

From *Astrophil and Stella* (ca. 1580s), a sonnet sequence, by Sir Philip Sydney

Sonnet 1

- Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That the dear She might take some pleasure of my pain,
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,—
- (5) I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay:
- (10) Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows,
And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.
Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite:
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart and write."

Sonnet 34

- Come, let me write. "And to what end?" To ease
A burdened heart. "How can words ease, which are
The glasses of thy daily vexing care?"
Oft cruel fights well pictured forth do please.
- (5) "Art not ashamed to publish thy disease?"
Nay, that may breed my fame, it is so rare.
"But will not wise men think thy words fond ware?"
Then be they close, and so none shall displease.
"What idler thing, than speak and not be hard?"
- (10) What harder thing than smart, and not to speak?
Peace, foolish wit; with wit my wit is marred.
Thus while I write I doubt to write, and wreak
My harms on Ink's poor loss; perhaps some find
Stella's great powers, that so confuse my mind.

Sonnet 52

- A strife is grown between Virtue and Love,
While each pretends that Stella must be his:
Her eyes, her lips, her all, saith Love, do this,
Since they do wear his badge, most firmly prove.
- (5) But Virtue thus that title doth disprove,
That Stella (O dear name) that Stella is
That virtuous soul, sure heir of heav'nly bliss;
Not this fair outside, which our hearts doth move.
And therefore, though her beauty and her grace
- (10) Be Love's indeed, in Stella's self he may
By no pretense claim any manner place.
Well, Love, since this demur our suit doth stay,
Let Virtue have that Stella's self; yet thus,
Let Virtue but that body grant to us.