

NAMING AND THE LITERARY CONTEXT:
 BACKGROUNDS TO SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S PHILISIDES

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Sir Philip Sidney's use of names has not yet been exhaustively studied, presumably because of their enigmatic and elusive nature. For example, I have shown elsewhere that Sidney's Princesses, Philoclea and Pamela, may be onomastically related to and identified with their wicked aunt, Cecropia, through the traditional emblem of love, Philomena, the nightingale. Other names in the Arcadia, such as Andromana, Zelmane, and Pyrocles, may also repay close study. In this paper, I shall take up a nomenclature that has been autobiographically identified with Sidney, that of Philisides, or, as he is most commonly called, Philisides, Sidney's apparent anagram, who appears in the Old Arcadia and, to a much more limited extent, in the Revised or New Arcadia, as a minor character suffering from unrequited love.

Exactly who is Philisides? And what place does he occupy in Sidney's poetry? Is his function simply autobiographical, as most of the commentators, including Ringler, Robertson, Rudenstine, and Hamilton have affirmed, or is he as well something more? Did Sidney merely reduce his ^{OWN} name to an anagrammatic formula

or did he devise a name that both fitted his autobiographical requirements and responded to certain traditional themes that were in the air? I am inclined to the latter answer. A careful examination of Sidney's use of the name within the literary context indicates that the young courtier-poet, ever the innovator, may have added a new facet to the craft of anagrammatic naming in the Renaissance.

The first segment of Philisides' name suggests a nomenclature that was prominent in classical and medieval literature, that of the Filli or Phyllis who is often associated with sad or tormented love, often in a pastoral setting. One thinks first of the Phyllis who appears in Ovid's Heroides, II, and Ars Amatoria, III, 38, and in Hyginus' Fabulae (#59 and 243) as the daughter of Sithon, the Thracian King. She was supposed to wed Demophon, the son of Theseus and Phaedra, but when he was tardy for the wedding festivities, she hastily took her own life and was metamorphosed into a tree. Although Ovid in his Heroides stops short of her suicide, merely having her inscribe the tale of Demophon's betrayal on her tomb, it is clear that Phyllis' story is one of discontented, even tragic love. This association of Phyllis' name with the theme of unhappy love in a pastoral setting became something of a convention by the early sixteenth century. For example, in Abraham Fraunce's translation of Thomas Watson's Lamentation of Amyntas (1587), a Phyllis dies for true love and is

subsequently lamented by Amyntas. Phyllis could also be represented as a foe of love, as in Lope da Vega's La selva sin amor (before 1635), where Filis, before being wounded by love, was completely insensitive to it. In Sannazaro's Arcadia (1504), the name again appears, this time referring to a figure who is arrogant to her lover (Eclogue II) and coquettish (Eclogue IX), to a lifeless being that hangs pendulously from an almond tree (Eclogue VIII), and to the traditional martyr for love (Eclogue XII and the first Piscatorial Eclogue).

The Arcadia of Sannazaro, further, is not the only work among Sidney's acknowledged sources that takes up this name in a pastoral setting and links it to discontent in love. In his Diana (ca. 1559), a work that Sidney knew well, Montemayor produces a sequence of characters whose names derive from the Latin "felix" root, a close relative of the Greek "philo" root and the Phyllis nomenclature we have been considering. These characters, Felis, Felismena, and Felicia, each point up some aspect of unhappy love, but, by utilizing the Latin variation on the Phyllis name and the "philo" root, Montemayor was able to strike out in new ironical and thematically rich directions unattempted by his predecessors. For example, Don Felis is a false lover who brings felicity neither to the ladies he beguiles nor to himself. In accord with the Latin fēles or fēlis, he is guileful and cunning, like the cat or weasel,

and dishonest like a thief; and, in keeping with the Latin fēl, fellis, it is gall and bitterness that he brings to the ones he deceives. Despite his many shortcomings, however, Felis is ultimately united with felicity or fēlīcitas by Felismena, and finally realizes the errors of his ways and agrees to wedlock with the lady who has always loved him and whom he has been taught to love. In the case of Felis, then, bitter love is transformed into sweet by the operations of a paragon of a lady.

