Against 'others' feet': Reassessing Nationalism in Sidney and Spenser

'Başkalarının Ölçülerine' Karşı: Sidney ve Spenser'da Milliyetçiliği Yeniden Değerlendirmek

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Abstract

The critical tradition positions Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser among the pioneers of the nationalistic movement in Early Modern England. From a historical point of view, this has been the result of the promotion of Britishness by 19th and 20th century literary critics through their construction of national poets in the literary canon. Yet, the idea of nation in the Early Modern Period was a multi-layered phenomenon in which religion, sectarianism, race, geography, and social rank were of significance. International and intranational relationships could be felt on a daily basis on the streets of the relatively cosmopolitan London that was populated by the English, the Dutch, and the French, which were further divided into Protestants, Catholics, Puritans, and many more groups in the 16th century. What is more, intellectual discussions about the promotion of the English tongue on literary and non-literary levels were far from the homogeny which our present understanding of nationalism implies. Rather, literary and non-literary intellectual discussions were the result of the negotiations of imitation, translation, appropriation, and experimentation. Hence, nationalism should be re-historicised from its 19th and 20th century concepts to the 16th century to understand to what extent Sidney and Spenser were proud of and promoted their national identities in their works. Accordingly, this article will attempt to discuss nationalism in Sidney and Spenser's works with a primary focus on their poetry.

Keywords: Early Modern Period, Nationalism, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser

Öz

Eleştiri geleneği, Sir Philip Sidney ve Edmund Spenser'ı Erken Modern Dönem İngiltere'deki milliyetçi hareketin öncüleri arasında konumlandırır. Tarihsel bir bakış açısıyla, bu görüş, 19. ve 20. yüzyıl edebiyat eleştirmenlerinin İngilizliği yüceltme amacıyla edebiyat kanonundaki ulusal şair kavramını oluşturmalarının bir sonucudur. Oysa Erken Modern Dönem'de millet fikri, dinin, mezhebin, ırkın, coğrafyanın ve sosyal sınıfın önem taşıdığı çok katmanlı bir olguydu. Ulusal ve uluslararası ilişkiler, İngilizler, Hollandalılar, Fransızlar, ve bunları daha da alt gruplara bölen Protestanlar, Katolikler, Püritenler ve daha birçok grup tarafından doldurulmuş olan nispeten kozmopolit 16. yüzyıl Londra sokaklarında günlük olarak hissedilebilirdi. Dahası, İngilizcenin edebi ve edebi olmayan düzeylerde yüceltilmesi ile ilgili entelektüel tartışmalar, bugünkü milliyetçilik anlayışımızın ima ettiği homojenlikten uzaktı. Aksine, edebi ve edebi olmayan entelektüel tartışmalar, taklit, çeviri, uyarlama ve denemelerden oluşan fikir alış verişlerinin sonucuydu. Bu nedenle, milliyetçilik, Sidney ve Spenser'ın çalışmalarında ulusal kimlikleriyle ne kadar gurur duyduklarını ve yüceltmek istediklerini anlamak için 19. ve 20. yüzyıl konseptlerinden 16. yüzyıldaki milliyetçilik anlayışı doğrultusunda tarihsel çerçevede yeniden konumlandırılmalıdır. Buna göre, bu çalışmada Sidney ve Spenser'ın eserleri, başta şiirleri olmak üzere, milliyetçilik kavramından hareketle incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erken Modern Dönem, Milliyetçilik, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser

Introduction

The critical tradition positions Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) and Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) among the pioneers of the nationalistic movement in Early Modern England. From a historical point of view, this has been furthered by two reasons. The first one is related with Sidney's martyrdom for the Protestant cause in continental Europe in 1586. Sidney's untimely death and his endeavours to produce English poetry have been equated and commemorated by various poets and critics. Contemporaries like Spenser likened Sidney to a "Gentle Shepheard" who was killed while hunting in a "brutiſh nation" (Spenser, 1617, p. B1^{v}); later poets/critics like Wordsworth also elevated him into a poet-hero and placed him among the "defenders" of nationalism and national literature (Wordsworth, 1974, p. 373). Based on this equation of Sidney with nationalism, the promotion of Britishness by 19th and 20th century literary critics through their construction of national male poets in the literary

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canon (Groak, 2001, pp. 23-26) was another reason why Sidney and partially because of him Spenser have been considered national poets. This was because Sidney and Spenser created a "breakout" in "national poetry" (Cheney, 2011, p. 1), which was related with the contemporary rise in nationalism and the formation of proto-nation states in Europe in the Early Modern Period (Waller, 2003, pp. 17-20).

