

## The Poetic Theory of Philip Sidney\*

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1. The publication of *The Apology for Poetry*
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### [Abstract]

The aim of this paper is to review poetic theory of the English Renaissance, mainly focusing on Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*. The *Apology for Poetry*, which is known as the most brilliant piece of aesthetic writing in the Renaissance, reveals the pivotal debate on the existence of literature of the times. The book not only defends the value of poetry but suggests Sidney's poetic theory not as imitating nature but as creating nature. More important is that Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* is not just a comprehensive synthesis of the poetic theory that takes its origin back to the Classicism. But the book also gives a strong influence on the ideal prototype of poet that the Romantic writers would have envisaged. Among the Romantics, especially Coleridge's concept of creative imagination is analogous to Sidney's wit and his notion of *natura naturans*, found not in created nature but in creating nature, is similar to Sidney's idea of second nature. Although the idea of creative imagination flourishes in the Romantic period, it is Sidney who opened the way for the growth of human creativity in English Romanticism. Thus it can be said that

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English Romanticism can draw its theoretical and philosophical justification on critical theory from the foundation of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*.

Key Words : Philip Sidney, *The Apology for Poetry*; Coleridge, Renaissance, imagination, poetic creativity, English Romanticism

## 1. The publication of *The Apology for Poetry*

Sir Philip Sidney's idea of poet as creative maker occupies a central position not only in his time but in the history of English literary criticism. Sidney's *The Apology for Poetry*, also known as *The Defense of Poetry*, presents his comprehensive philosophical thought on poetic theory. The poetic theory that *the Apology for Poetry* represents distinguished Sidney's poet from that of his previous and contemporary critics. More important is that Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* is not only a comprehensive synthesis of poetic theory that takes its origin back to the Classicism. But the book also gives a strong influence on the ideal prototype of poet that the Romantic writers would have envisaged in their heart. As Michael Mack asserts, Sidney transforms the classical ideal of poetry as imitation into something the world had not seen, a theory of poetic creativity (6).

Some critics, on the other hand, questioned the originality of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*. Joel Spingarn, a representative traditional Sidney scholar, who doubted the originality of Sidney's idea in *the Apology for Poetry*, sees Sidney as "a major importer of Italian literary theory" (Mack 11). More recently, a postmodern critic Margaret W. Ferguson, who interprets *The Apology for Poetry* as a work of quasi-autobiographical allegory, suggests Sidney's *Defense of Poetry*

is really a defense of himself (Mack 13). While admitting that Sidney's *Apology* is an amalgamation of all the literary tradition, S. K. Heninger, Jr, speaks of Sidney's work as "marking significant node in our cultural history" (Waller 36).

On the other hand, Meyer Abrams wants to find Sidney's poetic creativity in his famous book *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Finding that the poet's mind is adequately characteristic neither as a mirror nor as a lamp, Abrams argues that the poet of Sidney's *Apology*, though not yet creative by romantic standards, is practicing an art that does more than imitate nature (Mack 14-5). One step further from Abrams' point of view, Michael Mack, a recent Sidney scholar, thinks that the "*Apology for Poetry* presents an idea of creativity that is, even today, original" (16).

My starting point is relying on Mack's approach. Following Mack's suggestion that Sidney's poet is not an imitator but a creative maker, this paper first discusses Sidney's critical theory in the Renaissance period from the point of representation, not of imitation. Furthermore, my aim is to trace the origin of the poetic creativity of Romanticism back to Sidney's idea of poet. In conclusion, I want to suggest that English Romanticism can draw its theoretical and philosophical justification on critical theory from the foundation of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*.

## 2. The Debates on Literature in the Renaissance England

Sir Philip Sidney lived at a time when the European Renaissance

movement was introduced to England. It is generally known that the Renaissance was one of the most significant in European history because it effected a change in man's attitude towards the problem of human existence. Not only in the history of politics but also of literature, the Renaissance is a turning point in the history of western society. The term 'Renaissance' was borrowed to describe the cultural transformation that spreads from Italy to the entire Europe around the sixteenth century. To put the term in literary world, the Renaissance is "the revival of antiquity in literature" (Fowler 30), in other words, the rediscovery of the ancient classics of Greece and Rome.