If Felis embodies the lower form of love in the Diana (that which Montemayor labels "falso amor"), Felismena represents the higher variety, or "buen amor." Although her love and dignity have been violated by the false Felis, never once does she, unlike her foil Sireno, indulge in helpless and rancorous invective against her lover, love in general, or even fortune; she merely sets upon to recover what appears lost but is in fact retrievable. Like the traditional Phyllis and Philomena, she knows the meaning of suffering, but, with her mental resources, suggested in the suffix of her name, mens, mentis, she is strengthened and cleansed by her pain and finally transcends it to achieve a fusion of love (philo) with happiness (felix) in this world. In this respect, she conspicuously contrasts with the apparent heroine of the work, Diana, who, unlike her chaste namesake, loves ~~it~~ constantly and feebly and brings pain to others because she has never experienced it herself. Montemayor's true heroine, Felismena, whose life is a

testimony to her creator's dictum that "los que sufren más, son los mejores" (p. 167), embodies his ideal of love in action.

The third "felix" character in the Diana is Felicia, Montemayor's benevolent sorceress, who is closely related to, even identified with, Felismena, but where the latter embodies love in action, Felicia constitutes the ideal of love in theory. Like Montemayor's heroine, her good works on behalf of true love link her with the normative denotation of the Latin felix, felicis, that of a fecund or fertile force that brings good fortune and contentment to those affected by it, and with Felicitas, the Goddess of Good Luck, whose vogue reached its peak several decades before the Christian era. Whereas Felismena aids other lovers with the wealth of her own experiences in love, Felicia, who constitutes the final resort, makes use of magical potions, spells, and counsel in her role as divine intermediary in love. It is they who bring unity to a divided world, joining love with happiness and fortune with providence. In the Diana, everyone moves from discontentment to contentment by consulting either Felismena (who has remedied herself) or Felicia. The Phyllis nomenclature, with its ironical associations, provided Montemayor, one of Sidney's direct sources, with a verbal paradigm through which to explore and express distinct aspects of discontented love in the world.

So wide was the use of this nomenclature that it comes up for some gentle ridicule in the first part of Don Quijote (1605),

where the Don peruses the letter of Carenio containing a sonnet on discontented love dedicated to a Lucinda who is nevertheless otherwise named. Like so many other poets, Carenio utilizes the Phyllis name in the sonnet, a portion of which reads:

Pues, ¿quién ordena
El terrible dolor que adoro y siento?
Si digo que sois vos, Fili, no acierto;
Que tanto mal en tanto bien no cabe,
Ni me viene del cielo esta ruína.

It is notable not only that Carenio conceals his beloved's true name by recourse to this familiar, traditional name, but also that Sancho so totally misses the point as to confuse "hilo" (a thread) with "Fili." The Don, on the other hand, hears correctly but takes the name literally. It is a Fili, he contends, to whom the sonneteer is referring. This exchange is not without interest. Sancho characteristically reduces ideas to their concretest manifestations, while the Don idealizes the real. For Sancho, "Fili" is a thread that will unravel the mystery of the poem; it is therefore something of use, a means to the end of knowing something. If Sancho is oblivious to the convention and craft of literary naming, the Don over-exaggerates it, mistaking the pseudonym for the reality. Whatever the case, that Cervantes resorted to this nomenclature in a satirical episode dealing with the poetry of discontented love and its exegesis is further testimony to its popularity and conventionality in renaissance pastoral and love literature.

