, A & S, 62, ll. 1-4, Poems, ed. Ringler.

³cf. A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 60; T.Watson, Tears of Fancie, 45, 53; B.Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, sons.10,35; R.L., Diella, 37.

⁴B.Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, son.101, [11.8-14], Eliz. Sonnets, I; cf. also ibid., son.11; W.Smith, Chloris, 24.

⁵W.Raleigh, "A Secret mvrder hath bene done of late", The Poems, ed. A.M.C. Latham, Muses Library, 1951; S.Daniel, Delia, 1592, 26; T.Lodge Phyllis, 19; E. Spenser, Amoretti, 10; B.Griffin, Fidessa, 47, 48; M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 2, 50.

cruelty compared to the savagery of wild beasts,¹ her hardness of heart to stone or steel.² She was warned that her antagonism to love and the lover's suit could only win her dispraise and notoriety:

Chose rather to be prayd for dooing good,
then to be blam'd for spilling guiltlesse blood. (3)

The stylized pattern of reproach varied little, except in the sensitivity with which it was applied to the sonneteer's individual case, until we come to Shakespeare's sequence, where the convention becomes wholly subordinate to the relationships of the sonnets.

The true humility and generosity of the poet's affection for the Friend are nowhere more apparent than in those poems in which Shakespeare has occasion to be angered or hurt by the young man's behaviour. There are a number of such occasions, ranging from a general wildness in the behaviour of the Friend, to his unfaithfulness towards the poet, both by favouring a rival, and having an illicit relationship with Shakespeare's mistress. All are mentioned in sonnets of rebuke, reproach, or warning; but in every instance, feelings of bitterness or anger are softened by the sonneteer's love for the erring and, in the readers' eyes, rather unworthy young man:

Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits,
When I am sometimes absent from thy heart,
Thy beauty and thy years full well befits,
For still temptation follows where thou art.

¹See L.C. John, Eliz. Sonnet Sequences, pp. 165, 200.

²ibid., pp. 165, 199 f.

³E. Spenser, Amoretti, 38, [ll. 13-14], Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors; cf. ibid., 36.

Gentle thou art, and therefore to be ^wson,
 Beauteous thou art, ~~and~~ therefore to be assailed;
 And when a woman woos, what woman's son
 Will sourly leave her till she have prevailed?
 Ay me! but yet thou mightst my seat forbear,
 And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
 Who lead thee in their riot even there
 Where thou art forced to break a twofold truth,
 Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
 Thine, by thy beauty being false to me. (1)

A similar restraint is noticeable in the sonnets more specifically concerning the Dark Lady, not only in those poems which treat of the triangular relationship which involves the Friend,² but also when the poet considers his unsatisfactory passion for his mistress. This is a result of his acknowledging the unreasonable nature of his affection for the Dark Lady at the same time as he recognizes her unworthiness:

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
 As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;
 For well thou know'st to my dear dotting heart
 Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel.

... An nothing art thou black save in thy deeds
 And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds. (3)

The tension and anguish of these anti-Petrarchan sonnets grows from the knowledge that faults lie on both sides; careless inconstancy and alluring coyness in the Lady, and the mad physical desire she arouses in her lover. (4)

Inconstancy was the most crushing kind of cruelty which the mistress could inflict upon her lover; indeed, it was the one

¹ Sonnets, ed. Beeching, son. 41.

² ibid., sons. 133, 134, 144.

³ ibid., 131, ll. 1-4, 13-14.

⁴ ibid., son. 142, quoted above, p. 199f.

mortal sin against Petrarchan love. Having no recognized and established position in society, the Petrarchan tradition, like that of courtly love, relied directly and heavily upon the mutual faith of two lovers. Their vows had not the legal safeguards and rights of those of marriage, nor had they the unquestionable sanctity of matrimonial promises, made in the presence of the unchanging God; lovers' vows had the blessing of inconstant, changeable Cupid. The burden upon the lovers, accentuated by the antagonism of social order, must in some cases have been considerably. It is hardly surprising that the bitterest of reproaches were voiced against inconstancy, the most devastating blow of all struck at the lover's insecure state. This element in the sequences of Greville and Shakespeare, has been discussed earlier,¹ and these two poets described it most feelingly and strongly. The theme can be found in other sonnets of this period,² and later in Davies of Hereford's Wittes Pilgrimage [?1605]:

Thou saist I haue deceau'd thee in thy loue
 By other Loues³; and so, thou me dost hate
 Vpon a meer surmise: but I can proue
 Where thou thy Chastitie dids't vulnerate:
 O no, I lye, thou stil didst keepe it sound
 But others gaue, and it receau'd the wound. (4)

In general, however, the inviolable chastity of the Petrarchan

¹See above, p. 193ff

²See G. Gascoigne, Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p. 464, "If what you want, you (wanton) had at will". cf. also T. Lodge, William Longbeard, p. 25, Complete Works, ed. Hunterian Club, II.

³cf. F. Greville, Caelica, 18.

⁴Pt. I, son. 84, [ll. 9-14], Works, ed. A. B. Grosart, Chertsey Worthies' Library, II.

lady prevented her from knowing or feeling love at all, and the lover's reproaches were often directly coupled with pleas for mercy and a softening of her attitude towards him.¹ The outburst over, the sonneteer might ask his love to forgive him for condemning her intractable nature, which, as he knew, was part of her perfection:

Blame me not deere loue though I talke at randon.
 Terming thee scornfull, proud, vnkind, disdainfull
 ...If I doe paint thy pride or want of pittie,
 Consider likewise how I blase thy beautie:
 Inforced to the first in mournfull dittie,
 Constrained to the last by seruile dutie:
 And take thou no offence, if I misdeemed,
 Thy beauties glorie quenbeth thy prides blemish:
 Better it is of all to be esteemed,
 Faire and too proud than not faire and too squemishe. (2)

For if the lover were to retain his Petrarchan character it was necessary for him to accept the unyielding chastity of his lady, as it was for her to continue to refuse his suit if she were to remain the Petrarchan mistress.

Nonetheless, the lover had to be resolute in his hope, and to keep on pleading with his obdurate love. If she were unmoved by her own praises, she might be sympathetic to her poet's sufferings. In all the sonnet sequences, and in individual quatorzains, the lover's sorrows were given an imposing character and weight. This was because they arose from the depths of an unconquerable and life-destroying sense of despair:

Waying the cares that cause me thus to crye
 the combers that dayly straines my hart string
 the sorrowes that drawe the dropps from myn eye

¹G.Fletcher, Licia, 8; R.L., Diella, 12; M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 52.

²T.Watson, Tears of Fancie, 54, [ll. 1-2, 5-14], Eliz.Sonnets, I.

strange may it seeme how ^many muse this can singe
 I singe not deare love but lyke to the Swanne
 that fyndyng her deathe shrykes out her voice. (1)

Life itself was wearisome and dark,² the joys of friendly company
 lost their comfort,³ death alone appeared to hold hope of release.⁴
 Complaints of the lover's unhappiness took many forms, all emphasizing
 the great misery of his plight.⁵ He might well echo this sentiment
 voiced in the augmented Diana of 1593:

What tids me then, since these paines which annoy mee,
 in my dispaire are euer-more increasing?
 the more I loue, lesse is my paines releasing,
 that cursed be the fortune which destroyes me.
 The hower, the month, the season and the cause,
 When loue first made me thrall to louers lawes. (6)

Yet the paradoxical nature of Petrarchan passion made it the one
 hope of happiness for the lover⁷; he could not, therefore, with
 reason complain about his lot:

And when iust cause of sorrowing doth faile,
 I waile in fine, bicause I cannot waile. (8)

¹A.Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 84, ll. 1-6, Poems, ed. Sandison.

²See ibid., 86; P. Sidney, Certain Sonnets, 18.

³See T. Watson, Tears of Fancie, 37, 40.

⁴See ibid., 43; S.Daniel, Delia, 1592, 20; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, son. 77; B. Griffin, Fidessa, 28.

⁵See L.C.John, Eliz.Sonnet Sequences, p. 103 ff.

⁶VI, 8, ll. 9-14, Poems of Henry Constable, ed. Grundy, p.207.

⁷See P. Sidney, A & S, 108, ll. 13-14; A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 71, 73; S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 24; M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 23, 26; E.Spenser, Amoretti, 42; R.L., Diella, 23; W.Smith, Chloris, 24.

⁸R.S., The Phoenix Nest, 1593, ed. H.E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, "Of all the woes my pensive heart endureth", p. 95. cf. also Diana (augmented) 1593, V, 2, Poems of Henry Constable, ed. Grundy, p. 198.

Love was the cause of the poet's unhappiness, but its immediate source was the lady in her unassailable chastity and constant denial of his suit. The theme could be treated with a mannered formality, as in Constable's "Each day new proofes of new dispaire I find",¹ or - more rarely - with the kind of insight into emotional relationships shown by Shakespeare, or, as in this instance, by Drayton:

You not alone, when You are still alone,
 O God from You, that I could private be,
 Since You one were, I never since was one,
 Since You in Me, my selfe since out of Me,
 Transported from my Selfe, into Your being,
 Though either distant, present yet to either,
 Senselesse with too much Joy, each other seeing,
 And onely absent, when Wee are together.
 Give Me my Selfe, and take your Selfe againe,
 Devise some meanes, but how I may forsake You,
 So much is Mine, that doth with You remaine,
 That taking what is Mine, with Me I take You;
 You doe bewitch Me, O that I could flie,
 From my Selfe You, or from your owne Selfe I. (2)

The Petrarchan lover could only infrequently bridge the distance between him and his lady, however, as the constant complaints about the lady's cruelty emphasize. It is with this aspect in mind that the sonneteer wrote his verses, and addressed his pleas for mercy to the beloved:

Oft doo I plaine, and shee my plaints doth reede
 Which in black colors do paint forth my, [sic] wo
 So that of force she must my sorrow know;
 Ad know, for her disdaine my hart doth bleede.

¹Diana, III, iii, 4, Essays, op.cit., p.174.

²Idea, 1619, 11, Works, ed. Hebel, II.

And knowledge must of Force some pittie breede,
 Which makes me hope, she will some fauour show
 And from her sugred lippes cause comfort flowe
 Into mine Eares, my hart with ioy to feede. (1)

X Respect, fair LICIA, what my torments are!
 Count but the tithe both of my sighs and tears!
 See how my love doth still increase my care!
 And care's increase, my life to nothing wears.
 Send byt a sigh, my flame for to increase:
 Or lend a tear, and cause it so to cease. (2)

His hopes were doomed to failure. Not the urging of his great sufferings, nor the worth of his deserts,³ could move the obdurate heart of his lady. The Petrarchan lover knew little of the sweetness of love, always yearning for the unobtainable:

I sacrificize my youth, and blooming yeares,
 At her proud feete, and she respects not it:
 My flowre vntimely's withred with my teares,
 And winter woes, for spring of youth vnfit.
 She thinkes a looke may recompence my care,
 And so with lookes prolongs my long-lookt ease:
 As short that blisse, so is the comfort rare,
 Yet must that blisse my hungry thoughts appease.
 Thus she returnes my hopes so fruitlesse euer,
 Once let her loue indeede, or eye me neuer. (4)

He had few occasions for "laughing, reioysing & solacing the beloued againe",⁵ and therefore had to exploit any opportunity with pathetic eagerness:

¹F. Davison, Poetical Rhapsody, ed. Rollins, I, no. 64, ll. 4-11.

²G. Fletcher, Licia, 33, [ll. 9-14], Eliz.Sonnets, II; cf. also ibid., 31, 35, 38; P.Sidney, A & S, 40; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, sons. 73, 91; W. Percy, Coelia, 17; B.Griffin, Fidessa, 16.

³See S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 15; M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 38; B. Griffin, Fidessa, 9.

⁴S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 21, [ll. 5-14], Poems, ed.Sprague, p.21.

⁵G.Puttenham, Arte of English Poesie, quoted above, p.280.

Fair Queen of Cnidos! come, adorn my forehead!
 And crown me with the laurel, Emperor!
Ió, thrice Ió, about thy poet!
 Lo, on my goddess, I am conqueror!
 For once, by chance, not sure or wittingly,
 Upon myfoot, her tender foot alighted. (1)

Nevertheless, "Sonets be not bound prentise to annoy",² as Sidney wrote, and several of his own quatorzains bore witness to this, notably 69:

...Stella hath with words where faith doth shine,
 Of her high heart giv'n me the monarchie:
 I, I, ô I may say, that she is mine. (3)

The joyful theme was continued in the poems on the lady's kiss (79-82); and in 76, "she comes with light and warmth", with its lovely alexandrines. This last sonnet ends on a plea for further happiness, "what helpe then in my case, / But ... / Pray that my sunne go downe with meeker beames to bed".⁵ This was not without significance: for the sonneteer was more likely to write poems anticipating joy, than ones which celebrated the achievement of his success. The lover was a petitioner; if he no longer had to plead for his lady's grace, then the Petrarchan situation had ceased. Anticipation was the consolation of the lover. Quatorzains were written on the expected joy of returning to the beloved after an absence,⁵ or (a theme of Spenser's sequence) on the fruition of

¹W. Percy, Coelia, 5, [ll. 1-6], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

²A & S, 70, l. 5, Poems, ed. Ringler.

³ll. 9-11, Poems, op.cit. cf. B. Griffin, Fidessa, 20.

⁴ ll. 12-15, Poems, op.cit.

⁵cf. P. Sidney, A&S, 85; W. Shakespeare, Sonnets, 51.

the poet's sufferings and perseverance at some future date¹;
gratitude and delight for the assurance of affection were also
voiced:

Then happy I, that love and am beloved
Where I may not remove nor be removed. (2)

The full triumph of sexual love was rarely celebrated in the love sonnet, for strictly speaking it lay outside the Petrarchan situation, and was a breach of the necessary secrecy surrounding the relationship of the lovers. Elevated by neo-Platonic language, however, this success could also be recorded in a Petrarchan manner; as Lodge's hero-villain, William Longbeard, demonstrated after he had seduced his Maudelin:

Ennobled thus, by that thrice-nobled passion,
Which hath the power all worldly cares to banish,
I flie sweet-seeming lures of false occasion,
And let al thoughts but loue-sweet vade & vanish.
The fruits I reape in spight of Fortune froward,
Makes me suppose no torment too vntoward. (3)

Gaiety and humour, and a light-heartedness, were not often appropriate to the lover's circumstances, but occasionally "solacing the beloved" included writing sonnets in these veins. Sidney composed two delightful sonnets upon Stella's dog,⁴ and sparrow, seeing each as a rival for his lady's affection:

¹Amoretti, 26, 63, 69.

²W. Shakespeare, Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 25, ll. 13-14. cf. also E. Spenser, Amoretti, 66, 82.

³William Longbeard, p. 18f, Complete Works, ed Hunterian Club, II. In italics throughout. Contrast the "Frydayes Breakefast" sonnet of The Adventures of Master F.S. which, lacking these concepts, is almost scurrilous in its frankness, G. Gascoigne, Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p. 413.

⁴A & S, 59.

Good brother Philip, I have borne you long,
 I was content you should in favour creepe,
 While craftily you seem'd your cut to keepe,
 As though that faire soft hand did you great wrong.
 I bare (with Envie) yet I bore your song.
 When in her necke you did Love ditties peepe
 Nay, more foole I, oft suffered you to sleepe
 In Lillies' neast, where Love's selfe lies along. (1)

As Astrophil envied his mistress's pets, Shakespeare, watching his lady at the virginals, was jealous of

those jacks that nimble leap
 To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
 While my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
 At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand! (2)

He proposed a solution³

Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
 Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss. (3)

Such sonnets offer us a charming literary portrait of the lover and his mistress, revealing moments of intimacy and pleasantry which were rare in the Petrarchan tradition. Spenser's sequence contains such another/vignette, when the poet came upon his lady busy with her embroidery:

I ioy to see how in your drawn work,
 Your selfe vnto the Bee ye doe compare;
 and me vnto the Spyder that doth lurke,
 in close awayt to catch her vnaware. (4)

Spenser, the serious poet of love chose to treat the situation in a gently tendentious manner, and drew a moral from it:

¹ibid., 83 ll. 1-8, Poems, ed. Ringler.

²Sonnets, ed. Beeching, 128, ll. 5-8.

³ll. 13-14. cf. also ibid., 145.

⁴Amoretti, 71 [ll. 1-4], Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors.

Right so your selfe were caught in cunning snare
of a deare foe, and thralled to his loue:
in whose streight bands ye now captiued are
so firmly, that ye neuer may remoue.
But as your worke is wouen all aboue,
with woodbynd flowers and fragrant Eglantine:
so sweet your prison you in time shall proue,
with many deare delights bedecked fyne.
And all thensforth eternall peace shall see,
betweene the Spyder and the gentle Bee. (1)

The humour was not all upon the lady's part, but underneath her lover's lighthearted approach, his allegorical mind revolved upon the full import of the little emblem.² The moralistic bent of the Elizabethans would have recognized this possibility and accepted it quite readily; for love, the most fragile and elusive of human passions, presented them with more occasions for moralizing than did any other emotional or factual situation.

The sonnet followed the course of love, from its inception to its culmination, traversing most commonly the path of unrequited passion, but making excursions ~~en~~ into happier and easier ways of dalliance as well. But as it expressed the whole-hearted acceptance of love, it was also used to mark the rejection of affection. Elizabethan sonnets of rejection gradually acquired an increasingly moralistic tone, and throughout the period contrasted with the earlier farewells to love of Sir Thomas Wyatt, who laid bare the

¹ibid., [ll. 5-14].

²See further below, p.364.

pain of disillusionment with passion and the beloved, and avowed a refusal to be made a fool of any longer.¹ The moral awareness of the Elizabethan sonneteers grew out of the need to protect themselves against the devastations of unstable and destructive love:

I learne that greevous is the game,
Which followes fansie dazled by desire.
So that I wynke or else holde downe my head,
Because your blazing eyes my bale have bred. (2)

Perhaps inevitably, despised emotion led to a utilitarian assessment of the lover's gains and losses; he had to consider whether the relationship was worth the pain and anguish:

If what you want, you (wanton) had at will,
A steadfast minde, a faythfull loving heart,
If what you speake you woulde performe it still,
If from your worde your deede did not reuerte:
If youthfull yeares your thoughtes did not so rule,
As elder dayes may scorne your friendship fraile,
Your doubled fansie would not thus recule,
For peevisch pryde which nowe I must bewaile.
... if your friendship be not to deare bought,
The price is great that nothing gives for nought. (3)

The lover's return to reason also offered the grounds for a rejection of wrongly directed love:

My thoughts ashamd since by themselves consumd,
Haue done their duetie to repentant wit:
Ashamde of all sweete guide I sorie sit,
To see in youth how I too farre presume. (4)

¹See Tottel's Miscellany, ed. H.E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1928, I, nos. 39, 75, 99.

²G. Gascoigne, Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p. 51, "You must not wonder though you thinke it strange".

³ibid., p.464, "an uncourteous farewell to an inconstant Dame".

⁴R.Greene, Francescos Fortunes, 1590, Complete Works, ed. Grosart, VIII, 170. In italics throughout.

Morality, the reasonable guide to correct behaviour, triumphed in this instance too. This was not the kind of farewell to love that a Petrarchan lover convinced of the neo-Platonic basis of his passion would take, as the bewilderment at the close of Sidney's sequence,¹ and the turning from profane to sacred love in Greville's,² show us; those who rejected Petrarchan love because they finally found it morally indefensible both in itself, and on personal and objective grounds, were those who inclined more towards its courtly rather than towards its neo-Platonic bias. Yet such rejections, although comparatively rare in Elizabethan sonnets, were pointers towards the new spiritual direction the quatorzain was to take in the seventeenth century, and which it in fact started upon in the Elizabethan period.³ For the Christian, living religiously can no more be separated from living morally than Christ's two great injunctions of charity can be separated from the legal requirements of the Mosaic commandments; and a turning away from the destructive effects of profane love meant for the Elizabethan a turning towards the constructive promises of Divine love.⁴ The sonnet of the rejection of passion marked a small but not unimportant step in the progress of poetry from secular to sacred themes.

¹See above, p. 175.

²See above, p. 228f.

³See above, p. 345f, and Chapter Nine.

⁴See above, pp. 217, 238.

The Elizabethan love sonnet proved itself to be a poem of complexity and flexibility. In the perfect fusion of its intellectual and emotional qualities it was capable of conveying all the "many moods and pangs of lovers", a feat not so perfectly achieved by the other more lyrical verse forms which were its companions. Its Petrarchan language and the fixed limits of its form presented the poet with both the raw material and the mould from which and in which to express the situations which appertained to his own emotional state, real or literary, and to that of his generation. The quatorzain was a poem of great possibilities for the sonneteer, bounded only by the requirements of art and decorum.

Its complexity was not restricted to the aesthetic plane, but also functioned on the human level as well. The ambiguity of the poet-lover pose, the public and private voices of the sonnet, and its witty nature which attracted the lover and the poet and offered both the opportunity for devising courtly entertainment, for the lady or for a wider audience, all went to constitute the mystery of the Petrarchan quatorzain. For it was a creation both of literature and the emotions, and was marked by the self-consciousness which underlies so many human ambitions and actions, and not least the desire to prove that one is as good as the next man and as capable as he is of doing certain things. The diverse elements of personality, individual needs and aspirations, were all woven into

the texture of the Petrarchan sonnet, and were transformed into a literature which gave a highly stylized and generalized representation of life. Elizabethan readers could take what they wanted from the poem; they could enjoy its artistry, and, if they wished, at the same time apply its emotion to their own lives. This was what they required of the quatorzain and this was what it gave them, as it gave to its writers the opportunity for personal utterance or the pursuit of literary fame, or perhaps both. The distinction between reality and semblance for the sonneteer and his audience was deliberately blurred in the Petrarchan sonnet, and the interests of both were safeguarded by the generous ambiguity of its form.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Sonnet as a Poem of Compliment
and of Abuse

As an earlier^f chapter attempted to indicate,¹ the sonnet had a wider significance in Elizabethan times than that alone which resulted in the expression of Petrarchan emotion. Real or simulated, the Petrarchan attitude was not only the safety valve for the passion which society declared had to be repressed; it became also the accepted and courtly pose in which to address those who were one's superiors, or those whom out of courtesy one considered to be so. (This development of Petrarchanism affords an example of the way in which man's needs ingeniously undermine repressive social conventions.) The popularity of the sonnet towards the end of Elizabeth's reign must no doubt have been influenced by this, and the social functions of the quatorzain must have contributed to its fashionable appeal in an age that was paradoxically both idealistic and utilitarian. Compliment was a property of the Elizabethan sonnet as, to a lesser extent, was its opposite, abuse; when circumstances called for either, the poem was at the disposal of the courtly and educated classes.

¹See above, p. 134f

The adoption of the sonnet as a poem of compliment was further facilitated by the relationship of Petrarchanism to one of the basic concepts governing the functioning of courtly society.

The disastrous effects of the Wars of the Roses upon the economy and the pattern of life had made plain to the English in the sixteenth century the necessity of stability within the country. The anarchy of civil war had underlined the need for order which the Tudor monarchs understood and implemented by establishing and upholding a strong central authority. Themselves the descendants of a minor Welsh nobleman, the Tudors chose their servants not from the heirs of the turbulent feudal aristocracy but from men outstanding for their ability and loyalty, who owed their position and prospects entirely to the ruler. As a result of this, society functioned on a system of patronage, with its concomitant, a deferential regard for the necessary distinctions of rank which were the safeguards of social stability.¹ Less powerful gentlemen were dependent on those above them to befriend and advance them; these in turn drew their influence from the great lords and ladies; and

¹See Ulysses's speech in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, I, iii, 84ff, Works, ed. W.G. Clark and W.A. Wright, Globe ed., second ed., repr. 1923.

at the apex of the scale was the monarch, from whom all power was derived. Patronage was a necessary link joining the strata of society, and was by no means a system which resulted in mere servility. In the relationships it established, it could bring out the most noble elements of character: Essex petitioned tirelessly for his friends and dependents; his generosity of spirit was matched only by his unbridled ambition. Patronage also involved a two-way traffic, benefitting both the giver and the receiver. The Queen herself rewarded in different ways the most able men of her reign, and in return was given their devotion and service. A society, therefore, which functioned on the basis of the relationship between the petitioner and the one petitioned would clearly find a correspondence in the situation underlying Petrarchan love. There the lover was the humble petitioner, requesting the favour of the lady who was exalted above him, whilst in return he offered her his faithful devotion and service. The Elizabethans, always alert to parallels of all kinds, understood the potentialities of Petrarchan expression, and recognized that the quatorzain could voice all the elements basic to the system of patronage.

The sonneteer who emerges as the most dedicated poet of courtly compliment is Henry Constable, significantly almost as much disregarded by later ages as he was applauded in his own. The account Constable's latest editor, Miss Joan Grundy, gives of

the courtier's life and work makes it clear that poetry was only a minor interest for him.¹ Artistically, his affinities lay with "the less lyrical, more drily intellectual and conceited sonneteers",² like those other society poets, Serafino and Desportes, a fact partly dictated by, partly in keeping with, the tenour of his verse:

Rightly considered, perhaps, the success of these poems should be judged by social rather than literary standards; they require their milieu, or at least an awareness of their milieu, to complete them, as a libretto requires music. (3)

Amongst Constable's sonnets are, for instance, twenty-two addressed to Penelope Rich; several to the Queen, and to King James; and various others, written to Arabella Stuart, Frances Walsingham, the Countess of Shrewsbury, and the sister Countesses of Cumberland and Warwick; with all of whom the poet had ties of family or service. Said at one time to have been "favorito de la Regina",⁴ the courtier followed in the family tradition of public service⁵ not only by entering the field of diplomacy, but also that of apologetics.⁶ Under Sir Francis Walsingham, previously his father's patron, Constable journeyed to Scotland, and presumably first made the acquaintance of James VI⁷; possibly through his connection with

¹The Poems of Henry Constable, Liverpool, 1960, "Introduction", pp.10 f.

