

Sidney's Wounds: Poetic Physicality, Revision, and Remembrance in the Sidney Circle

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The existence of both earlier and later versions of poems written by the Sidney circle reveals a hitherto overlooked Elizabethan writing practice: namely, the revising of a poem to describe more richly the physical act of composition. In the Sidney circle, in particular, this writing practice was aimed at memorializing Sir Philip Sidney and participating in his literary legacy. In his sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney had become obsessed with describing the body of the poet as he composes aloud and then writes down what he speaks. I call such an account of literary composition in its corporeal and material aspects “poetic physicality.” By setting the precedent for describing the compositional process so vividly, Sidney actually influenced how his family and literary followers wrote, for in revising their poetry they often channel and even quote his visceral depictions of writing. Where the writers below differ from Sidney is in their also alluding to the manner of his death. That is, while revising their poems to depict the act of composition in greater detail, each writer also incorporates the pain and blood of Sidney’s wounding at the fateful battle of Zutphen. The fact that they so often revise their poems to create a more intense, “wounded” experience of composition indicates just how important the *topos* of poetic physicality was to this famed literary group.

First and foremost among these rememberers of Sidney is Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, the main figure, besides Sidney, in the first half of this essay. Her elegy for her brother, “To the Angel Spirit,” exists in basically two versions: an earlier version, which survived in Samuel Daniel’s papers and was mistakenly printed with his *Works* volume of 1623; and a later copy, intended to accompany her gift of the *Psalms* to Queen Elizabeth, probably during a planned visit to Herbert’s Wilton

home in 1599.¹ Once the occasion for speculation about Herbert's feelings for her brother, the revised version of "To the Angel Spirit" actually reveals Herbert's complex sense of her own body as it writes.² And so, as critics have more recently noted, while this dedicatory poem to her *Psalms* humbly acknowledges her late brother's starting of the project, it also declares her own poetic mastery and authorial identity.³ Beth Fiske has argued that Herbert's experience of translating the *Psalms* provided her with the impetus to revise "To the Angel Spirit," but I propose that her brother's sonnet sequence provided another, perhaps even more potent, inspiration.⁴ That is, differences between the two versions of Herbert's elegy demonstrate how thoroughly she absorbed Sidney's representation of composition in *Astrophil and Stella*, making that highly physical act her own. By emphasizing the body of the writer, Herbert fashions a manual poetic physicality that contrasts with the oral world of her *Psalms* translation—and indeed with the Protestant *Psalms* tradition as a whole, which placed new emphasis on the laity's singing of the *Psalms* with the advent of the Calvinist French-Genevan and Sternhold and Hopkins English Psalters.⁵ In fact, Sidney's and Herbert's rich

¹ For a discussion of these two versions, see Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan, eds., *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1: 74-7 and 303-4. All quotations from both versions of the poem will be cited parenthetically from this edition. On the creation of a presentation copy of the *Psalms* for the queen, see Michael G. Brennan, "The Queen's Proposed Visit to Wilton House in 1599 and the 'Sidney Psalms,'" *Sidney Journal* 20.1 (2002): 27-53, and Shannon Miller, "Mary Sidney and the Gendered Strategies for the Writing of Poetry," in *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1500-1700: Vol. 2, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 59-80.

² See G. F. Waller, *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke: A Critical Study of her Writings and Literary Milieu* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, University of Salzburg, 1979), 97-100. Seventeenth-century antiquarian John Aubrey reported an old gentleman's gossip that Philip and Mary lay together: John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Richard Barber (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2004), 140. Waller later apologized for heeding Aubrey in "The Countess of Pembroke and Gendered Reading," in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 335-6.

³ Beth Wynne Fiske, "'To the Angell Spirit...': Mary Sidney's Entry into the 'World of Words,'" in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*, 263-75; Margaret P. Hannay, "'Do What Men May Sing': Mary Sidney and the Tradition of Admonitory Dedication," in *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985), 149-65.

⁴ Fiske, "To the Angell Spirit..."

⁵ Congregational singing of the *Psalms* was more often practiced in the Elizabethan period than earlier, probably owing to the liturgical experience of the Marian exiles worshipping on the Continent; see Beth Quitslund, *The Reformation in Rhyme:*

descriptions of the act of writing apparently inspired one of the scribes of the *Sidney Psalms*, John Davies of Hereford, to do something similar in his own sonnets.

Taking Herbert's elegy as a point of reference, then, the second half of this essay will look at poetic physicality as manifested in other works associated with the Sidney circle—those of Fulke Greville, Robert Sidney, Barnabe Barnes, and Samuel Daniel. Beginning with Greville, I compare his account of Sidney's compositional practice with Sidney's own in his dedication of the *Arcadia* to his sister. As I suggest, a main point of disagreement between Greville and Herbert was over whether to embrace the physical pleasures of writing discovered by Sidney. I then show how Robert's revision of Sonnet 26 reveals him to be under the same personal and literary pressures as his sister Mary, as he, too, incorporates Sidney's wounds into his compositional practice. I conclude my essay with two sonneteers who, while not initially members of the Sidney circle, tried to enter their literary world, one of them successfully. The first writer, Barnabe Barnes, only suggests a connection with the circle by referring to the manner of Sidney's death and clumsily copying the lessons on poetic physicality taught by *Astrophil and Stella*. The second writer, Samuel Daniel, succeeds where Barnes fails, due in part to his original, defter handling of the Sidneian legacy and also to his actual revising of his sonnet sequence *Delia* to pay tribute not just to Sidney but also to Herbert herself, his eventual patron. What especially unites Herbert and Daniel is their imagining of their works as written in blood in the midst of great physical suffering while under the blessing of hands that direct their poetic efforts. This shared physicality suggests that Daniel was a careful reader and perhaps even commentator on Herbert's "To the Angel Spirit."