Bearing these backgrounds and traditions in mind, we may now turn to Sidney's Philisides. It is possible that in conceiving this name Sidney was doing more than merely attaching one segment of his own name to another. May it be that the poet was also aware of and responsive to the meanings, resonances, and ironies in the name with which he experimented? Indeed, if Philisides is to be taken as nothing more than Sidney's self-portrait, why does the poet assign in the New Arcadia passages belonging to Philisides in the Old Arcadia to other figures? For example, a poem in the Third Eclogues of the OA (Ringler, #62) recited by Philisides is assigned in the NA to the disguised "Zelmae" (one of the two heroes of the work), while he is watching Philoclea bathing by the river Ladon. And another of Philisides' poems, from the Third Eclogues of the OA (Ringler, #66), is transferred to an anonymous young shepherd in the 1590 edition, only to be reassigned to its original position in the 1593 edition. Further, if Philisides was intended to be nothing more than Sidney's anagram and self-portrait, why does the poet virtually drop him from the Revised Arcadia, where he appears only once, in the new guise of an Iberian knight, and why does his poem in the Fourth Eclogues of the OA (Ringler, #74) become in the revised work a verse epistle which Dorus sends to Pamela? It is this passage which Walter R. Davis quotes Marcus S. Goldman as considering to be a very autobiographical piece of poetizing, until one realizes that it is taken

directly from the settina prosa of Sannazaro's Arcadia. From this cursory look at Sidney's irregular and inconsistent use of Philisides, one may conclude that this anagram was something more, or less, than his autobiographical portrait.

The same is borne out by an examination of Philisides' character. If he is to represent Sidney, why is he portrayed as irrational, impudent, and petulant, qualities known to be foreign to Sidney's character? A prominent example occurs in the First Eclogues of the OA (Ringler, #9) where Philisides obstinately rejects the well-intentioned counsel of Geron, who preaches a philosophy of moderation in love. Philisides not only rejects the older man's advice, he insolently mocks him as an "old foole" and indicates that he was not even listening to his words, comments which sound hardly reminiscent of Sidney, who was known to be particularly pregnable to the counsels of his elders, most notably Hubert Languet (1518-81), with whom he had an ongoing correspondence for at least seven years. Finally, there is little evidence of autobiographical interest in Philisides in his poem that appears in the Second Eclogues of the OA (Ringler, #31), a poem in which word play and puns take precedence over anything else. Notwithstanding all of these inconsistencies, one cannot deny that, up at least to a certain point, Philisides performs a limited autobiographical function as the rejected lover suffering from discontentment

and frustration. To that extent, he is reminiscent of other such renaissance anagrams as Garcilaso's Nemeroso and Bernardim Ribeiro's Binmarder, although he functions somewhat more subtly than they.

One of his more salient functions is ironic. In the fashion of the "Phyllis characters" discussed above, Philisides' tale is one of discontented and grieving love, and he reminds us of a large number of Montemayor's lovers, including Don Felis, in his impulsive and irrational approach to love. An extension of this interpretation depends on the pronunciation of his name. Although it is common to pronounce the final segment of his name to rhyme with "rides," I contend that Sidney intended the word to resonate with the plural form of "felicity": "felicities," deriving from that ubiquitous root I have discussed above. Evidence for this contention can be found in a canzone of Sidney (according to Ringler, the first to be written in English, p. 256), classified by Ringler as "Other Poems," #5:

The ladd Philisides
 Lay by a river's side,
 In flowry fielde a gladder eye to please:
 His pipe was at his foote,
 His lambs were him beside,
 A widow turtle neere on bared root
 Sate wailing without boot.

The rhyme scheme of the first stanza, ABACBCCDEEDFF, moreover, is continued in the succeeding stanzas. It seems probable, then, that one of the supreme ironies of Sidney's anagram

in the Arcadia is in its allusiveness. It is Sidney's response to a pastoral love convention he encountered in his generic predecessors, and its ironies are best seen in that context. Philisides, in conformity with what we know about Sidney's unhappy love affair with Penelope Devereux, is a figure direly lacking the felicity of love, given the evanescent and standoffish nature of Mira, the nymph of Diana whom he abjectly loves. The irony is even more brutal when one ponders the plural form of the word. What are "felicities" to Philisides? This juxtaposition itself rankles with bitterness, even sarcasm. Like Montemayor, Sidney is interested in the ironic application of conventional nomenclatures and verbal roots within a literary tradition. But the English poet goes further. In exploiting the homophonic resemblances between certain segments of his own name and a highly reverberative and seminal verbal root and name, he has created a new kind of anagram, and cradled it in an enormous irony.

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