

Eighth song

In a grove most rich of shade,
Where birds wanton music made,
May then young, his pied weeds showing,
New perfumed with flowers fresh growing,

Astrophil with Stella sweet
Did for mutual comfort meet;
Both within themselves oppressed,
But each in the other blessed.

Him great harms had taught much care:
Her fair neck a foul yoke bare:
But her sight his cares did banish,
In his sight her yoke did vanish.

Wept they had, alas the while;
But now tears themselves did smile,
While their eyes, by love directed,
Interchangeably reflected.

Sigh they did; but now betwixt
Sighs of woes were glad sighs mixed,
With arms crossed, yet testifying
Restless rest, and living dying.

Their ears hungry of each word,
Which the dear tongue would afford,
But their tongues restrained from walking,
Till their hearts had ended talking.

But when their tongues could not speak
Love itself did silence break;
Love did set his lips asunder,
Thus to speak in love and wonder:

“Stella, sovereign of my joy,
Fair triumpher of annoy,
Stella, star of heavenly fire,
Stella, lodestar of desire;

Stella, in whose shining eyes
Are the lights of Cupid’s skies;
Whose beams, where they once are darted,
Love therewith is straight imparted;

Stella, whose voice when it speaks
Senses all asunder breaks;
Stella, whose voice when it singeth
Angels to acquaintance bringeth;

Stella, in whose body is
Writ each character of bliss;
Whose face all, all beauty passeth,
Save thy mind, which yet surpasseth:

Grant, O grant—but speech, alas,
Fails me, fearing on to pass;
Grant—O me, what am I saying?
But no fault there is in praying:

Grant, O dear, on knees I pray”—
(Knees on ground he then did stay)
“That not I, but since I love you,
Time and place for me may move you.

Never season was more fit,
Never room more apt for it;
Smiling air allows my reason;
These birds sing, ‘Now use the season’;

This small wind, which so sweet is,
See how it the leaves doth kiss,
Each tree in his best attiring,
Sense of love to love inspiring.

Love makes earth the water drink,
Love to earth makes water sink;
And if dumb things be so witty,
Shall a heavenly grace want pity?”

There his hands in their speech fain
Would have made tongue’s language plain:
But her hands, his hands repelling,
Gave repulse, all love excelling.

Then she spake; her speech was such
As not ears, but heart did touch;
While such wise she love denied,
As yet love she signified.

“Astrophil,” she said, “my love,
Cease in these effects to prove:
Now be still; yet still believe me,
Thy grief more than death would grieve me.

If that any thought in me
Can taste comfort but of thee,
Let me, fed with hopeless anguish,
Joyless, hopeless, endless languish.

If those eyes you praised be
Half so dear as you to me,
Let me home return, stark blinded
Of those eyes, and blinder minded.

If to secret of my heart
I do any wish impart
Where thou art not foremost placed
Be both wish and I defaced.

If more may be said, I say:
All my bliss in thee I lay;
If thou love, my love content thee,
For all love, all faith is meant thee.

Trust me, while I thee deny,
In my self the smart I try;
Tyrant honour thus doth use thee;
Stella's self might not refuse thee.

Therefore, dear, this no more move,
Lest, though I leave not thy love,
Which too deep in me is framed,
I should blush when thou art named.”

Therewithal away she went,
Leaving him so passion-rent
With what she had done and spoken,
That therewith my song is broken.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554—1586)
From *Astrophil and Stella*