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## ‘KNIGHTS OF THE SAME ORDER’:

### A REFERENCE IN SIDNEY’S DEFENCE OF POESY EXPLAINED

Toward the end of the Defence of Poesy (composed c.1579-1581, published 1595), Sidney makes a reference that has never been satisfactorily explained. Writing in the digressio—the penultimate part of the oration, in which he laments the sorry state of poetry in contemporary England—Sidney complains that bad poets are so rushing to print and flooding the market that better ones are loth to do the same lest they be accounted ‘knights of the same order’.<sup>1</sup> The context of the passage is the social disparity between the outstanding poets of other times and places—who included ‘kings, emperors, senators, great captains’ (108.29-30)—and the ‘base men with servile wits’ (109.11) of the present moment: ‘bastard poets’ (109.17) who bring the Muses into disrepute. Robert Maslen, the editor who has the most to say about this passage, describes the sentence in question as ‘difficult’ (225) and the final phrase with which we are concerned as ‘puzzling’ (226). Jan van Dorsten is the only modern editor to connect Sidney’s ‘knights’ with a section in the Ars poetica where Horace similarly satirises the bad poet, accusing him of writing poetry even though he doesn’t know how to simply because ‘he is free, even free-born, nay, is rated at the fortune of a knight [equus]’.<sup>2</sup> Although other modern editors do not refer to this particular line, they all agree that Sidney had this part of the Ars in mind, for in the following sentence he includes himself among this ‘company of the paper-blurrers’ (109.25) and accuses both them and himself of ‘taking upon

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<sup>1</sup> All citations from the *Defence* are taken from An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy), ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, revised and expanded by R. W. Maslen (Manchester, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2002), citing page and line reference, respectively; this quotation 109.23.

<sup>2</sup> In Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford, 1973), 205. See Horace, Ars poetica, line 383, in Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry, ed. and trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA, 1926).

us to be poets in despite of Pallas' (109.26-7): a clear reference to the sentence in which, having scorned the poetaster 'knight', Horace immediately goes on to contrast the better sense and judgement of his esteemed addressee: 'But you will say nothing and do nothing against Minerva's will [Tu nihil invita dices faciesve Minerva]; such is your judgement, such your good sense'.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to notice, however, that, although Sidney undoubtedly echoes the Ars here, he does not follow Horace's logic. Where Horace shifts from the worse to the better poet, contrasting the feeble dilettante with the true writer who knows how to avoid such mistakes, Sidney—having damned the 'knights'—goes on in the very next breath to identify with them. He fails to switch back to the model of the better poet, in other words. Editors seem not to have picked up on this subtle change (which comes of turning Horace's double negative into a single one), but it clearly derives from a sudden onset of the modesty topos. Having compared the base and servile poets of his day with the great poets of the present and past—those whom Prometheus 'made of better clay [meliore luto finxit]' (109.21), as a timely quotation from Juvenal reminds us—Sidney finds himself in the awkward position, when his own status as a poet comes up, of placing himself either amongst this superior crew (where in all justice he belongs) or (as modesty demands) amongst their acknowledged inferiors: 'as I never desired the title [of poet], so have I neglected the means to come by it' (109.28-9).<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Shepherd is surely right when he describes this statement as 'modesty to the point of disingenuousness' (216), but a failure to follow through on this—to register

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<sup>3</sup> Horace, Ars, lines 385-86 (Minerva, of course, is the Roman name given to the Greek goddess, Pallas Athene). Following Horace, the phrase 'invita Minerva' ['in despite of Pallas'] was a well-known Latin tag. In addition to Maslen (227) and van Dorsten (205), Geoffrey Shepherd, ed., An Apology for Poetry (Manchester, 1973, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 215, and Gavin Alexander, ed., Sidney's 'The Defence of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism (Harmondsworth, 2004), 349, agree that Sidney is referring to this passage in Horace here.