1

I begin, then, with the poetic physicality that Philip Sidney himself sets out in *Astrophil and Stella*. Throughout his sonnet sequence, Sidney portrays Astrophil as sweating over his writings and pouring his body into them—especially his heart and the lungs that

Sternhold, Hopkins and the English Metrical Psalter: 1547-1603 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 6 and *passim*; Micheline White, "Protestant Women's Writing and Congregational Psalm Singing: from the Song of the Exiled 'Handmaid' (1555) to the Countess of Pembroke's *Psalms* (1599)," *Sidney Journal* 23.1-2 (2005): 61-82. For Calvin's developing view of church music leading up to the Beza-Marot Psalter, see Charles Garside, *The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music, 1536-1543*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 69, part 4 (1979).

exhale his breath. Andrew Strycharski has commented that the “affect often associated with orality is in Sidney’s sonnets mobilized for writing.”⁶ In fact, Sidney goes further than this by having Astrophil engage in oral composition at the start of the sequence and frequently thereafter. Appearing in the middle of *Astrophil and Stella*, Sonnet 50 is the *tour de force* example of this oral physicality:

STELLA, the fulnesse of my thoughts of thee
 Cannot be staid within my panting breast,
 But they do swell and struggle forth of me,
 Till that in words thy figure be exprest.
 And yet as soone as they so formed be,
 According to my Lord *Love*’s owne behest:
 With sad eyes I their weake proportion see,
 To portraitt that which in this world is best.
 So that I cannot chuse but write my mind,
 And cannot chuse but put out what I write,
 While those poore babes their death in birth do find:
 And now my pen these lines had dashed quite,
 But that they stopt his furie from the same,
 Because their forefront bare sweet *Stella*’s name.⁷

The sonnet begins in the poet’s panting chest, and by extension his heart, which harbors the thoughts he would utter. These thoughts are the images of Stella sent to the heart by the imagination, as well as the passions of desire that these images arouse in his heart.⁸ The act of panting implies that Astrophil’s heart is heated by these erotic passions and needs to be cooled, according to the Renaissance understanding of the lungs as refrigerators of the heart.⁹ Astrophil’s increased rate of respiration also provides him with more vital spirits necessary both for animating his body and for producing the finer “animal spirits” involved in intellectual

⁶ Andrew Strycharski, “Literacy, Education, and Affect in *Astrophil and Stella*,” *Studies in English Literature* 48.1 (2008), 46.

⁷ All quotations from *Astrophil and Stella* are cited parenthetically from William A. Ringler, ed., *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

⁸ For an Elizabethan account of the role of the imagination and the heart in creating passions, see Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, ed. William Webster Newbold (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 123.

⁹ See, for example, Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: Everyman’s Library, 1964), 1:153.

activity, such as composition.¹⁰ Along with this increased respiration, then, comes speech. That the thoughts of Astrophil's heart demand to be uttered recalls the Renaissance comparison of the lungs to the heart's spokesperson, as recorded by Robert Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). For him, the lungs are "the town-clerk or crier (one terms it), the instrument of voice, as an orator to a king; annexed to the heart, to express his thoughts by voice."¹¹

Astrophil thus begins to compose his sonnet aloud before writing it down. The movement from speaking the poem in the first four lines to writing the poem in the next four is quick, reinforcing Astrophil's claim that this compositional process is inevitable ("I cannot chuse but write my mind"). Yet seeing provides an impression different from hearing, for when Astrophil writes his spoken words he is suddenly able to see "their weake proportion" before him on the page. In the sestet, he thus prepares to cross out his lines, when the poem is suddenly saved by Stella's name, the word that began the poem and that Astrophil repeatedly voices aloud throughout the sequence. Sidney's portrayal of Astrophil first speaking and then writing his poem comes full circle here, in a recursive, corporeal process not just of oral composition but also of oral revision. That is, Astrophil does not stop speaking once he has begun to write the poem; rather, the ending suggests that he returns to speaking as he considers destroying or revising his sonnet in the making.

Many other examples of this oral poetic physicality in Sidney's sequence could be cited, but Sonnet 6, in particular, appears to have drawn the attention of Sidney's sister most of all:

SOME Lovers speake when they their Muses entertaine,
 Of hopes begot by feare, of wot not what desires:
 Of force of heav'nly beames, infusing hellish paine:
 Of living deaths, deare wounds, faire stormes and freesing fires:
 Some one his song in *Jove*, and *Jove's* strange tales attires,
 Broadred with buls and swans, powdred with golden raine:
 Another humbler wit to shepheard's pipe retires,
 Yet hiding royall bloud full oft in rurall vaine.
 To some a sweetest plaint, a sweetest stile affords,
 While teares powre out his inke, and sighs breathe out his
 words:

¹⁰ Andreas Vesalius, *On the Fabric of the Human Body*, ed. William Frank Richardson and John Burd Carman (Novato, CA: Norman Publishing, 2009), 5: 161-2.

¹¹ Burton, *Anatomy*, 1:153.

His paper, pale dispaire, and paine his pen doth move.
 I can speake what I feele, and feele as much as they,
 But thinke that all the Map of my state I display,
 When trembling voice brings forth that I do *Stella* love.

