Monograph Precis. The Literacy Affect: Philip Sidney and Early Modern Education

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Article. Pedagogical Affect in the Early Sidney-Languet Correspondence

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Précis: The Literacy Affect: Philip Sidney and Early Modern Education
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The Literacy Affect: Philip Sidney and Early Modern Education, focuses on the literacy education of the celebrated sixteenth-century English courtier and poet Philip Sidney, author of the first English Petrarchan sonnet sequence, the first English prose romance, and participant in the first literary critical quarrel. The book project considers Philip Sidney's attitude toward writing in the context of the slowly evolving transition from scribal to a print culture in late sixteenth-century England, a transition that has been an especially fruitful subject of investigation and critique since the publication of Elizabeth Eisenstein's controversial work. A scribal holdout during the explosion of print culture, Philip Sidney clung to the technology of pen and ink because reading and writing affected him deeply. Sidney's complex emotional response to chirographic inscription was conditioned by the exemplary Erasmian humanist education he received. The famous sixteenth-century aristocratic “stigma of print” arose not only from the grubby indignity of the press, but also because the literacy education of a “perfect gentleman” inculcated strong (though at times confusing) affection for inscription. Sidney's affect can be understood as technological nostalgia, which includes an inevitably frustrated longing for a wholeness scribal culture never actually had. My original readings of Sidney's writings will show elements of the literacy affect throughout: the simultaneous sense that inscribed writing carries a writer's presence in the “hand,” and that it bridges gaps between people, but also anxious doubt about the power of one's writing to articulate the self and to build lasting relationships across distances. As a study of affective concerns aroused in an historical epoch of transition from one dominant medium to another, script to print, this book promotes efforts to develop a deep understanding of our own moment of technological transition, from print to digital.

Book Organization
After an introduction establishing its theoretical and methodological orientation, the book moves chronologically through Sidney's literacy career, starting with family and educational institutions, then to a correspondence begun during his “grand tour,” then to his mature works, mainly in the order they were most likely written.

Introduction: Literacy and Affect
Scholarship in literacy studies and educational history, especially psychoanalytic studies of emergent literacy and compositional theories of literacy as involvement, frame the idea of a literacy affect, a complex set of emotional responses to writing.

Chapter 1: Sidney's Early Literacy Environment
Philip Sidney's unusually literate family environment and the grammar school and university education he received inculcated a set of affective responses to inscribed writing. This literacy affect includes a set of attachments to and frustrations with writing and its role in family and educational relationships.

Chapter 2: Rhetoric and Affect in the Sidney-Languet Correspondence Course
(abbreviated form forthcoming at The Sidney Journal.)

Chapter 3: Monuments of the Self in Others: The Old Arcadia
Renaissance inscription often serves a monumental function: recording the stability of the self. Monumental inscriptions exhibit the humanist paradox that to know oneself is to find that self in others' words. This paradox appears in a surviving artifact of Philip Sidney's literacy environment, a copy of Hall's history of England in which his parents wrote verses drawn from their own humanist education. The paradox of the monumental self is reworked throughout Sidney's Old Arcadia.
Chapter 4: The Psychic Literacy Narrative in *Astrophil and Stella*

(Early form: “Literacy, Education, and Affect in *Astrophil and Stella*” SEL 48,1 (Winter 2008), pp. 45–63.) Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* presents Astrophil's conflicted emotions for a Stella who is both schoolmistress and text. The refracted literacy narrative within Astrophil and Stella reveals mixed feelings about writing including a need for human textual presence and a desire for unity with the "alma pater," a schoolmasterly figure who appropriates maternal nurturance. While learning from schoolmistress Stella how to read and to write her promises self-realization to Astrophil, anxieties over meaning and memory threaten self-loss.

Chapter 5: Process as Product: Philip Sidney's Lingering Incompletes

The unbearable dissatisfaction with his previously completed *Arcadia* that drove Sidney to a wholesale but incomplete rewriting, as well as his inability to complete other projects (the *Psalms*, the translation of Philippe du Plessis Mornay's *On the Truth of the Christian Religion*, and perhaps the early *Certain Sonnets*) are best understood within the framework of the literacy affect.

