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Rebeca Helfer

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article s'intéresse à l'art de la mémoire comme une poétique mnémonique dans la théorie et la pratique littéraires de Philip Sidney. Nous avançons que, plus qu'une méthode mnémonique ancienne, l'art de la mémoire constitue une poétique qui évolue de Platon à Pétrarque au sein d'un dialogue et d'un débat interdisciplinaires sur la manière dont le passé est remémoré (notamment à travers les histoires d'amour) et réactivé dans le présent. Cette tradition d'une poétique mnémonique est centrale dans la représentation de l'art poétique comme art de la mémoire dans l'Apology for Poetry, tradition que Sidney fait renaître dans les sonnets d'Astrophil and Stella. Sidney construit son poème comme un théâtre de la mémoire dans lequel il représente et met en scène l'art de la mémoire de façon indirecte et ironique, soit à travers une persona poétique, Astrophil, qui aspire à un « art de l'oubli » dans sa quête d'originalité.

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The Art of Poetry and the Art of Memory: Philip Sidney's Mnemonic Poetics

REBECA HELFER
University of California at Irvine

This article explores the significance of the art of memory as a mnemonic poetics in Philip Sidney's literary theory and practice. The art of memory is more than an ancient mnemonic method, I argue; rather, it constitutes a poetics that evolves from Plato to Petrarch as part of an interdisciplinary dialogue and debate about how the past is remembered (particularly through love stories) and remade in the present. This tradition of mnemonic poetics is central to Sidney's portrayal of the art of poetry as an art of memory in his Apology for Poetry*, a tradition that Sidney remembers anew in his sonnet sequence,* Astrophil and Stella*. Sidney constructs his poem as a memory theatre in which he demonstrates and indeed dramatizes the art of memory indirectly and ironically: through a poetic persona, Astrophil, who longs for an "art of forgetting" in his pursuit of originality.*

*Cet article s'intéresse à l'art de la mémoire comme une poétique mnémonique dans la théorie et la pratique littéraires de Philip Sidney. Nous avançons que, plus qu'une méthode mnémonique ancienne, l'art de la mémoire constitue une poétique qui évolue de Platon à Pétrarque au sein d'un dialogue et d'un débat interdisciplinaires sur la manière dont le passé est remémoré (notamment à travers les histoires d'amour) et réactivé dans le présent. Cette tradition d'une poétique mnémonique est centrale dans la représentation de l'art poétique comme art de la mémoire dans l'*Apology for Poetry*, tradition que Sidney fait renaître dans les sonnets d'*Astrophil and Stella*. Sidney construit son poème comme un théâtre de la mémoire dans lequel il représente et met en scène l'art de la mémoire de façon indirecte et ironique, soit à travers une persona poétique, Astrophil, qui aspire à un « art de l'oubli » dans sa quête d'originalité.*

Philip Sidney ends his *Apology for Poetry* with a witty curse against poetry's critics that ironically would seem to include himself as a poet: "I conjure you all that have had the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the nine Muses, no more to scorn the sacred mysteries of poesy, no more to laugh at the name of poets, as though they were next inheritors of fools, no more to jest at the reverent title of a rhymer."[1] And if they refuse? Then "thus much curse I send you in the behalf of all poets," Sidney concludes, "that while you live, you live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph."[2]

1. Sidney, *Apology*, ed. Robinson, 87.

2. Sidney, *Apology*, 89.

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This sardonic curse reflects Sidney's portrayal of his own personal and political frustrations in his sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*, as scholars have long observed. As his poetic persona Astrophil dramatizes, to "live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet" is an affliction that mirrors Sidney's cursed love life: his failed courtship of Stella, a figure for both his unrequited love of Penelope Rich, as well as his courtly love for Queen Elizabeth, both of whom ultimately refused to grant Sidney "favor."[3] Sidney's legendary wit and irony here partially conceals the importance of this curse, which he returns to in his own sonnets in more complex ways than has been recognized. In truth as well as in "jest," Sidney's final word in the *Apology* affirms the importance of poetry to memory—specifically, the sonnet that serves as epitaph, a poetic monument as memorial—and signals the complementary importance of memory to poetry. As I will argue, this conclusion is a reminder of the poetics of memory at the heart of *An Apology for Poetry*, which Sidney remembers anew in *Astrophil and Stella*.

To "never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet" is a problem that Sidney explores throughout the *Apology*, one central to his larger complaints about English poetry. Surveying the field of English love poetry, he criticizes it as having produced little else than "songs and sonnets," and poor ones at that: "if I were a mistress, [such poets] would never persuade me they were in love; so coldly they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather read lovers' writings, and so caught up certain swelling phrases than that in truth they feel these passions."[4] Sidney sarcastically mocks such sonneteers for their artificial and allegorical poetry as poets who write poetry about poetry and to other poets, poetry incapable of seducing either a beloved or a reader. The problem of originality—imitation and innovation and ultimately invention—would seem to find a solution in the first sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella*, with Astrophil's avowed desire to forget the past and, with it, a poetic tradition grounded in the memory of love and poetry. "Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show," Astrophil declares in sonnet 1, but his reading of lovers' writings

3. "Stella," the star (in Latin) to Astrophil's "Star Lover," also can refer allegorically to Queen Elizabeth, especially in her mythic role as "Astraea," the "Star Maiden" (in Greek) and virgin goddess of justice, one of Elizabeth's many mythological avatars; see Yates, *Astraea*. On the sonnet as a political allegory of love, and the use of Petrarchan love language therein, see Marotti, "Love"; Warley, *Sonnet Sequences*. On Sidney's life, see Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney*; Stewart, *Philip Sidney*.

4. Sidney, *Apology*, 80–81.

in search of inspiration—"Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow / Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt brain"—leads only to writer's block, both metrical and metaphorical: "others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way." An answer to Astrophil's anxiety about their influence is provided by the unexpected, comic intervention of his "Muse," who instructs him, "Fool [...] look in thy heart, and write."[5]

As scholars have argued, the first sonnet exemplifies Sidney's wit and sets the stage for the sonnet sequence's engagement with issues of invention by establishing an ironic distance between Sidney the poet and his poetic persona: Astrophil rejects literary imitation from the start, a declaration of independence from Petrarch and especially his imitators, who have spent approximately 200 years bemoaning the icy fires of love, pursuing beloveds who are merely allegorical figures for fame, poetry, history, empire, and so on rather than representations of "real" women or "true love."[6] Such sonnets are retrospective, memorials to a dead antiquity, a Rome in ruins, the poetry of the past, as well as metapoetic, reflecting upon sonnets as art about memory. Astrophil's rejection of artifice and allegory, declaring his to be true love and thus in need of original expression, serves to underscore Sidney's inventiveness in creating a speaker who desires pure originality and fails to achieve it. But there is more at stake here, I will argue: what appears to be primarily an issue of future-oriented persuasion (how Astrophil can write sonnets that will seduce Stella) is actually a problem of memory that frames the entire sonnet sequence. The first sonnet presents a problem and a solution—Astrophil cannot be original unless he refuses imitation—yet this determination to forget the past for the sake of novelty is framed ironically by Sidney's remembrance of this same sonnet tradition. The tension between imitation and innovation, author and authorial persona, hinges upon a dynamic between remembering and forgetting through which Sidney explores the relationship between art and memory, and in metapoetic

5. All cited passages from Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* (*AS*) are taken from *Sir Philip Sidney: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). All subsequent in-text citations refer to individual sonnet numbers.

6. The issue of Sidney's complex relationship to Petrarchism and the Platonism that undergirds it has been central to Sidney scholarship, a metapoetic engagement that A. D. Cousins refers to as "meta-Petrarchism" (Cousins, "Cupid, Choice, and Rewriting Petrarch," 93). On the subject of Sidney's treatment of imitation, see Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*; Kennedy, *Site of Petrarchism*; Roche, *Petrarch*; Waller, "Rewriting of Petrarch." Sokolov provides an excellent review of criticism on *Astrophil and Stella* (Sokolov, "Sir Philip Sidney").

fashion: his sonnets represent the art of memory as a poetics that shapes literary theory and practice from antiquity through early modernity, including his own.[7] As I suggest, Astrophil's determination to forget a sonnet tradition defined by artificiality is an ironic reminder of art-as-artificial-memory, a mnemonic poetics that turns on such forgetting-as-remembering.