Yet, the idea of nation in the Early Modern Period was a multi-layered phenomenon that incorporated socio-political, economic and spatial markers of difference. What is more, intellectual discussions about the promotion of the English tongue on literary and non-literary levels were far from the homogeny which our present understanding of nationalism implies. Rather, literary and non-literary intellectual discussions were the result of the negotiations of imitation, translation, appropriation, and experimentation. Hence, nationalism should be re-historicised from its 19th and 20th century concepts to the 16th century to understand to what extent Sidney and Spenser were proud of and promoted their national identities in their works. Accordingly, this article will attempt to discuss, construct and deconstruct nationalism in Sidney[1] and Spenser's[2] works with a primary focus on their poetry.

Early Modern English Nationalism

Humanism revived classical sources and changed the standard medieval concept of man as a fallen creature to that of one who has an idiosyncratic intellectual potential to progress and become later even "a *kind* of god" (Ficino, 1977, p. 388). Shattering the fetters of the unified and universal Latin Church doctrines, the vulgar tongues in Europe developed discussions and methods for the advancement of intellectualism. Initial continental discussions were followed by those in England, in which classical sources, including works by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca, were used to form the prescripts of contemporary conduct books, as can be seen in the examples of Castiglione's *The Courtier* (1528), Elyot's *The Governour* (1531), Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* (1570), and many more. By studying Latin and English grammar, rhetoric, history, and other disciplines in grammar schools or universities, this progressive education was crucial in the "*self-fashioning*" (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 1) of an English gentleman who trained both his mind and body according to classical standards.

The idealistic endeavour of the Early Modern English education was to create a self that could identify itself with perfection and differentiate itself from degradation. The double aims to reach perfection and differentiation naturally boosted nationalistic fervour in England. Yet, it also underlined cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences within the country. Contrary to our present day ideas about nationalism as a unifying phenomenon, religion, sectarianism, race, customs, geography, bloodlines and social rank were among the important fragmentary markers of differentiation and springboards for national pride or vanity in Early Modern England. The rise of the fourth estate, steady population growth despite the frequency of natural disasters, the forced migration of continental and English Protestants and Catholics because of sectarian conflicts, and the opportunities brought by mobilisation necessitated many people in the Early Modern Period to move from towns into cities and other countries, which created cosmopolitan communities (Levin and Watkins, 2009, pp. 12-13). As a direct result of these, international and intranational relationships could be felt on a daily basis on the streets of the relatively cosmopolitan London that was populated by several generations of the English, the Dutch, or the French, which were further divided into Protestants, Catholics, Puritans, and

[1] In parenthetical references, Sidney's poetry will be abbreviated as follows: *Astrophil and Stella* (*AS*). References will be to sonnet number and line numbers.

[2] In parenthetical references, Spenser's poetry will be abbreviated as follows: *Shepheardes Calendar* (*SC*), *Amoretti (A)*, and *Faerie Queen* (*FQ*). References will be to sonnet number or canto number and line numbers. The respective eclogue of the *Shepheardes Calendar* will be referred in the parenthetical references.