Conclusion: Technologies, Innovations, Nostalgia

A writer who was hugely influential in the development of English letters because of generic innovations in poetry, prose fiction, and literary criticism nonetheless exhibited a nostalgic attachment to the old technological literacy of humanist scribal culture. Despite his commitment to manuscript presentation and circulation, Philip Sidney became the influential innovator he was because his works appeared posthumously in print. (????)
Pedagogical Affect in the Early Sidney-Languet Correspondence

Andrew Strycharski

As is well known, when Philip Sidney embarked on his European tour in 1572, he met the Protestant humanist diplomat Hubert Languet. They shared the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Day in Paris, likely spent time together in Frankfort, and after Languet was installed in Vienna as the Elector of Saxony's ambassador, he and Philip Sidney began an extended correspondence that lasted past Sidney's return to England in 1575 until Languet's death in 1581.¹

Scholars have long been interested in the intense affection realized in their writing. Steuart Pears, the nineteenth-century editor of the correspondence, remarks that Sidney's letters “are full of the quiet play of a heart overflowing with affection,” a love that “stirred feelings in [Languet] which had long lain slumbering, and called forth many a latent affection in his breast.”² Such a view has been echoed in subsequent years. Osborn, for example, assures us that “the intimate relationship between Languet and his 'foster son,' which their comity of mind had nurtured, requires little comment,” and writes about one particularly fervent passage that Languet's “letter . . . burns with affection.”³ Even scholars who regard the relationship more skeptically focus on its emotional weight. Katherine Duncan-Jones, for example, has spoken of Languet's often “tedious” emotional attachments.⁴ Robert Stillman, charting a via media between Pears and Duncan-Jones, notes the elder diplomat's “loving attentions” as he attempts to fashion Sidney into a leader of international Protestantism, and ultimately

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³ Osborn, Young Philip Sidney, 24, 123.
seems convinced of Languet's “deep, even passionate affection for Sidney.”

Languet's tenderness appears to have been repaid in kind:

This is the 29th letter I have received from you, my dearest Languet, since I came into Italy, and yet I have ever found the last more acceptable and more delightful than any former one. And hence I discover, what I had conceived to be impossible, that my affection for you, which I thought did not admit of increase, has received a great augmentation in this interval of time and space. You are the same person, and your noble genius produces the same fruit as ever; and yet, loving you as I do, I always find, that although your former letters gave me such pleasure as I do not believe our merry friend Pietro found in his history of Pannonia, nevertheless the last are so far superior in this respect, that I fancy I have only sipped the former, while I quaff the latter with the draught of a Saxon.

From a romantic perspective, Sidney expresses immediate intimacy, the heart “overflowing,” to borrow from Pears, onto the page. Yet Sidney's presentation bears curious similarities to a passage from the predominant humanist model for the familiar letter, Cicero, writing to his son-in-law Dolabella:

As you are aware, I have always loved M. Brutus for his fine intellect, the charm of his manners, and his outstanding uprightness and constancy. Yet the Ides of March added so much to my love for him that I was astonished to find room for increase where I had long believed all was full to overflowing. Who would have thought that the love I bore you admitted of any accession? Yet the accession is such that it seems to me as though I only now feel love where formerly I felt affectionate regard.

6 Sidney to Languet, [Padua], 4 June, 1574 (Pears, 70).
7 Cicero to Dolabella, Pompeii, 3 May 44 (371A/XIV.17A). Cicero, Letters to Atticus, vol. 4 (Loeb Classical Library, 1999), 194–7. Given the tyrannomachist principles that Stillman's Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism reveals Languet inculcated in Sidney, the political context of Cicero's letter—namely the assassination
The similarities—surprise at the increase of love, a concluding “previously/but now” comparison—are remarkable. Perhaps a few comments are required after all. Might Sidney have been turning Cicero’s leaves, or the leaves of his commonplace book, as he bit his truant pen, unable to look into his heart and write? Might he even have had a copy of Erasmus’ best-selling epistolary textbook, *De conscribendis epistolis*, to hand, for in the section on “Letters of Friendship,” Erasmus includes this exact Ciceronian quotation among the “Collection of Materials for Letters of Friendship”? What at first appeared as an overflowing heart begins to look like an ingenious schoolboy exercise in imitative amplification.

This essay stakes two central claims about the Sidney-Languet correspondence. First, at least in its early stages, it is a kind of correspondence course. Languet is teaching Sidney how to write, and Sidney puts into practice principles of the *ars epistolica* even while mastering them. Second, a rhetoric of affect structures and informs this pedagogical relationship. Sidney learns how to produce affective humanist epistolary rhetoric; at the same time, this affect motivates the writing. The affect is fictive—constructed and guided by taught structures for articulating feeling—but we cannot therefore dismiss its emotional power or sincerity. Even as Languet leads Sidney through a correspondence course in the familiar letter’s friendly affection, the relationship between pupil and mentor channels the intimacy Sidney learns to write. Focusing on parallels between the advice Erasmus offers in *De conscribendis* and the correspondence’s intimate rhetorical dance will help not only to revisit the relationship between Sidney and Languet, but also to glimpse transformations of affect inspired by humanist teaching.

