"FORE-CONCEIT," AUTONOMY, AND SIDNEY'S VIEW OF MIMESIS

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by

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Abstract

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In Sidney's conception of mimesis, a pyramid of autonomy exists with God as the ultimate artificer, and the succeeding levels peopled with human artificers, then fictional artificers. The autonomous character of each descending artificer connects one to the power of the heavenly maker. Sidney's use of mimesis argues for cognizance of our innate capacities, for which we are grateful solely to God. In creating the characters of *The Old Arcadia*, Sidney first endows them with the capacity for "fore-conceit," a necessary corollary to Free will, the essential aspect of man's condition as Sidney conceived it. By emphasizing the artificer/artifact relationship on successive levels, Sidney implies the focal importance of the creative process. Because Sidney's artifacts are constructed in the image of their maker, despite the limitations of an "infected will," they are also artificers themselves, at least insofar as they approach a true mimesis of the nature of man.

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Introduction

That Sir Philip Sidney produced only three complete works is not indicative of either their influence or importance. These three, *The Defence of Poetry, The Old Arcadia,* and *Astrophel and Stella*, have exerted an enormous influence on the development of English literature. His courtly sonnet sequence became the model for English poets, including Spenser and Shakespeare. His critical treatise "provides a fairly clear and extensive picture of Renaissance critical attitudes" (Adams 154). S. K. Heninger claims that "the *Defence* is a manifesto which is at once conservative and radical--conservative in its motives, but radical in the means by which it seeks to achieve those purposes" ("Sidney's Rapprochement" 4). Though brief, this work provides a cornerstone for the history of English criticism. Sidney's prose romance was enormously influential in the succeeding century, providing allusions and dialogue for both prose and drama. Michael C. Andrews shows that many Jacobean dramatists, including Dekker, Beaumont, and Webster, were obviously affected by Sidney's work. Nearly a century later, James Shirley reflects the continuing popularity of *The Arcadia,* substantiated through fifteen printings by 1674, by adapting it for the stage (Hogan 36). Heninger believes that "the concept of drama does not begin in England until Sidney advocates the Aristotelian poetics of mimesis, imitating the actions of men" ("Speaking Pictures" 398). Heninger also comments that the "*Arcadia* provided triumphant proof" of the evolving relationship between

poetry and painting as image-centered endeavors ("Sidney's Rapprochement" 15). That *The Arcadia* has fared less well in the modern era is attributable to the fact that its rhetorical techniques and dependence on early Renaissance conventions have proved alien to modern sensibilities.

Yet some of Sidney's key concepts expressed in *The Defence* have recaptured the theoretical imagination of scores of writers and critics in our own century, not always with a full appreciation of the source. The concept of the poet as Maker, analogous to the Divine Creator, for example, inspired a very influential treatise by novelist Dorothy Sayers (*The Mind of the Maker*) which was echoed by scholar and fantasist J. R. R. Tolkein ("On Fairy Stories," "Tree and Leaf"), and which soon found its way into academia, inspiring re-evaluations of major figures in the literary canon (such as *Chaucer, the Maker* by John Speirs). More recently, critics like S. K. Heninger and Dorothy Connell have somewhat belatedly applied the concept to the study of Sidney's own fictions.

One difficulty, however, in assessing Sidney's fiction in terms of his theory has been the controversy over Sidney's ambiguity in treating his classical sources. Since Sidney employs key concepts from both Plato and Aristotle, whose views are usually seen as widely divergent, a consistent interpretation of Sidney's theory seems unlikely. Recent studies, however, especially by Heninger, John C. Ulreich, and D. H. Craig, have alleviated the problem, while coming closer to a unified concept of Sidney's process of poetic composition. Recognizing that Sidney's treatise, albeit outwardly classical, is inherently a Christian document by a Christian writer (Evans

9) supplies many of the qualifying factors which make the "fusion" of empirical and idealist approaches both possible and plausible.

Part of the contemporary reader's difficulty in reading Sidney's fiction, then, stems from a misunderstanding of Sidney's approach. In order to appreciate what Sidney accomplished in "figuring forth" his "fore-conceits" in "another nature" modeled after the phenomenal world as he perceived it, we must first examine *The Defence of Poetry* to establish Sidney's concept of the poet as a maker of fiction, particularly his notion of the poet as a Maker analogous to the Divine Creator. The initial step of this process requires establishing a consensus position on Sidney's classical background. Sidney's Christian heritage can then be taken into account. A combination of these divergent perspectives leads directly to analysis of Sidney's theory of the process of composition, and especially the role of the "fore-conceit" in this process. That examination will show an essentially Christian perspective, through which the poet, secure in the belief that he was created in his Maker's image, endows his literary "imitations" of mankind with the same autonomy and "erected wit" that were God's gift to the poet (though compromised, of course, by postlapsarian "infected will"). An examination of the "fore-conceits" that motivate Sidney's Arcadians to transform or recreate themselves will demonstrate this point.

Finally, I propose that an examination of Sidney's theory as stated in his *Defence*, followed by a close reading of *The Old Arcadia*, will show that he consciously expanded the traditional view of mimesis by creating successive levels of artificers within his prose work. In the *Arcadia*, Sidney's major characters artfully

construct alter-egos; thus both the characters and the author are engaged in the creative process, replicating the image of the Maker in micro/macrocosmic fashion, and suggesting the focal importance of artifice itself in the mimesis of man.

Chapter One

Sidney's Poetic Theory

The fact that so many critics find difficulty in analyzing Sidney's poetics says something about the man himself. We must assess the complex character of Sir Philip Sidney in order to come even remotely close to understanding his literary theory. Dorothy Connell supplies a very helpful point of departure:

> Sidney's emphasis on a free, exuberant creativity in poets, his sense that such greatness of spirit is not exclusive to poets, deriving rather from the creative power of all men, his recognition that this human power depends on and is limited by God's power . . . should all be noted. The chameleon creativity of Sidney and the seemingly contradictory mix of aspirations for man and religious humility in his themes have tended to obscure the perception of the fundamental unity of his ideas. (2-3)

Chameleon creativity indeed! It is difficult to corral Sidney into any theoretical herd. *The Defence of Poetry* is presented as a classical oration, though its audience and its arguments exist in a decidedly Christian context. As a literary theory, *The Defence* is clearly indebted to classical sources, citing paradoxically both Aristotle and Plato, transcending the materialist limitations of the one, yet denying the abstract idealism of the other.

Thus, while many critics emphasize Sidney's indebtedness to either Aristotle or Plato, a majority now see Sidney as using elements of both in his development of a critical stance. When Sidney says that "poesy is an art of imitation" (25) he appears to follow Aristotelian precepts, while his statement that "the skill of each artificer standeth in that *idea* or fore-conceit of the work" (24) appears to be Platonic. In fact,

Sidney combines Aristotle's theory of mimesis, art as imitative of the natural world, and Plato's ideas about fore-conceived essences. Heninger discusses the view of Plato's theories that held sway in Sidney's era as a way of introducing the innovative influence of Aristotelian empiricism. He notes Sidney's respect for Plato's approach, but observes that "he felt the need to adjust to a world view which increasingly questioned the primacy of Platonic essences and relocated reality among the phenomena of observed nature . . . more experiential than meditational" (*Sidney* 223). Craig postulates that this "hybrid quality is the key to the striking originality of the *Apology*" (62), which attempts to bridge the gulf between the poetic theories of Aristotle and Plato. Heninger and Ulreich suggest a "dynamic" compromise; they see Sidney as mediating between theories. Heninger says that Sidney "was forced to balance a platonist's ideality against an empiricist's materiality" (*Sidney* 231) while Ulreich says that the two theories are "necessarily interdependent rather than mutually exclusive" (70). Ulreich's point is that Sidney fuses the two approaches so that they interpenetrate: with respect to "the process of imitation, Aristotelian and Platonic theories of *mimesis* are fundamentally in accord" (74). Ulreich concludes that

> Sidney's concept of the poet as imitator implies an Aristotelian maker of fictions, who works from a Platonic invention in order to make "matter for a conceit." Sidney thus unites the mutually interdependent process of Platonic conception and Aristotelian embodiment. (74)

So Sidney's poet, "disdaining to be tied to any such subjection [to nature], lifted up with the vigour of his own invention" (23), is at once Platonic and Aristotelian. Sidney believes that the poet must imitate nature (what is), but he allows for the influence of potentiality (what will or should be). That his poet is "lifted up with the

vigour of his own invention" is of special importance. His poet may use the natural world as a source, but certainly is not bound to follow any existing pattern. On the contrary, Sidney sees his poet as growing "another nature" (23).

Sidney's view of man is optimistic (and thus more "Aquinian" than "Calvinist" [Evans 13]); the poet engenders new possibilities; he is endowed with nature's "uttermost cunning" (24), which exhibits itself as the ability to create anew. The poet, or artificer, using the "zodiac of his own wit" comes up with an imagined model, the "fore-conceit," upon which he bases his finished product. Sidney's "right poet" imitates "nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range[s] . . . into the divine consideration of what may be and should be" (26). To do this, says Heninger, "the right poet relies upon the Aristotelian concept of mimesis . . . grounded in the factual world, yet allowed to escape the confinement of any predetermined subject matter" (*Sidney* 237). The poet's ability to imagine a more perfect entity drawn from an existing, possibly flawed model establishes his preeminence.

