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The idea of the golden world : a study of the nature of imaginative enlargement, with particular reference to Sir Philip Sidney.

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2015-01-13
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/16500

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It follows that an investigation of those qualities in poetry which make for the effect of imaginative enlargement cannot stop short at the idea of the poet as teacher. Nor, as we shall go on to argue, does Sidney's own Apology contain itself completely within a moral frame.

SECTION TWO : THE POET AS MAKER

If works of literature need not have a moral content or moral effect, we must look for other qualities which contribute to the effect of imaginative enlargement that seems common to all successful works of literature. The traditional view of the poet as maker which Sidney endorses and I think extends, would seem to provide a useful starting point for this further discussion. But Sidney's views on poetic making are so bound up with, or bound in by, his moral and rhetorical assumptions that the interest in the first two chapters of this section will lie as much in observing the way in which a recognition of specifically aesthetic qualities slowly struggles to emerge as in extending the notion of imaginative enlargement include aesthetic considerations. There is of course the danger of reading back into Sidney fashionable modern views; but there is, as I have suggested, an opposite danger in condescending to a work such as the Apology and in assuming that it is naive and lacking in complexity.

I begin then, in Chapter IV, by considering Sidney's notion of "making" in relation to the complex of ideas about teaching or persuading through feigning which were sanctioned by the rhetorical convention that dominated Elizabethan literature.

Chapter IV

THE TRUEST POETRY IS THE MOST FEIGNING

Sidney's passage on the golden world delivered by the poets, which we took as our starting point, deserves closer attention. All other forms of learning, he argues, are dependent upon nature,

> Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like; so as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.
>
> (100:21)

Sidney's words build up to their climax with such rhythmical assurance and liveliness that the momentary catch in the phrase "the too-much-loved earth" is hardly noticed. But though the phrase provides only a slight check, it seems to indicate something deeply ingrained in Sidney's consciousness; it represents an almost involuntary moral reminder that the loveliness of pleasant rivers and sweet-smelling flower is, in the last reckoning, seductive and insubstantial.

Given the moral tenor of Sidney's whole argument, it is extremely significant that the moral catch should here figure as intrusive. Nor can the intrusiveness of the reminder be argued away on the grounds that there is a

difference in kind between the pleasure provided by the too-much-loved earth and that provided by the poet's richer tapestry: "more lovely" implies no suggestion that what was a temptation has been transformed by the process of art into something morally sanctioned.

In a similar way the reader tends to be so swept along by the mounting energies of the passage that he does not pause to consider the dubious relationship, within the argument, of the furies to the fruitful trees, or of the pleasant rivers to Pylades, who is adduced in the next paragraph as a further example of the poet's power of bringing forth his images with the wonder-inducing "force of a divine breath". It would seem that in his discussion of the artist as surpassing the works of nature Sidney produces quite different, and possibly incompatible, kinds of example. On the one hand he posits the poet as offering moral examplars - Pylades the constant friend, Aeneas the man excellent in every way, Cyrus the right prince to "make many Cyruses, if [men] will learn aright why and how that maker made him"(101:11); but in the golden world passage itself his response would appear to be at least in part to something other and perhaps more immediate in the effect of art, to the enthralling richness of the poet's tapestry and to the inventiveness which delivers furies, cyclops and chimeras, no less than Cyruses.

Sidney's deeply committed moral idealism would seem to pull against this other element in his response. When he later echoes the verb "ranging", which he has used so memorably of the poet "freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit", he hedges it around with qualifications:

> [The poets] range, only reined with learned discretion into the divine consideration of what may be and should be.
> (107:36)

The effect of the argument turning in again on its moral bias is not only to introduce a check akin to that in "too-much-loved", but to shift the stress from the heightened quality of the making to the nature of the content. This, Sidney hastens to declare, must be "substantial" and not "wholly imaginative" - which puts the sweet-smelling flowers in their place but leaves the cyclops and chimeras completely stranded.

Of course Sidney was not writing a philosophical treatise, and it is only to be expected that at times his persuasive purpose should have made him ready to forego consistency for the sake of immediate rhetorical effect. Thus at one stage he says of Plato, with the Ion clearly in mind, "He attributeth unto Poesy more than myself do, namely, to be a very inspiring of a divine force, for above man's wit" (130:7). That this was Sidney's personal conviction seems supported by the fact that the Astrophel and Stella sonnet, 'I never dranke of Aganippe well', disclaims inspiration with a good-humoured pertness:

> Some do I heare of Poets' furie tell,
> But (God wot) wot not what they meane by it.
>
> (Poems, p.204)

Nevertheless, Sidney is quite ready in the peroration of the Apology to conjure the reader to believe with Landino that the poets are so beloved of the gods "that whatsoever they write proceeds of a divine fury" (142:6). In the Apology Sidney is not above an almost mock-heroic flourish. But the uncertainties in the argument which we have just been considering are of a quite different order of significance, and they open up interesting questions as to what indeed it is that makes for the wonderful potency of art.

It is significant that the golden world passage occurs not in the main body of Sidney's argument, but in a

preliminary section based on the "etymology of the poet's names"(101:30); and Sidney's immediate concern in the passage is with the poet's right to the name of "maker". The idea of making has a great prominence in the Apology. It is central, for example, to Sidney's discussion of what constitutes a "right poet".

One mid-sixteenth-century development among the Northern Christian humanists was the attempt to counter growing secular trends in literature and in thought, and to give status to poetry in the face of its detractors, by cultivating the idea of divine poetry as a special kind. Sidney's contemporary, the French poet and critic du Bartas, graced the didactic element in poetry by placing it under the special aegis of Urania, the Christian Muse; and Milton was later to invoke the same figure at the start of Paradise Lost.[1] Sidney, on the other hand, goes out of his way in the Apology to distinguish divine poetry as a separate kind; but he explicitly excludes it from his considerations, confining himself to a defence of "right poetry". In part this represents a gesture of genuine humility. It seems typical of him that, having argued the superiority of the poet to the historian and to the moral philosopher, he should add the firm rider:

> as for the divine, with all reverence it is ever to be excepted, not only for having his scope as far beyond any of these as eternity exceedeth a moment, but even for passing each of these in themselves.
> (100:17)

But Sidney has equally important reasons for excluding divine poetry: he wants to defend "right poetry" upon its own terms and without any a priori divine sanction.

And Sidney's notion of "right poetry" is an interesting one. At first, the distinctions which he is making between right poetry and other kinds might seem to relate to the objects of the poet's imitation, that is to subject

matter: divine poets "imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God"; the second kind of poets deal with "matters philosophical"; right poets imitate "what may be and should be" (101:38, 102:14 and 37). This is the way that William Webbe, in his A Discourse of Englishe Poetry of 1586, distinguishes between vates, who are concerned with "grave and necessary matters", and poets or makers, who sing "of love matters, or other lighter devises".[2] But Sidney's distinction between the second kind of poets and right poets depends rather upon the manner in which subject matter is treated, as is perhaps indicated by the fact that he does not use the term "imitation" in his discussion of the second kind of poet. Writers who simply philosophise or present their ideas on any subject, in verse, are not right poets because, in Sidney's words, they remain "wrapped within the fold of the proposed subject" and do not take "the course of [their] own invention". Sidney goes on to make it clear that this poetic invention is a matter of "feigning". He argues wittily in his next paragraph that,

> it is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet - no more than a long gown maketh an advocate, who though he pleaded in armour should be an advocate and no soldier. But it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by.
> (103:26)

Sidney is here repeating the definition he has just made of "right poets" as those who "make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach"; so "make to imitate" is coterminous with "feigning notable images"; and in their turn "feigning", "making" and poetic "invention" are synonymous with one another. Like Aristotle, Sidney believes that the right poet, defined not in terms of his intentions but of the manner of his operations, is in essence a maker, one who feigns.[3] Moreover, it is difficult not to feel

that the parenthesis, "with that delightful teaching", is a concession to Sidney's overall moral view rather than a point essential to the distinction in hand, particularly as Sidney seems to give warrant for thinking of content and form separately by his careful "gradation" in which he talks of the poet as making in order to imitate, and imitating in order to teach and delight. At the very least, Sidney is again clearly quite unaware that as far as his moral argument is concerned he has thrown the cat among the pigeons, or the chimera among the Cyruses, with that casual afterthought, "notable images of virtues, vices, or what else".

The idea that poetry is characterised simply by the act of feigning is made play with right from the opening pages of the Apology. Thus Sidney claims Solon as in part a poet because he used "a notable fable" (97:8); and he argues that even Plato had a good deal of the poet in him because he wrote in feigned dialogues, and provided both poetical describing and interlacing tales such as that of

> Gyges' Ring, and others, which who knoweth not to be flowers of poetry did never walk into Apollo's garden.
> (97:19)

The classical historians too, "entered into the gates of popular judgments" only because they had taken "a great passport of poetry" (97:32), for quite apparently their passionate descriptions of battles they had never seen and of speeches they had never heard are no more than feigning.

It is in the section of the essay devoted to "the etymology of the poet's names", however, that Sidney's most important treatment of the idea of the poet as "maker" occurs. Here Sidney urges the uniqueness of the poet's activity: the poet alone, he argues, is not tied to the

works of nature for his object, but is free to deliver his own golden world, his own perfected images. That Sidney sets special store by this claim is clear from the fact that when he moves on to what he calls his "more ordinary opening" (namely the typical Renaissance conflation of the views of Aristotle and Horace in which the poet is thought of as imitating in order to delight and teach) he regrets that this more orthodox approach will offer "not so unmatched a praise as the etymology of his names will grant". The implication is that the preliminary arguments on making are particularly well considered and close to Sidney's heart. But what is surprising is that Sidney should seem to give the impression that the discussion of the poet as maker is only supplementary to the main body of his argument. For it is not. On the contrary, his stress on the poet as maker remains absolutely essential to his central claim that the poet is the most effective teacher of all. It is precisely the poet's power of feigning that sets him above the historian as a teacher, for the poet alone is free to feign an outcome to events such that the valiant Miltiades is not left rotting in his fetters. Then too, the poet is superior to the philosopher because he is not limited to bare precepts but can feign "notable images" of vice and virtue which will more effectively move the mind. Such images have this power not merely because they are simplified and heightened, but because they are feigned images, speaking pictures which "strike, pierce [and] possess the sight of the soul" (107:15).

It is necessary to be clear about what Sidney understood by poetic making. Inevitably one finds him in places thinking of composition in terms of the model provided by traditional rhetorical teaching, and particularly in relation to the techniques of inventio, dispositio and elocutio. The first two of these processes were conducted under the shared aegis of rhetoric and logic (at least until Ramus made them the province of logic alone) and they consisted in finding matter and arguments - often by recourse

to such systematic aids as the "topics of invention", which included definition, division, comparison with things greater or lesser or equal, and the noting of antecedents and incompatibilities - and of arranging this matter in the best way to support one's proposition or guiding idea. Elocutio, in its turn, was the use of tropes and figures to make the presentation eloquent.[4] In Sidney's own rendering of this idea, the poet begins with an "Idea of fore-conceit" which he proceeds to "figure forth" using all the appropriate techniques and devices, and following the course of his own "invention".

The influences of formal rhetorical training are everywhere to be seen in Sidney's writing. The Apology itself is built up in a seven part progression suitable for a laudatory oration,[5] and in the Arcadia, speeches such as those of Musidorus and Pyrocles in their debate on love, or the whole forensic climax of the final trial, provide almost model texts for illustrating the way in which the "topics" can be used for developing proofs in argument. One of the main differences between Sidney's prose style and Lyly's euphuism is that Lyly tended to use the "topics" less rigorously, and generally only as a means of achieving amplification.[6] As far as elocutio was concerned, it is significant that John Hoskins illustrated his Directions for Speech and Style, a work concerned mainly with the writing of letters, with examples from the Arcadia, because it exemplified "all the figures of rhetoric"; and Abraham Fraunce used Sidney's poems in his Arcadia Rhetorike to illustrate a complete range of tropes and figures.[7]

But clearly if Sidney was thinking of "making" only in relation to general rhetorical practice his distinction between the poet on the one hand, and all the species of philosopher on the other would collapse, together with the notion of the right poet. For rhetoric and its tools are equally the property of philosopher and poet. Sidney well knew that the poet's means and those of the rhetorician

overlapped to a large extent, but he ended his discussion of the deficiencies of contemporary writers by saying,

> Methinks I deserve to be pounded for straying from Poetry to Oratory; /though/ both have ... an affinity in this wordish consideration.
>
> (139:35)

As we have seen, what characterised poetic making for him was the fact that the poet not only drew on all the resources of rhetorical heightening, but delivered in addition a notable image, a fiction or a fable. Sidney says at the outset of his argument that it is "high flying liberty of conceit" and "exquisite observing of number and measure in words" that are "proper to the poet" and seem to embody almost a "divine force" (99:3f). Significantly it is precisely in free feigning and in versifying that poetry goes beyond rhetorical practice, and of these, versifying is, as it were, only an optional extra. Again, much later in the argument, Sidney makes it clear that he is fully aware that these two are the independent aspects of poetic making, for when he outlines the nature of the enticement which the poet offers he says:

> He cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well enchanting skill of music; and with a tale forsooth he cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner.
>
> (113:27)

Rhetoric will help the poet of course, but feigning is his own proper province. In similar terms, though with a gesture towards didacticism thrown in for good measure, Ben Jonson affirmed:

> He is called a poet, not he which writeth in measure only, but that feigneth and formeth a fable, and writes things like the truth. For the fable or fiction is, as it were, the form and soul of any poetical work or poem.
>
> 8

Brian Vickers provides a necessary qualification of Rosemond Tuve's claims for the importance of logical and rhetorical methods in Elizabethan composition when he affirms that in the final count the poet's eye, except in long speeches conceived as arguments, is "fixed on his characters and their inter-action not on his categories or predicaments".[9]

Aristotle provides a clearer distinction between poetry and rhetoric in claiming simply that persuasion characterises rhetoric and imitation poetry: this makes imitation a proper end in its own right. But Sidney had taken over from rhetoric his triple criteria of delighting, teaching and moving, and he was committed to the idea of poetry as morally coercive. In consequence he never quite manages to think of feigning completely or consistently in its own terms. Moreover, by the sixteenth century poetry had been thought of in relation to rhetoric for so long that many aspects of what we would think of as fiction or imitation had been absorbed by rhetoric. There was, for example, the medieval precedent of Matthew of Vendôme, almost half of whose treatise is taken up with a consideration of descriptio, an aspect which had received only passing treatment in the classical rhetoricians who had considered it as a figure of thought. By such means the amplification of rich and ornamental details is taken over the wing of rhetoric and descriptions such as that of the locus amoenus are given a new status as topoi.[10]

Even in classical rhetoric, however, enargia or 'a style vivid with images'[11] was highly recommended as a means of achieving both clarity and emotional force. Sidney himself uses a related and extremely important rhetorical term in arguing that the power of the poet's perfect picture and the "true lively knowledge" which it creates depend upon the "forcibleness or energia" (138:2) with which it is feigned. He makes this point in relation to numerous love poems of his acquaintance which would

move no mistress to anything but boredom. Given the courtly context in which love poems were produced, a context in which it is difficult to think of poems of seduction simply as pragmatically intended means to an end, it would almost seem that in his advocacy of *energia* Sidney is commending the vigour, passion and immediacy of the poet's feigning for its expressive rather than for its persuasive power. It is clearly almost impossible in practice to keep the two functions apart, whether by breaking off *elocutio* from *inventio* and *dispositio*, or by breaking off poesy from rhetoric, or by thinking of form apart from content.

A caution is necessary. Despite Sidney's remarks on feigning and on liveliness, and despite his famous comment on the poet as coming to you with a tale "which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner" (113:29), terms such as feigning and fiction in his argument cannot simply be thought of in a casual way as pointing to what we might be tempted to think of as the standard form of fiction, which is to say a continuous, almost self-sufficient narrative, with convincing characters and a naturalistic consistency. On the contrary Sidney's views are so constantly related to the idea of moving that they might seem to leave little room for anything like narrative in this modern sense. When, for example, in the course of his discussion of admonitory forms, he emphasizes the importance of a realistic mirroring, he does so only in relation to the persuasive effect that a convincing immediacy will help to achieve. Thus in his discussion of certain stock comic types, figures such as the "self-wise-seeming schoolmaster" (137:14) of whom his own Rhombus from *The Lady of May* or Holofernes from *Love's Labour's Lost* are examples, Sidney insists that the roles should be played "naturally; but his concern is that such figures should not be grossly exaggerated for the sake of winning laughs from

the pit, and hence lose their instructive potential. He quite clearly accepts that they should be recognizably types, which is to say instances of common foibles, exaggerated and heightened for the purpose of delightful teaching by all the means at the poet's command. Nature's vain schoolmasters are no more than tedious and boring; the schoolmasters that the poets deliver parade their follies and warn us away from affectation through "the posterior of /an/ afternoon" that is always golden. Again, when Sidney argues that the writer of comedy should figure forth the intricacies of "private and domestical" matters, so that the reader or spectator may

> get as it were an experience, what is to be looked for of a niggardly Demea, of a crafty Davus, of a flattering Gnatho, of a vainglorious Thraso; and not only to know what effects are to be expected but to know who be such, by the signifying badge given them by the comedian ...
> (' 7:20)

his comment might seem to call for a form of representation grossly steeped in brazenness. But in his remark that the successful comic poet makes his comic figures so actual to the imagination that it is as if he gives them a "signifying badge" he is referring directly to the commonplace of rhetorical teaching that "circumstances" need to be set forth with a proper substantiality.[12] Sidney had himself translated a long section of Aristotle's Rhetoric, and he must have taken to heart the passage in which Aristotle discusses the means by which "actuality" is to be achieved:

> We must now explain what we mean by 'setting things before the eyes', and by what means this is effected. This is my definition - those words 'set a thing before the eyes', which describe it in an active state. For instance, to say that a good man is 'four-square' is a metaphor, since both the man

> and the square are complete; but it does not describe an active state. This phrase, on the other hand, 'in the flower of his vigour'; or this 'at large, like a sacred animal', - are images of an active state.
>
> 13

In Aristotle's view the means for achieving "actuality" can all be related to qualities of style. Not surprisingly writers of Sidney's age tended to think of dramatic immediacy as one means among others of achieving a moving effect.

Sidney declares himself contemptuous of "matter which never was begotten by knowledge" (133:7), and he would not have commended for its own sake anything like vivid descriptiveness. Indeed it is difficult to find in Renaissance literature a passage such as the following from Roger Ascham's Toxophilus in which observation seems to be almost an end in itself.