What I am calling "mnemonic poetics" builds upon Frances Yates's and Mary Carruthers's groundbreaking historical studies of the art of memory, an art defined most narrowly as an ancient rhetorical method of place-based or locational memory, a strategy for memorization and memorial retrieval.[8] Though memory is only one of the five canons of rhetoric, it is, as Carruthers argues (following Cicero), nevertheless foundational to all parts of rhetoric, not only delivery—its primary use—but also invention, arrangement, and even style. Orators would learn locational memory by creating a mental place for memory by (most often) imagining a building and/or a book, which they would imaginatively furnish with striking images that would represent the topics to be remembered, and which would in turn spark the speaker's remembrance during the course of delivery or performance as they memorially reviewed and traversed this mnemonic structure. Often referred to broadly as a "memory theatre," such a structure acted as a parallel place of performance—an internal rehearsal space and stage for delivery or performance, as well as a prompt book of sorts—designed for the dramatic re-enactment of the orator's speech.[9]

7. The relationship between rhetoric and poetics in early modern writing is a huge subject with a voluminous body of scholarship. For a recent comprehensive literature review of the past forty years or so, see Katz, "Recent Studies in Rhetorical Poetics." For scholarship on rhetoric and poetics that incorporates the art of memory, see, for example, Sloan and Waddington, *Rhetoric of Renaissance Poetry*. However, my focus here is on the art of memory as a poetics that connects not only rhetoric and poetry but also philosophy and theology, and still more broadly, history and historiography. The scholarly works that I cite throughout this essay on the art of memory—particularly those by Frances Yates and Mary Carruthers—also explore these complex interdisciplinary relationships both directly and indirectly.

8. Seminal studies on the history of the art of memory include Yates, *Art of Memory*; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*; Rossi, *Logic and Art of Memory*; Bolzoni, *Gallery of Memory*. Contemporary European memory studies have built upon and dramatically expanded how the art of memory is understood and in what contexts. Aleida Assman's classic study, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Arts of Memory*, exemplifies this transformation. For work that moves beyond contemporary European memory studies, see Tota and Hagen, *Handbook of Memory Studies*.

9. On the "memory theatre," see Yates, *Art of Memory*, esp. 160–72; *Theatre of the World*.

Although the art of memory has been understood historically as a rhetorical art (technique or method) that finds use in other fields, this article positions it first and foremost as a matter of artistic representation and the method of the poet in performance.[10] I reverse the usual order of priority between rhetoric and poetry by building upon the origin story of the art of memory: the tale of the ancient Greek poet, Simonides, credited with discovering this mnemonic method after delivering a poem in a banquet hall that falls to ruin, which he memorially reconstructs and thereby is able to remember the dead therein. As William Engel has long argued, the memory arts were central to poetics in theory and practice during the early modern period, an argument that has influenced the work of many literary critics, including my own.[11] Yet my particular rereading of the story of Simonides and its afterlife offers a kind of revisionary history of the art of memory as a poetics of ruin and recollection that was adopted and adapted by other fields—philosophy, rhetoric, theology, and history—which in turn profoundly shaped the history of poetics. The influence of what I refer to as "mnemonic poetics" in the sonnet tradition is striking, and in Sidney's sonnets in particular.

In the broadest sense, I want to suggest, Sidney's mnemonic poetics are part of a larger "inter-poetics": an interdisciplinary and intertextual dialogue about poetics and memory that spans from Plato to Petrarch, in which Sidney participates both in theory and in practice, in both poetry and prose. This article therefore has a double vision: on the one hand, it focuses on Sidney's sonnet sequence as a performance of his highly influential poetics of memory; on the other, it considers the longer history of mnemonic poetics and the ways in which Sidney engages with this poetic tradition, at once remembering and reforming it. I begin with the art of memory in *An Apology for Poetry* before turning to the *ars memorativa* tradition from Plato to Petrarch, and then return

10. In his classic study, *Preface to Plato*, Havelock examines the mnemonic strategies of oral poetry and performance as part of Plato's critique of poetry. On the relationship of orality and literacy to memory, see also Ong, *Orality and Literacy*.

11. Engel has numerous studies on the early modern memory arts, from his first study, *Mapping Mortality*, to the forthcoming volume *Memory and Mortality in Renaissance England* (co-edited with Rory Loughnane and Grant Williams). Other important works on the early modern literary memory arts, not including the many studies on Shakespeare and memory, include Hiscock, *Reading Memory*; Phillippy, *Shaping Remembrance*; Beecher and Williams, *Ars Reminscendi*; Gordon and Rist, *Arts of Remembrance*. On the "art of forgetting" in relation to the art of memory, see Ivic and Williams, *Forgetting*; Weinrich, *Lethe*.

to *Astrophil and Stella* and the representation of mnemonic poetics therein. As I will ultimately argue, Sidney constructs his sonnet sequence as a memory theatre for the art of memory: a metapoetic space in which he dramatizes his poetics of memory.

Sidney: *An Apology for Poetry* and mnemonic poetics

The art of memory is central to Sidney's definition of the art of poetry in the *Apology*, both directly and indirectly.[12] His primary definition of poetry indirectly alludes to the ancient Greek poet Simonides, who is credited with discovering the art of memory. "Poesy [. . .] is an art of imitation," Sidney asserts, "for so Aristotle termeth it in this word *mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight."[13] The phrase "speaking picture" refers to a commonplace of the period—that painting is silent poetry, poetry a speaking picture—which is also credited to the poet Simonides.[14] More directly, Sidney evokes Simonides again when characterizing the art of poetry as an art of memory, and vice versa:

> Lastly, even they that have taught the art of memory have showed nothing so apt for it as a certain room divided into many places, well and thoroughly known. Now that hath the verse in effect perfectly, every word having his natural seat, which seat must needs make the words remembered [. . .]

12. My thinking on Sidney's *Apology* has been shaped, in part, by Robinson's *The Shape of Things Known*, which explores Sidney's "speaking pictures" in the context of Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy. Stillman provides an extensive and useful review of recent work on Sidney's *Apology* (Stillman, "Sir Philip Sidney). I also explore Sidney's *Apology* in relation to the art of memory more fully in a separate study; see Helfer, *Spenser's Ruins and the Art of Recollection*, 145–60.

13. Sidney, *Apology*, 18.

14. On the attribution to Simonides of the analogy between "silent poetry" and "speaking pictures," which is translated in various ways, see, for example, Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis*, 3. Plutarch is one source for this attribution, and he refers to this saying of Simonides in the context of writing history and the remembrance of the past: "Simonides calls painting silent poetry, and poetry voiced speaking, because whereas painting presents us with events as if they were actually happening, words describe and relate the same events of the past," and "both basically have the same purpose: the best historian is the one who uses emotions and characters to make his narrative a reflection of events, as a painting is" (Plutarch, "Fame of Athens," trans. Waterfield, 157). On history writing as an art of memory, see Hutton, *History*.

