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THE ANALYSIS OF THE "MASK" CONVENTION
IN SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S "ASTROPHEL AND STELLA"

The English sonnet achieved its immense popularity chiefly due to the Petrarchan sonnet which gave the Elizabethans a set of conventions for the development of love poetry. As a result, the Elizabethan poets inherited a ready-made pattern of love in which the mistress was a priori unresponsive to the adoration of the lover. The origins of this specifically understood model within the "microcosm" of the feeling as such, should also be discerned in the Provençal love poetry - especially that of Bar-bierieux, Peire Ramon of Toulouse, Aimeric de Pequillan and Daniel Arnaut. From these two sources the basic situation presented in any love poem gained its romantic colouring, almost approaching religious fervour, and formal structure with a set of conventions. Thus the sonnet itself, regarded as the verbalized expression of certain emotions, was capable of performing its functions only within the sphere of such a feeling as was possible to be expressed by means of the sonnet's own system of "conceits". In other words, the aspect of a certain "sacredness" of the pattern of love itself, forces Petrarch's followers to focus their own inventiveness and poetic sensibility upon the sphere of formal devices capable of best illustrating the feeling. The criterion of "conceit" seems of necessity to be the most important and, in fact, the only dimension of the evaluation of lyrical creation.

It seems to be quite evident that the growing consciousness of conventionality of the feeling itself, systematically shifts the scale of evaluation of poetic creativity towards the sphere

of formal means of presentation. Paradoxically enough, the conventional attitude in respect to the "matter" of love poetry does not regard the feeling itself as the "modus vivendi" predestinating to the creation of true love poetry. Thus the sonnet, as defined by M. Evans, is "[...] less concerned with the exploration of love itself than with the process by which the moment of passion is transformed into a polished artefact"¹. The assumption that the form of the sonnet, possible to be qualified as a "personal kind" in the hierarchy of the Elizabethan poetic genres and, thus, as a kind by means of which the poet should speak in "propria persona", should not be taken too literally. A rather schematic treatment of the presented feeling, should put the reader on the guard if there is the tendency to identify the poetic persona with its poetic creator. According to E. Lucie-Smith, the Elizabethan above all, "[...] believed in the supremacy of the word, the word in all its variousness"². Thus, the stress is put not so much on the true emotional impact of the poem, but rather upon its form. Whether or not a poet is in love, does, in fact, not matter at all; what matters is that his poem should, by means of a skilful verbal manipulation, give the impression that he is, and it is this illusion that the Elizabethan sonneteers attempted to create.

One should also be aware of another factor which accounts for the implied clash between the poetic message per se and the formal means of this message. The love sonnet, as any other piece of poetry is, paradoxically, both "private" and "public". It pretends to be entirely "private" caring only for the receiver addressed in the poem. Yet, obviously, it is the very fact of the participation of other people, either as minor characters referred to in the poem, or as the readers implied in it, that makes it also "public". Moreover, apart from the frequently doubtful sphere of emotions, any love sonnet may be regarded as an exercise in the fashionable mode or a public complement paid to a patron or a friend. The ultimate meaning of any piece of

¹ Introduction, [in:] Elizabethan Sonnets, ed. M. Evans, J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., London 1982, p. VIII.

² The Penguin Book of Elizabethan Verse, ed. E. Lucie-Smith, Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex 1965, p. 15.

love poetry written in the reign of Elizabeth should, thus, be regarded as a kind of compromise between the poet's wish to keep the highest level of intimacy and the unavailability of the social context.

The following study will deal with a single sonnet sequence, "Astrophel and Stella" by Sir Philip Sidney in connection with various roles the main protagonist performs. The sequence is one of the most spectacular examples of the Elizabethan love poetry belonging to the Petrarchan poetical tradition. It was written sometime about 1581-1583, published in a pirated edition in 1591, and finally issued with the textual supervision of Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke, in the 1598 folio edition of the "Arcadia".

The awareness of the presence of certain traditional as well as moral limitations in the Renaissance love poetry certainly imposes upon the reader the necessity of distinguishing the poet from the poetic persona. The poetic artefact may express the feelings of the poet but it does not have to. Even if it does, various kinds of poetic camouflage keep various autobiographical facts in secrecy. The sources of the inconsistencies between the feeling itself and the way of its poetic realization may be traced both in the heritage of the ethos of Amour Courtouis and the specifically understood "morality" of the Renaissance society. These two factors made the poets use poetic camouflage. The method of the "masks" as it were, used in "Astrophel and Stella", seems to testify Sidney's close adherence to this kind of poetic "morality". Thus Sidney's poetic persona, Astrophel, "wears" various "masks" and stripping one "mask" probably uncovers another one and another under that. They are frequently used interchangeably but still the revelation of a "true" face under the "masks" is ambiguous. The chief difficulty lies in the fact that any simplification aiming at interpreting the poetic persona either as a lover who has become a poet and a literary critic, or as a poet and a literary critic who, accidentally, has fallen in love, does not reflect the fullness of Astrophel's personality.