> That morning the sun shone bright and clere, the wind was whistelinge a lofte, and sharpe accordynge to the tyme of the year. The snowe in the hye waye laye lowse and troden wyth horse feete: so as the wynde blowe, it toke the lowse snow with it, and made it so slide upon the snowe in the felde whyche was harde and crusted by reason of the frost over nyght, that therby I myght se verye wel, the hole nature of the wynde as it blewe that daye. And I had a great delyte and pleasure to marke it, whych maketh me now far better to remember it. Sometyme the wynd would be not past two yardes brode, and so it would carie the snowe as far as I could se. An other tyme the snow would blowe ouer halfe the feldes at ones. Sometyme the snow woulde tomble softly, by and by it would flye wonderfull fast. And thys I perceyved also that the wind goeth by streames and not hole togither. For I should se one streame wyth an a Score on me, than the space of two score no snow would stirre, but after so much quantitie of grounde, an other streame of snow at the same very tyme should be caryed likewyse, but not equally ... Nor it flewe not streight but sometyme it crooked thys waye sometyme that waye, and sometyme it ran round aboute in a compase ...
>
> (English Works, p.1.2)

Even here though, Ascham is not observing the wind with complete disinterestedness, but as an archer; and the passage leads up to the practical conclusion that, "The more uncertaine and vnsceyvable the wynd is, the more hede must a wyse Archer gyve to know the gyles of it".

Renaissance literature is full of memorable and strikingly accurate details. One thinks, for example, of the den to which Spenser's brigants carry Pastorella, lit "with continuall candle-light, which delt/ A doubtfull sense of things, not so well seene, as felt" (VI.x.42); or of the description of the wrecked ship at the start of the Arcadia:

> a ship, or rather the carkas of the shippe, or rather some few bones of the carkas, hulling there, part broken, part burned, part drowned: death having used more than one dart to that destruction.
> (I. 9)

But almost invariably, and always with Sidney and Spenser, what strikes one on reflection about such details is how obviously they act as "evidences" and subserve a larger "figurative" purpose. Even the most "naturalistic" touches in Shakespeare's plays, to be rightly interpreted, need to be seen not as mere scene-painting but in relation to a considered "figurative" effect. A good example is Marcellus's famous description, in the battlement scene of Hamlet, of the dawn in "russet mantle", which no less than the description of the temple-haunting martlets in Macbeth provides an image of normative naturalness setting off the moral and physical claustrophobia of the surrounding action.

What this really boils down to is simply the recognition that successful art, however much it may struggle to conceal its art, is never artless. Details in a work of art are seldom merely ornamental; they are invariably chosen by the writer in order to achieve a particular effect. Sometimes, the intended effect is clearly signalled. Spenser,

for example, unashamedly calls attention to his moral intention which is the overt structural principle of his work, as in the following comments in the Sixth Book of The Faerie Queene:

> For all that hetherto hath long delayd
> This gentle knight, from sewing his first quest,
> Though out of course, yet hath not bene missayd,
> To shew the courtesie by him profest,
> Euen vnto the lowest and the least.
> But now I come unto my course againe,
> To his atchieuement of the Blatant beast ...
>
> (VI. xii. 2)

Spenser openly admits that the central story has been long neglected because the necessity of showing Calidore's courtesy to the lowestand the least was more important to his moral purpose than simple narrative continuity. Similarly, Sidney, for all his talk of the poet's entrancing tale, tends to think of works as realizing their momentum not through a convincing narrative so much as through an accumulation of vivid vignettes and vigorous tableaux which clearly serve an over-riding purpose. Again and again he instances a scene rather than a sequence: "Let but Sophocles bring you Ajax on a stage, killing and whipping sheep and oxen," he says, "and tell me if you have not a more familiar insight into anger than finding in the schoolmen his genus and difference"(108:2). What matters is that each episode - whether it present Kalendar's house, a vain schoolmaster or the fury of Ajax - should grip the mind by its emblematic heightening, and be forcibly conducive to the moral intention.

Sometimes the intended effect is left implicit, as in the lines from Hamlet to which we referred, and as is generally the case in a good deal of realistic modern fiction: yet a moment's reflection makes it clear that the successive episodes and details in a work such as Sons and Lovers, from the description of Morel cutting fuses to that of Miriam on the swing or of the ageing Mrs Morel puffing as she climbs the hill, all exist in relation to the necessity of Lawrence's thematic intentions.[14]

Sometimes, however, a work may seem to disavow any intentional effect; yet it remains true that it must necessarily "discover" some artistic form. However fortuitous the details of which a work is constituted may seem, they have been selected and endorsed by the poet for expression; and if the work has the coherence which we expect of a work of art it is possible for us to think of some conscious or unconscious "intention" on the poet's part as controlling the process of selection and expression. This argument is no more than a necessary extension of our earlier remarks about the poet's frame. The practice of imitation or of rather loose translation as the Elizabethans understood it provides a useful model for considering this point. Each new section of the work to be rendered presents itself simply with the need of being expressed. But the imitator who is worth his salt does not set out to give a literal rendering; he attempts to bring out the quality of the original as he understands it. Consider for example Chapman's translation of the description of the death of Polydorus in Book Twenty of the Iliad:

> He flew before the first heate of the field
> Even till he flew out breath and soule - which,
> through the backe, the lance
> Of swift Achilles put in ayre, and did his head advance
> Out at his navill. On his knees the poore Prince
> crying fell,
> And gathered with his tender hands his entrailes,
> that did swell
> Quite through the wide wound, till a cloud as
> black as death concealed
> Their sight and all the world from him ...
> 15

William Carlos Williams quotes these lines and remarks of them, "That's straight talking, with a compelling vigour of phrase that has brought Chapman the attention and admiration of the ages".[16] One suspects that Williams was thinking only of the unflinching realism of the details when he spoke of "straight talking", but the point

to make surely is that Chapman does not present anything like straight rendering of an incident or object in the 'red wheelbarrow by the white wall' sense.[17] What Chapman has done is to make an apprehension of the awesome and mysterious pathos of the young man's sudden death the focus of the whole incident. In Coleridge's terms he modifies everything by this "predominant passion".[18] In so doing Chapman can be thought of as "discovering" this apprehension as the intention or unifying principle of the whole incident, hence making it possible for the passage to achieve something of the authority of a self-sufficient "poem". Chapman figures the apprehension by means of a highly stylized modulation, prepared for in the zeugma of "flew out breath and soule" which momentarily lifts the lines to a different level of reality, whereby the pathetic immediacy of the image of the dazed prince gathering his spilling entrails with an uncomprehending and almost protective gentleness gives way to the heroic image of the cloud as black as death. Condescension to the foolish impetuosity and bravado of the young adolescent disappears before the immensity of death; and the sudden symbolic heightening of the style achieves an effect of awesome expansiveness that is adequate to the "intention".

This is to argue as though Chapman found in translation a freedom for the exercise of sheer feigning, and it is interesting how very apposite a gloss on the foregoing discussion his own comments on vivid feigning provide:

> That enargia or cleernes of representation, requird in absolute Poems is not the perspicuous delivery of a lowe invention; but high, and harty invention exprest in most significant, and unaffected phrase; it serves not a skilfull Painters turne, to draw the figure of a face onely to make knowne who it represents; but he must lymn, give luster, shaddow, and heightening.[19]

It is in a very similar sense that Sidney thinks of the poet's "high, and harty invention" as involving the feigning of

substantially realized images, examples or fables. It is in this sense too that the poet alone is not bound to nature as his only source, but "bringeth his own stuff, and doth not learn a conceit out of a matter, but maketh matter for a conceit" (120:21). In Polixenes' terms he is free to marry the "gentler scion" of his own invention

> ... to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race.
>
> (The Winter's Tale, IV.iii.93)

It is through his making that the poet utters "sweetly and properly the conceits of the mind" (140:16), and in such a manner that what is finally delivered is an "enlarged" conceit, a golden world with its own "apparent shining" (108:9). And there would seem to be no *inherent* necessity why that enlarged conceit should serve any prior or persuasive purpose, or any purpose other than that of achieving its own expressive potential.

Chapter V

BEAUTY AND USE

In this chapter I shall extend the point that I began to make in relation to Chapman's description of the death of Pelgdorus, namely that it often happens in practice that the activity of feigning seems to generate its own energies. But first it is necessary to say a few words about the Elizabethan attitude towards the mind's ability to feign, and about Sidney's attempts to subordinate feigning to teaching.

Sidney was audacious in making so much in his argument of the poet's ability to feign, for he was writing at a time when the activity of feigning, in itself, was in considerable disrepute. As C. S. Lewis has said, Sidney was "contributing to, or concluding, an age-old debate; and that debate, properly viewed, is simply the difficult process by which Europe became conscious of fiction as an activity distinct from history on the one hand and from lying on the other".[1] Sidney was contending against the contemporary conviction that "true" examples have more force than fictional ones, but also against a distrust of feigning that was far more fundamental. To understand why this should have been so it is necessary to have some grasp of the Elizabethan idea of the nature of the mind and of its hierarchical functioning. A convenient starting point is Sidney's remark that learning involves a "purifying of wit ... enriching of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit" (104:2). The terms Sidney uses refer directly to the various faculties of the mind as these were understood in contemporary psychology. The five senses were held to deliver their impressions to the lower faculties of the mind. Of these the imagination, what Sidney calls the "conceit", was a power which organised the reports of the senses into coherent impressions. The judgment in turn scrutinized and

sifted impressions which were then either stored in the memory or mediated to the wit or understanding which was one of the higher faculties of the mind.[2]

For the Elizabethans these functions of the mind were interdependent, and the imagination had a key role in the whole process. If it did not provide correct impressions then the whole personality was distorted and it was impossible for right judgments to be made or for a man to act in a properly moral way. Thus Burton could say in The Anatomy of Melancholy, "Some ascribe all vices to a false and corrupt imagination, ... deluding the soul with false shows and suppositions".[3] Moreover, the imagination was held to be an extremely vulnerable faculty for three reasons: it dealt directly with the senses, which were thought to have something of a brutish quality; it was particularly susceptible to the distorting effect of the passions; and it possessed in itself the ability (sometimes talked of as the prerogative of the phantasy though this term was often used loosely in place of imagination itself) to conceive images of its own, as in dreams or hallucinations. As Bacon said, the imagination could function not only as a clear mirror, but as an "enchanted glass".[4]

It should be clear why "feigning" was looked upon with such suspicion, and why the poet, "lifted up with the vigour of his own invention" (100:22), was liable to be lumped together, as by Theseus, with the lover and the lunatic as though they were "of imagination all compact". Worcester can be thought of as the spokesman of a pragmatical age when he says impatiently of Hotspur whose mind is toying delightedly with the prospect of plucking "bright honour" from the pale-faced moon, "He apprehends a world of figures here,/ But not the form of what he should attend" (Henry IV,Part I, I.iii.209).

Sidney sets about justifying feigning in two ways. In the first place he counters the less essential Platonic

argument that poetry is "the mother of lies" by insisting that the poet "nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth" (123:5 and 38). The poet offers a "fiction" (124:25) which is the product of good invention, and which makes no claim at all to verisimilitude. Even a child knows that it is not Thebes on the stag simply because "Thebes" is written in great letters on an old door. The more crucial argument that feigning is psychologically dangerous, and that it breeds immorality, he counters by distinguishing two types of feigning, that which is eikastike, "figuring forth good things", and that which is phantastike, "infect[ing] the fancy with unworthy objects" (125:25). Allowing that poetry can be abused by the use of fancy, he yet argues that the best poets deal only with eikastike or morally perfect images. Right poets borrow "nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be, but range ... into the divine consideration of what may be and should be" (102:35). They offer impressions different from those produced by the senses, but their delivering is not "wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air" (101:7), for they go beyond the brazen renderings of sense only to deliver a golden example, framed "to that which is most reasonable" (110:27). And in defence of this greater reasonableness Sidney can, and does, readily fall back upon an appeal to a combination of the Aristotelian universal, the Platonic idea and the rhetorical notion of paradigmatic examples.[5]

In this way Sidney is ready to meet the psychologists on their own grounds by arguing that right poetry works to rehabilitate the imagination. By enlarging the conceit or imagination through the delivery of a golden or perfected as opposed to a brazen impression, poetry successively helps to enable the judgment, provide matter for enriching the memory, and purify or erect the wit. Today one might talk in almost parallel terms of poetry as extending one's experience, increasing one's powers of discrimination, enlivening the mind and refining the whole sensibility.

Sidney thus tries, at one and the same time, to make "feigning" the central poetic activity, and to justify it by containing it within a moral and rational frame. As he says, in answering the charge that poets are liars, though poets "affirm" nothing with their speaking picture they do write "allegorically and figuratively"; their narrative might seem to be only a "fiction" but it is in truth the "imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention" (124:23 My italics). But he is walking a tight-rope. Leaving aside his admission that feigning can at times be phantastike and the imagination abused, one must recognise that there are dangers in the dualistic view of poetic composition which he inherited from rhetoric. In this view the poet's "Idea or fore-conceit" clearly precedes the figuring. Sidney makes the duality in the process of conceiving and composing quite explicit when he blames his fellow English poets for neglecting "Art, Imitation, and Exercise". He complains that they write without method, as though good poetry could be written without observing the rules of art, and without a poet's bothering to school himself in the imitation of good models and in the continuous practice of his craft. And he concludes by insisting that the poet who aspires to be more than a "paper-blurrer" must never forget that in poetry there are "two principal parts - matter to be expressed by words and words to express the matter (111:2f.).

Our discussion of Chapman's passage should have indicated that an adequate view of composition needs to make room for the idea of cognition being achieved in the act of writing itself. But the real danger in the rhetorical or dualistic view of composition is not so much that it excludes this recognition as that it encourages the idea that form and content are somehow separable. It is in the course of answering the objection that a feigned example cannot have the force of an historical or "essential" one that Sidney talks of the poet's controlling "Idea or fore-conceit"; and what he says more fully is,

> any understanding knoweth the skill of the artificer standeth in that Idea or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself. And that the poet hath that Idea is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he hath imagined them.
> (101:3)

In temporarily forsaking his argument for the poet's greater moving power he commits himself to a proposition which he seems to find vaguely disquietening. He tries to salve himself by a qualification which suggests that imagining and discovering cannot really be separated after all; but the comment that the skill of the artificer standeth in the Idea or fore-conceit comes perilously close to a devaluation of feigning, and to an undermining of his whole argument that the poet is pre-eminent because of his power to make.

Sidney's image of poetry as a speaking picture implies a completely organic fusion in which the representation energizes the meaning and the meaning simultaneously gives point to the representation. It is interesting too that in itself it implies no stipulation as to what sort of meaning there should be. Where a writer has an overt didactic intention, however, it becomes almost impossible for him to maintain an ideal balance of form and content. A classical example of this is to be found in the ending of plays like Volpone and The Alchemist, where the harshness of the punishments meted out pulls against the exuberance with which Ben Jonson has conceived his rogues, and we have seen much the same thing at work in the Arcadia. Similarly, where a moral bias enters a theory of poetry it is inclined to lead to an encouragement of imbalance and to the dislocation that content can have an existence and value apart from form. Thus we find Sidney arguing that if the poet can beguile men with delights, many

> will be content to be delighted - which is all the good-fellow poet seemeth to promise - and so steal to see the form of goodness (which seen they cannot but love) ere themselves be aware, as if they took a medicine of cherries.
> (114:28)

Disregarding the question-begging "which seen they cannot but love", one might charitably think of Sidney's phrase "a medicine of cherries" as memorably refurbishing the Horatian formula. It implies by a striking paradox that cherries can somehow become medicinable without losing any of their essential "cherriness", and it carefully underplays the suggestion of subterfuge. A page earlier, however Sidney had used a slightly different metaphor, arguing that the reader is won over,

> even as the child is often brought to take most wholesome things by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant taste: which, if one should begin to tell them the nature of aloes or rhubarb they should receive, would sooner take their physic at their ears than at their mouth.
>
> (113:33)

Here the implication of the imagery is that the delightfulness of literature is of little or no value in itself: the sweetness of poetry is merely a subterfuge. The suggestion of deceit passes unnoticed in the reading only because the immediate context of the reference to aloes and rhubarb is the praise of the poet's tale as capable of holding "children from play and old men from the chimney-corner" - a comment whose effect is hardly such as to suggest that the delight of reading is an adventitious deception. But it is impossible, once it has been pointed out, to deny the implications of the imagery: the delightfulness of poetry is only a means to an end, and if literature can trick the reader into desiring to improve himself it will have served its turn.[6]

The large moral dimension of Sidney's argument - that poetry provides inspiring images of life and enables the judgment - must be given full due, but it is also true that Sidney does at times tend to think of art in a more crudely didactic way. What is more, the moralist's preoccupation with content and the rhetorician's concern with persuading lead him inevitably into an impasse. The more he emphasises profitable content as alone justifying feigning, the more he lends credence not only to the idea that the feigning is in

essence something apart from the moral nature of the content, but also to the suspicion that though for the moralist what matters in poetry is the teaching, what is distinctive and perhaps even most valuable in poetry is simply the feigning.

Works of art of any complexity invariably reveal a certain self-consciousness about their own making, and the revised Arcadia is no exception. Three passages in the work consider the problem of the right relationship between beauty and use, and they neatly indicate the way in which a dualistic approach based on the idea of teaching plus delighting finds it difficult to maintain the delicate balance, as of a speaking picture, which it purports to advocate.

Just before Pamela attacks Cecropia's godlessness, the aunt tries to win Pamela's favour by flattering the quality of her embroidery on a purse which she is making. The purse, says Cecropia fulsomely, is a "treasure it selfe". But Pamela rebuffs the suggestion, haughtily remarking that she values the object "even as a verie purse"; for her the embroidering has been a moral gesture, an act of faith and defiance of a kind that Conrad would have approved. For beauty as a mere external quality - "but a pleasaunt mixture of naturall colours, delightfull to the eye, as musicke is to the eare, without any further consequence" - she holds no store. Cecropia may think of the purse as fit "to worke unwitting effectes of wonder", but Pamela dismisses mere beautiful workmanship as a thing without consequence: beauty, she insists, must be sanctioned by something more than itself (I.402f.).

The description of Kalendar's house, which we looked at earlier, can be thought of as approaching the question from the point where Pamela leaves off. In Kalendar's house everything is

> more lasting than beautifull, but that the consideration of the exceeding lastingnesse made the eye beleeve it was exceeding beautifull.