> But what needeth more in a thing so known to all men? Who is it that ever was a scholar that doth not carry away some verses of Virgil […] which in his youth he learned, and even to his old age serve him for hourly lessons? But the fitness it hath for memory is notably proved by all delivery of arts: wherein for the most part, from grammar to logic, mathematic, physic, and the rest, the rules chiefly necessary to be borne away are compiled in verses. So that verse, being in itself sweet and orderly, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in *jest* that any man can speak against it.[15]

Here, as throughout the *Apology*, Sidney assumes the persona of a "serious jester," as Alan Hager observes in the context of exploring the complex relationship between Sidney's authorial persona and his poetics, represented in theory and in practice.[16] Sidney teaches the art of memory in truth and in jest by imitating both "they that have taught the art of memory"—most notably, Cicero—and *how* they taught it, a lesson that is deceptively simple. Sidney first alludes to the mnemonic method of creating a location for memory: "a certain room divided into many places, well and thoroughly known," each "seat" filled with a memorable image, as in the tale of Simonides. Yet he challenges a standard lesson with a revisionist history by insisting that "even those that have taught the art of memory" agree that "verse" is "best for memory": the "pretty rooms" of poetry (as Donne describes sonnets) provide enduring places for memory.[17] Sidney suggests that the art of memory is a method that truly belongs to poetry through its very nature: its "fitness" for remembrance, and the "order" it provides for memory. As well as providing a place for memory, poetry also serves as a vehicle for conveying memory. Sidney vividly pictures readers carrying "some verses of Virgil" from youth to old age, suggesting how the translation of culture, empire, and learning takes place in the minds and memories of readers

15. Sidney, *Apology*, 54–55.

16. Hager, *Dazzling Images*. On Sidney's ironic persona and its relationship to his poetics, see Hardison, "Two Voices"; Helgerson, *Elizabethan Prodigals*; Herman, *Squitter-Wits*; Kinney, "*Defense of Poesie* as Parody"; Sinfield, "Cultural Poetics"; Bates, *On Not Defending Poetry*. Ferguson argues that Sidney's *Apology* needs to be understood as a work of storytelling, explaining that "apology" derives from "the Greek *apologos*, meaning 'story' or 'fable,' [and] the term came to be generally used in the Renaissance for didactic allegories" (Ferguson, *Trials of Desire*, 3). On Sidney as teacher, see Knecht, *Grammar Rules*; Klein, *Exemplary Sidney*.

17. Donne, "The Canonization," in *John Donne*, 95–96.

who remember Troy's ruins: readers re-enact the transmission of culture when recollecting Troy's ruins for new times and places—a story that mirrors the tale of Simonides and the process of recollection it dramatizes.

Poetry's ability to hold and convey memory is individual but also interdisciplinary, Sidney argues: it has been used for "all delivery of arts: wherein for the most part, from grammar to logic, mathematic, physic, and the rest, the rules chiefly necessary to be borne away are compiled in verses."[18] This reflects Sidney's larger and more contentious argument that other disciplines—primarily rhetoric and philosophy—made poetry part of their own writing and methods of edification, even as they condemned it. Cicero "taketh much pains and many times not without poetical helps to make us know the force of love of our country hath in us," he writes, and he observes that "of all philosophers [Plato] is the most poetical," by necessity, it seems: the philosopher's "learned definition, be it of virtue, vices […] lie dark before the imaginative and judging power if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy."[19] Cicero and Plato are poets too, Sidney asserts, associating them with Simonides and his definition of poetry as a "speaking picture."[20] These prose poets use the architectural mnemonic for the purpose of edification, and Sidney highlights its double meaning of building and learning when arguing that poetry is "directed to the highest end of the mistress knowledge, by the Greeks called *architectonike*, which stands (as I think) in the knowledge of a man's self."[21] Even as he complains about the "artificial rules" of the "rhetorician and logician" in contrast with that of the poet—"freely ranging only within the Zodiac of his own wit," as Sidney does in his constellation of sonnets—he also suggests the uses of artificial memory across a range of fields.[22]

18. Sidney, *Apology*, 55.

19. Sidney, *Apology*, 29, 63.

20. Sidney further asserts that Plato, despite being "the most poetical" of all philosophers, "picked out of the sweet mysteries of poetry […] putting it in method, and making a school-art of that which the poets did only teach by divine delightfulness" (Sidney, *Apology*, 64). He also argues that "Simonides" was a better teacher of princes than "Plato" (64–65). This reflects Sidney's broad argument that "it is not rhyming and versing that maketh poesy" (52), but rather "it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching," which defines a "poet" (21).

21. Sidney, *Apology*, 23. The pun in "edification," to build and to learn, is built into the architectural mnemonic, in effect. On the "architectural analogy," see Dohetry, *Mistress-Knowledge*, xiii. On Sidney's "metaphorical architectonics," see Galbraith, *Architectonics of Imitation*, 11.

22. Sidney, *Apology*, 12–13.

Sidney caps his seemingly offhand lesson in the art of memory by dismissing the need to teach it at all—after all, "what needeth more in a thing so known to all men?"—as if to reject its importance. In so doing, however, Sidney wittily emulates the teacher of the art of memory in Cicero's *De oratore*, Antonius, who affects a similar nonchalance about the topic. Sidney adopts Antonius's persona here, as in *Astrophil and Stella*, to teach the art of memory as an art of concealing art, and as a matter of wit. Of the overly "diligent imitators" of Cicero, he writes:

> For my part, I do not doubt, when Antonius and Crassus, the great forefathers of Cicero in eloquence, the one (as Cicero testifieth of them) pretended not to know art, the other not to set by it, because with a plain sensibleness they might win credit of popular ears; which credit is the nearest step to persuasion; which persuasion is the chief mark of oratory; I do not doubt (I say) but that they used these knacks very sparingly [...] But what? methinks I deserve to be pounded for straying from poetry to oratory: but both have such an affinity in this wordish consideration, that I think this digression will make my meaning receive the fuller understanding; which is not to take upon me to teach poets how they should do, but only, finding myself sick among the rest, to show some one or two spots of the common infection.[23]

Despite this arch apology, Sidney's "straying from poetry to oratory" is less a digression than an oblique illustration of their relationship. He emulates the ways in which Cicero himself teaches the art of memory as an art of performance that depends upon the art of concealing art: that is, by "following that which by practice he findeth fittest to nature" and thus "according to art," a studied artlessness that he contrasts with "some professors of learning" who "us[e] art to show art, and not to hide art [...] flieth from nature, and indeed abuseth art."[24] Sidney's witty remembrance of Cicero's dialogue intimates what connects "poetry" with "oratory," and the orator with poet-courtiers (like himself) who are well-versed in the art of concealing art: their shared art of memory, which

23. Sidney, *Apology*, 84–85.

24. Sidney, *Apology*, 84.

is ultimately expressed as a form of performance art.[25] Sidney dramatizes his own use of this art in *An Apology for Poetry*, which he frames as a mock oration about poetry. He links poetry and oratory through the art of memory and as an art of persuasion.

Despite Sidney's coy disavowal of a desire to "teach poets how they should do," he does just that in the *Apology*, teaching both the method and in the manner of "those that have taught the art of memory"—a poetry lesson that he puts into practice in *Astrophil and Stella*. As Sidney suggests, the art of memory is far more than a method of memorization or recollection. Rather, it is a matter of art, a poetics adopted and adapted by other fields and taught through new versions of its old origin story: the legendary tale of the poet Simonides who, as the story goes, remembers a banquet hall that falls to ruin and the dead therein immediately after delivering a poem in this same place. In memorially reconstructing this edifice from ruin, the poet discovers the mnemonic method of places and images. This is no coincidence, of course, for the art of memory codifies the method of the poet already in use, who creates "speaking pictures" and places for them: a gallery of memory. The story of Simonides's discovery not only teaches the orator's art of memory, as I will argue; it also dramatizes the mnemonic art of the poet in performance and implicitly demonstrates a crucial connection between rhetoric and poetics. The art of memory's origin story of ruin and recollection resonates throughout the complex history of mnemonic poetics, to which I will now turn.