One of the qualities of Sidney's sonnet sequence is the fact that the relation between the protagonist and its poetic creator should be analyzed in terms of two levels of a specifically un-

understood "disguise". In fact, any study limited to analyzing one type of relation only, namely that existing between the character of the main protagonist and the roles he performs, both operating within the sphere of the "microcosm" of the poetic sequence would be, to a large extent, incomplete. Thus bearing in mind the fact that love poetry, by its very nature, may reflect the emotional state of the author himself and not only that of his fictitious representative, the following study will briefly analyze the relation between the poet creator and his main protagonist.

The evident presence of two levels of poetic "disguise" seems to function as a confirmation of Sidney's intention to grant Astrophel at least a partly independent status in the sonnet sequence.

Let us, for a while, concentrate upon the analysis of the first level of "disguise", the problem of which does, in fact, concern the degree of an autobiographical input in "Astrophel and Stella".

The degree of the autobiographical input in "Astrophel and Stella" has, for a long time, been, and, in fact, still is a matter of discussions among literary critics. The scale of possible interpretations fluctuates between the hypotheses regarding Sidney's sonnet sequence as a purely fictitious piece of poetry, and those stressing the inseparability of facts and fiction. C. S. Lewis, ignoring the biographical input in "Astrophel and Stella", claims that the form of the sonnet sequence used by Sidney is the best evidence for its fictitious character. A sonnet sequence is "[...] not a way of telling a story. It is a form which exists for the sake of a prolonged lyrical meditation", thus "the narrative, still more the biographical, reading of a sonnet sequence may obscure its real qualities"³.

The opposite attitude towards the problem of autobiography in "Astrophel and Stella" is represented by W. A. Ringler who is apt to claim that "[...] we cannot avoid biography" as one of Sidney's intentional effects⁴.

³ C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1954, p. 328 (quoted in: *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. W. A. Ringler, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 440).

⁴ *Ibid.*

Bearing both opinions in mind one should always be conscious of Sidney's own distinction between history and poetry. In the "Apology for Poetry" he says that: "[...] the historian, wanting the precept, is so tied, not to what should be but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that this example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore a less fruitful doctrine"⁵. On the other hand, it is the poet who "[...]" is the food for the tenderest stomachs, the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher, where of AEsop's tales give good proof: whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many more beastly than beasts [...]"⁶. It is, thus, not a report of the chronology of the real experience that poetry should deal with, but adopting the reality as a raw material for a purely fictitious creation. Sidney's own opinion about the relation between fact and fiction seems to be reflected in the first sonnet of "Astrophel and Stella", which is not only the praise of Stella but also a "discussion of the best process for producing a poem"⁷.

A strong argument in favour of those who tend not to "decode" Sidney's sonnet sequence as an autobiographical piece of poetry, is the moral aspect of the matter. In order to understand fully the ambiguous nature of this aspect let us turn to the biography of Sir Philip Sidney and Penelope Devereux.

Four days before his death, the Earl of Essex, Penelope's father, expressed the wish that, "yf god so move ther hartes" Philip Sidney "myght matche with my daughter"⁸. In fact, since Sidney was the only heir of his uncles, the childless earls of Leicester and Warwick, and had prospects for wealth and influence, there is every possibility to believe that the heart of Philip, then almost 22, was not moved by the 13-year-old Penelope⁹. Besides, the Earl's proposal was only one of at least

⁵ Ph. Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. H. A. Neadham, Ginn and Co. Ltd., London 1931, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷ *The Poems...*, p. 458 (quoted in: *The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. J. G. Nichols, Liverpool University Press, 1974, p. 54).

⁸ *The Poems...*, p. 436.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 437.

five that were made by various noble families¹⁰. Eventually, Penelope was married to Lord Robert Rich on 1 November, 1581¹¹. Since the poems of "Astrophel and Stella" (1581-1583) must have been, at least for the most part, written after Penelope's marriage, she should, therefore, appear in them as a married woman. For any contemporary reader it seems morally unthinkable that Sidney should have continued to address such impassionate verse to a married woman, himself being married to Frances Walsingham in 1582.

