



## “[T]he fault of the man and not the poet”: Sidney’s Troubled Double Vision of Thomas More’s Utopia

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Article abstract

In the Defence of Poesy, Philip Sidney refers puzzlingly to Thomas More and Utopia. He praises the “way” this work presents a commonwealth yet faults the man who produced it. Sidney might have followed religious writers who condemned More’s Catholicism and his use of poetic fictions rather than direct assertions of what is true. In context, though, Sidney implies that his equivocation stems from More’s inconclusive dialogue and speculative discourse: genres he deems less effective than narrative in compelling readers to act virtuously. When revising his *Arcadia*, Sidney tests the poetics outlined in the Defence: a lengthy dialogue is interrupted by new episodes as narrative rises above rational debate and as characters become more obviously dominated by passion, not reason. Sidney’s revisions correspond to reassessments of Utopia at the turn of the century: its wit and poetry could be admired, yet its hybrid, contemplative genres seemed less compelling than narratives whose delight invites virtuous action.

# “[T]he fault of the man and not the poet”: Sidney’s Troubled Double Vision of Thomas More’s *Utopia*

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*In the Defence of Poesy, Philip Sidney refers puzzlingly to Thomas More and Utopia. He praises the “way” this work presents a commonwealth yet faults the man who produced it. Sidney might have followed religious writers who condemned More’s Catholicism and his use of poetic fictions rather than direct assertions of what is true. In context, though, Sidney implies that his equivocation stems from More’s inconclusive dialogue and speculative discourse: genres he deems less effective than narrative in compelling readers to act virtuously. When revising his Arcadia, Sidney tests the poetics outlined in the Defence: a lengthy dialogue is interrupted by new episodes as narrative rises above rational debate and as characters become more obviously dominated by passion, not reason. Sidney’s revisions correspond to reassessments of Utopia at the turn of the century: its wit and poetry could be admired, yet its hybrid, contemplative genres seemed less compelling than narratives whose delight invites virtuous action.*

*Dans sa Defence of Poesy, Philip Sidney se réfère inexplicablement à Thomas More et à son Utopie. Il y loue comment cet ouvrage met en avant un bien commun, tout en trouvant bien des failles à son auteur. Sidney était peut-être d’accord avec certains auteurs religieux ayant condamné le catholicisme de More, ainsi que les fictions poétiques que la République condamne. Toutefois, considérant son propos dans son contexte, Sidney avance que son ambivalence s’explique par l’absence de conclusion du dialogue et le discours spéculatif de More, c’est-à-dire des styles qu’il considère moins à même que la narration de pousser le lecteur à la vertu. Lorsqu’il révisé son Arcadia, Sidney met à l’épreuve la poétique qu’il a développée dans sa Defence : un dialogue s’étirant en longueur est interrompu par de nouveaux épisodes, et le récit prend le pas sur le débat rationnel, alors que les personnages se laissent visiblement plus emporter par la passion que par la raison. Les révisions de Sidney correspondent aux réexamens de l’Utopie au tournant du siècle. Il était possible d’admirer l’esprit et la poésie de More, mais son style hybride et contemplatif semble avoir été moins efficace que la narration, qui, elle, invite à la vertu par le plaisir qu’elle provoque.*

**I**n a remarkably subtle and ambiguous passage in the *Defence of Poesie*, Philip Sidney sets *Utopia* alongside Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* and the *Aeneid* as an exemplary literary work. Unlike a “philosopher’s counsel,” Sidney writes, each of the three works presents “the way” to the “most excellent determination

of goodness” although that goodness differs for each.<sup>1</sup> Xenophon’s “feigned Cyrus” provides direction for an individual prince and Aeneas does the same for a “virtuous man in all fortunes,” but *Utopia*, Sidney continues, proffers a “way” to a larger conception in that it imagines a means of directing a “whole commonwealth” to goodness (222). In drawing this contrast between the individual and the public good, Sidney seems to build upon a distinction made earlier in the *Defence* between the ethical (personal) and political (public) dimensions of “knowledge of a man’s self,” the latter being the *architektonike* or the “highest end” of knowledge with its “end of well-doing and not of well-knowing only” (219).

In the same passage, though, Sidney qualifies this praise by claiming that More had somehow committed a fault despite writing in the correct “way”—a fault committed by “the man” but not “the poet.” The distinction is confusing in that reference to the “poet” seems, in context, connected to the so-called “right poet” whom Sidney has privileged—the poetic technician who “makes” or creates so that the resulting imitations delight and teach: they delight to move men to goodness and teach “to make men know that goodness whereunto they are moved” (218). It appears, then, that there is something about More “the man” that impedes the poetic execution of a “way of patterning a commonwealth”—a way that may be “most absolute,” as Sidney claims (my emphases). But *what* has More’s error as a man affected in the work and *how* has More “perchance not so absolutely performed” the way to present that commonwealth? Although these and other questions are suggested when Sidney refers to *Utopia* and its author, he does not directly address them before moving on to a potentially but only indirectly related question of whether poetry’s “feigned image” can have more force than “the regular instruction of philosophy.” In the whole passage referring to More, then, Sidney conveys the impression that poetry (taken in the broad sense of all fictions) and the specific case of *Utopia* can exist doubly, representing both an imaginative “way” to prompt goodness in the community—that is, the commonwealth (presumably in imitation of the ideally just community Plato invents in the *Republic*)—and a crafted fiction that can stray from the imagined ideal because of defects in the poet as a man—lapses

1. Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Sir Philip Sidney: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 222. Hereafter, references to the *Defence of Poesy* are cited parenthetically in the text.

in virtue or character, perhaps, and/or in the technical ability to craft effectively the imagined commonwealth.

This article addresses this double vision of *Utopia*, as a work that is at once exemplary and flawed, by examining the assessment that Sidney's *Defence*, composed in the 1580s, makes of two literary genres—dialogue and narrative fiction—and the unequal power he assigns the genres, both in his poetics and his narrative fictions, as means to sway readers to virtuous action. Below, I will examine Sidney's oddly presented ambivalence: 1) by interrogating the immediate passage and varied cultural contexts that may have shaped Sidney's idea of More as “man” and “poet,” 2) by exploring those contexts more fully in relation to the argument in the *Defence*, and 3) by sketching how Sidney's crystallizing ideas about dialogue and narrative in that work play out in Sidney's composition and revision of pivotal episodes involving dialogue and narrative in the *Old Arcadia* (completed ca. 1580) and in its later fragmentary re-write, which in 1593 received wide readership after its incorporation into *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*.