The Renaissance produced a number of books about literature. The revival of Greek and Latin literary forms was actually a literary development in Europe. In northern Europe, the literary Renaissance was allied with efforts to achieve moral and social reformation, and there was a great emphasis on popular education (Copleston 209). Especially in England, the scholarly debate on the value of literature and its role of education was highly culminating. The Renaissance in England was followed by a strong moralistic reaction against the growth of literature. From ancient times poetry was considered as potential menace to the education of children and public morality. The first and most influential of these attacks was initiated by the philosopher Plato who expelled poets from his ideal city. For Plato, poets were liars who merely imitated vice in their poems, as clearly evidenced in his *Republic*. Reinterpreting and relying on Plato's attack on poet and poetry, some of the sixteenth century England scholars think that the contemporary English poets are seductive demolishers of moral and public education.

First, Roger Ascham attacked secular England drama on moral ground in his *Schoolmaster*, published in 1570. Especially, Ascham,

who wanted to indicate the importance of humanist teaching, regards secular love-poetry and erotic stories as vicious because those texts are not based upon humanist curriculum. As Maslen says, followers of Ascham might well have suspected that writing poetry was merely a prelude to producing still more controversial texts (24). The most significant among the Renaissance England scholars who questioned the value of literature is Stephen Gosson. As a successor to Ascham, Gosson published *The School of Abuse* (1579) in which "he called the poet father of lies" (Selden 473). Like Ascham, Gosson thinks that one of the most dangerous aspects of English poetry is its moral complexity. Moral lessons, he argues, should be clear and simple, since the human mind is simple; there can be therefore no justification for communicating the truth through a web of falsehoods, as the poets claim to do when they state that their fictions convey valuable lessons to their readers. Poetry is the product of idleness and encourages only idleness in its recipients (Maslen 22).

You are no sooner entered the school of abuse but liberty looseth the reins, and gives you head, placing you with poetry in the lowest form: when his skill is shown to make his scholar as good as ever twanged, he prefers you to popping, from piping to playing, from play to pleasure, from pleasure to sloth, from sloth to sleep, from sleep to sin, from sin to death, from death to the devil. (Herman 27, *Ibid*)

Gosson's puritan assault aims directly at contemporary English drama and theater. But he also questioned the value of classical poetry itself. He uses Plato as his ally "in claiming that poetry is mostly a waste of time, and not all that entertaining either" (Hulse 53). He also agrees with Plato's charge that poets appeal to humanity's worst

instincts. In this sense, Plato's attack on poetry is strongly echoed in Gosson's *The School of Abuse*. For Gosson as for Plato, poets are traitors to the entire nation, preparing ground for England's surrender to its hostile neighbours (Maslen 22).

On the contrary, there have been strong efforts to defend of poetry. The first reply to Gosson's *School of Abuse* came from Thomas Lodge. Lodge instantly responded to Gosson with his own *Defense of Poetry*(1579), saying that "I reason not that all poets are holy, but I affirm that poetry is a heavenly gift, a perfect gift, then which I know not greater pleasure" (Blamires 54). Lodge turned to the classical defender on poetry to refute the charges of Gosson. He, for instance, cites his translation of Horace's *Art of Poetry* to prove that poetry, contra Plato, is the cause, not the enemy, of political stability. The poets, Lodge asserts through Horace, laid the foundation for all laws, both moral and civil, as well as religion (Herman 29). Except Lodge, William Webbe is another defender of poetry in this period. Although Lodge directly and instantly responds to Gosson's charge of poetry, his persuasion mainly rests on the arguments of classical theories. Lodge's defense, as Mack suggests, is "purely conventional, possessing none of easy erudition or synthetic originality" (9).

Most importantly, the best-known Elizabethan defender of poetry is Philip Sidney. Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* is known as "the most brilliant piece of aesthetic writing of the Tudor age" (Hulse 53). But the motif and intention of the publication of *Apology for Poetry* is a little controversial. As many critics agree, Gosson's book might have stimulated Sidney into writing down his own thoughts on the value of poetry. Written around 1580, the work was simultaneously printed in 1595, under the title of *Defense of Poetrie* as well as under an alternative title of *the Apology for Poetry* (Hulse 55). It is generally

acknowledged that Gosson dedicated *The School of Abuse* to Sidney, and this led Sidney to make an instant refute to Gosson's attack on poetry. As Blamires admitted, indeed Gosson's importance in English literature derives entirely from the fact that his book is believed to have provoked Sir Philip Sidney to write his *Defense of Poesie* or *Apology for Poetrie*, published in 1595 but probably written soon after Gosson's book (55).