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9 Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism*, 55, similarly wishes “to challenge the post-romantic assumption that affective experience is somehow diminished rather than enhanced by evidence of rhetorical design.”
“Correspondence Course”

It is generally recognized that Languet, a Huguenot and pupil of Philipp Melanchthon, sought to enlist the promising Englishman Philip Sidney in the cause of moderate, but active, international Protestantism. Robert Stillman's recent work has illustrated just how significant were the “Philippist” ideas and networks to which Languet introduced Sidney. The correspondence, in part at least, serves this religious-political mentorship. Languet supervised Sidney's travels, perhaps retained, as Duncan-Jones speculates, by Philip's kin: his uncle the Earl of Leicester, future father-in-law Walsingham, and father Sir Henry. At a time before the “grand tour” became the finishing school of the English aristocracy, these secular continental travels, though certainly not unprecedented, were unusual. Sir Henry Sidney—a hard-headed administrator who had already gained considerable experience as President of the Council of the Welsh Marches and Lord Deputy of Ireland—surely saw these travels as preparation for a similar diplomatic and administrative future for his children. Languet, as an experienced multilingual diplomat, moderate Protestant, and student of Luther's temperate associate, was ideal for furthering these educational ends. Having won Sidney's confidence during his travels, Languet continued to mentor him in later letters, delivering foreign news, exhorting him to marry, encouraging public activity, discouraging rashness. This combination of friendly affection and political pragmatism characterizes not only these letters, but indeed much correspondence influenced by the humanist revival of the familiar letter.

10 Stillman, Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism, 53–62.
11 Duncan-Jones, Sir Philip Sidney, 71.
12 Edward Chaney argues that increasing Protestant-Catholic tensions delayed the development of the Grand Tour, initiated by Thomas Hoby and his contemporaries in the 1540s, until the later seventeenth century. The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations since the Renaissance (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 77 – 9.
The letters between Sidney and Languet have therefore with good reason usually been addressed from a biographical vantage as a record of Sidney's life and travels, or from a literary perspective to help understand Sidney's artistic and intellectual development. This essay reads them instead as an example of early modern literacy instruction, providing insight into relationships between rhetorical training and affect. Such a focus accords especially with Edward Berry's excellent treatment of the early correspondence as a complex realization of *imitatio*: “As both a personal and literary ideal, friendship with Languet thus involved Sidney in a complex and intertwined series of imitations: of his own 'true' self, as articulated by Languet; of Languet and his father; of Latin styles; and of the ideal of friendship as expressed by Cicero.”

As Berry notes, the early stages of the correspondence, between the fall of 1573 and summer 1575, when Sidney was completing his “grand tour,” were especially focused on writing instruction. After Sidney returned to England, the letters settle into a much more regular, humanist diplomatic correspondence. Earlier epistles, however, are filled with references to composition instruction and with Languet's advice to Sidney on improving his writing. In one of his first letters, Languet is explicit about the purpose of this correspondence:

> I am truly pleased that you again promise to lose no opportunity of letting me hear from you, and that you make so much of your diligence in writing. . . . You will be employing yourself well and usefully, if you practice writing diligently while you are absent from your home, for when you return it will not be in your power: and unless you have acquired the art of writing with ease, you will have lost the principal object of your studies and

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14 Edward Berry, *The Making of Sir Philip Sidney* (Toronto: Univeristy of Toronto Press, 1998), 35. My essay has been influenced by Berry's treatment of the early correspondence. Whereas Berry emphasizes the influence of Cicero's *De amicitia*, however, I focus more closely on Renaissance epistolary instruction. Berry is quite conscious of the tension between convention and emotional immanence in the correspondence. In identifying epistolographic sources for much of its affective structure, I wish to draw the nature of the epistolary affect in the correspondence even further into question than does Berry.
labours.\textsuperscript{15}

As we will soon see, one prescribed way to develop intimate bonds between correspondents is to emphasize the duty of writing to friends, and to complain of personal injuries when a friend fails to write. Languet's point here, however, is not to induce a friend to demonstrate affection by writing. Rather, he encourages writing \textit{qua} writing practice. More than a conversation between friends, Languet makes clear, this correspondence is intended to shape and polish Sidney's Latin literacy. Later, in a letter dated midsummer, 1575, after Sidney has returned to England, Languet returns to the idea that the correspondence has focused on composition instruction. Reflecting on their previous letters, Languet claims, “I was playing \textit{Ludebam} with you then, that I might move you to write, believing that the habit of writing was an important part of your studies. But now you are entering on a far different manner of life.”\textsuperscript{16} He understands that Sidney's duties will often prevent him from writing, and promises to prune the “silly jesting letters,” instead focusing “on public affairs” (95). Languet acknowledges that Sidney, having arrived at the English court, can remove the training wheels and enter the public life for which the correspondence has groomed him.