## 1.

Focusing principally on the language mentioned above, Scott D. Evans has argued that the meaning of “way” shifts in its three uses during Sidney's brief reference to More in the *Defence*. In its first and third uses, Evans finds reference to a Platonic *idea* of a commonwealth that is outlined in the description appearing in book 2 of *Utopia* and that receives Sidney's praise. The second “way” in the passage, which is linked to More's “fault,” refers, in Evans's view, to More's factual errors, of the type illustrated in Aristotle's *Poetics* by a writer's placing antlers on a doe. Evans observes that, although we cannot know in context the specific errors of fact Sidney had in mind, he thought More was heading in the right direction when trying to show the best “way” to pattern the commonwealth but failing when relying on outlandish details, whether used satirically or seriously. In my reading, Sidney's passage does not evaluate More's ability to represent things as they are, since Sidney does not profess that the right poet *must* or *should* present a single, correct reality but, rather, wants the poet to have the skill necessary to *imitate* and *invent* actions that delight, teach, and move audiences to virtue. For Sidney, such poetic skills become evident through the use of fictive forms that are appropriate to poetry, since genres

that are primarily philosophical or historical lack the crucial, imaginatively-conceived poetic power to move an audience to want to be virtuous. The contrast between this pragmatic literary inflection of Sidney's words and Evans's Platonic reading becomes evident when one looks beyond Sidney's immediate passage to its context and the broader arguments of the *Defence*, including the way it positions More in relation to other writers.<sup>2</sup>

By elevating More to the rank of Xenophon and Virgil but then pointing to his faults, Sidney initiates a pattern of literary critique repeated later in the *Defence* when he refers to other praiseworthy English writers: Chaucer in *Troilus* is said to have written well enough in his "misty time" despite ambiguous "great wants"; Spenser in *The Shepheardes Calendar* showed himself capable of "much poetry" yet erred by choosing "an old rustic language" for his pastoral; and the authors of *Gorboduc* produced fine speeches and language in an elevated Senecan style, "notable morality," and delightful teaching in a work that was nevertheless defective in the circumstances of place and time. Only the briefly mentioned *Mirror for Magistrates* and lyrics of Surrey receive Sidney's unqualified praise (242–43). Notably, when evaluating *The Shepheardes Calendar* and *Gorboduc*, Sidney bases his assessments on literary technique: changes in the English language over time or deviations from classical, especially Aristotelian, precedent in the sequencing of narrative. Given this pattern of justifying critique on a *literary* rather than ideational basis, what is, then, the "fault of the man" that Sidney attributes to More?

Surely, Sidney must have known well the negative biographical assessment of "the man" More that had emerged in post-Reformation England. Nevertheless, Sidney's qualified praise of *Utopia* in the 1580s contrasts sharply with most Reformers' commonplaces about More-the-person and his writings. Peter Herman has shown that attacks on both More and his role as a writer proliferated in the years following William Tyndale's 1531 *Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue Concerning Heresies*. Tyndale had then attacked More

2. Scott D. Evans, "A 'Divine Consideration': *Utopia* in Sidney's *Defence of Poetry*," *Moreana* 33.125 (March 1996): 7–29; 23, 14–16. Trevor Cook helpfully noted in correspondence another possible resonance in Sidney's language wherein the "way" echoes that found in Acts 9:2 and other scriptural passages that refer to the earliest "sect" of Christians, noted marginally in the Geneva Bible (1560 facsimile [Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969], NT, 58v). The "way" in this sense would represent an ideal Christian community, with Sidney's critique highlighting More's personal lapses, an errant literary product, or *Utopia*'s "not so absolutely" realized ancient Christian society.

because of his aggressive defense of Catholicism and misuse of fictionalized dialogue. According to Tyndale, the form More had used in *Utopia*, with its imagined interlocutors and setting, was misapplied to serious doctrinal issues of the sort More had raised in *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529).<sup>3</sup> Peter Herman observes that Tyndale objected not only to More's lack of decorum in mixing fictional elements of dialogue with polemics but also to the fictionality of Catholic theology, which, like the imaginative *Utopia* and its dialogue form, was rooted in poetic deceit and the untrustworthy imagination rather than the sufficient truth of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> Both as a Catholic and as the author of *Utopia*, then, More was considered by Tyndale a poet and *de facto* a practised liar, a title awarded no doubt with awareness of Plato's arguments against poets in the *Republic* as well as on religious grounds.<sup>5</sup> For Tyndale, More as poet was predisposed by his Catholicism to the ritualistic performativity, idolatry, and magic that were the imaginative props of the papacy and its bishops, who behaved in their fictive performances much like the depraved Sir Gawain or Bevis of Hampton.<sup>6</sup> The habit of joining the supposedly infected imagination in Catholicism to literary fiction continued during the Elizabethan decades, when some, including Philip Stubbs and Stephen Gosson, expanded antipoetic sentiment to "intolerance toward *all* fictiveness."<sup>7</sup>

Tyndale's linking of imaginative fiction to false doctrine divorced from reality seems related to a sixteenth-century topos that had set More's work alongside the *Republic* in that both are unrealizable and therefore pointless fantasy. Pairings of More with Plato appear in a diverse array of works, including John Foxe's *A Sermon of Christ Crucified* (1570);<sup>8</sup> the anti-literary Puritan Thomas Bowes's preface to a translation of Pierre de la Primaudaye's

3. Peter Herman, *Squitter-Wits and Muse Haters: Sidney, Spenser, Milton and Renaissance Antipoetic Sentiment* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 34–35. According to David Daniell in *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), Tyndale gets the better of the controversy, though he, too, expresses anger through the use of "imagined figures" (273).

4. Herman, 35.

5. Herman, 41–42; *Republic*, ed. and trans. by Christopher Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), II, 377D–378D; X, 595A–C (Loeb 275, 276).

6. Herman, 42.

7. Herman, 47.

8. Cited by Warren W. Wooden, "An Unnoticed Sixteenth Century Reference to More's *Utopia*," *Moreana* 15.59–60 (December 1978): 91.

*Académie française* (1577), which berates both *Utopia* and the *Republic* for not joining “works with words” as Primaudaye’s work had;<sup>9</sup> Henry Willoby’s *Willoby his Avis* (1594, 24); Peter Lowe’s *The whole course of Chirurgie* (1597, 17); an anonymous English translation (1598) of Guillaume de la Perrière’s 1555 *Miroir politique* (16); Thomas Holland’s *Oratio Sarisburiae* (1599; 15); and Barton Holyday’s play *Τεχνονομία: or the marriages of the Arts* (1599, 15). George Puttenham’s *The Art of English Poesy* (1589), too, joins the *Republic* and *Utopia* as examples of “poesy historical,” works “resting all in device, but never put in execution, and easier to be wished than performed.”<sup>10</sup> Although *Actes and Monuments* does not mention *Utopia* by name, Foxe denounces More the person as a “bitter persecutor [...] of good men, and a wretched enemy against the truth of the gospel.”<sup>11</sup> With ties to leading Protestants such as Melancthon, Beza, Philippe de Mornay, Hubert Languet, and other Continental and English Protestants, Sidney should have known many examples of reformed assessments of More the man, and it seems virtually certain that they must have played *some* role in his equivocal evaluation of *Utopia*.<sup>12</sup>

Sidney also would almost certainly have known the first English translation of *Utopia*, Ralph Robynson’s of 1551. In its 1556 revised edition, Robynson includes a dedication to William Cecil that, rather than deny the work’s utility, justifies the book as “fruitful” and “profitable” in “setting forth the best state and form of a public weal” and doing so with “sweet eloquence,” “witty invention,” and fine “disposition of the matter.” Robynson goes on to describe More as “a man of incomparable wit,” knowledge, learning, and eloquence, yet ultimately Robynson’s evaluation turns against More as one blinded by an “obstinacy” that

9. Anne Lake Prescott, “Renaissance References to Thomas More,” *Moreana* 17.70 (June 1981): 3–24, 7. Other citations to this source in this sentence are indicated parenthetically.