<sup>4</sup> The quotation is an adaptation of Juvenal, Satires, XIV, line 5. Sidney's statement here may register a degree sensitivity if not ambivalence toward such titles, since he was not knighted until January 1583 and, at the time of writing the Defence, therefore had no 'title' whatever.

that Sidney's false modesty is the reason why Horace's meaning gets changed—is, I think, the reason why this passage has caused confusion. A combination of Horace's scorned equus and Sidney's self-deprecation has led editors to assume that the 'knights' are indeed an inferior group, and thus to look for explanations accordingly. Perhaps they refer to mere armchair or 'book knights' (rather than the real thing), it has been suggested, or to so-called 'knights of the post' (i.e. bearers of false witness), or to the 'Green Knight', George Gascoigne's dubious middle-aged and over-sexed literary persona in the Posies (1575).<sup>5</sup>

I would like to make a different suggestion and to propose that Sidney's 'knights of the same order' derive at least in part from the Inner Temple Revels that took place over the Christmas season of 1561-2 in honour of his uncle, Lord Robert Dudley. Described at length in Gerard Legh's heraldic manual, The accedens of armory (1562), this entertainment centres on an elaborate investiture ceremony in which Dudley—allegorised as 'Pallaphilos' (the lover of Pallas/Minerva, goddess of wisdom, learning, craft, and skill)—creates twenty four new knights (junior members of the Inner Temple, presumably) to join him in the chivalric Order of Pegasus. This model Order of knights, I suggest, could be the ideal that, lurking behind Sidney's false modesty, stands in silent, reproachful contrast to the base, servile, and bastard 'knights of the same order' among whom he disingenuously situates himself: an example of the 'better' sort—who would indeed do nothing against Minerva's will—and whom Sidney, like Horace, sets up in contrast to the third-rate rhymesters he saw all around him. For these model knights serve under the sign of Pegasus, the legendary winged horse responsible for creating the fount of the Muses—Hippocrene, literally 'the spring of the horse'—when he struck Mount Helicon with his hoof.<sup>6</sup> Legh opens his account of the

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<sup>5</sup> The suggestions of Shepherd (215) and Maslen (226), respectively.

<sup>6</sup> Also known as 'Aganippe well' ['the well of the gentle horse'], as Sidney calls it in Astrophil and Stella 74, line 1. That Sidney coins the name Aganippe, here (see OED, Aganippe, n.), suggests a desire to stress the point that poetry mythically began with a horse (perhaps because of his personal investment in the etymology of the name). See also note 21 below.

proceedings by presenting Pegasus as a symbol of poetic fame, claiming that Chaucer had designed his House of Fame as ‘a place mete for the horse of honour’.<sup>7</sup> The soaring creature was also, of course, a symbol of poetic inspiration—of the unstoppable heights and flights of the creative imagination—something Sidney also seems to have had on his mind while writing this passage, since he refers only a few lines later to ‘the highest-flying wit’ (109.40), and has, indeed, been preoccupied with the ‘high flying liberty of conceit proper to the poet’ (84.13) since early in the Defence. When Legh comes to describe the investiture ceremony in detail, moreover, he introduces the twenty four candidates as ‘a Sonette of Pallas knightes’ (fol.216), as if together they constituted a kind of human poem. This is the only example I know of in which ‘sonnet’ is used as a collective noun (it is not in the OED), and one must remember that at the time the word still carried the general sense of any short poem or lyric, having not yet come to denote a poem of strictly fourteen lines: some five per cent of the poems in Tottel’s Songes and Sonettes (1557), for example, consist of twenty four lines.<sup>8</sup>

The possibility that this occasion may have been circling in Sidney’s mind as he was composing the Defence is strengthened by the fact that only two paragraphs later he goes on to mention Gorboduc: a the play, written by Templars Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, that was first performed at the Inner Temple Revels.<sup>9</sup> Although Sidney would hardly have been present at the event himself, being barely seven at the time, he obviously knew about the

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<sup>7</sup> Gerard Legh, The accedens of armory (London, 1562), STC 15388, fol. 202<sup>v</sup>. Chaucer does not, in fact, mention Pegasus anywhere in The House of Fame. He does, it is true, describe a scene involving ‘pursevantes and heraudes’ which may have caught Legh’s attention, but it looks more likely that Legh did not get much further with Chaucer’s text than the title (if he had, he would have realized that fame is a somewhat ambivalent commodity in the poem); see The House of Fame, Book III, line 1321, in The Riverside Chaucer, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford, 1987, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), 364. On Legh’s tendency not to get very far beyond reading the titles of literary texts, see also note 16.