I think Sidney's purpose to publish *The Apology for Poetry*, however, is aimed not just to refute Gosson's attack on poetry, but to make a comprehensive theory of poetry in the Renaissance England. Margaret Ferguson pays close attention to the two titles of Sidney's book. Ferguson points out that each title has its appropriateness, since the title of *Defence* better indicates Sidney's rejection of the external attacks on literature, while the title of *Apology* better indicates Sidney's response to the internal critique. Ferguson identifies the *Defence* as a response to three threats: the threat to imitation posed by the factual truth of external reality, the threat from morality as expressed by Stephen Gosson and others who see literature as disruptive to the state, and the threat posed to literature by itself through its power to inflame the passions (Hulse 55, Ibid).

The literary critical attitudes between Gosson's *Abuse* and Sidney's *Apology* are quite different, but it is interesting that the two books have some aspects in common. Like Gosson, Sidney argues that ideal poetry should be simple and easily understood, and that it should not encourage its readers to confuse good with evil (Maslen 26). But denouncing the contemporary poets of England, both think that the current state of English literature, especially poetry and drama, has fallen into disrepute. Sidney agrees with Gosson that the wrong sort of poetry is dominant in his own country, and that bad poets have been

complicit with the recent decline of England as a military power (Maslen 27). Arthur Kinney has argued that Sidney responded parodically to Gosson in order to disguise the significant similarities between his and Gosson's views of poetry (Matz 60, Ibid). Sidney's and Gosson's texts share the conviction that they are being written at a time of crisis in England's national identity, when England stands on the verge of losing its independence either to foreign powers or to foreign cultural values (Maslen 3).

Although Sidney shares his view with Gosson that poetry's reputation in England is so low and contemporary poets abuse their poetry, *The Apology for Poetry* transcends *The School of Abuse* both in its literary achievement and influence. As Bates points out, the *Apology* contains Platonic and Aristotelian doctrine of philosophy as well as the influence of Horace. By combining these three influences, together with that of Christian religious thought, Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* offers the most rounded and comprehensive synthesis we have of the Renaissance conception of the aim and function of literature. By admitting that *The Apology for Poetry* is partly as an answer to Gosson the book presents a larger synthesis of Renaissance ideals than do other critical works (Bate 78). In this sense, *The Apology for Poetry* is considered as "the century's acclaimed poetics" (Matz 20).

### 3. The Poet in *The Apology for Poetry*

Sidney's *Apology* begins with his definition of poetry as "the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges."<sup>1)</sup> And then,

he compares poetry with the two rival sciences, history and philosophy.

So that truly neither philosopher nor historiographer could at first have entered into the gates of popular judgements, if they had not taken a great passport of poetry, which in all nations at this day, where learning flourisheth not is plain to be seen; in all which they have some feeling of poetry. (83)

Sidney's statement that poetry has served as a great passport to other sciences clearly indicates the distinctive existence of poetry. As Bate suggests, poetry is often the cause or incentive in creating a written language, thus making other studies and sciences possible. Moreover, according to Sidney, it is poetry that first opens the untamed wits of stony and beastly people by presenting a knowledge of men and their actions, and by arousing the curiosity and imagination to take note of this knowledge (Bate 79).

Sidney's defense of poetry over history and philosophy is focused on not only the debates on poetry in his days but also the long standing quarrel first initiated by Plato. To solve the controversial and posit the excellence of poetry over all sciences, he develops his argument about poetry by relying on some general doctrines from philosophy. Defining poetry as an effective presentation of general truth, he supports his argument of poetry by turning to both Plato and Aristotle. Although Plato, who banished poet from his ideal society, thinks of poetry as a false information of knowledge, Sidney reversely accepts Plato's

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1) Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry: or the Defence of Poesy*, Ed., R. W. Maslen (New York: Manchester UP., 2006), P. 82. Hereafter all passages quoted are from this book.

philosophy as a whole rather than his special remarks on literature. In addition to Plato's philosophy, Sidney also heavily depends on the Aristotelian theory of poetry. That there is a branch of learning sovereign over all the rest, that poetry is superior to history, and that poetry contains a philosophical element,—such were the cardinal truths which Sidney learned from Aristotle (Cook xxxvii). Thus, Sidney's doctrine of poetry is especially founded upon Aristotle's teaching and Plato's spirit.