Another point indicating the discrepancy between fact and fiction in "Astrophel and Stella" is, strangely enough, put forward by one of the main supporters of interpreting Sidney's sequence as an autobiography, that is by W. A. Ringler. He shows how much of Sidney's biography is left out of the sequence¹². In fact, several important events from the author's life covering the years of writing "Astrophel and Stella" are not mentioned in it. Sidney does not mention anything about his trip to Antwerp (1582), his friendship with the exiled Earl of Angus and the Portuguese pretender Don Antonio and, what is most significant, he tells nothing about his activities in opposition to the proposed marriage of the Duke of Anjou with the Queen (1580)¹³. Sidney's conscious omission of these important facts may be taken as a proof against treating "Astrophel and Stella" as a chronological diary of its author.

Yet, on the other hand, it must be admitted that the sequence contains essential ingredients of autobiography of another kind which show, however, the relation between the main protagonist of the sequence and its creator.

As W. A. Ringler points out, the main protagonist is clearly identified as Sidney himself¹⁴. The references to his coat of arms can be found in sonnets: No. 65 (Thou bear'st the arrow, I the arrowhead), and in No. 72 (Virtue's gold now must head my Cupid's dart!). Bearing in mind that Sidney's coat of arms was

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 438.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 447.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

a "pheon azure" (a blue arrow-head on a gold background), the heraldic allusion seems to be quite obvious¹⁵. In sonnet No. 30, Astrophel and Sidney have a common father:

How Ulster likes of that same golden bit
Wherewith my father once made it half tame,

Similarly to the preceding hint, a close look at the biography of Sir Philip Sidney indicates that the relation between the "father" from the sonnet and Sir Henry Sidney, who was thrice Lord Deputy Governor of Ireland, is, indeed, something more than a mere coincidence. The phrase: I am not I, pity the tale of me. (sonnet No. 45) may reflect the fact that Astrophel's story is a fictionalized account of real events.

Not all biographical intrusions are so easy to "decode", sometimes they work by hints and guesses. The first two lines of sonnet No. 33:

I might, unhappy word, oh me, I might,
And then would not, or could not see my bliss,

seem to bear the traces of the proposed marriage between Sidney and Penelope Devereux. Yet, without a detailed analysis of Sidney's biography, the meaning of these lines seems to be reduced to the conventional woe of Astrophel¹⁶.

The use of equine imagery (cf. sonnets Nos. 41, 49 and 53) may, for an average reader, perform the function of presenting Astrophel's chivalric ethos, yet the analysis of Sidney's biography indicates that on 15-16 May, 1581, he was "one of the four challengers in the Fortress of Perfect Beauty tournament, which celebrated the romantic beauty of the Queen"¹⁷. Besides, Sidney's love of horsemanship is quite obvious in the "Apology for Poetry"¹⁸.

¹⁵ The Poetry..., p. 86.

¹⁶ A. C. H a m i l t o n, Sir Philip Sidney a Study of His Life and Works, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 94.

¹⁷ The Poems..., p. 441.

¹⁸ S i d n e y, An Apology for Poetry..., p. 1.

Sonnet No. 83 also seems to be enigmatic. Astrophel, warning Stella's sparrow against being too bold, uses the name "Philip":

Good brother Philip, I have borne you long,
I was content you should in favour creep,

Again, this may be a pure convention since the sparrow, traditionally, was identified with lechery, but, on the other hand, the use of the name itself, the close relationship (Good brother Philip), and a certain nobilitation of the sparrow (Sir Phip), indicate that Astrophel, while warning the sparrow, may also warn Philip Sidney too¹⁹.

It seems that all the arguments used in the above analysis concerning the biographical input in "Astrophel and Stella" indicate that the views of both C. S. Lewis and W. A. Ringler regarding the relation Sidney-Astrophel may be justified. The undeniable quality of Sidney's sonnet sequence stems, definitely, not from the fairly large amount of biographical intrusions, but from the successful attempt to fuse the real story with the elements of poetic fantasy. It is, in fact, the dramatic qualities of the main protagonist, with which I will deal later, that make the identification of Astrophel with his "creator" by no means easy²⁰.

Despite the fact that the substance of "Astrophel and Stella" contains some biographical data, Sidney seems to be concerned with fusing them with the elements of drama, fiction, and convention²¹. Thus, despite the evident autobiographical ostensibility of certain sonnets, the sequence itself can be regarded neither as a kind of a versified diary, nor as a series of verse epistles planned to gain the favour of the lady.