²ibid., p. 76.

³idem.

⁴ibid., p. 26.

⁵ibid., p. 20.

⁶See the sonnet to the Queen, Diana, II, i, 3, Poems, op.cit., p. 139.

⁷ibid., p. 21.

Walsingham, whose daughter, Frances, was Sidney's wife, he came into the Sidney-Essex circle, to which Penelope Rich, Robert Devereux's sister, belonged. His duty to "my Ladie Rich" was no empty formality, but was vindicated in such enterprises as his attempt to win James's favour for her brother, the Earl of Essex. On the same mission to Scotland, "he also brought commendations from the Countesses of Cumberland and Warwick".¹ Related to Arabella Stuart and the Countess of Shrewsbury by virtue of the influential Talbot family,² Constable was clearly assiduous in maintaining such useful connections. The way to success lay in placing one's self under the influence of important patrons; it was the sixteenth-century equivalent of "knowing the right people". Henry Constable, "a busie yong man",³ was sensibly pursuing the means to achieve a successful career:

His tributes were paid...to the great ladies of the court, and self-advancement, perhaps, rather than self-expression, was the end he had in view. (4)

In the context of the age, this is not necessarily an adverse criticism.

This does not mean, however, that all sonnets of compliment were necessarily written out of self-interest, or with the hope of gain. Tributes were undoubtedly called forth by genuine admiration,

¹ ibid., p. 28.

² ibid., pp. 17f, 26, note 5.

³ ibid., p. 15.

⁴ ibid., p. 76.

as in the congratulatory sonnets to England, the Queen, Lord Howard of Effingham, and Sir Francis Drake, by James Le^o, the translator of An Answer to the Vntruthes, Published and Printed in Spaine, in Glorie of Their Supposed Victorie atchieued against our English Navie, 1589,¹ or those addressed to the memory of Sir Philip Sidney, amongst which figure three by Constabl^e,² or the sequence mourning the passing of the great Queen in Thomas Newton's Poetical Excursive Discourse of our late Eliza, 1603.³ Nonetheless, the sonnet was very much a poem marking distinctions in rank, and was only rarely composed to a subject still living of lower social standing than the writer. The only exceptions appear to have been those quatorzains addressed to artists, such as Raleigh's fine sonnet praising Spenser's Faerie Queene, and that of Sir Arthur Gorges to the miniaturist, Nicholas Hilliard.⁴ In each case, these poems include a compliment to a third person, the unattainable Petrarchan lady: in Gorges's case, perhaps Douglas Howard;⁵ in Raleigh's, Elizabeth herself:

¹by D.F.R. de M. The sonnets are printed on pp. 10, 13, 17, and 20.

²Diana, III, ii, 4-6, Poems, ed. Grundy, pp.167-69. Commemorative sonnets of Sidney's death were also written by Sir A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 97, Poems, ed. H.E.Sandison, Oxford,1953; by King James, The Poems of James VI of Scotland, ed.J.Craigie, Scottish Text Society, Third Series, no. 26, Edinburgh and London, 1958, II, 105.

³Reprinted by J. Nichols, in The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, [second ed.], 1823, III, 628-39.

⁴Vannetyes and Toyes, 75, Poems, ed. Sandison. Constable also has a sonnet to Hilliard on the latter's portrait of Lady Rich, Diana, II, iii, 7, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 158.

⁵See Poems, ed. Sandison, "Commentary", p. 208.

Methought I saw the graue, where Laura lay,
 Within that Temple, where the vestall flame
 Was wont to burne, and passing by that way,
 To see that buried dust of liuing fame,
 Whose tumber faire loue, and fairer vertue kept,
 All suddainly I saw the Faery Queene:
 At whose approach the soule of Petrarke wept,
 And from thenceforth those graces were not seene.
 For they this Queene attended, in whose steed
 Obluion laid him downe on Lauras herse:
 Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
 And grones of buried ghostes the heuens did perse.
 Where Homers spright did tremble all for grieffe,
 And curst th' accesse of that celestiall theife. (1)

Such poems illustrate the mutual benefits of patronage. Spenser stood to gain from the association of the influential name of Sir Walter Raleigh with his epic, just as Raleigh would receive reflected glory from the achievement of his brilliant poet; and whilst Hilliard might have achieved further fame from being acknowledged^d in courtly verse, the sonneteer's connection with the fashionable painter would probably have added to his social standing. Thus the situation underlying the Petrarchan sonnet was vindicated, in that the subjects had something to offer their eglogizers.

The poem, elaborate in structure and decorative in style, in keeping with the tastes of those who loved the gorgeous extravagance of court fashions, was of sufficient length^c to be courteous without becoming tedious. It was admirably suited to comment upon the occasion, and to add the right touch of gallantry which would lend graciousness to an event or a gesture; to record a lady's walking

¹The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh, ed. A.M.C. Latham, The Muses Library, 1951, no. 13.

in a garden,¹ or playing the virginals²; to accompany a portrait,³ or a gift.⁴ An example of the last usage can be found in Francis Davison's Poetical Rhapsody, where one sonnet is inscribed "To a worthy Lord (now dead)" to whom the poet offered works of Caesar and Tacitus as a New Year's gift:

Worthily, famous Lord, whose Virtues rare,
 Set in the golde of neuer-stain'd Nobilitie,
 And noble minde shining in true humilitie,
 Make you admir'de of all that vertuous are:
 If as your Sword with enuy imitates
 Great Caesars Sword in all his deedes victorious,
 So your learn'd Pen would striue to be glorious,
 And write your Acts perform'd in forrein States;
 Or if some one with the deepe wit inspir'd,
 Of matchles Tacitus would them historifiè,
 Thē Caesars works so much we should not glorifie,
 And Tacitus would be much lesse desir'd.
 But till your selfe, or some such put them forth,
 Accept of these as Pictures of your worth. (5)

The worthy lord was probably Essex, to whom the brothers Davison looked for advancement partly because he was the bitter enemy of Burghley, who had taken the secretaryship away from their father.⁶

¹H. Constable, Diana, I, vii, 1, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 130.

²W. Shakespeare, The Sonnets, ed. H.C. Beeching, Boston and London, 1904, sOn. 128.

³H. Constable, Diana, II, ii, 3, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 147, and "Commentary", p. 235. The Ditchley portrait of Queen Elizabeth, now in the National Portrait Gallery, painted for her visit to Sir Henry Lee in 1592, has a sonnet incorporated into the picture on the lower right hand side. Careless framing has obliterated the line endings.

⁴F. Davison, A Poetical Rhapsody, 1602-1621, ed. H.E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, I, nos. 48, 149; W. Shakespeare, Sonnets, 77.

⁵ed. Rollins, I, no. 48.

⁶ibid., "Notes", II, 130 f; cf. also Davison's Poetical Rhapsody, ed. A.H. Bullen, 1890, "Introduction", I, xxxviii, note 1.

Patronage was not confined solely, however, to the social and political circles, but overlapped into the literary world. Literature is always in need of patrons; in the twentieth century, they are supplied by the reading public; in the sixteenth, the roles were filled by people specially selected by the authors, to whom the books were sometimes personally offered. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that this was the ideal situation; it was beginning to change in the reign of Elizabeth, whilst patrons such as the Countess^{es} of Pembroke and Bedford gathered about them groups of literary men, much as the courts of the Medici or of Castiglione's Urbino had encouraged and supported artists and authors, the expanding book trade was altering the system of literary patronage. The increasing number of authors was out of proportion to the patrons available, and therefore writers were to become more dependent on the public who bought their works, than on the favour of one individual. In the sixteenth century, however, the literary profession was still in a transitional stage between the dependence of medieval times upon the patron, and the independence it was to achieve during the eighteenth century.¹ It was still necessary to dedicate books to patrons in the hope of financial reward, and since many writers published first and sought a patronage afterwards, there was a tendency towards the use of multiple dedications in the

¹See P. Thomson, "The Literature of Patronage, 1580-1603", Essays in Criticism, 1952, II, 270.

attempt to win over potential patrons.¹ Along with this development grew the increasing practice of including commendatory verses on preliminary sheets preceding an author's work,² a move to influence the general reader, who, in the absence of reviewers to offer him guidance, had to rely on the prefatory matter provided by the publisher, and his or the author's friends, to convince him that the writer was able, and the book worth reading. The dedication was to gain the favour of the individual; the commendation was to win over the many and, in the language of modern marketing, to boost sales.

With the growth of the popularity of the Petrarchan sonnet in the fifteen nineties, the stanza came to be used both for dedications³ and commendations; it was indeed the form especially advocated for the latter by King James:

For compendious praysing of any bukes, or the
 authouris thairof, or ony argumentis of vther
 historeis,...vse Sonet verse, of fourtene lynis,
 and ten fete in euery lyne. (4)

The poem is to be found fulfilling both functions and occurring in all types of books, from technical treatises such as William

¹ ibid., p. 271.

² F.B. Williams, Jr., An Index of Dedications and Commendatory Verses in English Books before 1641, Bibliographical Soc., 1962, p. xi. Out of a representative selection of seventy literary, religious, theoretical, and scientific works published in England between 1558 and 1589, I discovered only ten sonnets; whilst ninety-three books published between 1590 and 1603, selected on the same principle, gave a total of forty-eight commendatory quatorzains.

³ See C. Gebert, An Anthology of Elizabethan Dedications and Prefaces, Philadelphia, 1933, "Introduction", p.5.

⁴ James VI, Ane Schort Treatise, 1584, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, I, 223.

Barlow's Navigator's Supply, 1597, to popular biography like Charles Fitz-Geffrey's Sir Francis Drake, 1596; from religious works, represented by Lok's Ecclesiastes, 1597, to works of love, amongst which can be numbered several sonnet sequences,¹ and even Nashe's scurrilous Choise of Valentines. The convenient length of the quatorzain was undoubtedly one reason why it was chosen; the actual timing of the choice suggests another, more fundamental cause, that of the inter-relation of patronage, Petrarchanism, and the sonnet.

For as the lover wrote his sonnet sequence to praise his lady and to persuade her to grant him her favour, so the writers of dedicatory and commendatory sonnets wrote to praise the patron or the author or the book, and to persuade the individual or the public at large to favour the work by kind acceptance, or by protecting it or its author from the carping Momuses and Zoiluses who were the bogey-men of Elizabethan criticism.

In vain I thinke right honourable Lord,
 By this rude rime to memorize thy name;
 Whose learned Muse hath writ her owne record,
 In golden verse, worthy immortal fame:
 Thou much more fit (were leasure to the same)
 Thy gracious Souerains praises to compile.
 And her imperiall Maiestie to frame,
 In loftie numbers and heroicke stile.
 But with thou maist not so, giue leaue a while
 To baser wit his power therein to spend,

¹H. Constable, Diana, 1592; B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 1593; G. Fletcher, Licia, 1593; Diana (augmented) 1593; S. Daniel, Delia, 1594; M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 1594; W. Smith, Chloris, 1596.

Whose grosse defaults thy daintie pen may file,
 And vnaduised ouersights amend.
 But euermore vouchsafe it to maintaine
 Against vile Zoilus backbitings vaine. (1)

What Ornaments might I devise, to fit
 Th' aspiring height of thy admired Spirit?
 Or what faire Garland worthy is to sit
 On thy blest Browes, that compasse in all Merit?
 Thou shalt not crowned be with common Bayes,
 Because for thee it is a Crowne too low,
 APOLLO's Tree can yeeld thee simple praise,
 It is too dull a Vesture for thy Brow:
 But with a Wreathe of Starres, shalt thou be crown'd,
 Which when thy working Temples doe sustaine,
 Will like the Spheares be ever moving round,
 After the royall Musicke of thy Braine:
 Thy skill doth equall PHOEBUS, not thy Birth:
 He to Heaven gives Musicke, thou to Earth. (2)

If to thee (Reader) it may welcome bee,
 The Critickes censure it will feare the lesse:
 For being young from feare it is not free,
 Which otherwise more courage might possesse.
 Reade, way, and try, but reade, and often trye
 The rules of skill whereto it doth direct:
 Triall may bring as much authoritie,
 As newnesse hinder it of due respect. (3)

Commendators sometimes aided their friends and acquaintances by providing sonnets for works with whose subject matter their names would be immediately connected; Spenser, poet of chivalry and statesmanship, gave his praise to Jones's translation of G.B. Nenna's Nennio or a Treatise of Nobility, 1595, and to Lewkenor's English rendering of Contarini's The Commonwealth and Gouernment of Venice, 1599; and Drayton, author of the legends of Robert Duke of Normandy and Mathilda, contributed a quatorzain for Christopher Middleton's

¹E.Spenser, The Faerie Queene, 1596, sonnet to Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, Poetical Works, ed.J.C.Smith and E.de Selincourt, Oxford Standard Authors, p.412.

²M.Drayton, The Barons Wars, 1619, sonnet to the author by T.Greene, Works of Michael Drayton, ed.J.W.Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, II, 6. In italics except for the words in capitals.

³W.Barlowe, The Navigators Supply, 1597, "To the Reader", by I.R., [ll. 5-12], sig.[b3 verso].

Legend of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, 1600. The unaffected warmth and good-will of many of these poems, and the friends' pride in the writers' achievements, contained a fervour not unlike that expressed in Petrarchan love poetry, and certainly a high regard for worth and ability was fostered by the courtly passion:

C Come Sacred graces, and applaude the spirrit
 O Of MICHIEL COIGNET, for his gratefull deede
 I Intaking this same praise-deseruinge paines.
 G Grace him to after-ages that succede,
 N No other Author like deserte attaynes
 E Enuye, his vvorthe beyonde thy power extends
 T Tyme, Truthe, and Fame, are learninges faithfull frendes.
 (1)

Commendatory sonnets were designed to sell the works they appeared in by giving some indication of the author's talents, and, sometimes, the profit to be gained from his book.² The kind of patronage that was hoped for from the judicious use of the dedicatory sonnet is more difficult to ascertain. It is evident that their writers did not always rely upon the generosity of one patron alone; in some thirty works written between 1590 and 1603 containing dedicatory quatorzains was found a total of over one hundred and fifty of these poems. Spenser's Faerie Queene included, besides a prose dedication to Elizabeth, seventeen sonnets addressed to the foremost nobility of the realm; Barnes's Parthenophil and

¹A. Ortelius, His Epitome of the Theatre of the Worlde, 1603, sonnet on the author by S.R., [ll. 8-14, prelim. 8]. In italics throughout.

²cf. C. de Sainliens, The Frenche Littleton, [1576], (misprinted 1566 on the title page), sonnet by G. Gascoigne, [prelim. . . iij]; J. de la Vardin, The Historie of George Castriot, 1596, sonnet by R.C., [prelim. viii], N. Ling, Politeuphia, [second ed.], 1598, sonnet by M. D[rayton], sig.[A4]. See also preceding quotation, p. 316, and I.R.'s sonnet before W. Barlowe's Navigators Supply, quoted above, p. 315.

Parthenophe similarly employed multiple dedications, as did Weever's Epigrammes, and Davies of Hereford's Microcosmos; but the largest single number, that of sixty quatorzains, was in the 1597 edition of Henry Lok's Ecclesiastes. According to the poet's editor, A.B. Grosart, these poems "seem chiefly to have been ~~inscribed~~ inscribed in gift-copies" of the work. The practice of such writers is in effect the same as that of Constable, who, as we have seen,¹ offered his poems of compliment to a wide circle of dignitaries. It is reasonable to assume that an author hoped for perhaps more than the gracious acceptance of his work; possibly for more than the forty shillings assumed to be the usual fee for dedications.² Miss Eleanor Rosenberg, in her study, Leicester, Patron of Letters, has argued plausibly that writers of serious works hoped for preferment to public or clerical offices.³ This appears to be borne out in the case of Henry Lok:

in 1596 and in 1598 - before and after the publication of his Poems - he was a solicitor to SIR ROBERT CECIL for a small public appointment. (4)

Cecil was one of the twelve privy councillors whom Lok addressed in some of the sonnets appended to Ecclesiastes; and there the great man figures as

¹See above, p.307f.

²P. Sheavyn, The Literary Profession in the Elizabethan Age, Manchester, 1909, p.26.

³New York, 1955, "Introduction", p. xvii f.

⁴Poems of Henry Lok, ed. A.B.Grosart, "Memorial Introduction", p.74, Miscellanies of the Fulmer Worthies Library, II, 1871. (Pagination refers to that of the volume, not of the individual work.)

...my hopes sweet life, muse to my muse,
Kind foster-father of deseruing sprights. (1)

In addition, the quatorzain to the Countess of Derby may contain a covert request for her to intercede for the royal favour on Lok's behalf

From one presumption, vnto more I slide,
And giue the raigne so much to rash desire
That I make publike what I ought to hide,
And seeke my sanctuary in that heauenly fire,
Whose image of perfection I admire,
In our rare goddessse, wisdome's dearest light,
Whose grate aspect, my many wants require,
to clense the clouds, which blind my iudgmets sight:
And such faire starres, as you - who influence haue
Of her bright beames - to giue some light I craue. (2)

There is no evidence that Lok, who complained in another quatorzain of "The world to me vnkind and carelesse growne",³ received an appointment from Cecil or the Queen.

For the author who was primarily a man of letters, the cherished hope was no doubt for a place in one of the great circles of patronage. This would yield a certain amount of security, though not perhaps lasting, as the peregrinations of Danjel and Drayton indicate. One of the attractions of such a position was undoubtedly the opportunities it afforded for the artist's development, for the poet would not only have written at the suggestion and encouragement of the patron, but would have discussed and formulated his views on the critical and artistic problems of the day, and explored and

¹ ibid., Sonnet to Sir Robert Cecil, [ll. 1-2], p. 404.

² ibid., Sonnet to the Countess of Derby, [ll. 5-14], p. 431 f. Ecclesiastes and Sundry Christian Passions were both dedicated to the Queen, see Poems, pp. 99 ff., 139 ff.

³ ibid., sonnet to Robert and Anne Moyle, [l. 5], p. 429.

discovered his poetic range amongst those who understood and sympathized with his aims.¹ Thus Samuel Daniel could write to the Earl of Pembroke that Wilton had been his best school,² even if he had perhaps found it necessary to break away from Mary Sidney's influence: he had learnt the fields towards which his talents should, and should not, have been directed.³

The means by which all kinds of patronage, whether monetary, or of a more permanent kind, were to be won were the same as those by which the Petrarchan lover was to win his lady, praise of the subject's rare perfections, and the service of a dutious, grateful, and humble heart. The praise offered and expected ran along the same lines for both love poetry and the poetry of compliment; beauty, virtue, nobility, wisdom, accomplishments,⁴ were themes equally applicable to both sexes, as a comparison of the two following sonnets will show. The first is a courtly tribute to one of the ladies of the influential Howard family; the second, the dedicatory sonnet from Davison's A Poetical Rhapsody:

Faire, is to base for Nature's excellence,
Rich, all too meane for such a mind of treasure:
All, but too few to do her reuerence,

¹See J. Buxton, Sir Philip Sidney and the English Renaissance, 1954, p. 11 f.

²A Defence of Ryme, [?1604], "Epistle dedicatory", Poems and A Defence of Ryme, ed. A.C. Sprague, 1950, p. 129.

³J. Rees, Samuel Daniel, 1964, p. 65.

⁴See above, p.284f.

Uertue her selfe doth loue her out of measure.
 No earthly coast containeth such a creature,
 Chose by the heauens, to shew the earth a wonder:
 Ioy of the earth, the miracle of Nature,
 Sent to the wise to set all wits asunder,
 How farre she is aboue all humane sence,
 Aske of the Gods for men cannot discerne:
 When such I find her secret excellence,
 As wit and reason are too weake to learne.
 Rare is the worke that Nature thus hath ended,
 Daintie the end that cannot be amended. (1)

Great Earle, whose high and noble minde, is higher
 And nobler, then thy noble high Degree:
 Whose outward shape, though it most louely bee,
 Doth in faire Robes a fairer Soule attier:
 Who Rich in fading Wealth, in endlesse Treasure
 Of Vertue, Valour, Learning, richer art:
 Whose present greatnes, men esteeme but part
 Of what by line of future Hope they measure.
 Thou Worthy Sonne, vnto a peerlesse MOTHER,
 Thou Nephew to great SIDNEY of renowne,
 Thou that deseru'st thy CORONET to crowne
 With Lawrell Crowne, a Crowne excelling t'other;
 I consecrate these Rimes to thy great NAME,
 Which if thou like, they seeke no other fame. (2)

The practical application of virtue, such as statesmanship and military prowess for male patrons, fell easily into the pattern of the Petrarchan sonnet, in which the subject was always politic, and sometimes described as a warrior.³ The generosity of a patron's bounty could also be paralleled in the love poem's praise of the lady's magnanimity, and the petitioner received his reward with the same grateful duty as the lover a kiss or kindness from his

¹Brittons Bower of Delights, 1591, ed. H.E.Rollins, Huntington Library Publs., Cambridge, Mass., 1933, no. 34, p. 37. In black letter throughout. The editor points out that this is an acrostic sonnet, "Notes", p. 90.

²Poetical Rhapsody, ed.Rollins, I, 3. In italics throughout

³See L.C.John, The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences, New York, 1938, pp. 62 f., 162. cf. also C. Gebert, Anthology of Eliz.Dedications, "Introduction", p. 15 f.

mistress:

Most Noble Lord the pillor of my life,
 And Patrone of my Muses pupillage,
 Through whose large bountie poured on me rife,
 In the first season of my feeble age,
 I now doe liue, bound yours by vassalage:
 Sith nothing euer may redeeme, nor reauue
 Out of your endlesse debt so sure a gage,
 Vouchsafe in worth this small gift to receauue,
 Which in your noble hands for pledge I leaue,
 Of all the rest, that I am tyde t'account. (1)

This attitude is so basic to both situations, indeed, that a similar poem, occurring in Shakespeare's sequence, is not at all out of place in the expression of the idealized affection which the poet felt for his Friend:

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
 Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
 To thee I send this written ambassage,
 To witness duty, not to show my wit:
 Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
 May make seembare, in wanting words to show it,
 But that I hope some good conceit of thine
 In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it;
 Till whatsoever star that guides me moving
 Points on me graciously with fair aspect
 And puts apparel on my tatter'd loving,
 To show me worthy of thy sweet respect:
 Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee;
 Till then not show my head where thou mayst prove me. (2)

However, the advantages were not entirely upon the poet's side.

The patron would benefit from the achievements of his protégé:

If my slight Muse do please those curious days,
 The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise. (3)

¹E. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, sonnet to Lord Grey of Wilton, [ll. 1-10], *Poetical Works*, *Oxford Standard Authors*, p. 412.

²*Sonnets*, ed. Beeching, son. 26.

³*ibid.*, 38, ll. 13-14.

This argument was of use in persuading the continuance of support:

O leaue not, still to grace thy worke in mee:
 Let not the quickning seede be ouer-throwne,
 Of that which may be borne to honour thee.
 Whereof, the vtrauaile I may challenge mine,
 But yet the glory, (Madam) must be thine. (1)

Vouchsafe, right virtuous Lord! with gracious eyes,
 ...To view my Muse with your judicial sight;
 Whom, when time shall have taught, by flight, to rise
 Shall to thy virtues, of much worth, aspire. (2)

This was one aspect of the real benefit which befell the generous supporter of the poet: his name would be immortalized in his poet's work:

Who euer gaue more honourable prize
 To the sweet Muse, then did the Martiall crew;
 That their braue deeds she might immortalize
 In her shril tromp, and sound their praises dew?
 Who then ought more to fauour her, then you
 Most noble Lord, the honor of this age,
 And Precedent of all that armes ensue?
 ...Sith then each where thou hast dispredd thy fame,
 Loue him, that hath eternized your name. (3)

In this lay the great gift which the creative writer could offer his patron:

Liue Lord for euer in this lasting verse,
 That all posteritie thy honour may reherse. (4)

¹S. Daniel, Delia, 1594, sonnet to the Countess of Pembroke, Poems, ed. Sprague, p.170 f. In italics throughout. C. Schaar, Elizabethan Sonnet Themes and the Dating of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Lund and Copenhagen, 1962, p.36 ff., believes Daniel to be the debtor.

²B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 1593, sonnet to the Earl of Southampton, [ll. 9, 12-14], Elizabethan Sonnets, ed. S. Lee, 1904, I, cf. also ibid., sonnet to the Earl of Northumberland, p. 313. 314 f

³E. Spenser, Faerie Queene, sonnet to Sir John Norris, [ll. 1-7, 13-14], Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors, p. 412.

⁴ibid., sonnet to Lord Hunsdon [ll. 13-14], p.412; cf. also ibid., sonnet to Lord Howard, p. 411.

The theme was not confined to dedicatory lines alone, but was also used in commendatory sonnets. Drayton was lauded for making Mathilda and Robert immortal in his Legends,¹ and Charles Fitz-Geffrey links the immortality of Thomas Storer's fame as a poet with that of Cardinal Wolsey, whose biography in verse Storer had written.² In his own life of Drake, Fitz-Geffrey established a similar bond between poet and subject in his address to the adventurer's widow:

So may heroique DRAKE, whose worth gave wings
Vnto my Muse that nere before could flie,
And taught her tune these harsh discordant strings,
A note above her rurall minstralsie,
Live in himselfe, and I in him may live,
Thine eies to both vitalitie shall give. (3)

All these writers were using the "eternizing" conceit of Petrarchan verse, by which the poet claimed to have made his beloved immortal, and sometimes acknowledge^d that his fame as an artist lay in those same poems.⁴ This example from Constable's volume of 1592 indicates how close the connection was between the two types of poem, of love and of compliment, since "his absent Diana" was presumably the subject of his sonnets, Lady Rich:

¹Mathilda, 1594, sonnet to the author by Anonimos, The Works, ed. J.W. Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, I, 216; Legend of Robert Duke of Normandy, 1596, sonnet by Mirocinus, ibid., I, 248.