many more groups in the 16th century. While the exact numbers of Anglicans, recusant Catholics and the many varieties of Dissenters broadly termed as Puritans can be only estimated within the total number of 200,000 people living in London towards the year 1600 (Finlay, 1981, p. 9), the number of people who were considered foreign in London can be relatively distinguished. According to a 1581 census, a total of 3,909 "strangers" were officially recorded living in London, "of whom 1,149 attended the French Church, 66 the Italian, 1,043 the English, 1,364 the Dutch, and 287" who "were of no Church" (Cunningham, 1897, p. 150). The number of officially recorded strangers increased in 1618 to 10,000 (Cunningham, 1897, p. 155), which made London a shared community of diverse groups. Yet, despite the fact that the English, the Dutch, the French, and many other ethnic groups – whether they were Protestants, Catholics, or Puritans – lived in the same locality, what was native or alien would be a matter of the time span spent there by each group or individual and their integration into the Anglican English culture, which in itself was only a few generations old. As a result, what was and what was not English was a contested issue whose definition was still in the making.

Sidney and Spenser's "Nationalistic" Poetics

Sidney was among the first poets to comprehend and theorise the importance of literature as a vehicle towards a definition of Englishness. Sidney emphasises the importance of the creation of a national poetic convention, a literary nationalism (Umunç, 1995, p. 113) through his inspiring words to "'look in [one's] heart and write'" (*AS* 1.14). Sidney promotes a national understanding not only of the function of the poet and but also of poetry. Particularly, Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* (1582, 1591), a sonnet cycle that bears close outward resemblances to Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, is regarded as a pioneering work "achieving a synthesis which suited the taste of the Elizabethan reader" (Seber, 1995, p. 118) who could no longer solely be satiated with the asexual prescripts of Petrarchism based on Neoplatonic ideals.

For Sidney, the English poet should no longer make solely use of "others' feet," which "seemed but strangers in […] [one's] way" (*AS* 1.11), but rather formulate national conventions through national inspirations. Through Astrophil, Sidney voices his concerns against the use of "strange similes" (*AS* 3.7), that is, continental poetic conventions such as Petrarchism. Astrophil points out the absurdities to use stock phrases – like those that allude to classical mythology, such as the Muses, classical literature, such as Pindar, and earthly riches, such as those of "Ind or Afric" (*AS* 3.1-11) – just for the sake of allusion. Similarly, Astrophil occasionally belittles Petrarchan oxymorons (*AS* 6.1-11, 15.1-11, 41.1-6) as these are considered to be artificial stimuli for poetic inspiration. Rather, "Stella's face" (*AS* 3.12, 15.12-14), being the English inspiration for the English poet should be sufficient for him to produce good poetry and "speak what [he feels]" (*AS* 6.12).

As Astrophil further informs us, although he claims that he does not write to be a famous poet, he cannot withhold himself from writing because he is inspired by Stella herself (*AS* 90.1-14). Stella's love is not only the generative force behind the sonnet cycle, but expressing his love for her is part of Astrophil's (national) identity: "Thine eyes my pride, thy lips mine history" (*AS* 90.3). This turns Stella into a personification of nationalistic love, which is also reflected earlier when Astrophil refers to English history to give an English example of ideal love upon which he can build his understanding of love. Astrophil likens himself to the English king Edward IV who married the English commoner Elizabeth Woodville instead of his French betrothed and created an international diplomatic crisis (Loades, 1974, pp. 86-89). Just like Edward IV, Astorphil would "lose his crown, rather than fail his love" (*AS* 75.14) and choose his English love/beloved over anything else in the world.[3] Consequent-

[3] However, within this Anglicised understanding of love, Sidney does not shun from positioning England within the rest of the world. Referring to the Turkish invasion of continental Europe, the Polish invasion of Moscow,

ly, Sidney underscores the importance of using native conventions and stimuli for the construction of English poetry.