10. George Puttenham, *Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 129–30. On the differences between Puttenham and Sidney on *Utopia*, see Clare Carroll, “Humanism and English Literature in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 246–68, 259–61.

11. *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO* (1570 edition) (HRI Online Publications, 2011). Available from <http://www.johnfoxe.org>, book 8, p. 1255. See also John Guy, *Thomas More* (London: Arnold, 2000), 13, 20n.

12. For an overview of scholarship on Continental Protestant sources bearing on Sidney, see Robert E. Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 6–28.

prevented him from seeing the “shining light of God’s holy truth” in “certain principal points” of religion and that ended in his untimely death.<sup>13</sup>

Just when Sidney’s *Defence* is poised to follow writers like Tyndale, Robinson, and Foxe in denouncing More “the man,” Sidney seemingly veers from any biographical consideration, if there was one, to poetics. Rather than link More and his religion to an errant performance that led to the less-than-“absolute” pattern of a commonwealth, as Tyndale might have, Sidney shifts from critique to praise of the “feigned image” that the “peerless poet” *should* create. A poet should produce a “perfect picture” of whatever the philosopher less effectively “saith should be done,” a “perfect picture” that, Sidney implies, misses the mark in *Utopia* because it leans to philosophy (223, 221). Behind this implied assessment of *Utopia* is Sidney’s emphasis on the functional effects of language. For Sidney, the role of the right poet (and perhaps the right “man”) is rooted in experience, yet, as Astrophil must learn from the Muse in the first sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella*, effective language arises more from passion, from the heart, than from studied argument, logic, or rhetoric.<sup>14</sup> In the *Defence*, Sidney ironically deploys argument, logic, and rhetoric to admonish lyric poets who contrive mere “swelling phrases” when they should instead “feel those passions” that ought to be conveyed through “forcibleness, or *energia*” (246). Sidney assigns to the poet’s experience and to imaginatively generated affect and inspiration the power to keep “children from play, and old men from the chimney corner” (227), a power missing, he believes, in philosophical dialectic and dialogue where “obscure definitions” “blur the margin with interpretations” and “load the memory with doubtfulness” (226–27). As Nina Chordas has shown, by the late sixteenth century dialogue was often understood as a hybrid with one foot in dialectic and another in poetry’s fictionalized settings and characters. Dialogue therefore could both affirm fictionality and undermine it “by insisting on an agency in the material world”—a materiality that Sidney’s right poet is called on to supplant with an invented story-world

13. *The “Utopia” and The History of Edward V... With Roper’s Life*, ed. Maurice Adams (London: Walter Scott, 1890), 66–67.

14. On Sidney’s nuanced critique and use of rhetoric in contrast to poetry, see David A. Katz, “Counterfeiting Rhetoric: Poetics, Violence, and Ekphrasis in Sidney’s *Arcadia* and the *Defence of Poesy*,” *Sidney Journal* 34.2 (2016): 49–70, 67–69.



that borrows nothing “of what is, hath been, or shall be” (218).<sup>15</sup> The dialogue that frames the whole of *Utopia* therefore might have been understood as a form of conversation that, since the thirteenth century, denoted an academic exchange between two or more who argued either side of an issue (*in utramque partem*), with no necessary resolution.<sup>16</sup> As the long history of reception of *Utopia* shows, dialogic open-endedness in that work has given rise to many indeterminate readings. In this vein, Elizabeth McCutcheon has described More’s work as “in some sense tautological, in some sense the nothing it plays upon, inextricably connected with language, wholly incomplete until and as we read it, and inexhaustibly generative.”<sup>17</sup> In such a reading, *Utopia* is shimmeringly if frustratingly attractive—thought-provoking but finally unknowable. And the presentation in book 2 of a “best” commonwealth that Hythlodæus and Morus agree is unattainable in the Europe of the sixteenth century jars against Sidney’s conviction in the *Defense* that the “right” poet is to calculate the pragmatic effects of inspired language in order to stir delight and compel readers to enact virtue, thereby to gain “knowledge of a man’s self, in the ethical and political consideration” (219). Sidney makes it clear that the

15. Nina Chordas, “Dialogue, *Utopia*, and the Agencies of Fiction,” in *The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue*, ed. Dorothea Heitsch and Jean-François Valée (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 27–41; see especially 29–30, citing Tasso’s *Discourse on the Art of the Dialogue*: “The writer of a dialogue must be an imitator no less than the poet; he occupies a middle ground between poet and dialectician.” See also Jon S. Lawry, *Sidney’s Two Arcadias: Pattern and Proceeding* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), 7–8.

16. Katarzyna Jazdzewska, “From *Dialogos* to Dialogue: The Use of the Term from Plato to the Second Century CE,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 54 (2014): 17–36, traces the ancient emergence of the literary dialogue. See also Gerard Wegemer, “The Rhetoric of Opposition in Thomas More’s ‘Utopia’: Giving Form to Competing Philosophies,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 23.4 (1990): 288–306; Irma Taavitsainen, “Dialogues in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Medical Writing,” in *Pragmatics and Beyond, New Series: Historical Dialogue Analysis* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), 243–68; J. Christopher Warner, “Thomas More’s *Utopia* and the Problem of Writing a Literary History of English Renaissance Dialogue,” in *The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue*, ed. Dorothea Heitsch and Jean-François Valée (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 63–76.

17. Elizabeth McCutcheon, *My Dear Peter: The Ars Poetica and Hermeneutics for More’s Utopia* (Angers: Moreana, 1983), 68–69; Dominic Baker-Smith, *More’s Utopia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 210–13, 225–26; J. C. Davis, “Thomas More’s *Utopia*: Sources, Legacy and Interpretation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 28–50. Also, see Csaba Macselka, “Sermo, Colloquium, Decorum: The Dialogic Roots of Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*,” *ANQ* 27.3 (2014): 97–104.

practical effects of any good fiction, dialogic or narrative, will exceed those of non-fictive philosophy, which is “so hard of utterance and so misty to be conceived” (221). When Sidney gestures in the *Defence* toward praise of *Utopia* as a “way” to pattern the best commonwealth—as a means of conceiving an idea, perhaps—his equivocation about the work’s achievement results more from judgment of the work’s propensity to ineffectual philosophical discourse than from a critique of the biographical More or of *Utopia*’s representation of factual truth.