Does Sidney make the poet a superbeing? No, but he emphasizes his divinely given right to dominion "over all the works of that second nature [the phenomenal world]." Frank Evans discusses the religious foundation of the *Defence* as a shocking breakthrough. He sees Sidney's concepts of "erected wit" and "infected will," the former allowing the poet to conceive perfection while the latter inhibits achievement of it, as a "daring diagnosis" (14). Evans claims that this dichotomy "lies at the heart of [Sidney's] argument" for the special status of the poet (12), since it claims at least semi-divine power for the "fore-conceit" of the artificer.

It is only through a thorough understanding of Sidney's conception of the poet's "fore-conceit" that we can realize the innovative nature of Sidney's thought. Sidney's poet, says Forrest G. Robinson, is armed with a visually derived "diagrammatic concept" (118). Robinson's overt dependence on Platonic mathematical models, says Ulreich, is limiting (72). Nevertheless, Robinson's point is that Sidney's poet first develops such a model or concept, which then becomes the "natural object" to be imitated. In Heninger's terms, "conceptual ideas as well as physical phenomena can be objects, and consequently . . . suitable for imitation in art" (33). Thus, Sidney's poet "only bringeth his own stuff, and doth not learn a conceit out of matter, but maketh matter for a conceit" (*Defence* 48), that is, he develops "matter for conceits" through his own conceptualization rather than merely imitating what exists. Sidney's poet, cognizant of "both Platonic Ideal and Aristotelian form" (Ulreich 75), "mirrors the universe created by the deity" (Heninger, *Sidney* 227). As Heninger says, "the skill of the poetic artificer, as opposed to nature, lies in that ability to universalize, to generate that 'idea or fore-conceit' which underlies the poem" (295).

For Sidney, comparison of the poet with the Divine Maker is not blasphemous; rather it is derived from a logical premise. Although he adopted the guise of a classical orator in presenting his treatise, Sidney was, as Evans notes, a thoroughly Christian writer. Observing that "the heavenly maker . . . having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature" he also asserts that poetry is produced "with the force of a divine breath" (24), and

"surpass[es] her [nature's] doings" (25). But if the production of poetry is associated with a celestial power, it is not itself divinely inspired, since the artificer is autonomous, exercising his god-given dominion with a free (even if infected) will. Sidney's poet illustrates his humanness through his "infected will," while his "erected wit" (25) associates him with the divine creator. Ulreich sees that "the fundamental basis for this analogy, the likeness between Maker and maker, is the activity of making itself, the process by which man reveals his dominion 'over all the works of that second nature'" (77). Ulreich believes Sidney concentrates on the *process* of poetry, not on the product (71). Sidney is not primarily concerned with the artifact, but rather to assert that the creation of it reflects certain inalienable powers bestowed by the Creator. The process, in Sidney's words, is "the feigning of notable images" (27). This feigning, says Ulreich, "embraces both Platonic conception and Aristotelian action" (82). Sidney's poet, imitating both the natural world and the "essences" inherent in that world, and guided by a "fore-conceit," "feigns notable images" by "delivering them forth in such excellency as he had imagined them" in a work of art (25).

Sidney connects his concept of the Divine Maker with his belief in poets as autonomous creators through a hierarchical parallel between the Maker of the heavens and the maker of a fiction. Although somewhat concealed, the act or process of originating remains the focus throughout. Ulreich comments that Sidney conceives of man as

> a fully independent creation, most like his Maker in the act of making itself, wherein he imitates, not mere appearance, but the invisible

> working of divinity, and . . . because he conceives, not the visible product, but the invisible process, at work also in himself. (83)

Sidney's poet "realizes [his] godlike capacity" through the activity of making (Heninger, *Sidney* 299). Sidney consciously expands the traditional Aristotelian view of mimesis by recognizing that a "fore-conceit" exists before the act of creating occurs. This thought together with his notion of the "poet [as a] maker in the image of the heavenly maker" (Heninger, *Sidney* 290) assumes that all creators or makers are endowed with an independent capacity for achieving "fore-conceits."

What degree of independence, then, may be granted to those "notable images" themselves? In an introductory chapter, "A Model for the Art of Imitation," Heninger presents an analysis of Sidney's poetics which attempts full cognizance of contemporary literary theory; isolating four elements in the "art event" (artifact, artificer, object imitated, percipient), Heninger asserts that the artifact is "an autonomous item . . . externalized by its maker, separate from the object which it imitates" (26). Later, in examining the *Old Arcadia*, Heninger says,

> the image represents a previously existent object, physical or conceptual, which has been universalized; but once created, the image as an individual example also assumes an autonomous existence with its own phenomena. (*Sidney* 257)

If these assumptions are correct, and the implications of parallel creations are accepted, then a series of correspondences must apply: God made Man in his own image, and that image included free will. If the Poet creates in imitation of God as Creator, his creations too will demonstrate free will, or "autonomy" in their choices, no matter how "infected" those choices may prove to be. My aim is to show that

Sidney's fictions do in fact present successive levels of autonomous "creators," whose powers are analogous to those of their author, as Sidney's are to God's.

Chapter Two

The Old Arcadia

1. The Genre Problem

Before we can consider the "fore-conceits" of Sidney's characters within the Arcadian universe, we must develop an understanding of the structural theme of *The Arcadia*. Much has been written pertaining to the problems of genre presented by Sidney's prose work. *The Arcadia* has been called a pastoral comedy, a romance, a heroic poem, an epic, and even a tragi-comedy. After reviewing some of the more relevant genre arguments, I will attempt to make my own case for locating Sidney's *Arcadia*.

Elizabeth Dipple believes the "central issue is the question of genre" (310). Her assumption is correct, but her discussion focuses only on the dichotomy between the pastoral setting and the audience's expectations for action within this setting. She recognizes her inability to place the work in any one genre when she comments that the "landscape is one in which literary idealism co-exists with unadorned, quasi-historical realism" which results in "magnificent comedy interlaced with a heavy didacticism" (318). This type of comment typifies the difficulty most critics have in trying to define Sidney's eclecticism. Richard A. Lanham illustrates the problem with his proposal that "Sidney wrote, without any doubt, a prose-fictional, tragi-comical-

heroic-politico-pastoral drama" (358). Robert Parker observes that "the old *Arcadia* presents a compendium of literary types, all woven harmoniously and significantly into its unfolding narrative" (153).

Regardless of the work's "five books or acts" structure, and its debt to classical drama, it can no more be defined as a drama than fitted into any other genre. Marenco "attempt[s] to approach the spirit of the work through its dramatic structure," only because he realizes that "to judge [*The Arcadia*] on the basis of the distinction between 'heroic' and 'pastoral' is misleading" (250). This does not mean that he sees the work as a drama, but that he feels that exploring the structure of the parallel plots is the most convenient way of examining the work. Both Robert Parker and Clark Chalifour agree. They focus their discussions upon the belief that Sidney adapted Terence's comic structure. Chalifour considers the question to be

> whether Sidney merely introduced an element of outer form (the Terentian five-act structure) and a minor element of inner form (incidental humor) into a work whose inner form is basically that of tragedy or heroic poetry, or employed the outer form of comedy in conjunction with an inner form which is significantly comic. (53)

Parker sees "Sidney's structure in the old *Arcadia*" as "one of the clearest indications of the currency of [Terence's] theory" (155).

Walter Davis considers Sidney's work in light of its possible sources. He describes pastoral romance as combining the "setting and tone of Greek and Latin pastoral with an action that was basically medieval" (7), then considers to what degree Sidney's work fits this definition, concluding that "the fictional world of *Arcadia* differs from its predecessors in circumstantiality and range, but the most important

difference is in structure" (52). Sidney, he says, adds a third concentric circle to the usual two: "between these opposed circles [Basilius's pastoral retreat and "the melodramatic world reminiscent of the Greek romances"] lies the state of Arcadia proper" (52). Thus, the dichotomy present in Sidney's setting parallels the complexity and variety inherent in trying to determine a genre for the work itself. Richard Lanham echoes previous comments about the complex nature of the work as a whole, but finally asserts that its comic nature is supreme. He says "we should not regard the Old *Arcadia* as a mere frivolity, but we should not discard our sense of humor when we read. Its didacticism is tempered by a strong element of burlesque. The spirit in which we are to read is a comic spirit" (404).