Sidney's defense against the threat to poetry and the threat from poetry centres on his definition of imitation (Hulse 54). Borrowing the term mimesis from Aristotle, Sidney defines poetry as a speaking picture in his *Apology for Poetry*:

Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word mimesis—that is to say, a representation, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight. (86)

Here, we have to focus on the meaning of mimesis. Traditionally, imitation refers to a passive interpretation of poetic writing. Although he borrows the term from Aristotle that poesy is an art of imitation, Sidney gives a vivid and creative reinterpretation on it. The philosophical term representation takes the place of imitation for Sidney. As Mattison says, the term representation or figuring forth suggests not a passive and static but "a three-dimensional, active image" (2). In this sense, Sidney's representation is direct opposition to Plato's belief that a representation is always a false promise. And also, he clearly has in mind something more than Aristotelian imitation (Mack 5). As Kinney suggests, poetry bridges ideas and reality;

Platonism and Aristoteleianism are irrevocably merged through the poetic art of choosing right images (345).

Sidney's argument of representation is directly concerned with his idea of poet. As poetry is superior to philosophy and history, this definitely means that the poet is positioned as superior to the philosopher and historian. First, he compares the poet with the philosopher and historian.

The philosopher therefore and the historian are they which would win the goal, the one by precept, the other by example; but both not having both, do both halt. For philosopher, setting down with thorny arguments the bare rule, is so hard of utterance and so misty to be conceived, that one that hath no other guide but him shall wade in him till he be old, before he shall find sufficient cause to be honest. For his knowledge standeth so upon the abstract and general that happy is that man who may understand him, and more happy that can apply what he doth understand. On the other side, the historian, wanting the precept, is so tied, not to what should be, but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that his example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore a less fruitful doctrine. Now doth the peerless poet perform both: for whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, he giveth a perfect picture of it in someone by whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he coupleth the general notion with the particular example. (90)

For Sidney, the important rivals to the poet are the philosopher and the historian. The former teaches precept without example, the latter example without precept. The philosopher has wise precepts, if only anyone could understand them. The historian has the fact, if only they added up to something. The philosopher, in other words, is less effective in inspiring virtuous action because he is too difficult to

comprehend: "happy is that man who may understand him, and more happy that can apply what he doth understand. As for the historian, he is bound to report what happened, not what should have happened: he is so tied, not to what should be, but to what is, and so, his example draweth no necessary consequence (Herman 31).

Suggesting that both are fundamentally flawed, Sidney continues to argue that "Now doth the peerless poet perform both: for whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, he giveth a perfect picture of it in someone by whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he coupleth the general notion with the particular example" (90). According to Sidney, the poet blends the universal that belongs to the philosopher with the particular that belongs to the historians. Thus, the poet can combine the strengths of both the philosopher and historian. It is the poet who "coupleth the general notion with the particular example," creating vivid pictures in our minds. This alone is a form of language capable of making things happen in the world, creating imitations with such force that the audience determine to imitate those imitations (Hulse 56-7).

Consequently, for Sidney only the poet wins the prize. The poet wins by providing both the philosopher's precept and the historian's example in his perfect speaking picture. Sidney concludes:

I conclude, therefore, that he excelleth history, not only in furnishing the mind with knowledge, but in setting it forwarding to that which deserveth to be called and accounted good; which setting forward, and moving to well-doing, indeed setteth the laurel crown upon the poet as victorious, not only of the historian, but over the philosopher, however in teaching it may be questionable. (94)

Sidney's description of the poet is well announced in the above sentences. The poet has a more effective force for good than the historian and the philosopher. As Sidney suggests, "since the end of all earthly learning is virtuous action"(88), he insists that poet rather than historian or philosopher can serve this end. Thus, as Sidney's poet is superior to philosopher and historian, he is able to produce the Platonic ideal world with using the Aristotelian doctrine of imitation. This concept of poet will be strongly illustrated later by the Romantic poets.

#### 4. Sidney and the English Romantics

To clearly understand the poet's imitative ability presented in the *Apology*, we have to turn to the term mimesis, representation, again. As Sidney said before, poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word mimesis—that is to say, a representation, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight (86). According to Sidney, poets imitate, or represent, to teach and delight for its reader. In other words, the poet feigns notable images of virtues, vices, or what else; he teaches, delights, and moves his readers, drawing them in by delighting them so that they learn from these idealized images and are moved to imitate the good and shun the bad in their own lives (Alexander xxvii). The following suggestion by Sidney clarifies the object and nature of poetry as art of imitation.