<sup>8</sup> According to George Gascoigne, it was still possible for some to ‘think that all poems (being short) may be called sonnets’ as late as 1575; see his ‘Certain Notes of Instruction’, in Alexander, ed., 245. Richard Tottel was also the publisher of Legh’s text.

<sup>9</sup> Gorboduc was performed again at court on 18 January 1562.

Revels from Gorboduc (published separately in 1565), from his uncle's testimony, no doubt, and likely from Legh's text, too.<sup>10</sup> Dudley's involvement with the Inner Temple Revels had come about after he interceded on the Society's behalf in a property dispute with the Middle Temple.<sup>11</sup> When the Queen ruled in the Inner Temple's favour, the lawyers expressed their gratitude to Dudley by appointing him 'prince' of their annual Christmas festivities that year (it was highly unusual to appoint an outsider to such a position), and granting him and his heirs certain privileges for several generations. Before describing the investiture ceremony in which the twenty four initiates are sworn in as knights of the Order, Legh provides the lengthy backstory of how Dudley came to be 'Pallaphilos', the lover of Pallas and chief knight of the Order of Pegasus, in the first place. Confusingly, this backstory is narrated by a character who seems at first glance to be called the same: a herald, 'Palaphilos' (one 'l'), who is differentiated from the knight and Christmas prince only by this minimally altered spelling of the name.<sup>12</sup> We thus have two characters: knight called Pallaphilos whose story is told by a herald called Palaphilos (a King of Arms, in fact, the highest rank of herald within the College of Arms).<sup>13</sup> That the two are meant to be playfully fused if not confused with

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<sup>10</sup> Evidence that Sidney was familiar with The accedens of armory is suggested by Timothy D. Crowley, 'Diplomacy, Money, and Sidney's Four Foster Children of Desire', Sidney Journal xxx (2015), 27-60 (53).

<sup>11</sup> Dudley's loyalty to the Inner Temple may be explained, perhaps, by the fact that his father had been member of the Society. For details of the property dispute, see: Marie Axton, 'Robert Dudley and the Inner Temple Revels', The Historical Journal xiii (1970), 365-78; and Ian W. Archer, et al, eds., Religion, Politics, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England (Cambridge, 2003), 86.

<sup>12</sup> Although there are a couple of lapses where the herald is spelled 'Pallaphilos' (fol. 213<sup>v</sup>) and the knight 'Palaphilos' (fols. 220, 221), the different spellings are otherwise consistent enough to suggest that they are more than just compositorial variation. The difference is lost in a modern-spelling edition such as that in D. S. Bland, ed., Three Revels from the Inns of Court (Amersham, 1984), which may explain why some critics have failed to pick up on it. Those who do discuss the difference between the herald and the knight include Bradin Cormack, 'Locating The Comedy of Errors: revels jurisdiction at the Inns of Court', in The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court, ed. Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight (Manchester, 2011), pp.264-85; and Alice Hunt, 'Dumb Politics in Gorboduc', in The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama, ed. Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford, 2012), 547-65.

<sup>13</sup> Although not a member of the College of Arms himself, there is some suggestion Legh was himself a Pursuivant of Arms (i.e. a herald of the lowest rank): see Richard J. Schoeck, 'Gerard Legh, Herald', N&Q, ii (1955), 140; and D. S. Bland, 'Arthur Broke, Gerard Legh and the Inner Temple', N&Q, xvi (1969), 453-55.

one another becomes clear as Legh's account proceeds, for, having told this story, Palaphilos goes on to introduce Pallaphilos to the assembled company, and Pallaphilos, in turn, delegates to Palaphilos the actual business of selecting and preparing the twenty four initiates and conducting the ceremony.<sup>14</sup>