The sonnet's first eight lines and its last six are divided between various ways of writing that increasingly compete with Astrophil's own compositional practice by featuring more and more physical imagery. The most threatening of these other poets are those who use the "sweetest plaint" and the "sweetest stile" of poetic physicality, introduced after the *volta* in the first lines of the sestet. These other poets equate the effusions of the body and of writing, metamorphosing the tears common to Petrarchan poetry into ink. Meanwhile their sighs, part of the same traditional physicality, carry forth the words that they simultaneously inscribe, as the paper they write on is white like their pale, despairing faces—pain rather than simply their hands responsible for the moving of their pens. More so than the clichés and references to Greek mythology he mocks earlier in the poem, all this materiality and corporeality endangers Astrophil's sense of his own originality and true depth of passion.

Sidney, then, has to resort to another kind of physicality both to surprise the reader and to lend verisimilitude to Astrophil's emotional writing process. In this, he is aided by the fact that other poets write about their bodies and writing materials more abstractly, using figurative language, as tears become ink and pale despair becomes paper. Sidney thus ends his poem with a more visceral physicality unadorned by metaphor or simile: the trembling voice, which marks out its individuality by barely being able to utter just the beloved's name. As I have shown, Sidney later reveals this name as the igniting spark for oral composition in Sonnet 50. He also emphasizes this fact a little later in Sonnet 55: "For let me but name her whom I do love, / So sweete sounds straight mine eare and heart do hit, / That I well find no eloquence like it" (12-14). These and other poems in the sequence are all pieces that, in depicting acts of oral composition and revision, threaten to impact the bodies of readers through their forceful physical suggestion.

Mary Herbert is one reader who felt this impact, as a passage she added to "To the Angel Spirit" testifies. In the second to last stanza of her revised poem, Herbert links the emotional pain of grief with the physical strain of writing:

To which these dearest offrings of my hart
 dissolv'd to Inke, while pennis impressions move
 the bleeding veines of never dying love:
 I render here: these wounding lynes of smart
 sodd Characters indeed of simple love
 not Art nor skill which abler wits doe prove,
 Of my full soule receive the meanest part. (78-84)

This stanza is completely new to the later version of the poem, demonstrating that a combined poetic and physical self-representation was necessary for Herbert as she set about revising her poems for presentation to Queen Elizabeth. Discussing this new stanza, Wendy Wall has focused on the image of the corporeal text as conflated with Sidney's wounded male body.¹² I would like to emphasize with Mary Ellen Lamb instead the presence of Herbert's own female body as it writes and is wounded by memory. As Lamb comments, "In using her blood for ink, [Herbert] represents her writing as almost a physical rather than an intellectual act, literally writing from the heart's feelings rather than from the head's thoughts."¹³ This is strikingly similar to what Sidney had Astrophil's rival poets do in Sonnet 6—that is, equate the effusions of their bodies and writing materials. In fact, the first three lines of Herbert's stanza recall two specific lines from her brother's poem: "While teares powre out his inke, and sighs breathe out his words: / His paper, pale dispaire, and paine his pen doth move" (10-11). Herbert also describes a bodily "Inke" and "penn"; moreover, she echoes Sidney's last rhyme word, "move," with her own phrase "while pennis impressions move." Most importantly, as Sonnet 6 contrasted Astrophil's true passions to those of his affected rivals, Herbert's stanza also contrasts her "simple" love and grief with the "Art" and "skill" beloved by the "abler wits" from whom she distances herself with double-edged modesty.

However, whereas Astrophil ends his poem by contrasting his quaking voice with the writings of others, Herbert stays with the act of writing by transforming the physicality of Astrophil's rival poets, replacing their Petrarchan, clichéd tears with the more essential substance of blood. That is, rather than likening tears or

¹² Wendy Wall, "Our Bodies / Our Texts?: Renaissance Women and the Trials of Authorship," in *Anxious Power: Reading, Writing, and Ambivalence in Narrative by Women*, ed. Carol J. Singley and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (Albany: State University of New York, 1993), 51-71.

¹³ Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 117.

sighs to ink as the other writers in Sidney's sonnet do, Herbert transforms the vital spirit-filled blood from the heart into the fluid of her writing: "theise dearest offrings of my hart / dissolv'd to Inke ... the bleeding veines of never dying love" (1-3). Herbert thus intensifies and renders serious an image that in Sidney was somewhat parodic, demonstrating her oft-recognized ability to improve upon an earlier idea of her brother's in revision. Most importantly, and much more than her brother in Sonnet 50, Herbert emphasizes the journey of her hand across the page and the traces it leaves. The reader can almost feel the pressure of quill on paper as "pens impressions move," causing blood/ink to ooze from its tip, then sees "the wounding lynes of smart" and "sadd Characters" that result from such movement on the page before them. While Sidney is drawn more to orality, Herbert is fascinated with the physical movement of the poet's hand and the materiality of the text it produces.

In manuscript, the medium in which this poem was originally meant to be read, these lines would have forcefully stood out both to their scribes and to Herbert's intended royal reader, Queen Elizabeth. That is, Herbert would invite the queen to meditate on the "wounding lynes" and "sadd Characters" she sees before her in the presentation copy of the *Psalms* she has just been given. In this way, "To the Angel Spirit" is a perfect example of Juliet Fleming's notion of a Renaissance text where "matter appears to bind thought—where, for example, an inscription may take the form of the implement on which it appears."¹⁴ A text that exhibits such poetic physicality also recalls Fleming's use of the word "posy" to refer to "all forms of poetry (portable or not) that understand themselves to be written *on* something," although I would stress that poetic physicality often also includes the portrayal of oral composition (as in *Astrophil and Stella*), as well as other aspects of poets' (and readers') bodies.¹⁵ In any case, through her words and the physicality they represent, Herbert attempts to bind her grief within ink and paper so as to instill sympathetic passions in Queen Elizabeth.