## 2.

In the *Defence*, Sidney surrounds reference to *Utopia* with texts he deems exemplary because of their profitable fictions. These include not just the fore-named *Cyropaedia* and *Aeneid* but a host of others—all with one exception *fictive* and *narrative*. Sidney does not adhere to the sixteenth-century Protestant topos that, as we have seen, considers both the *Republic* and *Utopia* as unrealizable and therefore useless speculation. Sidney recoups some value for both in that they deploy some fictive elements, and, for Sidney, fictions are preeminently useful. In the *Defence*, Sidney agrees in principle with Plato’s complaint about poetry’s potential for immoral abuse, and he denies to the “right” poet what Plato is said to allow: potential inspiration of a “divine force, far above man’s wit” (240). Sidney suggests that the *Republic* itself is partially if unsatisfactorily poetic. Early in the *Defence*, Sidney describes Plato as an aspirant poet because his writings are often covered with the beautiful “skin” of poetry. Plato’s dialogues include fictive characters who engage in feigned dialogues; they use verbal ornament in description, like that for the banquet of the *Symposium*; they present a pleasant walk, as in the *Phaedrus*, and they even embed “mere tales” such as that of Gyges’s ring in the *Republic* (213–14).<sup>18</sup> Sidney praises Plato as “the most poetical” of all philosophers and therefore one to be held “most worthy of reverence,” yet in the *Defence* he uses this praise in part to deflect opponents such as Gosson, who had cited Plato’s attacks on the veracity, morality, and value of poetry when targeting all poets as liars and as immoral. For all his praise of Plato’s fictive elements, Sidney insists finally that

18. *Republic*, II, 360b–c; also, with a variant story, Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, translated by A. D. Godley (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 1.8–15 (Loeb 117).

the “inside and strength” of Plato’s writings are not poetical but philosophical in their method, discourse, and aim (213, 238–40).

In a similar way, one might imagine Sidney admiring the poetic *techniques* More brings to *Utopia*—its complex characters, attention to setting, paradoxes, literary games and challenges; its story-telling in dialogues and its description; its satire of Europe’s vices and perhaps even features of Utopian society that Hythlodæus promotes. But Sidney makes it clear that More’s work falls short of being an ideal “way” to present a “whole commonwealth.” It is, perhaps, not fully poetic.

Let’s examine more closely those exemplary writings with which Sidney surrounds reference to *Utopia*, all being enlisted to show that the “speaking picture of poesy” uniquely brings illuminating sensations and passion immediately to the “imaginative and judging power” of a reader without the drag of philosophy’s “learned definitions” (222). The examples comprise many genres, beginning with orations of Cicero that, despite not being fictional or narrative, use “poetical helps” to inspire “the force love of country hath in us.” Subsequently, Sidney lists only exemplary stories from verse and drama, fifteen in all and taken from genres such as the *heroic*, highlighting Virgil’s Anchises in burning Troy (*Aeneid*, 2.634–50) and Homer’s Ulysses with Calypso (*Odyssey*, 5.149ff.), and the *tragic*, oddly represented by Sophocles’s offstage action with deluded Ajax slaughtering sheep and oxen, thinking them enemies (*Ajax*, 42–65, 1060–61). And he cites exemplary *characters* given to virtue and vice in fictional narratives, such as wise and temperate Ulysses and Diomedes, Virgil’s model friends Nisus and Eralus (*Aeneid*, 9.433–34), remorseful Oedipus, Aeschylus’s proud and unrepentant Agamemnon, cruel Atreus, the ambitiously violent Thebans Polynices and Eteocles, and the revengeful Medea.<sup>19</sup> Later, Sidney adds characters from narratives and drama who illustrate satire and irony: Terence’s Gnatho from *The Eunuch* and Chaucer’s Pandar in *Troilus* (222). He then refers to the works mentioned above, which illustrate the “most excellent determination of goodness”—as for a model prince (Xenophon’s

19. As Duncan-Jones notes, the more precise references at the beginning of this list give way later to characters that appear in many versions of Greek tragedies (276n222). References are to Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2 vols., trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) (Loeb 63, 64); Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. A. T. Murray, rev. George E. Dimock (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919) (Loeb 104); Sophocles, *Ajax*, *Electra*, *Oedipus Tyrannos*, ed. and trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994) (Loeb 20).

“feigned” Cyrus), a virtuous man (Aeneas), and an excellent commonwealth (*Utopia*). Following these exemplary works, Sidney adds “divine narration” from Scripture, which sets in action the “commonplaces” of moral philosophy: narratives of Jesus with Dives and Lazarus offer, respectively, examples of punishment and reward that “inhabit the memory and judgment” more effectively than do philosophical nostrums.<sup>20</sup> Sidney pairs scriptural narrative with the fables of Aesop, “whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many, more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sound of virtue from these dumb speakers” (223). Excepting Cicero’s orations, which are included due to their exemplary effectiveness and “poetic” rhetorical effects, and to some extent the dialogic *Utopia*, the examples in the *Defence* feature attractive or repellent fictional characters in narratives that, according to Sidney, reveal “all virtues, vices and passions, so in their own natural seats laid to the view that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them” (222). Such narrative imitations are dynamic, enactive, and forceful, bringing readers near to experience, and they readily encourage awareness of the empathetic “conveniency to ourselves or to the general nature” (245) that Sidney terms “delight”—a goal-oriented delight that in turn teaches, moves, and compels an audience to act virtuously. Or, like derisive laughter, the poet’s fictive imitations may cause an audience to be repelled by characters and/or their actions. This functional, dynamic poetics places a premium on experiential delight and laughter, a valuation that seems to be foreshadowed in Sidney’s semi-serious comment to Languet in a letter dated 1 March 1578: “For what is the point of stirring up our thoughts [*cogitationes*] to all kinds of knowledge, if we are given nowhere to put it into practice to contribute to the common good [*publica utilitas*]*—*which in a corrupt age we may not hope for? Who learns music, if not for delight? Architecture if not to construct buildings?”<sup>21</sup> The job of the

20. Sidney refers to “learned divines” who profess that “instructing parables” such as that of the prodigal son are not “historical acts” but images placed before the mind’s eye, while the punishment of Dives and heavenly reward for Lazarus have a more lasting mnemonic persistence than do “moral commonplaces” (223).

21. *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney*, 2 vols., ed. Roger Kuin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2:817; “quem enim ad finem sunt nobis nostrae cogitationes ad uariam cognitionem eccitandae, nisi locus illius exercendae detur, ut inde publica utilitas redundet, quod in corrupto seculo sperare non licet. quis musicam nisi ad delectationem? Architecturam nisi ad aedes fabricandas discit?” (2:814). On dynamic and enactive processes, see Giovanna Colombetti, *The Feeling Body: Affective Science Meets the*

poet, Sidney writes in the *Defence*, is to create the delight that puts into practice readers' virtue, even prior to conscious awareness of it.