Whatever the reason for this splitting and intertwining of the two Pal[*I*]aphiloses, the fact remains that the backstory told by one about the other is a neo-medieval fantasy which revives and promotes the long-obsolescent (if ever existent) chivalric ideals that would become increasingly central to the mythology of Elizabeth's reign.<sup>15</sup> Drawing very loosely on Stephen Hawes' already backward-looking, nostalgic, and pseudo-medieval The pastime of pleasure (1509), the story comprises a recognisably medieval allegory of the Roman de la Rose tradition in which a figure named Desire undergoes an intense training in the liberal arts and in chivalry before being knighted, and—having proved his worth by vanquishing a nine-headed monster (representing Dissimulation, Delay, Shame, Misreport, and so on)—being rewarded with Beauty's hand in marriage.<sup>16</sup> The emphasis on chivalric values both here and in the knighting ceremony that follows (the latter modelled on the Garter ceremony which itself makes sure to keep alive its original medieval foundation) is a good example of the 'invention of tradition'. As Peter Goodrich notes, Legh's account of the Revels 'has the curiously other-worldly character of that Renaissance literary genre which depicts the

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<sup>14</sup> It would be nice to think that the 'Palaphilos' spelling (one 'l') might derive from the Hebrew prefix פֶּלֶא (pala, 'to be surpassing or extraordinary'), but the distinction between the two spellings and the two men is most likely to be a matter of expediency. It courteously allowed Dudley to play the part of Pallaphilos without requiring him to go to the trouble of performing any actions or learning any cues or lines.

<sup>15</sup> As noted by Bruce R. Smith, Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage, 1500-1700 (Princeton, 1988), 112-18. Smith comments that, as described by Legh, the Revels 'offer a particularly striking instance' of the veiling of realpolitik beneath the conventions of medieval romance (112).

<sup>16</sup> Mike Pincombe, 'Robert Dudley, Gorboduc, and "The masque of Beauty and Desire": A Reconsideration of the Evidence for Political Intervention', Parergon xx (2003), 19-44. As Pincombe insists, the account of Desire and Beauty is a narrated story, not (pace Axton) a masque. He also points out that Legh's familiarity with Hawes' text extends no further than the chapter headings (for Legh's similarly minimal knowledge of Chaucer, see also note 7 above). Hawes' text was reprinted several times in 1554 and 1555, including by Tottel.

originary: the times and rituals of repetition whose power of presence resides in a stylistic conformity to a past which was never present'.<sup>17</sup> In this case, the chivalric ideals are amplified (none too subtly) by their investment in a chivalric order named after a mythic horse, and the whole imaginary scenario is an extended compliment to Dudley in his capacity as the Queen's Master of the Horse (this being, prior to his elevation as Earl of Leicester in 1564, his highest appointment at the time).<sup>18</sup> The other fictive titles bestowed on Dudley in his festive persona—Constable and Marshal—confirm the equine/chivalric theme, for 'constable' derives from comes stabuli (a count or officer of the stable), and 'marshal' from mariscalcus (groom), etymologies that reflect the importance of the horse in the medieval state and the centrality of cavalry to its warfare.<sup>19</sup> Dudley would certainly have made quite an impression when, on 27 December 1561, he made his way through London to the Inner Temple to take part in the Revels, 'in clean, complete harness gilt, with a hundred great horses and gentlemen riding gorgeously, with chains of gold, and their horse goodly trapped', as the diarist Henry Machyn recorded.<sup>20</sup> None of this is likely to have been lost on Sidney,

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Goodrich, 'Eating Law: Commons, Common Land, Common Law', Journal of Legal History, xii (1991), 246-67 (247).