This is not the only significant example of Herbert's revision of her poem to materialize the body of the poet before her private manuscript audience. Faced with Sidney's absence and "this halfe maim'd peece" that is his legacy—and her object to mend—Herbert reawakens the pain of losing a brother. In the earlier version of the poem, the relevant passage reads as follows:

¹⁴ Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 13.

¹⁵ Fleming, *Graffiti*, 20-1.

But ah! wide festred wounds that never shall
 Nor must be clos'd, unto fresh bleeding fall,
 Ah memory, what needs this new arrist. (19-21)

For the new iteration of the poem, Herbert made substantial changes that incorporate more of Sidney's physical wounds combined with Herbert's own still powerful and present grief:

Deepe wounds enlarg'd, long festred in their gall
 fresh bleeding smart; not eie but hart teares fall.
 Ah memorie what needs this new arrest? (19-21)

Both versions allude to Sidney's wounds received while fighting at Zutphen in the Netherlands, wounds that surprised both Sidney and his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, by turning gangrenous.¹⁶ However, in the new version Herbert has intensified the impression of bodily pain: the wounds are now "deepe" and "enlarg'd" (19), while the fact that the wounds are "long festred" rather than "wide festred" extends Sidney's past wounds into the present of the poem to represent the Countess's own continual suffering. Herbert further unites the "fresh bleeding" (20) of the old version with "smart," emphasizing even more her own sense of personal pain. She also replaces the weak rhyme word "shall" with "gall" (19), suggesting once more the turbulence of her own bodily interiority. Most importantly, while the earlier draft contains no mention of tears, in the revision Herbert takes advantage of what Gail Paster terms the "fungibility" of bodily fluids in the Renaissance—that is, the idea that all the fluids in the body stem from one common source and can undergo transformations.¹⁷ Thus, "not eie but hart teares fall" (20)—these tears from her eyes having only recently originated from Herbert's blood. Now we are firmly in the present tense, encountering the moans of Herbert's own pain, rather than simply remembering Sidney's. The addition of the still beating and moist "heart" only puts further emphasis on the tangible grief that Herbert feels. In short, through the process of revising the stanza, Sidney's wounds have become Herbert's own.

This move by Herbert makes sense in light of her poem's title. Philip is "the Angel Spirit"—doubly without flesh. Herbert's own body supplies this missing substance, so that their shared text

¹⁶ See Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Philip Sidney's Toys," in *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, ed. Dennis Kay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 127-46, for details of Sidney's deathbed scene.

¹⁷ Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 9.

may finally exist in the physical world. Indeed, throughout her dedicatory poem Herbert repeatedly contrasts the heavenly and earthly realms, locating her inspirational brother in the former and her own suffering corporeal existence in the latter. The only part of Sidney's body that unambiguously makes an appearance in the poem is his "blest hand" (3)—which is fitting, given the common Renaissance view of this organ as the masterpiece of God's creation in the human body.¹⁸ As Elizabeth Sagaser also suggests, the phrase "First rais'de by thy blest hand" may recollect Sonnet 90 from *Astrophil and Stella*, in particular the last line: "love doth hold my hand, and makes me write."¹⁹ John Davies of Hereford, the scribe for the Penshurst manuscript of the *Psalms*, recalls this very line from Sidney's poem more explicitly in his own sonnet sequence, *Wittes Pilgrimage* (1605?).²⁰ Mentioning how some "wonder how so well I write," Davies explains in Sonnet 8 that "an Angell guides my hand."²¹ Here we have the first piece of evidence that other writers besides Herbert were consciously echoing her brother's poetic physicality. Since Davies worked for Herbert as a scribe, perhaps he was echoing her poem, too. In any case, the appearance of Sidney's "blest hand" only in the revised version of "To the Angel Spirit," demonstrates that in this one crucial instance Herbert was revising not only her own poetic physicality, but also her brother's.

Despite this appearance of Sidney's hand in the poem, Herbert usually portrays her translation of the *Psalms* as produced by the combination of Sidney's spirit and her body, whose sensations—especially in the act of writing—she describes so feelingly elsewhere. As critics have often noted, the language for this poetic marriage is fittingly both erotic and spiritual:

... what is mine
 inspird by thee, thy secrett power imprest.
 So dar'd my Muse with thine it selfe combine,
 As mortall stuffe with that which is divine ... (3-6)

¹⁸ See Katherine Rowe, *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), Chap. 1, and Martin Kemp, "The Handy Worke of the Incomprehensible Creator," in *Writing on Hands: Memory and Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Claire Richter Sherman and Peter M. Lukehart (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 22-7.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Harris Sagaser, "Elegiac Intimacy: Pembroke's 'To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney,'" *Sidney Journal* 23.1-2 (2005), 120.

²⁰ For Davies as scribe see Noel Kinnamon, "The Sidney Psalms: the Penshurst and Tixall Manuscripts," *English Manuscript Studies* 2 (1990): 139-61.

²¹ Alexander B. Grosart, ed., *The Complete Works of John Davies of Hereford* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 2: 7.

As R. E. Pritchard urges us to consider, the word “inspired” here “is no cliché, but rather evokes the enlivening entry of the breath or *pneuma* of the ‘angel sprite’.” He goes on to cite the “convention for paintings of the Annunciation to show the archangel Gabriel’s words impregnating the Virgin Mary through the ear,” a notion of “aural impregnation or inspiration” that also shows up in Spenser.²² This religious awareness of *pneuma* is important given the emphasis on both spiritual devotion and passionate orality in the Sidney circle, for Herbert is inspired by Sidney as the oral poet of both his *Psalm* translations and *Astrophil and Stella*. While this divine inspiration that her brother provides underwrites her authority and emphasizes her humility, the necessary separation between them has the other effect of stressing her own receptive physical presence behind the text. That is, just as Mary’s body is emphasized in her acts of conceiving, giving birth to, and nursing Christ, so Herbert’s body draws attention to itself through her interaction with Philip as a stand-in for the Holy Spirit. Indeed, her brother’s bodily absence is what paradoxically allows her own physical act of composition to leave its visible effects on the page, as orality gives way to materiality.