Cicero: the art of memory and the tale of Simonides

In his dialogue on the ideal orator, *De oratore*, Cicero portrays the famed Roman orators Antonius and Crassus as epitomizing the art of persuasion as an art of concealing art, as Sidney recalls. In the frame narrative, Cicero reveals that both orators were deeply learned but feigned "to hold learning in contempt" and indeed "to have no learning at all" as a central part of

25. Sidney alludes to an implicit debate in Cicero's *De oratore* between Antonius and Crassus about poetry and oratory. "Do you see how far the study of history is the business of the orator?" Antonius asks (Cic., *De or.* 2.15.99), a reply to Crassus's earlier argument that "the poet is nearly allied to the orator" (1.16.24). For Crassus, the poet and orator are "nearly the same": both "circumscribes or bounds his jurisdiction by no limits, but reserves to himself full right to range wherever he pleases with the same ease and liberty" (1.16.24). Sidney reiterates this in part when he asserts that the poet is "freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit" (Sidney, *Apology*, 14).

their practical and patriotic performative personae.[26] Such method acting is on display when Antonius briefly teaches the art of memory as an art of performance, a technique used for rhetorical delivery that counterpoints his persona as an orator who scorns artifice. It is through such art that Antonius paradoxically can create the illusion of an orator who appears to speak as if naturally and extemporaneously. Yet even as Cicero makes readers aware that Antonius is primarily acting a part, a performance that Antonius himself both conceals and reveals, this revelation also reflects ironically on Cicero's own self-fashioned authorial persona. Though presented as a true story intended to memorialize these renowned orators, what Cicero purports to remember—a gathering at Crassus's country home a generation ago and a legendary dialogue therein about the ideal orator, which Cicero only knows second-hand—is itself a historical fiction. Cicero constructs *De oratore* as a work of both art and memory, a story built upon the art of memory.

When an interlocutor playfully challenges Antonius's claim to be entirely "ignorant of Greek" learning, Antonius insists on the truth of this fiction: his imitation of the past is incidental if not accidental, he asserts, using an analogy that Sidney adopts to describe Astrophil's "sunburnt brain" in the first sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella*. Antonius claims to only read Greek writings during his leisure time and to "amuse" himself, and even then only in passing: "for as, when I walk in the sun, though I may walk for another purpose, yet it naturally happens that I gain a deeper color; so, when I have read those books […] I can perceive that my language acquires a complexion, as it were, from my intercourse with them" (Cic., *De or*. 2.15.98). Nevertheless, Antonius famously makes the orator the very voice of history when he asks, "By what other voice, too, than that of the orator, is history, the evidence of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the directress of life, the herald of antiquity, committed to immortality?" (2.9.92). His assertion of rhetoric as a form of "method and teaching" superior to "other arts" belies his obvious knowledge—and use—of those arts. Against all evidence, Antonius avers that he understands little of "Greek writings," and to "not understand a single word" of "the philosophers," and to "never attempt to touch at all […] the poets, as [if] speaking in a different language" (2.15.99). This posture of willful ignorance contradicts the very premise of Cicero's dialogue, which remembers Greek learning broadly and re-enacts Plato's *Phaedrus*

26. Cic., *De or.* 2.2.82. This and all subsequent in-text citations from Cicero's *De oratore* are taken from *Cicero on Oratory and Orators*, trans. J. S. Watson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970).

specifically. "Why should not we, Crassus, imitate Socrates in the *Phaedrus* of Plato? For this plane-tree of yours has put me in mind of it," an interlocutor remarks, a re-enactment far more complex than it seems (1.7.12–13).

In teaching the art of memory, Antonius not only returns to Plato's dialogue and debate about the art of rhetoric, but also adopts a mode of "ironical dissimulation" of the kind epitomized by Socrates, who Antonius describes as performing the part of "an ironical jester" (Cic., *De or*. 2.67.162).[27] Recalling the *Phaedrus*, Antonius begins his lesson on the art of memory with a version of a Socratic story about forgetting. Antonius tells the tall tale of the ancient Greek general Themistocles who, when "a certain person of learning […] offered to teach him the *art of memory* […] rejoined that he would oblige him much more if he could instruct him how to forget, rather than to remember, what he chose" (2.74.172).[28] "I am not […] possessed of such intellectual power as Themistocles had, that I had rather know the art of forgetfulness than that of memory," Antonius admits, "and I am grateful to the famous Simonides" for his discovery. As the story goes, the poet Simonides recited a poem for his patron Scopas, in which he also praised the twin gods Castor and Pollux, which angered Scopas. Simonides was then called away from the hall by a *deus ex machina*:

> In the mean time the apartment in which Scopas was feasting fell down, and he himself, and his company, were overwhelmed and buried in the ruins […] so much crushed were the bodies, [yet] Simonides is said, from his recollection of the place in which each had sat, to have given satisfactory directions from their interment. (2.85.186)

By the process of reconstructing this edifice from ruin, Simonides discovers the precepts of the art of memory by using strategies of visualization that are

27. Such Socratic irony is fully on display in Antonius's teaching of the art of memory, which he treats in a casual and brief fashion, not wanting to be "prolix and impertinent upon so well-known and common a subject" (Cic., *De or*. 2.87.188). Sidney echoes Antonius's attitude in his brief lesson on the art of memory: "But what needeth more in a thing so known to all men?" (Sidney, *Apology*, 54).

28. Elsewhere, in his *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, Cicero implies that Simonides himself may have been the teacher of the art of memory that Themistocles refused: "Themistocles […] when Simonides or some one offered to teach him the art of memory, replied that he would prefer the art of forgetting; 'for I remember,' said he, 'even things I do not wish to remember, but I cannot forget things I wish to forget'" (Cic., *De fin*. 2.32.105).

coincident with the commonplace saying also attributed to Simonides that painting is silent poetry, poetry a speaking picture.[29] That a poet discovered this method suggests that the strategies of locational memory—clearly demarcated places filled with evocative and provocative images akin to a kind of inner painting—are drawn from the very poetics that Simonides already was using in creating and delivering his poem, an art by which the poet remembers the past anew.

Antonius treats the tales of Themistocles and Simonides playfully, as performance art, in ways that dramatize the use to which artificial memory was put in delivery: to create the illusion of speaking simply naturally, as though extemporaneously.[30] But Cicero takes this tale seriously, and he dramatically expands the significance of the story of Simonides by rewriting and in effect re-enacting this tale as the narrative frame for *De oratore*.[31] In so doing, Cicero plays the part of the poet Simonides and treats the art of memory not simply as an oratorical technique but rather as a rhetorical poetics. After Antonius's teaching on the art of memory, Cicero begins the third and final book of *De oratore* by rewriting the tale of Simonides as a frame tale for his dialogue, a story of Rome's ruin and his recollection of it. Cicero laments the deaths of Antonius and the others who have been buried in the "ruins" of Rome (Cic., *De or*. 3.3.195), and then implicitly performs the part of a new Simonides, remembering the past as a memorial reconstruction that draws upon a mnemonic poetics. "Let us deliver as a memorial to posterity [this] remaining and almost last discourse," Cicero writes, admitting that this dialogue represents both story and history, which he compares to the "dialogues of Plato" and how the "character of Socrates is represented" therein—that is, as a blending of fact and fiction (3.4.196). Cicero thus gestures to his own performance as a new Simonides, but one who remembers the past second-hand: "[I] was not present at this dialogue," Cicero confesses, but having been told "the topics and

29. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis*, 3.

30. Crassus applauds Antonius's artistry: "I feel pleasure in seeing you appear as a professed artist," Crassus teases Antonius, "stripped of the disguises of dissimulation, and fairly exposed to view" (Cic., *De or*. 2.85.186).

31. On the tale of Simonides, see Yates, *Art of Memory*, esp. 1–4, 26–30; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 22, 86, 147. Both Yates and Carruthers interpret the tale of Simonides as a teaching tale about a rhetorical method, whereas I understand it, first and foremost, as a heuristic story about mnemonic poetics in practice; see also Helfer, *Spenser's Ruins and the Art of Recollection*, 1–6 and *passim*.

heads of dissertation" he attempts to remember the speakers and reconstruct the past with this dialogue (3.4.196). Cicero includes the caveat that, as with Plato's representation of Socrates, readers must imagine Antonius and the others as far greater than Cicero can represent or remember. In short, Cicero reminds readers that *De oratore* is a work of historical fiction, an imaginative reconstruction of a past time and place that nevertheless represents the "life of memory." Memory and artistic representation meet in Cicero's treatment of the art of memory as an art of imitation, a poetics of ruin and recollection built upon Plato's own art of memory.