²"To M. Drayton", The Life and Death of Thomas Wolsey Cardinall, 1599, [sig. A4].

³Sir Francis Drake, Oxford, 1596, sonnet to Lady Elizabeth Drake, [ll. 9-14], sig. A2.

⁴See above, p. 271.

Shed not one teare my teares to recompence:
 But ioy in this (though Fates gainst mee repine)
 My verse still liues, to witnes thee diuine. (1)

The basic correspondances underlying the relationships of both lover and lady, patron and protégé, inevitably led to the use of Petrarchan techniques to express each situation:

Just as the sonneteer elevated his beloved, real or imaginary, into an Elizabethan Beatrice, and the nobleman courted his goddess-queen, so some writers composed almost amorous paeans to patrons, male and female. (2)

Amorous, but in the idealized, Petrarchan sense of the term, in which sensuousness never degenerated into sensuality, but, like a jewel (a conventional Petrarchan image) retained its power to excite a rarefied desire, whilst itself remaining remote and cold. Miss Grundy's comments on Constable's sonnets could be applied more widely to the writers of social compliment:

In "the sweete conceites of Philip du Portes" he found both the right attitudes and the right temperature of feeling for his purposes. All the attitudes of an icy adoration - the constant idealisation of the lady, the emphasis on her divinity, the comparison of her to the sun and of the poet in his aspiration to Icarus - are expressed there with precise, almost business-like, efficiency. (3)

Petrarchanism could be so completely lacking in sensuality, that its terminology could even be applied to the descriptions of towns or places:

¹Diana, 1592, "To his absent Diana", ll. 12-14, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 109.

²E.H. Miller, The Professional Writer in Elizabethan England, Cambridge, Mass., 1959, p. 96 f.

³Poems of Henry Constable, "Introduction", p. 76.

Fayer mayden towne that in rich Thetis armes,
 Hast still been fostered since thy first foundatiō,
 Whose glorious beauty cald vnnubred swarmes
 Of rarest spirits from each forrein natiō,
 And yet (sole wonder to all Europes eares,
 Most louely Nymph, that euer Neptune got)
 In all this space of thirteene hundred yeares,
 Thy virgins state ambition nere could blot.
 Now I prognosticate thy ruinous case,
 When thou shalt from thy Adriatique seas,
 View in this Ocean Isle thy painted face,
 In these pure colours coyest eyes to please,
 Then gazing in thy shadowes peereles eye,
 Enamour'd like Narcissus thou shalt dye. (1)

When circumstances were so favourable, the writer of the poem of compliment might add to the gallantry of his verse by explicitly adopting the persona of the Petrarchan lover himself, as we can see in the two following examples. The first is by Constable, and was addressed to James VI on the occasion of his delayed return, on account of the hard ^wWinter, from Denmark in 1590. The poet, the known servant of Lady Rich, found his Petrarchan devotion offered him the occasion for a pretty conceit, based on the conventional ice/fire antithesis. The second is a commendatory sonnet by Thomas Hassel before Drayton's Heroicall Epistles, in which the commendator's role of lover provided a pleasing compliment to the author, and a recommendation to his readers:

If I durst loue as heertofore I haue
 Or that my heart durst flame as it doth burne
 The ice should not so longe stay youre returne
 My heart should easely thaw the frozen waue

¹G. Contarini, The Commonwealth and Government of Venice, trans. L. Lewkenor, 1599, Sonnet by I. Ashley, [p.3 verso]. cf. also G. Gascoigne, Posies, 1575, ed. J.W. Cunliffe, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge, 1907, p.331, "Not stately Troye". For further proof of the adaptability of Petrarchanism, see G. Chapman, Ovids Banquet of Sence, 1595, "A Coronet for his mistresse Philosophie", Poems, ed. P.B. Bartlett, New York and London, 1941.

But when my payne makes me for pittie craue
 The blindest see with what iust cause I mourne
 So least my torment to hir blame should turne
 My heart is forc'd to hide the fire she gaue

But what doth need the sea my heart at all
 Thow and thy spouse be suns, in beautye shee
 In wisdom thow, the sun we Phoebus call
 And Phoebus for thy wisdom we call thee
 Now if the sun can thaw the sea alone
 Cannot two suns supplie the want of one. (1)

Long have I wisht, and hop'd my weaker Muse
 (In nothing strong, but my unhappie Love)
 Would give me leave my fortune to approve,
 And view the World, as named Poets use;
 But still her fruitlesse Bosome doth refuse
 To blesse me with indifference of Prayse,
 Not daring (like to many) to abuse
 That Title, which true Worth should onely rayse:
 Thus Bank'rout, and despairing of mine owne,
 I set my wish and hope (kind Friend) on thee,
 Whose Fruit approv'd, and better Fortune knowne,
 Tells me, thy Muse my Loves sole Heire must be;
 So barren Wombes imbrace their Neighbors yong,
 So dumbe Men speake by them that have a Tongue. (2)

Whilst this type of compliment could be very effective, as in Constable's sonnet to Lady Clinton,³ the tendency to adopt it for every occasion sometimes makes it by our standards incongruous and rather shocking. Constable's address to Frances Walsingham, probably written soon after the death of her first husband, Sir Philip Sidney,⁴ affords a good example of this. He based the sonnet upon the "murdered heart" conceit, and the theme of revenge:

¹Diana, II, i, 7, Poems, ed. Grundy, p.143. cf. also ibid., II, i, 6, p.142.

²Works of Michael Drayton, ed. Hebel, II, 131. (This sonnet was first published in the 1596 edition of Englands Heroicall Epistles.) cf. E. Spenser, Faerie Queene, sonnet to Raleigh, where the patron is appositely cast in the role of lover.

³Diana, II, iii, 5, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 156.

⁴See Poems, op.cit., "Commentary", p.237 f. cf. also ibid., II, iii, I, p. 152; III, ii, 7, p.170.

Sweetest of Ladies if thy pleasure be
 To murder hearts, stay not in England still,
 Revenge on Spain thy husbands death, and kill
 His foes, not them that love both him and thee.

.... thus ambitious Spaine
 Unsatisfied the new-found world to gayne,
 Two better worlds should have, I meane thine eyes.
 And we our world, our world his sun should misse,
 Our sun his heaven, thine eye our want supplies:
 Our world, our sun, our heaven, our all it is. (1)

We have no record of contemporary reactions to such discomfoting attempts at comfort²; perhaps they were received for the sake of of the good-will which undoubtedly underlay them. But in these instances the Petrarchan sonnet fell short, for it was attempting to express an emotion which had no place in its scheme of love. The subject was always self-sufficient and self-possessed; he, or she, was to be praised and honoured, only rarely to be comforted³; even the indisposition of the beloved was approached from the point of view of the sadness and pain it caused the admirer⁴. Sorrow was felt only by the lover. The opportunity that sad occasions like bereavements offered the sonneteer was better fulfilled, therefore, in the expression of personal sorrow,⁵ or in the terms of praise for the dead

Mars and the Muses weare att mortall stryfe
 which of them had in Sydney grettest parte
 the one layde clayme unto his valyaunt harte
 The other to his mynde in knowledge ryfe

¹Diana, II, iii, 4, ll. 1-4, 9-14, Poems, op.cit., p. 155.

²cf. also the sonnets of another Elizabethan, Sir Arthur Gorges, to Queen Anne and Princess Elizabeth, prefacing The Olympian Catastrophe, 1612, Poems, ed. Sandison, pp. 137, 138.

³See A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 48, Poems, op.cit.

⁴See P. Sidney, Certain Sonnets, 8-11; A & S, 101-102, Poems, ed. Ringler.

⁵See H. Constable, Diana, III, ii, 4, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 167; A. Gorges, Later Poems, 107, Poems, ed. Sandison.

This parragon applyinge Bothe to please
 his spryte and penn gave to Arcadia soyle
 hys harte and hand in flaunders warrs to toyle
 Which partage ryche dyd eyther parte appease
 But enuyous Death that equalls Slave and kinge
 with one dyre stroake reafte bothe these powres theyr
 of which great spoyle no share to hym could ryse
 For worthy fame that foyles Deathes loathsome^{pryse} styng
 Entombes his harte in wyde worlds love and prayse
 And of his mynde anewe heavensman doth rayse. (1)

The figure is based upon the traditional antagonism between opposites - reason and love, beauty and chastity - which, in amatory sonnets, are reconciled through or in the beloved alone.² A similar use of this conceit can be found in the fifth sonnet of Newton's Poetical Discursive Discourse commemorating the death of Elizabeth.³

The hyperbole of the love sonnet also found a place in the complimentary lines. "When we prayse men we call them gods",⁴ acknowledged Constable, in a quatorzain in which he apologized to Arabella Stuart for not blazing her "divinitie" by "some goddesses title". This is borne out in all kinds of laudatory sonnets; Mars and Neptune, according to James Lea, resigned their godheads to Lord Charles Howard, commander of the victorious fleet which defeated the Armada⁵; whilst Lok found even such exalted metaphors inadequate, when he attempted to assess the virtues of Essex's character:

¹A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 97, Poems, op.cit. cf. also H. Constable, Diana, III, ii, 5 and 6, Poems, op.cit., pp. 168-169.

²See above, p. 168ff.

³See J. Nichols, Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, III, 631.

⁴Diana, II, ii, 4, 1.9, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 148.

⁵D. R. F. de M., Answer to the Vntruthes Published in Spaine, p. 17.

Not Neptune's child, or Triton I you name,
 Nor Mars, nor Perseus, though a pere to all:
 Such word I would find out or newly frame,
 By sea and land might you triumphant call,
 Yet were such word for your desert too small. (1)

Enthusiastic friends commended an author's ability, as that of a Phoebus²; and one commendatory sonnet, prefixed to Chapman's Ovids Banquet of Sence, 1595, praises^d the god-like nature of those able to understand that abstruse writer's work:

But you high spirrits in thys cloud of gold
 Inioy (like Joue) this bright Saturnian Muse,
 Your eyes can well the dazeling beames behold
 This Pythian lightner freshly doth effuse
 To daunt the basenes of that bastard traine
 Whose wise borne iudgements, formeles still remaine. (3)

Since the gentlemen shared the divinity of the ladies, the devotional attitudes of the lover to his mistress were sometimes applied with equal appropriateness to male patrons; thus Barnabe Barnes offered his Parthenophil and Parthenophe to Southampton's "thrice sacred hand",⁴ and Constable opened a quatorzain to the Scottish king "whome as yet he had not seene" with the following terms:

Bloome of the rose I hope those hands to kisse
 Which yoyge a scepter which olde wisdom bore
 And offer vp ioy-sacrifice before
 Thy altar throne for that receaved blisse. (5)

The same attitudes persisted in the representation of the subject

¹Poems, ed. Grosart, sonnet to the Earl of Essex, [ll. 1-5], p. 398.

²See above, p.315.

³Sonnet by T. Williams, Poems of George Chapman, ed. Bartlett, p.51.

⁴Sonnet to the Earl of Southampton, [l. 1], Eliz.Sonnets, I, 314.

⁵Diana, II, i, 4, ll. 1-4, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 140.

as a planet; men and women shone with equal brilliance. Lucy, Countess of Bedford, at the time patron of Michael Drayton, was compared by E.B., in her support of her poet, to the pole-star which God fixed in the firmament:

...he the Pole-star, Cynosura cleere,
 Caused steddily to stand, though heaven did gyre,
 For an example to mens actions heere:
 Madam, you are starre of his desire;
 Whilst hee, his thoughts heaven moves, [^]ô gracious bee,
 And wonders in your Creature you shall see. (1)

Davies of Hereford likened the Duke of Lennox to another planet:

Thou like the Moone, among heau'ns lamps dost shine,
 Whilst Sol thy Sov'raigne goes the Globe about.
 Long maist thou (as he doth) give light to all,
 That pleas'd or pain'd, doe foote this earthy Ball. (2)

The eyes of each sex spread light of more than earthly glory. The following example is from Constable's sonnet to the Countesses of Cumberland and Warwick:

But if he aske which one is more devine?
 I say like to theyre owne twin eyes they are
 Where ~~e~~ither is as cleare as clearest star,
 Yet neyther doth more cleare then other shine. (3)

Barnes's lines to the Earl of Southampton also contain a compliment of the same nature:

Vouchsafe, right virtuous Lord! with gracious eyes,
 (Those heavenly lamps which give the Muses light,
 Which give and take, in course, that holy fire)
 To view my Muse with your judicial sight. (4)

¹ Mortimerados, 1596, "to...Lucie Countesse of Bedford", [ll. 9-14], Works of Michael Drayton, ed. Hebel, I, 308.

² Microcosmos, 1603, sonnet to the Duke of Lennox, [ll. 11-14], Works, ed. A.B.Grosart, Chertsey Worthies' Library, 1878, I, 95.

³ Diana, II, ii, 3, ll. 5-8, ^{Poems} ed. Grundy, p.146.

⁴ Parthenophil and Parthenophe, sonnet to the Earl of Southampton, [ll. 5-8], Eliz.Sonnets, I, 314 f.

The ladies and gentlemen of the Elizabethan court glitter as richly in the verse addressed to them as in the portraits in which they are sumptuously adorned with jewels and rich silks. It is perhaps only fair to patrons and protégés to accept the poetry in the same spirit that we accept the finery, as gorgeous ornament, befitting the nobility.

People of later generations have found Elizabethan compliment fulsome, some dismissing it as mere flattery.

The contest among authors in the art of adroit flattery, the effort to emulate one another in hyperbolic compliment, reached its height in the decade between 1590 and 1600 (1)

wrote Miss Gebert, of the dedication in the years of the strongest Petrarchan influence. Undoubtedly, some of the praise was ill-applied; and the gull, who had to be flattered by his starving dependent,² probably existed; perhaps there were even gallants who needed to be mollified by a judicious dedication, as Dekker suggested in The Gull's Horn-Book.³ But patronage was still a virtue in the sixteenth century, part of the chivalric virtue of magnanimity dear to the Elizabethans, and therefore the laud of literary and other patrons should not be dismissed too lightly. For, stripped of the elaborate compliment, the sonnets praising the great lords and ladies declare

¹Anthology of Eliz. Dedications, "Introduction", p.17.

²See The First Return from Parnassus, ?1599/1600, I, i, 281 ff., The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. J.B.Leishman, 1949.

³ed. R.B. McKerrow, The King's Classics, 1905, p.64.

that they were generous and fostered the muses, facts which emerge from other sources too. Nor, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, should we disallow the poets' claims that their subjects were wise and virtuous.

Cast glauncing eie into Queene Pallas Court,
 And scorene the dimnes of thy dazeled sight,
 Astound with Lord-and-Lady-Graces view:
 Idees how high, Abysses how profounde,
 Of valour braue, and admirable woorth. (1)

They may not have had these qualities in such superabundance as the verse suggests, but it would be ungenerous not to allow them the same degree of intelligence and good-nature and courage common to a large proportion of humanity in any age.

Moreover, we must allow for an Elizabethan interpretation of the lives of the great princes of the court in the terms of their own day. Petrarchanism must have acquired a particular significance in the Elizabethan court which was presided over by a being who must have appeared to have been ^{virtually} the manifestation of the Petrarchan lady. Elizabeth was indeed the most noble of women; she was a queen, and therefore according to the Renaissance theory of kingship, god-like; she was intelligent, learned, wise, and gifted. Elizabeth knew how to play the part of the Petrarchan mistress to perfection. She was fully aware of the political importance of her unmarried state, and the diplomatic virtues of remaining beyond the reach of the

¹G. Harvey, Foure Letters and Certaine Sonnets, 1592, son. 12, [11.8-12] The Works, ed. A.B.Grosart, Huth Library, 1884, I.

hopes of her suitors and their supporters; the Queen was always desirable, but always wedded to her virginity which her noble subjects, like Petrarchan admirers, regarded with almost mystical awe. Partly from temperament, partly from the pressure the combined roles of goddess-queen and woman imposed, Elizabeth was subject to the abrupt changes of mood sometimes displayed in the portrait of the Petrarchan lady. Her position as monarch meant that her favour had to be sought, and was hard won, even by her favourites. It followed naturally that her courtiers used the Petrarchan form of address to her,¹ and sonnets written to and about the Queen contained not only the correct attitudes of the age towards a great lady, but also a representation of the true nature of her position and influence as it appeared to her generation:

In that yow sway the Scepter and the Crowne
 And doo in Pompe lyke stately Juno Raigne
 Onely your selfe enjoyes nott such renowne,
 Prynces elsewhere lyke Roialtye retayne
 In that yow doo in shape and Bewtye bright
 The fairest of those hevenly three surpasse
 Who for th~~eyr~~ Judge dyd chuse the Trojan knight
 Nature affirmes her guyfte and good ytt was
 In that yow are Mynervas darlinge deare
 Your spryte endued with wisdom and with skill
 That in your browe such Glorye doth appeare
 Nott from discent from heaven ytt did distill
 But that in so high powre such temperance hath place
 That is your proper praise and gyves your greatnes grace. (2)

A similar argument could be put forward with regard to the laudatory quatorzains addressed to Essex, all of which stressed his outstanding

¹See, for example, the extracts from letters by Essex and Raleigh, printed in J.E. Neale's Queen Elizabeth I, 1958, pp.324, 328f.

²A.Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, 49, Poems, ed. Sandison. cf. also ibid., 47; H. Constable, Diana, II, i, 1-3, Poems, ed. Grundy, pp. 137-39; W. Raleigh, Poems, ed Latham, no. 45.

nobility and magnanimity, and which were written by men as different in temperament as Barnes, Daniel,¹ and Spenser from whose sonnet I quote:

Magnificke Lord, whose vertues excellent
 Doe merit a most famous Poets witt,
 To be thy liuing praises instrument,
 Yet doe not sdeigne, to let thy name be writt
 In this base Poeme, for thee far vnfitt. (2)

Chivalrous, valiant, if headstrong, and of outstanding personality, able to charm both the highest lady in the realm and the commonalty, Essex must indeed have seemed god-like to his generation. With more knowledge of the circumstances underlying other poems of this kind, the case for accepting them^{as} at least half-truths might gather support. In the event, there was no criticism of this method of praising until Petrarchanism was becoming a weed outworn:

I will not strive m'Invention to inforce,
 With needlesse words your eyes to intertaine,
 T&observe the formall ordinary course,
 That every one so vulgarly doth faine.
 Our interchanged and deliberate choice
 Is with more firme and true election sorted,
 Then stands in censure of the common voice,
 That with light humor fondly is transported.
 Nor take I patterne of anothers prayse,
 Then what my Pen may constantly avow,
 Nor walke more publique, nor obscurer wayes
 Then Vertue bids, and Judgement will allow;
 So shall my love and best endeavours serve you,
 And still shall study, still so as to deserve you. (3)

¹In G.B. Nenna, Nennio, trans. W. Jones, 1595, [prelim. 1 verso]. The two sheets containing four commendatory sonnets (by Spenser, Daniel, Chapman and Angel Day) are inserted between gatherings A and B.

²Faerie Queene, sonnet to the Earl of Essex, [ll. 1-5], Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors, p.411. In italics throughout

³M. Drayton, Legends, 1619, sonnet to Sir Walter Ashton, Works, ed. Hebel, II, 381.

Thus Drayton ends, true to the genuine values of Petrarchanism, having rejected its fashionable effusions,¹ There is no hint that he did not think that in certain cases high praise was justified.

Moreover, the Elizabethans had no mean in their praise or blame; that which they lauded, they extolled in the highest terms, that which they abhorred, they clothed in terms as strong in denigration. This does not mean that they had reached their conclusions without consideration, but there was no place for the processes of thought to be shown when the decision was made known to the reader. It must be remembered that the sixteenth century saw a close connection between the arts of poetry and oratory; rhetoric was one of the tools common to both. The orator's task was to persuade, as the poet's was to teach; each hoped for acquiescence, and this left no scope for a reasoned exposé of their individual thought processes to be ~~fr~~aced. Patrons, authors and their works, were all considered from this point of view.

If the praise of the latter still seems exorbitant to modern taste, we should refer it to the context of the age, and the increasing standing which native literature was achieving at this time.² The poets of the latter part of the reign had raised the pedestrian verse of the mid-Elizabethan period to heights which the earlier, pessimistic detractors of the English tongue had not deemed

¹cf. Idea, 1619, 31.

²See above, p.47f.

possible. We ought to allow the Elizabethans their natural pride in this real achievement.

Phoebus hath giuen thee both his bow, and Muse;
 With one thou slayst the artizans of thunder,
 And to thy verse doth such a sound infuse,
 That gatherd storms therewith are blowne in sunder:
 The other decks her with her golden wings
 Spred beyond measure, in thy ample verse,
 Where she (as in her bowrs of Lawrell) sings
 Sweet Philosophick strains that Feends might pierse,
 The soule of brightnes in thy darknes shines
 Most new, and deare: vnstainde with forraine graces,
 And when aspiring sprights shall reach thy lines,
 They will not heare our trebble-termed bases.
 With boldnes then thy able Poems vse
Phoebus hath giuen thee both his bow and Muse. (1)

However, if the Petrarchan sonnet was a suitable vehicle to convey commendation and praise, it was equally capable of doing the opposite. As in society the ideal chastity of the lady was balanced by the easy ^virtue of the courtesan, so in Petrarchan literature praise of perfection was offset by recriminations against feminine weakness. This element was present to some extent in most sonnet sequences, being voiced in outbursts against the mistress's unkindness and cruelty²; it was generally stylized and formal, because the lover's aim was not to alienate the lady by arousing her active hostility towards him; and, as we have seen, these aspects, which virtually represented woman's fallen nature, could

¹Ovids Banquet of Sence, "Richard Stapleton to the Author", Poems of George Chapman, ed. Bartlett, p.51. cf. T. Greene's sonnet to Drayton, quoted above, p. 315

²See above, p. 288f

even be turned into praise.¹ Censure was therefore a property of even the poem of courtly compliment:

Most sacred prince why should I thee thus prayse
Which both of sin and sorrow cause hast beene
Proude hast thow made thy land of such a Queene
Thy neighboures enviouse of thy happie dayes.

Who neuer saw the sunshine of thy rayes
An everlasting night his life doth ween,
And he whose eyes thy eyes but once haue seen
A thousand signes of burning thoughts bewrayes

Thus sin thow causd envye I meane and pride
Thus fire and darknesse doe proceed from thee
The very paynes which men in hell abide

Oh no not hell but purgatorie this
Whose sowles some say by Angells punish'd be
For thow art shee from whome this torment is. (2)

Some poems were not aimed at complimenting their subjects, but asserted the opposites of the Petrarchan values,³ and such sonnets have their parallels in the quatorzains of social insult which appeared in the long and unfortunate dispute between Harvey and Nashe. Sonnets as weapons were chiefly wielded by the doctor and his supporters. The partisanship of his friends gave them every opportunity for praising Harvey exorbitantly,⁴ and trouncing Greene or Nashe with the same degree of intensity:

The Muses scorne; the Courtiers laughing-stock;
The Countreys Coxecombe; Printers proper new;
The Citties Leprosie; the Panders stew;
Vertues disdayne; honesties aduerse rock;

¹ See above, p. 292.

² H. Constable, Diana, II, i, 2, Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 138.

³ See G. Gascoigne, Posies, ed. Cunliffe, p. 450, "With hir in armes that had my hart in holde"; ibid., p. 464, "an uncourteous farewell to an an inconstant Dame"; R. Greene, Greens Groats-worth of Wit, 1596, The Life and Complete Works, ed. A. B. Grosart, Huth Library, 1881-1886, XII, 129 f.

⁴ Pierces Supererogation, 1593, sonnets by B. Barnes, "Parthenophe", J. Thorius, and A. Chute, Works of Gabriel Harvey, ed. Grosart, II, 22, 24, 336, 337.

Enuies vile champion; slaunders stumblingblock.
 Graund /Oratour of Cunny-catchers crew;
 Base broaching tapster of reports vntrue,
 Our moderne Viper, and our Countryes mock;
 True Valors Cancer-worme, sweet Learnings rust.
 Where shall I finde meete colours, and fit wordes,
 For such a counterfaict, and worthlesse matter?
 Him, whom thou raylest on at thine owne lust,
 Sith Bodine and sweet Sidney did not flatter,
 His Inuectiue thee too much grace affordes. (1)

The method Barnes uses here can be paralleled in the Petrarchan love sonnet ("How shall I deck my Love in love's habiliment,/ And her embellish in a right depaint?"²); the line by line development is the same as that in, for example, the sonnet quoted on pages 319/320 of this chapter. The one sonnet Nashe himself contributed to the controversy similarly displays the adaptation of the techniques of Petrarchan poetry to his purpose:

Were there no warres, poore men should haue no peace;
 Mxcessant warres with waspes and droanes I crie:
 Hee that begins, oft knows not how to wease,
 They haue begun, Ile follow till I die.
 Ile heare no truce, wrong gets no graue in mee,
 Abuse pell mell encounter with abuse:
 Write hee againe, Ile write eternally.
 Who feedes reuenge hath found an endlesse Muse.
 If death ere made his blacke dart of a pen,
 My penne his speciall Baily shall becum:
 Somewhat Ile be reputed of mongst men,
 By striking of this duns, or dead or dum.
 Awaite the world the Tragedy of wrath,
 What next I paint shall tread no common path. (3)

Incorporated into this quatorzain are the themes that that which is most desirable is not easily won; that the poet is true to his

¹ibid., "Nash, or the confuting Gentleman" by "Parthenophil", II, 23. In italics, except for the proper names "Bodine" and "Sidney".