In contrast, it would seem, are more static, less fully narrative forms such as the dialogue, travelogue, and Lucianic satire that comprise most of *Utopia*, a work whose provocative ideas emerge from thought and reflection more than action and whose greatest appeal is to a Latin-reading, elite audience with a capacity to enjoy the work's verbal fireworks, etymological gamesmanship, satire, and argumentation as well as to perceive, engage in, weigh, and evaluate its critiques of English and European politics, international cultures, and human nature. More's second letter to Giles, which appeared only in the 1517 edition among the earliest four, points teasingly and tellingly both to the fictionality of *Utopia* and to the kind of audience required to perceive it. Were *Utopia* a fiction, More writes tongue-in-cheek, "I would certainly have softened [it] a little, so that, while imposing on vulgar ignorance, I gave hints to the more learned which would enable them to see what I was about." He would have deployed, as he does, of course, the disguised significance of names like Hythlodæus, *Utopia*, Anyder, and Amaurot.<sup>22</sup> Sidney no doubt appreciated the misleading Lucianic satire evident in More's language and in the elaborately playful inventions that comprise *Utopia*'s geography, culture, and society because such *ludus* is, finally, *utile*: the fiction of "nowhere" draws attention to defective governance "somewhere" and to the sinfulness of lapsed humanity.<sup>23</sup> Sidney seems even to imitate More's elitist play with language in the *Arcadias* when he devises names such as Cleophila, Pyrocles, Musidorus, Basilius, and Gynecia; when he invents complex societies and when he uses irony and comedy to critique the limits of justice in a fallen world that relies more on passion than reason. But Sidney

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*Enactive Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 53–70, 101–06, and Terence Cave, *Thinking with Literature: Towards a Cognitive Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 28–30.

22. George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams, and Clarence H. Miller, eds., *Utopia: Latin Text and English Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 269; "At certe sic temperassem tamen ut si vulgi abuti ignoratione vellem, litterarioribus saltem aliqua praeifixissem vestigia quibus institutum nostrum facile pervestigarent" (268).

23. See Gerard B. Wegemer on More's prefatory letter to a translation of Lucian, concerning the Horatian dictum of delight with instruction, in *Young Thomas More and the Arts of Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 62–63, citing More's *Complete Works* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963) 3.1.3. Like Sidney, More objects to the "fruitless contentions of philosophers" (5/10). More also emphasizes that Lucian excludes the "wanton wiles of the poets"—a view with which Sidney might agree, but only if the poet's "wiles" are gratuitous and incapable of leading readers to virtue.

embeds his learned fictions in action-oriented narrative rather than in noetic dialogue and description. In contrast to arguments on either side that slip into indeterminacy despite the pointedness of Utopian satire aimed at those in the know, Sidney constructs a poetics that aims at a broad audience—vulgar and elite—wherein all may and should be compelled to do good: he writes of “even those hard-hearted evil men who think virtue a school name [...] and therefore despise the austere admonitions of the philosopher, and feel not the inward reason they stand upon, yet [are] content to be delighted” by stories. Such delight, for Sidney, “is all the good-fellow poet seems to promise, and so [readers] 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” (227). As a “good-fellow,” Sidney’s poet assumes the persona of a sociable or docile companion, at a level that is the same or below that of nearly all readers, in order to compel virtuous action even surreptitiously by merely seeming to offer delight and so to lead even the evil and ignorant to desire goodness, “ere themselves be aware”—almost instantly and without conscious awareness.<sup>24</sup> Such an effect requires side-stepping “inward reason” and enabling the “conveniency” or coming together of text and reader in a dynamic *experience* of virtue, vice, and passion. In contrast, as judged by readers as diverse as George Logan, Elizabeth McCutcheon, and Dominic Baker-Smith, *Utopia* seems designed to spur the very thought and exercise of the “inward reason” Sidney’s fictions seek to avoid, at least during readers’ first encounters when the poet’s tale “doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue” (227).

Writing of a narrative dynamic that is peculiar to *Utopia*, William T. Cotton follows J. H. Hexter’s argument that More began in 1515 to compose the more “static” portions of the work—the systematic description that appeared in the 1516 first edition as book 2. Of this section, Cotton observes, “there is very little sense in the description [...] of the quotidian, of the day-to-day quality of life. No one is named. There is no chronology of the events of Raphael’s stay on the island. There is almost no specifically *narrative* interest in the ‘story’ Raphael

24. Stillman offers a detailed, scholarly analysis of the rhetoric of the *Defence* as an oration rather than a dialogue, with a persuasive scope and argument. Stillman points to, for Sidney, the reader’s necessary “accommodation” and “affective identification” with a poetic text as the source of poetry’s “distinctive power,” with the awakening of knowledge and a subsequent dynamic “metamorphic power” capable of changing the reader (63–122). Sidney’s *Defence* emphasizes the poet’s agency in this expression of power and suggests that readers’ conscious awareness need not be present for delight to do its work.

tells.”<sup>25</sup> As a consequence, according to Cotton, More added book 1 with its detailed attention to historical places, names, and events that lend reality to the rudimentary history and future of *Utopia* in book 2 and thereby create a more dynamic impression of verisimilitude despite the work’s general “lack of purely narrative detail” (43). Even with the additions, Cotton observes, the completed *Utopia* offers little or no chronological context for isolated events in *Utopia*’s history—the deeds of King Utopus, the founding of the island, named battles, and state visits; therefore, Cotton concludes, the work lacks narrative, novelistic traits of the sort that appeal to modern readers. Whatever the accuracy of Cotton’s belief about modern readers, a taste for narrative was becoming well-established in Elizabethan England, cutting against the grain of humanists *and* Protestants who objected to older narrative forms such as chivalric and courtly romances and who instead had promoted ancient literary forms such as the satire and dialogue that shape *Utopia*.<sup>26</sup> Patrick Parrinder emphasizes that the character Morus deliberately refused in *Utopia* to recount Hythloday’s *tales* of travel adventures involving monsters and marvels, opting for a frame that emphasizes the play of ideas, with brief narratives such as that of the Anemolian ambassadors set within it.<sup>27</sup> If fictive utopian society presents what Darko Suvin has termed a “cognitive estrangement” that introduces a new perspective and new way to understand one’s own world, it does so chiefly by means of cultural descriptions and contrasting points of view, not by means of narratives whose “pictures” compel an audience to enact virtue.<sup>28</sup>

When Sidney writes that More’s “way of patterning a commonwealth was most absolute though he perchance hath not so absolutely performed it,” the assertion of the *absoluteness* of More’s “way” implies that Sidney has considered how to present a commonwealth effectively even though the precise significance

25. William T. Cotton, “Five-fold Crisis in *Utopia*: A Foreshadow of Major Modern *Utopian Strategies*,” *Utopian Studies* 14.2 (2003): 41–67, 42, my emphasis; see also Patrick Parrinder on More’s muted narrative in “Utopia and Romance,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 154–73; see especially 153–56.