The fact of treating Astrophel as a central character of the dramatic sequence, somehow a priori imposes upon the reader the necessity of considering "Astrophel and Stella" as a sequence

¹⁹ Sir Philip Sidney, *Selected Poems*, ed. K. Duncan-Jones, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1982, p. 221.

²⁰ *The Poetry...*, p. 77.

²¹ *ibid.*

of monologues or quasi-dialogues. Thus, it is the reader who becomes the audience as it were, while the protagonist and those he addresses, including the beloved, are the characters.

Thomas Nashe, in the preface he wrote for Newman's unauthorized edition of "Astrophel and Stella" in 1591, characterized the sequence as "the tragicomedy of love [...] performed by starlight [...] the argument cruell chastities, the Prologue hone, the Epiloque dispaire"²². The use of the term "tragicomedy" should incline the reader to regard the sequence not as a mere series of separate poems but as a wholesome unit putting stress on the presentation of various emotional states of the main protagonist. "Astrophel and Stella" seems to be marked by an orderly progression of mood and action, having a beginning, a middle, and an end.

The consideration of Sidney's poetic sequence in terms of its dramatic qualities, somehow of necessity results in the attempts aiming at dividing the sequence into specifically understood "acts" marking respective stages of the development of the feeling. The attempts by H. Biedrzycka to divide the sequence into five "acts" have their justification in Sidney's own division of "Olf Arcadia" into "five books or acts"²³. Yet, the pattern which, in the opinion of the present author, seems best to indicate the dynamism of the emotional transformation of Astrophel, is the division into three parts, suggested by W. A. Ringer: part 1, sonnets Nos. 1-51; part 2, sonnet No. 52-Song No. 8; and part 3, Song No. 9 - sonnet No. 108²⁴. The three parts mark the shifts in the attitude of the protagonist himself towards Stella.

The fact of regarding "Astrophel and Stella" as a specifically understood "drama" performed for the reader, of necessity requires certain verifications concerning the status of the main protagonist within the "microcosm" of the sequence. Obvious dramatic qualities characterizing respective stages in the progress

²² The Poems..., p. 69.

²³ H. B i e d r z y c k a. "Astrophel and Stella" as a Dramatic Sonnet Sequence, Studies in English and American Literature, PWN, Łódź 1984, p. 22.

²⁴ The Poems..., p. 66-69.

of Astrophel's courtship, justifies the use of the term "actor" for the qualification of his ethos. If so, let us analyze the relation between Astrophel and the set of "masks" functioning as the medium of performing certain roles. The evident dramatic qualities of Astrophel's roles inclines the reader of the sequence to regard "masks" or rather the relations between them, as the vehicles for expressing the emotional states of the main protagonist. Therefore, the mutual interdependence of the roles performed by Astrophel exposes the dynamism of respective stages of the protagonist's feelings. The term "interdependence" seems to exemplify the complexity of the relations between particular roles of the protagonist, performed by means of the "masks".

The analysis of the "mask" convention in Sidney's sonnet sequence indicates certain hierarchy in respect of the use of this medium. The message itself, which concerns love as well as the way in which it is expressed, confirms the dominating character of the roles of the poet and the lover. Also in this case any attempt to consider the main protagonist either as the lover who has become the poet, or as the poet who, accidentally, has fallen in love, results in evident simplifications. Thus, the use of these two "masks" must, undoubtedly, be considered not from the point of view of their separate meanings, but from the point of view of the emotional input brought about by the fusion of these two "masks". The mutual interdependence of the two "masks" is, in fact, confirmed by the first three sonnets of the sequence. The first sonnet shows Astrophel as a lover who starts writing poems to please Stella and to attract her to him. The following sonnet No. 2 changes the roles of the poetic persona. Now, Astrophel plays the role of the poet who has fallen in love. Having assured the reader about the unconventionality of his love, in sonnet No. 3, Astrophel consciously comes back to the role of a naive poet, he played in the first sonnet of the sequence. The unity of "masks" is, sporadically, broken by the factors which will be dealt with in the next parts of the study, yet, as a rule, the relations between the respective roles performed by Astrophel should be considered as the reflection of his emotional states.