Herbert’s revised emphasis on her bodily experience of writing contrasts with the *Psalms* themselves, which do not depict the psalmist writing but rather speaking or singing. The physicality of the Sidney *Psalms* has often been discussed in terms of feminine—especially maternal—imagery.²³ However, I would like to focus here on orality as a central concern of the *Psalms*, both those translated by Philip and those translated by her sister.²⁴ As Beth Quitslund argues, even though the Sidney *Psalms* were not meant for congregational singing, Herbert and her brother still identify with the oral devotional world of the *Psalms*, taking inspiration as they do from Calvin’s French Genevan and Sternhold and Hopkins’ English Psalters.²⁵ And then there is the oral imagery of these Hebrew songs themselves. Here one finds

²² R. E. Pritchard, “Sidney’s Dedicatory Poem: ‘To the Angel Spirit of the Most Excellent Sir Philip Sidney,’” *The Explicator* 54.1 (1995), 2.

²³ See Beth Wynne Fisk, “Mary Sidney’s *Psalms*: Education and Wisdom,” in *Silent But for the Word*, 166-83, and Emma Clark, “Metaphors of Motherhood: Claiming Back the Female Body in the Poems of Mary Sidney and Mary Wroth,” *Women’s Writing* 8.2 (2001): 263-73.

²⁴ Quotations from the Sidney *Psalms* are cited parenthetically. Those from Philip’s *Psalms* are taken from Ringler. Those from Herbert’s are taken from Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan, eds., *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), vol. 2.

²⁵ Beth Quitslund, “Teaching Us How to Sing?: The Peculiarity of the Sidney Psalter,” *Sidney Journal* 23.1-2 (2005): 83-110.

some remarkable and intriguing resemblances to *Astrophil and Stella*. For example, Sidney's Psalm 39 resembles the moment in Sonnet 50 when Astrophil's love for Stella breaks forth from his heart and lungs. The psalmist at first vowed to humbly "mussle" his mouth in the presence of the wicked, but he found he was unable to keep silent:

But still the more that I did hold my peace,
 The more my sorrow did encrease,
 The more me thought my heart was hott in me;
 And as I mus'd such World to see,
 The fire took fire and forcibly out brake
 My tongue would needs and thus I spake...(7-12)

In this passage, the psalmist's heart burns with righteous indignation and, unable to be cooled by his breathing, necessarily breaks out in speech. Unlike Sonnet 50, however, the vocal outbursts of the psalmist do not turn into writing before our eyes. Instead, throughout the *Psalms* it is God's hand alone that writes. For instance, in Psalm 8 the Lord has his "unmatched glory / Upon the heavns engrav'n the story" (3-4). This imagery of God as powerful writer continues through the rest of Philip's poems into Mary's portion of the *Psalms*. Thus, in her translation of Psalm 56, the psalmist takes comfort in the fact that "ev'ry teare from my sad eyes / saved in thy bottle lyes, / these matters are all entred in thy book" (23-5). In "To the Angel Spirit" Herbert's tears accompanied her act of writing, but here God himself takes them up and records them.

In depicting writing in "To the Angel Spirit," Herbert thus counterbalances the privileging of God's hand over man's in the *Psalms*. While engaged in translation and religious writing—genres that were supposed to encourage humility in women—Herbert still insists on recognizing her own physical act of composition, specifically her body's role in it.²⁶ Overall, Herbert's poetic physicality is a major sign of her self-conscious awareness and forceful will as a female writer in a culture that placed high fences around the kinds of literature a woman could engage in. After all, "To the Angel Spirit" is an original poem, not a translation and not really a prayer to God but rather a prayer to her brother. More than that, it is a powerful display of her own

²⁶ On these strictures encountered by Herbert and other women writers, see Margaret P. Hannay, "'House-confined maids': The Presentation of Woman's Role in the *Psalms* of the Countess of Pembroke," *English Literary Renaissance* 24.1 (1994): 44-71.

physical, emotional, and literary strengths, presented to another woman writer, and a queen at that. In other words, if the mode of the piece itself is atypical, it is no coincidence that the poetic physicality it presents is also startlingly out of bounds.

2

Herbert's poetic physicality appears more transgressive when contrasted with the manner of Sidney's other literary executor, Fulke Greville. Greville never explicitly mentions *Astrophil and Stella* in any of his writings, not even in his *Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*, a prose memorial meant to introduce Greville's own works. Instead, Greville focuses on the *Arcadia*, which he still treats ambivalently despite his previous decision to publish it. Herbert ended up publishing her own very different version of the *Arcadia* after Greville's, and even included *Astrophil and Stella* in her edition of 1598. Scholars have identified a number of other telling differences between the two versions of Sidney's romance, especially Greville's omission of the pastoral singing matches that Herbert restores to her edition.²⁷ Perhaps an even more important disagreement between Herbert and Greville is their different reactions to Sidney's fascination with the physical experience of writing.