What is more, through Sidney's deconstruction of the characteristics of the lover, the sonnet form and the perception of Petrarchism are further "Englished" (Marotti, 1982, p. 398). In his sonnet cycle, Sidney is rather concerned with the "sensuous" aspect of "love" (Seber, 1995, p. 118), which is much in contrast with Castiglione's continental notion of the reasonable lover. According to Castiglione, the importance to control physical drives by reason is elaborated as follows:

> [W]han the soule is not nowe so much wayed downe with the bodyly burdein, and whan the naturall burning asswageth and draweth to a warmeth, if thei be inflamed with beawty, and to it bend their coveting guided by reasonable choise, they be not deceived, and posses beawtye perfectly, and therefor through the possessing of it, alwaies goodnes ensueth to them: bicause beauty is good and consequently the true love of it is most good and holy, and evermore bringeth furth good frutes in the soules of them, that with the bridle of reason restraine the yll disposition of sense, the which old men can much sooner do then yong. (Castiglione, 1577, pp. NN3^{v}-NN4^{r})

It seems that because Astrophil belongs to the group of "yong" people, he prefers the "flesh" to the control of "virtue" (*AS* 4.1, 4.13) and, thus, wants to be "sinful" (*AS* 14.14) rather than delimit his understanding of love within the Petrarchist conception of one-sided love. For instance, Astrophil reveals his preference for the flesh which even moves into a sort of fetishism when he praises but clandestinely envies the "Highway" on which Stella walks because it "kiss[es]" "Stella's feet" (*AS* 84.13-14). Yet, Astrophil's strong will to "taste" of Stella through "kiss[ing]" or even "bit[ing] her," or lying on her "lap" are constantly cut short by her coldness (*AS* 59.11, 82.11-14). Her coldness is represented through the "iron doors" that "keep [him] from use," which also serve as a dirty allusion to Stella's genitalia that is kept closed to Astrophil (*AS* 108.11). Her rejections, however, do not prevent Astrophil from going further in his sinful behaviour. Towards the end of the sonnet cycle in Song 2, for example, Sidney expresses how Astrophil steals a "kisse" from his sleeping Stella and laments afterwards "for no more taking" (*AS* Song 2.21-4, 2.28). But as Castiglione informs us, "reasonable love is more happye then sensuall" (Castiglione, 1577, p. OO4^{r}) which foreshadows Astrophil's doomed fate as a forsaken lover. Although Astrophil ends up as a miserable lover who pays for his sensuousness and cannot reach *discordia concors* by mingling carnal desires with divine intellect, Sidney seems to achieve an "originality" (Seber, 1995, p. 125) regarding how the idiosyncratic characteristics of the English lover could be formulated, which would encourage other English poets as a generative force.

One of these poets was Edmund Spenser in whose sonnet cycle *Amoretti* (1595) we see a similar yet different subversion of the continental conventions of Petrarchism in order to reflect English points of view. Here, Petrarchism, with its emphasis on the separateness of the lover from the angel-like and asexual beloved (Pearson, 1966, p. 164), is replaced by a happy ending and marriage, if we read the sonnet cycle along with his wedding poem *Epithalamion*. The beloved is not an abstraction but a flesh and blood lady who walks with the poet on the beach and whom we can hear when she chides the poet/lover (*A* 75.1-14). This is much in

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the French civil war, the Dutch war, the Irish war, and intrigues within the Scottish court (*AS* 30.1-11), Sidney, through Astrophil, comments on international affairs and maintains that his nationalism is not an insular one. Creating a pseudo-historiographic mythology of how love reached his heart, love is described to be born in Greece, driven out by the Turk, frozen in Northern Europe, having reached Stella's shining face for comfort but driven out again by her coldness into the poet's warm heart (*AS* 8.1-14). Reflecting Astrophil's frustration with Stella further through the use of international comparisons, "like" a "slave-born Muscovite / I call it praise to suffer tyranny" (*AS* 2.10-11), Sidney shows that although English nationalistic poetry should abstain from using "strange" poetic conventions, it should not be ignorant of what happens in "strange" parts surrounding England.

contrast to continental conventions to silence the beloved in order to foreground her unattainableness. Likewise, in Spenser, contrary to asexual Petrarchism, the consummation of love is not seen as a sin but rather as a divine ordinance, a "lesson which the Lord us taught" (*A* 68.14). Spenser's erotic celebration of the beloved with floral imagery (*A* 64.1-14) renders him a happy lover, rather than a wretched poet, who uses poetry as a writerly catharsis to purge the sorrows of love. Consequently, it can be argued that both Sidney and Spenser bring idealistic poetic conventions of continental literature to a down-to-earth, almost realistic, level.