²Zepheria, 1594, 17, [ll. 1-2], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

³Strange Newes, 1592, Works, ed. R.B.McKerrow, Oxford, 1958, I, 333f.

role, (in amatory verse, to that of the lover, here, to that of antagonist), that, in this role, he will never cease to write; and that his pen will not produce the usual matter.

Not all the sonnets in the dispute show the same faithful adherence to Petrarchan models; those of the unknown gentlewoman, for example, have a style and vocabulary all their own¹; and some of Harvey's own verses, particularly those casting vituperation on Greene, and defending the Harvey family, depart from the Petrarchan tradition.² However, in those in which the doctor is administering mild reproof, more in sorrow than in anger, and desiring a reconciliation with his disputant, the formulae of the love poem are once again in evidence, as they are applicable to the situation:

Neuer Ulysses, or Aeneas tyr'd,
 With toying trauailes, and huge afflictions:
 As arrant penne, and wretched page bemyr'd
 With nasty filth of rancke-maledictions. .
 I seldome call a snarling Curr, a Curr:
 But wish the gnarring dog, as sweete a mouth,
 As brauest horse, that feeleth golden spurr:
 Or shrillest Trompe, that soundeth North, or South:
 Or most enchaunting Sirens voñce vncouth.
 Self-gnawing Harts, and gnashing Teeth of murr,
 How faine would I see Orpheus reuiu'd,
 Or Suadas hoony-bees in you rehiu'd?
 O most-delicious hooney-dewes, infuse
 Your daintiest influence into their Muse. (3)

The poet's extreme suffering, his desire for the object of his verse to be mollified, his use of classical allusion,⁴ all belong to the

¹See Pierces Supererogation, Works of Gabriel Harvey, ed. Grosart, II, 17f

²G. Harvey, Four Letters, sons. 1, 4, 18-20, Works, ed. Grosart, I.

³ibid., son. 7, Works, op.cit., I.

⁴cf. also ibid., son. 9, [ll. 5-8].

poetry of courtly passion. Similarly, Gabriel Harvey's pleas for reconciliation, particularly sonnet 17, would not, with minor alterations, be out of place in a sequence of love sonnets:

O mindes of Heauen, and wittes of highest Sphere,
 Molten most-tenderly in mutuall zeale:
 Each one with cordiall indulgence forbear,
 And Bondes of Loue reciproquely enseale.
 No/rose, no violet, no fragrant spice
 No nectar, nor Ambrosia so sweet
 As gracious Looue, that neuer maketh nice,
 But euery one embraceth, as is meet.
 Magne[t]s, and many thinges attractiue are:
 But nothing so allectiue vnder skyes,
 As that same dainty amiable Starre,
 That none, but grisly mouth of Hell, defyes.
 That Starre illuminate ælestiall Harts:
 Aad who, but Rancour, feeleth irkesome smartes? (1)

Harvey wrote at his best in these poems; by nature a sensitive man, he responded to the discipline and figures of Petrarchan verse, whereas sheer vituperation in other of his quatorzains leaves only an impression of meanness. These lack dignity; and dignity is a feature of the Petrarchan sonnet as its finest. It is not without significance that when Nashe, who was more fitted by temperament and disposition for the role of disputant than Harvey, wrote his quatorzain during the controversy, he relied upon the Petrarchan pattern. The sonnet held within its complex structure the key to those paradoxically closely-related opposites, love and hate.

¹Works, op.cit., I.

CHAPTER NINE

The Sonnet as a Reflective Poem

In any age, the sonnet is not a poem to be undertaken lightly. It is sinewy, and intellectually demanding, and cannot be treated as an ordinary lyric, the chief function of which is to convey a mood or an aspect of emotion.¹ The poet should come to the sonnet with something definite to say, something which can be expressed fully and completely in fourteen lines, but which leaves the reader pondering and revolving the implications of the issues presented in the perfect quintessence of the sonnet form. In all its manifestations, therefore, it is a reflective poem; it should be the expression of thoughts explored in depth by the poet, and compressed within the discipline of the stanza, to tease his readers into thought. It is thus suitable for the utterance of the deepest truths which mean most to man, and suitable for pursuing matters of discourse.²

The Elizabethans were aware of these facts, and used the sonnet accordingly for those situations and states of feeling which were of particular importance in their age. The quatorzain as a

¹ See G. Gascoigne, Certayne Notes of Instruction, 1575, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, I, 57.

¹ See below, p. 380ff

² See G. Gascoigne, Certayne Notes of Instruction, 1575, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, I, 57.

Petrarchan poem was, as we have seen, chiefly ^{of} human love, but it came to be adopted also to express man's spiritual aspirations, for the sixteenth century was deeply concerned with the soul as well as the body. A part of this concern, which sought to reconcile the two seemingly antagonistic forces of flesh and spirit, ^{was} mirrored in the strong moralistic strain which can be seen in all branches of Elizabethan writing, and which also came to be used in the sonnet, with its formal connection with the short, pithy epigram.¹

The sonnet did not become a religious poem until it had been well tried as a secular verse form, and until the Jesuit Robert Southwell had made a bid to reclaim poetry from purely amatory subject matter.² Nonetheless, there was nothing strange in a profane stanza being used for religious purposes, since a sharp division between kinds of poetry was not encouraged by Renaissance theory; poetry was held to be holy in origin and the product of the divine afflatus, and therefore the separation of forms into secular and devotional was meaningless to the sixteenth century. Poetic forms were fulfilling their functions most completely when treating of divine matters,³ and thus in theory all were equally capable of bearing witness to the glory of God. The sonnet was as suitable for this purpose as any other stanza.

¹See above, p. 18f.

²See above, p. 235.

³See above, p. 234.

The formal qualities of the poem can be viewed as an advantage in this respect. The fixed limits, the particular patterns which the structural divisions and the versification impose upon the contents, are amicable to conveying the clarity of thought and expression which is important to all kinds of poetry, but essential in religious verse which otherwise becomes blurred and sentimental. Moreover, the Elizabethan sonnet conferred a special nature on its subject matter which made the poem suitable for voicing both public and more private utterances, as we have seen in the quatorzain of love,¹ so that it was equally appropriate for recording personal meditations, as in the devotional sonnets of Constable and Alabaster (and later of Donne, in the Holy Sonnets, and of Herbert), and for the more general expression of these in Lok's verses, Breton's The Soules Harmony, 1602, and, to some extent, in Barnes's Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets, 1595. For the expression of the former attitude, the sonnet might have been used on account of its cogency, its ability to crystallize emotion and experience within a definite framework; for that of the latter, the stanza might have been chosen for the reason which, Professor Helen Gardner suggests, decided Donne to adopt the form in La Corona: "to create an offering of beauty and dignity".² In this respect, the writer of the religious quatorzain shared the same aim with the poet of the courtly Petrarchan sonnet.

¹See above, p.261ff

²J. Donne, The Divine Poems, ed. H. Gardner, Oxford, 1952, "Introduction", p.xxiii.

Indeed, an impetus of similar intensity and direction underlaid the poem in both its secular and sacred manifestations in the sixteenth century. The situation of the lover and his lady can be seen as having many features in common with that of the worshipper and his God. Love was the great good in the Petrarchan devotion, as it is in the Christian tradition; in its attainment lay all happiness; it was to be pursued by all the powers and selfless means at man's disposal. The Christian would avouch the same. Perfect happiness was to be attained by directing wholehearted service to one exalted being, the Petrarchan lover's lady; the Christian is enjoined to offer this duty to his personal God. The object of devotion, the Petrarchan beloved, remained aloof from her lover, who strove to win her favour, as God is always beyond the men He has created, whose efforts to know and love Him fail so often on account of their feet of clay. The lover was insignificant beside the virtues of his mistress; the Christian ^{is} unworthy before the perfection of God. The full reward for faithful service belonged in the Petrarchan tradition to a distant, future time, as it does in the Christian belief; that of the former, to an unspecified date when he might enjoy the full confidence of the beloved and her affection; that of the latter, to eternity spent in the comfort of divine love. The present for the Petrarchan lover was a time of striving, of hopeful aspirations, and momentary joy; or of sorrow, dashed hopes, and temporary failure, when only the quality of the lover's desire kept him resolute: this situation was and can be

paralleled in that of the Christian.

Such correspondencies are not fortuitous. Petrarchanism, as we have seen,¹ took its forms of duty and its terms from the religious observances of the Church; and neo-Platonism, which in the truly Petrarchan sonneteers was of great importance in the service of the beloved, has been part of much of Christian thinking since Augustine recognized the application of the pagan concept of the soul striving towards Good to that of the Christian reaching out to God. The sacred mingled easily with the profane in the Petrarchan tradition, and we may expect to find something of the same inter-relationship in expressions of divine love.

This is borne out not only in the sonnets themselves, but also in the prefatory epistles which Barnes and Lok prefixed to their published sequences. The Petrarchan attitudes of praise of the beloved, the lover's sense of his own unworthiness, and his miserable state fluctuating between hope and fear, were those which Barnes stressed when he apologized for the disordered arrangement of his spiritual sonnets, "their unequal coherence of praises, penitence and fearefull afflictions".² He also wrote of the "secret, and inseparable combat betwixt earth and my spirite, the prime motions, and sting of diuers wounds",³ thus adapting for religious use the language of the Petrarchan theme of the conflict

¹See above, p.207ff.

²A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets, 1595, "To the favourable and Christian Reader", The Poems of Barnabe Barnes, ed.A.B.Grosart, [p.160] Occasional Issues of Unique or Very Rare Books, Manchester, 1875, I.

³ibid., [p.159].

of opposite forces. In his epistle to the Christian reader, Lok also emphasized the contrary states which beset the sinner as they did the lover, the pious representation of which he hoped to convey in his Christian passions:

In which .l. may be seene the state of a regenerate soule, sicke with sinns, sometimes - ague-like - shivering with cold despaire, straight waies inflamed with feruencie of faith and hope. One while yielding vnder the burden of sinne to eternall death, and presently encouraged to runne cheafefully forward the appointed course of this his pilgrimage. (1)

The Christian sonneteer approached his God in the same manner as did the writer of Petrarchan love quatorzains. The titles of majesty, and praise of nobility and honourable descent, were adopted as as appropriate wayss of addressing the subjects of holy sonnets as they were for lauding the Petrarchan beloved or the great lords and ladies of the court. Examples in religious poems can be found in the works of Barnes and Constable, both writers of quatorzains of courtly compliment. Many of the poems of Barnes's Divine Centurie take the form of addresses to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and apply to the subjects fitting titles: for example, Christ is "Mylde king of Salem Lord of louely peace",² and in another stanza, "Hye Priest of Syon".³ Constable's sonnets "To the honour of God and hys Sayntes" are as formal in character and

¹Sundry Christian Passions, 1597, The Poems of Henry Lok, ed. A.B. Grosart, The Fuller Worthies' Library, II, 145.

²Son.17, l. 1, Poems, ed Grosart.

³ibid., 18, l. 1.

arranged in order of precedence as are those poems of Diana written in "the prayse of perticulars",¹ but almost invariably they have a warmth lacking in the secular sequence. The quality of bravery is praised in the sonnets to St. Michael and St. Margaret,² and the noble births and high descent of Christ and Our Lady³ are strongly emphasized, and illustrate the happy union of Petrarchan and religious convention. It is particularly well exemplified in the quatorzain to St. Katharyne:

Because thow wast the daughter of a kyng,
 whose beautye, dyd all natures workes exceede,
 and wysedome, wonder to the world dyd breede,
 a Muse myght rayse yt selfe on Cupids wyng.
 But syth theys graces which from Nature sprynge,
 were graff'd by those which from grace dyd proceede,
 and glory haith deserv'd; my muse doth neede
 an Angells feathers, when thy prayse I synge.
 For all in thee, became Angelycall:
 an Angells face, had Angells puritye:
 and thou an Angells tongue did'st speake withall.
 Loe why thy sowle seth free by Martyrdome,
 was croun'd by God in Angells company,
 and Angells handes thy body dyd intombe. (4)

Spiritual qualities, as the example above shows, were not neglected in the holy sonnets. Barnes was rapt with the contemplation of Divine Virtue, and extolled God's mercy, truth, justice, and His unchanging nature,⁵ and Lok was overwhelmed by the unending stream of mercies and kindness which the Father offered His creatures:

Vnsearchable indeed are all Thy wayes,
 In multitude thy number do exceed,

¹Spiritual Sonnettes, The Poems of Henry Constable, ed. J. Grundy, Liverpool, 1960, p. 114.

²ibid., pp. 186, 188.

³ibid., pp. 183, 185.

⁴ibid., p. 188.

⁵Divine Centurie, 65.

In glorie they do admiration breed,
 Their goodnesse, power of recompence denayes.
 The hungry, Thou with plenteous hand doest feed,
 Thy fauour to Thy creatures doth not fade;
 The more in view of all Thy works I wade,
 The more I finde my sence confound indeed;
 But yet in steed of eccho to Thy fame,
 I will giue tñanks and laud vnto Thy name. (1)

Greatest of all gifts was that hope purchased by the redemption:

Oh God great wonders thou for mee hast wrought
 (For thy Sonnes sake) who my saluation bought. (2)

For the sixteenth-century Christian poet, therefore, it was no anomaly to express the power of the Gospel in terms which would equally describe the effects of the power of the affection which the Petrarchan lady inspired, which transformed those who were humble and worthy to receive it:

Like as the sunne whose heat so needfull is,
 Produceth daily different effects,
 According to the nature of obiects,
 Which hardneth that, yet molifieth this:
 So doth the Gospell preachèd euen the same;
 It makes some to repent and melt in teares,
 Some stubborne hearts repine, and caulls frame
 To quarrell at, and scorne such needlesse feares.
 The lowly heart, in ioy and hope it reares,
 The haughty mind, as low as soone deiects;
 In zealous hearts it neighbour-lone reflects,
 Whiles other conscience, spight and rankor beares:
 The natiue powre it keepes of perfect blisse,
 And holy heat, consuming all amisse. (3)

Gratitude in the sinner caused him to affirm his allegiance to God,⁴ and to offer his solemn vow to love and serve Him alone, as

¹Sundry Christian Passions, Pt.II, 29, [ll. 5-14] Poems, ed.Grosart.

²B.Barnes, Divine Centurie, 62, [ll. 13-14], Poems, ed.Grosart. cf also H.Lok, Sundry Christian Passions, Pt.II, son.61, Poems, ed.Grosart.

³H.Lok, Sundry Christian Passions, "Sundry affects of a feeling Conscience", 100, Poems, op.cit.

⁴See H.Lok, Sundry Christian Passions, Pt.I, sons. 72, 86; Pt.II, son. 52.

the Petrarchan lover swore unending devotion to his mistress:

My vowes and deeds they shall be alwaies one,
 All dedicated to adorne Thy name;
 My heart, my soule, my strength shall do the same;
 Thy loue shall be my faith's true corner stone;
 The loue of Thee shall my affections frame,
 To follow that may pleasing be to Thee,
 My eyes no beautie but in Thee shall see,
 And Thy regard my wandring will shall tame,
 yea I will blame, and scorne each other thing
 Saue what shall me vnto Thy fauour bring. (1)

The sonneteer frequently, and naturally, adopted the pose of lover, both explicitly, and in his language and imagery. This feature is in the sonnets addressed to the Virgin, particularly marked in Constable's poems/especially where it is infused with the values of neo-Platonism:

Sovereigne of Queenes: If wayne Ambition move
 my hart to seeke an earthly prynces grace:
 shewe me thy sonne in his imperiall place,
 whose servants reigne, our kynges & queenes above.
 And if alluryng passions I doe prove,
 by pleasyng sighes: shewe me thy lovely face:
 whose beames the Angells beuty do deface:
 and even inflame the Seraphins with love.
 So by Ambition¹ shall humble bee:
 when in the[^] presence of the highest kyng
 I serve all his, that he may honour mee.
 And love, my hart to chaste desyres shall brynge,
 when faynest Queene lookes on me from her throne
 and jealous byddes me love but her alone. (2)

In the fourth sonnet to Our Lady, the poet carries his neo-Platonism to its logical conclusion; love of the mother will lead him to love of the Son.³ Safely within the framework of neo-Platonic

¹ ibid., Pt.II, 39, [11.5-14], Poems, ed. Grosart. cf. also N. Breton, The Soules Harmony, 1602, son.[7],[11.13-14], p.5, col.1, The Works in Verse and Prose, ed.A.B.Grosart, Chertsey Worthies' Library, 1879, I. (The works in this volume are all paginated separately.)

² Spiritual Sonnettes, Poems, ed. Grundy, p.189.

³ ibid., "Sweete Queene: although thy beuty rayse vpp mee", Poems, op. cit., p.190.

philosophy, Constable, like Spenser in the Amoretti,¹ can indulge in
sinless dreams of the consummation of his passion:

... lyke a woman spowse my sowle shalbee,
whom synfull passions once to lust did move,
and synce betrothed to goddes sonne above,
should be enamoured with his dietye.
My body ys the garment of my spryght
whyle as the day tyme of my lyfe doth last:
when death shall brynge the nyght of my delyght
My sowle vncloth'd, shall rest from labors past:
and clasped in the armes of God, inioye
by sweete coniunction, everlastyng ioye. (2)

Like the lover, the Christian sonneteer was a petitioner for mercy,
favour, and grace,³ tossed to and fro~~n~~ between sinful and good
motions of the spirit as his Petrarchan counterpart was by the
contrary feelings of hope and despair, whilst both looked to the
calming influence and moral strength of the beloved to rescue them:

Lord, when I thinke how I offend thy will,
And know what good is in obedience to it;
And see my hurt, and yet continue still
In doing ill, and cannot leaue to do it;
And then againe, doe feele that bitter smart
That inwards breeds, of pleasures after payne;
When scarce the thought is entred in my heart,
But it is gone, and sinne gets in againe:
And when, againe, the act of sinne is past,
And that thy grace doth call me backe againe:
Then in my teares I runne to thee as fast,
And of my sinnes, and of my selfe complayne.
What can I doe, but cry, Sweet Jesus, saue me:
For I am nothing, but what thou wilt haue me. (4)

¹Sons. 76, 77, 84.

²Spirituell Sonnettes, "To St Mary Magdalen", Poems, ed. Grundy, p.192.
cf. W. Alabaster, The Sonnets, ed. G.M. Story and H. Gardner, Oxford
English Monographs, Oxford, 1959, son. 48.

³cf. H. Lok, Sundry Christian Passions, Pt. I, sons. 55, 61, 95, Poems, ed. ^{Grosart}

⁴N. Breton, Soules Harmony, son. [3], [p.4], col. 2, Works, ed. Grosart, I. cf.
also H. Lok, Sundry Christian Passions, "Sundry affection^{ate} sonnets
of a feeling Conscience", 6, 85, Poems, ed. Grosart.

As part of his duty, the Christian poet offered sacrifices and oblations in the language and figures of the secular sonneteer:

Sacred redeemer, let my praier pearce
 Thine eares, to contrite sinners open still
 At my hart's altar made, where (to fulfill
 My vowes) I sacrifice in humble verse.
 ... Oh, my deare Sauour crucifi'd, mee saue!
 Let my contricion's incense up aspire
 (With true zeale kindled on my Altar hart)
 And of thy sweete saluation purchase part. (1)

He too promised to write always of his beloved Lord inspired like the Petrarchan lover by his subject,² and to affirm continually the infinite scope of his subject:

How can I limit well my tong or pen?
 Within what bownds may I my selfe inclose?
 Who such a theame to write vpon haue chose,
 Whereon the more I muse, more grow'th it then. (3)

So adaptable were the language and attitudes of the Petrarchan tradition, that Barnes could offer his poems to God, and in return for their fair acceptance, he promised to praise the Maker evermore, as the profane poet offered his verses as tribute to be continually paid if the lady was gracious and received them⁴:

Sacred directour of diuine Syon
 With gracious hands and mercy-mouing eyes,
 With eares attentive) take my sacrifice:

¹ B. Barnes, Divine Centurie, 3, [ll. 1-4, 11-14], Poems, ed. Grosart. cf. also, ibid., 92, 93; H. Constable, Spiritual Sonnettes, "To God the Father", Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 183; W. Alabawter, Sonnets, ed. Story and Gardner, 42.

² cf. H. Lok, Sundry Christian Passions, Pt. II, son. 77, Poems, ed. Grosart.

³ ibid., Pt. II, son. 26, [ll. 1-4]. cf. also ibid., Pt. II, son. 22.

⁴ See above, p. 286.

Beholde my teares, heare my playntes which crie on,
 Lighten my pensiuē soule which would flye on
 To thy sweete mercies seate, heauens Paradise:
 Thy pure Dooues white Winges (that my soule may rise,
 And mount from this base earth) deare Lord tye on:
 So shall my Spirite fly from starre to starre:
 And in consent of musickes sweete reporte
 Beare thy rich Glories forth from farre to farre,
 When Cherubines with Seraphines resorte,
 And Angelles with Archangelles still to sing
 The glorious wonders of their heauenly King! (1)

The same poet gave a new turn to the theme that the lover was made immortal by his passion, by applying it to the case of the redeemed Christian:

Nor those which in these² their affiance set
 Can euer bee (for glories want) obscure:
 But with Saluation eternizde endure. (3)

Other Petrarchan conceits were also adapted for religious sonnets, one of these being the altered use of the classical analogy. As the lover compared himself to such figures as Ixion or Leander, so the Christian sonneteer likened his state to that of Biblical figures. This conceit was used most extensively by Lok, especially in the first part of his Sundry Christian Passions, but the analogy was not confined to him alone, and was occasionally employed by Barnes,⁴ and once by Breton:

When Job had lost his children, lands & goods
 Patience did kill the poyson of his payne:
 And when his sorrowes came as fast as floods,
 Hope kept his heart, till comfortes came agayne.

¹Divine Centurie, 100, Poems, ed. Grosart.

²That is, God's mercies.

³ibid., 97, [ll. 12-14], Poems, op.cit.

⁴Divine Centurie, 26, 70.

When Dauids life by Saul was often sought
 And worlds of crosses compast him about;
 Yet was his spirit neuer ouer-wrought,
 But in his woes, hope still did helpe him out.

When the sore Cripple by the poole did lye,
 Full many a yeare in misery and payne;
 His heart on Christ no sooner set his eye,
 But teares mou'd grace, and he was well agayne.
 No Iob, nor Daud, Cripple more in grieffe:
 Christ giue me patience, and my hope reliefe. (1)

Sometimes such analogies were aided by the figure being common to both Christian and Petrarchan traditions, as in the case of the theme of the merchant seeking great treasure.² Quite frequently, however, the conceits could be taken over from Petrarchan poetry just as they stood:

... love hath wrought in me thy form divine
 That thou art more my heart than heart is mine:
 How can I then from myself, thyself, fly? (3)

Particularly appropriate for such transference was the light-giving quality ascribed to the beloved, as it occasioned a nice word-play upon the forms "Son" and "sun":

See how the Sun unsetting doth uphold,
 From out the ocean of unfathomed being,
 The unfathomed ocean of his Father's seeing;
 See how the virgin morning doth unfold
 The golden cabin where he was enrolled;
 See how the Baptist with angelic wing
 Doth scatter crystal dew of true repenting,
 To bathe our eyes these glories to behold.
 But pearling drops cannot mine eyes distract,

¹N. Breton, Soules Harmony, final sonnet, p. 6, col. 2, Works, ed. Grosart, I. cf. also H. Constable, Spiritual Sonnets, "To St Mary Magdalen", Poems, ed. Grundy, p. 191.

²See H. Lok, Sundry Christian Passions, Pt. I, son. 21, Poems, ed. Grosart.

³W. Alabaster, Sonnets, ed. Story and Gardner, 10, 11. 6-8.

Showers they be that must enclear my sight,
 O dart one beam into that cloudy night
 That holds my heart, that melted heart may rain
 Grace to mine eyes. Now, lord, the way is plain,
 Glance through mine eyes, and to my heart go right. (1)

Alabaster, from whose poems the sonnet just quoted was taken, also made use of the common Petrarchan heat/cold, fire/water images:

... love of Christ to tears mine eyes do turn,
 And melted tears do make my soul to burn,
 And burning love doth make my tears more deep,
 And deeper tears cause love to flame above. (2)

In religious quatorzains, the stormy sea of passion became the tossing waves of affliction³; as the lover was the victim of Cupid's arrows, so the Christian was wounded by and suffered from the darts of sin.⁴ Almost every attitude could be reproduced within the pattern of the religious sonnets: Lok even found a place for a mild reflection of anti-Petrarchanism, when he emulated the perversity of the lover following his unworthy mistress by accepting punishment for his sins against the counsel of worldly logic:

I must commend the thing the world doth hate,
 And like the thing that flesh and blood detest;
 The cares and griefes by which I was opprest,
 Which made me see and know my wretched state. (5)

¹W, Alabaster, Sonnets, 39, ed. Story and Gardner. cf. also ibid., 4; H.Lok, Sundry Christian Passions, Pt.II, sons 8, 36, Poems, ed.Grosart

²Sonnets, op.cit., 18, ll. 9-12. cf. also ibid., 1, 69.

³H.Lok Sundry Christian Passions, Pt.I, 3, Pt.II, 81.