Greville's later account of the *Arcadia*'s composition in his *Dedication* is dismissive, as he reports how the romance was "scribbled rather as pamphlets for entertainment of time and friends than any account of himself to the world" (emphasis added).²⁸ Contrast this with the excitement and affection expressed by Sidney in his dedication of the same work to his sister (ironically published in Greville's edition of the romance). Sidney, after dismissively stating that his romance is not "for severer eyes ... being but a trifle, and that triflingly handled," cites his sister's own witnessing of his writing process: "your dear self can best witness the manner, being done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest by sheets sent unto you as fast as they

²⁷ Joel Davis, "Multiple *Arcadias* and the Literary Quarrel between Fulke Greville and the Countess of Pembroke," *Studies in Philology* 101.4 (2004): 401-30. See also Victor Skretkowitz, "Building Sidney's Reputation: Texts and Editors of the *Arcadia*," in *Sir Philip Sidney: 1586 and the Creation of a Legend*, ed. Jan Van Dorsten, Dominic Baker-Smith, and Arthur F. Kinney (Leiden: E. J. Brill-Leiden University Press, 1986), 111-24.

²⁸ Quoted from John Gouws, ed., *The Prose Works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 11.

were done.”²⁹ There is a sense of bravado or *sprezzatura* here that is missing from Greville’s account, itself written many years later, as well as an emotional intimacy that is equally lacking. First of all, the *Arcadia* is written for a “dear lady and sister,” not just “friends.” Furthermore, by reading the poem in her “idle times,” and not expecting too much of it, Philip promises Mary that “you will continue to love the writer who doth exceedingly love you ...” Having earlier identified the text as a “child which I am loath to father,” Sidney now imagines it as a substitute for his presence with his sister, and so declares himself both “brother” and “writer.” These various emotional attachments as well as Sidney’s portrayal of himself as a compulsive writer invest this dedication with a special urgency, capped off by the text now bearing “the livery” of his sister’s name. Indeed, Sidney alludes to a flurry and excitement of composition missing from Greville’s bare reference to the *Arcadia*’s “scribbling”—the quickly written pages being sent to the captive audience of his sister “as fast as they were done.” The *frisson* of writing is palpable here, as in *Astrophil and Stella* and “To the Angel Spirit.”

Herbert’s poetic physicality can be further illuminated through comparison with the writing of another one of her brothers, Robert Sidney. In his Sonnet 26, Robert demonstrates again how important both Sidney’s wounds and the act of revision were to the Sidney circle, in addition to the themes of dialogue and incompleteness that Gavin Alexander finds so key.³⁰ Interestingly, Robert goes beyond Herbert in the gruesomeness of this physicality:

‘Ah dearest limbs, my life’s best joy and stay,
How must I thus let you be cut from me,
And losing you, myself unuseful see,
And keeping you, cast life and all away’

Full of dead gangrenes doth the sickman say
Whose death of part, health of the rest must be;
Alas my love, from no infections free,
Like law doth give of it or my decay.

My love, more dear to me than hands or eyes,
Nearer to me than what with me was born,

²⁹ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. Jean Robertson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 3.

³⁰ Gavin Alexander, *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney, 1586-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-55 and *passim*.

Delayed, betrayed, cast under change and scorn,

Sick past all help or hope, or kills or dies;
 While all the blood it sheds my heart doth bleed
 And with my bowels I his cancers feed.³¹

Lying behind the greater disgust and outrage in Robert's poem may be the fact that he, unlike his sister, was actually present when his brother died and, according to Greville, showed "infinite weakness" in his mourning.³² Certainly in revising the poem he darkened it considerably. Line 6 originally seems to have begun, "whose loss of part" rather than "Whose death of part." Meanwhile, the despairing line "Sick past all help or hope, or kills or dies" replaced the much weaker "Endures all paines that feares and wants can try," with "eye" pluralized in line 9 to make the rhyme work. In line 13, Robert added more bleeding to the poem, replacing "all the sores loue beares" with "all the blood it sheades." Most striking of all, in the original final line the bowels of the poet are feeding "vultures" rather than "cancers." But while Robert focuses more on bodily suffering in revising the poem, he does not, unlike his sister in "To the Angel Spirit," make the act of writing itself the subject of the sonnet. Robert experiences this poetic physicality as he revises but readers do not share in it, whereas Herbert calls readers' attention to her own corporeal presence behind the text and invites them to empathize with her sensations—a more audacious move for a female poet and a marked gesture towards her queenly interlocutor.

Because of the popularity of *Astrophil and Stella*, visceral depictions of the body in the midst of writing were not just important to the Sidney circle. Rather, they were part of a new literary code which other writers outside this inner group could also use. In his 1593 sonnet sequence, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*, Barnabe Barnes refers quite often to *Astrophil and Stella* and its descriptions of composition, attempting to suggest links with Sidney's sequence and literary world, beginning with *Stella*.³³ Sometimes Barnes is embarrassingly boastful. In Madrigal

³¹ P. J. Croft, ed., *The Poems of Robert Sidney, Edited from the Poet's Autograph Notebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 227, with the state of Sidney's manuscript on 226, and a photograph of the manuscript version on 117.

³² Margaret P. Hannay, "Mary Sidney's Other Brothers," in *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers, and Others*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 94.

³³ All quotations from Barnes's sequence are taken from Victor A. Doyno, ed., *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971). We observe the modern forms of "u" and "v."

14, for example, Parthenophil responds to Parthenophe's scorn by declaring how his poetry places her above both Stella and Petrarch's Laura. Sonnet 95 is actually written to Stella, complimented in the opening lines as "Thou bright beame-spreading loves thrise happy starre, / Th'arcadian shepheard Astrophill's cleare guide" (1-2). Other references to Sidney's sequence abound. In Canzon 2, Parthenophil sings in celebration of "*Astrophill's* byrth-day" (4) before Stella is seen bearing "three garlandes in her hand." But Barnes's most daring move is certainly his reference to the manner of Sidney's death in Sonnet 67, where he compares Cupid's arrow to "the musket in the field" that "hittes, and killes unseene, till unawares / To death the wounded man his body yeeld" (9, 10-11). Barnes's allusion to the manner of Sidney's death daringly attempts to increase the intimacy between himself and Herbert, as he—most likely unwittingly—co-opts the practice shared by Herbert and her brother Robert of incorporating Sidney's wounds into their poetry. Barnes thus indicates that not only has he mastered Sidney's sonneteering but also that he is prepared to include Sidney's *corpus* itself in his poetry.