Created things find their proper end only in being put to use, but in doing so they can achieve a proper comeliness. Pamela herself comes close to the exalted extension of this argument when, in defending the comely order of God's creation, she argues that "perfect order, perfect beautie, perfect constancy" can not be merely "the children of Chaunce" (1.408).

But there is a significantly different emphasis in Sidney's description of the antics of some sailing-ships in the wind:

> To delight the Princes eies, some two or three of them would strive, who could (either by the cunning of well spending the windes breath, or by the advantageous building of their mooving houses) passe their fellowes behind them in the honour of speed: while the two Princes had leasure to see the practise of that, which before they had learned by bookes: to consider the arte of catching the winde prisoner, to no other ende, but to runne away with it; to see how beautie, and use can so well agree together, that of all the trinckets, where with they are attired, there is not one but serves to some necessary purpose.
>
> (I. 191)

The passage is presented as one more detail in the account of the princes' education, and once again beauty is shown to reveal itself in use: even the most trinket-like sail "serves to some necessary purpose". Nevertheless, the purpose which the sails serve is only to catch and run away teasingly with the wind, "in the honour of speed": and there is a strong impression of abandonment to a playful and exuberant self-delight.

Without undue distortion these three passages can be taken as emblematic of a range of possible positions from that of art as instrumental to that of art as autonomous, with an attempted balance in between.

When one turns from Sidney's Apology and from his overt references to the problem of beauty and use and

considers his practice, one finds that the Old Arcadia provides a perfect literary parallel to this theoretical inability to do consistent justice to the differing claims of feigning and teaching. Despite the work's clearly didactic intention and moral structure it seems for long stretches less than sure of its serious intentions. Nor is this simply a matter of Sidney's ambivalent feelings about love which we noticed earlier.

Consider, for example, one of the most successful scenes in the book, that in which the disguised princes fight and overcome a lion and a bear which erupt into the scene of idyllic serenity just before the first pastorals are about to begin. The sudden attack figures the disruption of the Arcadian dream, and the pursuit of Pamela and Philoclea by the beasts can be seen as an allegory of the threatened destruction of Beauty and Virtue by Passion.[7] But the effect of the scene itself is much less solemn than any account of its relevance to the moral plot might suggest. When Philoclea sees the ravenous lion she falls into the arms of Cleophila (the disguised Pyrocles) who is sitting beside her, and he is so transported when their faces are "unawares closed together" that he gives "leysure to the Lyon to come very nere them" (IV.43) before rising to confront it. Having killed the beast at the cost of a shoulder wound and having cut off its head as a trophy, he rushes after Philoclea who has fled in fear "as fast as her delicate legges woulde carry her". As she runs, her nymphlike apparell is carried up by the wind in such a way that,

> muche of those beutyes shee woulde at an other tyme have willingly hidden, were presented to the eye of the twyce wounded Cleophila: which made Cleophila not followe her over hastely, leste shee shoulde too soone deprive her self of that pleasure. But carrying the Lyons heade in her hande, did not fully over take her, till, they came, bothe into ye presence of Basilius.
>
> (IV. 43)

Pyrocles' tardiness is delightful - he is a creature of flesh and blood one feels, and not simply the wavering hero in pursuit of an image of Beauty. The dramatic vignette fixes itself in the mind more than Sidney's subsequent comment that each runner is "carryed away with the vyolence of an Inwarde evell" (IV.44). Indeed what Sidney himself seems to have been carried away with is a memory of Ovid's description in the Metamorphoses of Daphne fleeing from Apollo.[8] The humour in the treatment of the handling of the bear by Musidorus is even broader. When Pamela sees the bear she throws herself down flat on her face, an action which provokes Sidney to comment facetiously that this might not have been fear, for she might have heard that this device was the best refuge against angry bears. Fear or not, Pamela falls into a deep faint, which provides Musidorus with the opportunity of smothering her with kisses once he has killed the bear. Basilius's steward, the craven Dametas, outdoes Pamela, for after all the palaver is over he is found,

> lyinge with his head and brest, as farr as hee coulde thrust him self into a Busshe, drawyng up his Legges as close unto him, as hee coulde. For, in deede, assoone as hee sawe the Bear coming towardes them, (Like a man that was very apte to take pitty of him self) hee ran headlonge into this Bussh, with full resolution, that at the worst hand hee woulde not see his owne deathe.
>
> (IV. 46)

Nothing disconcerted, it is Dametas who leads Pamela back in triumph to her parents, singing a joyful little song in which he congratulates himself for having taken Musidorus into service:

> Now thancked bee the great God Pan,
> That thus preserves my loved lyfe:
> Thancked bee I that keepe A man
> Who ended hathe this feare full stryfe.
> So, yf my Man must prayses have:
> What then must I, that keepe the knave?
>
> (IV.47)

In such a scene Sidney's inventive fancy is taking him beyond incidental humour to the stage where his work begins to "discover" an almost self-sufficient life of its own, independently of the avowed moral purpose. And it is by no means an isolated example. The man who found his heart enough moved by the reading of the somewhat despised Amadis de Gaule to use it as one of his sources was continually liable to find that his feigning was generating energies of its own.

Sidney seems himself to have had doubts about the Old Arcadia. His drastic rewriting and reshaping of the whole venture would in itself indicate this, but in addition it is worth recalling that in dedicating the work to his sister Mary, the Countess of Pembroke, he remembers how a great deal of it was written in her presence at Wilton as a literary diversion; and he dismisses his production as "an idle work ... which I feare (like the Spiders webbe) will be thought fitter to be swept away, then worn to any other purpose". He advises his readers to look in it for "no better stuffe, then, as in a Haberdashers shoppe, glasses, or feathers" (I.4). Similarly in a letter to his brother he refers to the work as a toy. Such disclaimers may represent no more than gestures of sprezzatura (or Ironia, as Greville calls it in his life of Sidney) which is the casualness appropriate to men who, "to keep above their workes - seeme to make toies of the uttermost they can do".[9] But perhaps they can also be seen as pointing to misgivings which might have caused Sidney to be justifiably hesitant about claiming a consistently moral purpose. It is worth recalling too that the tone of Sidney's "asides" to his "fayre Ladyes" is not all that different from Castiglione's when he affirms with sophisticated gallantry that,

> without women no contenation or delight can be felt in all this life of ours which (set them aside) were rude, and without all sweetness and rougher than the life of forest wild beasts.[10]

The traditional picture has been of Sidney wilting at Wilton, cut off from employment in the Protestant cause by the Queen's embargoes, and writing the Arcadia to fill up empty and dragging hours. But Languet's letters to Sidney reveal that he may well have been finding a seductive sweetness in the "love of ease" and in the pleasures of sophisticated idleness and appreciative female company.[11] In the Arcadia itself he says somewhat wistfully of the shepherds that "they have ease, the Nurse of Poetrie" (I. 28).

Nor is this tendency for the feigning to generate energies of its own confined to the Old Arcadia. In the revised version Pamela still falls flat on her face at the onset of the bear, and one of Sidney's few additions to this particular scene is to make Pamela quiver in fear like a partridge at the sight of the animal. (I.119)

It is worth considering in this respect what is perhaps the best remembered passage from the revised Arcadia, the description of the idyllic world of Arcadia as it presents itself to the eyes of the young Prince Musidorus after he has been rescued from the shipwreck. One can go to great lengths to suggest the ways in which, in context, the passage is marshalled "into an assured rank" (133:15), or functionally related to the moral design. As an emblem of serenity and content it participates in a number of pointed contrasts. Musidorus has just come from Laconia, a country 'not so poore by the barrennes of the soyle as by a civill warre ... which had disfigured the face of nature" (I.14). By contrast Arcadia is "decked with peace, and the child of peace, good husbandry", which is epitomised in the well-stored pastures and knitting shepherdess. Sidney's didactic intention is clear: no less than Shakespeare he was a good Tudor subject concerned about the possibility of a disruptive civil war and all its attendant horrors. The idealized description of Arcadia, no less than the description of Kalendar's house or that

of the well-kept garden in Richard II, figures the prosperous and fulfilled life that good government alone makes possible. More subtly, the passage also provides a direct contrast with the description of the unruly and treacherous storm which has helped to separate the princes and bring about their misfortunes. The storm is clearly presented as symbolic of the forces outside man's control, the vicissitudes of Fortune which have to be overcome by the exercise of patience and magnanimity. Indeed Kalendar receives Musidorus as one whose behaviour is "so noble, as gave a majestie to adversitie" (I.16). In contrast with the storm the representation of Arcadia is an emblem for a state of mind; it images that peace of mind and self-sufficiency which a man can find within himself when he has learned to set at nothing the attaints of passion and of accident. The description of the shepherdess with her knitting looks forward to that of Pamela with her embroidery.

Yet the fact remains that one remembers the passage primarily as a set-piece, a virtuoso performance which lifts itself above its surroundings, a projection of the timeless pastoral dream of freedom and repose. This subjective assertion is impossible to prove, in the way that one can "prove" the relationship of the passage to the moral plot as I have done above. All that one can do is begin to suggest how the passage builds up to create, as it were, an inviolable world of its own. Here is the passage:

> There were hilles which garnished their proud heights with stately trees: humble valleis, whose base estate semed coforted with refreshing of silver rivers: medows, enameld with al sorts of ey-pleasing flowres: thickets, which being lined with most pleasat shade, were witnessed so to by the chereful depositio of many wel-tuned birds: each pasture stored with sheep feeding with sober security, while the prety labs with bleting oratory craved the dams cofort: here a

shepherds boy piping, as though he should never be old: there a yong shepherdess knitting, and withall singing, and it seemed that her voice coforted her hads to work, and her hads kept time to her voices musick.

(I.13)

Every rhetorical resource has been enlisted in the figuring forth of the "Idea" of serenity and content, and the passage blandly sets itself up to be admired for its delightful artifice. The very notion of a set-piece tends to offend the modern sense of the inviolability of organic unity: virtuosity is just acceptable in a Dylan Thomas, who was after all Welsh not English, and whose 'creative torrent' can be thought of as the spilling over of an irrepressible volubility somehow akin to a force of nature; but the highly self-conscious virtuosity of a Nabokov ('these foreigners') seems disconcertingly bad-mannered, and is taken as the mark of a lack of real seriousness. Even Auden has had to battle against the tide. But if we can put such irrelevant reservations aside there is much to be admired in Sidney's artifice.

Structurally, the passage achieves a fastidious balance which yet allows for the most subtle nuances. There is an almost tabloid neatness about the construction, as will be clear if we consider the first movement in some detail:

There were hilles	which garnished their proud heights	with stately trees
... huble valleis	whose base estate semed coforted	with refreshing of silver rivers
... medows	enamell	with al sorts of eye-pleasing floures
... thickets	which being lined were witnessed so to be the depositio of wel-tuned birds.	with most pleasant shade

The clauses, and the details which body them out, are kept strictly parallel. "Hilles" balances "valleis", "meadows" balances "thickets"; "proud heights" is set against "base

estates", "enameld" complements "lined". Trees garnish the heights, while rivers refresh the valleys; the meadows are set out with flowers, the thickets are folded in with shade. Lest the fourfold balance become predictable and stilted, however, delicate variations are introduced: the initial active verb is set over against passive verbs in the remaining relative clauses, and the fourth clause extends itself to the detail of the birds, and so rounds out into a graceful and satisfying closing cadence. In the movement that completes the passage the structural balance is even more subtle, as in:

here a shepherds boy piping, as though he should never be old

there a young shepherdess knitting ... voices musick

The contrast "here/there" creates the expectation that the pattern will be completed in the form "piping ... old/ knitting ... young". As a result the sudden change whereby "young" thrusts itself forward adjectivally has the effect of tilting the whole sentence back upon its heels, in such a way that the double counterweight of "voice ... hands/ hands ... voices" seems necessary to achieve a truly balanced close. A latter-day E.K. could gloss the effects throughout with the appropriate technical terms: isocolon - clauses of similar length, parison - balance of corresponding elements, prosopopoeia - giving being to lifeless things by metaphor, and the rest. But the resuscitation of such terms seems to me inhibiting, and the mere naming still leaves the task of attempting to say what the precise effect is in each case.

Once one has accepted heightened prose as not in itself aberrant the syntactical balance is found to be gratifying. The syntactical patterning of variations against a norm is comparable to the counterpointing of rhythm and metrical pattern in verse. In addition the rhymical heightening takes the effect very close to that of verse

itself for one can even think of the relative clauses as playing off against a muted blank verse norm:

...which garnished their proud heights with stately trees

...whose base estate semed coforted with refreshing of silver rivers

...enameld with al sorts of ey-pleasing flowers

...the chereful dep ition of many wel-tuned birds

Insufficient account has been taken of the extent to which Sidney was fascinated by the rhymical possibilities of prose; and obviously the reader who is deaf to such calculated effects is missing half the fun. In a variety of ways then, the passage begins to build up into a verbal universe of its own.

But Hazlitt was one who found the passage intolerable, particularly because it did not seem to meet his own romantic taste for accurate description. Having complained in general terms of Sidney's obsessive need,

> officiously and gratuitously to interpose between you and the subject as the cicerone of Nature, distracting the eye and the mind by the continual uncalled-for interruptions, analysing, dissecting, disjointing, murdering everything, and reading a pragmatical, self-sufficient lecture over the dead body of nature ...

he singled out the description of Arcadia for special opprobrium. Nothing, he complains, could be less like oratory than the bleating of lambs; and the epithet "silver" has nothing to do with the refreshment which the streams are said to provide.[12] If one accepts though that it is not accuracy of detail but internal coherence which provides the rationale for the images it is easy enough to counter

such literalist objections by pointing out that "bleting oratory" is justifiable as defining the utmost "discordance" that this world of "wel-tuned" songs allows. In addition, as a witty conceit, it enlivens the total effect by a touch of quiet humour, working from persuasiveness as the acknowledged purpose of oratory to the nagging quality of lamb's bleating; while at the same time helping to delimit this world by glancing momentarily outside it with a wry observation on the quality of much that passes as oratory among men. A similar gentle humour enlivens the legal gravity of "witnessed so to by the chereful deposition of many wel-tuned birds", with the quiet whimsy of "wel-tuned". It is at work too in the adjective "silver" to which Hazlitt objected - a word which is justified both by its own intrinsic richness and by the sly appositeness and delimiting effect of its reference to the means whereby "base estates" in human society are commonly made content. As Tuve insists, once one has left assumptions of sensuous immediacy behind, there is really no reason why one should be any more resistant to the deliberate artificiality of Sidney's mode than to the related ingenuity of Donne's.

Nor is the total effect of emblematic completeness gained at the expense of treating nature as a cadaver in the way that Hazlitt asserts. The heightened image of Arcadia lives in the mind, with its own substantial presence. But the ideality is convincing both because of the iconic clarity of presentation and because the selected details do have a convincing actuality of reference. The metaphor of trees "garnishing" the heights has a suggestive aptness; and a sort of pun in "base", which locates the valleys visually at the foot of the hills, helps to evoke the curving quietness of country streams. It is an accurate observation that the birds with the sweetest song tend to sing unobserved in the shades of the wood, and feeding sheep do have a "sober" communality. So one could go on, detail by detail, pointing out that Sidney was not merely heightening his prose in a rhetorical manner but feigning a notable image.

Arcadia is no place that one might visit, but it is very much a place, a golden world of art in which the shepherd's boy pipes as though he never should be old with something of the ability of the pastoral figures on Keats's Grecian Urn to tease us out of thought. Just as such figures beg our questions, so thematic explanations seem "cold" by comparison with the vision of Arcadia. For a moment such a vision allows no intrusions, and it expresses a yearning that runs clearly counter to the work's heroic and moral intentions. The description might have been fashioned to provide moral contrasts, but it expresses itself so perfectly that it exists as a self-sufficient mediator of man's timeless dream of paradise painlessly regained.

The difficulty of striking a just balance betwee teaching and feigning is anything but local to Sidney's work. Any writer who attempts to produce a unified work of art in which all the variety of his materials is subordinated to some controlling principle faces what is really the general case of this problem. It is only that this general difficulty is frequently exacerbated when the controlling principle of a work is conceived or formulated in clear-cut terms, as is frequently the case when a writer is working in relation to a fixed moral or judicial scheme.

Indeed it might seem that the phrase "controlling principle" is in itself misleading in seeming to imply something relatively clear-cut. The logical extension of the suggestion that a work of art can "discover" its intention or controlling principle in the act of coming into being is to argue that every work of art discovers its full intention only in the act of coming into being - an intention which is ultimately not anything less than the effect of the total expression which the work achieves. It is, as has so often been pointed out, something which cannot be expressed reductively in terms either of a paraphrase or of an abstracted theme or principle, inferred perhaps from the logic of the plot: or even in terms of a

statement offered by the author himself in the course of, or in comment upon, his work.

It does seem worth underlining the point that the difficulty of containing parts within a whole, which the artist has, creates a parallel difficulty for the critic, namely the problem of avoiding too reductive an account of a work. What makes the problem acute is that the critic is often most valuably employed in trying to define as subtly as he can what he takes to be the unifying principle of a work, but the danger of this activity is that it almost inevitably leads the attention away from the full corporeality which the work has achieved.

Criticism of the revised Arcadia has proved particularly prone to the pitfalls of thematic criticism precisely because the work is left unfinished and thus seems to provoke critics even more strongly into attempting to close the gestalt. John Danby, for example, has argued with an engaging enthusiasm and with a fine perceptiveness of the moral strength of the work that the design of the whole would have completed the education of the princes by allowing them to learn from the examples of Pamela and Philoclea in their captivity that the chivalric values of heroic magnanimity must be subsumed in a loftier Christian ideal of patient fortitude.[13] The work would then neatly illustrate the remark in the Apology about heroes who undergo "exercises of patience and magnanimity, to make them shine the more in the near-following prosperity" (111:30). This suggestion does much to illuminate the section of the work which was revised. Pyrocles, helpless in his captivity, is driven wild by the faked execution of Philoclea, and he raves in almost Cecropian terms at the heavens:

> O tyraunt heaven, traytor earth, blinde providence: no justice, how is this done? how is this suffered? hath this world a government?
> (I. 483)

Pamela, by contrast, fortifies her will and says in her famous prayer,

> If the pride of my not-inough humble harte, be thus to be broken, O Lord, I yeeld unto thy will, and joyfully embrace what sorrow thou wilt have me suffer.
> (I.383)

Her attitude of complete (and to all practical intents Christian) submission involves that active triumphing over fortune that goes beyond stoical endurance: for to accept God's will as Pamela does is to invalidate the whole pagan concept of fortuna. Danby's discussion helps to bring out what is clearly an emerging pattern of the work in which Providence - not the "blinde providence" of Pyrocles but a divine pattern - is set over and above Chance.