Thus, it is with Sir Philip Sidney as innovator and literary paradox that we must contend when looking for a unified structural theme in *The Old Arcadia*. Sidney, well-schooled as a literary craftsman, consciously declined to limit himself by the bounds of genre in the Old *Arcadia*. Richard Helgerson says "more than any of his contemporaries, [Sidney] was engaged as a writer in a testing of himself and literature" (130). A. C. Hamilton adds that Sidney "thoroughly assimilated his reading so that each of his writings is a well-wrought artifact, uniquely his own, and characterized by an original argument and careful, deliberate structure" (10). My point is that Sidney is deliberately ambivalent in treating questions of genre. By playing traditional forms against each other, and thus ironically qualifying the philosophical thrust of each, he argues humanistically for moderation rather than for extremes.

Surely Sidney's ambivalence in *The Arcadia* has something to do with the didactic nature of Sidney's *Defence of Poetry*. There is strong scholarly evidence that both works were written during the same two year timespan, 1579-1581. Heninger says, "it is appropriate to think of Sidney's writings as a body of closely interrelated work rather than a sequence of discrete items composed seriatim" (*Sidney* 397). Sidney's theme is not the obvious and conventional conflict between reason and passion, but moderation between such polarities. Although I disagree with Richard Helgerson's view of Sidney as a prodigal, I agree with his statement that Sidney's work delicately balances "humanistic education" and "rebellious tastes and aspirations" (11). Kenneth Myrick, in his early study, *Sidney as a Literary Craftsman*, says that "Sidney stands for a deeper, richer, more imaginative humanism than his predecessors in the English tradition" (11-12). In concurrence, Dorothy Connell sees Sidney as the quintessential model of the paradox inherent in the Renaissance. She talks of Sidney's "ability to encompass and balance contradictions" (5). These contradictions present themselves in the dichotomy between essentially virtuous characters and the vices that spur them to action. Sidney does not present us with truly malevolent characters, but rather slightly misguided ones. At worst, they fail to comprehend the consequences of their actions. When sympathetic, attractive characters allow their emotions, or, worse yet, their lust, to dictate a disastrous course of action, they illustrate the failure of moderation and restraint. They become, albeit unwittingly, vicious. I agree with Heninger's belief that "comedy is primarily a corrective for personal behavior, and the reader is the primary

target of reform" (*Sidney* 427). Although there is a definite blurring of the lines that separate genres, it was Sidney's goal to have his audience leave having learned something. Sidney, avowed humanist and believer in the didactic nature of poetry, wished to lure the reader into vicarious sympathy with vice, to drive the identification home with a threat of tragedy, then finally to withdraw from the equally odious evils of "judgment" through a comic conclusion. Moderation wins all around.

2. Fore-Conceit

Not only is the work itself free of genre constraint, but the element of freedom itself abounds within the work. In approaching the Old *Arcadia* as the interaction of more or less autonomous characters, each endowed like their creator with "fore-conceits" of their aims and identities, some stratification of the "cast of characters" is necessary for analytical purposes. On the surface level of the narrative, we may easily discern the narrator, whose chief "fore-conceit" is the general plot, essentially embodied in the verse of the Oracle that sets the narrative in motion. On the next level are the principal characters, the six figures involved in amorous intrigue: Pyrocles and Musidorus, Basilius and Gynecia, and Philoclea and Pamela. Beneath these, yet still endowed with autonomy, are the base characters, Dametas and his family. Finally, the characters who dominate the last book or act, the faithful but sternly vindictive Philanax and the inflexible judge Euarchus, are similarly constructed.

The different strata of all the characters notwithstanding, they are alike in that each is endowed with a "fore-conceit," a sense both of identity and autonomy, in determining a course of action. Heninger alludes to this same point when he observes that the "fictive creature is an extrapolation from the maker, made from his stuff, and yet the creature is clearly set apart from the maker" (*Sidney* 444). Thus Sidney bestows upon his creations the same ability to create that the Heavenly Maker gave to poets. More specifically, this power to create is predicated upon the power to acquire "fore-conceits" which demonstrate "the skill of each artificer" (*Defence* 24). Using

this concept as a parameter, I will first examine the three male protagonists, Basilius, Pyrocles and Musidorus in some detail, since they supply the basic impetus of the plot; I will then examine the role of Gynecia, whose perverse passion parodies that of the male lovers, and finally I will discuss the roles of the minor characters. In each case, the skill of the artifact/persona in exercising the artificer's craft is demonstrated, and the consequences of the free but "infected" will therein expressed will be noted. A necessary prelude is a review of the persona of the narrator himself.

3. The Narrator

In essence, the narrator's persona is an artifact created by Sidney, the artificer. To apply this theory more succinctly, we must briefly engage Heninger's testimony concerning the "art event," or the relationship between artificer, artifact, object of imitation and percipient. Heninger suggests, and I concur, that "the artifact exists as an autonomous item, separate from the object which it imitates, and present before the person who perceives it" (*Sidney* 26). This is an extremely important assertion; it allows us to discuss the artifact/persona as a separate entity, by analogy endowed with the same capacity for "fore-conceit" as the artificer. Heninger comments that the artifact, once created, "leads a life of its own" (*Sidney* 39), further disassociating itself from the principal artificer. This thought presumes the "fore-conceit" of the artificer in creating the artifact. If the artifact exists independently of the artificer, then it too enjoys the faculty of "fore-conceit." Heninger proposes two ways in which to approach this question about the relationship between the artifact and the artificer. He claims that either the artifact "is dominant in our consideration, almost independent of its maker" or "that the artifact is little more than pertinent evidence about [the artificer] and his milieu" (*Sidney* 42). The choice depends on the individual (artificer or percipient), and obviously, the former choice is most amenable to my discussion, although I would probably eliminate the "almost" where independence is concerned. Some type of "fore-conceit" must establish itself in an artificer's mind before an artifact can be produced. The artifact/persona then assumes an independence discernible through its demonstrated power to make decisions and

choices that are similarly preceded by a "fore-conceit." These considerations will enable our discussions of the persona of the narrator as both an artifact and an artificer to be more rewarding. Richard Lanham's discussion, "Sidney the Narrator," rejects the dual nature of the narrator. He claims that Sidney "seems not to have taken a great deal of care to keep the two roles [maker and narrator] separate" (319). This limited view denies that Sidney the author/artificer created a narrative persona, who in turn shapes the audience's initial perceptions of the story, its setting and its characters. Heninger rejects Lanham's view when he says that "there is reason to believe that the imputed narrator is not Sidney himself" (*Sidney* 429). Heninger maintains that the narrator "achieves a distinct ethos of his own" (*Sidney* 429).

The principal separation between author and narrator concerns levels of credibility. The author's view, although never overtly apparent, is consistent. Although Lanham sees "the author's attitude toward his creation as puzzling" (325), this is due to a misunderstanding of Sidney's artifice. Heninger sees a distinct difference in the roles played by author and narrator. Since economical plot results from an "artful maker," this maker creates a narrator who "is a prominent and complicating figure throughout the work" (Heninger, *Sidney* 431). Lanham charges "that the narrator does not remain at a fixed distance either from his characters or from his audience," and that this damages the narrator's credibility (324). Heninger agrees, citing passages in which the narrator seems, by turns, pompously pious and amorally cynical ("vacillating in wide swings between apparent pietism and equally apparent cynicism" *Sidney* 433).

But it is too easy to dismiss our complicated narrator as merely unreliable. The narrator, due to the paradoxical nature of the work itself, must struggle to define himself. Lanham recognizes this duplicity when he claims that the narrator "accepts *Euarchus as the all-wise king" while also being in "full sympathy with the heroic* seductions carried out by the princes" (324). This contradiction is the main reason Heninger cannot equate the narrator with Sidney: "Sidney [could not] allow his persona, guilty of caprice and blunder, to represent that serious maker" (*Sidney* 436) whose chief end is "to teach and delight" (*Defence* 25). Both Lanham and Heninger agree that the narrator's untrustworthy nature stems from his role as manipulator of the narrative; his autonomous decisions (to interrupt or postpone the presentation of the plot elements, for example) prejudice the percipient's responses, often in contradictory ways. However, this disingenuous performance argues for the disparity between Sidney the author and his character the narrator. Although Heninger believes that the narrator is Sidney in the same way that any "persona represents the author to some degree" (*Sidney* 436), the main connection between author and narrator, overlooked by both Lanham and Heninger, is that both show evidence of "fore-conceit," that conceptualization process essential for creation. It is the narrator's "fore-conceit" which brings us the narrative in the first place. Both Sidney the author and the narrator/persona create; the first conceives the artifact as a whole; the second creates our perspective of the action in Arcadia, a perspective that does *not* have a simple equivalent relation to the first. Heninger hints at this when he claims that the narrator "achieves a distinct ethos of his own" (*Sidney* 429). Sidney as

author/artificer undoubtedly granted his narrator/persona the capacity for "fore-conceit"; he does not appear to control the narrator's implementation of this faculty.