⁴ibid., Pt.I, son.4; B. Barnes, Divine Centurie, 2, 19, 97. Alabaster used the arrow image for darts of love, Sonnets, 7.

⁵Sundry Christian Passions, "Peculiar Prayers", 113, [ll. 1-4], Poems, ed. Grosart.

The correspondencies between religious and secular quatorzains, therefore, sprang from a mutual dependence upon Petrarchanism; it was this tradition also which gave to both kinds of poem a character equally suited for public or private utterance. The Petrarchan sonnet was an intimate poem, but one which used a language which was general in expression; individual situations and circumstances gave it its immediate application.

This feature was one emphasized in various ways by the writers of those spiritual quatorzains destined by their authors for publication.¹ Both Barnes and Lok, who prefaced their works with an explanation of their intentions, affirmed that their sonnets were written out of personal affective piety, and were made known to the world to help and comfort others.²

The desire to reach and satisfy a wide audience of general readers resulted in some of the sonnets, particularly those of Lok and Breton, and to a lesser extent, of Barnes, sharing certain qualities with community prayers. The century, and the religious denomination to which these poets belonged, lead us to The Book of Common Prayer as an obvious point of comparison; in the case of Barnes, for instance, his references to and borrowings from the Psalms are reliant upon the liturgical translation.³ Whilst lacking

¹Barnes's declaration that he published A Divine Centurie purely at the behest of his "wel-deseruing friends" can, I think, be discounted as such Elizabethan statements were usually conventions in themselves; Address to Toby, Bishop of Durham, Poems, ed. Grosart, [p.158].

²ibid., "To the favourable and Christian Reader", [p.160]; H.Lok, Sundry Christian Passions, "To the Christian Reader", Poems, ed. Grosart p.145 (pagination refers to that of the volume, not of the individual work); ibid., Pt.II, son.93, [ll. 13-14].

³Barnes came of a clerical family (his father was successively Bishop of Nottingham, Carlisle, and Durham) and this version would be the form he was most familiar with from childhood.

the rhetorical beauty and resonance of the Prayer Book, Lok's sonnets, which so often read more like prose than verse, have something of the simplicity and trusting humility of the great Anglican manual:

To Thee - O Lord - who only knowst my sin,
 And only able art, my state redresse,
 To Thee alone my plaints directed bin,
 To Thee my guilt alone I do confesse:
 In hope Thy graciouse aide at neede to win,
 Who giuest me grace, these prayers to addresse:
 My words can not expresse my inward grieffe,
 My deedes declare too well my true disease,
 Yet doubt I not to craue of Thee reliefe,
 Because Thy Sonne did first Thy wrath appease:
 These are my wants, and many more then these,
 But of them all, vnfaithfulnesse is chief:
 Yet as repentant thiefe, on crosse found grace,
 Vouchsafe my plaints with mercie to imbrace. (1)

This was not, however, the only connection that the ^{religious} Elizabethan/sonnet had with devotional literature; a more interesting and more complex one was that which existed between some of the spiritual quatorzains and the pattern of meditation.

Recent studies have shown that despite the divisions between Roman Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century, there was a strong tradition of devotional literature, particularly that of meditation, which both parties held in common,² a fact which, as Professor Louis L. Martz has demonstrated, had especial importance for the structure and texture of religious poetry in the seventeenth

¹ "Introduction to Peculiar Prayers", Poems, ed. Grosart. cf. also N. Breton, Soules Harmony, sons. [4], [8], pp. [4], 5, Works, ed. Grosart, I.

² See H.C. White, "Some Continuing Traditions in English Devotional Literature", PMLA, 1942, LXVII, 966-80; and Tudor Books of Private Devotion, Wisconsin, 1951.

century.¹ His findings are not without relevance for the Christian sonnets of the Elizabethan period, although except in isolated instances, the impact of the meditative tradition is not as marked in these poems as in the verse of the succeeding century.

A meditation consisted of several parts: the first prelude, or "composition of place"; the second prelude, in which the end of the meditation was foreseen, and plotted towards by analysis involving the three powers of the soul; followed ~~in~~^{by} the colloquy, or colloquies, the climax of the exercise, in which the three powers were united and the soul was lifted up to speak to God.² This movement does in fact correspond closely to the pattern of the sonnet form; as Professor Martz indicates:

Such a threefold structure ... easily accords with the traditional 4-4-6 division of the Petrarchan sonnet. (3)

The poem could therefore render a successful exposition of the meditation, although poetry inspired by such an exercise was not necessarily a faithful and sequential representation of the three basic processes.⁴

If the metaphysical poets were aware of these features, as Professor Martz's study has shown that they were, then it is reasonable to assume that, as the tradition entered English poetry

¹The Poetry of Meditation, New Haven and London, 1954.

²See ibid., pp. 27, 29 f., 32 ff., 36 ff.

³ibid., p. 49.

⁴ibid., p. 46.

with Southwell, his contemporaries had at least tried the ground before them. On examination, some of the Elizabethan Protestant sonneteers show an obvious acquaintance with the method of meditation, but it received greater attention from their Roman Catholic counterparts.

The first part of Lok's Sundry Christian Passions is described by its author as "consisting chiefly of Meditations, Humiliations and Prayers"¹; and it is² in this section, as we noted above, that the conceit using the Biblical types ~~of~~ figures most strongly. Besides the analogy with the Petrarchan conceit of a similar nature, this also corresponds to the first requirement of the meditation, the "composition of place". Lok's usual method is, then to proceed to apply this to his own case, thus carrying out the analytic part of the exercise, which leads naturally to the colloquy, the request or direct communication with God, often in the couplet in the work of this poet:

In pride of youth when as vnbridled lust
 Did force me forth, my follies to bewray,
 I challengèd as patrimony iust,
 Each vaine affection, leading to decay:
 And trusting to that treasure, post away
 I wandred in the world's alluring sight:
 Not reason, vertue, shame, or feare could stay,
 My appetite from tasting each delite,
 Till want and wearinesse began me bite,
 And so perforce to father I retire,
 To Whom I prostrate kneele - vnworthie wight -
 To name of sonne not daring to aspire;
 Receiue me yet, sweet Sauour, of Thy grace,
 Poore penitent, into a seruant's place. (3)

¹Title Page; Poems, ed. Grosart, [p.138].

²See above, p.353.

³Pt.I, son.6. Based on the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Compared with the fervency of later religious poetry, however, the stanzas of Lok are cold and uninspiring; they are only rudimentary excursions into the techniques of meditation, such as a Christian of any period could make without the discipline of practising the art. The principles are grasped, but only by the intellect; they are not informed by the complete yet controlled involvement of the emotions which the full exercise entails. Barnes, on the other hand, comes nearer to this attitude, though when emotion is given its head, intellect tends to fade from the scene. Some of his subjects are the same as those proposed for meditation; the sense of sin, the horrors of Hell, the happiness of Heaven, the qualities of the Creator¹; several times he refers to the five wounds, the external signs of the Passion and of Salvation²; but he approaches the meditation most closely in sonnet 76 of his Divine Centurie, on the theme of the offerings of the Magi to the infant Christ:

As those three Kings (touch'd with a sacred zeale)
 By presents rich made Royal offerture,
 Our new borne Sauours blessing to procure,
 Borne in an Oxe stall for our publique weale:
 When in adorning him they did reueale,
 his Godhead, by those gifts they did assure.
 So let faith, hope and loue make overture
 Of new saluation (which themselves conceale
 In this base mortall stable, sinnes foule place)
 Whereof eternall ioyes, they may present
 To my saluation (borne of thy deare grace)

¹Divine Centurie, 49, 97; 55, 59, 63; 84; 62, 65.

²ibid., 12, 13, 36, 45, 47.

Such rich Propines: As from thy Gospell sent
 By precious incense may my spirit bring
 Thy tearmelesse praises of my God to sing. (1)

The influence of the meditative pattern on the Elizabethan quatorzain is strongest, however, in the work of the Catholic poets, Alabaster and Constable. The qualities of the Spirituell Sonnettes of the latter, and the warmth, the imagery controlled by the intellect, the features which make them akin to the verse of the metaphysical school,² come partly from the adoption of the meditative exercise as a formulating principle of these stanzas. The sonnet, "To the blessed Sacrament", affords a good example of the complexity and different strata of emotion and intellect kept in control by the spiritual exercise.

It is set in the general framework of a colloquy, addressed to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and doctrinally follows the section of the Creed, "was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell". The two preludes contain both "composition of place, seeing the spot", and the analysis which develops from this; the specific colloquies then follow (lines 9, 12, and 14), though the poetic form in this instance requires their conjunction with other points of analysis which would have preceded them in the meditation proper:

¹ibid., 76, Poems, ed. Grosart.

²See Poems of Henry Constable, ed. Grundy, "Introduction", p. 83.

When thee (O holy sacrificed Lambe)
 in severed sygnes I whyte & liquide see:
 as on thy body slayne I thynke on thee,
 which pale by sheddyng of thy bloode became.
 And when agayne I doe beholde the same
 vayed in whyte to be receav'd of mee:
 thou seemest in thy syndon wrap't to bee
 lyke to a corse, whose monument I am.
 Buryed in me, vnto my sowle appeare
 pryson'd in earth, & bannish't from thy syght,
 lyke our forefathers, who in Lymbo were.
 Cheere thow my thoughtes, as thou did'st gyve the light:
 And as thou others freed from purgyng fyre
 quenche in my hart, the flames of badd desyre. (1)

Similar features could be described in Alabaster's equally fervent, if less truly poetic verses; sonnets 3 and 11, for instance, have the strong dramatic sense which comes from the immediacy of the meditative technique, whilst sonnet 22 is a meditation in outline.² So important is the exercise to Alabaster's verse, that, as one of his editors has written:

A reader's opinion of Alabaster's success in a number of sonnets will depend largely on whether he reads them as poems or as devotional exercises. (3)

This speaks strongly for the power of the tradition in which this recusant poet chose to work.

The intensity of the meditative discipline, happily confined within the intellectual framework of the sonnet, results in Alabaster

¹ ibid., p. 184 f.

² cf. also son. 39, quoted above, p. 353f., for use of meditative pattern. Son. 77 appears to offer the one example of the colloquy accorded its full import in this poetry, of man speaking to God, and God speaking in return to man. Although there is no indication in the text that the final line is spoken by the Saviour, its promise of assured welcome can be interpreted as God's confirmation to the poet of His word.

³ The Sonnets of William Alabaster, ed. Story and Gardner, "Introduction" p. xxviii.

being a forerunner of the metaphysical poets of the next century. This is particularly striking in the quatorzains that his editors entitle "Personal Sonnets"; these poems are rightly called so, and they are the only ones of this period of literature to truly merit the designation. They have all the immediacy of the metaphysical poems of the seventeenth century, and, like his other meditations, appear to have been written about the time of the poet's conversion to Roman Catholicism.¹ Constable's verse, on the other hand, dependent though it is in part on the meditative tradition, lacks such urgency; it is not without relevance that Miss Grundy believes that his spiritual sonnets belong to the years following the poet's reception into the Church of Rome,² when he was settled in heart. By profession a courtier-diplomatist, in temperament thoroughly Elizabethan, Henry Constable retained the conventional persona of the poet of the sixteenth century in his divine as well as in his secular quatorzains.

The opportunity for reflection which the sonnet offered the sixteenth-century Englishman also presented him with the opportunity for moralizing; and indeed, one critic has preferred to see the Elizabethan age, in spite of its avidity for devotional works,

¹ibid., p. xxxvi ff.

²The Poems of Henry Constable, ed. Grundy, "Introduction", p. 59.

as moralistic rather than religious.¹ It was certainly true that the popular "guides to Godliness" had a definite bias towards practical Christianity.² The Elizabethans as a whole accepted the truths of the Christian ethic; they wished to know how these could best be put into practice. This generation which had inherited the Renaissance doctrine of utilitarianism was fully aware that "by their fruits ye shall know them". It is only to be expected that this attitude would enter poetry, for moralizing implies a critical or objective judgement of behaviour, based on the standards of an accepted code of ethics or presented as the fruit of experience, and in an age in which the poet was considered to play an important part, in society, the issues of morality were not to be avoided in verse.

The trend towards moralizing can be found in some of the sonnets of the amatory sequences themselves,³ of which Shakespeare's "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action" is the finest example, in that it is fully integrated with and relates to the poet's situation as the collection stands, and is therefore meaningful in its context. The religious quatorzain did not escape the influence of this tendency, but also gave testimony of the close relations of religion and morality, particularly in the addition^d of sonnets to Lok's Sundry Christian Passions, as the majority

¹ E.H. Miller, The Professional Writer in Elizabethan England, Cambridge, Mass., 1959, p. 73.

² See L.B. Wright, Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England, New York and London, 1958, p. 228 ff.

³ cf. E. Spenser, Amoretti, 1595, 86; B. Griffin, Fidessa, 1596, 21, 58; M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 7.

of "Sundry affectionate Sonnets of a feeling Conscience" are practical or doctrinal exhortations about how God should be served, and how the Christian should behave to his neighbour.¹ The Elizabethan delight in drawing morals can be illustrated by Spenser's Visions; his own Visions of the worlds vanitie, and his re-worked translations of the earlier "Epigrams" and "Sonets" of A Theatre for Worldlings, 1569, The Visions of Bellay and The Visions of Petrarch.² All these epigrammatic sonnets show the influence of emblematic literature, not unnaturally in the case of the stanzas from Petrarch and du Bellay, for they accompanied van der Noodt's emblem engravings in A Theatre for Worldlings. One of the loveliest of these poems is the sixth Petrarchan vision, based on the death of Laura:

At last so faire a Ladie did I spie,
 That thinking yet on her I burne and quake;
 On hearts and flowres she walked pensiuely,
 Milde, but yet loue she proudly did forsake:
 White seem'd her robes, yet wouen so they were,
 As snow and golde together had been wrought.
 About the wast a darke clowde shrouded her,
 A stinging Serpent by the heele her caught;
 Wherewith she languisht as the gathered floure,
 And well assur'd she mounted vp to ioy.
 Alas, on earth so nothing doth endure,
 But bitter griefe and sorrowfull annoy:
 Which make this life wretched and miserable,
 Tossed with stormes of fortune variable. (3)

All these sonnets are steeped in the wonder and sadness that all

¹B. Barnes, Divine Centurie, sons. 8⁴/₅-87, are moralistic in tone.

²The revised Visions, and The worlds vanitie, were published for the first time in 1591.

³The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford Standard Authors, Oxford, 1959.

that is beautiful, glorious, and majestic, must pass away; it is a theme which appeared in the Amoretti, and must clearly have been one which haunted Spenser from a young man.

Not all Elizabethan moralistic quatorzains are as fine as his, however, nor do they all have such poetic subjects. Topics include the condemnation of drunkenness,¹ the necessity for youth to be usefully employed for the good of the commonwealth,² the dangers of courtly living,³ how to keep one's wife loving and faithful,⁴ even a wry, rather frightening, nursery joke by Raleigh for his son, containing a warning about the gallows.⁵ The moral sonnet offered the writer the opportunity to be didactic, and he rarely refused the chance to fulfil his role of mentor, to teach as well as delight:

Though that my yeares, full far doo stande aloofe,
 From counsell sage, or Wisdomes good aduice:
 What I doo know by soone repenting prooffe,
 I shall you tell, and learne if you be wise.
 From fined wits, that telles the smoothest tale,
 Beware, their tongues doo flatter oft a wry:
 A modest loke shall well set forth your sale,
 Trust not to much, before somewhat you try:
 So guyde your selfe in worde, and eke in deede,
 As bad and good may prayse your sober name:
 Assay your freend, before your greatest neede,
 And to conclude, when I may doo that same,

¹The Arundel Harington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry, ed. R. Hughey, Columbus, Ohio, 1960, I, no. 146.

²A. Gorges, Vannetyes and Toyes, no. 54, Poems, ed. H. E. Sandison, Oxford, 1953.

³G. Gascoigne, The Posies, 1575, ed. J. W. Cunliffe, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge, 1907, p. 66 ff.

⁴P. Sidney, The Arcadia, ed. A. Feuillerat, Prose Works, Cambridge, 1962, II, 70.

⁵The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh, ed. A. M. C. Latham, The Muses Library, 1951, p. 49.

That may you please, and best content your minde,
Assure your selfe, a faythfull freend to finde. (1)

Poems of such a character seem far removed from the courtly love sonnet; yet there are amongst the moralistic stanzas those which show the influence of Petrarchanism. They belong to the later rather than the earlier Elizabethan period, and are nowhere so well represented as in the sonnet, "Our long sweet sommers day", which is found in the Raleigh/Gorges group of poems. The quatorzain is one of sadness and gentle melancholy; the passage of years and the vanity of the world are looked back upon with regret for time wasted, whilst the present and the future present the poet with a version of the traditional Petrarchan impasse:

Our long sweet sommers day of youthfull yeares
Drawen to his evening late and durefull night
By drooping age in whose bleame face appeares
Times carelesse scarrs and loves extinguisht light.
Calls our spent hopes to take the poore remaine
Of Glorie, Pryde, excesse, and wanton joyes
Fancies outworne, all perisht but the paine
Love lent to losse, Time truckt away for toyes
Th' accompts, the thoughts, the memories of these
(Mett with a mind reclaim'd by virtues lore)
Are of our hearts the sorrow sucking Bees
Whilst sad repentance straines to paie the score
With sighing seekes, beginings, after ends:
Armes after wounds, and mones without amends. (2)

Petrarchanism thus entered the moralistic poem, infusing into it its tender, haunting sorrow; for once again the Petrarchan situation offered a comment applicable to another aspect of Elizabethan life.

¹T.P[rocter], A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions, 1578, ed. H.E.Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1926, "How to choose a faythfull freende", p. 69.

²A. Gorges, Later Poems, 110, Poems, ed. Sandison.

The love which demanded all and gave nothing in return could turn to disillusion and regret in the lover; and rejection of this passion meant that he had lost no more than a dream: in this lay the pain. The fleeting quality of life in the sixteenth century, which made men and women old at forty, brought an awareness of the vanity of youthful hopes and dreams at that most poignant point of time when they were irrevocably past, and yet still close enough to cause pain; pain increased by the knowledge that the future was too short to make reparation. An unconsolable melancholy was as natural to the Elizabethan in this mood as it was to the Petrarchan lover. This also agreed with the general pattern of English Petrarchanism: for none of the sonneteers, not excluding Spenser, used to the full the implications of neo-Platonic philosophy: in no instance did the lover proceed from passion for his mistress to love of God. Most frequently, devotion to the Creator came from the rejection of human love.¹ Therefore, from one point of view, it would be true to say that the Christian quatorzains are not truly Petrarchan; although the poet underwent trials and tribulations comparable to those of the secular lover, he could trust in the promises of Christ if he held to his faith; salvation would be his. The Petrarchan lover had no such assurance, but followed a devotion which would most probably end in blank despair. Whatever form the Petrarchan lover's affection took, its frightening power gave cause

¹See above, p.217.

for moralistic reflection:

... none knows well
 To shun this heaven that leads men to this hell. (1)

The Petrarchan quatorzain was therefore well suited to this kind of expression, and moral sonnets which relied upon this pattern were more successful than the stanzas which were didactic or epigrammatic, and which relied more purely on wit. They were more reflective because, like the religious sonnets, they spoke of experience rather than of precepts. The triumph of the Elizabethan sonnet as a reflective poem depended once again upon its ability to voice in Petrarchan terms the situations and feelings which were important to its age.

¹W. Shakespeare, The Sonnets, ed. H.C. Beething, Boston and London, 1904, son. 129, ll. 13-14.

CHAPTER TEN

The Sonnet as a Song

There appear to have been two distinct Elizabethan approaches to the sonnet as a song. The first stressed the place of the sung sonnet in the ritual of Petrarchan love, and can be found in the literature of the age, but there is no evidence that the quatorzain was so employed in actuality. The second resulted in the poem being accepted as a song lyric, and treated as such by composers. The functions in both cases were different, but perhaps indicated the intricate relationship between the ideal and reality.

The Petrarchan lover had to distinguish himself not only by being a poet, but also by being a musician as well.

Amongst other good qualities an amorous fellow is endowed with, he must learn to sing and dance, play upon some instrument or other, as without all doubt he will, if he be truly touched with this Loadstone of Love. For as Erasmus hath it; Musiciam docet amor et Poesia, Love will make them Musicians, and to compose Ditties, Madrigals, Elegies, Love Sonnets, and sing them to several pretty tunes, to get all good qualities may be had. (1)

¹⁸N. Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. A.R. Shillito, 1896, III, 203.

As music was intimately connected with poetry, we may expect the sung sonnet to fulfil the same functions as the poem which was written and read. Burton's description of the young man returning from a visit to his beloved, and setting down his rhapsody upon her gracious behaviour to him isⁿ an epigram or sonnet, which he sang to five or seven tunes, has already been quoted above.¹ The solitary expression of ^smadness and joy can be found in the sonnets of Sidney's Arcadia, where the characters were forced by circumstances to keep their feelings hidden from each other. These poems belonged to the melancholy retiring place, to the shady, solitary thickets, the dark, secret cave, or to the privacy of the chamber, where the quintessence of the emotion suffered could be given its most poignant expression. In such places Zelmane, Gynecia, and Philoclea^s, unburdened their unhappiness, on several occasions accompanying their sonnets on^a musical instrument. Zelmane and Philoclea employed the lute for their songs "In vaine, myne Eyes, you labour to amende" and "Vertue, beawtie, and speach",² Gynecia sang "Harke plaintfull ghostes" to the "base Lyra",³ and Zelmane played a cittern for "Aurora now thou shewst thy blushing light".⁴ Songs of joy in The Arcadia also required to be guardedly uttered, and

¹See above, p.276

²The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. A. Feuillerat, Cambridge, 1962, I, 147; II, 53.

³ibid., II, 8.

⁴ibid., II, 39.

Basilus sang to himself of the delight of being in love once again in "Let not old age disgrace my high desire", and, later, he expressed his ecstasy in what he believed to have been an adulterous bed, by bursting into a hymn of thanksgiving to the night, "O Night the ease of care the pledge of pleasure".¹ Sidney took the need of the human heart to express sorrow and gladness by means other than words alone, and gave literary expression to the timeless desire to relieve mirth and misery by singing, or whistling, or humming a tune. Music, verbal, vocal, and instrumental, goes far to ease the burdened heart. Thus it is no surprise to find two of the sonneteers addressing their lutes, which served them in this sort. R.L. presented this portrait of himself as the Petrarchan lover-musician:

... under umbrage of some aged tree,
 with lute in hand I sit and, sighing, say,
 "Sweet groves, tell forth with echo, what you see!
 good trees, bear witness, who is my decay!
 And thou, my soul, speak! speak what rest I have,
 When each our joy's despair doth make me rave!" (2)

He continued in the pose in the following quatorzain:

But thou, my dear sweet-sounding lute, be still!
 repose thy troubled strings upon this moss!
 Thou hast full often eased me 'gainst my will:
 lie down in peace, thy spoil were my great loss! (3)

Percy also employed this self-characterisation in one of his poems:

¹ ibid., I, 149; II, 91.

² Diella, 1596, 15 [ll. 9-14], Elizabethan Sonnets, ed. S. Lee, 1904, II.

³ ibid., 16, [ll. 1-4].

Strike up, my Lute! and ease my heavy cares,
 The only solace to my Passions:
 Impart unto the airs, thy pleasing airs!
 More sweet than heavenly consolations. (1)

If music had the power to ease the lover's sufferings, its influence was not confined to him alone. Its strong emotional impact made it, as "the most diuine striker of the sences",² a useful part of the lover's equipment for wooing his lady:

princypally in Courtes, where (beside the refreshing of vexacyons that musicke bringeth unto eche man) many thynges are taken in hande to please women withal, whose tender and soft breastes are soone perced with melody and fylled with swetenesse. (3)

Who, saith Castillo, would learn to play, or give his mind to Musick, learn to dance, or make so many rhymes, love-songs, as most do, but for women's sake, because they hope by that means to purchase their good wills, and win their favour? (4)

Music had played its role in amorous enterprises from medieval times at least,⁵ and was as strong a part of tradition for the Petrarchan lover, as for his predecessor, the courtly lover.

A wower be he neuer so poore,
 Must play and sing before his bestloues doore (6)

¹Coelia, 1594, 8 [ll. 1-4], Eliz.Sonnets, II.

²P. Sidney, An Apologie for Poetrie, 1595, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, I, 182.

³B. Castiglione, The Courtyer, trans. T. Hoby, 1561, Tudor Translations XXIII, 1900, p. 89.

⁴^RN. Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 204. In italics throughout, except for the word "saith".

⁵See J. Stevens, Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court, 1961, p. 270 ff.

⁶III, iii, 147-8, Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, ed. J. A. Adams, 1924.

declared Merygreeke in Ueall's Ralph Roister Doister, and this attitude lingered on into the Elizabethan age. Proteus followed his advice to Sir Thurio about the use of poetry in courtship with these lines:

Visit by night your lady's chamber-window
With some sweet concert; to their instruments
Tune a deploring dump: the night's dead silence
Will well become such a sweet-complaining grievance.
This, or nothing else, will inherit her. (1)

Cloten, in Cymbeline, on the other hand, had been told to woo Imogen with an aubade:

I am advised to give her music o'mornings; they say
it will penetrate.