Unfortunately, however, Danby extends his discussion to the second half of the Old Arcadia, and here he falls back upon a good deal of special pleading, and even upon misrepresentation. He conjectures that Sidney, if he had completed his revision, would have had Pyrocles learn the lesson of Christian patience from Philoclea on the occasion of his second attempt to take his own life - that is to say in the scene in Book Four of the Old Arcadia after Dametas has discovered him to have spent the night with Philoclea. In this scene Pyrocles tries to stab himself with an iron bar which is the only weapon he can lay his hands on, but he bungles the attempt and so wakes Philoclea. A debate on suicide ensues with Philoclea pleading most movingly for the necessity of submission to God's will. According to Danby, "Pyrocles submits to her wisdom".[14] But Sidney states clearly that "Pyrocles was not so much perswaded as delighted by her well conceyved and sweetly pronounced speeches" (IV.278). Moreover, having heard her out he again picks up the bar, "meaning yf that fayled, to leave his braynes upon the wall"; and what restrains him is, of all things, the fact that Philoclea threatens to gouge her own eyes out and kill herself too if he commits suicide.

Even if Sidney, during the course of his revision, had intended to re-work this passage in such a way that it did enforce the lesson of patience, the idea must have occurred to him very late in the revision, for he included without qualifying comment or particular emphasis a passage in the third chapter of Book Three in which Philoclea herself posits suicide, telling Amphialus

> that though his mother had taken away her knives, yet the house of Death had so many doores, as she would easilie flie into it, if ever she founde her honor endaungered.
> (I. 370)

This threat might look forward to Cleopatra and the Duchess of Malfi,[15] but it is hardly the speech of a paragon of Christian patience. What is more, we have remarked that it is the latest scholarly view that the alterations to the last books in The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia were Sidney's own, or at least had his sanction, and although the scene in which the suicide debate occurs was one of those revised the course of the debate itself and Pyrocles' final attitude remained unaltered.

The revised Arcadia and the Old Arcadia move in contrary directions and the critic has no option but to keep the two works separate in his mind. The strength of each work derives largely from Sidney's moral probity and the insights which this provides, but the merits of neither work can be expressed exclusively in moral terms. Even at the level of plot it would seem fair to say that Sidney did not have the massive intelligence and discipline of a Milton or the singleness of intention of a Spenser that could sustain an unremitting moral purpose through a work of epic length. Particularly with the revised Arcadia where Sidney's ambitions are greater and where his penchant for emblematically heightened set-pieces is more apparent, we do not always feel, as we certainly do feel in the captivity episode, for example, that we are being carried forward on

the tide of a forward-reaching energy. Much of the richness of the work is a matter of wonderful scenes, and passages of great power and variety. Indeed the very multiplicity of effect helps Sidney to do justice to the multiple quality of human experience. But it is a defect of the work that at times there is a sense only of tedious accumulation, not unlike French knitting. This is particularly the case with the cross-threaded episodes of Book Two, however one may rationalize their relationship to the moral plot or attempt to explain them as a means of achieving epic breadth. It is also true that though Sidney makes short shrift in the Apology of moral philosophers who come "with a sullen gravity" (105:2), he himself does not always avoid the effect of a "sullen" didacticism. One of the main difficulties facing the critic of the Arcadias is that of doing justice to their variety and liveliness, and this is not to be done by glossing over their deficiencies or by suggesting that they are more of a piece than they are.

A work's liveliness is something far more than a matter of the submission of all its parts to a controlling principle of order, and works may succeed despite their failure to achieve a total coherence. One of the main sources of the feeling of imaginative enlargement which literature provides is the sense of being raised above our normal lives and liberated into a more abundant and more intense life. And one of the things that contributes to this sense of liveliness is the fact that the process of reading is one of continuous and excited discovery as the object before us itself seems to discover new facets and a new shape at every turn. This process of invigorating re-definition operates at every level in a work, from the often minute verbal surprises which Aristotle associated with the sense of wonder, through all the subtle and unexpected turns of the plot, to the radical reassessment of those ideas and values which provide the often unexamined principles of order in our mundane lives. It is not fortuitous that those characters in literature who live most intensely in the imagination are those who most stubbornly refuse to submit

to our ideas about them. Hamlet exits on the jangled agony of "To a nunnery, go!" and returns as a spokesman for grace and control:

> Speak the speech, I pray you ... trippingly upon the tongue.
> (III.ii. 1)

His stops are not to be sounded but their apparent discords create a mysterious and unpredictable harmony.

Chapter VI

THE ZODIAC OF THE WIT

We have just spoken of the way in which literature seems to liberate us into a more abundant and more intense life; or, in Sidney's terms, to deliver us into a golden world. At the most immediate level this power of poetry is obviously related to the use of a heightened style. Sidney talks admiringly of eloquence as a "honey-flowing matron" (138:7), and though he attempts to subordinate his passage on the golden world to the logic of his moral argument, his use of a metaphor from the intricate and decorative arts in the phrase "nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done ..." strengthens the inference that the golden quality he has in mind owes a great deal to sheer artifice: to what Spenser, or E.K., calls "the brightness of braue and glorious words" (Poetical Works, p.417), and Holofernes in Love's Labour's Lost, "the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poetry" (IV.ii.126).

The poem of Sidney's which he most assiduously re-worked and which found most favour among his contemporaries was 'What toong can her perfections tell', the song which Pyrocles "recalls" as he lifts Philoclea onto the bed in the Old Arcadia and which Zelmane "composes" in her fit of inspiration in the revised version.[1] Here artifice is almost an end in itself. For sheer verbal facility, grace reining in gusto, the song takes some matching. Limb by limb, feature by feature, Pyrocles moves through his witty blason of delights, making the convention outdo itself in a nice mixture of sensuality and humour:

> ... who those ruddie lippes can misse?
> Which blessed still themselves doo kisse ...

Which never part but that they showe
Of pretious pearle the double rowe,
The second sweetly-fenced warde,
Her heav'nly-dewed tongue to garde ...

So good a say invites the eye,
A little downward to espie,
The lovely clusters of her brests,
Of Venus' babe the wanton nests:
Like pomels round of Marble cleere:
Where azurde veines well mixt appeere ...

After straying amidst the "stately swelling bankes" of the thighs, Sidney recalls himself with mock gravity:

But back unto her back, my Muse,
Where Leda's swanne his feathers mewes,
Along whose ridge such bones are met,
Like comfits round in marchpane set ...

(Poems, p.85)

The poem is in truth a box "where sweets compacted lie", and it seems extraordinary that the two most recent, and in many ways the two best, books on Sidney's poetry do not *even mention it.*[2] It is a shame that we should take poetry so much more solemnly than the Elizabethans did when they had once set aside its formal defence. As Aristotle says, "the wonderful is pleasant",[3] especially when wonderfully expressed; and we should not need to be reminded that there are many kinds of perfection in art, and moods when one is not up to Milton or Michaelangelo - or, for that matter, moods in which Milton could write Arcades and Michaelangelo lavish his attention on the coiffure of teste divine.

Sidney talks of himself in the first of the Astrophel and Stella sonnets as setting *himself* to the task of praising Stella by "studying inventions fine, her wits to entertaine"(Poems, p.165); and when,at the end of

the sonnet, he upbraids himself for not looking in his heart to write he means that Stella's image which is seated there would be the most potent inspiration. But he still thinks of it as an inspiration to fine invention, and he is not advocating anything like self-expression in a romantic sense. Musiuorus laughs at the love-sick Pyrocles' rapturous description of Arcadia as a seat fit for a goddess, and teasing him gently says,

> I think you will make me see, that the vigor of your witte can shewe it selfe in any subject: or els you feede sometimes your solitarines with the conceites of the Poets, whose liberall pennes can as easilie travaile over mountaines, as molehils: and so like wel disposed men, set up every thing to the highest note.
>
> (1.58)

Setting up everything to the highest note in the golden liberality of fine inventions constitutes almost a definition of the courtly ideal for poetry, and it is noteworthy that one form which the development of the tradition takes is a movement from poems about swans to poems which are as likely to be about fleas as about swans.

Of course Sidney frequently insists that "colour" and artifice as ends in themselves are vulgar and corrupt. In the Arcadia he declares that the beauty of the false Andromanas is "truely not in nature to be misliked" but to be condemned for being "as much advanced to the eye, as abased to the judgement by arte". In the Apology he rails against that eloquence which is "apparelled, or rather disguised in a courtesan-like painted affection" (138:8). Again, he complains of his fellow poets that:

> they cast sugar and spice upon every dish that is served to the table; like those Indians, not content to wear ear-rings at the fit and natural place of the ears, but they will thrust jewels through their nose and lips, because they will be sure to be fine.
>
> (138:23)

Yet in condemning excessive artifice he acknowledges himself "sick among the rest" (140:1) and he has no doubt but that ears would benefit from ear-rings. Hazlitt turned what was almost Sidney's own image against him in complaining of the Arcadia that "his Muse is tattooed and tricked out like an Indian goddess".[4] Sidney's remark that he found his heart moved more than with a trumpet by the "old song of Percy and Douglas" is often remembered, and it well illustrates the way in which his spontaneous response to literature tended to run ahead of his more considered judgment, but the coda to that remark is equally revealing of his attitude towards artifice:

> Yet it is sung by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil apparelled in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?
> (118:26)

One of Sidney's complaints is against poets whose "figures and flowers" are extremely "winter-starved"(138:13), for it was considered a matter of decorum, and a great point of art "to enlarge and veer out all sail" (as Ben Jonson put it) when the matter required it.[5] Moreover, the principle of variety could be invoked to supplement the principle of decorum. Sidney praises a landscape because in its variety it approaches artfulness:

> Being diversified between hills and dales, woods and plaines, one place more cleere, and other more darksome, it seemes a pleasant picture of nature, with lovely lightsomenes and artificiall shadowes.
> (I.91)

And Jonson spells out the application that "as in a meadow, where, though the mere grass and greenness delights, yet the variety of flowers doth heighten and beautify" so in art "some words are to be culled out for ornament and

colour".[6] Rosemond Tuve has argued vigorously that in Elizabethan theorizing even "varying" and the pursuit of copiousness were held to be controlled by the judgment.[7] When faced, however, by the run of "courtly" miscellanies from Tottel, (1557), through The Paradise of daynty devises (1576) to England's Helicon (1600) and beyond,[8] one finds it difficult to see how anyone could deny that a leading motive among the writers represented was to exhibit mere inventive facility: to wear the garment of courtly style rather than to employ style as a garment.

"Artificial" was a term of highest praise in all the arts, and displays of virtuosity were encouraged, especially in works where the focus of critical discussion was technical rather than apologetic. George Puttenham, for example, in his Arte of English Poetrie, comes close to suggesting that mere virtuosity is an end in itself when he defends the construction of elaborate anagrams and those impreso of which Sidney was so fond by saying that they provide "conuenient solaces and recreations of mans wit".[9] Puttenham even takes a loving delight in naming the various geometrical figures which might be used by poets in determining the shape of their poems upon the page: "the Lozange called Rhombus, the Fuzie or spindle called Romboides ... the egge displayed". His names for the figures of ornament have also obviously been devised with a hobbyist's delight in gloating over and cataloguing his collection: prozeugma is "the Ringleader", ironia "the Drie mock", micterismus "the fleering frupe", clarietismus "the Privy nippe", Hiperbole "the Over reacher", epizeuxis "the Underlay, or Cooke-spel", and "the last and principall figure" simply "Exargasia or The Gorgious".[10]

The sixteenth-century English composer Thomas Morley, in his A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke which was published in 1597, only two years after Sidney's Apology, gives special praise in the writing of madrigals

to "strangenesse of the invention": he urges the writer of madrigals to "shew the verie uttermost of your varietie", because "the more varietie you shew the better you shall please". Again, having described the practice in which a musician "taketh a point at his pleasure, and wresteth and turneth it as he list, making either much or little of it according as shall seem best in his own conceit", he praises this process of elaboration because more art may be shown in it "than in any other music, because the composer is tied to nothing but that he may add, diminish, and alter at his pleasure". In fact the composer of madrigals was tied to disposing his music "according to the nature of the words",[11] but that does not really alter the case; and Morley's own main contribution to the English madrigal was not so much realism in setting as a quality of lightness, which was in Bruce Pattison's judgment "just what English music most lacked".[12] It is significant that Sidney should allow Pamela to use music as an example of something delightful to the ear but "without any further consequence" (I. 403).

In the fine arts too one finds at this time, at a European level, an almost ubiquitous pleasure in, and veneration of, virtuosity as a sufficient end. Sidney, in the Apology, praises Francis I of France as an outstanding patron of poetry, and it was for Francis that Benvenuto Cellini fashioned his famous 'Salt Cellar', with its intricate design and provocatively elongated nudes. Benvenuto's salt cellar could be used - indeed he is reported to have used it at one of his own dinner parties - but it is this period that sees the emergence of the work of art that serves no ulterior purpose. In his Autobiography Benvenuto strikes a note which has almost the force of a rallying call when, at the end of his long and lovingly detailed account of the uncovering of his Perseus cast, he says of the operation with characteristic vanity that it was "something no one else had ever done before".[13]

Benvenuto's admirer and Sidney's contemporary Giovanni da Bologna was to develop such *challenging* sculptural forms as the figura serpentinata to the point where, as in his 'Mercury', the exquisite rhythmical turns of the body achieve the effortless fluidity of a rising flame; and under the aegis of Francis the artists of the School of Fontainebleau developed *mannerism* to an equally high peak of stylishness.[14]

English art, by contrast, was extremely conservative and even old fashioned. Shakespeare refers in Cymbeline to a chimney-piece with "chaste Diana bathing" in which the "cutter" outdid nature (II.iv.81), but as John Buxton wittily observes,

> Nudes, it may be noted in passing, were not to the English taste: Medieval classicism had not yet divested our furred and farthingaled shapes, and the nude figures that we sometimes see carved by Elizabethan fireplaces look as if they had gone there to keep warm.[15]

Nevertheless, as regards Elizabethan architectural ornament it is certainly possible to talk of mannerist effects in the fashionable displays of ingenuity and preciosity in the construction of secondary features such as the fireplace, staircase or waterwork - a fictional example of the last being the complicated affair with rainbow, singing birds and turntable which diverted the company in Arcadia during the first banquet for Zelmane. The fashion for elaborate chimney tops attracted the mockery of John Hall who described them as "the wind-pipes of good fellowship";[16] and Sidney - in one of his more austere moods - seems to have had just such features in mind in his comment that the "lightes, doores and staires" of Kalendar's house were not "slubberd up with good fellowshippe". Even a house such as Kalendar's, however, was liable to find itself on the itinerary for the Royal

Progress which took place every summer, with the Queen and Court being entertained in turn by a succession of favoured nobles; and for these *progresses the most elaborate shows* and tableaux vivants were arranged in which effects of strangeness and virtuosity were most prized.[17]

Perhaps the closest England came to matching the ingenuities of mannerist sculpture was in verbal "sculpting", like that in Marlowe's description of Hero:

> Her veil was artificial flowers and leaves,
> Whose workmanship both man and beast deceives.
> Many would praise the sweet smell as she passed,
> When 'twas the odour which her breath forth cast;
> And there for honey bees have sought in vai
> And, beat from thence, have lighted there a. in.
> About her neck hung chains of pebble-stone,
> Which, lightened by her neck, like diamonds shone.
> She ware no gloves, for neither sun nor wind
> Would burn or parch her hands, but to her mind
> Or warm or cool them, for they took delight
> To play upon *these hands*, they were so white.
> Buskins of shells all silvered used she,
> And branched with blushing coral to the knee,
> Where sparrows perched, of hollow pearl and gold,
> Such as the world would wonder to behold:
> Those with sweet water oft her handmaid fills,
> Which, as she went, would chirrup through the bills.
>
> [18]

In Hero nature and art go hand in hand to deliver a self-consciously extravagant masterwork. The conception is as playful as it is resplendent, for only an audacious gaiety could have imaged Hero as a perambulating sprinkler with musical accompaniment and conscientiously provided refills. The chirruping climax comes very near to exploding in a snort of laughter, but the wit, by insisting on the precise details of the device, down to the sweetness of the water that feeds it, recalls one to the accomplishment and ardour of the performance. Just as Hero's beauty transfigures the the artifice which sets it off so Marlowe's vigour lifts the performance beyond either parody or vulgarity. As with a

piece of mannerist sculpture, one cannot help catching one's breath with admiration: one is content to see in Hero a strange and miraculous deliverance, "such as the world would wonder to behold".

The Zodiac which attracts man's erected wit can indeed be lit up with more than the burnishing of a moral idealism. What we might not unfairly call sixteenth-century aestheticism comprehended the exuberant love of gallantry and gorgeousness, the pleasure in fecund invention and difficulty overcome, and the idealisation of the strange and wonderful - all these contributing to that liberating exhilaration which comes from the spectacle of the mind disporting itself, and surpassing itself, in sheer performance.

In a defence of the high seriousness of poetry, written in a country which a generation earlier had seen poetry defended on the sternest pragmatic grounds, Sidney could hardly have made this sort of point even if he had desired to. But the man who wrote 'What toong can her perfections tell', and who was excited by the spectacle of sails being made to catch the wind in order to run away with it in the sheer liberality of speed was clearly not incapable of appreciating artistic delight in and for itself.

When, however, the burden of a formal defence was not upon a writer, virtuosity and the cultivation of pleasurable effects could be justified by reference to the most respected classical authorities. Quintilian, for example, had argued that,

> the critic who disapproved of the figure /of the Discobolos of Myron/ because it was not upright would merely show his utter failure to understand the sculptor's art, in which the very novelty and difficulty of execution is what most deserves our praise. A similar impression of grace and charm is produced by rhetorical figures, whether they be figures of though or figures of speech. For they involve a certain departure from the straight line and have the merit of a variation from ordinary usage.
> 19

Such a comment is a direct extension of Aristotle's claim that the unfamiliar is a source of wonder. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that by the time of Quintilian Aristotle's notion of style as inducing wonder by its strangeness has been reduced to the idea of it as producing an impression of grace and charm, an idea which is in this passage further related to the choice of novel and difficult subjects. Inherent in the whole rhetorical tradition as it impinges on poetry is the idea that pleasurable response to a work of art is called for, and that this is largely a matter of the appreciation of its stylistic qualities. But just as the insistence on strangeness could encourage the choice of more and more teasing subjects and forms in relation to which ever greater virtuosity could be shown, so the insistence on grace and charm could encourage the choice of a comparatively restricted range of subjects and moods which particularly lent themselves to pleasurable effects.