Plato to Petrarch: the art of memory and the art of poetry

To understand the art of memory as an interdisciplinary poetics we need to look back from Cicero to Plato, and then forward to a Neoplatonism that culminates with Petrarch.[32] Through the explicit invitation to re-enact the *Phaedrus* that opens *De oratore*, Cicero indirectly illuminates Plato's own novel uses of the art of memory. Conventional wisdom holds that Plato rejects artificial memory for natural *and* supernatural forms of memory: he reimagines learning not as rote recollection but rather as metaphysical *anamnesis*, which Plato's Socrates describes as a story about the remembrance of things past already contained within the soul but forgotten—the primary teaching tale about Plato's philosophy.[33] To be sure, Socrates disparages the art of memory when he mocks "the inventor of covert allusion [...] in mnemonic verse," and he conflates the mnemonic methods by poets, pedagogues, and politicians alike as merely performative.[34] Famously, he rejects artificial memory in the *Phaedrus* in his story about the ancient Egyptian King Thamus, who refuses artificial memory-as-writing—a tale that Cicero's Antonius reverses and rewrites with the tale of Themistocles in *De oratore*. As Socrates tells it, King Thamus returns the so-called gift of writing from the Egyptian god Theuth, reasoning that it is "a recipe not for memory, but for reminder," which will ultimately lead souls

32. In the *Art of Memory*, Yates argues for this tradition, that is, "the transition from Cicero, the trained rhetorician and religious Platonist, to Augustine, the trained rhetorician and Christian Platonist" (Yates, *Art of Memory*, 48).

33. For the argument that Plato rejects mnemonics, see, for example, Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 12.

34. Plato, *Phaedrus*, ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 532, 528.

to forgetting rather than remembering.[35] With this story, Socrates indirectly inverts Simonides's well-known definition of poetry as a "speaking picture" when he tells Phaedrus that "the strange thing about writing, which makes it truly analogous to painting," is that "written words [...] maintain a most majestic silence [...] if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever."[36] Simonides is an important subject and subtext in the *Phaedrus*, as throughout Plato's dialogues, particularly in the *Symposium* and most evidently in the *Republic*.[37] A poem by Simonides, which Socrates criticizes for its portrayal of justice, is the premise for the *Republic* and the question of poetry's place therein: poetry's expulsion from Plato's ideal Republic and its return to it depends, as Socrates says in the *Phaedrus*, on poetry being able to answer for itself—that is, to speak rather than remain silent, itself a silent rebuttal of Simonides's memorable phrase.[38]

Nevertheless, Socrates appropriates artificial memory within the dialogue as just such a "reminder," which in turn underscores the larger irony that Socrates himself is only remembered through Plato's writing. Throughout the *Phaedrus*, Socrates plays the part of a poet, nowhere more so than in the story he tells about the immortality of the soul and its movement from *amnesia* to *anamnesis*, forgetting to remembering. Socrates critiques common love stories (including his own) by performing another poet's palinode, that is, a poem of retraction: he remembers a poem by Stesichorus that retracts his earlier poetic defamation of Helen of Troy—a poem in which the ruins of Troy and ruinous love are nearly interchangeable. With this complex remembrance and re-enactment of poetry, Plato's Socrates rewrites an old love story for new

35. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 520.

36. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 521.

37. The *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* are closely connected dialogues, together forming the heart of Plato's engagement with issues of memory. Though the speakers of Cicero's *De oratore* explicitly re-enact the *Phaedrus*, the most obvious Platonic analogue to Cicero's work is the *Symposium*: another imaginary gathering of famous people long ago, nominally recounted by someone who was not present but is recollecting the recollections of another. Murrin has described the *Symposium* as "a gigantic exercise in oral recall" (Murrin, *Veil of Allegory*, 91), which draws upon the art of memory in its multiple frames of storytelling: as in the tale of Simonides, it is the story of the legendary banquet that has been told and retold, remembered from the ruins of the past.

38. Plato, *Republic*, ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 580–86. This discussion of Simonides's poetry begins with a tale of Themistocles, pairing the two figures as in the teaching tales of Cicero's *De oratore*, which also link the "art of forgetting" to the "art of memory."

matters: he offers a metapoetic tale about how true love, the love of wisdom, or *philosophia*, leads the soul from ruin to repair rather than vice versa. In this story, Socrates compares the soul to a winged chariot drawn by two horses—one tame, the other wild—which, when "burdened with a load of forgetfulness," loses its wings and "falls to earth."[39] Such a soul only regrows its wings and reascends to the heavens through "a recollection" of the divine visions that the soul has forgotten.[40] Love is the "reminder" that allows the soul to recollect and ultimately reform itself, Socrates explains, as a counter to conventional love stories that represent love as inevitably ruinous—love that conquers all—or, rather, self-destructive. This is the wrong kind of love, Socrates asserts, and he offers a new love story in its place about the right kind of love and where it leads: "the spectacle of the beloved" leads to the soul's recollection from ruinous oblivion, and "at that sight the driver's memory goes back to that form of beauty," and ultimately progresses from baser physical desire to a higher love: the "friendship of the lover."[41] The "spectacle of beauty" returns "the driver's memory to that form of beauty," thus from human love to divine love, or more precisely, the love of wisdom.[42] Socrates's description of this allegory of love-as-*anamnesis* as "perforce poetical, to please Phaedrus," reveals his method: telling a version of the tale of Simonides as a story of the soul's ruin and re-edification, he remakes the mnemonic method of the poets for philosophy.

The relevance of Plato's allegory of love, or "Platonic love," to Petrarch's poetry is clear: Petrarch's representation of Laura involves complex dynamics of remembering and forgetting, exaltation and abasement. But to understand fully Petrarch's rewriting of this story of the soul's ruin and renovation we need to consider how it responds to Augustine, who represents a key joining of the Platonic and Ciceronian art of memory for later writers. As both a Ciceronian rhetorician and a devout Platonist, Augustine adapts both predecessors' uses of artificial memory as a method of poetics to tell the story of his soul and salvation. "My soul is like a house, small for you to enter, but I pray you to enlarge it […] it is in ruins, but I ask you to remake it," Augustine appeals to God in his *Confessions*, recounting how he was led to such ruin through Virgil's tales of Troy: he had once "wept for Dido," he laments, and "was obliged to

39. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 495.

40. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 496.

41. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 502.

42. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 500.

memorize the wanderings of a hero named Aeneas, while in the meantime I failed to remember my own erratic ways."[43] Despite his overt rejection of the false "fancies dreamed up by the poets," Augustine adapts mnemonic poetics for Christian allegory. The story of his soul's ruin and reformation, forgetfulness and remembrance through divine love, is a Platonic allegory of *anamnesis* in which Augustine is an Everyman whose conversion narrative may spiritually edify readers.

In book 10, a method chapter of sorts, Augustine demonstrates his conversion of the art of memory for his soul and, writ large, for the story of his confessions. "I must also go beyond this natural faculty of mine, as I rise by stages towards the God who made me," Augustine writes, using key mnemonic metaphors to describe the process by which he finds God within himself, albeit in ways that ultimately exceed this simple method and become metaphysical: "The next stage is memory, which is like a [...] spacious palace, a storehouse for countless images of all kinds which are conveyed to it by the senses [...] for safe keeping, until such time as these things are swallowed up and buried in forgetfulness."[44] The paradox of remembering forgetfulness—"I am certain that I remember forgetfulness, even though forgetfulness obliterates all that we remember"[45]—becomes a form of *anamnesis*. Christianizing the Platonic vision of the soul's recollection of prior happiness in the presence of divinity, Augustine affirms that the memory of God is a priori and thus can be remembered despite forgetting.[46] Yet such remembrance of the divine requires *reminders*, as the tale of Theuth in the *Phaedrus* ironically suggests, which Augustine finds in writing both secular and sacred, in rhetoric and philosophy as well as in scripture: "since the time when I first learned of you, you have always been present in my memory, and it is there that I find you whenever I am reminded of you."[47] For Augustine, as for Plato and Cicero, forgetfulness is both an inevitable counterpart to remembrance and also a spur to it, a necessary form of erasure that opens up a space in which to remember anew. Augustine's own writing, the

43. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Pine-Coffin, 24, 33. For Augustine's relationship to the art of memory in the *Confessions*, see Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, esp. 146, 170–71; Yates, *Art of Memory*, esp. 46–50.