Come on; tune: if you can penetrate her with your
fingering, so; we'll try with tongue too: if none
will do, let her remaine; but I'll never give o'er. (2)

This situation is reflected in the verse of one of the sonnet sequences. In the eleventh song of Astrophil and Stella, the lady called to her rejected lover who was providing a serenade for her:

"Who is it that this darke night,
Underneath my window playneth?" (3)

but, unfortunately, we are given no clue as to what form Astrophil's plainings took. However, the quatorzain was certainly eligible to play its part amongst the courtly serenades. Roister Doister's servant gave a delightful account of his master's attempts in this field:

¹W. Shakespeare, Two Gentlemen of Verona, 1594-1595, III, ii, 83-87, Works, ed. W.G. Clark and W.A. Wright, Globe edition, second ed., repr. 1923. cf. also J. Florio, Firste Fruites, 1578, Facs. reproduction by A. del Re, Memoirs of the Faculty of Literature and Politics, Taishoku Imperial University, 1936, III, no. 1, p. 27 f.

²II, iii, 12-18, Works, op.cit.

³ll. 1-2, The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. W.A. Ringler, Jr., Oxford, 1962.

With euery woman is he in some loues pang.
 Then vp to our lute at midnight, twangledome twang;
 Then twang with our sonets, and twang with our dumps,
 And heyhough from our heart, as heaueie as lead lumpes. (1)

Gullio, a later but equally unsuccessful wooer, and a caricature of the affected Petrarchan lover, related how he went about to win his mistress's heart in this way:

How often of yore haue I sunge my sonnetes vnder
 her windowe to a consorte of Musicke, I my selfe
 playinge vpon my Iuorie lute moste enchantinglie. (2)

The Parnassus plays were written during the vogue of satire which dealt heavily with Petrarchanism in all its manifestations, and particularly with the quatorzain. To this period, too, belonged Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost, in which Biron jibed at Navarre's verses, "Tush, none but minstrels like of sonneting!"³ Both the King and Longaville had recited poems of the sonnet variety, and the implication of Biron's remark was clearly that such poems could expect musical accompaniment.

The lover's serenade was intended to please the beloved, for unless she obtained pleasure from his verse, he could not hope to influence her feelings. The motives and emotions of the young man might at any one time veer in several directions, but the entertainment of the mistress was undoubtedly an aim always present in his verse. This can be seen in Musidorus's sonnet sung to Pamela after they had escaped from Basilius's court, "Locke up, faire liddes, the

¹II, i, 19-22, Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, ed. Adams.

²The First Return from Parnassus, ?1599/1600, V, i, 1368-71, The Three Parnassus Plays, ed. J.B. Leishman, 1949.

³IV, iii, 158, Works, Globe ed.

treasures of my hearte". It is at once an expression of the joy which the prince experienced in being alone at last with his beloved, and a poem which fulfilled the function of a courtly lullaby whilst reassuring Pamela of the zeal and strength of his affection.¹

For even when the lady had declared that she returned her lover's feelings, he continued to ply ⁱⁿ her with the gambits of the game of courtship, to carry out his characterization of the Petrarchan lover languishing until his desire was fulfilled. Perhaps he also intended this to encourage and intensify her regard for him, for music was the food of love. Thus, Don Pedro in Much Ado asked Balthasar to provide some music for the eve of the wedding of Claudio and Hero:

I pray thee, get us some excellent music; for tomorrow night we would have it at the Lady Hero's chamber-window. (2)

This device can be seen at work in Lodge's Margarite, in the wooing of Philenia by Minecius:

Minecius hauing achiued her father and intangled the daughter in fancie, sought all meanes possible to satisfie her delights; sometimes therefore vnder a pastorall habite he would hide him in the groues and woods where the Ladies were accustomed to walke, where recording a ruthful lay as they passed by; hee through his harmonie caused them beleewe that the tree tattled loue, & such was his method in his melancholy fancies, that his coate was accordant to his conceit, and his conceit the miracle of conceits. (3)

¹P. Sidney, Arcadia, Prose Works, ed Feuillerat, II, 26.

²II, iii, 87-89, Works, Glohe ed.

³p.13, The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge, ed. Huxterian Club, 1883, III. (The works in all volumes of this edition are paginated separately.) "u for "n" has been reversed in the quotation.

Amongst these "melancholy fannies" is the quatorzain "O desarts
be you peopled by my plaints",

which in a shepherds habite, sitting vn̄der a Mirtle
tree he had mornfully recorded in the presence of his
mistresse. (1)

This kind of courtly entertainment occurred again in another love story of this book. Arsadachus wooed and won Diana, yet she retained the distant, unapproachable character of the Petrarchan mistress, which gave Lodge the opportunity to introduce further sonnets into his story, since Arsadachus had to continue the self-display of the Petrarchan lover:

sometimes would he (attiring him like a second Diana
readie to chace) disguise himselfe like a sheheard,
and sitting apart solitarily, where he might be in
her presence, he would recount such passions as gaue
certaine signes in him of an excellent wit. (2)

In such circumstances, the basic attitudes of the lover were crystalised; the graceful self-display, the attempt to move the lady to compassion, and to please and entertain her, could be seen to advantage in this artificial literary portrait. The coincidence of place and dress with the mood of the verse in this romance, as in The Arcadia, resulted in an ideal unanimity of situation and character, in which the Petrarchan lover could fulfil his role.

The Petrarchan lady was not always an onlooker of the entertainment provided for her. She, too, was expected to be skilled in music, as much to help her to a husband, if we are to believe Burton, as the young man's prowess was exercised to win his beloved:

¹ ibid., p. 14.

² ibid., p. 74.

'Tis their chiefest study to sing, dance; and without question, so many Gentlemen and Gentlewomen would not be so well qualified in this kind, if love did not incite them. ...We see this daily verified in our young women and wives, they that being maids took so much pains to sing, play, and dance, with such cost and charge to their Parents, to get those graceful qualities, now being married, will scarce touch an instrument, they care not for it. (1)

This was the Elizabethan girl's opportunity for self-display, much as that of the Victorian young lady was the pianoforte; once the object of marriage was achieved, both could move gracefully aside, and leave their younger sisters to become the centre of attraction. Benedick laid down the condition that any maid he married had to be "an excellent musician",² and the sonneteers sometimes praised the musical ability of their ladies. Griffin extolled Fides³'s skill in playing upon the lute,³ Fletcher and Constable commended the beloved's singing and playing,⁴ and Sidney, Constable and Barnes wrote poems praising the lady's voice.⁵ The lover, therefore, was expected not only to write and sing his own songs, but to write them for his lady to sing:

Some love of yours hath write to you in rhyme.
That I might sing it, madam, to a tune. (6)

¹R. Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Shilleto, III, 203 f.

²W. Shakespeare, Much Ado, II, iii, 35, Works, Globe ed.

³Fidessa, 1596, 17, 37; cf. also E.C., Emaricdulfe, 1595, 17.

⁴Licia, 1593, 30; Diana, I, ii, 4, Poems, ed. J. Grundy, Liverpool, 1960, p. 125.

⁵A & S, Songs 3 and 7; Diana, I, ii, 3, Poems, op.cit., p.124; Parthenophil and Parthenophe, 52. cf. also E.C., Emaricdulfe, 24; T.Watson, Hekatompathia, 1582, 11-17.

⁶W. Shakespeare, TGV, I, ii, 79-80, Works, Globe ed.

Two of the sonneteers employed this situation in their quatorzains. Sidney told how he wrote of his sorrows to move Stella, but her renderings of his verse turned his sorrows to joy, without purchasing him relief:

She heard my plaints, and did not only heare,
But them (so sweete is she) most sweetly sing,
With that fair breast making woe's darknesse cleare:
A pretty case! I hoped her to bring
To feele my griefes, and she with face and voice
So sweet& my paines, that my paines me rejoyce. (1)

To Sir Arthur Gorges, however, the same behaviour in his mistress was another aspect of her tyrannical cruelty, and was viewed by the poet with a melancholy bitterness:

...the mercyleste this day that lyveth
to see my harte flamyng fyndes Contentment
To heare mee sorrowe alas shee smylethe
her fayre Eyes glorie moste in my tormente
And showinge her Rigor to the worldes sighte
She singes those plaintes that I weepinge do write. (2)

Such, then, was the love of Petrarchanism, but it is difficult to decide how much was myth, and how much took place in actuality. It seems justifiable to accept the tradition in its broad outlines; there were doubtless young men who wrote verses and sung them, or gave them to their ladies to sing; perhaps some of the more determinedly Petrarchan of the lovers braved the rigours of the English climate, and serenaded their mistresses in the approved style. The part of the quatorzain in such musical proceedings,

¹A & S, 57, ll. 9-14, Poems, ed. Ringler.

²Vannetyes and Toyes, 60, ll. 9-14, Poems, ed. H.E. Sandison, Oxford, 1953.

however, was probably small. This field of Petrarchan composition belonged chiefly to the amateurs, and competent though they may have been at their instruments, there is no strong tradition to suggest that these musicians composed their own accompaniments. The inference one draws from the remarks of Julia's maid in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and of Burton, in The Anatomy of Melancholy, is that verses were composed for existing tunes.¹ The quatorzain, either in the closely knit Petrarchan arrangement of eight and six, or in the looser Shakespearean form of three blocks of four and a couplet, is not a stanza which fits easily to music, when compared with more simple forms of four or six lines.²

Evidence for the absence of the quatorzain from amongst the lover's sonnets is lacking as is that for its presence, but the negative information provided by the drama seems to point to the former. None of the songs, which were presumably sung at performances, is in sonnet form; even in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Shakespeare's most Petrarchan play, Sir Thurio's "sonnet" proves to be the lyric, "Who is Sylvia". Moreover, those songs which shared the sonnet's function, and eased the burdened heart (such as "Take, O take those lips away" in Measure for Measure, or "Love with my Campaspe playing", in Lyly's Campaspe), or which evoked a mood (as "Sigh no more" from Much Ado, or "Come away, death" in Twelfth

¹See above, pp. 377, 276.

²But see the setting of "Those sies which set my fancie on a fire", W. Barley, A Nevv Booke of Tabliture, 1596. sigs. [C2verso]-C3, where the nature of this "catalogue" sonnet allows the repetition of the final couplet as a refrain after every four lines.

Night), all have forms which are unequivocally lyrical. In view of this, the fact that none of the regular sonnets in the romances of Greene, as opposed to those in Sidney's Arcadia, and in the later works of Lodge, were sung gains significance; they were written to be savoured intellectually.¹ The quatorzain, therefore, seems to have been rare amongst the lover's armoury of sounds and sweet airs. The chief exponent of its place there was Sidney in The Arcadia, whose example was followed by Lodge, particularly in A Margarite of America. The poem as a song flourished best in an ideal courtly world, where every lover was indeed an excellent musician and where the most Petrarchan of all forms was given the adjuncts of exquisite delicacy and art, which matched its own exquisite, delicate, and artificial nature.

The sonnet differs from the song in that its structure is intellectual, not emotional. If used to its full capacity, the poem is tough and sinewy, following through to its close a pattern of thought which has been predetermined by the stanza form. "My love is strengthen'd, though more weak in seeming", "Beautie, sweet loue, is like the morning dewe", "Soule's joy, bend not those morning starres from me", or "Deare, why should you command me to my Rest",²

¹See Francescos Fortunes, 1590, Complete Works, ed. A.B. Grosart, Huth Library, 1881-1886, VIII, 169; Philomela, 1592, ibid., XI, 142, 149, Groatsworth of Wit, 1592, ibid., XII, 129. cf. also the quatorzain in some of the early works of Lodge, Robert Duke of Normandy, 1591, p.53, Complete Works, ed. Hunterian Club, II; William Longbeard, 1593, pp. 18, 19, 25, 36, 37, ibid., II.

²W. Shakespeare, Sonnets, 102; S. Daniel, Delia, 1592, 42; P. Sidney, A & S, 48; M. Drayton, Idea, 1619, 37.

in their different ways, all illustrate the happy conjunction of form and thought at the command of the good sonneteer. Emotion is present, but it flows as a strong undercurrent to the content of the poem, and makes its appeal through the force of the argument. Music, "the most diuine striker of the senses", appeals directly to the emotions, and in any combination of words and music, the sound rather than the sense will strike the ear first. Therefore, words for music should be simple and straightforward in theme and content, and have a general, rather than a particular, appeal:

as music's meaning lies in the flow of its notes the words best suited to its notes are those which are short and simple and without subtlety or depth of meaning. There is no place for discussion, close argument, or intricate thought. Likewise the emotional content must be plain and straightforward, it must be strongly enough expressed for the hearer to seize it and identify himself with it, but all without the intrusion of the deeper and special feelings of the poet himself. (1)

In its reliance upon reasoned argument, and the consequently personal tone this gives to the poem, the quatorzain is clearly not one of the most suitable stanzas for setting to music.

Moreover, the sonnet imposes a limit upon the extent to which its poet can experiment with verbal music, which a song does not. Lyrics such as "I care not for these ladies" or "Weep you no more, sad fountains", convey their different veins of light-hearted gaiety

¹R.W. Ingram, "Words for Music", Elizabethan Poetry, ed. J.R. Brown and B.A. Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, no. 2, 1960, p. 134. cf. also B. Pattison, Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance, 1948, p.100; C. Ing, Elizabethan Lyrics, 1951, p. 15.

and sweet melancholy as much by their verbal rhythms as by the words themselves. The two are not really separable, but the sound of the words is responsible to a large extent for conveying the sense. The words of a sonnet, on the other hand, are implements of the thought, and so the rhythms of the verse are always, or should be, subordinate to the content of the poem. There is no lack of rich variety of verbal music in this poetry, but, stemming from the content rather than from the emotion, its appeal is to the intellect, whilst that of the song is directly to the emotions.¹

However, the Elizabethans saw no reason on traditional grounds why the sonnet should not be given musical accompaniment. Poetry and music were related arts; the poet, says Sidney,

commeth to you with words set in delightfull
proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared
for, the well inchaunting skill of Musicke. (2)

This relationship stretched back to the earliest times. Orpheus and Amphion were both poets and musicians, and they and their descendants in the world's infancy were responsible for all good order.³ Whether the Elizabethan approved of poetry and music or not, he acknowledged the ancient and traditional bond between the two:

¹ Contrast the rhythms of Shakespeare's sonnet 116 with those of Drayton's lyric, "Eyes with your teares, blind if you bee", Works, ed. J.W. Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, I, 487. The latter resembles the quatorzains it is among in length and format, but is constructed on a lyrical, not an intellectual, principle; and is distinguished from the sonnets by its heading, "A Cansonet".

² Apologie, Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, Oxford, 1904, I, 172.

³ T. Lodge, Defence of Poetry, 1579, Eliz. Crit. Essays, I, 74; G. Puttenham The Arte of English Poesie, 1589, ed. G.D. Willcock and A. Walker, Cambridge, 1936, p. 9.

Poetrie and piping have alwayes been so united together, that til the time of Melanippedes pipers were poets hyerlings. (1)

The world is made by Simmetry and proportion, and is in that respect compared to Musick, and Musick to Poetry: for Terence saith, speaking of Poets, artem qui tractant musicam, confoudding Musick and Poesy together. (2)

This classical theory had been reaffirmed in the Renaissance by the two greatest poets of the period, Dante and Petrarch. Dante looked upon all vernacular poetry as suitable for music,³ and Petrarch, followed by other Italians, was known to try his compositions to the lute.⁴ Later, the French Pléiade eagerly accepted this theory,⁵ which Ronsard in particular stressed, and his biographer, Claude Binet, reported him as saying that music and poetry were sister arts, so that poetry without music lacked grace, and music without poetry was dead and lifeless.⁶ There is no evidence that the Elizabethans followed the example of the Italians and French in testing their verses against music, perhaps because England lacked a native tradition to compare with that of the courtly troubadour of the continent.⁷ However, there was no

¹S. Gosson, The School of Abuse, 1579 [ed. J.P. Collier], Shakespeare Society, 1841, p. 15.

²T. Campion, Observations in the Art of English Poesie, 1602, Eliz. Crit. Essays, II, 329. Terence is also cited by E.K. in his gloss to the December eclogue of The Shepherdes Calender, 1579, The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford Standard Authors, Oxford, 1959, p. 466; and by W. Webbe, A Discourse of English Poetrie, 1586, Eliz. Crit. Essays, I, 230.

³B. Pattison, Music and Poetry Eng. Renaissance, p. 31.

⁴ibid., p. 118 ff; J. Stevens, Music and Poetry Early Tudor Court, p. 281.

⁵J.E. Spingarn, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, New York, 1899, p. 220 f.

⁶B. Pattison, Music and Poetry Eng. Renaissance, p. 36 f.

⁷See J. Stevens, Music and Poetry Early Tudor Court, p. 281 f.

suggestion in contemporary criticism that the English disagreed with the principle of measuring verbal quantities against those of music, and the attitudes of Sidney and Campion,¹ and of the age generally in accepting the connection between the arts of poetry and music, strongly implied the contrary. To question the literary theory of the Renaissance in this matter would have been to question the authority of the classics, from which the doctrine derived. Thus, whilst Mrs. Ing speaks for the twentieth century when she excludes sonnets from consideration in her book on the Elizabethan lyric, because

In England, they never had any immediate connection with the lyric in its earliest sense [of "a song for singing"²], and it is questionable whether they may be with precision called "lyrics" at all (3)

she is making a distinction unrecognised by the sixteenth century. In this period, poetry, and particularly the lyric in all its branches, was answerable to the requirements imposed by music.

There was, moreover, a continental precedent for setting the sonnet to music. It was found as a song as early as the fifteenth century in Italy,⁴ and the joint influence of Petrarchanism and the Netherlands chanson brought about its revival as a madrigal in the early sixteenth century.⁵ It was therefore only to be expected that the composers of the Elizabethan age should have treated the

¹Quoted above, pp.282,283.

²Eliz. Lyric, p. 15.

³ibid., p. 20.

⁴B. Pattison, Music and Poetry Eng. Renaissance, p. 90.

⁵ibid., p. 92.

form amongst their compositions at this period of the renaissance of English music. For the last two decades of the reign saw the growth of the school of great English madrigalists and lutenists which, coming into bloom with the publication of Byrd's Psalmes, Sonets & songs in 1588, continued to flourish in the early part of the seventeenth century, until it virtually died away after Martin Pearson's Mottects were published in 1630. Throughout these years, the glory of Elizabethan music drew upon Elizabethan poetry, or poetry Elizabethan in its character, for its lyrics. Sixteen of the song-books included in Dr. E.H. Fellowes's collection of English madrigal verse, which covers the years 1588 to 1630, contain sonnets, or parts or adaptations of these poems, accounting altogether for some forty-six madrigals, lute-songs or, in the case of Martin Peerson's work of 1630, motets. This is not a large total amongst the hundreds of English songs set at this period, and this is perhaps partly accounted for by the unsuitable nature of the complex quatorzain for musical treatment; nonetheless, it indicates that the difficulties of the sonnet were not considered to be insuperable by the Elizabethan composers.

The setting of some sonnets may have been the result of a desire to please a patron or friend, as it seems to have been in the case of Daniell Batchelar's arrangement of the Earl of Essex's quatorzain, "To plead my faith, where faith hath no reward", which was included in Robert Dowland's collection, A Musicall Banquet,

1610.¹ Settings of poems by Sidney were perhaps intended to be tributes to him or to his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, and are to be found in Ward's First Set of English Madrigals, 1613, in which "My true love hath my heart" forms the first two pieces of the volume, whilst both Vautor, in his Songs of diuers Ayres and Natures, 1619, and Peerson, Private Musicke, 1620, provided different musical versions of "Lock up, fair lids, the treasures of my heart".² More clearly an act of homage were Peerson's Mottects, 1630, all of which, except for a final elegy on the poet who had died in 1628, were taken from Fulke Greville's Caelica: they included five sonnets. Whatever external factors contributed to the composers' interest in the quatorzain, they did not shirk the challenge of the form, and generally the effectiveness of the settings as madrigals justifies the attention they gave to the stanza.

Professor Pattison has pointed out that the sonnet is "really too long to be quite satisfactory" as a madrigal, and that this fact often resulted in the division of the poem into two parts, accommodating the octet and the sestet.³ This was only one indication of the way in which the composer might handle the form, for he was at liberty to treat it as he pleased. Thus John Farmer took the

¹no.6. The sonnet is set for a lutenist, tabliture under the treble's lines, whilst the "bassus" is set at the side on the opposite page, for two-part singing if desired.

²T. Vautor, nos. 8-9, The English Madrigalists, ed. E.H. Fellowes, rev. T. Dart, [1958], XXXIV; M. Peerson, No. 13.

³Music and Poetry Eng. Renaissance, p. 96.

sestets of two of Griffin's sonnets, and one from the augmented Diana of 1593, leaving the octets of the poems aside,¹ whilst Ward set the first quatrain of Sidney's "A satyr once did run away for dread", and dealt in a more arbitrary fashion with Walter Davison's "I have entreated, and I have complained", using the first four lines and the concluding couplet, but inserting an altered version of lines 9 and 11 before the last two:

O could my sighs once purchase my relief,
Or in her heart my tears imprint my grief!
(Ward) (2)

Yet you (my Sighs) may purchase mee releefe,
... Therefore my sighes sigh in her eares my greefe
(Poetical Rhapsody) (3)

The madrigalists were not alone in the cavalier disregard of poetic form when it pleased them, for Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger adapted lines 1-4, 13 and 14 of "Like to a hermit poor in place obscure" for one of his airs,⁴ and Martin Peerson rendered a setting of the words of the first quatrain of Constable's Diana I, i, 1 and the first two of Diana III, iii, 1, making these into a twelve-line song.⁵ The stanza form was, therefore, something of which the

¹First Set, 1599, 1, 6, 9; English Madrigal Verse, ed. E.H. Fellowes, Oxford, second ed., 1950, p. 89f; Diana (augmented), V, 411. 9-14, Poems of Henry Constable, ed. J. Grundy, Liverpool, 1960, p. 199; B. Griffin, Fidessa, 46. [ll. 9-14], Eliz. Sonnets, II.

²First Set, 26, Eng. Mad. Verse, p. 207.

³ed. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, I, no. 62.

⁴Ayres, 1609, 1, Eng. Mad. Verse, p. 460. The first line is altered to "Like hermit poor in place obscure" and "gates" in the fifth line replaces "gate" in the Phoenix Nest version of the poem.

⁵I am following the version given in Dr. Fellowes's Eng. Mad. Verse. I have not been able to see the 1620 text, as the British Museum copy of Private Musicke is imperfect up to no. 9 ("Resolved to love" is the second song of the collection). Fellowes's lines agree with the printed and MS. versions of the poem, differing only in the replacement

(contd. on next page)

the composers took little heed, for their concern was with words and music. This can be further seen from the arbitrary way in which the length of line was treated by repetitions or by running on in the interests of the music. The contrapuntal nature of the madrigal in particular, together with the proliferation of voices, obliterated the original shape of the poem, and therefore gave the musician full scope to arrange his words to the advantage of their musical interpretation. A good example of the freedom with which the composer approached his lyric is found in Farmer's treatment of the sestet of the thirteenth sonnet of Fidessa, in which, if the soprano's part were to be written out as it is sung, with the pauses so isolating the phrases as to make of them new lines, the original shape would be so altered that it would appear thus to the reader:

Compare me to the child that plays with fire, with fire,
 With fire
 With fire, with fire,
 Or to the fly, the fly
 That dieth in the flame, or to the foolish boy, the foolish
 boy that did aspire, that did aspire,
 Aspire to touch the glory of high heaven's frame:
 No man to these me fitly can compare, these live
 to die
 these live
 to die
 these live
 to die

(continued from previous page)

of "itselfe" by "myself" (l. 5, Peerson), and "whom" of the 1592, 1593 Dianas and of all MSS. except the Todd, by "when", found in no other version. In the modern edition by M. Wailes, The Complete Works of Martin Peerson, Part 87, 1953, the words differ in certain respects from Fellowes's text: "Resolved" (l. 1) becomes "Resolue"; "in verse" (l. 3) is rendered as "in vain", and this version agrees with the Todd MS. in replacing "whom" by "where" (l. 7). Miss Wailes erroneously ascribes the lines to Greene. Dr. Fellowes has not tracked down their source in his Eng.Mad.Verse.

I die
I die
I die
I die
I die to live in care. (1)

The other voices are so arranged as to combine or conflict with this pattern, and to produce other arrangements of the words. This disruption of the verse was not unusual, and can be seen to a greater or lesser extent in the work of all the madrigalists, although in the case of the composers of solo songs, a little more care was taken to follow the verse form. One reason for this was the consideration which had to be paid to the length of the song, for with too many repetitions in a verse as long as the sonnet stanza, the lyric would become tedious. A certain respect for this is to be seen in those sonnets set as one madrigal, for, although repetition and counterpoint were still used in the interests of intricate patterns of music, the elaboration was a little curtailed. Thus, in Byrd's complete setting of "Ambitious love hath forced me to aspire", the two quatrains have substantially the same tune, allowing for the alteration of note values to suit the different sets of words, and the same applies to the tercets.² In his arrangements for "As I beheld I saw a herdman wild", and "Weeping full sore with face as fair as silver", Byrd is moving towards a compromise between the sonnet set as one madrigal, and that set in two parts, divided into octet and sestet. Both madrigals keep

¹ First Set, English Madrigal School, ed. E.H.Fellowes, 1914, VIII, 30 ff.