Taking a cue from the poetic physicality of Sidney's sonnets, Barnes also portrays Parthenophil in the present moment of composition as much like Astrophil. In Sonnet 12, Parthenophil considers Parthenophe's beauty at length, before suddenly revealing in the couplet that, while trying to forget her, he has also been trying to write a poem:

And (working that) me thinke it's such a sinne
 (As I take penne and paper for to write)
 Thee to forget: that leaving I beginne. (12-14)

Although Barnes's editor notes that there is an "apparent incoherence" to this sonnet, this ending to the poem clearly pays homage to Sidney's Sonnet 50.³⁴ Sidney surprises readers when his Astrophil almost destroys his sonnet in the making. With his stuttering writing process (stopping and then starting again), Barnes' Parthenophil almost doesn't compose his sonnet at all.

Barnes engages Sidney's precedent for poetic physicality even more directly in a sonnet that follows soon after Sonnet 12. Earlier in the sequence, Parthenophil had signed a charter with Parthenophe that led to the losing of his heart. Sonnet 17 follows shortly after Parthenophil has complained against but ultimately accepted this fatal agreement:

³⁴ Doyno, ed. *Parthenophil*, 143.

How then succeedeth (that amid this woe)
Where reasons sence doth from my soule devide:
By these vaine lines my fittes be specified
Which from their endlesse Ocean dayly floe
Where was it borne whence did this humour groe?
Which long obscur'd with melancholyes mist
Inspires my gyddie braynes unpurified
So lively, with sound reasons to persist
In framing tunefull Elegies, and Hymnes
For her whose name my Sonnets note so trimmes,
That nought but her chast name so could assist:
And my muse in first tricking out her lymmes,
Found in her livelesse shadow such delight:
That yet she shadowes her, when as I write.

The opening words “How then” recall Sidney’s similar use of this phrase at the end of his sonnets, where he explains why he is able to write as well as he does—as in Sonnet 3, when he copies Stella’s face and the Love and Beauty he finds there (“How then? even thus” [12]), or as in Sonnet 74, when his lips are inspired by Stella’s kiss (“How falles it then, that with so smooth an ease / My thoughts I speake ... ‘How then?’” [9, 13]). Barnes similarly wonders why he is able to craft so many different kinds of poems despite his loss of reason through passion. His explanation, although neither as climactic nor clear as Sidney’s, seems to be that some warm humor is still able to overcome his cold melancholy and so inspire his “giddy brains” with poetic invention. In this, Barnes focuses more on the poet’s internal humoral physiology than Sidney, who was more interested in oral composition, respiration, and the warming heart. However, there is still the familiar ingredient of the lady’s name in both poets’ works. Due to the flexibility of syntax, Barnes’s melody can either be said to “trim” (deck) his lady’s name or the reverse. In Sonnet 50, Stella’s name, spoken aloud, was also an inspiration to writing.

Unfortunately, Barnes’s attempts both to outdo Sidney and to connect himself with his circle are frequently clumsy, as the disturbing end of his sequence—in which Parthenophil uses witchcraft to have his way with Parthenophe—would also indicate. As Lamb notes, Barnes dedicated his sonnet sequence to five others besides Herbert, and so this appeal to her can be discounted with similar instances of dedications as indicating “any but the

most trivial patronage.”³⁵ It appears, then, that rather than seeking membership in the Sidney circle, Barnes was trying to indicate to unwary readers that he was already a part of that group’s literary world. The awkward reference to Sidney’s death and the title of his sequence, superficially similar to Sidney’s, are other signs of this intention. Barnes’s less skilled, “outsider” performance also suggests that poetic physicality was not strictly limited to the Sidney circle, even if it took primary inspiration from *Astrophil and Stella*. That is, poetic physicality was becoming associated with the sonnet sequence in general by the time Barnes was writing, even if some writers closer to Herbert were still dealing with issues important to the Sidney family through their revision of the same *topos* in their works.

With its revised and highly coded poetic physicality, Samuel Daniel’s *Delia* exemplifies this kind of direct appeal to the Sidney circle. Some of Daniel’s sonnets had already been published with the 1591 pirated version of *Astrophil and Stella*. For the official 1592 edition of his sonnets, Daniel added poems featuring the physical hand. However, whereas Barnes shows Parthenophil writing, Daniel repeatedly represents Delia as a writer, a humbler move that seems to ask for Herbert’s female hand to replace that of his cruel sonnet mistress. Tellingly, Daniel also credits the lady’s hand with inspiring his own verse through the music she plays in the new Sonnet 52 (47 in Hiller and Groves’s edition): “O happy ground that makes the music such, / And blessed hand that gives so sweet a touch!” (13-14)—anticipating Herbert’s own use of the phrase “blest hand” in “To the Angel Spirit.”³⁶ Daniel’s most extensive treatment of the female hand is Sonnet 42 (39 in Hiller and Groves), also new to the authorized edition of *Delia*:

Read in my face a volume of despairs,
The wailing Iliads of my tragic woe,
Drawn with my blood, and printed with my cares,
Wrought by her hand, that I have honored so;
 Who whilst I burn, she sings at my soul’s wrack,
Looking aloft from turret of her pride;
There my soul’s tyrant joys her in the sack
Of her own seat, whereof I made her guide.