26. Herman, 53–54.

27. Parrinder, 155–56.

28. Suvin is cited by Nicole Pohl, “Utopianism after More,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 51–78, 56–57.



of More's errancy is ambiguous.<sup>29</sup> Regarding the *Defence's* use of "absolute" in reference to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* as a "heroical poem" (218), S. K. Heninger, Jr. notes that the perfection Sidney signifies by this word pertains "both in the sense that it circumspectly follows the principles of imitation without contamination from other modes of discourse, and also in the sense that it provides an image so comprehensive as to approach a philosophical absolute."<sup>30</sup> While the mimetic purity of *Utopia* as an "absolute" dialogue is subject to debate, its tangled interpretive history suggests that it offers little or no assurance of the "philosophical absolute" that Heninger found in Xenophon's poem. Whatever Sidney intended when referring to More-the-poet's "most absolute" way of outlining a commonwealth, he specifically objects to More's "not so absolutely" performing it, "for the question is," Sidney continues, "whether the feigned image of poetry or the regular instruction of philosophy hath the more force in teaching" (223–24). In context, then, the point at issue for Sidney seems to be less More's religion and character and more *Utopia's* foundation in "regular"—rule-bound—philosophies that employ dialogue, these lacking the corrective guidance of the poet's imaginative speaking pictures. J. Christopher Warner concludes that during the 1580s and 90s, English political and religious writers in general grew increasingly wary of the dialogue form despite its ongoing use. In part, these concerns resulted from dialogue's presentation of arguments "on either side" that inevitably gave voice to opponents of Elizabeth's "settlement" (70–71). Moreover, the open-ended dialogic frame of *Utopia* undermines the poet's ability to move an audience to a particular action, in contrast to the many poetic forms that are praised in the *Defence* precisely because they strike, pierce, and "possess" the sight of the mind, without requiring consideration of alternatives.

Sidney locates the forceful *energeia* of poetry in the type and quality of its "feigned image." In contrast to the "wordish description" of philosophers (and, perhaps, Hythlodæus's *Utopia*), Sidney's "peerless" poet creates a "perfect picture" (221). Not only does this poetics privilege the visual, but it emphasizes the verbal image's effects upon "the powers of the mind" (221). Sidney illustrates

29. "Absolute" denotes "perfect," as indicated in Scott Evans (19) and in *Lexicons of Early Modern English (LEME)*, ed. Ian Lancashire (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), <http://leme.library.utoronto.ca/>, which cites instances throughout the sixteenth century.

30. S. K. Heninger, Jr., *Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 278–79, 561n107.



the effect of the poetic image first with simple examples, by noting how language can furnish an image of the size, shape, and colour of something never actually seen, such as an elephant or rhinoceros. Or, more complexly, the poet can produce a “true lively knowledge” of a “gorgeous palace,” surpassing in so doing even its architect, who can describe it only as if “by rote.” The architect’s abstracted reproduction of the palace cannot move a reader’s “*inward conceit*” nor produce “straightways,” “without need of any description,” a “judicial comprehending” of what the poet creates (222, my emphasis). The distinction here is between what cognitivists might call *enactive* language—words conveying the poet’s sensations and feelings and impressing them upon a reader’s mind—and merely *descriptive* language, the latter useful as a memorable illustration, perhaps, but not as a way to inspire action, affect judgment, or enact virtue.<sup>31</sup> The latter offers the immediate, totalizing effects of passion Sidney attributed to Pyrocles when in *Arcadia* he first glimpsed Philoclea’s image in a painting that “conquered” his reason.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to the dialogue and its concern with arguments on either side, compelling fictions act much like the ekphrastic art whose images Quintilian finds particularly effective when adapted to language in that they not only inform but also *control* the hearer.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.

If Sidney objects to the fictive stasis and unstable absolutes that result from *Utopia*’s social analysis and dialogue, his own Arcadian narratives experiment with alternative ways of developing fiction. As is well known, *Arcadia* exists in two versions composed on either side of the accepted date for the *Defence* (late 1582), and it is likely that Sidney implemented in the incomplete revision of the original (the *Old Arcadia*, completed ca. 1580) narrative principles he had

31. See Raymond A. Mar, Keith Oatley, Maja Djikic, and Justin Mullin, “Emotion and Narrative Fiction: Interactive Influences before, during, and after Reading,” *Cognition and Emotion* 25.5 (2011): 818–33, 822. A large body of scholarship examines the relation of narrative to processes of thought: see for example David Herman, “Stories as a Tool for Thinking” and Uri Margolin, “Cognitive Science, the Thinking Mind, and Literary Narrative,” both in *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*, ed. David Herman (Stanford CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 2003), 163–92, 271–94.

32. *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 141. Hereafter cited parenthetically in text as CPA.

33. *Institutio oratoria*, 8.3.62.

formulated while developing the *Defence's* justification of the efficacy of poetic fictions.<sup>34</sup>

Like Hythlodæus's *Utopia* in book 2, Sidney's Arcadian society in both versions fails to outline a political state capable in itself of enacting justice. Less obvious than questions evident in More's dialogue concerning the best form of the commonwealth and *Utopia's* applicability to a sinful world is a question embedded in Sidney's Arcadian narratives: how may a sovereign act justly when reason leads to injustice either through misunderstanding of providence (as for Basilius when mistaking the Delphic oracle) or through unyielding trust in human law (as for Euarchus when sentencing his son and nephew to death)? Unlike *Utopia*, however, the Arcadian state and the inhabitants of its story-world are guided by a providence that intrudes into human actions to save unwitting sovereigns like Basilius and even the wisest governors, like Euarchus, from their incapacity to comprehend and execute the divine plan. Both versions of *Arcadia* introduce dialogues wherein interlocutors argue *in utramque partem*, but the dialogic exchanges of Sidney's characters prove to be more conversational and emotion-driven than academic and rational—better suited to unfolding a narrative than ending in contemplation. Under the guise of rational debate, Sidney's characters conceal driving, emotional subtexts and private agendas. In the revised version of *Arcadia* especially, Sidney weaves dialogue into emotionally driven narrative.

In the revised book 2, Sidney adds much new dialogue, including lengthy private conversations replete with digressive back-stories and embedded narratives-within-narratives. These involve mainly the princes Pyrocles and Musidorus and their beloveds, the princesses Philoclea and Pamela. Elsewhere, he deploys dialogue in its formal, academic sense of presenting arguments *in utramque partem*: in the revised portion of book 3, for example, Cecropia tries and fails to use reason to win for her son Amphialus the hands first of Philoclea (chapter 5) and then of Pamela (chapter 10), with the latter exchange varying from the dialogic tradition by offering a very firm conclusion when Pamela scorns the “filthiness of impiety” found in Cecropia's atheism (CPA, 492).

34. Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 168, 251, 256–57. Regina Schneider, “‘Within the reache of no man liuing’: New Questions about the Revision of Sidney's *Arcadia*,” in *English Prose Fiction*, ed. Donald Beecher (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1998), 257–77, argues for a synchronous development of the *Defence* and multiple revisions of the *Old Arcadia*.