Virtuosity and graceful and charming effects are of course not in themselves "to be misliked". In the English art of Sidney's time the form which demanded greatest virtuosity was probably the miniature. The techniques of this form, deriving as they did from the art of the medieval goldsmith-illuminators, encouraged a highly decorative quality and demanded the greatest sureness of touch. The best-known and most graceful miniature of the period is the 'Young Man with Cloak and Roses' of about 1588 by Nicholas Hilliard, who is incidentally known to have had at least one discussion with Sidney on the technicalities of art.[20] The motto on this miniature makes clear its courtly and literary affiliations - Dat poenas laudata fides: 'Praised constancy requites one with punishment' - and the six inch high oval depicts a dandified lover, straight from any of the sonnet sequences, leaning pensively yet stylishly with hand on heart against a tree. What strikes one immediately is the intricate care that has gone into the design and into the decorative

effects. The shape of the quilted panels of the doublet, for example, is repeated both in the rough bark of the tree and in the grouping of the leaves of the trailing briars, whose thorns in turn match the decorative stitching of the panels, and whose flowers complement the buttons down the doublet. Here truly, with golden elegance, one may see "the fancy outwork nature".

Yet what is most impressive is that for all the decorativeness the effect is wonderfully natural and relaxed. The foliage, and hint of a clouded blue sky delicately evoke a sense of dewy freshness; and the young man, for all the languid affectation of his pose, conveys an impression of virility and manliness both by the bloom of his body and in the assurance with which he carries his magnificent clothes. Hilliard, in his Art of Limning, recommended that the miniature painter should aim especially at catching those "lovely graces, wittye smilings and thesse stolne glances which suddenly like lightning pass",[21] and there could be no more startling contrast than that between the patriotic pomp and impersonal public quality of so many Elizabethan oil-paintings and the lively intimacy of his own exquisite miniatures.[22]

It is only the exclusive pursuit of virtuosity or sweetness that is limiting and suggests decadence. Here the classical statement is Dr Johnson's verdict that Cowley had lost the "grandeur of generality". For Dr Johnson generality implied the generality of the human condition, and his charge is essentially one against the triviality of all forms which would seem to aim no higher than cleverness and delight. "What is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculousness",[23] he declares, making quite clear the limitations of an art which offers no more than the titillations of form and of fancy.

What we have called sixteenth-century aestheticism was clearly a courtly phenomenon, and to speak of the

courtly ideal is to acknowledge how profoundly the idea of poetry as a refined species of play was the reflection of a social ideal which found expression in almost all the cultural forms of the age. We noticed earlier that one of the deepest Renaissance aspirations was the desire to *embody a dream* of comeliness and ease in every social ritual and artistic form, but it is quite apparent that the nonchalance, or *sprezzatura*, which was expected to make all achievement seem effortless and natural was essentially an artistocratic conception. The labourer works to achieve his ends, the aristocrat merely enriches his leisure with such graceful accomplishments that the perfection and plenitude of the Golden Age would seem to have been regained. The idea that culture itself, in Huizinga's words, "bears the character of play"[24] is one of our most important inheritances from the Renaissance. Yet precisely the idea of culture in this sense is now most strongly challenged by the sociological insistence on the variety of cultures. Actions performed with *sprezzatura* are actions meant to be seen and admired, and Northrop Frye has pithily characterised the ubiquitous tendency to confident display as this reveals itself in the art forms of the sixteenth century by saying that the "high mimetic" mode of the Renaissance is full of "the idea of cynosure or centripetal gaze".[25] As such, this mode can readily be seen by the champions of cultural relativism as merely the self-justifying product of an aristocratic society rapidly *becoming* anachronistic and intent on bolstering up its image in its own and in everybody else's eyes.

This way of looking at things throws a great deal of light on specific cultural forms. The development of the courtly masque, for example, can justly be understood as a precarious attempt to uphold the fiction of a vital courtly life whose lineaments were still glowing with *magnificence*: the climax of the masque was the moment when the courtly audience joined the masquers in the concluding

dance, and when, or so it was hoped, spectacle achieved its true end in an all-embracing wonder.[26] The Arcadia, too, is clearly the product of a Great House ethos,[27] and it reflects contemporary social pressures particularly in Sidney's awareness that courtesy and ceremony are threatened from without. When Elizabeth lectured Sidney on the importance of degree and respect after his rudeness to Lord Vere in the tennis court affair, she stressed that "the gentleman's neglect of the nobility taught the peasant to insult upon both";[28] and one of the most revealing passages in the Arcadia is that describing how Zelmane, Dorus and Basilius encounter the rebellious mob:

> A butcher, a butcherlie chuffe indeed ... lifted up a great leaver, calling Zelmane all the vile names of a butcherlye eloquence. But she (letting slippe the blowe of the leaver) hitte him so surely on the side of his face, that she lefte nothing but the nether jawe, where the tongue still wagged, as willing to say more, if his masters remembrance had served. O (said a miller that was halfe dronke) see the lucke of a good fellow, and with that word, ran with a pitchforke at Dorus: but the nimblenes of the wine carried his head so fast, that it mad it overrunne his feet, so that he fell withall, just betweene the legs of Dorus: who setting his foote on his neck (though he offered two milche kine, and foure fatte hogs for his life) thrust his sword quite through, from one eare to the other; which toke it very unkindlie, to feele such newes before they heard of them, in stead of hearing, to be put to such feeling.
>
> (I. 312)

The wine-besotten mob, spurred on only by envious hatred, run to meet their just reward. Yet at the same time a sense of relish in the description of the carnage suggests the released malice of the aristocrat who resents the fact that his ideals of comeliness and ceremony are at the stake in a society of "butcherly chuffes".[29]

Similarly the nostalgic colouring of the romance in the Arcadia can be related to the fact that in Sidney's society the gentlemanly knight was rapidly giving place to the civil servant. The majority of the nobility had become

a more or less decorative feature at court, and chivalrous behaviour, though Sidney managed to realize it in his own life, was becoming the subject of text-books on manners for the newly dominant. There must have been, at the best, something truly splendid about the festive life at court, as Spenser's 'Prothalamion' and Donne's epithalamion for Somerset suggest. But Spenser describes a court life in 'Colin Clout Comes Home Again' in which,

> Each one seeks with malice and with strife,
> To thrust downe other into foule disgrace,
> Himselfe to raise: and he doth soonest rise
> That best can handle his deceitfull wit ...
>
> (Poetical Works, p.543, ll. 690 f.)

Spenser was not an unbiased witness, and Sidney, in so many ways the darling of his age, might seem to have been above such considerations. But even he suffered real frustrations. He was greatly praised by his friends for the way in which he handled his embassage to the Emperor and to the Prince of Orange in 1577, but the Queen was opposed to the aggressive policy of Leicester and of Walsingham who were behind Sidney's efforts to form a Protestant League and she felt that he had exceeded his brief. Her intention was to play a waiting game and to avoid open enmity with Spain, and because of Sidney's militancy she did not give the ambitious young man any further official employment for another eight years. At the same time she stopped him from undertaking a proposed voyage around the world. Leisure to write the Arcadia was not full consolation for a man whose idea of the courtier's duties was so much more earnest than that of Castiglione or of most of his contemporaries.[30]

Sidney had difficulties other than lack of official employment. The Queen was furious at his marriage to Frances Walsingham, and she could hardly have been pleased when in 1578 he sent her his carefully argued letter

dissuading her from marrying the Duke of Anjou, whatever her personal motives were in this affair. Significantly enough it was partially by the gift of a whip encrusted with jewels and signifying his total submission that Sidney mollified the Queen, who subsequently agreed to act as godmother for his daughter. Most important of all, Sidney was heavily in debt, and though a man of greater integrity than most of the courtiers he too was forced to peddle for influence. He is remembered for having expressed distaste at the idea of taking money obtained from preying on his Catholic fellow-countrymen, but Brutus-like he accepted the money all the same. As he once wrote of his activity at court, "Need ob[illegible] no law and forgets blushing"[31]. The irony of Sidney's position is neatly brought out by the fact that he was given his knighthood only because Casimir of the Palatine named him as his proxy at the ceremony in which he was to be invested as a Knight of the Garter, and only a person with at least the rank of knight was allowed to stand proxy.

Thus even Sidney had good personal reasons to yearn nostalgically for the Golden Age of chivalry, and this helps to explain the deep pockets of romantic nostalgia in the Arcadia. Scenes such as the trial of arms between Amphialus and Phalantus are glamorously conceived. Phalantus sends a formal challenge announcing the purity of his intentions and a combat is arranged, complete with heralds, trumpets, squires and judges. The charges are described in a hieratic, almost ritualistic manner:

> Together they set spurres to their horses,
> together took their launces from their thighes,
> conveied them up into their restes together,
> together let them sinke downward ...
>
> (I. 416)

When Phalantus is finally struck down by a cruel blow on the knee Amphialus pities his valour and spares his life: for he will have no ransom but the word of friendship, and he sends Phalantus off to seek his adventures elsewhere. One of the best known passages in the Arcadia is that which describes the furnishings of Phalantus's horse. The horse was

> milk white, but that upon his shoulder and withers, he was fretned with red staines, as when a few strawberries are scattered into a dish of creame. He had caused his mane and taile to be died in carnation: his reines were vine branches, which ingendring one with the other, at the end, when it came to the bitte, there, for the bosse, brought foorth a cluster of grapes, by the workeman made so lively, that it seemed, as the horse champed on his bitte, he chopped for them, and that it did make his mouth water, to see the grapes so neere him. His furniture behind was of vines, so artificially made, as it semed the horse stood in the shadow of the vine, so pretily were clusters of rubie grapes dispersed among the trappers which embraced his sides.
>
> (I. 415)

Despite the humour and the precision of a word like "fretned", so deftly descriptive of contour, the effect is of a dainty exquisiteness. To guage fully the idealized effect of the passage we should put it next to a passage such as the description of Gawain arming himself and his horse before going out to encounter the Green Knight:

> Bi þat watȝ Gryngolet grayth, and gurde with a sadel
> Þat glemed ful gayly with mony golde frenges,
> Ayquere naylet ful niwe: for þat note ryched;
> Þe brydel barred aboute, with bryȝt golde bounden;
> Þe apparayl of þe payttrure and of þe proude skyrteȝ,
> Þe cropore and þe couertor, acorded wyth þe arsouneȝ;
> And al watȝ rayled on red ryche golde nayleȝ,
> Þat al glytered and glent as glem of þe sunne.
>
> 32

These lines are also highly wrought, but the whole aura is different. The Gawain-poet's involvement in the technicalities of breast-trappings, caparison, crupper, coverture, and saddle-bows is that of the initiate who knows about armour as intimately as he knows about the unlacing of a kill. Moreover, the whole passage has a directly symbolic function. The poet has previously established the idea of the approach of winter and death in a magnificent passage -

> ...And wynter wyndeȝ ageyn, as þe worlde askeȝ - [33]

and he now takes great pains to show Gawain girding himself in the colours and blazonry of magnificence before setting out honourably to meet his death. Arming himself gorgeously for death is not a mere gesture but a ceremonial dedication sanctioned by the whole culture of chivalry. The assurance and dignity of the passage is a clear contrast to the delicate fragility of Sidney's description.

Phalantus's trappings and impresa, by contrast with Gawain's accoutrements, derive directly from the Accession Day Tilts held in honour of the Queen. Here the courtiers, Sidney prominent among them, displayed and disported themselves with all the elaborate pageantry of knights of romance. Frances Yates has written of these Tilts:

> The passion for the trappings of chivalry in court spectacle and pageantry was, of course, by no means peculiar to England in the sixteenth century. Something like an imaginative re-feudalization of culture was going on all over Europe, witness the Orlando furioso ... In France and England, this phenomenon had something to do with the rise of the national monarchies which used the apparatus of chivalry and its religious traditions to focus fervent religious loyalty on the national monarch. [34]

The Tilts were in part an expression of Protestant and patriotic fervour as Yates says, in part a substitute for saints' days and other expunged festivals, in part simply an excuse for the elite to show off their manliness before the ladies as they do today in polo matches: but they were also, in a profound sense, an expression of nostalgia for a more magnificent and what seemed a more opportunity-laden past.

Such nostalgia expresses itself at different times in quite different forms. The twentieth century may invest the Wild West rather than the Tournament and the Quest with a totem-like significance, but the spirit of the yearning to which the totem answers is radically the same. Within our culture at least it seems reasonable to assume a continuity of essential human values and emotions, and to feel that sociological "explanations" of these are only partiall, illuminating.

The point may be extended in terms of another example. To an age like ours, still somewhat conditioned by Bauhaus attitudes towards style and value, it might seem that just as the Elizabethan taste for aristocratic display encouraged excessive junketing which issued in an almost universal rumbling and belching, so the taste for extravagance and display in art reflected merely the greed and materialism of a privileged group for whom "conspicuous expenditure" had become possible on a scale undreamed of before.[35] Even Ben Jonson's description of Penshurst, as Raymond Williams has pointed out, provides a vision of plenitude that centres on the dining-table and that has a dimension of social compliment.[36] But this sort of insistence is inhibiting and reductive. The lavishness of an Antony is not to be explained away. Consider just one of those unforgettable images which Shakespeare strikes off, apparently at will, to define him in his essential magnanimity:

> ... his delights
> Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above
> The element they liv'd in ...
> (V. ii. 88)

An extravagant and declarative action is evoked - the powerful and graceful leap of a dolphin - but for all the *suggestiveness of the image* it has no blurred edges: the respect in which Antony's vitality retained its own unique identity even in the enjoyment of those erotic pleasures in which men may seem to be most alike is precisely defined in relation to the way in which dolphins most joyfully command *their element* in the act of leaping out of it. In consequence the image achieves not only a sense of great vigour but also a sense of lapidary authority. And something of the iconic power of the image seems to invest the memory of Antony with a vigorous and self-sufficient life that asks no sanction. Cleopatra's words seem definitive, one might almost say creative, of a perpetual human possibility: as she herself goes on to say, it is as if

> ... t' imagine
> An Antony were nature's piece gainst fancy,
> Condemning shadows quite.
> (V. ii. 98)

This is not to deny that Shakespeare has rendered Antony's mismanagement of his public affairs with an equally vigorous and self-sufficient life, nor is it to deny the grief which suffuses Cleopatra's whole speech. The Shakespeare who had written the sonnets understood only too well the consequences of "infatuation", and he knew too that "bounty, that makes gods, does still mar men" (Timon of Athens, IV.ii.41). The point is, in the first instance, that *the life* of the dolphin image is a life in the poetry and this can never be explained away in any extraneous terms.

But there is a further point to be made which will allow us to leave the consideration of cultural relativism and which will return us squarely to our main argument. Shakespeare's presentation of Antony as a "mine of bounty" (IV.vi.32) evokes, among other responses, a response to lavishness, in itself, and as a value beyond the rational or moral estimate of the eye of Rome. To recognise that Cleopatra and Sir Epicure Mammon share an admiration for lavishness, and that this admiration is very much a quality of the age that saw them created for the stage, is not to make a discovery about the roots of sixteenth-century greed and affectation, but to realise that the point at which the greatest greed and affectation move over into the deepest aspiration and the most acute sense of decorum is impossible to define. It is also to recognise that the decorum of superfluities is not necessarily a facile, or a deceptive, or an amoral thing. All the dangers of a Comus-like luxuriousness and pride may lurk in the assertion

> Beauty is nature's brag and must be shown
> In courts, at feasts, and high solemnites
> Where most may wonder at its workmanship ...
> 37

but man has a real need in any age for superfluities, as Lear testifies when he cries in anguish:

> Allow not nature more than nature needs,
> Man's life is cheap as beast's.
> (II.iv.269)

The respect for superfluity has a most profound cultural sanction.

No one has expressed this idea more forcibly than Yeats in his essay 'Poetry and Tradition'. He singles out the "style" that art achieves by its very excess and playfulness, and he finds this evinced particularly

> in that touch of extravagance, of irony, of surprise, which is set there after the desire of logic has been satisfied and all that is merely necessary established, and that leaves one, not in the circling necessity, but caught up into the freedom of self-delight: it is, as it were, the foam upon the cup, the long pheasant's feather on the horse's head, the spread peacock over the pasty.
> 38

For Yeats, the achievement of style serves as a complete poetics: and more than this, he sees in the achievement of style man's only hope of freedom. "Only when we are gay over a thing, and can play with it", he declares, "do we show ourselves its master, and have minds clear enough for strength". Civilizations may be put to the sword, and King Billy pitch his bomb-balls in, but in the gaiety of art is created a joy and a sorrow which are "irreverent" and "unserviceable", but a strength and wisdom "to world end".[39]

No such radical a defence of the mind's ability to range freely in the zodiac of the erected wit is to be expected of Renaissance poetics, yet Puttenham is one critic who does grope towards a profound defence of pleasure. We have noticed him talking of effects of virtuosity as providing "conuenient solaces and recreations of man's wit", but in a number of places he goes substantially beyond the idea of recreation as valuable in itself and because of the solace it provides to argue for more deeply-rooted sanctions. His arguments throw more narrowly hedonistic view into relief. He refuses, for example, to accept Cicero's condemnation of dancing:

> But there by you leaue he failed, nor our young Courtiers will allow it, besides that it is the most decent and comely demeanour of all exultations and reioycements of the hart, which is no lesse naturall to man then to be wise or well learned, or sober.
> (The Arte of English Poesie, p.292)

Here, in relation to dancing, he echoes what had been the characteristic medieval justification of poetry as "honest mirth". But his main point is not simply that such occupations as dancing provide a harmless diversion, nor is he conceding that the force of contemporary courtly attitudes is such that it would be folly to try to stop the practice. He is rather insisting that it would be wrong for men to stunt their natures by limiting the range of the feelings they allow themselves. The insistence that delight is as natural to man as any other emotion is even more strongly expressed in a passage in which he defends "reioysings" in poetry:

> Pleasure is the chiefe parte of mans felicity in this world, and also (as our Theologians say) in the world to come. Therefore while we may (yet alwaies if it coulde be) to reioyce and take our pleasures in vertuous and honest sort, it is not only allowable but also necessary and very naturall to man. And many be the ioyes and consolations of the hart: but none greater, than such as he may vtter and discouer by some conuenient meanes: euen as to suppresse and hide a mans mirth, and not to have therein a partaker, or at least wise a witnes, is no little griefe and infelicity. Therefore nature and ciuility haue ordained (besides the priuate solaces) publike reioysings for the comfort and recreation of many.
>
> (The Arte of English Poesie, p.45)

The psalms urge us to make a joyful noise unto the Lord, but Puttenham is content to take his stand simply on the naturalness to man of the instinct to celebrate life and living. By comparison with this view, the few other sixteenth-century critics who defend pleasure as a proper and sufficient end of art reveal themselves as standing on an extremely shallow base: Castelvetro's famous assertion, for example, that "poetry has been discovered solely to delight and to recreate" (Gilbert, p.307), is used to further a somewhat dubious argument that poetry should

rightly aim only at the capacities of the ignorant man.