Yet, throughout the whole sequence, the "masks" of a lover

and a poet, possible to be qualified as the "basic" ones, are regularly fused with the "masks" from outside the sphere of feeling. These "masks" may be regarded either as the components of the ethos of Astrophel as the Renaissance man (cf. sonnets Nos. 41 and 53 - Astrophel-knight, and sonnet No. 30 Astrophel-politician), or their presence is the consequence of the protagonist's earlier accepting some other roles. Therefore, the "mask" of the poet seems, of necessity, to be supplied with the "mask" of the literary critic. There are some sonnets in the sequence (Nos. 1, 3, 6, 15, 28, 44, 50, 74 and 90) which deal with matters of purpose and style. One can digest from them a doctrine about love poetry and, perhaps by implication, about all poetry. The presence of these specifically understood minor "masks", confirming the typically Renaissance versatility of Astrophel, is marked either directly by the choice of a particular imagery, or, indirectly, by the choice of vocabulary the register of which explicitly characterizes the para-poetic interests of Astrophel.

An obvious example of these methods is the fusion of two basic "masks" of the lover and the poet, with the minor "mask" of the knight. In sonnets Nos. 41 and 53, the chivalric ethos of Astrophel is confirmed by the description of the tournament. But in sonnets Nos. 13 and 36, it is not the imagery itself but the choice of a specific type of verbal register used by Astrophel-poet, that exemplifies his chivalric ethos. Thus the military vocabulary used in the sonnets characterizes the protagonist as a character well acquainted with the chivalric tradition of tournaments. The style of Astrophel-poet is in this sonnet formed of a unique fusion of the three influential factors, his love, the courtly tradition of adoration, and his chivalric ethos.

The dynamics of the relations existing between the respective "masks" seems, also, to be confirmed by the process opposite to those mentioned above. The fusion of the "masks" seems in certain sonnets, to be based on a specifically understood opposition. Sonnet No. 3 represents the evident contradiction between the "mask" of the naive poet and that of the literary critic who catalogues here four current ways of ornamenting ver-

se²⁵. Therefore, Astrophel's conscious return to the role of the naïve poet, in connection with his opposition to the classical or conventional methods of writing poetry, which is testified by his seemingly naïve imitation of them, confirms not only his attempt to advocate poetic simplicity, but also his profound knowledge of the Ciceronian principles of decorum.

This kind of opposition may be traced not only within the relation of the basic "masks" and the minor "masks", as has been shown in the above analyzed sonnet, but also in case of the relation of two basic "masks". The assumption concerning this type of opposition may be confirmed by sonnet No. 14. The poetic *Energia* of this poem stems from the conflict between the unconventionality of the "mask" of the lover and the conventional status of the "mask" of the poet. The original freshness and novelty of the protagonist's feeling itself is, somehow, diminished by the conventionality of the image and vocabulary used to present the lover's sufferings. The ultimate message of this poem results from the opposition between the uniqueness of the idea represented by the "mask" of the lover, and the artificiality of form, confirming the conventional status of the "mask" of the poet.

Bearing in mind the unequal level of originality of respective "masks", one may risk the suggestion that this phenomenon confirms Sidney's conscious tendency to particularize one definite "mask" through the evident depreciation of the innovatory quality of another one.

Sonnet No. 71 requires a separate analysis, mainly as an example of the opposition between the two variants of the same "mask", occurring within a frame of a single sonnet. In this sonnet, the seeming acceptance of the conventional lover's ethos is, eventually, denied by the last line of the poem, stressing the uniqueness of Astrophel-lover's feeling. This poem reflects, in fact, the protagonist's dramatic clash between two kinds of love: love as a typically Petrarchan form of purifying and ennobling emotion, and love as a physical desire. Thus, the sonnet reflects an obvious movement from Astrophel-lover's ex-

²⁵ Sir Philip Sidney..., see Notes p. 215.

periencing the "public" evaluation of beauty and virtue, to his private reactions revealing his true intentions. The profound conflict of the lover's attitudes breaks the sonnet into two and gives a vivid dramatic expression of the central opposition between reason and passion.

The fact of dividing the sonnet cycle into three parts, somehow in advance confirms the assumption that Sidney's chief aim was to present the respective stages of love's progress and their psychological implications. Is it, then, possible to consider the mutual relations between "masks" as a specific factor reflecting, indirectly, the psychological or emotional transformations of the protagonist? The following attempt to answer this question has been based upon the above mentioned division of the sequence, made by W. A. Ringler. The division, however, requires further sub-division in Part I concerning the separation of a certain prologue-like phase (sonnets Nos. 1-8). This phase included, according to W. A. Ringler's nomenclature in Par. 1, is characterized by a definite instability of the relations between respective "masks". It seems to result from the protagonist's lack of experience both in the sphere of emotions as well as in that of poetic creation. This specifically understood emotional "tossing" of the protagonist results from an obvious discrepancy between the declaration of emotional unconventionality, included in sonnets Nos. 1 and 2, and the conventional expression of the lover's feeling itself, presented in sonnet No. 8. This phenomenon concerns as well the aspect of the sonnets's style, so it also concerns the "mask" of the poet.