44. Augustine, *Confessions*, 214.

45. Augustine, *Confessions*, 214.

46. Augustine, *Confessions*, 223.

47. Augustine, *Confessions*, 230.

story of his sin and soul, offers such a reminder for readers who similarly seek to recollect themselves from ruin.

The afterlife of Augustine's Christian art of memory, his reinterpretation of Ciceronian and Platonic mnemonic poetics, profoundly influences Petrarch's poetry as well as his prose. Petrarch's reputation as the Father of the Renaissance turns on his obsession with Roman antiquity and its writers—most directly, Cicero and Augustine, and indirectly, Plato—the ruins and remains of which Petrarch seeks to recollect throughout his writing. Augustine figures centrally in Petrarch's ambivalent portrayal of Platonic love in his poetry, his division between secular and sacred loves, most evidently in *Secretum*, his imagined confessional dialogue with Augustine, and, relatedly, in "The Ascent of Mt. Ventoux": here, Petrarch recalls the impact of reading book 10 of *Confessions*, where Augustine realizes that he must look within to truly remember himself. This allusion to the art of memory becomes part of Petrarch's own memoir and method. Yet Petrarch's mnemonic poetics are also mediated through Dante's, particularly his confessional *Vita Nuova* (New life), which joins the sonnet tradition to the Augustinian art of memory-as-allegory. Dante's and Petrarch's sonnet sequences represent, albeit in very different ways, allegories of *anamnesis* about how love leads fallen souls to remember themselves, if only in part. Their allegories of love (divine and human, personified through Dante's Beatrice-as-divine blessing and Petrarch's Laura-as-laureate ambition) also double as allegories of poetry: a poetics of ruin and recollection that builds upon the art of memory and the place of forgetfulness therein. To remember love is to remember Rome, pagan and Christian, immortalized in the palindrome *amor summus roma*. Their sonnets' "pretty rooms"[48] are built through the art of memory and reflect, in metapoetic fashion, on the relationship between art and memory.

Through Dante and Petrarch, the sonnet becomes a space in which to both remember and forget Augustine's *Confessions*, paradoxically emulating a story about remembering from forgetting. Dante's confessional start to his "new life" imbues the sonnet form with memorial elements that bespeak the influence of Augustine's *Confessions*.[49] This defence of poetry, which Dante calls his "Book of Memory," portrays an allegorical poetics of memory that

48. Donne, "The Canonization," in *John Donne*, 95–96.

49. On the development of the sonnet, see Spiller, *Development*.

allows him to accommodate a Virgilian art of poetry with an Augustinian art of salvation. Moving from sonnets to epic, from his poetic persona's youthful folly and forgetfulness of divine love in *Vita Nuova*, to the bigger song of the *Divine Comedy* and the larger mnemonic architecture of heaven, purgatory, and hell, Dante thereby aligns a Virgilian art of poetry with an Augustinian art of salvation.[50] By contrast, Petrarch's sonnet sequence, *Rime Sparse*, which he describes as "scattered rhymes" and *ruinae*, focuses on time and death, dividing the art of memory from the art of salvation so that their aims fail to converge for his poetic persona, unlike Dante's. Rather, Petrarch begins his sonnet sequence by confessing his "youthful error" and, ironically, he ends in exactly the same way, "weeping for [his] past time [...] spent in loving mortal things," and begging God to "help [his] strayed frail soul and fill out with your grace all that she lacks" in a kind of deathbed plea: "to my dying deign to be present."[51] In the end, Petrarch never reforms his fallen and sinful soul by remembering the love of God and instead continually forgets divine love in favour of earthly loves, poetry primarily. Petrarch's confessional poetry is a failed conversion narrative that perversely divides the sonnet from salvation and suggests that allegory offers no real defence of poetry in the end. Petrarch's anti-Platonic poetry perversely refuses to relinquish poetry, presumably the "wrong" kind of love. In so doing, Petrarch both remembers and forgets Augustine's *Confessions*, adapting its poetics of memory to express a dividedness within his poetic persona, and between the past and present. Petrarch's poetry remains in ruins that symbolize his divided self and soul—ruins that nevertheless reflect his poetics of memory.[52]

These sonneteers continue the complex performance of the self through earlier performances visible in Plato, Cicero, and Augustine. Plato's Socrates performs the part of Simonides but as Stesichorus; Cicero's Antonius performs Socrates, and Cicero himself performs Plato; in presenting himself, Augustine performs Cicero and Plato; and Dante and Petrarch both perform versions of Augustine. Each poet constructs his work as a place for memory and a space

50. Dante, *Vita Nuova*, trans. Musa, 3; *Purgatorio*, trans. Ciardi, 33.85–87. Yates suggests that the *Divine Comedy* can be read as such a memory system (Yartes, *Art of Memory*, 95–96).

51. Petrarch, *Lyric Poems*, ed. Durling, poem 1 and poem 365. On Petrarch and memory, see Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, esp. 163–34.

52. On Petrarch's "Augustinian aesthetics" and poetics of ruin and recollection, see Doherty, *Mistress-Knowledge*; Mazzotta, *Worlds of Petrarch*.

in which to perform the part of the poet. Sidney fashions his poetic persona in kind in *Astrophil and Stella*.

Sidney: recollecting the art of memory in *Astrophil and Stella*

Sidney puts these mnemonic poetics into practice in *Astrophil and Stella*, at once remembering and reforming this tradition, albeit in ironic fashion: by focusing on a desire to forget, which serves as an ironic reminder of the poetics of memory that he recollects anew.[53] Sidney returns to "those that have taught the art of memory," as he writes in *An Apology for Poetry*, and emulates them: his lesson in poetics links poetry and oratory, classical philosophy and Christian allegory, through the art of memory. Sidney teaches the art of poetry as both an "art of imitation" and an "art of memory" through the ironic example of Astrophil, his poetic persona who believes that only poetry that rejects rather than remembers the past can succeed at the art of persuasion. Sidney demonstrates and indeed dramatizes the art of concealing art at the heart of the art of memory, a tradition of mnemonic poetics in which he participates, entering into a dialogue about poetry and memory over time and across disciplines. *Astrophil and Stella* stands as a metapoetic memory theatre: a location for locational memory, a book-*cum*-building built upon a mnemonic poetics, the history of which Sidney remembers from Plato to Petrarch.

As noted earlier, *Astrophil and Stella* (*AS*) begins with Astrophil's helpless entrapment in the poetics of imitation, seemingly caught by the curse Sidney casts against his critics at the end of *An Apology for Poetry*, to "live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet."[54] Astrophil would seem to attempt to rectify this very problem from the start:

> Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
> That she (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,
> I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,

53. See Roche in this context, who insightfully explores "Astrophil's forgetfulness of all he has learned" (Roche, *Petrarch*, 205).

54. Sidney, *Apology*, 89.

> Studying inventions fine her wits to entertain;
> Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
> Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt brain.
> But words came halting forth, wanting Inventions stay;
> 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 my self for spite,
> "Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart and write." (*AS* 1)

Astrophil's solution is to forget: choosing "Nature" over artifice, "Invention" over imitation, he determines to write from the heart and thus to give birth to novelty rather than merely the rebirth of the past. Implicitly, this injunction to write from the heart—in order to seduce Stella—upends the Petrarchan sonnet tradition by focusing on a future-oriented present rather than the past, indirectly rejecting its memorial imperative to remember an unrequited love that is ultimately allegorical. Astrophil's adulterous desire for Stella could not be less "platonic," and he sees his poetry in baldly instrumental terms: as art used for the purpose of persuasion and seduction.[55] Yet half-concealed in Astrophil's description of his imitative failures is a Ciceronian allusion—whether invisible to Astrophil or half-remembered by him—that ironizes his posture of novelty and reveals the complexity of Sidney's innovation. Astrophil's reference to his "sunburnt brain" alludes to Antonius's description of walking in the sun of Greek learning and the "deeper color" and "complexion" he gains from it.[56] Astrophil echoes Sidney's allusion to Antonius in *An Apology for Poetry*, which draws attention to Antonius's performative affectation of ignorance: his artful concealment of the learning that stands behind his oratorical persona of a bluff Roman who speaks naturally from the heart. This insincere dismissal of Greek learning is further ironized by the fact that the Antonius of *De oratore*, though based on a historical person, is here a character that Cicero creates in

55. Lanham illuminates Astrophil's "pure and impure persuasion" in his art of seduction (Lanham, *Astrophil and Stella*, 223). Herman persuasively argues that Sidney's anti-Platonic representation of Astrophil reflects an anti-poetics (Herman, *Squitter-Wits*, 96–98).