Nevertheless, the sonnet form is not the sole form and way through which Sidney and Spenser are considered to have attempted to promote a national English literature. Having formed a group of literati under the pseudonym *Areopagus*, which included figures like Spenser, Harvey, and Dyer, Sidney tried to form a school for the advancement of English literature (Smith, 2014, pp. 38-39), and he might have given further examples of English literature of his own if he had not died at an early age in battle.

As one of the members of this informal club, Spenser follows the Virgilian example in his nationalistically oriented career for the advancement of the English tongue. In particular, he starts with the "Oateen reeds" of the pastoral and then moves to the "trumpets sterne" of the epic (*FQ* 1.Proem.4) to "sing of bloody Mars" (*SC*, "October" 39). Spenser tries to produce original literature and sets it especially in the English landscape to assert national dignity. Particularly, Spenser situates his pastoral in England referring to English shepherd names, such as Colin, Hobbinol, Cuddie and Piers, and English flowers, such as "purple Cullambine," "Gelliflowers," "Daffodownfillies," "Cowslips," "Kingcups," "Lillies," "Pawnce" and the like (*SC*, "Aprill" 136-144). As he mentions in his dedicatory epistle to his *Shepheardes Calender*, Spenser wants to give the "English tongue" its dignity by rescuing it from being the "hodgepodge of al other speeches" (Spenser, 1943b, p. 9).

Likewise, the production of his epic *Faerie Qveene* (1590, 1596), the first national epic in English (McCabe, 2002, p. 15), has been regarded as a manifesto of the capability of the English language for high literature. Accordingly, although unfinished, each of the completed six books of the *Faerie Qveene* represents a certain idealised characteristic of the legendary King Arthur's life before he became king. Holiness in Book I, Temperance in Book II, Chastity in Book III, Friendship in Book IV, Justice in Book V and Courtesy in Book VI were used to reflect the ideals of national identity in national literature. Through these idealised characteristics, the epic poem intentionally aims at creating a "national mythography" (Woodcock, 2004, p. 5) in a period marked by the rise of "nationalism" (Brooks-Davies, 1977, p. 1; King, 2004, p. 141; Woodcock, 2004, p. 31; Bennet, 1942, p. 54). Considering Chaucer as an inspiring father figure and orthographic model for his nostalgically oriented spelling in his epic endeavour, Spenser tries to recreate an ideally pure and pseudo-historically well-established English atmosphere in his poetry. Thus, in an English mythological realm of elves, and creating characters who reflect the virtues of English Knights – like Una, the Redcrosse Knight and Britomart – as representatives of an Anglican Protestant national culture against monsters, wizards, and enchantresses – like Error, Duessa, Orgoglio, or the Dragon – which represent continental threats of Catholicism, Spenser tries to promote a nationalism that feeds itself from native Anglo-Saxon, Arthurian, and Protestant sources against foreign literary and intellectual threats of the continent. Consequently, it can be argued that both Sidney and Spenser perceive literature as a way to show national dignity.

Nevertheless, this rise in nationalism reflected in literature was only possible with the encouragement given by patrons to their patronees, which could be seen in Sidney's and Raleigh's encouragement of Spenser; Spenser dedicated his *Shepheardes Calender* to Sidney, and through Raleigh, he presented his *Faerie Qveene* to Elizabeth I. Here, gifts from patrons,

such as getting an official position, were in reality the continuation of the feudal master and servant relationship (Lamson, 1956, pp. 5-6), which had the potential to limit artistic creativity to the tastes of each respective patron. Yet, poets were aware of this as Elizabethan courtiers used, for instance, the Petrarchan diction intentionally while presenting their works to Elizabeth I to get her favour. Thereby, artistry was used as a means to seek gain according to one's social "ambition" (Marotti, 1982, p. 399). For example, through Colin in the "Aprill Eclogue," Spenser shows Elizabeth I, the patron as a "goddess" and himself as her "shepherd," her patronee, who has to serve her in order to sustain his life (*SC*, "Aprill" 96-99). Elizabeth I is put on the position of a Petrarchan lady, the "Great Lady of the Greatest Isle" (*FQ* 1.Proem.30), who controls and inspires those who love her. Hence, it could be argued that the rise of nationalism was correlated with the hoped-for support of the Elizabethan regime.