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Blundeville (of Gray's Inn) similarly appeals to Dudley in this role, dedicating to him A newe booke containing the arte of ryding (London, 1560?), STC 3158, his translation of Federico Grisone's riding manual, Gli ordini di cavalcare (Naples, 1550). Blundeville acknowledges Dudley as 'chief master' of the art of horsemanship, 'aswell by knowledge as also by office' (sig. A2'), and notes that in most parts of the country 'partelye for lacke of arte, & partly for lacke of exercise, Chiuallry is sore decayed' (sig. A3). In the Preface, Blundeville praises the art of horsemanship and notes that it derives in part from the legend that, 'as poets faine, [was] begot vpon Medusa the wynged horse, named Pegasus, which fleing vp to the heauens, was transformed into those sterres, that be nowe called after his name' (sig. B4).

<sup>19</sup> See *OED* constable, n. and marshal, n. As the Dictionary notes, '[T]he early development of the sense, whereby the comes stabuli, from being the head groom of the stable, became the principal officer of the household of the Frankish kings, and of the great feudatories, and the field-marshal or commander-general of the army, had taken place before the word came into English; the development was parallel to that of marshal'. In England, the position of Lord High Constable, the supreme commander of the army, had been abolished in 1521 after the disgrace and execution of the post's last holder, the Duke of Buckingham. Thereafter, the post was reinstated, for ceremonial purposes only, to serve at royal coronations (the Earl of Arundel officiated in this capacity at the coronations of Mary and Elizabeth Tudor). It was quite something, therefore, even in play, for Dudley to be appointed as 'the high constable of the Goddess' in the Revels (Legh, fol.203<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>20</sup> A London Provisioner's Chronicle, 1550–1563, by Henry Machyn: Manuscript, Transcription, and Modernization, ed. Richard W. Bailey, Marilyn Miller, and Colette Moore (electronic scholarly edition): <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/machyn/> (accessed 30/10/2020), fol.144<sup>v</sup>.

who makes personalised references to horses and horsemanship throughout the Defence (as, indeed, elsewhere in his writing) in a favourite play on his own name (Philip, ‘lover of horses’).<sup>21</sup>

If critics are increasingly questioning the part that Gorboduc played in furthering Dudley’s marital ambitions, much the same might be said about the Revels.<sup>22</sup> For all his self-presentation as a knight dedicated to the service of a goddess, Dudley’s role as Pallaphilos speaks less to any marital suit than to the specifics of Inns of Court culture at the time. Recounting the ‘line, and progeny’ of Pallaphilos, Legh traces his descent from Pallas herself (whose arms signified ‘Sapientia & Fortitudo’, wisdom and strength), through Perseus (‘politia et magnanimitas’, statecraft and greatness of soul) and various other mythic figures down to Pallaphilos himself, whose arms—the blazoning of which is pretty much the entire purpose of this episode—represent the qualities of ‘virtus et scientia’ (virtue and knowledge) (fols.219<sup>v</sup>-220).<sup>23</sup> The image of Pegasus emblazoned on the shield, meanwhile, as well as being a ‘heraldic pun’ suitable to the royal Master of Horse, also declares him ‘constant in loue of wisdom’, as does the shield’s motto that, like the winged horse that went on to

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<sup>21</sup> The oration famously opens with a comparison between the arts of horsemanship and poetry, while the digressio begins by characterising the oration as ‘a career’ (108.22) or short gallop at full speed. On the use of horse imagery throughout the Defence, see Catherine Bates, On Not Defending Poetry: Defence and Indefensibility in Sidney’s Defence of Poesy (Oxford, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Contrast earlier interpretations such as Axton, ‘Robert Dudley and the Inner Temple Revels’, and Susan Doran, ‘Juno versus Diana: The Treatment of Elizabeth’s Marriage in Plays and Entertainments, 1561-1581’, The Historical Journal, xxxviii (1995), 257-274, which support the ‘marital’ argument, with more recent studies such as Pincombe, ‘Robert Dudley’, and Jessica Winston, Lawyers at Play: Literature, Law, and Politics at the Early Modern Inns of Court, 1558-1581 (Oxford, 2016), who play down its significance.