56. Cic., *De or*. 2.14.98. For a discussion of Sidney's Ciceronian allusion, which argues for its significance in the context of early modern ideas about imitation in both rhetoric and poetics, see Armstrong, *Ciceronian Sunburn*, esp. 8–9.

order to imitate Greek learning—specifically, for Cicero himself to re-enact the dialogues of Plato, recollecting the ruins of the past as a new Simonides.

Sidney-as-Astrophil plays a double role in *Astrophil and Stella* drawn from *De oratore*: as Astrophil, Sidney performs the part of another Antonius, who teaches the art of memory as a rhetorical method of artificial memory that allows him to create the illusion of natural ability and easy inventiveness. Yet beyond this persona, Sidney also performs the role of a new Cicero, who teaches the art of memory in more complex ways, as the method of the poet. In short, Sidney fashions a persona that both *is* and *is not* the poet himself for the purpose of translating the past for new purposes—despite that persona's avowed hostility to this project. This witty allusion illustrates again how the art of memory connects poetry and oratory, both in terms of the illusion of naturalness and also as a means of remembering the past anew. Sidney thereby demonstrates *how* the art of memory is taught by imitating not only Cicero's dialogue but also Cicero's imitation of Plato's dialogues—and further, their Neoplatonic reception in Petrarchan poetics. In associating Astrophil with Antonius, Sidney also continues a long tradition of using an ambiguous relationship between author and persona in mnemonic poetics, a tradition that reaches back to Plato's ironic relationship to Socrates. Among other things, such performative personae blur the relationship between the real and the artificial, and they underscore that art inevitably remembers the past by mingling story and history.

Forgetting is at the heart of *Astrophil and Stella*, and it is through such forgetting that Sidney indirectly remembers the art of memory. Most overtly, Astrophil associates forgetting the past with forgetting Petrarch and all that he represents (even as he follows the Petrarchan rhyme scheme to express this): so, allegories of love rather than poetry about real love, "loving in truth," and the privileging of the artificial over the natural. Thus distinguishing himself from Petrarch's poor imitators, Astrophil argues that "You that do dictionary's method bring / Into your rhymes" are simply exhuming "poor Petrarch's long-deceased woes" in a sad attempt at cultural rebirth (*AS* 15). "You take wrong ways" with "far-fet helps," he admonishes, adding that "sure at length stol'n goods do come to light" (*AS* 15). "Stella, think not that I by verse seek fame […] / Nor so ambitious am I, as to frame / A nest for my young praise in laurel tree," Astrophil protests in another sonnet, denying a desire for poetic fame through a Petrarchan pun (Laura/laurel) and rejecting poetic immortality

in the bargain: "In truth I swear, I wish not there should be / Graved in mine epitaph a poet's name," nor "That any laud to me thereof should grow / Without my plumes from others' wings I take" (*AS* 90). Wittingly or not, Astrophil reverses the final curse of the *Apology*—that "when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph"[57]—by disavowing a desire for immortality that doubles as a witty reminder of the sonnet as a space for memory.

Stella is no allegory of love, Astrophil repeatedly claims, but the poet protests too much, and this denial points to the central irony of the sonnet sequence in terms of how it remembers the past. He disdains "You that with allegory's curious frame / Of others' children changelings use to make," and affirms that "I list not dig so deep for brazen frame" as to resort to the use of allegory to portray love (*AS* 28). Denying any hidden allegorical meaning to his poetry, Astrophil asserts that "When I say 'Stella,' I do mean the same / Princess of beauty":

> I beg no subject to use eloquence,
> Nor in hid ways to guide philosophy
> […]
> But know that I, in pure simplicity,
> Breathe out the flames which burn within my heart,
> Love only reading unto me this art. (*AS* 28)

Beyond the obvious irony that the allegorically named "Astrophil" and "Stella" strongly suggests that this "Star Lover" seeks poetic immortality through allegorical love sonnets about his "Star," Astrophil's desire to forget serves as a key reminder of the mnemonic tradition explored above.

Through negation, Sidney affirms that Stella *does* stand for poetry, and oratory, and philosophy; she is indeed a "subject to use eloquence" and to reveal the "hid ways" of veiled philosophical meaning. Sidney-as-Astrophil identifies precisely the allegorical underpinning of *Astrophil and Stella*: tales of ruin and recollection associated with the origin story of the art of memory, drawn both from the art of Ciceronian "eloquence" and Platonic "philosophy," and, most importantly here, from the allegorical sonnet tradition. The "pure simplicity" that Astrophil claims for his poetry is ironized by an allusion to Dante's *Vita Nuova* and the allegorical image of Love feeding Beatrice a burning heart. This

57. Sidney, *Apology*, 89.

image lies at the heart of Dante's "Book of Memory" and the mnemonic poetics of confession and conversion, ruin and recollection, by which he reforms the sonnet as an allegorical poetics aligned with Christianity.[58] Drawing attention to the very allegories that Astrophil at least nominally seeks to forget, sonnet 28 reveals the nested frames of recollection that structure *Astrophil and Stella*: Cicero remembering Plato, and both in turn being remembered through Augustinian allegory and ultimately in the sonnet. Sidney thus uses the ironic distance between himself and his poetic persona in a manner that parallels Cicero's double use of Antonius: to demonstrate the art of concealing art, and to incorporate an ostensible rejection of the past into his method of memorial recollection.

Significantly, in sonnet 45 Sidney provides an answer to sonnet 1 by dramatizing his mnemonic poetics in metatheatrical terms. Whereas in the first sonnet Astrophil longs for an art of forgetting, here he constructs something like a memory theatre in order to seduce Stella:

> Stella oft sees the very face of woe
> Painted in my beclouded stormy face;
> But cannot skill to pity my disgrace,
> Not though thereof the cause herself she know.
> Yet hearing late a fable, which did show
> Of lovers never known a grievous case,
> Pity thereof gate in her breast such place
> That, from that sea derived, tears' spring did flow.
> Alas, if fancy drawn by imaged things,
> Though false, yet with free scope more grace doth breed
> Than servant's wrack, where new doubts honor brings;
> Then think, my dear, that you in me do read
> Of lover's ruin some sad tragedy:
> I am not I, pity the tale of me. (*AS* 45)

58. Sidney alludes to Dante: what inspires Dante in his "Book of Memory" is a dream vision of Love feeding Beatrice his heart. An allegorical theory of poetics emerges from Dante's explication of this vision as Dante explains that love is not love—or not just love—but a philosophical and theological allegory, at once veiled (like Beatrice in the dream vision) and here at least partly unveiled in order to reveal the sonnet's hidden meaning (Dante, *Vita Nuova*, 25).

This sonnet most evidently concerns imagination, but it hinges, I would argue, on the imaginative reconstruction of the past both in the present and for the future, on a dynamic between art and memory, recollection and reenactment, which Astrophil rehearses for Stella. Calling upon Stella's remembrance of a play that moved her to pity (in Aristotelian fashion), Astrophil asks her to imagine him as a player in a lover's tragedy, not as himself but as a persona: "think, my dear, that you in me do read / Of lover's ruin some sad tragedy: / I am not I, pity the tale of me." Such pathos or "ruin" is what might prompt Stella's recollection of this theatrical space into which Astrophil locates himself imaginatively, poetically, and rhetorically. He thus draws on a fundamental teaching of the *ars memorativa*: the relationship of imagination or "fancy" to both emotion and memory.