The Problematics of Sidney and Spenser's "Nationalistic" Poetics

However, although critics have considered Sidney and Spenser as pioneers of national English literature and integral parts of the canon, Sidney and Spenser's reductive ideas of an Anglican Protestant and elitist nationalism were received neither by the majority of the population that consisted of all walks of life[4] nor by the Elizabethan regime. Estate divisions and differences in political points-of-view on domestic and international politics[5] prevented Sidney and Spenser's poetry and prose from reaching and shaping a national audience in their own time in the way they anticipated.

Despite the importance given to national products of literature by both composers and financial supporters, the actual production of literature in the English tongue received a mixed reaction by these so-called nationalistic pioneers. As Helgerson has highlighted the irony of Early Modern poets including Sidney and Spenser, these national poets "deliberately, even wilfully, neglect[ed] the literary traditions of the vernacular languages" and were "seeking inspiration elsewhere, in the literatures of ancient Greece and Rome and of modern Italy" (Helgerson, 2005, p. 20).

Interestingly enough, in spite of the fact that Sidney overtly criticises the bookishness of Petrarchan imitation (*AS* 6.1-11, 15.1-11, 41.1-6), in his sonnet cycle he makes extensive use of it. This is naturally necessitated because Sidney uses the sonnet form which was essentially considered by Early Modern literati to be Petrarchan in origin (Distiller, 2008, pp. 43-46). Although Sidney argues that classical or Petrarchan diction is insufficient to reflect Stella's beauty (*AS* 3.1-11, 6.1-12, 13.1-14, 15.12-14), his pushing of these Petrarchan conventions into the periphery in his poetry only highlights them.

Varying in degree, Sidney's use of Petrarchan diction can be seen especially in metaphors, conceits, oxymorons and paradoxes, hyperboles, and exclamations. For instance, Stella's "eyes" are likened to "spheres of beauty" and "fair planets" (*AS* 42.1, 103.4), and her "red cheeks" are similar to "roses," "crimson," and "vermilion" (*AS* 101.1-5). Similarly, Petrarchan diction is seen in Sidney's use of conceits, such as when he likens Stella's "bed" to a beach on which Astrophil's "sighs" create "storms" (*AS* 98.1-4); or when he refers to Stella's

[4] The Late Elizabethan society was a deferential one in which estate divisions, professions, gender, status and age determined the relationships among individuals which, to name a few, consisted of apprentices, servants, freemen, gentry, merchants, clergymen, courtiers and noblemen. For further information see Shepard, A. (2003). *Meanings of manhood in early modern England.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. See, especially, pages 1-3 and 10-11.

[5] For a detailed analyisis on the differences on domestic and international politics, especially regarding whether England should act as a patron of European Protestantism, see Öğütcü, M. (2017). *Julius Caesar:* Tyrannicide made unpopular. *Parergon* 34(1), 109-128. See, especially, pages 111, 117-119, and 123-124.