4. Basilius

Our discussion of the narrative properly begins with Duke Basilius, whose foolish vanity prompts the move into the Arcadian retreat. Heninger says that Basilius "is the focal figure of the plot, providing its initial impetus and its conclusion" (*Sidney* 448). Our focus is not on the move itself or even the consequences that result, but with the "fore-conceit" that precipitates the move. Basilius's determination to seek reclusion to avoid the "worldly disasters" forecast by the oracle is in no small part inspired by the then fashionable belief in the virtues of the pastoral setting, uncorrupted by urban worldliness. Basilius's decision to flee his responsibilities taints the entire proceeding. Philanax puts it succinctly when he asks "who will stick to him that abandons himself?" (*Arcadia* 7). Basilius's fore-conceit of a pastoral escape ultimately leads to other equally misguided decisions. His first decision to abdicate his responsibilities as ruler, and his ill-fated move into the pastoral retreat engenders the action to follow, the narrative itself. That this is unwittingly accomplished does not mask the presence of the "fore-conceit." Basilius's attempt to escape his fate precipitates its occurrence (Heninger *Sidney* 449). There are three specific instances in which Basilius shows evidence of possessing "fore-conceit." The first preconception, as has been already mentioned, prompts his decision to flee to Arcadia. The second inspires his decision to advance Dametas into an advisor's position, and the third motivates his willful decision to pursue Cleophila. A close examination of these three instances will undoubtedly prove Basilius's capacity for "fore-conceit," an exercise of free albeit "infected" will.

The most complex and far-reaching of Basilius's decisions is his desire to flee to Arcadia. The stimulus for this action is Basilius's yearning, in the narrator's words, "to know that of which in vain thou shalt be sorry after thou hast known it" (5). It is apparent that Basilius's preconception of the Edenic unworldliness of a pastoral retreat enables him to believe he can escape the oracle. His "fore-conceit," or the premise on which he operates, leads him to act irresponsibly. Philanax illustrates the foolishness in Basilius's thinking when he asks "why should you deprive yourself of governing your dukedom for fear of losing your dukedom, like one that should kill himself for fear of death?" (7). It is important to note Basilius's frame of mind during his discussion with Philanax about his decision to flee to Arcadia. He is described as being "wholly wedded to his own opinion" (8). Determination is also emphasized; the word appears three times in less than a page, which signifies Basilius's ability not only to form an opinion, but also to espouse it vehemently. The narrator relates that the duke "deceive[d] himself, and making his will wisdom, told [Philanax] resolutely he stood upon his own determination" (8). Since this is our first depiction of Basilius, it is noteworthy that his mental capabilities, regardless of how we view them, receive emphasis. Due to a very subtle move, we focus as much attention on Basilius's decision-making power as we do on the decisions themselves. We are as concerned with the reasoning behind his choice as we are with the fact that he has abdicated his throne. The artifact here illustrates an artificer's attribute--the capacity for developing and using "fore-conceit."

Another instance where this capacity is evident is Basilius's treatment of Dametas. The stress in this instance is placed on the duke's appraisal of the man, not the man himself. Mistaken as the appraisal is, it once more reflects the duke's ability to "conceive" (or misconceive) an idea based upon a "fore-conceit." Basilius's inaccurate assessment of Dametas is directly related to his preconception of the Arcadian retreat itself. He sees the wood as a pure environment, immune to the evils associated with his urban world. It follows then that his assessment of Dametas, as a creature of this pristine environment (or so Basilius believes) will be affected by his preconceived beliefs. The narrator's cynical yet truthful comment supports this view; in the duke's eyes the crude Dametas exhibited "shadows of virtues," while "his silence grew wit, his bluntness integrity, his beastly ignorance virtuous simplicity" (28). The regard that the duke held for the rusticity of Arcadia certainly influenced his estimate of Dametas. He is named "principal herdsman" (28) not so much for what he is, but for what the duke thinks him to be.

The decision that argues most strenuously for Basilius's capacity for "fore-conceit" is his willful pursuit of Cleophila. The assumption that drives his actions revolves around his belief that to woo Cleophila he must remake himself as a young suitor in the game of courtly love. This transformation completes his abdication of his duties as ruler, husband, and father. Upon meeting Cleophila the duke "began to feel the sparkles of those flames which shortly after burned all other thoughts out of his heart" (32). To satisfy these passions Basilius reasons that he must adopt the appearance and behavior of the French *fegnedor*, the young aspirant for the lady's

service. Broaching the subject of his passion forms, traditionally, the next stage in a lover's development. Since the lady's rejection is routinely expected, the duke is "not so sorry for Cleophila's short answer as proud in himself that he had broken the matter" (85). His bashful pride in his accomplishment leads him to "pass great time in the writing of verses, . . . making more of himself than he was wont to do" (85). While he realizes the difficulty in changing his outward appearance, the transformation affects his actions and attitude; "Basilius combed and tricked himself more curiously than any time forty winters before" (100). Some of his love poetry illustrates his paradoxical concept of his worth and his goal: "Let not old age disgrace my high desire, / O heav'nly soul in human shape contained. / Old wood inflamed doth yield the bravest fire" (83). A "mighty duke named Basilius" (4) has become a lovesick shepherd, singing of unrequited love, and feigning youth: "sometimes fetching a little skip, as if his strength had not yet forsaken him" (84). Obsessed with attaining Cleophila's graces, Basilius relinquishes his place as a respected ruler, a loving husband and a caring father. Basilius's decision to pursue Cleophila, one that engenders a personality shift, is responsible for his becoming ludicrous in all eyes but his own. He humiliates himself in order to pursue Cleophila's love. He falls at her knees not knowing whether she is a "heavenly woman or earthly goddess" (100), and implores her to take pity on his suit: "look upon him with pity whose life serves for your praise" (100). The duke is both usurper and the usurped.

Basilius's nadir occurs in the third book when he abandons worship of the gods to "serve" his "saint," affirming Cleophila's superiority to the cosmos. He conceives himself as a slave of Eros whose only concern is his beloved. He declares:

> Phoebus farewell, a sweeter saint I serve.
> Thou art far off, thy kingdom is above;
> She heav'n on earth with beauties doth preserve.
> Thy beams I like, but her clay rays I love;
> Thy force I fear, her force I still do prove. (155-6)

This is the ultimate fruition of his "fore-conceit." Adopting a certain plan of action to pursue Cleophila forces Basilius not only to abdicate his positions of earthly authority, but also to deny the legitimate order of the world. The "fore-conceit" of Basilius as duke (the artificer) necessitates that Basilius as lovesick youth (the artifact) must act in such a manner as to contradict the fundamental assumptions of his former existence, disrupting the Chain of Being. The Duke's own "infected will" is thus the prime cause of that chaos which invades and overturns the idyllic conventions of the pastoral retreat.

5. Pyrocles

While Basilius's "fore-conceit" frames the narrative, those of the two heroes, Pyrocles and Musidorus, control the action of the narrative. Their machinations are most interesting, as well as the best examples of the character's capacity for forming such conceits. More than any other characters, they exemplify Sidney's use of autonomous artifacts inherently able as artificers also. Both Pyrocles and Musidorus, like Basilius, form preconceptions intricately designed to achieve their desired goals. My focus is on the development of these plans rather than their implementation, although the consequences of these fabrications also concern us.

Perhaps the most compelling example in our discussion is Pyrocles' decision to transform himself into Cleophila "to gain access to the girl [Philoclea]" (Rose 353). It is appropriate here to mention that Rose's study, "Sidney's Womanish Man," is interesting, but limited in its views. Rose discusses the obvious point, that "the symbolism of Pyrocles's womanish attire is related to his subjection to passionate love" (356). What he never considers though is what provokes Pyrocles to remake himself. Rose concludes that "Sidney is attempting to make a complex but precise statement about Pyrocles's character" (363). He is correct, but he misreads that "complex but precise statement." Instead of discussing the apparent ability of the artifact to play artificer, Rose concentrates on the "significance of the effeminate dress" (363). Sidney's statement concerns the dichotomous nature of his characters, imitative of people in general; the distinction between artifact and artificer becomes increasingly blurred once the capacity for "fore-conceit" is granted to both parties. A

close examination of Pyrocles' decisions and the thoughts that prompt these actions will illustrate this point.