Being imaginatively moved by emotion in turn marks the memory, which is foundational to the creation of striking and memorable images, *imagines agentes* (images that are active, which act). Despite his earlier repudiation of "allegory's curious frame," Astrophil here turns himself into just such an allegory of art. As in sonnet 1, the aim of this transformation is Stella's "pity," but now instead of rejecting poetry for unornamented truth, Astrophil does the reverse, embracing art and artifice. Astrophil bases his imaginative scenario upon the theatre, fashioning himself as a dramatic character, but as the reference to "fancy drawn by imaged things" indicates, this is also a memory theatre, filled with vivid imagery that sparks the process of recollection. The story that Astrophil tells of himself is metapoetic as well as metatheatrical; the remembrance of "love's ruin" within the little rooms of this sonnet also speaks to the architecture of *Astrophil and Stella*, built upon a poetics of ruin and recollection. Astrophil's "tale of me" becomes a tale akin to the tale of Simonides: a dramatization of how Sidney's sonnet sequence is constructed as a memory theatre, and a demonstration of his mnemonic poetics. Sonnet 45 may then replace sonnet 1 as the (curious) frame for the work as a whole, as the concerns of the first sonnet are refigured.

The drama of Astrophil's "ruin" re-enacts, in effect, earlier tales of ruin and recollection, allegories of love associated with Petrarch and Plato that Astrophil both forgets and remembers. The ambivalent, fitful nature of Astrophil's poetic, parodic combat with Plato and Petrarch serves as an ironic reminder of Sidney's foundational engagement with their related poetics of memory. Even as Astrophil professes to forget the past, he repeatedly recalls the seminal tale of

Platonic love-as-recollection and his failure to achieve it. Sonnet 21 summons Socrates's story of the soul as a chariot drawn by two horses, one wild and one tame, the central allegory of *anamnesis* in the *Phaedrus*. Playing upon his name as a "lover of horses," Phillip, Sidney-as-Astrophil laments:

> That mine own writings like bad servants show
> My wits, quick in vain thoughts, in virtue lame;
> That Plato I read for naught, but if he tame
> Such coltish gyres; that to my birth I owe
> Nobler desires, lest else that friendly foe,
> Great expectation, wear a train of shame. (*AS* 21)

As discussed above, Socrates concludes his story of the soul by returning to the analogy of the soul as a chariot drawn by two steeds and elaborating on how love serves as a reminder, controlling the wild horse of desire. Astrophil recognizes that his desire for Stella should ideally lead him to a higher, Platonic, virtuous love—and yet it is precisely Stella's virtue that frustrates his desire and causes him misery.[59] Sonnet 49 offers a comic reversal of this story of the soul:

> I on my horse, and love on me doth try
> Our horsmanships, while by strange work I prove
> A horseman to my horse, a horse to love
> […]
> Girt fast by memory; and while I spur
> My horse, he spurs with sharp desire my heart;
> He sits me fast, how ever I do stir […] (*AS* 49)

Dragged by the horse of desire, Astrophil likewise complains of his failed Platonic love in the well-known final lines of sonnet 71: "So while thy beauty draws the heart to love, / As fast thy virtue bends that love so good. / 'But ah,' desire still cries, 'Give me some food'" (*AS* 71). Clearly, love does not serve as a "reminder" for Astrophil, leading him from vice to virtue. However, his tragicomic failure and willful forgetting is itself a reminder of an anti-Platonic

59. My argument builds upon Phillippy's discussion of Sidney's response to Plato's *Phaedrus*; see Phillippy, *Love's Remedies*, ch. 4.

poetics of remembering and forgetting that shapes the sonnet tradition, most profoundly through Petrarch.

Sidney's complex engagement with Petrarch turns on a dialectic of forgetting and remembering Platonic love, and Astrophil gleefully upends the sonnet's language of sin and salvation from the start: "And now employ the remnant of my wit / To make my self believe that all is well, / While with a feeling skill I paint my hell" (*AS* 2). Through Astrophil's devil-may-care attitude, Sidney engages in a playful perversion of the conversion narrative at the heart of the sonnet tradition, visible in Petrarch's own poetic subversion of idealized Platonic love poetry. As discussed above, Petrarch's sonnet sequence intentionally forgets Augustine's Christian art of memory, portraying a poet who cannot fully remember divine love. By remembering his own failed salvation history, Petrarch remakes mnemonic poetics, making ruin itself into a space for ongoing recollection and for a poetics of ambivalence and unrequited desire, in effect severing the sonnet from salvation. Astrophil's ambiguous relationship to Petrarch, and his desire to forget Petrarchism, becomes a reminder or renovation of these same poetics of memory. Challenging the morality of sin and salvation associated with the sonnet—"Alas, have I not pain enough, my friend […] / But with your rhubarb words you must contend / To grieve me worse, in saying that desire / Doth plunge my well-formed soul even in the mire / Of sinful thoughts, which do in ruin end?"—Astrophil answers this question with a wink and a nod: "If that be sin which in fixed hearts doth breed / A loathing of all loose unchastity, / Then love is sin, and let me sinful be" (*AS* 14). Sidney's speaker embraces the ruins of his sinful soul: unlike Petrarch's poetic persona, Astrophil is not ambivalent nor divided in his loves (secular or sacred) but instead divided *from* his love—who is, as he affirms over and again, no allegory. After all, Stella speaks, if only to reject Astrophil and, in the end, to break his heart. Yet Sidney's relationship to Petrarch ultimately has more to do with a shared method of memory than the matter they remember. Like Petrarch's, Sidney's poetics are represented by a story of his ruin and partial recollection, a "tale of me" that doubles as a teaching tale about English poetry.

In the end, this tale of "lover's ruin" is constructed as a metapoetic place of memory. Despite Astrophil's insistence on the sonnet as a space for the present rather than the past, and despite his desire for a natural rather than artificial aesthetic, in sonnet 106, his memory of Stella in her absence undercuts his ambitions:

O absent presence! Stella is not here;
False flattering hope, that with so fair a face
Bare me in hand, that in this orphan place
Stella, I say, my Stella, should appear
[…]
But thou art gone […] (*AS* 106)

Against Astrophil's presentist claims and assertions of the real, Sidney returns to "allegory's curious frame" to reframe *Astrophil and Stella* as an allegory of art and the art of memory. The sonnet sequence is both a memorial and mnemonic structure, an "orphan place" that represents "art" and a location for memory constructed by a poetics of locational memory. Such Platonic love in the absence of so-called real love—the sublimation and substitution of desire into art—is the mark of the sonnet tradition: the transformation of Daphne into the laurel tree and into Petrarch's "Laura." But what ultimately matters more than the question of whether Sidney's sonnets are Petrarchan or anti-Petrarchan, Platonic or anti-Platonic—or the related question of whether Astrophil does or does not represent the author—is Sidney's unmasking of *Astrophil and Stella* as a work of art designed to be a place for memory. Sidney reveals what his art has partly concealed, an answer to the final curse of *An Apology for Poetry*, the threat of oblivion: "that while you live, you live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph."[60]

Sidney writes his own memorial with *Astrophil and Stella* and, most importantly, he teaches other poets how to do the same. He creates a memory theatre that dramatizes a poetics of memory through the performance of the poet—not just Sidney's authorial avatar but earlier performances of poetic personae that Astrophil forgets and remembers, whose desire to forget serves as an important reminder for readers and a spur to recollection. These "tales of me" are versions of the tale of Simonides, less reconstructed than fundamentally reformed or renovated for new memorial structures. The Ciceronian rhetorical framing of *Astrophil and Stella*, itself a performance of Platonic love that is re-enacted and reinterpreted within the sonnet tradition that it so profoundly shapes, dramatizes mnemonic poetics as a *method*, yet one that is reimagined for new *matter* of memory across time, place, and disciplines. With *Astrophil*

60. Sidney, *Apology*, 89.

and Stella, Sidney writes himself into this tradition of mnemonic poetics, and in recollecting it anew he enacts an English poetics. This poetry lesson is indirect, taught through wit, irony, and dissimulation that leads from forgetting to remembering as self-knowledge, for the audience if not for Astrophil. It is through Astrophil's ardent desire for originality—for an art of poetry that depends upon an art of forgetting—that Sidney recollects the past from ruin by playing the part of a poet.

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