² Psalmes, Sonets & songs, 18, Eng.Mad.School, ed E.H. Fellowes, 1920, XIV, 90 ff.

what is virtually the same tune for the first two quatrains, but the sestet, which in each poem strikes out on a new path, is set as a quatrain and couplet, with the couplet repeated.¹

From the manner in which they treated the stanza, the writers of music for songs were apparently neither dissuaded from, nor drawn to, the quatorzain on account of its form. Musical treatment could and did alter it radically. More important to the composer was the content of the verse, and this was particularly so in the case of the madrigalist, who used the quatorzain more frequently than did the lutenist. Farmer's re-arrangement of the lines from Fidessa¹ indicate that the composer chose verse which would allow musical "imitation" or description of the words, and that he turned to poetry whose lack of complexity would allow him to do this. It follows that in certain cases the sonnet must have fulfilled these demands. Therefore, the contents must have conformed to a certain extent with those of the song lyrics. Some of these correspondences between the sonnet and the song can be seen in this description of the lyric, given by Mrs. Ing:

Because it is intended for audible utterance, it retains something of a "public" quality: however deep and genuine the emotions expressed in it may be, they are of such a kind, or treated in such a way, as to make it seem proper that they should be communicated to anyone who hears the singing. That is, the subject of the poem, whether emotion or situation giving rise to emotion, must be freed from those elements which might connect it so intimately with an individual human personality that his privacy

¹ibid., no.20, p.100 ff; Songs of sundrie natures, 1589, 26, Eng.Mad. School XV, 155 ff. "As I beheld" also appeared in Englands Helicon, 1600.

²See above, p.388f.

might seem to be invaded by the overhearing of his utterances. Therefore, the emotion or situation will probably be in some degree generalized, as this is the most obvious way of protecting individual privacy. (1)

It has already been shown that the love sonnet kept the true nature of the poet's feelings masked from his audience, or rather, left them in doubt for all except the lady.² The poet was aware that his quatorzains would be passed round amongst his friends, that they might even find their way to the press; he could take the necessary precautions to guard his privacy, therefore, as Ferdinand Jeronimo did when reproving the unfaithful Elinor, by writing a sonnet "somewhat too general"³: those involved in the situation would understand its application. The lover's privacy was, however, protected more comprehensively by the conventions in which he wrote. Petrarchanism had laid down the attitudes and imagery which the poet employed in his verse, and outside the lover's immediate circle, no one was able to gauge their full significance. This applies equally to the quatorzain set as a song. Byrd's "Wounded I am and dare not seek relief", reflects this clearly,⁴ as does one of the sonnets in Bateson's Second Set of Madrigales, 1618, the lovely "Life of my life, how should I live alas", which expresses the lover's sorrow at the beloved's departure, and could be the sentiment felt by any lover about separation from his mistress.⁵

¹ Eliz.Lyrics, p. 15.

² See above, p.263ff

³ G. Gasgoigne, The Posies, ed. J.W. Cunliffe, Cambridge English Classics Cambridge, 1907
The Adventures of Master F.J., p.450.

⁴ Songs of sundrie natures, 17-18, Eng.Mad.Verse, p. 53.

⁵ No. 17, Eng.Mad.Verse, p. 20.

Neither of these poems in their musical settings make unsatisfactory madrigals.

Moreover, Petrarchanism was as indispensable to the madrigalist as it was to the lover:

The uniformity in the style of the poetry inspired freshness in the music.... All a musician needs from his librettist is an atmosphere, a good sustained for some time; and contrasted moods are even better, provided the transition from one to another is not too sudden.... Good music can be made from indifferent poetry, and the Petrarchan convention had all a composer wanted. Its emotions were broad and simple, its contrasts as clear as that between black and white. (1)

Although this was only true in outline for the sonnet, it nonetheless indicates that the Petrarchan nature of the stanzas's content could in some circumstances curtail its intellectual flow, and produce broader generalizations which reached beyond and obscured personal experience. Both types of poem are to be found amongst the quatrains with musical accompaniment.

Amongst the sonnets which the Elizabethan and early seventeenth-century composers set as madrigals are some which blend the personal and the general in such a way as to make the poem quite suitable for public utterance. One poem which Byrd arranged, "Is love a boy?" minimized^s personal application until it is merely a few brush-strokes on the canvas. The octet propounds the various properties with which Cupid is accredited, and which appear to conflict with his actions; yet he is declared to be "compact of all", a boy, blind, a man and

¹B. Pattison, Music and Poetry Eng. Renaissance, p. 100.

yet a god.¹ The first four lines of the sestet then proceed to apply these qualities to the poet's own case:

Boy, pity me that am a child again.
Blind, be no more my guide to make me stray.
Man, use thy might to force away my pain.
God, do me good and lead me to my way. (2)

A similarly general approach is to be seen in "When Flora fair the pleasant tidings bringeth", which Carlton set in two parts in his Madrigals to Fine voyces, 1601. The lover describes how the coming of Spring delights all creatures except himself, because his unhappy love affair makes him unable to join in the universal joy at the renewal^{of}/life and love:

I all alone am from these joys exiled;
No Summer grows where love yet never smiled. (3)

The least personal sonnet is the one related to the epigram,⁴ in which the fourteen-line stanza is used to relate an anecdote of love; the poet in this case does not participate in the emotion, although he is sympathetic towards it, as are the authors of "As I beheld I saw a herdman wild", and "Weeping full sore with face as fair as silver":

Alas, quoth I, what meaneth this demeanour,
So fair a dame to be so full of sorrow? (5)

¹Songs of sundrie natures, 15. Eng.Mad.Verse, p. 53.

²ibid., 15-16 [ll. 9-12]. cf. also ibid., nos. 10-11, "When younglings first on Cupid fix their sight", and Psalmes, Sonets & songs, 18, Eng.Med.Verse, p. 40.

³ibid., 4-5, [ll. 13-14], Eng.Mad.Verse, p. 69.

⁴See above, p. 18f

⁵W. Byrd, Songs of sundrie natures, 26, [ll. 9-10], Eng.Mad.Verse, p.55. cf. also R. Carlton, Madrigals, 6-7, Eng.Mad.Verse, p. 69.

Anecdotes about Cupid furnish subjects for sonnets in Byrd's Songs of sundrie natures, and Bateson's Second Set. Byrd set a quatorzain which describes the winged boy's adventures when "Upon a Summer's day love went to swim",¹ whilst Bateson's poem tells that

Cupid, in a bed of roses
Sleeping, chanced to be stung
Of a bee that lay among
The flowers where he himself reposes. (2)

This poem is more truly a lyric than a sonnet.³ The variations in the length of line, and the light, dancing rhythms, enhance its musical qualities; the poem asks to be sung. The words may have been expressly written for music, but if they were not, it is easy to see their appeal to the madrigalist, with their contrasts of light and shade:

Cytherea, smiling, said
That if so great sorrow spring
From a silly bee's weak sting,
As should make thee thus dismayed,
What anguish feel they, think'st thou, and what pain,
Whom thy empoisoned arrows cause complain? (2)

For, besides seeking a subject which would not impede him by making him attempt to convey an intellectual content by the emotional means of music, the composer looked for poems which allowed him to imitate musically the emotions which they expressed. The basic means at the composer's disposal were simple; long notes to convey sadness, short, dancing ones to indicate joy, runs to denote intricate or

¹ nos. 12-13, Eng.Mad.Verse, p. 52.

² nos. 25-26, [ll. 1-4], Eng.Mad.Verse, p. 22.

³ See above, p. ?

³⁴ [ll. 9-14], Eng.Mad.Verse, p. 22.

subtle situations, pauses to emphasize dramatic phrases. Nonetheless, by these means, and by repetition both of words and of note values, the madrigalist could bring much richness to the musical settings. The music was his prime concern; poetry offered the composer a means to express and explore ideas fruitful to music and musical combinations, for the madrigal was too elaborate a form to do more than exploit the words for their emotional content, and to play its variations on their themes.

However, if this treatment did not do justice to the poem as a whole, it allowed an emphasis on individual words and phrases which can be seen as both pleasing and fruitful. The effects achieved are always highly decorative, on account of the nature of the madrigal, but in the hands of a master, they evoke the correct emotional response from the listener. In his ability to produce this response lay the triumph of the madrigalist, for this vindicated the madrigal both as a song for singing and as a song to listen to. Two sonnets which are effective in this way, both different in character, are Byrd's "Wounded I am", and Ward's "My true love hath my heart". The use of the predominantly long notes of Byrd's madrigal may seem to be an expected, almost facile, treatment of a sad lyric, but the skilful combination of the four voices successfully exploits the essential simplicity of this arrangement, and enhances the sadness without allowing the effect to degenerate into sentimentality. The result is that the singers express, and the listeners sympathize

with, the strong feeling of compassion which the composer brings to the lyric.¹ John Ward's setting of Sidney's sonnet is successful in a different direction. The emotion to be conveyed in this case is one of happiness, but of that kind of happiness which results from mutual trust and the confidence of the lovers in each other's affection. To express this, Ward uses a measured rhythm, in which the note values are evenly balanced, long against short. The choice of three voices for this setting is a particularly happy one, as they intimate the necessary richness and depth of the emotion without overburdening it, and the small group gives the effect of intimacy. The harmony of the lover's situation is further emphasized by the lovely, chiming opening of the first part of the madrigal, which is repeated, or rather hinted at, in different combinations of the voices in the introduction of each new theme. However much the sonnet as a form suffers in the setting, it finds the full expression of its emotion in these skilful and carefully wrought madrigals.²

The madrigalist was frequently as sensitive in his approach to individual words and phrases in which he saw the opportunity for musical painting or imitation. Repetition, which can be irritating if used pointlessly, can be seen employed both elaborately and effectively in the two parts of Bateson's setting of "Cupid in a ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

¹Songs of sundrie natures, 17, 18, Eng.Mad.School, XV.

²The First Set, 1, 2, Eng.Mad.School, ed. E.H. Fellowes, 1922, XIX.

NO. 25. CUPID IN A BED OF ROSES.
(The First Part.)

Brightly, in quick time.

SOPRANO. (CANTUS.) *mf* Cu - pid in a bed of Ros - es, in a bed of

SOPRANO. (ALTUS.) *mf* Cu - pid in a bed of Ros-es, in a bed of Ros-

ALTO. (SEXTUS.) *mf* Cu - pid in a bed of Ros - es, in a

TENOR. (QUINTUS.) *mf* Cu - pid in a bed of

TENOR. (TENOR.) *mf* Cu - pid

BASS. (BASSUS.) *mf* Cu - pid

PIANOFORTE. (For rehearsal only) *mf*



Ros - es, in a bed of Ros - es sleep -

-es, in a bed of Ros - es, in a bed of Ros - es sleep -


bed of Ros - es sleep -

Ros - es, of Ros - es, of Ros - es sleep -

in a bed of Ros-es sleep -

sleep



bed of roses", in his Second Set, 1618, numbers 25 and 26.¹ The continuous repeating in the first line builds up a relaxed, soporific effect which reaches its culmination in the long notes of "sleeping"; whilst the delicate, light notes combine with the longer ones of "roses" to convey the sophisticated luxuriousness of such a flowery bed (Illustration 1).² This complex opening is matched by the beginning of the second part of the poem's setting, where repetition is again used with short, lilting notes, to express Cytherea's smiling.³ Imitation similar in nature is to be found in Vautor's treatment of the lines, "Then take my shape and play a lover's part", where the notation of "play" in the parts for the two sopranos is rendered in the modern transcript by quavers (Fig. 1).⁴ Words expressing movement are also susceptible to this musical painting, and Byrd conveys a delightful musical picture of Diana's nymphs dancing in "Weeping full sore".⁵ Movement of another kind is depicted in Carlton's "All creatures then", the second part of "When Flora proud", where the basic notation for "the fish with scales of silver" is  in all voices,⁶ and this gives the effect of the small, darting

¹The English Madrigalists, ed. E.H. Fellowes, rev. T. Darke, [1958], XXII.

²ibid., p. 143.

³ibid. p. 147.

⁴Songs, 9, Eng. Madrigalists, ed. E.H. Fellowes, rev. T. Dart, [1958], XXXIV, 68 f.

⁵Songs of sundrie natures, 26, Eng. Mad. School, XV, 159.

⁶Madrigals, 5, Eng. Madrigalists, ed. E.H. Fellowes, rev. T. Darke, [1960] XXVII, 30. Note, however, the variations of the second soprano's line.

[1st sop.]
 Shape and play ————— a lov-er's part

[2nd sop.]
 take- my- shape and play ————— a lov-er's part

Fig. 1.
 T. Vautor, Songs, ed. cit., pp. 68-69.

[1st sop.]
 sweet — sleep — some ————— ease im- part

Fig. 2:
 T. Vautor, Songs, ed. cit., pp. ~~68-69~~⁵⁹⁻⁶⁰.

[2nd. tenor]
 weep- ing full sore, weep ————— ing-
 — full — sore, weep- ing full ————— sore

Fig. 3:
 W. Byrd, Songs of sundrie natures,
 ed. cit., p. 155.

movements of the creatures. Words which are themselves expressive of sound, such as "sighs", or "alas", are frequently found in the sonnet madrigals; and "sleep" or "sleeping" is also a favourite word for imitation, for here the madrigalist can capture in his music the regular indrawing and letting out of the breath, as in Vautor's "Lock up, fair lids" (Fig. 2).¹ Such devices were generally used in moderation by the composer, as in Byrd's treatment of "Weeping full sore", where the musical imitation of the sobbing and catching of the breath is strictly confined to the second tenor's line (Fig. 3).² Musical terms themselves offer perhaps the most rewarding material for description, and one of the sonnets chosen by the madrigalists, "Of joys and pleasing pains", almost demands a musical setting, particularly in the sestet.

My rests are sighs deep from the heart-root fetched;
My song runs all on sharps, and with oft striking
Time on my breast I shrink with hands outstretched.
Thus still and still I sing, and ne'er am linning,
For still the close points to my first beginning. (3)

The poem may have been written by the composer himself, perhaps with a setting in mind, for Dr. Fellowes tentatively suggests that Wilbye wrote his own words.⁴ Although the editor does not press the point, this stresses the particular harmony in Wilbye's case between his

¹Songs, 8, Eng. Madrigalists, XXXIV, 59 f.

²Songs of sundrie natures, 26, Eng. Mad. School, XV, p. 155.

³First Set, 1598, 26-27, [ll. 10-14], Eng. Mad. Verse, p. 237.

⁴Second Set, 1609, Eng. Mad. School, 1914, VII, "Notes", [p. ix].

Illust. 2a: J. Wilbye, First Set, ed. cit., p. 138.

with skrik-ing, with skrik -
 - my voice is hoarse with skrik-ing, with skrik -
 voice is hoarse hoarse with skrik -
 with skrik - ing:
 hoarse, my voice is hoarse with skrik - ing:
 hoarse with skrik -

- ing: My rests, are sighs, are sighs, Deep from -
 - ing: My rests, are sighs, are sighs, Deep
 - ing: My rests, are sighs, are sighs, Deep from the
 My rests, are sighs, are sighs, Deep
 My rests, are sighs, are sighs, Deep from
 - ing: My rests, are sighs, are sighs, Deep

*To avoid the very harsh effect probably intended by the composer) the small notes are suggested, so that the F sharp may come on the first beat, followed by a minim rest.

the heart root fetch - ed: My
 from the heart root fetch - ed: My song runs all on sharps,
 heart root fetch - ed: My song runs all
 from the heart root fetch - ed: My
 the heart root fetch - ed:
 from the heart root fetch - ed: My song runs all on

song runs all on sharps, And with oft strik - ing
 My song runs all on sharps, And with oft strik - ing
 on sharps, And with oft strik - ing
 song runs all on sharps, And with oft strik - ing
 My song runs all on sharps, And with oft strik - ing
 sharps, And with oft strik - ing

*This chord is correctly transcribed from the original edition. The harmony, so unusual for the period, is evidently intended to illustrate the words. It should also be stated that the only sign employed at that time for raising any note a semitone was the "sharp," so that B as well as F, on the word "sharps," required the # in the original edition: even the E in the sextus part requires the accidental in modern notation.

[Sop] >

sub-tle thing, then shield me heavens from such a sub-tle

[Alto] >

thing, then shield me heavens from such a sub-

[Tenor] >

thing, from such a sub-tle thing, from such a sub-tle

thing, a sub-tle thing.

thing.

thing, from such a sub-tle thing.

FIG. 4:
 W. Byrd, Songs of sundrie natures,
 ed. cit., p. 67.

Illust. 3: J. Farmer, First Set, ed. cit., p. 33.

fit - ly can com - pare, these live to die, these live to die, these live to die, these live to die, these live to die, the

theselive to die, I die, I die, I die, I die, die, these live to die, I die, I die, I die, I live to die, to die, I die, I die, I die, I die, these live to die, I die, I die, I die, I

I die to live in care. care. die, I die to live in care. No care. die, I die to live in care. No care. die to live in care. No care.

music and the poetry he sets. The aptness of the treatment of "Of joys and pleasing pains" clearly reflects this happy conjunction (Illustrations 2a and 2b).¹ Beyond this aural imitation, some composers attempt to convey more intellectual ideas by the intricacy of their arrangement, and notably Byrd, who is particularly successful in the eleventh madrigal of the Songs of sundrie natures, with "then shield me heavens from such a subtle thing" (Fig. 4).²

However, above all the madrigal is strong in creating a mood. The pause is especially useful in conveying sadness, and is used in effective contrast of different states of being in Farmer's setting of the line "These live to die, I die to live in care",³ where, following the rising notes of "these live", the rest allows a feeling of expectation and hope, which is gently reversed in the pause following the falling notes of "I die", leading into the sad melancholy of the close (Illustration 3).

Another device which the madrigalists use is that of contrast. It can be employed with great subtlety, as in Byrd's arrangement of the lines, "Proceed then in this desperate enterprise / With good advice, and follow love thy guide" (Illustrations 4a and 4b). The resolution and certainty of "Proceed then in" and "with good advice" are conveyed by a regular rhythm and measured beat, whilst

¹ First Set, 27, Eng.Mad.School, ed. E.H. Fellowes, 1914, VI, 138 f. cf. also ibid., pp. 140, 142.

² no. 11, Eng.Mad.School, XV, 67. cf. Byrd's treatment of "far greater harmes", ibid., no. 12, p. 72.

³ First Set, 9, Eng.Mad.School, ed. E.H. Fellowes, 1914, VIII, 33. cf. also W. Byrd, Psalmes, Sonets & songs, 20, Eng.Mad.School, XIV, 107; Songs of sundrie natures, 13, 18, Eng.Mad.School, XV, 76, 102; T. Bateson, Second Set, 17, Eng.Madrigalists, XXII, 95.

Illust. 4a: W. Byrd, Psalmes, Sonets & songs, ed. C. C., p. 92.

cresc. *dim.*

Whose se - vere law doth pro - mise me no grace.
 for *mf* on his frown a thou - sand tor - ments wait.

law doth pro-mise me no grace, no grace, no grace.
 frown a thousand torments wait, tor - - - ments wait.

— law, Whose se - vere law doth promise me no grace.
 — frown, for on his frown a thousand tor - ments wait.

promise me no grace, doth pro - mise me no grace.
 thousand tor - ments wait, a thou - sand tor - ments wait.

law doth pro - mise me no grace, no grace.
 frown a thou - sand tor - ments wait, tor - ments wait.

f *p*

Pro - ceed then in this de - sperate en - ter - prise, with *p*

Pro - ceed then in this de - sperate en - ter - prise, with *p*

Pro - ceed then in this de - sperate en - ter - prise, with *p*

Pro - ceed then in this de - sperate en - ter - prise, with good ad - *p*

Pro - ceed then in this de - sperate en - ter - prise, with *p*

good ad - vice, and fol - low love thy guide, that leads thee to thy
good ad - vice, and fol - low, and fol - low love thy guide, that leads thee
good ad - vice, and fol - low love thy guide, and fol - low love thy
- vice, ad - vice, and fol - low love thy guide, that leads thee to,
good ad - vice, and fol - low love thy guide, that leads thee to thy wished

wish - ed Pa - ra - dise, to thy wish - ed Pa - ra - dise, Pa - ra - -
to thy wished Pa - ra - dise, to thy wished Pa - ra - dise,
guide, that leads thee to thy wish - ed Pa - ra - dise, Pa - ra -
that leads thee to thy wish - ed Pa - - ra - dise, to thy wish - ed
Pa - ra - dise, that leads thee to thy wished Pa - ra - dise, Pa - ra -

"desperate enterprise" is given shorter, less regular, notes to imply the element of risk in such an undertaking, and "follow love thy guide" runs trippingly to complete the contrast.¹ Other examples can be cited from the works of Bateson,² and of Carlton, whose use of the device is more rudimentary than Byrd's, but nonetheless pleasant in effect.³

If the sonnet did not serve the Elizabethan madrigal composer with exactly the right simplicity of theme and content, therefore, he could adapt the less personal and more general ones to suit his musical musings, for they as successfully fired his imagination as their more lyrical companions. For, in spite of all that points to the contrary, the sonnet is successful as a madrigal. If the poem is divided into separate settings for octet and sestet, the form in many cases allows this, on account of the change of direction in the thought or theme: even in those sonnets set in their entirety, there is an alteration of mood and tune which underlined⁵ the division into eight and six lines.⁴ Individual words, lines, or parts of lines, are repeated in a manner which should destroy their beauty, and frequently, amidst the contrapuntal juxtaposition of three, four, five, or even six voices, the sense is obscured altogether. Nonetheless, whilst the music triumphs, the words hold their own

¹Psalmes, Sonets & songs, 18, Eng. Mad. School, 1920, XIV, 92 f.

²See Second Set, 17, Eng. Madrigalists, XXII, 91 f.

³See Madrigals, 5, 6, Eng. Madrigalists, XXVII, 31, 44 f.

⁴cf. W. Byrd, Psalmes, Sonets & songs, 18, 20; Songs of sundrie natures, 26; T. Bateson, Second Set, 17.

in some mysterious way. Perhaps it is because the madrigal is elaborate in a manner which reaches beyond the purely emotional, for it is an artificial form in the Elizabethan sense of the word. The pleasure it gives, therefore, derives to a large extent from the appreciation of the intricacy of the composer's invention, and this is also true of that which the sonnet gives in the sphere of poetry. These two artificial modes are therefore suited in some respects, and if the words yield the victory, the music proves to be a not tyrannical conqueror.

As a song for solo instrument and voice, the sonnet appears to have been less popular. Of the twenty-nine books which E.N. Fellowes attributes to the lutenist school of airs in his English Madrigal Verse, only those of John Daniel, and of Robert and John Dowland, contain settings of complete sonnets.¹ Possibly more quatorzains were set which have failed to survive; perhaps because the tune could^{be} easily learned by ear, and the performer could then improvise his own accompaniment. Young men and women today are able to produce a tolerable accompaniment to almost any piece of popular music with a few basic chords on the guitar, as a generation or so earlier they did on the ukelele, and it does not seem unlikely that their similarly dilettante forbears of the Elizabethan age should have used analogous methods with the lute and cittern. The

¹Songs for the Lute Viol and Voice, 1606, 4; A Musicall Banquet, 1610, 6; A Pilgrimes Solace, 1612, 18.

lutenists took pains to preserve their compositions for solo instrument, which are of great beauty and intricacy, but they perhaps did not show the same concern over the light air, which could so quickly become any man's property. Nonetheless, certain of the sonnet's characteristics made it unsuitable for this kind of setting.

The essence of the air is the tune. Its distinction lies in its being the first English song in which the accompaniment is carefully composed yet purely subsidiary to the solo voice. (1)

The complicated structure of the quatorzain cannot be so easily subdued in the air as in the madrigal. The latter derives its own extremely various forms from the words it uses, and then, by repetition in the different voices and by the use of counterpoint, successfully obscures those elements of the sonnet stanza which interfere with the relationship between words and music. The air, on the other hand, tends to rely more heavily on the shape of its verse, for, with a single voice the opportunities for musical embellishment are lessened, and as all the words are audible, they impose a limit upon the extent to which the composer can indulge his imaginative treatment of repetitions. The verse must always make sense. The sonnet is too long a poem for the air, and it does not divide comfortably into stanzas; moreover, the emphasis which the voice is enabled to give in this solo song, underlines the complexity of structure and thought which make the quatorzain a

¹B. Pattison, Music and Poetry Eng. Renaissance, p. 113.

difficult form for this setting. The melody of the air demands a partnership from the words which a sonnet, by its very nature, cannot give.

The composers did their best to overcome these obstacles when they set the poem. Like the madrigalists, they tended to choose those which were more generalized in tone, as Dowland's "My heart and tongue were twins", Apollo's love song for Daphne, which closes on a note of wide application:

Then this be sure, since it is true perfection,
That neither men nor gods can force affection. (1)

John Daniel set only one of his brother's quatorzains in its entirety, and in this case he was presumably attracted by the musical terminology of "Like as the lute". Amongst his other songs, the sonnet "Time cruel time" appears in a new form as two stanzas of eight lines each, the second stanza of which is not found elsewhere in the poet's works:

Then do so still, although she makes no 'steem
Of days nor years, but lets them run in vain.
Hold still thy swift-winged hours, that wondering seem
To gaze on her, even to turn back again;
And do so still, although she nothing cares.
Do as I do, love her although unkind.
Hold still. Yet, O I fear, at unawares
Thou wilt beguile her though thou seem'st so kind. (2)

These lines substantially change the personal tone of the original sestet, and are presumably Samuel Daniel's alterations to make the

¹Pilgrimes Solace, 1612, 18, [ll. 13-4], Eng. Mad. Verse, p. 450. The original version of l. 13 is that given in Englands Helicon, ed. H. Macdonald, The Muses Library, 1962, p. 125: "Engrave upon this tree Daphnes perfection". (See also below, p. 422)

²Songs, 1606, 8, Eng. Med. Verse, p. 403 f.

Then this be sure, since it is true per-fection, That nei-ther
 men-nor ——— gods, — nor- gods can for- — & f - fec-tion.