Pyrocles falls in love in a typically Medieval fashion; he is struck by Philoclea's picture, as one of Cupid's darts pierces the eyes of the lover. Sidney presents the scene as a fateful encounter, the better to focus on Pyrocles' reactions: "It was Pyrocles' either evil or good fortune that he perceived a picture which contained the duke and duchess with their younger daughter Philoclea" (10). Pyrocles, desirous of more information, begins "arguing with himself; and the more he argued, the more his thought increased" (11). Finally, "love, the refiner of invention, put in his head a way how to come to the sight of his Philoclea" (11). Sidney's description here is purposefully ambivalent concerning the genesis of Pyrocles' love; at issue is the response this love engenders in Pyrocles and the fact that he is able to process this information into a specific plan. As his thoughts of Philoclea's picture increase, augmented with what he knows of her situation from Kerxenus, Pyrocles fashions a plan to meet and woo the younger princess. This plan comprises a "fore-conceit." Knowing of the pastoral exile imposed by Basilius, Pyrocles decides that his only course of action is to transform himself. He says:

> I am resolved, because all direct ways are barred me of opening my suit to the duke, to take upon me the estate of an Amazon lady going about the world to practise feats of chivalry and find myself a worthy husband. (16)

It is noteworthy that in Pyrocles's creation of an alter-ego, he changes his sex, but not his noble status. This subtle move gives another strong indication of "fore-conceit" in Pyrocles. He must first conceptualize how his plan may help him achieve

his goal before he can implement it. Therefore, he must have given thought to retaining his noble status in the belief that when he reveals himself, he will remain socially acceptable. A close examination of his costume will illustrate this more clearly. The piece of Pyrocles' costume that is presented in most detail is the jewel that fastens together the two ends of his mantle:

> an eagle covered with the feathers of a dove, and yet lying under another dove, in such sort as it seemed the dove preyed upon the eagle, the eagle casting up such a look as though the state he was in liked him, though the pain grieved him. (24)

Pyrocles' heroic self, the eagle, is vanquished by his alter ego, Cleophila, the dove. The use of eagles and doves is revealing of Pyrocles' mindset in this instance. A traditional interpretation would focus on the courtly love convention of the enslavement of the lover by his beloved. The dove, symbolic of Philoclea, conquers the eagle, Pyrocles, through his passion. The dove feathers disguising the eagle also represent Pyrocles' attempt at cross-dressing. But according to the theory of correspondences, the eagle symbolically represented a king; Pyrocles' use of this symbol shows his desire to retain a semblance of his former rank even while disguised. The use of the dove is more closely tied to Pyrocles' plan. The dove, traditionally associated with love and peace, perfectly identifies Pyrocles' desire to appear non-threatening to Philoclea. Therefore, Pyrocles' masculine self (the eagle) is consciously hidden in the trappings of his womanish attire (the dove). The eagle wilfully allows the dove to overtake him. The pain caused by his transformation is well worth the possible reward. Pyrocles' actions are predicated on his desire to get close to Philoclea.

While Pyrocles' behavior remains fairly heroic early in the novel, his continuing charade does somewhat feminize him; as a fawning suitor he becomes passive rather than active. Rose comments, "in Pyrocles Sidney shows a hero turning from the life of active virtue to a life of idleness" (361). An examination of three instances in the narrative will illustrate this point more clearly. Cleophila's (following the narrator's example, I will use the name of the hero's alter ego) early exploits include saving Philoclea from a lion and Basilius from the Phagonian rebels. In the first incident, the company is surprised in the woods by two beasts; Philoclea flees the pursuing lion, but Cleophila's "spirits were kindled with an unwonted fire; so that equalling the lion in swiftness, she overtook him as he were ready to have seized himself of his beautiful chase" (43). Cleophila's heroics are lavishly praised, and similar praise comes Cleophila's way for quelling the Phagonian attempt at rebellion. Cleophila uses both arms and wits against the Phagonians, subtle evidence of a change taking place. Where before she reacted with brute force, chopping off the head of the lion, in this situation she uses diplomacy when physical valor is clearly not sufficient. Cleophila changes strategies only after the Phagonians force her hand by attempting to burn down the royal lodge. "Cleophila, seeing no way of defence, nor time to deliberate, thought the only mean with extraordinary boldness to overcome boldness, and with danger to avoid danger" (113). She emerges from the gate, confronts the Phagonians, and eloquently persuades them to lay down their arms and return to their peaceful celebrations. While Cleophila's actions are both calculating and brave, the realization that her physical prowess in battle is insufficient

in this matter reflects a change in attitude. This shift from belligerence to persuasion prepares us to perceive Cleophila as the dovish female.

Cleophila's passive nature is a direct consequence of Pyrocles' initial plan. Yet as Cleophila, the second plan, further evidence of her capacity for "fore-conceit," provides the opportunity for this passivity to appear. Cleophila's second plan also shows the artifact's ability as an artificer. She manipulates Basilius and Gynecia to allow herself time with Philoclea. This manipulation revolves around Cleophila's ability to discern Basilius's and Gynecia's weaknesses. In this instance, more so than any other, Cleophila controls the action. The art of the artificer is demonstrated in the continuing credibility of the artifact: "For well she knew deceit cannot otherwise be maintained but by deceit. And how to deceive such heedful eyes, and how to satisfy, and yet not satisfy, such hopeful desires, it was no small skill" (181). Cleophila, the artifact, must continually prolong the show that Pyrocles began with his first transformation. To achieve his initial desires, Cleophila must prey upon the aspirations of the duke and duchess. Yet before her plan can manifest itself, Cleophila must process various intangibles presented to her. These include the feelings, desires, and probable reactions of Basilius and Gynecia to each action Cleophila might undertake.

Thus Cleophila, as the artificer, happens into the cave, "where forthwith it came into her head that should be the fittest place to perform her exploit--of which she had now a kind of confused conceit" (189). Cleophila has been forced to adapt her initial plan to reach Philoclea because of unforseen obstacles: the initial plan has

gone awry; she could hardly have anticipated that either Basilius or Gynecia would fall passionately in love with her, and the notion that both would is clearly beyond anticipation. As McCanles comments, "Pyrocles endures plot complications of farcical complexity" (121). In the cave, her recent private haunt, a solution comes to Cleophila: to achieve a peaceful moment with Philoclea she must somehow remove the royal couple. To accomplish this she must arrange a rendezvous outside the gates of the lodge for both Basilius and Gynecia. The darkness of the cave strikes a chord in Cleophila's mind; her performance acquires a setting. In a hilarious sleight of hand, the cross-dressing Cleophila exchanges clothes with Gynecia, allowing Gynecia (as Cleophila) safe access to the cave, and setting up Basilius for an unwitting tryst with his own wife. This strongly supports the belief that Sidney's characters are themselves autonomous "makers." Cleophila, the artifact created by the artificer Pyrocles (in turn an artifact created by the artificer Sidney), creates a situation, an artificer's construct, to promote the actualization of Pyrocles' initial scheme.

The consequence unheeded in this artifice is the accumulating feminization that Pyrocles undergoes as he continues his charade as Cleophila. We have been prepared for this change when Pyrocles, defending his initial plan to Musidorus, exclaims "neither doubt you, because I wear a woman's apparel, I will be more womanish . . . . I desire . . . to prove myself a man in this enterprise" (21). Yet, ironically, "womanish" is what he becomes. Once Cleophila gets the royal couple out of the way, she drops her disguise and, as Pyrocles, steals into Philoclea's chamber. Once there, "his eyes were so filled with her sight that, as if they would have robbed all

their fellows of their services, both his heart fainted and his tongue failed" (204). Pyrocles, so long Cleophila, cannot readily act the man once he is in position to culminate his hopes and desires. He becomes instead the passive, hysterical suppliant, paralyzed by the sight of his heretofore unattainable beloved. The prediction of the scornful Musidorus, that "this effeminate love of a woman doth so womanize a man," (18) is unwittingly fulfilled.

Thus the interplay of the male character and the female alter ego, artificer and artifact, is fluid, altered by circumstance, requiring fresh invention to meet obstacles, demonstrating the autonomous capacity of the artifact to display the essential creative force of the maker.

6. Musidorus

While a close examination of Musidorus will undoubtedly reveal similarities between the two heroes, Musidorus as both artificer and artifact exhibits a fresh use of "fore-conceit." In a subtle discrepancy, Musidorus's "artificial" transformation is one of rank rather than one of sex. The transformation therefore is not described in as much detail. Also, Musidorus appears as much more of a storyteller, or narrative artificer, than does Pyrocles. Musidorus encounters fewer external obstacles, but is presented with a more formidable internal impediment.

It is appropriate here to discuss Musidorus's initial action as an artificer, his willful decision to become Dorus, the shepherd. When made aware of Pyrocles's decision to adopt a woman's guise, Musidorus strongly objects. He beseeches Pyrocles to "separate . . . from yourself, and let your own mind look upon your own proceedings" (17). With this comment and others like it, the narrator presents Musidorus as an obstacle to Pyrocles's love-driven designs. Thus, we do not expect Musidorus to succumb to the same errors that he chastises Pyrocles for making. The narrator shows the same understanding of his audience that Musidorus, as Dorus, will reveal in future action. While he does not spend an equal amount of time discussing Musidorus's change, his previous portrayal of Musidorus encourages the reader's reaction to be one of wonder. As with Pyrocles, Musidorus's plan will have unforseen hindrances, but his capacity for "fore-conceit" will allow him to persevere too.