<sup>23</sup> The symbolism requires a knowledge of the myth. As half-brother to Pallas, Perseus had defended her honour by beheading the monstrous Gorgon (previously Medusa) who had sexually profaned the goddess’ shrine. Thereafter, the image of the monster’s severed head remained permanently etched on Perseus’s shield (the original *aegis* and thus the first ever escutcheon), to the terror of his enemies. From the blood that flowed from the Gorgon’s corpse, Pegasus sprang fully formed, much as Pallas had sprung fully formed from the head of Jove. Symbolically, poetic inspiration and wisdom thereby share the same non-human and non-sexual birth or origin, making them otherworldly and transcendental.

become a constellation, ‘Volat alta ad Sidera virtus’ (virtue flies to the stars) (fol.221).<sup>24</sup> As Mike Pincombe states, ‘there is no hint that any part of this allegorical description was meant in any way to support Dudley’s marital aspirations’; rather, ‘the whole point of the ceremony was to glorify [him] as a model of “virtue and knowledge”’.<sup>25</sup> Just as Desire had previously been educated in ‘thartes liberall’ (fol.207<sup>v</sup>) in the backstory of Pallaphilos, so Pallaphilos is here identified as patron of ‘all the liberall Sciences’ (fol.204) that flow from the fount of the Muses all the way to the Inner Temple itself. This needs to be set within the context of an Inns of Court culture that was coming under increasing pressure to incorporate humanist—and, indeed, Protestant—values, as grammar-school- and university-educated men began to enrol in growing numbers.<sup>26</sup> In the early 1540s, a Commission had been set up by Henry VIII to propose a new college of law—effectively, a fifth Inn—in which legal and liberal studies (including the study of languages) would be combined. Although the scheme was never implemented in the end, it was part of an ongoing conversation in the period about the desirability of combining legal learning with the liberal sciences/arts (‘scientia’) in order to update the traditional content and methods of English legal training which, by comparison, were starting to look suspiciously scholastic and old-fashioned.<sup>27</sup> A more humanist-inflected

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<sup>24</sup> On the ‘heraldic pun’, see D. S. Bland, ‘Pegasus at the Inner Temple’, *N&Q*, xvi (1969), 16–18 (18). Pegasus remains the emblem of the Inner Temple to this day; the motto has been adapted slightly to read Volat ad aethera virtus (‘virtue flies to the heavens’).

<sup>25</sup> Pincombe, ‘Robert Dudley’, 26.

<sup>26</sup> On this see Winston,; Paul Lawyers at Play Raffield, ‘The Inner Temple revels (1561-62) and the Elizabethan rhetoric of signs: legal iconography at the early modern Inns of Court’, in The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court, ed. Archer, et al, 32-50; and Paul Raffield, ‘The Monarchical Republic, Constitutionality, and the Legal Profession’, in Lorna Hutson, ed., The Oxford Handbook of English Law and Literature, 1500-1700 (Oxford, 2017), 163-179.

<sup>27</sup> This conversation would be continued by Sidney’s protégé, Abraham Fraunce, in The lawiers logike (London, 1588), STC 11343. Under the auspices of his former patron (who was, of course, dead by this time), Fraunce, then a member of Gray’s Inn, makes a detailed case for combining liberal with legal studies, rejecting the charge that no ‘good Scholler should euer prooue good Lawyer’ (¶2), and wanting nothing so much as for his fellow Inns men ‘to suffer without grudging Schollers to bee Lawyers, as they wish some Lawyers to become better Schollers’ (¶4).

legal education—not least in civil (i.e. Roman) law—would equip the nation’s judges, barristers, and magistrates to put their skills at the service of the state and so to exemplify a civic ethos in which the enlightened exercise of applied learning and active virtue would be of benefit of all.