³⁵ Mary Ellen Lamb, “The Countess of Pembroke’s Patronage,” *English Literary Renaissance* 12.2 (1982), 165.

³⁶ All quotations from Daniel’s *Delia* are taken from Geoffrey G. Hiller and Peter L. Groves, eds., *Samuel Daniel: Selected Poetry and A Defense of Rhyme* (Asheville: Pegasus Press-University of North Carolina, 1998), and are cited parenthetically.

There do these smokes that from affliction rise
 Serve as an incense to a cruel dame,
 A sacrifice thrice grateful to her eyes,
 Because their power serve to exact the same.
 Thus ruins she, to satisfy her will,
 The Temple where her name was honored still.

The sonneteer is especially threatened by the lady's status as an epic poet, while he is still toiling away in the lower genre of the erotic sonnet sequence. The tremendous suffering that the sonneteer undergoes realizes this threat physically in his body and also in the materiality of writing and books. His wrinkles and cares are wrought by Delia's hand, as if she is turning the vise of the printing press upon his body, drawing out his blood. This violent, rather than erotic, image of printing is exceeded only by the destruction of Troy that is another symbol for his physical suffering. Nevertheless, amidst all this passion and destruction, Daniel suggests where he intends to take his career by associating a higher genre and poetic fame with his lady's masterful, publishing hand—again, a stand-in for that of his would-be female patron.

If this humility and deference to the female hand was really part of Daniel's overall attempt to secure Herbert's patronage, then his strategy succeeded. The 1592 edition of *Delia* began with Daniel apologizing to the Countess for the printing of his poems with Sidney's the year before in the pirated *Astrophil and Stella*:

Right Honorable, although I rather desired to keep in
 the private passions of my youth from the multitude
 as things uttered to myself and consecrated to silence,
 yet seeing I was betrayed by the indiscretion of a
 greedy printer and had some of my secrets bewrayed
 to the world uncorrected, doubting the like of the rest,
 I am forced to publish that which I never meant.³⁷

In explaining that the poems in the 1591 *Astrophil and Stella* were uncorrected, Daniel also invited Herbert to note which sonnets were new. In doing so, he also asked her to notice how he had revised his own poetic physicality in the genre her brother had initiated for English readers. As shown above, the physicality of these new poems turns the female hand into a poetic icon,

³⁷ Hiller and Groves, *Samuel Daniel: Selected Poetry and A Defense of Rhyme*, 30.

advertising Daniel's interest in taking on greater literary challenges under the guiding hand of a female patron. As Arthur Marotti notes of Daniel's letter:

Daniel expressed his antagonism to the general public reached through the print medium, omitting any epistle to the readers and presenting the book as a gift to one person, who, in effect, became the owner of the text.³⁸

This ownership becomes certified in the 1594 edition of *Delia*, along with Herbert's patronage of Daniel. Lamb notes that Daniel was probably a tutor to Herbert's children and that his 1592 publication of *Delia* may have helped him gain a position at her Wilton home.³⁹ By 1594 Daniel had also received literary patronage from the hands of the Countess, for whom he apparently wrote his *Tragedie of Cleopatra* included with the new edition of *Delia*.

Testifying to this new personal and professional closeness with the Countess, Daniel introduces his 1594 volume not with an apology but with a true dedicatory sonnet. In the middle of this poem, Daniel acknowledges Herbert's inspiring role and pleads for his work in the following manner:

Sith only thou hast deigned to raise them higher,
Vouchsafe now to accept them as thine own,
Begotten by thy hand and my desire,
Wherein my zeal and thy great might is shown.⁴⁰ (5-8)

Rather than a product of his misspent youth, the poems are now the product of a union between the female patron's and the male poet's physical and mental powers. Symbolizing this union is the sonnet's interlaced rhyme scheme. In almost all of the sonnets in *Delia*, Daniel uses a Shakespearean rhyme scheme, but here he adopts a Spenserian one that represents the intertwining of Herbert's and his roles in producing the poems. Although Daniel's claim that his poetry was begotten by his female patron's hand may appear conventional, his careful plotting of the lady's hand as an icon in 1592 suggests that this sonnet marks the fulfillment of his individual model of poetic physicality and authorship in the way he

³⁸ Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 314.

³⁹ Lamb, "The Countess of Pembroke's Patronage," 167, 177-78.

⁴⁰ Hiller and Groves, *Samuel Daniel*, 227.

had first envisioned it. As Wall notes, the 1594 edition also included Daniel's name for the first time, while enlarging the titles of his poems.⁴¹ These changes, along with the poetic physicality he had shaped for himself and the Countess, granted Daniel a greater presence on the Elizabethan literary scene.

What is most striking about Daniel's sonnet, however, is its resemblance to Herbert's own poem for her brother with which this essay began. Both poems dedicate work to the hand of another and also portray that work as begotten in an erotic and spiritual manner. If it were not for the fact that Daniel seems to have possessed an early version of Herbert's poem, these similarities could be chalked up to coincidence or access to a common *topos*. But since Daniel did possess Herbert's poem, he may have had some input into its revision, drawn inspiration from it, or (most likely) both. Further reinforcing these possibilities is the way that both poets imagine their work as written with blood in the midst of tremendous bodily suffering, and how both speak of blessed hands guiding their literary labor. Such cooperation between Herbert and Daniel would be perhaps the most striking instance of the Sidney circle's general practice of revising their poems to depict composition more vividly. While all of the previous examples have represented writers as acting on their own, here we might see two writers revising their poetic physicality together as they engage in the mutual enterprise of continuing Sidney's literary legacy, Herbert in the realm of biblical poetry, Daniel in the erotic sonnet sequence that Sidney pioneered.

⁴¹ Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 75-7.

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