Musidorus, hidden in the woods during Pyrocles's meeting with the duke and his family, upon seeing Pamela "was wounded with more sudden violence of love than ever Pyrocles was" (37). To ward off this feeling, Musidorus goes running through the woods and happens into one of the Arcadian shepherds, Menalcas. "It came straight into his head that there were no better way for him to come by the often enjoying of the princess Pamela's sight than to take the apparel of this shepherd upon him" (37). Whereas the forethought of Pyrocles's plan is introduced with the detailed description of the fastening jewel, the thought involved in Musidorus's machinations is revealed in his decision to ensure Menalcas' disappearance from Arcadia. Musidorus, "lest the matter by Menalcas be discovered," secretly arranges for his servants to "keep Menalcas in good order till he had heard his further pleasure" (37). While Musidorus, dressed as Dorus, is relating all this information to Cleophila, Dametas, upon order of the duke, desirous of Cleophila's company, interrupts the heroes. More so than does his transformation, Musidorus's interaction with Dametas shows him to be an artificer as well as an artifact. Musidorus "feigns a tale of his own life" (40). He is both writer and actor (artificer and artifact) in the tale that he tells to Dametas. Dorus explains to Dametas that he is the younger brother of the newly-deceased Menalcas, and that he is "to seek the service of Dametas, and to be wholly guided by his counsel" (40). In addition Dorus gives Dametas a gold piece, explaining that Menalcas had "bequeathed it him upon condition that he should receive this poor Dorus into his service, that his mind and manners might grow the better by his daily example" (40). Dorus, perceptive not only to Basilius's inflated

estimation of Dametas, which has raised him far above normal expectations, but also instantly aware of Dametas' avaricious nature, concocts a story that plays on both weaknesses at once. "Dametas no sooner saw the gold but that his heart was presently infected with it; which, being helped with the tickling of Musidorus'ss praises, turned the brain of good Dametas" (40). Dorus's first tale, coupled with his transformation, allows him free access to Pamela once his heroics in the episode with the lion and she-bear are revealed to Basilius. Basilius, after hearing a quick retelling of Menalcas's instructions to Dorus, "charged Dametas to receive him like a son in his house, telling him, because of his tried valor, he would have him be as a guard to his daughter Pamela" (48).

This is the first of three tales that Dorus tells and each provides evidence of his capacity for "fore-conceit." It is interesting to note that, reminiscent of Cleophila's plan to remove Basilius and Gynecia, Dorus similarly plays upon Dametas's weakness to dupe him. However, Dorus reads the simple-minded Dametas immediately upon meeting him, in contrast to Cleophila who can act only after spending considerable time with the duke and duchess. Thus, even though the narrator spends less detail on Dorus, he still makes the reader aware of his dual role as artificer and artifact.

Dorus's second tale is again proof of his dual nature. His second story is prompted by his understanding that because of his disguise as a lowly shepherd, it is almost impossible for him to make the princess Pamela understand or recognize the affection he has for her. His decision to adopt a disguise that hides his true station in

life becomes a major obstacle: "too well he found that a shepherd's either service or affection was but considered of as from a shepherd, and the liking limited to that proportion" (86). In response to this situation Dorus adopts a plan whereby he will reveal his true nature to Pamela through a story apparently designed to entertain the witless Mopsa. Dorus "resolved to take this mean for the manifesting of his mind . . . he began to counterfeit the extremest love towards Mopsa that might be" (87). The use of "counterfeit" here is quite interesting. A purposefully falsified feeling demonstrates a preconceived notion concerning how his alter ego must perform to achieve a desired goal. Dorus' plan shows, without doubt, an ability to concoct a scheme whereby he will ultimately profit. The artifact illustrates an artificer's skill, "fore-conceit." Dorus is not only the storyteller, but also a character, Musidorus, in his own tale. Through his craftsmanship Dorus accomplishes his goal; Pamela "well found he meant the tale by himself, and that he did under covert manner make her know the great nobleness of his birth" (93).

Perhaps the most effective and most hilarious example of Dorus' use of "fore-conceit" is his outrageous deception of the witless trio: Dametas, Miso, and Mopsa. Early in Book Three, Dorus and Cleophila discuss developments in their counterfeiting schemes. Here it is revealed that Dorus' second obstacle is that he lives with people who, for their own various reasons, never allow him a moment alone with his beloved. Therefore he, like Pyrocles, must enact a scheme to remove them so that he can escape Arcadia with Pamela.

While the scheme itself is inherently funny, we are most concerned with the intelligence displayed by Dorus in coming up with a way to eliminate the obstacle of Dametas and his brood. Dorus "did wisely consider how they were to be taken, with whom he had to deal, remembering that in the peculiarities of everybody's mind there are particular advantages by which they are to be held" (163). Dorus' duping of Dametas, Miso and Mopsa is overshadowed by his ability to concoct particular distractions for each of them; "the muddy mind of Dametas he found most easily stirred with covetousness; the cursed heart of Miso most apt to be tickled with jealousy, but Mopsa . . . he thought curiosity the fittest bait for her" (163). Thus, Dorus demonstrates a perception of what drives other characters. His "fore-conceit" enables him to understand the various possible actions available to others, and he is able to plan accordingly and prey upon their weaknesses. In this respect he is an artificer as well as an artifact.

The epitome of this tale-telling, the artificer's craft, is the scene where Dorus completely deceives Mopsa. "Therewith he told her a far-fet tale" (170). Dorus talks Mopsa into believing that Apollo has a magic tree in Arcadia, and "whosoever sat down in that tree, should obtain whatsoever they wished" (171). So persuasive is Dorus that "never child was so desirous of a gay puppet as Mopsa was to be in the tree" (171). More so than any other moment in the story, Dorus here embodies the artificer as well as an artifact. The narrator's character is parallel to Mopsa's in that they are both creations, artifacts. Yet Dorus exercises power over Mopsa due to his capacity for "fore-conceit," which places him in the artificer category.

Similar to Pyrocles/Cleophila, Dorus' transformation affects his personal character. Up to this point Dorus has retained the noble dignity and integrity of the princely Musidorus, but once he attempts his escape with Pamela we see the characteristics of his base disguise begin to dominate his personality. During their departure Pamela presents her trepidation concerning the safety of her maidenhead during their journey; she says "if I have chosen well, all doubt is past, since your action only must determine whether I have done virtuously or shamefully in following you" (173). Dorus, somewhat overtaken by Pamela's beauty, and unable to call upon his princely chivalry for restraint, due to his total transformation, comes extremely close to justifying Pamela's fears. "His promise [to honor her maidenhead] began to have but a fainting force, overmastered with the fury of delight, he was bent to take advantage of the weakness of the watch" (177). Thus, Dorus' former nature is subdued; the heroic Musidorus, ruled by reason and courtly manners, has become the unscrupulous peasant, driven by lust and passion. Like that of Pyrocles, Musidorus's abdication is accomplished internally. Musidorus's stature as a prince is unwittingly undermined through his decision to enact the role of a plebeian. Where Pyrocles's nature becomes passive as Cleophila, Musidorus becomes ignoble as Dorus. In each case, the choices of the autonomous artificers illustrate the operation of "infected will."

7. Gynecia

Gynecia's "fore-conceit" is revealed through a reversal of her principles and conduct. Based upon conjugal fidelity and motherly care, her concept of female virtue is conventional. Her Arcadian transformation is shaped in turn by conscious rebellion against these qualities. More acutely than other characters, she foresees the moral consequences of her illicit passion, and she consciously projects a "fore-conceit" of personal tragedy. Her ethical training, which stresses the vile consequences of even the least slip from virtue, leads her first to despair and then to embrace her vicious plan with fervent abandon. She eagerly tosses aside regal modesty and propriety for the role of enchantress and seductress. Gynecia remains an artifice as long as she represents the conventional mother and duchess, but she becomes the artificer as soon as she transforms herself into an aggressive wooer in the courtly love tradition. Not only does she regress in social stature, like Musidorus, but like Pyrocles she renounces her gender role; in addition, she denies her "maternal" nature when she becomes Philoclea's sexual rival. And when she willingly agrees to commit adultery, she shatters her role as a virtuous wife.

Unlike the other artificers, Gynecia generates her "fore-conceit" through her intuitive ability to discern clues unrecognizable by everyone else; and her decisions are based upon this special knowledge. Thus, her capacity for "fore-conceit" reveals itself in her ability to "see" more clearly than the other characters. This makes her pain more puissant: "she saw the terrors of her own conscience; she was witness of her long-exercised virtue, which made the vice fuller of deformity" (80).

The first example of Gynecia's heightened sense of awareness comes during the scene where Cleophila and Dorus protect the royal presence from the wild beasts: "At the first sight she had of Cleophila, her heart gave her she was a man thus for some strange cause disguised, which now this combat did in effect assure her of" (43). The lack of information provided as reasons for Gynecia's suspicions strengthens our feelings about her intuitive powers. Gynecia's thoughts about Cleophila's disguise "framed in her a desire to know, which brought forth shortly such longing that it reduced her whole mind to an extreme and unfortunate slavery" (43). Thus, Gynecia's intuition, her ability to recognize Cleophila's true identity, acts as a catalyst for her "fore-conceit." Acquiring this information prods her actively to pursue Cleophila. She is so overcome "that neither honour long maintained, nor love of husband or children, could withstand it" (44). Gynecia subverts her roles as mother and wife by undertaking the guise of the pursuing lover--a role which also presents a case of gender switching; in the Renaissance era, women did not actively pursue, they were to remain the coy goal. Thus, Gynecia enacts the role of the male in her active pursuit of Cleophila, the man disguised as the woman.