If this is what Pallaphilos and his order of knights were meant to exemplify—signalling the Inner Temple’s commitment to such an ideal—it would certainly chime with the chief argument of the Defence, namely, that the highest aim of all knowledge is ‘the end of well-doing and not of well-knowing only’ (88.27) and that ‘not gnosis but praxis must be the fruit’ (94.34). Sidney’s argument that poetry is the best means to achieve this end was based on the idea that, since poets had from Orphic times drawn ‘with their charming sweetness the wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge’ (82.21-2), they were the original civilisers and legislators of mankind; ‘the first lawmakers to the people’, as George Puttenham was later to call them.<sup>28</sup> From the perspective of the late 1570s or early 1580s when he was writing the Defence—looking at the state of contemporary English poetry and lamenting what he saw—Sidney might well have cast his mind back to the idealism of a previous generation whose early promise the intervening decades had, in his view, had done nothing to fulfil. Back in the 1560s, the idea that members of the Inns of Court might lead the way—that this concentrated group of highly educated, literate, and professional men might apply their liberal and legal learning in a practical way so as to create a virtuous citizenry in a well-ordered and law-abiding commonwealth—had led to the development of distinct trope: that of ‘Minerva’s men’. That is how Jasper Heywood named the students of the Inns in the preface to his translation of Seneca’s Thyestes (1560)—exemplary poets who had been taught by the goddess to write well and to do justice to Seneca’s verse by translating

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<sup>28</sup> George Puttenham, The Art of English Poesy [1589]: A Critical Edition, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca, 2007), 97. The commonplace goes back to Horace, see Ars poetica, lines 391-401.

it with ‘stately style, / and goodly grace’ (particular Inns men such as Norton and Sackville were singled out for special praise, being begot ‘as Pallas was’ from the head of Jove).<sup>29</sup> ‘Minerva’s men’ was likewise how Thomas Pound characterised himself and his fellows at Lincoln’s Inn in a wedding oration performed there in 1566.<sup>30</sup> In this context, it is easy to see how an ideal order of lawyer-poet-knights, dedicated to Pallas and led by one Pallaphilos in the Inner Temple Revels of 1561-2 formed part of the same trope, and how the family connection secured by Dudley’s involvement may well have impressed the symbolic value of the scene on Sidney’s mind.

In sum, when Sidney drafted the digressio his aim was to improve the quality of the nation’s poetry by comparing illustrious examples of other times and places with the unsatisfactory examples he saw all around him (exceptions notwithstanding). With the Ars poetica at the back of his mind, it was natural that he should recall Horace’s similar comparison between the good poet, who would do nothing against Minerva’s will (‘invita Minerva’), and the bad poet who would, simply because he was rated at the fortune of a knight (‘eques’). The modesty topos obliged Sidney to identify with the latter, but his bad faith registers in the way Horace’s two-way comparison gets conflated into a single image of the bad poet: the scorned knight/s who disobey/s the goddess. The model of the good poet, however, had never gone away (even if the modesty topos forbade Sidney from identifying himself as such), and the image of just such a figure—enacted by his own uncle some twenty years before—was ready and waiting in the memory of the Inner Temple Revels. There, behind Sidney’s scorned ‘knights of the same order’, stood just such an ideal: a knight

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<sup>29</sup> Jasper Heywood, trans., The seconde tragedie of Seneca entituled Thyestes (London, 1560), STC 22226, sig.\*7<sup>v</sup>. Compare Sidney’s praise of Gorboduc for its ‘stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca’s style’ (110.31-2).

<sup>30</sup> Records of Early English Drama: Inns of Court, ed. Alan H. Nelson and John R. Elliott, Jr., 3 vols. (Cambridge, 2010), II, 638 (line 23).

dedicated to Pallas who served under the emblem of Pegasus that signified poetic inspiration and fame in the active exercise of virtue, and who went on to recruit a further twenty four young men—a ‘sonnet’ of knights—to the same cause. All this is speculation, of course, and so it must remain. But to a man who ‘in these my not old years and idlest times [had] slipped into the title of a poet’ (81.25-6), who knew his Horace backwards, who was on a mission to improve English poetry and raise it to heights it had visibly achieved elsewhere, who was intent on demonstrating that poetry could move people to active virtue, and who had more than a passing interest in horses, horsemanship, and chivalry—not to mention in sonnets or in flying to the stars—the connection between the two groups of ‘knights’, scorned and excellent, respectively, seems a possible if not a persuasive suggestion.

CATHERINE BATES

University of Warwick