In book 1, comparison of the original and revised versions of *Arcadia* allows us to observe how Sidney in the revision incorporated dialogue within narrative, under the influence, perhaps, of his developing poetics and its emphasis on narrative in the *Defence*. Both versions present a dialogue involving Pyrocles and Musidorus, who take opposing sides of several common academic topoi: action against contemplation, reason against passion, the virtue of men against that of women, and true against false friendship. These and similar topics appear in early modern disputations and in popular dialogues like Baldesar Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* and later in Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. In both versions of *Arcadia*, the lover Pyrocles is for a time set against his friend and cousin Musidorus, their dialogue providing an intellectual cover for contention rooted in hurt feelings, suspicion, and anger. In both versions, the Arcadian dispute eventually modulates into reconciliation and renewed friendship. Despite these commonalities, the dialogue in the revised version divides topoi that are all presented in a single series in the *Old Arcadia*. At the same time, the revision introduces new narrative episodes set between the two portions of the dialogue, with the dialogues themselves woven into the intervening action in ways that encourage readers to inhabit the princes' points of view.

The dialogue in book 1 of the *Old Arcadia* occurs *in utramque partem* much as one would expect of young princes who have been educated in rhetorical "conceits not unworthy of the best speakers," a point disclosed in back-story added to the revised book 2 (CPA, 258). In the *Old Arcadia*, the princes' commonplaces and rationality prove to conceal self-interested passions that undermine a superifice of skeptical reserve—the emotional distance that typifies academic debate and, particularly, Morus's reactions to Hythlodæus's praise of the Utopians.<sup>35</sup> In the *Old Arcadia*, the narrator discloses to readers the irrational passions within Pyrocles after the prince sees a portrait that includes the image of Cleophila, whose figure ekphrastically compels Pyrocles's desire and reveals not only "the show of her beauties" but, as "a man might judge," her interior self, including "bashfulness, love, and reverence [...], mixed with a sweet grief to find her virtue suspected" (OA, 10–11). Pyrocles is "moved" by the *energeia* of this image just before he engages in an extended dialogue that

35. *The Old Arcadia*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 10–11 (hereafter cited parenthetically in text and abbreviated "OA").

begins when Musidorus urges that they leave Arcadia to join Pyrocles's father Euarchus in Thrace. The love-struck Pyrocles challenges this call to action because of a seeming interest in contemplation and "higher thoughts" (OA, 12–15), and the result at first seems to be a conventional debate for and against *otio*. Subsequently, the dialogue turns to other common questions: whether a man in love is emasculated by his indulgence in passion; whether love is an ennobling virtue or a demeaning vice (OA, 17–20); and whether masculine friendship can survive when one falls in love with a woman (OA, 21–24). Although this dialogue may seem similar to *Utopia*'s in that the intellectual questions it raises are not resolved, the princes do find mutual ground. Their conciliation results, however, from the modulation of feelings of betrayal and jealousy rather than from reason, and it ends with professions of love. After arguing vehemently against erotic love, Musidorus finally vows to help clothe Pyrocles as an Amazon, the better to win princess Cleophila.

During the argument, Sidney's narrator pauses to note Pyrocles's lack of concern for the topics being debated. The prince goes through the motions of dialogue, allowing himself to be distracted from his genuine "devotion" for Cleophila only because, half-aware of Musidorus's "general points," he feels he must respond for the "respect he bare to his friend" (OA, 19). Here and elsewhere, the narrator reveals that the dialogue merely conceals tension of another kind: Musidorus's emotional distress at his friend's love for another and Pyrocles's erotic drive to pursue Cleophila. When the debate reaches an emotional climax, with the two princes at the point of disavowing their friendship, the pretense of rational dialogue falls away completely and is replaced by the princes kissing, embracing, weeping, and expressing mutual love (OA, 23). Here, the "feigned image" of rational dialogue conceals an affective overplus that finally seeps into and undermines the superifice of noetic debate.

In Sidney's incomplete *New Arcadia* (known principally through the *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, a hybrid of the old and new versions), the dialogue of Musidorus and Pyrocles reappears, though now in a fragmented form that has the effect of drawing out the contention and allowing readers more completely to share the points of view of the princes. As in the *Old Arcadia*, Pyrocles inadvertently reveals his love for the painted image of a princess (renamed "Philoclea") in the course of a debate about whether it is better to seek adventure in the world (Musidorus's position) or to remain in Arcadia to contemplate its beauties (Pyrocles's view). Unlike *Utopia*, wherein the narrator

is Morus, a homodiegetic participant in the dialogue, Sidney's heterodiegetic narrator stands apart from both characters but nonetheless conveys through Musidorus's observations the appearance, voice, and actions that signal a change in Pyrocles. By reading his cousin's nonverbal language, Musidorus arrives at the climactic declaration that Pyrocles is "one of these fantastical, mind-infected people that children and musicians call 'Lovers'" (OA, 16; CPA, 114).

The dialogue in the *Old Arcadia* pauses only briefly after this open break in the veneer of rational debate, going on quickly first to Pyrocles's disclosure of his plans to take on the costume of an Amazon as the means to gain access to Basilius's daughter and then to Musidorus's warning that love is an "unnatural rebellion" against reason, being "womanish" and "the basest and fruitlesst of all passions" (OA, 17–18). In the *New Arcadia*, however, Sidney uses Kalendar's sudden entrance and offer of a hunt to interrupt the dialogue and to facilitate the princes' temporary separation and Pyrocles's secret departure to Philoclea's forest retreat. Adding new episodes concerning Helen's unreciprocated love for Amphialus and recounting Musidorus's failed search throughout Greece for his missing cousin, Sidney returns to the dialogue almost thirty pages later (in Evans's edition). Musidorus, having returned wearily to Arcadia after fruitless travels, rests in a wood when he sees just "so much" of a veiled lady that it "was a surety" to him "that all was excellent" (CPA, 130). The subsequent focalized blazon and description of the woman's beautiful singing are pointedly erotic, both for Musidorus (being "moved [...] as warily as he could, to follow her") and, perhaps, for the unwitting reader. We are invited to imagine sensual delights only to have them shattered by Musidorus's sudden and comic recognition that the voice is Pyrocles's (CPA, 129–32). In this addition to the revised version, Sidney's calculated erotic fantasy brings to the surface a homoeroticism that gives new force to Musidorus's subsequent attacks against Pyrocles's "womanish" appearance, against love, and against false friendship. And the added action gives new emphasis to the princes' eventual reconciliation and mutual profession of love (CPA, 139).<sup>36</sup> Taken together, Sidney's use of

36. Lisa Hopkins, "Passion and Reason in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*," and Steven Mentz, "Gender, Genre, and Sexy Dressing in Sidney's *New Arcadia*," both in *Prose Fiction and Early Modern Sexualities in England, 1570–1640*, ed. Constance C. Relihan and Goran V. Stanivukovic (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 62–75 and 77–91; Hopkins and Mentz address this passage but without full consideration of Musidorus's homoerotic response to the cross-dressed Pyrocles. On which, see my essay, "Friendship's Passion: Love-Fellowship in Sidney's *New Arcadia*," in *Discourses and Representations*

an external narrator, intervening episodes, the invitation of the audience to emotional engagement, and the long interruption in the dialogue emphasize the power of interior passions, the delightful and/or laughable actions they produce, and their dominance over rational dialogue.