Fig. 5:
 J. Dowland, Pilgrimes Solace,
 ed. cit., p. 84.

yet strung and twined to play — heart's har- mo- ny.
 And both are one to make — a new- found lov- er.
 My love with pain, my pain — with loss- re- ward- ed.

Fig. 6:
 J. Dowland, Pilgrimes Solace,
 ed. cit., p. 84.

poem more suitable for his brother to set as a song:

And yet thou seest thy powre she disobaies,
 Cares not for thee, but lets thee waste in vaine,
 And prodigall of howers and yeares betraies
 Beautie and youth t'opinion and disdaine.
 Yet spare her Tyme, let her exempted bee,
 She may become more kind to thee or mee. (1)

The sonnet is perhaps most effective as an air when it is set in three stanzas, with the couplet providing a final summing-up of all that has gone before, thus retaining a musical semblance of the sonnet form, as in Dowland's setting of "My heart and tongue were twins".² As each of the quatrains has to follow the same tune, the amount of elaboration in which the composer indulges is limited; there is no repetition at all until the couplet, when the lutenist adds an extra "nor gods" to his lyric, which is fully justifiable in the context both of its^{first} performance in an entertainment,³ and also in that this is the underlining of the singer's point, "That neither men nor gods [no, not even gods], can force affection" (Fig. 5).

Some composers approach the quatorzain in the same manner as the madrigalists, taking it line by line, or phrase by phrase; viewing it from the point of view of its content rather than of the disciplined form laid upon that content by its stanza. This can

¹Delia, 1601, and all subsequent eds., 23, ll. 9-14, Poems, ed. Sprague, p.177. Sprague also gives the version of the second stanza of the Songs on the same page.

²A Pilgrimes Solace, 18, The English School of Lutenist Song Writers, ed. E.H. Fellowes, [first series], 1925, XIV, 83 f.

³See below, p.422

Illust. 5a: J. Daniel, Songs, ed. cit., p. 10.

my heart strings, high tuned, high tuned un - to her

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. The lyrics are "my heart strings, high tuned, high tuned un - to her". The piano accompaniment is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

fame. Her touch doth cause the war - ble

The second system continues the musical score. The vocal line begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic marking. The lyrics are "fame. Her touch doth cause the war - ble". The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern, maintaining the *p* dynamic.

of the sound Which here I yield in lamen-ta-ble wise, in

The third system of the musical score features a *cresc.* (crescendo) dynamic marking at the end of the vocal line. The lyrics are "of the sound Which here I yield in lamen-ta-ble wise, in". The piano accompaniment also includes a *cresc.* marking.

la-men-ta-ble wise, in la-men-ta-ble wise, la - men-ta - ble

The fourth and final system of the musical score features a *dim.* (diminuendo) dynamic marking at the end of the vocal line. The lyrics are "la-men-ta-ble wise, in la-men-ta-ble wise, la - men-ta - ble". The piano accompaniment also includes a *dim.* marking.

wise, *mf* A wail-ing des-cant, a wail-ing

des-cant on the sweet - est ground, Whose due re - ports, whose due re -

-ports gives ho - nour to her eyes, *f* whose due re - ports,

whose due re - ports gives ho - nour to her eyes:

heart's harmony",¹ confines such description to a clear but subtle intimation of this, to keep a decorum with the parallel lines of the following quatrains, which do not require this type of illustration (Fig. 6).² In the air, therefore, if a composer uses all the art at his disposal, the sonnet as a form suffers, and whilst the song stands to gain in individual phrasings, it tends to lose its own integrity; if the stanza form is observed, the composer is constrained to use a more simple, though not necessarily a less pleasing, kind of artistry. The union of sonnet and air, therefore, is not an entirely happy one.

Whether set for solo singer or for several voices, the musical settings of the sonnet require the same degree of enthusiasm and skill from the performers as do the other madrigals and airs. The proliferation of song-books during the latter part of the reign indicate that the Elizabethans had no lack of enthusiasm, particularly for the madrigal. Allowing for a degree of exaggeration in the picture offered in Morley's Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke, 1597, of every educated English gentleman and gentlewoman bearing his or her part,³ the fact that such a book of instruction as Morley's work came to be written at all proves that the desire to sing competently was not alien to the Elizabethan. The ability to sing was one of the social graces; but it must also

¹ idem.

² A Pilgrimes Solace, 18, Eng. School of Lutenist Song Writers, [First Series], XIV, 84.

³ ed. E.H.Fellowes, Shakespeare Association Facs., 14, 1937, [p.1].

have appealed to something deeper than the desire to impress and please others; to that love of and response to music which can only be satisfied by taking part in its exposition. The sixteenth century was happily able to justify this on moral grounds, by proclaiming the beneficial effects of music as a relaxation:

For yf we waie it well, there is no ease of the
labours and medicines of feeble mindes to be
founde more honeste, and more praise worthye in
tyme of leysur then it. (1)

This remained as true for the Elizabethan courtier as it was for Castiglione's:

.... when this Courtly Gentleman with toyle
Himselfe hath wearied, he doth recoyle
Vnto his rest, and there with sweete delight
Of Musicks skill reuiues his toyled spright. (2)

Even the Puritan did not condemn music out of hand. Whilst deploring the bad effect on the morals of young people that amorous songs could have, Philip Stubbes was nevertheless convinced that it was a suitable recreation, in the root meaning of the word:

priuatly in a mans secret Chamber or house, for his
own solace or comfort to driue away the fantasies
of idle thoughts, sollicitude, care, sorrowe, and
such other perturbations and molestations of the
minde, the only ends wherto true Musick tends, it
were very commendable and tollerable. (3)

¹B. Castiglione, The Courtyer, trans. T. Hoby, 1561, Tudor Translations p.89.

²E.Spenser, Mother Hubberds Tale, 1591, ll.753-56, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors.

³P.Stubbes, Anatomie of Abuses, 1583, ed. F.J.Furnivall, New Shakespeare Society, Sixth Series, 1877-79, IV and VI, p.171. Gosson, on the other hand, believed music fulfilled its function only when it was martial and roused the spirits, or ennobled by instilling moral precepts, see The Schoole of Abuse, 1579, [ed.Collier]. p.15 f.

However, the Elizabethan preferred his solace and comfort to take place in the midst of his friends, as the popularity of the madrigal showed. He was so fond of part-singing, that he would add other voices to the air written specifically for one singer, sometimes to the annoyance of the composer. Campion has given us a charming picture of the sixteenth-century Englishman perversely unable to resist joining in a song,¹ which suggests that his pleasure in music lay as much in the participation as in the hearing. The madrigal is particularly a singer's song, for he has the joy of achievement in mastering an exacting technical form, of taking the responsibility for bearing his part accurately with others similarly skilled. He is therefore aware, not only of the demands of his own part, but also of those of the others, for the success of a madrigal depends on perfect pitch, timing, and not least, of understanding, amongst the singers. The singer is aware of the words and music in their full relationship. The listener's pleasure is different. He hears primarily the musical effect, the chiming or harmony amongst the voices, the alterations of rhythms, the music of the runs, by which the emotion is conveyed; the words may strike through, or may be lost in the waves and pinnacles of sound. The listener, therefore, cannot be so acutely aware of the full extent of the artistry of the madrigal as the singer is. The madrigal is

¹Two Bookes of Ayres, 1613, "Preface", quoted by B. Pattison, Music and Poetry Eng. Renaissance, p. 114.

delightful to hear; but it is more delightful to perform.

The song for solo voice is, on the other hand, as much the listener's pleasure as the performer's; but to be so, it must be well executed, and the finest airs, such as those of John Dowland and John Daniel, demand a high degree of skill on the part of the singer, who in the sixteenth century may or may not have been the accompanist as well. It is probably no coincidence that "the majority of the composers of airs were professional lutenists".¹ Other than privately in a man's secret chamber, this type of singing was the province of the talented amateur, like John Daniel's young pupil, to whom he dedicated his Songs,² or the professional musician, employed in the royal service, or in those private houses whose owners were both sufficiently interested in music, and sufficiently rich, to employ a resident musician. The position of John Wilbye at Hengrave, described by Dr. Fellowes in The English Madrigal, 1925,³ was perhaps not typical of the age, but probably not unique. The duties of such a musician would have been to provide his patrons with music in which they could take part, and also with that to which they could listen. Whereas we may put on a record to evoke a mood, or simply for delight, the Orsino and Claudio and Mariana of the Elizabethan age called upon their Feste or Balthasar, or singing boy, to provide the same effect.

¹B. Pattison, Music and Poetry Eng. Renaissance, p. 117.

²Mistress Anne Greene.

³p. 10 ff.

The sonnet was perhaps infrequently employed in such private music, but as a courtly poem it was not neglected in the sophisticated, masque-like spectacles in which the Elizabethans delighted. In two separate entertainments given before the Queen, the sonnet was set as a soloist's song.

The first took place on the Whit Monday of 1581, and was a "triumph", staged before the French Ambassador and Queen Elizabeth, in which Sidney and Greville took part. The theme was the assault on the fort of Beauty, one which was itself part of the sonnet tradition.¹ The fortress itself appears to have been a triumph of Elizabethan scenic design, equipped with realistic cannons, which discharged scented water and rose petals at the climax of the entertainment. Before this point, however, a messenger from the four foster children of Desire² delivered a challenge to the defenders of the fort:

the rowling trench or mount of earth was mooved as
neere the Queene's Majestie as might be; which being
settled, the musike plaied very pleasantlie, and one
of the boies being then accompanied with cornets,
summoned the Fortresse with this delectable soong:

Yeeld, yeeld, O yeeld, you that this fort doo hold.(3)

The delectable song is a regular Shakespearean sonnet, but the repetition of "yeeld, yeeld, O yeeld" at the beginnings of lines

¹See B. Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe, mad.10; Coelia, 10; Zepheria, 3; M. Drayton, Ideas Mirrour, 34.

²The foster children were the Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor, Fulke Greville, and Philip Sidney, who may have written the songs for the triumph; see Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Ringler, "Commentary", p. 518 f.

³Account of Henrie Goldwell, in J. Nichols's The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, [second ed.], 1823, II, 318.

1, 5, 9, and 13, and of the phrase "O yeeld, O yeeld" at the close of lines 4, 8, 12, and 14, obscures the stanza to the extent that it becomes a truly lyric form. The answering song, "Alarme, alarme, here will no yeelding bee", follows the same pattern, substituting "alarme, alarme" for the "yeeld" phrases.¹

The Queen was also present at the first public performance of Dowland's setting of "My heart and tongue were twins", which took place during the entertainment given in her honour at Sudeley Castle, during a progress of 1592. The scene was carefully set to illustrate the unhappy issue of Apollo's love for Daphne:

her Majesty sawe Apollo with the tree, having on the
one side one that sung, on the other one that plaide:

Sing you, plaie you; but sing and play my truth. (2)

The lutenist was John Dowland himself, for during the entertainment provided for the third day, another sonnet, "Hearbes, words, and stones" is again assigned to a musician and a separate singer. The lutenist, referred to as "Do." in the account of the progress, is recorded as saying:

I have plaide so long with my fingers, that I have
beaten out of play al my good fortunes. (3)

This remark was probably a bid for the royal favour; if so, the arrangements of the courtly sonnets, amongst the other strains played during the visit to Sudeley, can be seen as part of this attempt

¹idem.

²J. Nichols, Progresses, III, 138.

³ibid., III, 141.

to gain the Queen's patronage. However, Dowland's hopes fell flat; the cherished appointment at the English court was not to be his until 1606.¹

The sonnet as a song, therefore, as well as a poem, fulfilled public and private roles. Its almost inevitable connection with Petrarchan love ensured that certain parts of both these roles took place in courtly surroundings, whether the song's function was to depict the lover sighing his sorrows, or using finest art to win his lady; or to provide an entertainment for friends or, with more spectacle, for noble personages. The joy and enthusiasm for Elizabethan music indicates that to that age music, as well as love, was "the delight of all well-thinking minds", to borrow a phrase of Greville's. Feste was not alone when he said, "I take pleasure in singing".² The sonnets which found their way into the song-books carried out the same purposes as their companion verses, that is, they provided material for that most pleasant of recreations, the making of vocal music. However adequately or otherwise the quatorzain fulfilled its role as a song, the Elizabethans did not hesitate to sing it amongst their other lyrics, with the same zest and artistry which characterized their approach to the courtier modes of music and verse of their day.

¹See B.Pattison, Music and Poetry Eng. Renaissance, p.117. During the same progress, when the Queen was staying at Rycot, an "old Gentleman" and his "sons" made speeches before her and presented her with tokens of loyalty: "This being done, there was sweete musicke and two sonnets; which ended, her Majesty went in" (J.Nichols, Progresses, III, 171).

²TN, II, iv, 70, Works of William Shakespeare, Globe ed.

CONCLUSION

The sonnet has emerged from this enquiry not as a stanza regarded by the Elizabethans as of a separate kind, but as one amongst many lyric forms, and particularly as one of many Petrarchan poems which helped the sixteenth-century Englishman to fulfil his literary and social ambitions, and which ministered to his psychological needs. The quatorzain held an important place in all these fields; and in their approach to the poem, the mingled idealism and utilitarianism of the Elizabethans was clearly reflected.

The word "sonnet" conveyed a variety of meanings to them. It was a flexible term, not necessarily descriptive of form, but rather of a type of delicate and ingeniously contrived lyric: it was usually a love poem, and partly on account of the traditional association of passion with music, occasionally a song. The Elizabethan quatorzain answered to at least one and sometimes all of the descriptions; the best always witty; the majority about love, primarily affection for a lady, and later, love of God; whilst some fulfilled the contemporary definition of the lyric by being set to music. In each instance the Elizabethans' breadth of view was vindicated, for the sonnet proved extremely

adaptable, if approached with poetical and musical sensitivity.

Yet there were limitations which the Elizabethans were not able to overcome completely. These arose chiefly from the difficulties of handling an alien verse form, and from not knowing exactly what treatment it required. As F.T. Prince has pointed out, the sonnet is not the easiest of poems to write in English,¹ and at this period it was a comparative new-comer to the language. The Elizabethans were the first Englishmen to persevere in its composition. This meant that experiment, trial and error, went to the making of the Elizabethan quatorzain.

The English were struggling to fit a vigorous and recalcitrant language to the exigencies of a form they did not wholly understand. (2)

Some of the violations of the integrity of the poem, such as the conjunction of fourteen separate lines (a fault of which Shakespeare was guilty on one occasion³), and the disregard of the stanza's shape in madrigals and songs, prove the justice of F.T. Prince's words; yet, with the flexible attitude to the sonnet form, the Elizabethans could feel themselves free to experiment with arrangements other than the popular Shakespearean, or lesser used Petrarchan, or Spenserian, types. In keeping with the adventurous strain of their temperament, they met the challenge of the difficult verse with boldness; and whilst some unusual metrical arrangements

¹"The Sonnet from Wyatt to Shakespeare", Elizabethan Poetry, ed. J.R. Brown, and B. Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 2, 1960, p. 11.

²ibid., p. 12.

³See son. 66.

were undoubtedly the result of an ⁱⁿability to grasp the requirements of the form, others were equally certainly exercises undertaken to test the possibility of the stanza in English.¹

Interest in the sonnet in England was aroused by contemporary concern about the creation of a modern vernacular literature, and this concern gave rise to a certain opposition to and suspicion of the quatorzain. The great vernacular literature of Italy had grown out of the study of the classics; classical forms, with their beauty and elegance, excited the Elizabethans as they did their continental predecessors and contemporaries. But whereas the Italians, and with slight demur, the French, had been eager to accept modern forms into their schemes, the English were less willing to voice approval of the sonnet stanza. They had received the continental tradition in its entirety with no time for assimilation or gradual development of the old into the new, and with no native forms which could benefit from the new doctrines. The strictures of the classicists therefore admonished caution. But the place of the sonnet on the continent in beautifying vernacular literature was too firmly established to be shaken by the misgivings of the classicists in England; the sonnet was a poem of prestige, and if English was to become a literary language, clearly the poets had not only to experiment with the noble classical forms, but also to attempt to make their own this stanza, the foremost representative of the modern lyric in their day.

¹See the sonnet incorporated into the narrative of "Pyramus and Thisbie" in A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions, 1578, ed. H.E.Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., 1926, p. 111, ll. 2-15.

Thus it was that the Elizabethans looked upon the achievements of the sonneteers with respect, seeing them as vindicating new possibilities in the English tongue. The quatorzain entered the language as the poem of love which Petrarch had perfected, with its own attitudes, imagery, conceits, and terminology, akin to and yet different from the old amour courtois. For the Elizabethans the form was as dependent on the contents as the contents were upon the form; they were able to assimilate the quatorzain because it offered them terms which they could translate. This entailed a certain reliance on continental models which was liberating, in that it enabled the poets to undertake a new field of literature, but also dangerous, because, as some of the Elizabethans recognized, it could lead to servility and constraint if the writers did not not distinguish between translation and re-creation. More dangerous, indeed something that was to prove fatal, was the facility with which the outer trappings of Petrarchanism could be adopted by all with pretensions to poetry. The enthusiasm with which the sonnet was received and proliferated in the fifteen nineties was greater than that needed to assure the poem of its place in refining English verse; it became a fashionable stanza; and therefore attracted the attentions of those who lacked true talent but who wished to be a la mode, as much as it attracted those who were serious poets.

The scornful satire of the close of the century, not always directed discriminately, marked the turning of the tide against

Petrarchanism. The literature which it had helped to come into being was established; the glut of quatorzains had occasioned its demise. The sonnet, which had been one of the mainstays of Petrarchan verse, became the first form to fall, undermined on the literary level by those who had exploited the fashionable nature of the poem, and by the current popularity of the satirists.

The contemporary success of the Elizabethan quatorzain was a result of more than its literary attraction; in its appeal to those belonging or aspiring to belong to the upper classes, the poem acquired social prestige. Whilst to some extent the insatiable Elizabethan appetite for reading and writing sonnets in the fifteen nineties can be dismissed as a literary fad, the true response to the quatorzain came from something deeper than the affectation of gulls and poseurs. The Petrarchan situation was as pertinent to the life of the nobility in sixteenth-century England as it was to that of its creator in fourteenth-century Avignon. Courtly love, refined to a greater or lesser extent in Petrarchan love, still dominated the pattern of behaviour of the upper classes. Its attitudes were encouraged by society; to be "in love" was a mark of gentility, because the graces which the lover cultivated were the ones which made the courtier a pleasant and interesting companion. The composing, or to be more accurate, the providing of verses was one of these social accomplishments,

and it was only to be expected that the sonnet, the form particularly Petrarch's own, should be highly prized amongst the variety of Petrarchan poems. However, beyond its importance in the courtly game of love, the quatorzain expressed succinctly the paradoxes which beset the lover, and spoke to the deeper, inner need of an age in which passion ~~was~~ almost inevitably excluded from any function in society. The courtier was expected to contract a financially beneficial marriage which was probably arranged by the two families concerned; the only outlets he had for emotion were the consummation of an illicit passion outside wedlock, or the direction of his desires into an exalted affection for a lady beyond his attainment. The continual conflict which this situation produced, making the lover either a man of purely physical desire, or almost godlike in the ethereal nature of his affection, was most perfectly represented in the sonnet form with its structural tensions and paradoxes, always striving for the point of balance where physical and spiritual would become equal and therefore would become one.

The impossibility of attaining this point ethically was one of the reasons for the antagonism of society to the basic emotion of the Petrarchan tradition, although paradoxically it accepted the values the root and stem of which it abhorred. Passion was frowned upon because it was irrational and thus dangerous; love could not be relied upon to build up alliances or family fortunes.

It aimed a direct blow at the moral code, for all lovers from Petrarch onwards, loving in the flesh desired possession. Chastity was a woman's chief virtue; adultery made the husband a cuckold, the wife a wanton. The practical effects of the ends which the Petrarchan lover desired were therefore distasteful to many Elizabethans. Some saw the courtier's complete absorption in his passion as a danger with military and political implications for the state, a few others considered the religious devotion of the lover to his lady as blasphemous, and probably papistical; all generally agreed, at least in principle, that scholars and poets could and did betray the true end of learning and literature, which was to teach virtue (in the full Elizabethan sense of the word), since they emphasized too much the delights of love.

Against this background of general censure which love poetry incurred in the Elizabethan age, the sonnet stood out in that it was given a better practical defence than other Petrarchan poems. In their sequences, Sidney, Greville, and Spenser attempted to defend the real values ~~of~~ which Petrarchanism advanced. The ennobling power of love, which inspired personal courage and good manners in the code of amour courtois, was elevated still higher by the neo-Platonic doctrine in Petrarchan emotion, which directed all manliness and virtue upwards towards Ultimate Good, reflected in an earthly manifestation in the beloved. Immorality, even irreligiousness if neo-Platonism was given a Christian direction

as in Spenser's sequence, became meaningless in such philosophy, for pure love could admit no impurity. Sidney and Greville failed to carry this through to a satisfactory conclusion, not because their philosophy was at fault, but because they remained victims of the Petrarchan situation, in which reason was always foiled by human weakness; even Spenser, who resolved the antagonism of love and chastity within his own neo-Platonic Christian ethic, ended his sequence on the note of sadness and separation occasioned by some slander. The position of the lover attracted opposition from society, whether this made itself felt by moral or immoral pressures exercised upon him. Yet the very failures of these sonneteers speaks for the nobility of the Petrarchan quatorzain, for the highest good imperfect man can attain is the striving after a perfection which he is inevitably bound to miss.

The ability of the sonnet to strike upon chords of such deep and personal nature was one of its strengths; another lay in the public as well as private voice which the poem possessed. Petrarchan language could be both a private code between two lovers, or a fitting utterance for the verse or song which could be made known to the world without destroying the lovers' secrecy, in the event of the verse really being occasioned by passion. The quatorzain in its versatility could entertain its second audience with its many tones for conveying all the moods and pangs of lovers at the same time as it delighted or admonished the beloved to whom it was

primarily directed.

The Elizabethans also recognized that this special quality of the sonnet made it a suitable verse for purely formal occasions. With its wit, brevity, and courteous attitudes of praise and petition, it accorded well with the demand of society that those in authority were to be honoured, treated with extreme politeness, and approached with humility by ~~people~~ whoever was in any sense their inferior. The ceremony of Elizabethan life found its courtly expression in Petrarchanism, and naturally in the most Petrarchan of all poems, the sonnet, which the Elizabethans used on many occasions to praise people, books, or places, and to petition for patronage and favour. The anti-Petrarchan quatorzain was at hand in its turn to dispraise and rebuke, the pattern of the anti-love poem providing a framework for abuse as that of the amatory verse did for praise.

When the reaction against love poetry took place, the Elizabethans readily adapted the Petrarchan sonnet as they did other secular forms for religious expression. The qualities of the poem made it equally capable of conveying human or divine love, and the public and private voices of the stanza allowed the sonneteer to make a full confession of faith, to pray and repent sincerely without causing his readers embarrassment. The urgency and strong sense of personal involvement of God with man and of man with God, together with bold and challenging conceits, were not a feature of

most sacred sonnets of this reign as they were to be of the succeeding one; the Elizabethan was for the most part as formal and deferential towards his God as he was to his mistress or to his patron; he burned for Him with the same kind of respectful zeal, and feared Him with the same reverential awe. His God was regarded as the apex of the scale of divine and secular rank and degree, and was therefore honoured and approached accordingly. The Petrarchan situation and attitudes represented ideas so basic to the Elizabethan mind that they proved adaptable to many different circumstances, even entering the moralistic sonnet, and elevating that didactic or epigrammatic form to the realm of true poetry.

The sonnet as the Elizabethans knew and understood it best was therefore a Petrarchan poem. This type of quatorzain, treated with sensitivity by the poet, was their finest achievement in the composition of the fourteen-line poem, and one of the glories of their lyric verse. When the Petrarchan pattern was ignored, as for example in Harington's epigrams, the purity and cohesion of the form was lost and little was gained in their place: the sonnet became in fact as well as in Elizabethan theory, just another short poem. But when the Elizabethans wished to write in depth as well as wittily, they frequently chose the Petrarchan quatorzain (though not usually the difficult Italian form) in which to express their personal preoccupations, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, those of their age. For Petrarchanism occasioned a direct

response from the noble and educated men and women of the period: and no situation or state of feeling which was close to the heart of sixteenth-century courtly society lacked expression in its special language and imagery. The sonnet in particular spoke to the Elizabethans in a form and with a voice which captured and described the paradoxes of man's existence of which they were strongly aware; his nature of god and beast, his strength and his weakness, his hopes and his fears, his loves and his hates. This was the essence of the poem's attraction; for when the Petrarchan sonnet died out in the England of the seventeenth century, the society it had vexed and comforted was dying too. The supreme virtue of the Petrarchan quatorzain was that it expressed so many of the ideals and values and needs of the Elizabethans, who still looked to medieval chivalry and amour courtois for the patterns on which to model their responses to the complex relationships of life. When the last phase of the Middle Ages receded and gave way to the sombre realities of the modern world, the sonnet inevitably changed its character. The challenge of the form remained, to be met in their individual manners by Donne, by Herbert, and by Milton; it still spoke of matters of importance, both public and personal; but the Petrarchanism which was the dominant tone of the Elizabethan quatorzain had disappeared. Perhaps in no other age has a poem been so completely the voice of society in its private and public

spheres; and perhaps no other stanza has suffered so much as a result, by later generations misunderstanding its aims and achievements.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Bull. John Rylands Library</u>	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</u>
<u>JEGP</u>	<u>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</u>
<u>MLR</u>	<u>Modern Language Review</u>
<u>PMLA</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</u>
<u>SP</u>	<u>Studies in Philology</u>

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