"sickness" and hopes that her pale face is rather a sign of her love-sickness comparing it to a "paper" onto which "beauty's reddest ink Venus for him doth stir" (*AS* 101.1-14, 102.12-14); or when he laments how the winds can touch Stella's "golden hair" while she moves on the River Thames (*AS* 103.1-14). Likewise, rather than just relying on or creating English conventions, Sidney makes use of Petrarchan oxymorons and paradoxes to reflect the contrast between his aspirations and the realities he finds. For example, Stella is "just in cruelty" (*AS* 42.6) insomuch that "Venus hath learned chastity" from Stella's coldness (*AS* 42.4); at the same time, Stella's coldness makes Astrophil "feel the flames of hottest summer day" while he lives "in blackest winter night (*AS* 89.13-14). His "sighs, dear sighs," become "indeed true friends" for Astrophil (*AS* 95.1), which, however, are "no sorrow […] but joy" (*AS* 100.12). Among the many hyperbolic expressions that seem to imitate those of Petrarchan poets, we see that Astrophil's "tears" are "but rain from beauty's skies / Making thoses lillies and those roses grow" which he rather "bleed[s]" than sheds (*AS* 93.14, 100.1-2) and that no "ink" is "black enough to paint [his] woe" (*AS* 93.3). Astrophil's exclamations of woes through repetitive uses of "O" (*AS* 69.1-2, 69.8, 69.11) in expressions like "I, I, O I may say that she is mine" (*AS* 69.11) or "O fate, O fault, O curse" (*AS* 93.1) top his Petrarchism. The very end of the last sonnet in the sonnet cycle reveals how Sidney, through Astrophil, cannot abstain from using Petrarchan diction and paradoxes no matter how hard he tries when he wants to express his frustration about his unaccomplished love for Stella: "That in my woes for thee thou art joy / And in my joys for thee my only annoy" (*AS* 108.13-14). Thus, it might be questionable to what extend Sidney actually does not take "plumes from others' wings" (*AS* 90.11) as he claims in his poetry.

What is more, contrary to what he seems to advocate in his own poetry, Sidney is against national popular literature and favours the imitation of the classics according to continental examples. In his *Defence of Poesy* (1582-1583, 1595), for instance, Sidney describes tragedy as a representation of an action that is complete in itself and teaches a moral lesson through the fall of the mighty, which combines views of Aristotle, Seneca, and Horace through the lens of contemporary Italian critics like Scaliger, Minturno, and Castelvetro (Coogan, 1981, pp. 255-270; Heninger, 1988, pp. 27-44). With the notable exception of *Gordobuc* (1561), English tragedies seem a mixture of several genres that only aim to exploit their audiences' attention through drollery and spectacle (Sidney, 1595, pp. $I4^{v}$–$K1^{r}$). In a similar manner, English comedies fail to comply with classical and contemporary Italian prescripts embraced by Sidney. Particularly, English comedy can only stimulate sinful laughter (Sidney, 1595, pp. $K2^{v}$-$K3^{r}$). As a consequence, actual English literary productions by the common English people did not suit Sidney's aristocratic and highbrow aesthetics.

Furthermore, the fact that these despised forms of English literature were rewarded by both the general public and the patronage led to the weakening and distortion of nationalistic feelings in many poets, including Sidney and Spenser. In particular, personal concerns for not being recognised for good service within the patronage system affected Sidney and Spenser's stance towards their fellow countrymen. Despite the fact that the patron was an important figure and generative source for the productivity of the poet, this relationship made the poet economically dependent on the patron. Either through the abandonment of the poet by his patron or the envy of other persons, poets could get into social and financial troubles. This was particularly true for those who had a nationalistic agenda in their works that promoted domestic and international Protestantism, which was quite in contrast with Elizabeth I's pacifist policies that were shaped by her meritocratic councillors like the Cecils (Hammer, 1999, p. 22; Stone, 1979, p. 482; Williams, 1995, pp. 364-365). For instance, despite his goodwill, Sidney was dismissed from court for his quite nationalistic letter to Elizabeth I, in which he urged her not to marry "a Frenchman, and a Papist," whom he termed as "the son of Jezebel of our age"

who persecuted Protestant "Hugenots'" with "fire and sword" (Sidney, 1973, p. 48). Similarly, Spenser felt himself mistreated for his efforts in composing the first three books of his national epic the *Faerie Qveene* which he later exemplified in the poet nailed on his tongue before Mercilla's castle in Book V (*FQ* 5.9.217-34) and the Blatant Beast in Book VI which is usually regarded as the personification of people surrounding Spenser who attacked his political and literary reputation (*FQ* 6.12.343-51). Likewise, having in mind the potential social and material dangers of artistic creation he contemplated in his "October Eclogue" (*SC*, "October" 10, 20, 117-8), we may argue that Spenser used the historically distant setting of Prince Arthur's time in his *Faerie Qveene* not just as a nationalistic setting but also as one which he himself termed in the introductory letter as "*furthest from the daunger of enuy, and suspition of present time*" (Spenser, 1932a, p. 167). He was referring to the envy against those who tried to promote an idealised version of a national Protestant identity in spite of contemporary Elizabethan politics. Thus, both Sidney and Spenser experienced that nationalism was not gratifying and remunerative in Elizabethan England.