The fact that the "evil" of Gynecia's illicit desires, in total contrast with her former "virtuous" behavior, is apparent to her transforms her into a tragic figure. "No small part of her evils was that she was wise to see her evils" (80). At the beginning of the second book, Gynecia discusses Cleophila's disguise as proceeding from "some foretaken conceit" (81). This again shows her extraordinary intuitive powers. During this same speech she reveals her desire to do whatever is necessary

to achieve Cleophila, even at the expense of her daughter; Medea-like in her hatred of her child, she says, "the life I have given thee ungrateful Philoclea, I will sooner with these hands bereave thee of than my birth shall glory she hath bereaved me of my desires" (81). Gynecia understands only too well the effect her desire has on her, yet she shows no remorse. Since her "fore-conceit" allows her to proceed without arousing suspicion, she confronts Cleophila with her knowledge; "Take pity of me, O Cleophila, but not as Cleophila, and disguise not with me in words, as I know thou dost in apparel" (83). Gynecia's attempt is thwarted when Basilius appears nearby. Frustrated by her lack of headway, Gynecia plans to blackmail Cleophila concerning her true identity. However, she fails in this attempt because she cannot bear to cut off her own hopes for success:

> For indeed did her spirit suffer a right conflict betwixt the force of love and the rage of jealousy. Many times she was about to tell Basilius what, and upon what reasons, she thought Cleophila to be far other than the outward appearance. But those many times were all put back by the manifold forces of her vehement love. Fain she would have barred her daughter's hap; but loath she was to cut off her own hope. (103)

Without doubt, Gynecia's internal conflict presents an interesting twist to the idea of "fore-conceit" established in other characters. She understands that her plan cannot come to fruition without a great cost, and, therefore her proceeding makes her a tragic figure, especially in her own mind.

A further demonstration of Gynecia's detailed preconception of her situation occurs in book three. There she professes her undying love to Cleophila, and the discord it has caused within herself: "I am divided in myself; I am overthrown in

myself; either I have never had but a shadow of thee or thou thyself are but a shadow, for how my soul is abandoned" (160). Gynecia also touches on the theme of recreating oneself. As she feels herself rebuffed by Cleophila she retorts that she will prevail. The motif she chooses for her words reinforces the idea of characters playing dual roles. She says that she "will not be the only actor of this tragedy" (162). The dual roles of actor and playwright parallel the relationship between artifice and artificer.

Perhaps the climax of Gynecia's "fore-conceit" is revealed in her plan to ensure fulfillment of her sexual desires. When Cleophila seems to acquiesce, Gynecia, taking no chances, decides to bring along what she thinks to be a love potion, a device to bind and secure the reciprocal passion of the love object, as in the tragic legends of such ill-starred lovers as Tristan and Iseult. But this decision has ramifications far beyond her wildest nightmares. The potion turns out to engender not passion, but a death-like sleep, and it is consumed by Basilius, who has been tricked into appearing in Cleophila's place. Gynecia believes that she has killed Basilius and is remorsefully determined to die for her supposed atrocity. Gynecia's tragic "fore-conceit" is so powerful that it produces a self-condemnation as extreme as the sin for which it ostensibly atones. Clearly, Gynecia sees herself as the heroine of a love-tragedy, as a scandalous defiler of moral law. Perhaps more than any other character, her choices reflect the consequence of "infected will."

8. Minor Characters

One of the most interesting qualities of *The Old Arcadia* is that both major and minor characters demonstrate the capacity for "fore-conceit." In keeping with the chauvinism of the era, as Heninger remarks (*Sidney* 446), the narrator allots little space to development of the "virtuous" princesses, Philoclea and Pamela. Philoclea rarely, if ever, projects any self-image, while Pamela does so only subtly. As the unwitting victim of Pyrocles's machinations, Philoclea's role is delineated by responses that are confused and ambivalent mostly. Pamela, on the other hand, projects her perceived role upon the jeweled clasp she wears, which represents her captive situation: "It was a perfect white lamb tied at a stake with a great number of chains, as it had been feared lest the silly creature should do some great harm" (34). Pamela obviously feels as if she has been done a great injustice; she has done nothing to justify the isolated captivity under which she now exists, and she resents it. Her "fore-conceit" exhibits itself in the jeweled clasp, which parallels Cleophila's jeweled clasp, discussed at length by the narrator. Musidorus makes excellent use of Pamela's sense of victimization when he convinces her to elope with him.

Although the narrator is at some pains to make the ironies of their self-concepts clear for comic purposes, each of the base characters, Dametas, Miso, and Mopsa, acts in accordance with a "fore-conceit" setting forth his/her expected role in the drama. Dametas comes onstage in the first book when Cleophila makes her appearance in Arcadia before the duke's lodge. Dametas "came swearing to the place

where Cleophila was, with a voice like him that plays Hercules in a play and, God knows, never had Hercules' fancy in his head" (28). Our primary impression is that Dametas thinks more of himself than he is worth; his "fore-conceit" involves his inflated self-conception. Encouraged by his foolish advancement by the duke, Dametas is obsessed with an image of himself as a "personage to be answered" (29) ["Am I not Dametas?"]. Dorus perceptively exploits this delusion. The lure of treasure is a natural ploy that depends upon Dametas's inflated self-concept: consorting with royalty only inflames a social climber's desire for gold to support the trappings of an overweening self-esteem. Dametas, despite his comic basis, clearly exemplifies the ability for "fore-conceit" seen in other, more serious, characters. In fact, Dametas' comic nature derives in no small part from his belief that he is much more important than he actually is. This concoction of a self-image, now matter how comic or ironic, demonstrates capacity for independent creation, and thus "fore-conceit."

Miso and Mopsa exhibit a similar capacity. Miso, fully aware of her husband's foolishness, is forever on the lookout for opportunity to proclaim herself the abused but virtuous housewife. Her "fore-conceit" is that of a self-righteous martyr eager for revenge. Thus, Dorus' plan perfectly ensnares her. Her desire to humiliate her husband publicly due to her perceived abuse at his hands is comical. She is perfectly willing to rouse an entire town to expose adultery on her husband's part: "She, that could before scarce go but supported by crutches, now flew about the house, borne up with the wings of anger" (169). Once again, although a

character creates a self-image inconsistent with reality, it demonstrates the presence of "fore-conceit."

Finally Mopsa, enjoying Dorus' pretty speeches, while understanding very little of their true meaning, soon sees herself as a fairy princess. Dorus' callous exploitation of her childish credulity might appear cruel if it were a shade less absurd. Mopsa's grasp of reality is so tenuous that our empathy, a necessary prerequisite for identification, is never engaged. Mopsa's ridiculous transformation, albeit occurring only in her mind, does suggest that she too possesses "fore-conceit." Nonetheless, all we can do is laugh as she sits waiting in a tree for Apollo to grant her three wishes.

On the opposite end of the social scale sit Philanax and Euarchus who also exhibit capacity for "fore-conceit" in their preconception of the roles they must play. The ironic ingredient in their situation consists in the extremity of their beliefs, just as the three base characters are excessive in their conceptions. Both narrow their pre-conceptions of themselves in ultimately disastrous ways. A component of self-righteousness makes their judgments rigidly moral rather than logical or reasonable.

Philanax conceives of himself as the voice of sanity in a society gone mad. As passion becomes dominant in his world, he sees his role as the one who must avenge the ills present in the realm. The perception that Basilius is dead drives him into the position of having to prosecute harshly the alleged perpetrators, Pyrocles, Musidorus and Gynecia. He instantly becomes an avenger, not a judge, vowing to sprinkle Basilius's tomb with the "blood of his murderers" (249). From this point on he is "hard-hearted Philanax" (263) whose zeal constantly "spurs his revengeful choler"

(265). As prosecutor for the state, he embraces the orders of Euarchus primarily because they promise to further "the just revenge he so much desires" (316). In essence, his extreme beliefs concerning his duty transform Philanax, loyal courtier, into a man consumed by retaliation, a vengeful monster.

In a similar respect, Euarchus' actions are dominated by his conception of himself as incorruptible. Formerly we are told of his tremendous reputation as an equitable man. This thought, that "doing good . . . did belong unto him" (312), allows him to accept Philanax's offer as regent.

Euarchus is conscious of his reputation as a judge, and even more acutely aware that his judging is here being judged: "I will promise . . . unto you that to the uttermost of my skill . . . I will see the past evils duly punished" (315). After the identities of the prisoners are disclosed, Euarchus does not deviate from what he perceives as his duty to uphold the sentence that he has passed, regardless of the fact that he has condemned his son and nephew to die. In this respect he develops, however unconsciously, into a tragic figure who causes his own demise; he allows his conception of himself as the avatar of justice to overpower his empathic ties to other humans. Euarchus sacrifices his humanity for his principle, and becomes "an obstinate hearted man, and such a one, who being pitiless, his dominion must needs be insupportable" (358). Unlike other characters, Euarchus is given the chance to modify the transformation engendered by his "fore-conceit," but he cannot. Ironically his "infected will" results from pride in his own virtue; he chooses the glory of his role as justice above the mercy of God.