But Puttenham's views, however generous and liberal in looking towards an idea of art as celebration, do not see the pleasure which art provides as in any sense intrinsic to it and of a special kind. Moreover, they have relevance only to certain kinds of art and to certain kinds of subject matter.

Sixteenth-century criticism was, however, as we have already begun to see in relation to Sidney's views on feigning, beginning to grope towards the idea that literature has qualities even more intrinsic to it than the pleasurable gratification provided by a consummate or gratifying performance, and praised as virtuosity or grace. Sheer skill is, after all, something which can be admired not only in art but in a wide range of human activities, and sweetness and charm are not the prerogative of the arts.

One of the two Italian literary critics whom Sidney mentions in the Apology along with Francis I as eminent "patrons" of poetry is Girolamo Fracastoro who had studied and worked at Padua, the town at which Sidney himself studied for several months in 1574. Fracastoro's treatise, Naugerius, sive de poetica dialogus, was published, after his death, in 1557; so it was not impossible, particularly in the light of Sidney's reference to Fracastoro, for him to have absorbed its arguments. The importance of this dialogue, as far as we are concerned, lies in the clarity with which it goes beyond the defence of aesthetic pleasure and virtuosity to the explicit insistence that poetic making is an end and an activity in its own right and of its own kind. The dialogue begins with the proposition that "every function of the poet seems to be comprehended by delight", but it rejects this hedonistic view as completely unsatisfactory because it would seem ultimately to trivialize poetry and to make the poet "an inconsiderable man".[40]

The opposite view, that the poet's proper end is to teach, is then canvassed at some length. Fracastoro makes

Naugerius bring this phase of the dialogue to an end by arguing that such a view must be rejected, "since no special mark is given by it to the poet"; unless, that is, that he is thought of as teaching "in a different way from the others" (Kelso, p.372). From this point on the dialogue grapples with issues that are central in Sidney's own attempt to set the poet above the historian and the philosopher. A position similar to Sidney's claim that the poet alone moves the reader by his perfect pattern is reached when Bardulone is made to quote Pontano to the effect that what differentiates the poet is first, that he speaks "so as to arouse wonder concerning everything he touches", and secondly, that he "does not wish to represent this or that particular man as he is with many defects but ... having contemplated the universal and supremely beautiful idea of his creator, makes things as they ought to be". Naugerius is almost happy with this account, but he makes one final reservation: this "making" must be thought of as an end in itself. The poet, he declares, being "inspired by no other aim than simply to express himself well about everything that proposes itself to him", treats every subject "not according to what is useful, but according to his own desire" (Kelso, p. 396). With these qualifications Naugerius effectively excludes any moral considerations from the proposition that the poet makes things as they "ought to be", his "ought" refers rather to that quality of beauty which is not merely added on a subject, but the consequence of expressing the essential quality of something with complete appropriateness, and in all its perfection, making of it a self-sufficient icon.

This notion is given its classical Renaissance statement by Jacopo Mazzoni in his Della difesa della Comedia di Dante where he calls the poetic image or representation an "idol", and argues that "the idol is that which has no other use in respect to itself than to represent and resemble".[41] For Mazzoni the idol is particularly the creation of that phantastike imitation which Sidney tried to rule out of court,

but which he let into his golden world at the back door with the cyclops and chimeras. Mazzoni, however, sees the "credible marvelous" as the proper subject of poetry, and though his whole defence of poetry is an extremely subtle and comprehensive one, his consideration of the poet's making is ultimately such as to encourage a preoccupation with marvels and a disregard of eikastike imitation. Following the logic of his recommendation of the credible marvelous, he goes on to assert that,

> If there were set before the poet two things equally credible, one of which was more marvelous than the other, though it were false, so long as it was not impossible, the poet ought to take it over and give up the less marvelous one.
>
> (Gilbert, p. 371)

In its own way this view is as likely to encourage poetry towards a limited range of exotic subjects as the rhetorical recommendation of strangeness.

Writers such as Sidney, Fracastoro and Mazzoni come close to each other in the common enthusiasm with which they speak of the poet's power of making, but as our brief comments on Mazzoni's views indicate there are significant differences of emphasis. Fracastoro, for his part, declares that it is given to poets alone to invent, for if subjects

> lack beauty and greatness, or, if they would turn out greater and more charming by some additions, certainly beauties should be added. So the poets personify many things and give many a divinity, and venerate woods and fountains, and make gods mingle with men, because by so doing they add sublimity and wonder to discourse.
>
> (Kelso, p.66)

This is very close in feeling to Sidney's remark that the poets make things "better than nature bringeth forth"; but, though Fracastoro is here thinking of the way the poets treat their subject, he cites his examples to illustrate

an idea of beautification which still has its focus in "discourse" or expression rather than in feigning. He is thinking of the poet's use of mythology as a device for achieving a sense of sublimity, not of the poet as making a self-substantial world. Sidney goes beyond Fracastoro in thinking of the poet not as beautifying but as "delivering".

The force of Sidney's "golden world" image is such as to imply that the poet's additions and inventions - all the variety of things from chimeras to sweet-smelling flowers which his feigning bodies forth - finally add up to something fully realized and all of a piece, a world like nature's, but of the poet's own unique making, a "second nature" or "zodiac of the wit" in which every object has "a local habitation and a name". A similar impression is given when Sidney introduces his contrast between poetry and all other forms of learning by using an image of the theatre. All other modes of learning, he says, depend upon Nature, and are "actors and players, as it were, of what Nature will have set forth". But nobody stands in the wings to prompt the poet. Just as Nature is the producer of the "essential" world of sense, so the poet is the sole producer of the world of his poem.

Sidney's passage on the golden world would seem to have been derived from Scaliger who had written:

> The poet makes another nature and other outcomes for men's deeds, and finally in the same way makes himself another God, as it were. The other sciences are as it were users of what the maker of them all produced; but poetry, when it so splendidly gives the appearance of the things that are and of those that are not, seems not to narrate the like events, as others, like the historian, do, but as a God to produce them.
> 42

Scaliger, in talking of the other nature produced by the poets, probably had in mind no more than the familiar idea - alluded to by Sidney in a passage of the Apology - that

the poet or painter selects the best elements from different objects and combines these into an ideal image. Scaliger subsequently praises Virgil for doing just this in such a manner that he would seem "not to have learned from nature, but to have vied with her, or rather to have created laws for her to obey".[43] But the metaphorical force of Sidney's passage is, as we have argued, such as to imply more than this. Sidney would seem to be approaching from a different direction a proposition which Tasso was soon to argue specifically in relation to the romantic epic as a legitimate form. Tasso was a good Aristotelian convinced that a work should have unity of action, but he was also a great admirer of Ariosto's sprawling masterpiece, Orlando furioso, and he wished to emulate its vastness in his own intended romance. He thus tried to define the form proper for romance by an analogy with God's masterpiece, the world, in which the most amazing variety of things are knit together with a kind of "discordant harmony", and in which nothing is either superfluous or unnecessary. On this basis Tasso argued that,

> The sublime poet (called divine for no other reason than that he models himself in his works on the supreme artificer and arrives at sharing thus his divinity) can indeed shape a poem in which ... a variety of substance should nevertheless be one.[44]

Here, as in Sidney, the idea of a heightened or idealised representation is giving way to the idea of the creation of a second nature, or copious other world.

This idea represents a most significant extension of the attempt to define the speciality of the poet's activity of making, and it is more suggestive in Sidney's context than in Tasso's, for the latter is using the idea to justify a particular type of form rather than setting

it up as the characteristic activity of the poet. It is presumably for this reason that M. H. Abrams singled out Sidney's golden world passage rather than anything that Tasso wrote as significantly foreshadowing the modern idea of the poem as heterocosm, "an object in itself, a self-contained universe of discourse".[45]

The idea of a poem as heterocosm has been particularly fruitful in later criticism and it has flourished most recently in the work of the contextualists or New Critics. More radically than the idea of imitation which it displaces, it has provided a means of thinking of the speciality of art as a matter of a work's structure and mode of being. In itself a heterocosm merely is, it exists as a self-sufficient creation; and the imagination can be thought of as being "released" into this world of art to find its own unique enlargement.

In seeing Sidney as groping towards some such apprehension, not so much as a result of self-conscious argument but, as it were, intuitively, one can anticipate the objection that this notion is a retrospective projection from an age accustomed to think of literature - to use Wallace Stevens's terms - as providing "supreme fictions" to compensate for its "poverty".[46] But there is a simple sense in which literature has always recognized something very close to the idea of a heterocosm: forms such as pastoral and romance have traditionally set out to create precisely 'an other world'. Consider the terms in which Harry Berger sums up the quality of the poet's second world:

> [It is] the playground, laboratory, theater or battlefield of the mind, a model or construct which the mind creates, a time or place which it clears, in order to withdraw from the natural environment.[47]

These words could almost stand as a definition of pastoral or romance as the Renaissance understood these forms.

Marlowe's passionate shepherd was neither a shepherd nor passionate, but the mouthpiece of a sophisticated and witty poet deliberately figuring forth, (in Marvell's words)

> Far other worlds, and other seas;
> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green thought in a green shade.
>
> (The Garden)

At an immediate and practical, if not at a theoretical level, Renaissance writers reveal themselves as intensely and intelligently self-conscious about the status of the fictions which they create. This is particularly apparent in Shakespeare's preoccupation with the idea of the play,[48] or in his anatomy of dreams and dreaming in A Midsummer Night's Dream, or in that deliberate movement into and back from a "green world" (such as the forest of Arden or the island of Prospero) set within the "second world" of the play which Northrop Frye has seen as providing a "natural perspective" in Shakespeare's comedies and romances; a movement which is taken a stage further when Puck or Prospero steps out of the play in the Epilogue and ushers the audience back into the mundane world of their own responsibilities.

Cervantes, likewise, in Don Quixote achieves a pitch of self-consciousness about the nature and status of fiction and of feigning that has rarely been equalled. In scenes such as that in which the knight kneeling before the "enchanted" Dulcinea is seen to be kneeling before a country slut on a jackass who objects to being made the sport of the "small gentry", and who jumps onto her packsaddle by vaulting over the crupper like a jockey, the parody works in a conventional way by deliberately breaking the "other world" frame and insisting on importing those irreconcilables which a romantic convention implicitly controls or excludes.[49] But in the second part of the work Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are presented not only as fictional characters

about whom we are reading, but as characters who know themselves to be characters that the other characters have read about in a book. A brief vignette will suggest some of the awarenesses that Cervantes is toying with. The mocking Bachelor, Sampson Carrasco, tells the Don that he wishes,

> the Author had spar'd himself the Pains of registering some of the infinite Number of Drubs which the Noble Don Quixote receiv'd.

At which Sancho butts in:

> There lies the Truth of the History.
> 50

The range of the ironies in this interjection depends upon a dazzling self-consciousness on Cervantes' part as regards the status of the "history" which he is presenting and its relation to life. On the simplest level, "the History" means for Sancho Panza 'what actually happened'. Hence his comment reflects both a wry remembrance of the drubs that he himself received, and a realization, in which shrewdness and loyalty play a part, and which makes his comment something of a retort, that the Don's questing had a quality of dedication and dignity out of reach of the mockery of Sampson Carrasco. But for Sancho "the History" now also relates to the book which was written about what actually happened. At this level the remark reflects his pride at being a character whose memory has been accurately enshrined in a fiction. But this witty by-play operates to make the reader self-consciously aware of his own allegiance to the world of the work in which he is immersed. Sancho's comment encourages the reader to feel that the fiction which he is reading goes beyond parody in that it transforms the very "drubs" which are at one level a parodic device into a defining quality of Don Quixote's "reality" as a character capable of enlisting

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a deep pathos and respect.

It is a strange pride which is convinced that the great minds of the past were less subtly aware of what they were about than our own, and in any case, certainly by the time of Cowley the idea of art as creating its own worlds had become a commonplace. In his ode 'The Muse' Cowley asserts with a breshness that one is tempted to call brazen:

> Whatever God did say,
> Is all thy plain and smooth, uninterrupted Way.
> Nay, ev'n beyond his Works thy Voyages are known,
> Thou hast thousand Worlds too of thine own.
> Thou speak'st, great Queen, in the same Stile as he,
> And a new World leaps forth when thou say'st,
> Le it be.
> 51

Cowley's punctilious note on these lines spells out their implications in a way that recalls Sidney's golden world passage and yet heralds that decline of the wonderful into the sensational that would take us beyond our chosen historical limits into a consideration of the restricted ranges of the picturesque, the sublime and the Gothic:

> Poetry treats not only of all things that are, or can be, but makes Creatures of her own, as Centaurs, Satyrs, Fairies, etc. makes Persons and Actions of her own, as in Fables and Romances, makes Beasts, Trees, Waters, and other irrational and insensible things to act above the Possibility of their Natures, as to understand and speak, nay makes what Gods it pleases too without Idolatry, and varies all these into innumerable Systems, or Worlds of Invention.
> 52

Ever since Kant the idea of a work of art as a "World of Invention" has been associated with the notion of aesthetic autonomy, and it is this notion that I would like to go on to consider more carefully in my next chapter.

Chapter VII

THE STATUS OF THE GOLDEN WORLD

The idea of art as an autonomous activity discovers new difficulties. Sidney did not have to face these we will be forced in this chapter to move, for the most part, beyond the frame which the Apology provides. Nevertheless, the two ideas of making and of teaching will remain the fixed points of reference, and the main endeavour of the chapter will be to suggest a more satisfactory reconciliation of the moral and aesthetic views than Sidney achieved.

A generation after Sidney, Sir Francis Bacon in his The Advancement of Learning echoes Sidney's defence of poetry, claiming, with a staid deliberateness that is as characteristic as Sidney's exuberance, that,

> The use of this feigned history hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul ... /Poetry/ was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind; whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things.
> 1

In discussing the "use" of poetry Bacon formalizes the distinction which Sidney developed in the Apology, and he views poetry as one of the three branches of learning. Philosophy and history, the provinces of reason and memory, he thinks of as concerned with the nature of things; whereas poetry ranges within a world of the imagination's own creation, feigning heightened images which raise and erect the mind. Like Sidney, Bacon is praising poetry but where Sidney speaks with fervour of

the "heart-ravishing" knowledge which the erected wit of the poet delivers, Bacon says, with a judicial use of the past tense, that this feigned history "has been" held to provide "some shadow of satisfaction to the mind". There is something equally reserved in his comment that poetry 'was ever thought to have some participation of divineness". Likewise he says elsewhere in The Advancement of Learning that poetry is "rather a pleasure or play of the imagination, than work or duty thereof",[2] which is an unexceptionable enough statement, but something less than flattering when the context lacks anything to suggest that the writer was ever personally kept from the chimney-corner by a heart-ravishing tale.

The reason for Bacon's unconscious reserve is apparent: in the larger perspective of his views it is reason, buckling itself to the nature of things, that promises an "advancement of learning" and "the relief of man's estate". It is thus not altogether surprising when he ends the brief discussion of poetry in The Advancement of Learning by declaring himself loath to stay too long in the theatre. Re-working the same arguments in the De Augmentis he describes poetry as "a dream of learning", and concludes his discussion by saying with mounting enthusiasm:

> But now it is time for me to awake, and rising above the earth, to wing my way through the clear air of Philosophy and the Sciences.[3]

As the different application of the metaphor reveals, this airy gesture is quite unlike the grudgingly honest admission of Keats that "An eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth".[4] The heart of the rationalist Bacon, like that of the magisterially condescending Theseus, is stirred by clarity rather than by dreams.

Of course there is something as glib as it is hackneyed in casting Bacon as the villain of the nascent

scientific view, just as there is in even implying that clarity and poetry do not go together or that reason is the destroyer of wonder. Bacon stresses the joy with which man's mind receives "the image of the universal world", and he insists that the end of learning is renewed wonder, or what he calls "broken knowledge".[5] Though he came to feel that a new order of events was at hand, "the specific quality of which would consist no longer in a mere imitation of nature but in her domination by man",[6] he never lost his sense of the ultimate mysteriousness of things; nor did he succumb to what he called "the vulgar arguments, that by learning man ... ascendeth to the heavens and their motions".[7] In setting the imagination apart as a faculty sui generis he intended to suggest that literature had its own distinct kind of relevance. But, given a society where empiricism was to become dominant, and in which puritanism had long been suspicious of poetry, the dissociation of poetry from philosophy and from other forms of learning was hardly liable to work in favour of poetry, or to confer value on the aesthetic experience of freedom and delight.

Traditionally poetry had had to face the Platonic charges that it was morally subversive or untrue - it was these charges that the puritans had taken over and that Sidney was trying to answer in his Apology. But Plato and even the Gossons of this world acknowledged the power of poetry. From the seventeenth century, however, one sees the emergence of a much more insidious attitude in which poetry is seen not as a danger - as it was seen even by the medieval Church - but as an irrelevance, or even worse, as a form of wish-fulfilment giving "some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man". From the age of Bacon the long perspective of indifference opens towards our own day, taking in as prominent landmarks Locke, who remarked that "parnassus is a pleasant Air but a barren soil", and Bentham who preferred pushpin to poetry.[8] Bacon

was prepared to re-tell and interpret the ancient myths in his De Sapientia Veterum, and Elizabeth Sewell detects in him echoes of the true Orphic voice[9]; but Bishop Thomas Sprat, the historian of the Royal Society, would hold no truck with figurative flights. He declares disdainfully,

> The poets began of old to impose the Deceit. They to make all things more venerable than they were, devis'd a thousand false chimaeras.
> 10

The descendents of Sprat have tended to value any activity inasmuch as it can confer power in and over the world of the probable. Consequently the very claims for poetic autonomy which establish it as an activity in its own right help in effect to isolate it and open the way for it to be seen as something apart from the main stream of human activity.