For, as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to

be worthy, and informs with counsel how to be worthy. (99)

This passage strongly suggests the active interaction of representation between poet and reader. As Mattison says, we cannot understand the represented things and actions without considering their role in the process of moving the reader that Sidney identifies as so important. Representation's purpose is never mere documentation, it is the excitement of an image in someone else's mind (32). The representation of a mental image of a poet will induce a representation in the behaviour of his audience. Thus, the poet has a power not only to imitate the virtue and lofty image but also to implant this image in reader's mind, inspiring his reader to imitate the virtue in his fictional hero. In this sense, Sidney's concept of poet refers not a imitator but a maker.

As Sidney himself said, the Greek term poet means maker. Properly called 'makers', these poets 'make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach: and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from stranger, and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved (Trimpi 194). The poet not only makes things, but he makes things happen. The poet is not just a fabricator of imaginary objects but a shaper of people, who works on his readers' minds and through these on the societies they inhabit (Maslen 43). As Sidney comments, poets are at once makers and seers (although such ideas had once separated Greek thought from Roman) because the poet is a visionary in order to make something (the poem, or work of art) and the maker to make anything must be a visionary (Kinney 345). Most importantly, Sidney's idea of poet is not confined to a mere maker of material world. Transcending this secular nature, he can create another nature in his fictional world

like God.

Only the poet, disdainful to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set froth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done: neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden. (85)

The passages quoted above strongly suggest Sidney's idea of poet as creator. All other arts, Sidney writes, derive from nature and have nature as their object. But the poet's relationship to nature is fundamentally different. Sidney argues that poetry alone among the arts does not just copy or improve nature, but makes something independent of nature that supplants and surpasses nature (Hulse 56). The poet can make things better than nature. He can not only go hand in hand with Nature but create another Nature because he is freely ranging with his own wit. And here, what is more important is Sidney's idea of "wit".

Sidney's use of wit in his *Apology* is a crucial concept to understand his poetic faculty. As Krieger suggests, the poet's own wit is no longer a realm of arbitrary subjectivity. It is identical with the Platonic ideal world. Thus the poet, in growing "another nature," produces a better world than nature does (76). One step further from Krieger's view, Michael Mack insists that Sidney's concept of wit is identical with the

imagination that belongs only to Romantic poets. Although the word imagination does not appear in the *Apology*, the idea is virtually present in the sixteenth-century notion of wit that Sidney employs. In the sixteenth century, it still encompasses both reason and imagination (Mack 15). Thus, in using wit as an important faculty for poetic creativity, Sidney can create "a second nature"(86), created by the poet in an analogous to God's creation of the world.

What is more significant, however, is that Sidney's creative poetic theory gives strong inspiration to the Romantic poets of the nineteenth century. Few Sidney scholars have focused on the meaning of wit in *Apology* and its relation with Romanticism except for Mack. Examining Sidney's belief that poet is a maker made in the likeness of the heavenly Maker, Mack suggests that Sidney's idea of wit opened the way to the theory of imagination in Romantic poetry. Among the Romantics, Percy B. Shelley and S. T. Coleridge are the poets whose poetic imaginations owe much to Sidney. It is generally understood that Shelley read Sidney's *Apology* before producing his own book *A Defence of Poesy*. Shelley's definition that a poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one echoes in Sidney's view of poet. Defining poetry as "the expression of the imagination," Shelley saw himself as Sidney's heir (Krieger 78).

Coleridge has much more indebted to Sidney. The poetic imagination that Coleridge uses derives from Sidney's poetic theory. In his famous book, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, which traces the origin and development of poetic creativity in Romanticism, Abrams argues that Sidney introduced the concept of poetic creativity in English criticism. Admitting that Sidney's poet grows into another nature, Abrams qualifies Sidney's theory as a theory of poetic creativity. But he also argues that the poet of Sidney's *Apology* is not yet creative by

romantic standards by suggesting that "the poet's mind is adequately characterized neither as a mirror nor as a lamp(Mack 14-5)".