9. Summation

Without question, *The Old Arcadia* presents characters capable of "fore-conceit" at all levels. The pervasiveness of this quality lends the work a special feature; the boundary separating artifacts and artificers is ambiguous. An artificer's creation is preceded by "fore-conceit," a premise present in the mind before an image of a completed artifact may exist. This ability to conceive such a model is Sidney's measure of human nature. All characters in his narrative exhibit this capacity in varying degrees; they appear as autonomous creations, capable of adapting their roles whenever and however they deem appropriate.

Moreover, in demonstrating through their choices the autonomy of the Maker, Sidney's characters achieve a fully human nature. They perceive, conceptualize, design, scheme, deceive--always in the context of their world in space and time. They cannot be forced to illustrate a theme or figure forth an allegory. They act from their own motives. As an artificer, Sidney imposes no more *apparent* restraints upon his creatures than does his divine counterpart. To be sure, like Him, Sidney knows the outcome of the story although his creations do not. Sidney's world thus duplicates the metaphysical parameters of the Christian cosmos, and his concept of mimesis clearly presupposes those parameters as the foundation of the natural world.

Finally, in emphasizing the creative process through reduplication on successive levels of the artificer/artifact relationship, Sidney clearly illustrates his belief that man's essential nature is reflected in the autonomy inherent in creativity itself.

Conclusion

Sidney's major achievement is his adaptation of mimesis, in which the imitation of nature centers upon the nature of man. For Sidney, the pre-eminent factor in the delineation of human nature is the Judaic/Christian belief that God created man in His own image, and thus endowed His creations with free will and a parallel capacity for creativeness. Sidney's conception of mimesis thus focuses upon the representation of autonomous characters, endowed with the creator's capacity for "fore-conceit." Since Sidney's mimetic practice is intended to glorify the heavenly maker, the poet as artificer created in God's image creates in turn artifacts endowed with analogous creative powers. In this sequence, the distinction between artifact and artificer becomes ambiguous; artificers multiply on ensuing levels. To represent truly the nature of man, Sidney must endow each of his creations with the capacity to create other, equally independent creations. The first step in this process of mimesis is the representation of "fore-conceit" in the imitations of men.

In his book, *Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker*, S.K. Heninger, Jr. makes some interesting points regarding Sidney's ideas concerning mimesis. He claims that the fictional world, Arcadia, "is an autonomous and explorable entity" (456), but that all the characters in this fictionalized world "represent Sidney to some degree. Each character is a creature of his own making. Each is a conceit that originates with his stuff, since an author perforce can write only out of his own experience" (445). While this thought is readily grasped, it does not do Sidney's

genius justice. Insofar as all fictional characters are representations of their author and derived from his experience, I agree with Heninger, but his statement that "each of his [Sidney's] creatures in the fiction is a projection of himself, a representation of himself" (456), dismisses the presence of "fore-conceit" which yields autonomy to the artifact.

Sidney purposefully creates characters with the capacity to transform themselves as the situation dictates. In doing this Sidney imitates the heavenly maker as closely as possible; his creations are fully realized because we engage their mental capacities, making them more than characters required by allegory or extended conceits. Instead of approaching characterization from the outside, through physical description, Sidney focuses upon autonomous mental creativity in his depictions of human nature. As an artificer as well as an artifact, with God as the ultimate artificer, Sidney sees the creation of artifacts with an artificer's ability as being the closest possible representation of God's achievements. In this way, Sidney fuses Aristotle's and Plato's views of mimesis with his own Christian beliefs. His understanding of mimesis is dependent upon a physical representation replete with the mental powers necessary for further creation.

Succinctly, this is Sidney's didactic thrust. He believes that the end of poetry is to teach and delight. The delight comes from our being able to see ourselves in the fiction, and the teaching comes from the vicarious experience which such identification provides, including the recognition that we all possess creativity which comes from and links us to the heavenly maker. In the persona of each of the major

characters in the *Old Arcadia*, for example, the reader may recognize an autonomous mind at work, and follow that mind's creative adaptations to the exigencies of plot, sharing the self-concept of that character as it adapts to the necessities of the situation. In the persona of Pyrocles, for example, the contradictory emotions of the love passion, figured forth in his disguise as Cleophila, may be vicariously experienced; the frustrations of the apparently fatal limitations of that disguise, and the triumphant plotting which seems to extricate him, and unite him with the object of his desire, may be enjoyed. But led this far into the mind of the persona, the reader must also experience the tragic consequences of the hero's falling away from the ideals of his calling, and share his despair at the righteous judgments which ultimately condemn him. Sidney's narrator does not display Pyrocles's faults so much as lure the reader into experiencing them fully, as the consequences of his actions unfold. The resulting character is not an exemplum, drawn to illustrate a moral; it is fully human, exercising both free will and creativity, and as readers we are left to draw what conclusions we may from a shared experience of life.

Thus attempts to identify the "theme" of the *Old Arcadia* with the old Renaissance debate between reason and passion fail to recognize the creative vitality of the characters, and the ambiguities that result from the inconsistency inherent in these autonomous creations. The debate does indeed occupy a rhetorical prominence in the utterances of the characters, as the intellectual furniture of any age must do, but the narrative does not organize itself around this debate, nor does it form a theme by which the actions must be judged. As readers, our intimacy with the "fore-conceits"

employed by the characters gives us much insight into their human souls, their virtues as well as their vices. Catalogued by Philanax, the conscientiously hostile observer, the actions of the princes seem vicious enough to merit the harsh judgment of Euarchus, and yet the judge is perhaps the only genuinely tragic figure in the narrative, the one character who cannot adapt, but must bear out his "fore-conceit" of incorruptibility to the edge of doom.

Sidney's concept of mimesis, then, precludes facile moral judgments. Characters formed in the image of their creator merit the mercy of Providence rather than worldly "justice." In the end, as the narrator remarks, "so uncertain are mortal judgements, the same person most infamous and most famous, and neither justly" (360), that justice itself must seem "pitiless" and "insupportable." Sidney the Maker opts for comedy as his genre: "Our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it" (*Defence*, 25). His artifacts, constructed in their maker's image, are granted the ability to perform artful constructions as well, and though the reader may sympathize with their aims, their infected wills appear plainly also. Sidney argues neither for passion nor reason, but for cognizance of our innate capacities, for which we are grateful solely to God.

In his conception of mimesis, a pyramid of autonomy exists with God as the ultimate artificer, and the succeeding levels peopled with human artificers, then fictional artificers. The autonomous character of each descending artificer connects one to the power of the heavenly maker. Thus, all artificers are artifacts, except for

the heavenly maker. Only the top of the hierarchy of autonomy remains absolutely free from transformation; all others in this model experience mutation at one time or another. Depending on the point of perception all artificers are possibly artifacts. Our infected will, our postlapsarian condition, does not negate our erected wit, our link to the heavenly maker and our font of autonomy.

Sidney's unique understanding of mimesis has three basic principles. First, the representation in art must be comprehensive: physical action, speech, and, most important, the creative capacity for "fore-conceit." Next, this representation must subtly reinforce the belief that we are created in the heavenly maker's image. And last, artifacts created in this fashion must be autonomous creatures, driven by Free Will, capable of creating in their own right.

The postlapsarian condition necessitates that mankind valiantly strive yet eventually fail. All of Sidney's creations make errors in judgment; their autonomy does not place them above the normal human condition. Sidney's characters often act on impulse without thinking of the consequences of their actions. This precipitates further scheming. Free will allows such scheming, but it does not compel favorable results. Pyrocles transforms himself into Cleophila in hopes of achieving Philoclea's hand, but he certainly does not foresee the obstacles presented by either Basilius or Gynecia, not to mention the Phagonian revolt. His decision (and let us not equivocate on whose decision it is) ultimately engenders the trial scene where he is almost put to death by his own father. Musidorus's free will precipitates nearly disastrous consequences as well. Sidney does not try to show autonomy as an unmixed blessing,

but rather a gift whose use must be carefully considered. The ability to create is a special offering, bestowed on mankind by the heavenly Maker. The sometimes loose and frivolous use of this gift by Sidney's creations argues for its remarkability, as well as for Sidney's feeling that it ought to be guarded more closely.

In giving his characters autonomy, Sidney first endows them with the capacity for "fore-conceit," a necessary corollary to Free will. Artifacts' choices are made from their own perspective for their own purposes, according to their wit and will, which are essentially free. These choices are limited because the characters exist in a "nature" that is really the work of an omniscient artificer, one who knows the outcome of his plot (his "fore-conceit") in advance. So Sidney gives his characters life which is an imitation of nature, and therefore they necessarily display free will, or autonomy, because it is an essential aspect of man's condition as Sidney conceived it. Because Sidney's artifacts are constructed in the image of their maker, they are also artificers themselves, at least insofar as they approach a true mimesis of the nature of man.

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