The most clear-cut answer to the likes of Sprat is to affirm that art, considered even as purely 'chimaerical', can yet be thought of as having its own sort of seriousness and its own most profound sanction, as Yeats suggests in his remarks on style, or Proust, in another way, in a passage where Marcel meditates on the death of Bergotte who was killed by a stroke while contemplating a detail in a painting by Vermeer:

> There is, in the condition of our life here, no reason which should make us believe ourselves obliged to do good, to be fastidious or even polite, nor which should make the godless painter believe himself obliged to start over twenty times a detail the praise of which will matter very little to his body eaten by worms - a detail such as the section of yellow wall painted with such skill and taste by an artist forever unknown and scarce identified under the name of Vermeer. All such obligations, which have no sanction in our present life, seem to belong to a different world based on goodness, consideration and sacrifice, a world altogether different from this one, and from which we emerge to be born on this earth.
> 11

The sort of sanction that Proust invokes for art could be extended by analogy to the obligation which the conscientious reader feels when he tries to take as full a possession as possible of a work of art. An act of scrupulous creation, or of scrupulous attention, pursued "for its own sake", need not be thought of as a frivolous substitute for, or as an evasion of, the sterner business of coping with "reality". It is a philistine view that making or reading a poem is a less real activity than making a nuclear reactor or listening to a political speech.

To talk of a scrupulous attention in this way is to imply that a proper response to art is no easy indulgence and that it involves more than what Wordsworth calls "proceeding in quiescence".[12] Attentive reading is the very opposite of simply allowing the work to take one out of oneself, for a good reader repays a poem even as simple as Sidney's 'What toong can her perfections tell' with more than an amused and passive assent. The intelligence and wit inspiriting every part of the poem provoke in the reader a lively play of mind. His response has, ideally, something of that energetic quality which Coleridge so memorably described:

> The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path of sound through the air: at every step he pauses and half recedes, and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him onward.
>
> Praecipitandus est liber spiritus.[13]

This sort of reading is pleasurable because of the controlled activity of response which it involves, and not because it is an anodyne. The sense that "you are the music while the

music lasts"[14] can involve a wonderful access of freedom and power, but this invigoration of the free spirit is of a different order than, say, the slavish surrender to suspense which a thriller can provide, or the gratification of identification with a successful protagonist. Though "the pleasurable activity" of reading can be thought of as a species of play, play is often strenuous and demanding, and it obeys strict rules. Freud, in his essay 'The Poet and Day-Dreaming', relates imaginative activity to the activity of the child absorbed in play and creating a world of his own "that pleases him better", but he insists on how seriously the child takes his play; and he elsewhere emphasizes the genuine artist's mysterious ability to mould and impersonalize his material.[15]

The trouble with an argument that stresses the activity of proper reading and that distinguishes the reading of "the [redacted]" who expect only an opportunity for "egoistic castle-building" from that of "the [redacted]"[16] is that it seems to imply embarrassingly élitist claims. It might seem unhealthily distant from the forthrightness of Sidney's assertion that poetry is "the companion of the camps" (137:6). Anything that suggests a mystique of reading is liable to encourage the worst sort of snobbishness and the over-valuing of complex textures for the opportunities they provide for a parading of 'perceptiveness and sensitivity'; and it is equally liable to obscure the fact that a piece of writing can work upon a reader directly and powerfully in a subliminal way long before any attempt has been made to possess it consciously in its entirety. Nevertheless, the ability to read literature well is an accomplishment that has to be nurtured and developed. The golf professional, faced with the person who potters round the course once a fortnight, feels no embarrassment at the skill which he has acquired - he takes it for granted that the art of swinging a club effectively has to be learned with tears and frustration. The Elizabethan writers were the

first to contemn the pit, and they wrote for an audience who had gone through the grind of a grammar school training and who understood that writing was an art. It is only in a post-romantic world of universal near-illiteracy that people concerned for literature lament that it is not popular and by some mysterious means immediately accessible to all. Just as everyone who swings a stick is not playing golf, so everyone who swings an eye across a line of print is not reading in the way that literature requires. Coleridge has a most delightful passage on the subject:

> For as to the devotees of the circulating libraries, I dare not compliment their pass-time, or rather kill-time, with the name of reading. Call it rather a sort of beggarly day-dreaming during which the mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness and a little mawkish sensibility.

Coleridge sees this process as the transfer of "one man's delirium, so as to people the barrenness of an hundred other brains afflicted with the same trance or suspension of all common sense and all definite purpose", and he concludes by suggesting that,

> We should therefore transfer this species of amusement (if indeed those can be said to retire a musis, who were never in their company, or relaxation be attributable to these whose bows are never bent) from the genus, reading, to that comprehensive class characterized by the power of reconciling the two contrary yet co-existing propensities of human nature, namely indulgence of sloth and hatred of vacancy. In addition to novels and tales of chivalry in prose or rhyme, (by which last I mean neither rhythm nor metre) this genus comprises as its species, gaming, swinging or swaying on a chair or gate; spitting over a bridge; smoking; snuff-taking; tete-a-tete quarrels after dinner between husband and wife; conning word by word all the advertisements of the Daily Advertizer in a public house on a rainy day, etc., etc., etc.
> 17

The image which Coleridge so brilliantly uses to suggest the nature of properly active reading is that of "the motion of a serpent", and this stress on the dynamic nature of the reader's involvement with the developing work might seem to make apparent a limitation of thinking of a work of literature simply as a heterocosm or golden world: a work of literature not only exists spatially as a totality, it also develops in time and it engages powerful energies in its development. Indeed Kenneth Burke has argued that the form of a work is best thought of as a matter of tensions which are created and released in the reader or spectator.[18] Perhaps, however, the way of reconciling these two notions is to recognize that the idea of dynamism relates to the process of reading, and the idea of a heterocosm to the potentially achievable (yet rarely, if ever, totally achieved) possession of a work, which is the end to which the reading process is directed. A most helpful gloss on the idea of possession is offered by J. V. Cunningham who quotes the following passage from St Augustine's Confessions:[19]

> I am about to repeat a Psalm that I know. Before I begin, my expectation is extended over the whole; but when I have begun, how much soever of it I shall separate off into the past, is extended along my memory; thus the life of this action of mine is divided between my memory as to what I have repeated, and expectation as to what I am going to repeat; but 'consideration' is present with me, that through it what was future may be conveyed over so as to become past. Which the more it is done again and again, so much the more the expectation being shortened, is the memory enlarged, till the whole expectation be at length exhausted, when that whole action being ended shall have passed into memory.

This subtle piece of introspection can be thought of as "completing" Coleridge's serpent image. Cunningham nicely sums up the implication of the passage by commenting, "So I know a poem or play thoroughly when the beginning,

middle and end are comprehended in one synthetic act of recollection and that synthetic act of recollection is the play".[20]

One of the advantages of thinking of a work of art as a heterocosm or golden world is that, on the analogy of a person who gradually explores and comes to know a particular environment, the metapher can readily accommodate the simple fact of the reader's sequential progress in time through a work, and it can accommodate too a recognition of the more intricate process of attempting to achieve "one synthetic act of recollection". With any highly developed work of literature possession can never be total, for the possibilities of what Roman Ingarden calls "concretion", or bringing a work into awareness, are almost infinitely complex.[21] Yet it is in an ideal act of concretion that a work can most fruitfully be thought to have its mode of being. The metaphor, or model, to use a more fashionable term, of a reader as being caught up into and coming to know a golden world allows the notion of active and developing involvement much more readily than, say, the image of a work as an artifact or "well-wrought urn" which equally implies a sense of a work's self-sufficiency, but which has inappropriate overtones of something solid and immobile. Likewise, it has an advantage over the notion of a work as an organic unity. That idea accounts for a work's liveliness as well as for its self-sufficiency, but it tends to suggest that a work is miraculously emergent from its own mysterious principles rather than delivered by an act of making. Moreover, it is so orientated to the idea of "expression" that it tends to leave the reader out of account or to obscure the nature of his involvement.

One of the most important advantages of the golden world model is that it draws attention to the element of self-sufficiency or autonomy in a work while at the same time suggesting that a work does have a necessary relation to the brazen world: the poet "goes hand-in-hand with

Nature" (100:26), says Sidney. Perhaps the central difficulty in critical theory, however, is that of deciding in what way a work is at once self-sufficient and yet related to life: for some reconciliation of these views seems necessary. A resolutely moral approach makes literature something instrumental, and cannot say what it uniquely is; a resolutely formalist approach makes literature something peripheral, and can never say really convincingly what its importance is.[22] It is to an attempted reconciliation that we must now turn.

In the first place, it is clearly impossible for the content of a work of literature to exclude reference to the merely contingent world. Mallarmé argued to the contrary in essays such as 'The Crisis in Poetry', declaring that,

> Speech is no more than a commercial approach to reality. In literature, allusion is sufficient: essences are distilled and then embodied in Idea.
>
> Out of a number of words, poetry fashions a single new world which is total in itself and foreign to the language - a kind of incantation. Thus the desired isolation of language is effected.
>
> [23]

But one wonders what sort of body "a single new world" would have if it were no more than an "incantation". Even so sympathetic a student of symbolisme as Arthur Symons acknowledged that Mallarmé was aiming at an impossible liberation and indulging in a "chimerical search after the virginity of language".[24] Words do not have denotations on the one hand and "allusions" on the other such that the latter can be "isolated" in their purity. If they could, those allusions would still include predispositions towards certain valuations and feelings. Moreover, the very use of syntax, however much syntax may be dislocated, enforces the notion of rationally apprehensible relationships and the sense of an existence

continuing in time. Even nonsense verse depends upon subtle manipulations of the anticipations of sense inherent in the syntax of language and thought. And even Mallarmé admits that in his search for essence he is renouncing an aesthetic which "has been responsible for certain masterpieces", and advocating "a tendency which limits literature" at the same time as giving it a new freedom.[25] The symbolists' reaction against nineteenth-century realism and against the tastes of an audience disposed to uncritical and often melodramatic identification with character and feeling is understandable; but the most effective answer to theories of pure poetry such as those of Mallarmé and Valery is the example of a poem like 'Le Cimetière marin' which proves itself magnificently impure enough to make even Yvor Winters claim it as among the finest of all lyrics.[26]

Even the most extreme fantasy worlds, and even "universes of discourse" constructed exclusively from the materials provided by an artistic convention define themselves in terms of, and owe their appeal to, their difference from an implied normality with all its demands and limits. As W.H.Auden says, if our desire to create fantasy worlds "arises at least in part from our dissatisfaction with the primary world, the latter must first be there before we can be dissatisfied with it".[27] What is more, though the poet is a maker in his own right, he generally chooses not to write nonsense verse and create worlds of "pure" fantasy, but to go "hand in hand with Nature".

To say that the writer chooses to do this is to put it too negatively, for an almost compulsive necessity to reflect the nature of the brazen world reveals itself even in those modes of the imagination that would seem most open to wish-fulfilment. Pastoral and romance create what Tolkien, who should know about such things, has called a "secondary world",[28] an exclusive realm of the imagination in which fading sublunary attributes suffer a change into "something rich and strange". The exclusiveness of romance and pastoral might seem to imply that the only limit on the

freedom of the worlds which they deliver is that they should exist in the spirit of 'Once upon a time ...', and end with the promise that 'They all lived happily ever after'. But in the act of establishing a world apart - be it that of Arcadia or the Pickwick Club, Faerie Land or Blandings Castle, or simply a socially remote sphere of life - these modes weave into their very texture a recognition of the necessities and limitations of the human condition which they might seem designed to leave behind. Though romance affirms that the dragon can be killed, and that the hero can complete his quest and endure his trials, it is coloured by the sadness of the knowledge that the Round Table is dissolving or that Gandolf and the elfin warriors must sail for ever to the western world; and though pastoral offers the assurance that men can find contentment in nature and in their own hearts, the motto on the tomb is Et in Arcadia Ego.[29] Though poetry delivers a vision of a golden world, it does not pretend that the Golden Age is anything but for ever beyond our grasp. Art, like play, gratifies us by creating the illusion of freedom, mastery and self-sufficiency - as has so often been said, it is nicely rounded where life is ragged and incomplete - yet it would seem that the poetic imagination, wherever it ranges, is discreetly reined with an awareness of necessity. "Come live with me", says the poet, but he cannot conceal his wistfulness.

Those who talk of a work of art as autonomous rarely imply that its forms bear no necessary relation to those of the brazen world. Literature can never be - and hardly ever, against the grain, aspires to be - "pure" in the sense that it is sometimes argued that music and abstract art may be pure. Rather, the argument for autonomy has tended to be that the work of art exists as an aesthetic object, that it belongs to an autonomous realm in which the values of the moral and practical world do not apply.

In discussing Sidney's description of Arcadia we began to illustrate the way in which a piece of writing can be thought of as achieving a quality of self-sufficiency. Perhaps we could extend the consideration of self-sufficiency by looking at a complete poem rather that at a passage of prose. And for the sake of variety let us take one by Lyly rather than one by Sidney, his 'Cupid and my Campaspe':

> Cupid and my Campaspe played
> At cards for kisses; Cupid paid.
> He stakes his quiver, bow, and arrows,
> His mother's doves and team of sparrows,
> Loses them too; then down he throws
> The coral of his lip, the rose
> Growing on's cheek (but none knows how),
> With these the crystal of his brow,
> And then the dimple of his chin:
> All these did my Campaspe win.
> At last he set her both his eyes;
> She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
>
> O Love! has she done this to thee?
> What shall, alas, become of me? [30]

Here certainly is a richer world of coral lips and crystal brows. Yet the poetic heightening is clearly a matter of far more than the selection of pretty details, each parading itself for approval. Rosy cheeks and the rest of the rich catalogue - except perhaps for the dimple - are in themselves no more than the standard attributes of the heroine of love poetry and had been so since the sixth century.[31] The materials of the poem, from Cupid's arrows and his blindness to the unassailable mistress and complaining lover, are as conventional as Mecanno parts. The subject of the poem provides no more than an opportunity for skilled performance, and the reader's gratification probably comes as close as is possible in poetry, to being a response to aesthetic qualities alone. Words, unlike blobs of paint or notes in music, come to the poet already marked by their prior use in the realms of perceiving and

valuing, but Lyly's counters are at one remove of refinement: they come not directly from use but from the reservoir which the convention has gathered for itself.

What they do need, however, is to be given poetic life. As Sigurd Burckhardt has put it, "Words already have what the artist first wants to *give them - meaning* - and fatally lack what he needs in order to shape them - body".[32] The richness of poetry is to a very large extent a matter of the way in which the poet uses his technical resources to restore to words what Burckhardt calls "the corporeality which a true medium needs";[33] or, in our terms, it is a matter of the way in which a poet builds his words into a golden world of his own making.

The poet makes a world of his poem by subordinating words to new principles of order. In the first instance these principles can be thought of as formal and linguistic. Consider Lyly's opening couplet:

> Cupid and my Campaspe played
> At cards for kisses; Cupid paid.

One of the first things that one notices is the alliterative play. Out of twenty-seven sounded consonants in these lines all but six are c, p, t or d, and s. It is this interweaving of comparatively few and predominantly plosive consonants that helps to give the lines their sense of a fastidious sensuality upon the tongue. In addition the alliteration helps to link the first four nouns in two pairs around the first verb: "Cupid and my Campaspe (played) at cards for kisses". This creates a sense of balance which contrasts with the effect of "Cupid paid" where the principle of double pairing is rudely abandoned and a clipped repetition of consonants is very apparent. In this way something of the poised expectancy in the game, and then the finality of the outcome is embodied in the words. And the finality is in turn emphasised by the way in which the rhyme opens expectantly

on "played" and closes firmly on "paid" which represents a tightening of the original rhyme word. At the same time the word "Cupid" participates metrically, yet with variation, in each of the sentences within the couplet - first hopefully in a rising foot that asserts itself against the controlling pattern of the iamb, and then in disciplined conformity to that pattern. Linguists such as Roman Jakobson are making us more aware of the unexpected extent of this sort of patterning in poetry, a patterning to which we respond for the most part subliminally, but which contributes greatly to our sense that a poem has resonance or body.[34]

It is as part of this body that even jaded verbal counters achieve new life. Consider, for example,

> ... down he throws
> The coral of his lip, the rose
> Growing on's cheek ...

The details are rhythmically pointed by the effect of the enjambement which is unexpected after two closed couplets, and which helps to bring out that surprising change in status whereby the details cease to be conventional attributes and achieve vividness in their new guise as a gambler's stake, recklessly "thrown" across restraining checks and wrenched from a natural function. In being won by Campaspe these conventional marks of beauty become hers as if by right. At the same time the poet skilfully keeps back the detail of the dimple on the chin, which is not a usual feature of the lady but the cherubic prerogative of Cupid, so that he can use it to bring the reader's attention back from contemplation of the originality with which the blazoning of the lady is being accomplished to the desperateness of Cupid's plight as he prepares to stake his eyes.

As the last comment suggests, the process of articulation extends to the formal structuring of the poem

as a whole. A rhythmical balancing of deliberate but mounting declarations ("Cupid and my ... for kisses") against abrupt, summary statements ("Cupid paid", "Loves them too", "She won") provides a syntactical patterning which corresponds to the fluctuations of reckless hope and almost pert trick-taking. This pattern pulls in tension against both the metre and the restraining couplets to achieve a sense of rising momentum which gathers into the climactic "Cupid blind did rise". Then even this climax is neatly capped when, with an effect of superb casualness, the attention is returned from Cupid to the speaker in the final lines, thus fulfilling the logic of the opening where the reference was to "my Campaspe".

Such demonstrations have a fatal attractiveness - for the demonstrator - but, however scrupulously conducted, they can never communicate what Coleridge called "the sense of musical delight",[35] the energy and perfect timing which gives life to the body, and by means of which all the elements in the pattern are made to dance.

Within the formal and yet lively world which he creates Lyly succeeds in doing something new with such old motifs as Cupid's blindness and the complaining lover. He conducts the reader through a sophisticated verbal performance which alternately teases and gratifies the intelligence, and which in every dextrous manouevre up to and including the ingenious double climax lives up to the courtly expectations of wit and grace. The effect is entirely delightful. To say this is both to compliment the poem and to indicate the way in which it establishes its own particular controlling limits. The speaker voices a final apprehension of grief, but all along he has conveyed a sense of almost malicious gloating at the power of his lady, and his "alas" has a neatly parenthetical poise: the poem's world of cards and Cupids clearly excludes the brazen realities of loss and suffering.