The second phase of the first part (sonnets Nos. 9-51) indicates Astrophel's attempt to accept the pattern of love imposed upon him by Stella. His love, therefore, becomes an elaborate game of self-deception. Thus seeming stability is also revealed in the case of the "mask" of the poet, which is characterized by a certain dose of stylistic maturity (cf. sonnets Nos. 22, 34, 38, and 47). The seeming emotional balance of the protagonist is fully confirmed by an obvious interdependence of the "masks" of the lover and the poet.

The poetic *Energia* of the second part of the sequence (sonnet No. 52 - Song No. 8) stems from the protagonist's negation of the ethos of the conventional lover. Astrophel-lover's lack

of acceptance of this pattern of love seems, as well, to be traceable in the style of Astrophel-poet. From sonnet No. 66 onwards, Astrophel-poet's voice is full of excitement and anticipation. An increasing conflict between the opposite attitudes towards love leads, eventually, to the rejection of the protagonist's love by Stella. The lover's frustration may be observed in the process of a gradual separation between the "mask" of the lover and that of the poet (Song No. 8).

The third part of the sequence, possible to be qualified as the 'decadent' period of love, is also characterized by the prevailing feeling of the opposition existing within the sphere of mutual relations between the "masks" of the lover and the poet (cf. sonnet No. 97). This increasing conflict confirms the protagonist's frustration caused by the fact of Stella's rejecting his model of love, and his own inability to accent her own pattern.

It seems that this, of necessity, very general analysis of the relations between the protagonist's emotional states and the mutual relations of the "masks", to some extent confirms the interdependence of these two factors. Thus, the respective "masks", or rather their reciprocal relations, do not, in fact, only serve as the factors stressing the Renaissance versatility of the protagonist, but also, indirectly, function as the means capable of reflecting Astrophel's psyche.

An essential feature of Sidney's sonnet sequence, is the author's concern with the conflict as the "modus vivendi" of Astrophel's proceedings. In fact, the profound humanism of Sidney's protagonist should be regarded not in terms of his falling in love, but, rather, in terms of presenting a series of "inner" conflicts caused by this feeling. The poetic Energia of "Astrophel and Stella" has its roots in the fusion of the three basic oppositions: that between Astrophel's sense of emotional freedom and the requirements of love, between love and heroic obligation, and between desire and virtuous affectation. The ethos of Astrophel-man should, thus, be regarded as a fusion of his particular attitudes to the above conflicts. The moral and spiritual "inconsistency" of the protagonist's attitude towards the problems he is faced with is, again, visualized to the reader by various "masks" used by Astrophel, which reflect not only

the typically Renaissance broadness of interests but also his conflicting nature. The convention of this "disguise" not only enables Astrophel to move flexibly among his changing attitudes, but also serves as a unique means of analyzing his intricate personality. The use of the "mask" convention contributes to the impression of "multiaspectuality" of the protagonist's character. Thus, the convention itself forms, as a result, an overall image of the Renaissance man.

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ANALIZA KONWENCJI "MASKI"
W "ASTROFELU I STELLI" SIR PHILIPA SIDNEY'A

Artykuł stanowi próbę analizy użycia przez Sidney'a konwencji "maski" jako poetyckiego kamuflażu.

Część wstępna artykułu omawia wpływy liryki włoskiej i poezji prowansalskiej na lirykę poetów elżbietzańskich. Część ta zawiera również analizę elementu autobiograficznego zawartego w cyklu sonetów Sidney'a "Astrophel i Stella".

W części głównej artykułu autor analizuje użycie konwencji "masek" w "Astrophelu i Stelli": poety, kochanka, krytyka literackiego, dworzanina, polityka, rycerza, których używa podmiot liryczny. Zagadnienie to jest rozpatrywane z punktu widzenia znaczeń, jakie poszczególne "maski" przez niego użyte mają w wizji poetyckiej utworu, jak również ich wzajemnych relacji i przenikania się.

W konkluzji podkreśla się wieloaspektowość postaci podmiotu dzięki użyciu tej konwencji, co przyczynia się do wielowymiarowości omawianego cyklu.