Mack, however, identifies Sidney's poetic creativity with the imagination that Coleridge employs. Explaining the development of Sidney's idea of wit, Mack goes much further from Abrams' view. According to Mack's view, "Sidney and Coleridge think of poetry in very similar terms. Both rely on the analogy of God and human beings (31). Sidney already argued that poet does not imitate God's created nature but constitutes a second nature created by the poet himself. Similarly, Coleridge's poet can create another nature using his own imagination. Thus, Sidney's poetic creativity can apply to Coleridge's notion of *natura naturans*, the creating world, rather than *natura naturata*, the created world. In other words, the poets of Sidney and Coleridge make creating nature, *natura naturans*, rather than created nature, *natura naturata*. As Mack argues, "the wit of Sidney's poet contains what Coleridge calls the essential principles of *natura naturans*, and they are crystallized in the poet's "Idea or fore-conceit," which Sidney believes to be the ultimate origin of the poetic work." (33). The following passage suggested by Coleridge shows a clear resemblance to Sidney's idea of poet.

If the artist copies the mere nature, the *natura naturata*, what idle rivalry! If he proceeds only from a given form, which is supposed to answer to the notion of beauty, what an emptiness, what an unreality there always is in his productions, as in Cipriani's pictures! Believe me, you must master the essence, the *natura naturans*, which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man. (Mack 131, Ibid)

As Mack points out, this "bond between nature in the higher sense

and the soul of man" is a more philosophical presentation of the "hand in hand" union Sidney speaks of in the *Apology*. Thinking of the same distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, Sidney speaks of the sensible world not only as the "brazen world" but also as a "second nature." (Mack 132). Clearly, Mack's view is that Coleridge's concept of *natura naturans* strongly resembles Sidney's second nature. Similar to Mack's view, Robert E. Stillman also thinks of Sidney's nature as *natura naturans*. Stillman argues that for Sidney "nature (*natura naturans*) is that great creating force with which the poet walks hand in hand—a speaking picture of the cooperation of the maker and his Maker, the human and the divine" (161). Thus although Coleridge develops his theory of poetic imagination more fully than does Sidney, it is certain that his starting point is based upon Sidney's poetic creativity.

As we have seen, the originality of Sidney's *Apology* is evident in that the book not only proclaims the beginning of poetic theory not as imitating nature but as creating nature. But it also gives a strong influence to the birth of English Romanticism. Thanks to Sidney, the romantics such as Wordsworth, Shelley, and especially Coleridge, found a philosophical and theoretical justification on the concept of poetic imagination from his *Apology*. As Cook sums up, Sidney's fundamental doctrine is true of the highest creative poetry, and in general of the noblest literature produced by the creative imagination, whether executed in verse or prose (xxviii). Thus although the idea of creative imagination flourishes in the Romantic period, it is Sidney who formed a solid foundation for the growth of human creativity in English Romanticism.

[한국어초록]

## 필립 시드니의 시론

구본철

영국 비평사에 있어서, 문학을 단순히 외부 대상을 충실히 그려내는 기준인 모방론의 틀 속에서 평가하려는 관점에서 벗어나, 시인의 창조적 능력이 주체가 되어 새로운 세계를 만들어내는 창조론이 문예비평의 절대적 기준이 되는 시기는 낭만주의 시대이다. 위즈워스와 셸리, 콜리지 등의 낭만주의 작가들은 그들의 전유물인 상상력을 동원하여 플라톤이 주장한 선형론적 철학을 작품을 통해 표현하고 있다. 따라서 영국 낭만주의 이전 시대에서 시인의 선형적 능력을 강조하는 창조론적 시론을 체계적으로 진지하게 논의한 비평가는 없었다.

그러나 르네상스 시대의 대표적 문학가인 필립 시드니가 그의 저서 『시를 위한 변론』에서 제시한 시인의 모습은 낭만주의 시인들의 시론과 상당히 닮아있으며, 특히 콜리지의 창조적 상상력과 흡사한 시인의 능력이 시드니의 이상적 시인에서 이미 나타나고 있다. 이렇듯, 시드니의 『시를 위한 변론』은 문학의 효율성에 대해 고전주의 시대에 서부터 불거진 평가자들의 논쟁을 끝내는 르네상스 시대 최고의 문학이론서 일 뿐만 아니라, 플라톤의 초월적 정신세계가 시로 표현되는 낭만주의 미학의 철학적 정당성을 미리 제시한 비평서가 된다. 이런 점에서, 시드니는 영국 낭만주의 시대에서 활짝 꽃을 피운 시인의 선형론적 정신세계에 씨를 뿌려준 르네상스 최대의 비평가라 할 수 있다.

주제어 : 필립 시드니, 영국 낭만주의, 르네상스, 『시를 위한 변론』, 콜리지, 상상력, 시적 창조성

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