This distancing is achieved partly because the poem is so completely contained within its own witty logic that the reader feels no need to go outside its playful assumptions. But it is also achieved in a more self-conscious way. The parenthesis, "but none knows how", might at first glance seem to be doing little more than providing a respite in a long catalogue, and producing some intricate internal rhyming. In another way, however, the throwaway phrase is necessary. It helps to establish the tone of flippant detachment and self-awareness which is the sphere of the poem's existence. For a moment the poet allows his poem to teeter on the edge of the ridiculous, but only, as it turns out, to insist on the autonomy of its more than common - and more than commonsense - world. Inasmuch as we are to think of the world in which Campaspe maintains her triumphant progress, it is a world where roses grow on cheeks and can be thrown down as a part bet, and where passion and frustration are divorced from the emotions of practical reality. The parenthesis helps to ensure that the playful limits of the poem are tactfully made clear, and observed.

Lyly's world of pseudo-suffering asserts its autonomy, but it does this by conscientiously drawing attention to the distinctness of its governing conventions from the conditions of life. In this it is quite unlike a crossword puzzle or an acrostic, other types of self-contained play with words which provide the gratifications of logic and of form. Such things indeed minister most gratifyingly to our desire for mastery - if we can ever get them out - but because they are completely autonomous we never feel that it is a privilege to enter their world. Nor do we have the gratifying sense that they constitute a world like and yet unlike our own. To share the poem's assumptions of intelligence and form, to savour its accomplishment and

grace, is to feel privileged: to participate in its ordered world of discourse is to be freed for a moment from one's involvement in life, with all its clumsiness and limitations. The poem thus provides imaginative enlargement by absorbing us into another world, a world which is satisfyingly complete and satisfyingly exclusive. And this sort of satisfaction is one which all works of literature provide, at a primary level, precisely because they are art and not nature, and whatever the relation of their subject matter to the world of actuality.

But this exclusiveness of a work of literature does not seem to entail the exclusion from its world of those values which exist in the brazen world. Nor is this simply a matter of these being reflected in the content of a work. In the act of creating a different world an artist implies a commitment to the qualities which colour this world and give it its uniqueness. Such commitment is something more than the artist's sense of obligation to his art which Proust discussed: it is a matter of specific commitments, necessarily built in to the poem and invested with value in the act of its making. These commitments are the inevitable reflection of the particular principles of order which guided the infinitely complex process of selection, rejection and arrangement whereby the poem achieved its self-sufficient being. In 'Cupid and my Campaspe' it is the sense of such commitments that creates the feeling of being privileged to enter the poem's exclusive world. And in this particular poem the commitments are to values such as grace, sophistication, intelligence, humour, self-consciousness, and levity. A poem such as Ben Johnson's 'An Epitaph on Master Philip Gray', on the other hand, is coloured by values such as honesty, firmness, rigour and moral integrity.

In taking imaginative possession of a poem one necessarily makes a sympathetic adjustment to the commitments or "ethos" which pervades the whole. Lionel Trilling

makes this point by claiming that the best readers are capable of hearing the truth that lies "in the justness of [a poem's] diction, in the pitch and tone of its voice."[36] Trilling goes on to suggest that the best readers,

> will know that the poem is a created thing, that it is a creature, and that it has its own creaturely life, and speaks in its own voice, which is to be judged as we judge the voice of an actual human creature, a person.

It seems important to insist in some such way that one's response to the "ethos" of a poem has an intimate quality that is best described as a sense of direct contact with a particular and unique personality. When I read,

> ... Dear, I know nothing of
> Either, but when I try to imagine a faultless love
> Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur
> Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone
> landscape ...[37]

I say, with a feeling of affectionate sympathy, 'That is Auden, the authentic voice of his later poetry'. When I read,

> They also serve who only stand and wait[38]

I feel, no less directly, a sort of protesting awe before another personality in its uniqueness. The sense of inwardness with a certain set of values and with a certain vision is so intimate that it seems inadequate to say that my response is merely to a rhetorically created persona - indeed it is only the modern formalists who have felt the need to make so much of that term.

An identical *inwardness* characterises one's response to dramatically presented characters. I know of nothing so much like my response to Milton's *sonnets* as my response to Prospero at the end of The Tempest. Consider, for example, the speech where he renounces revenge:

> Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick
> Yet, with my nobler reason, 'gainst my fury
> Do I take part: the rarer action is
> In virtue, than in vengeance: they, being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further.
> (V.i.25)

As in Milton's poem there is a sense of a resolve and self-control so great that mere personal feeling is discounted. Prospero's forgiveness cannot be warm and immediate for the situation to which he has *brought* his enemies has been of his own creation, and it is for him to make the right, not the instinctive, reaction: inevitably his forgiveness must seem deliberate and willed. If there is something deeply disturbing in the quality of the feeling in these lines it is because there is always something awesome about strong-willed renunciation, and about the lonely deprivation which seems to *go* with it.

To talk in this way - and I do not know of any other way in which one can as effectively *discuss* the lines - is to accept implicitly that there is a continuity between the response to experience as it is mirrored in art and the response to experience as it presents itself to the looker-on in life itself: and this is, after all, what the common reader - Dr Johnson's common reader and not the devotee of the circulating *libraries* - has always simply taken for granted. Nor need such an assumption involve anything like a Partridge-at-the-play naïveté. D. W. *Harding* has recently brought

both his authority as a psychologist and his authority as a most sensitive reader of literature to back up the claim that the mode of response to a novel, a response in which the reader simultaneously feels with, feels for, and evaluates the behaviour of the characters portrayed, "can be regarded as an extension of the mode of response made by an onlooker at actual events".[39]

In Marianne Moore's words, literature creates "imaginary gardens with real toads in them",[40] and John Bayley is right to cry in protest against the formalists' self-conscious insistence on the fictionality of all fictions:

> What becomes of Achilles's armour, Alison's arse,
> Othello's handkerchief, Vronsky's mare, Bloom's kidney?
> All gone into the head, or into the paradigm.[41]

It seems true to say that one reads literature both as a connoisseur and as an onlooker; and there are, in addition, moments when one loses all sense of one's separate and detached identity - for literature in its highest reaches is the great "drowner of the dykes" that separate man from man.

Let us try to see how connoisseur and onlooker get along with each other with the help of another example. Consider Herrick's little poem, 'Upon Julia's Clothes':

> When as in silks my Julia goes,
> Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flowes
> That liquefaction of her clothes.
>
> Next when I cast mine eyes and see
> That brave Vibration each way free;
> O how that glittering taketh me![42]

The contrast between two sorts of movement, texture and appeal provides a well-organised double finesse that is

comparable with Lyly's trick-taking in 'Cupid and my Campaspe'; and of course Herrick's poem belongs to the same continuing tradition of courtly sophistication as Lyly's. In an important respect, however, Herrick's poem is different - it deals directly with contemporary behaviour, and Herrick is at one level of significance responding appreciatively to a new fashion for clothes no longer hooped, braided and banded to the body.[43] Consider particularly the most striking lines of the poem:

> ... how sweetly flowes
> That liquefaction of her clothes.

One savours the rhetorical heightening, but even more the appropriateness with which the words give body to an accurate perception. The Latinism is superbly "brave", a confident verbal gesture adequate to the richness of the silks and the movement described, and mimetic in the delicious flow of its own sinuous movement across seven consonantal sounds. But even more powerfully the image vividly evokes the sensuous movements of the silks, and suggests the way in which they produce a volatile awareness of the supple flesh moving beneath them.

To say that the perception is vivid, and that it is charged with strongly sensuous and even erotic emotion, is not to make a trite confession; nor is it to remark on the testimony of the speaker in the poem whose mode of address is the exclamation and who states explicitly that he is strongly "taken". It is rather to attest that in the poem's rhythms and images a particular perception and its attendant feelings are powerfully realized in an appropriate form of words. Consequently neither emotion nor perception are directly experienced as in life but they are apprehended as part of that act of total attention which includes consciousness of rhyme and metre, recognition that the Latinate word is used in an unexpected context, awareness of how the root idea of 'making liquid' helps to imply the effect of the clothes on the flesh beneath them, and so on.

Keats objected to Benjamin West's painting, 'Death on the Pale Horse', on the grounds that "there [was] nothing to be intense upon; no women one feels mad to kiss; no face swelling into reality".[44] He was right to demand that a work of art should create the sense of an intense life, but the hoped-for life which "swells into reality" is that life in the poetry which the articulation of the work itself creates - it is this that activates a lively response. This was what Coleridge meant when he said of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' that:

> The reader is forced into too much action to sympathize with the merely passive of our nature. As little can a mind thus roused and awakened be brooded on by mean and instinct emotion as the low, lazy mist can creep upon the surface of a lake while a strong gale is driving it onward in waves and billows.[45]

Thus when one is tempted to say of Herrick's image of liquefaction that in it the reality of a specific sensuous movement is made golden, with the imagination confronting and seizing on the brazen world in order to transfigure it, the words "confronting", "seizing" and "transfiguring" are one's attempts to suggest the shock and sense of vitality that a successful "corporealisation" produces: they point to the rich verbal realization of a particular perception which has the effect of making it self-sufficient and available for lingering contemplation. Perception in life is momentary, and we are enmeshed in it: perception in art is heightened by "the secret discipline" of form and made continuously available to the act of attention so that the "gazing heart" may double its might.[46] We have all used the cliché "flowing robes", but Herrick's lines enable us, with a shock of recognition that is indistinguishable from discovery, "to imagine that which we know".

In denying that "mean and instinct emotion" can be aroused by art Coleridge tends to obscure the issue, for he would seem to imply that the arousal of certain feelings in art is inadmissable on moral grounds. The discussion should have made it clear, however, that art can realize strongly erotic perceptions, and that moral grounds are inappropriate for condemning a poem. It is possible, for example, to imagine a reader left faintly disquietened by Herrick's 'Upon Julia's Clothes', especially in the context of other poems by Herrick. Consider in this respect the effect of the parenthesis, "me thinks", in the first stanza:

> When as in silks my Julia goes,
> Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flowes
> That liquefaction of her clothes.

The parenthesis helps to fill out a line, but it also helps to produce a sense of the viewer savouring his thoughts. This emphasis persists as the speaker continues casting his eyes to garner delights. The deliberateness - "When ... next ..." - and the curious sense of an impression categorised and set apart - "that liquefaction ... that brave vibration" - help to draw attention to the viewer and to an almost gloating element in the quality of his attention. Moreover, he seems content to possess his Julia in the act of watching. As a result the effect of the poem as a whole comes close to one of titillation; and it is no great surprise to find that in a later poem, 'Upon Julia's Fall', the voyeur is leering at the legs beneath the liquefaction. In a further succession of Herrick's poems the peeping protagonist is "drown'd in delights" as a result of contemplating among other things Julia's petticoats clinging to her thighs, her blush, her nipples, the roses in her bosom, her unlacing herself and her washing in the river. The cumulative impression is that Herrick specialises in a preened but muted desire.[47]

To make this sort of observation is not to condemn Herrick's poems for "mean and instinct emotion". Part of what is entailed by the notion of autonomy is the realisation that each work exists on its own terms, and that it is legitimate for a writer to give expression to any sort of feeling or experience that he wishes. Judgments of a work based on the nature of its content alone reflect little more than the moral and ideological preferences of the person who judges. Voyeurism may seem a dubious means of obtaining erotic satisfaction, but a personal disinclination to playing the voyeur should not lead one to imply that the experience is in itself an unsuitable one for poetry.

The only legitimate grounds for taking exception to 'Upon Julia's Clothes' would be the argument that as a poem it does not achieve an adequate self-sufficiency. One would be entitled to argue - whether the argument is really just in this particular instance is not the point at issue - that the poem reveals a disturbing hiatus between the ingenuous openness of response which the tone of exclamation implies, and an impression of gloating. Or, alternatively, that an element of gloating in the poem is not brought into full focus by the poet but passed off as an outgoing appreciativeness. This would be to assert that the various elements in the poem are not coherently enough organised; that a certain quality in the feeling seems attached to the poem or merely present in it, rather than required by its own logic. If this were so the poem would not be self-sufficient, for, in Coleridge's terms, not every element in it would "contain in itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise".[48] To say, as T.S.Eliot does, that a poem must achieve impersonality and find adequate objective correlatives is to assert that it must give the sense of generating its own feelings, however much it may reflect its author's personality in its "voice" or ethos.[49] A poem which is not self-sufficient leaves the reader disquieted because of gratuitous and unresolved elements

in it. It may consequently seem kinetically related to feelings and motives outside itself, and even encourage speculation about such motives or feelings in its author.

In pornography and some types of sensationalist literature the work may exist entirely for the sake of these gratuitous elements, and in the hope of triggering off kinetic responses. As we have indicated, literature may rightly deal with the gruesome and taboo, but there is a world of difference between the way in which an artist forces one to contemplate the idea that a Caliban or Moosebrugger lurks in the suburbs of every human consciousness; and, say, the deliberately provocative presentation of those females of sensationalist fiction whose dress is a liquefaction in the sense that it seems to have been put on with a spray gun, and who are sure to end up by mutilating or being mutilated, or else by marrying the hero, which amounts to much the same thing.

The continued use of the word "contemplation" may suggest that there is necessarily an element of percipience in one's response to literature, but Lyly's poem is a reminder that what is primary in the notion of contemplation as it relates to art is simply the mind's complete absorption in its attention to the world of a work. Within that world there will more than likely be artistically heightened perceptions which relate directly to the larger, contingent world, for poems such as Lyly's are the exception not the norm. And though we have spoken only of perceptions these may well involve conceptual and moral as well as sensory apprehensions, depending upon what it is that is realized for attention in the particular work.

When Ben Jonson's poem politely, yet with a barbed pertinence, suggests that we too blithely avoid speculations which might turn out to be profitable, it demands that we attend to this idea. The full act of attention to the poem includes awareness of such things as the verbal play in

"surety and the poet's good grace in including himself in the final charge: but it is focused on an apprehension of the instability of human life. When Keats says, "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty ...", he asks the reader to ponder this idea in the light of the whole poem, not to say, 'This remark need not be thought about seriously, because Keats is only providing a pseudo-statement'.[50] It is a truism that literature presents ideas in a dramatic or feigned context - even a poem as close to statement as Ben Jonson's does this - and it is another truism that undue emphasis on ideas or themes in the criticism of literature is reductive and distorting. Yet it is absurd to suggest, as T.S.Eliot once seemed to, that a poet such as Shakespeare does not think in a profound way, and that he does not provoke thought too. Edgar Wind reminds us that Baudelaire began his essay 'Philosophic Art' with the intention of making a plea for "pure, disinterested beauty" only to leave the essay unfinished with the note: "There is something good in [the opposite] assumption; it is the disdain of prattle and the conviction that great painting rests on great ideas."[51]

The crucial point, however, is that the act of attention to a work of literature is completely absorbing and un-self-regarding. The mind sets aside, for the moment, all personal and external considerations of the usefulness to itself of what is contemplated. In Leslie Fiedler's phrase, it redeems ideas and perceptions "from use to wonder".[52] For the duration of its attention its "set" and commitments become those of the poem. Consequently, it would perhaps be better not to talk of the poem as autonomous, lest that should suggest that it in some way excludes a heightened awareness of life and values, but of the act of attention to the poem as being autonomous, in the sense that though it can engage "the whole soul"[53] of the reader, it is an activity in which his personal concerns and commitments are subordinated to the speculations and evaluations which the poem directly activates and controls. The reader's experience provides the ground-swell upon which the poem rides, but the initiative is all with the poem. Moreover, though the attention is "disinterested" in this way,

appreciation of the poem need not be insulated within "the aesthetic".

This view of the matter would allow one to short-circuit the polarity of aesthetic and moral. The appropriate mode of attention to a work of literature would always be aesthetic or distanced; whereas the object of attention, that is, the work itself, would be free to embody values of any kind appropriate to a principle of order, but always including certain values normally thought of as aesthetic (in a second application of the word) simply because the quality of form is shared by all works of art.

Looking back to our discursion of the poet as teacher, it might be pertinent to add, however, that only a work in which the pressure of a strong moral "ethos" is apparent would seem capable of stretching and sustaining attention to the point where the object before it seems inexhaustible because it is felt to open onto the ultimate mystery of things.

This last remark suggests that one should posit a hierarchy of self-sufficient works of art, which seems an appropriate and necessary idea. It is only misapplication of it that leads to a misguided spiritual or moral exclusiveness. Herrick's poem is clearly limited to the mode of exclamation, and it makes no attempt to go beyond the rendering of sensation in all its hedonistic simplicity. Moreover, Herrick's perception seems to have exhausted itself in the single intense apprehension of "liquefaction", for the second stanza is merely a lame attempt to match the first felicity. Herrick thus gives memorable expression to an isolated perception without making any attempt to relate it to larger wholes of experience. But however much the poet may desire "a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts" and wish to dwell in "havens of intenseness", "negative capability" before the forms of things will serve him only up to a certain

point.[54] As Coleridge said, in the passage to which we alluded a moment ago, the poet, if he is to be "described in ideal perfection", must be thought of as bringing "the whole soul of man" to bear upon the writing of his poem. Shakespeare draws upon a perception about clothes and how they are worn in making Banquo say of Macbeth's reception of the Thaneship of Cawdor that "strange garments cleave not to their mould/ But with the aid of use" (I.iii.145). In this way Shakespeare brings a perception from one area of experience to the understanding of another experience. The force of his lines, however, is not simply a matter of the way that the perception about how men wear new and unaccustomed clothes is made to illuminate Macbeth's observable state of discomforture; it is due to the fact that the words "strange garments" and "cleave" imply further awarenesses. "Strange garments" refers immediately to the new title bestowed upon Macbeth, and "cleave" clearly conveys the shock of the news which has come so suddenly upon the witches' prophesy. But the overtones of these phrases produce an apprehension about Macbeth which one can think of as formulating itself at a subliminal level in Banquo, or which one can simply accept as mediated through the poetry: the verb "cleave" points to the unsettling idea of murder or of violent action which has been abruptly activated at some level of Macbeth's consciousness, and "strange garments" points to the robes of kingship which he similarly at some level of his being desires, but which his "mould of man" tells him are strange and to be denied. Thus the impression of felt life and of imaginative enlargement which Shakespeare's lines produce is far more exhilarating than anything which Herrick achieves because much larger manifolds of feeling and implication have been both activated and "placed".

Perhaps the claim that attention can be sustained to the maximum only by the pressure of a strong moral

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Name of thesis The idea of the golden world : a study of the nature of imaginative enlargement, with particular reference to Sir Philip Sidney. 1972

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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