Sidney's skill at disassembling and interlacing episodes such as the dialogue in book 1 is a specific object of praise in William Scott's *The Model of Poesy* (ca. 1599). In this recently published manuscript, Scott claims that Sidney's technique in fictive imitation surpasses the exemplary narrative patterning of Heliodorus's *Aethiopica*, composed in the third to fourth century CE and translated into English by Thomas Underdowne in 1569:

I think it plain Sir Philip Sidney in the general gate of conveyance did imitate [Heliodorus], and I think it as plain that he exceeds both him and all other for a delightful easy intricateness and entangling his particular narrations one with another, that makes them as it were several acts, every one having a kind of completeness in itself, the final issue so much more welcome by how much it is by the difficulties and interruptions hid and held aloof from the longing mind.<sup>37</sup>

Strongly influenced by the aesthetics and poetics of the *Defence* and its application in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, Scott points to the linkage between Sidney's poetics with its focus on incitement to virtue and its application to *Arcadia*, where delight emerges from the resolution of its intricately interwoven "narrations." Elsewhere in the *Model*, Scott cites *Arcadia* as one among many examples of *epopoeia*, the "compiling of praise or celebrating praiseworthy things" in a narrative that features "acts of virtue and valour." He illustrates *epopoeia* with reference to the "ancient" verse narratives of Homer and Virgil, the "modern" poems of Ariosto and Tasso, and old and modern fictionalized verse histories. Scott then turns to prose examples of *epopoeia*, setting Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* alongside More's *Utopia* and Sidney's *Arcadia*, the latter described as a "mixed kind" that

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*of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700*, ed. Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere López, and Lorna Hutson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 65–79.

37. William Scott, *The Model of Poesy*, ed. Gavin Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 37.

combines “pastoral and much verse” with prose and that is notable for having “excellently limned the faces of all virtues and affections.”<sup>38</sup>

In Scott’s unusual pairing of *Utopia* and *Arcadia*, the former is not presented as errant, but the latter receives relatively greater esteem in that it is said to figure well “all virtues and affections.” The works are seemingly linked in that both offer praise—of a utopian commonwealth or the moral, sexual, and social growth of young princes and princesses under the beneficent guidance of providence. Perhaps Scott’s presentation of More’s fiction as exemplary owes something to a gradual reevaluation of *Utopia* evident in Sidney’s equivocal praise of it. Already in 1584, Guillaume de Saluste du Bartas, in *La seconde semaine*, had joined More and Sidney with Nicholas Bacon and Queen Elizabeth as four “firm pillars” of the English language.<sup>39</sup> Reassessments of More’s literary significance seem to coincide with changes in More’s personal reputation. In the “Apology for Ariosto” prefixed to the 1591 translation of *Orlando Furioso*, Sir John Harington praises More with little hint of the reformers’ objections: More was “a man of great wisdom and learning but yet a little inclined (as good wits are many times) to scoffing.”<sup>40</sup> Harington, like Scott later, is especially attuned to *epopoeia* in the form of the “historical poem,” and he likewise is drawn to innovative narrative techniques, especially Ariosto’s “break[ing] off narrations very abruptly.” Although he admits the practice may confuse “loose unattentive readers,” he praises its effect of drawing a reader “with a continual thirst to

38. Scott, 19. Alan Stewart cites Fulke Greville’s later *Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney* (ca. 1610–14), which uses language that echoes Scott’s: Sidney’s “intent and scope was to turn the barren philosophy precepts into pregnant images of life [...] to limn out such exact pictures of every posture in the mind that any man [...] might (as in a glass) see how to set a good countenance upon all the discountenance of adversity”; see Alan Stewart, *Philip Sidney: A Double Life* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), 256–57.

39. Alexander’s introduction links Scott to Sidney’s possible translation of du Bartas, noting that the manuscript of *The Model of Poesy* also contains a fragmentary English translation of the whole of the first day of creation and just over half of the second (Alexander, ed., xv–xvi). See also Stewart, 255–56; Anne Lake Prescott, *French Poets and the English Renaissance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 167–234, and her “Renaissance References to Thomas More,” 12. Prescott’s article traces the More-Bacon-Sidney-Elizabeth grouping through Joshua Sylvester’s translation of Du Bartas’s second week of creation and subsequent adaptations, such as Thomas Lodington’s subordination of More, Bacon, and Sidney under Queen Elizabeth in a poem in *Exequiae illustrissimi equitis, D. Philippi Sidnaei* (1587) (“Renaissance References to Thomas More,” 16).

40. Sir John Harington, “An Apology for Ariosto: Poetry, Epic, Morality (1591),” in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 302–24, 321.

read out the whole work,” and it leads to a conclusion that will “close up the diverse matters briefly and cleanly.” Harington defends Ariosto by appealing specifically to the authority and practice of Sidney, who, had he “counted this a fault, [...] would not have done so himself in his *Arcadia*.”<sup>41</sup> Although the references to More and *Utopia* by Scott and Harington are relatively favourable, their praise nevertheless remains vague or equivocal, reminiscent of Sidney’s in the *Defence*, for whom the best “way of patterning a commonwealth” was not through rational dialogue but through powerful emotional experience achieved through narrative and aimed initially at reform of action more than mind, at teaching *through* delight.

While there is no reason to believe that Sidney admired More the “man,” his double vision of *Utopia*—both its admirable exercise of imagination and its defective presentation of it—permitted him to admire the “way” *Utopia* sought to pattern “a whole commonwealth” even as he doubted its literary presentation as dialogue. Whatever his reaction to the biographical and/or literary “man” called More, Sidney exonerates “the poet”—the “right poet”—from the “fault,” and, both in the context of the *Defence* and in the subordination of dialogue in the *New Arcadia*, he increases the importance of narrative as the best way to present fiction. Insofar as More aspired to and partly achieved the status of “right poet” as an inventor of fiction, Sidney could praise *Utopia*.

After Robinson, Sidney was perhaps the first English writer openly to admire *Utopia*, and perhaps the first to assess it, albeit briefly and ambiguously, as a *literary* work. *Utopia*’s use of dialogue, satire, and categorical description produces ambiguity and irresolution that Sidney would likely resist in favour of narratives that compel virtuous action, yet he gives *Utopia* a place next to—or perhaps just below—the classics by Xenophon and Virgil. By referring to More’s “fault,” moreover, Sidney gestures toward what he considers a more effective way to present an imaginative commonwealth, one that draws readers to love virtue.

41. Harington, 319.