Disenfranchised and frustrated with how his political ambitions for the wellbeing of the English had been thwarted by the Elizabethan regime that sent him to Ireland instead of promoting him in court, Spenser expressed a nationalism turned into a toxic form of racism in his notorious *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596). According to Hadfield's reading of Anderson's ideas on Spenser's national identity, Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* can be regarded as the "articula[tion] of a sense of national identity in exile" which created a traumatic syndrome of "separation from one's homeland" which intensified Spenser's "interest in the question of identity" (Hadfield, 1997, pp. 3-7). Remaining in manuscript form until the middle of the 17th century, Spenser's questions about the dichotomy of us and them develop in the imagined dialogues between Eudoxus and Irenius who reflect on Spenser's trauma of separation from England and life in Ireland. Accordingly, Spenser's suggestions for taking control of Ireland by vanquishing the Irish rising led by Hugh O'Neill varied from cultural assimilation of the Irish language, laws and religion to indirect genocide through destroying crops and the killing of cattle. The following passage is one of the many instances of how Spenser's limited and pragmatist view of nationalism turned into a traumatised and toxic form following his life in Ireland and his confrontation with the Irish question:

> Out of everye corner of the woode and glynnes they came creepinge forth upon theire hands, for their legs could not beare them, they looked anatomies of death, they ſpake like Ghoſts crying out of their Graves, they did eat of the Carrions, happy were they could find them, yea, and one another ſoon after, inſomuch as the verye carcaſſes they ſpared not to ſcrape out of theire Graves, and if they found a plot of water-creſſes or Shamrocks; there they flocked as to a feaſt for the time, yet not able long to continue therewithal, that in a ſhort ſpace there were none almoſt left, and a moſt populous and plentiful Countrey ſuddainly lefte void of Man or Beaſt, yet ſure in all that War, there periſhed not many by the Sword, but all by the extremity of Famine, which they themſelves had wrought. (Spenser, 1679, p. 235)

Spenser's graphic retelling of the description of Irish people left to starve to death in an earlier rebellion (Spenser, 1679, p. 235) shows how his devotion to further the English cause gradually deprived him of his humanity. Viewing Spenser as an amorous and ambitious English poet without analysing his *A View of the Present State of Ireland* illustrates a selected view on national poets that produces a polished interpretation of the Early Modern English poet. Thus, the nationalism of Sidney's circle including Spenser were actually far from the romanticised notions of 19th and early 20th century critical tradition, on which most of the pedagogy of the philological education still relies.

Conclusion

Sidney and his patronee Spenser have been considered as the forerunners of English literature that asserted the dignity of the national tongue through outputs of national literature.

Yet, what was and what was not national was a multi-layered question in Early Modern England. Religion, sectarianism, race, customs, geography, bloodlines, social rank and both domestic and international politics were important markers of difference, which defied any concept of a unifying nationalism reduced by critics to Anglican Protestantism. What is more, theories and practices about national literature did not meet, as they were affected by socio-political differentiations of estate divisions: the aristocratic aesthetics of Sidney and his protégé Spenser were far from the realities of popular literature favoured by the commons. Despite their central position within the English literary canon, Sidney and Spenser's views on nationalism and national literature were taken into consideration neither by the majority of the population nor by the holders of power in Elizabethan England. Therefore, to have a holistic view of both Sidney and Spenser's perception and reception of nationalism and their place within Early Modern English literature, their non-canonical works should also be consulted and taken into consideration.

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