In the earlier letters, however, Languet's “play” with Sidney partakes of the \textit{ludus literarius}, the Renaissance schoolhouse. Languet might have had several models for this epistolary relationship. T.W. Baldwin suggests that young scholars would often write to their fathers as a rhetorical exercise.\textsuperscript{17} This practice appears frequently in the Sidney family correspondence. Such an epistle seems to have motivated a return letter that Sir Henry and Mary Sidney wrote Philip while he was at Shrewsbury.\textsuperscript{18}

Philip's first surviving letter, written to William Cecil from Oxford in 1569, appears, despite

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 24 December 1573 (Pears, 16).
\item Languet to Sidney, Prague, 1 June 1575 (Pears, 95). Languet's Latin is from Accurante D. Dalrymple, de Hailes, Eq., \textit{Huberti langueti, Galli, epistolae ad Philippum Sidneium, equitem anglam} (Edinburgh, 1776), 116 [sig. P2r].
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
protestations to the contrary, to be a similar performance.\textsuperscript{19} In a letter dated 24 or 25 March, 1578, Sir Henry also prods Robert to write to him in French or Latin while the less studious of the Sidney brothers was in Strasbourg.\textsuperscript{20} Composing letters to parents or to powerful family friends (and potential fathers-in-law) is one way students would use real letters to sharpen or display their skills. But teachers and pupils might also share correspondence to develop the student's writing ability. Baldwin provides a detailed discussion of such a correspondence between Prince Edward and his master, Richard Cox.\textsuperscript{21} Perhaps the most interesting of these pedagogical exchanges, given Erasmus' place as the epistolary theoretician of the Northern Renaissance, appears in Erasmus' letters to Servatius. The intensity of the Dutch humanist's stated affection for his pupil provides an apt model for understanding the pedagogical affect that underwrites the Sidney-Languet correspondence.

In his letters to Servatius, an acolyte in the monastery at Steyn, Erasmus adopts the pose of a scorned lover to plead with Servatius to write. Forest Tyler Stevens notes that scholars often pass over this relationship or try to dismiss it as an exercise while he catalogs the ways Erasmus fills his letters with the same rhetoric that he will later advise as apropos for amatory epistles. When Erasmus at one point writes “you yourself are surely aware what it is I beg of you,” Stevens notes that the clear contextual answer Erasmus then provides, “that you love him who loves you,” has been ignored, dismissed, or, just as deforming, taken as evidence of Erasmus' latent homosexuality.\textsuperscript{22} I would point out, however, that what Erasmus wants from Servatius are letters, for in writing them Servatius would

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{19} “tua beneficia in me . . . faciunt ut . . ad te literas prescribam; quod non eo quidem facio, ut inde queas dijudicare quantos progressus in literis latinies habeam.” [You kindnesses to me impel me to write you a letter, which, certainly, I do not do that thence you might judge how much progress I have made in Latin.] Philip Sidney to William Cecil, 12 March 1569, in Albert Feuillerat, \textit{The Prose Works of Philip Sidney}, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 75 (my translation).
\end{thebibliography}
learn how to write. To the extent that “love” figures “letters,” the vehicle does not vanish into its tenor, but expresses its salient characteristic. Letters represent and inscribe affective bonds between the humanist mentor and his wished-for protégé.

In the last surviving letter, Erasmus indicates that by failing to return epistolary favors, Servatius has made little progress as a writer. He complains that Servatius' style is patchwork of “heap[ed] up expresssions” from models sewn on to his awkward writing “as a crow might do with a peacock's feathers” before admonishing:

Four years have gone by, while you still stick in the same rut, whereas if you had followed our advice at first, you would by this time have come out such a man as might not only equal us in literature but instruct us in return. If you think me unworthy of your intimacy, I do not dispute the matter; only do not run away from me in such a way as to leave your own welfare behind.23

Epistles as exercises and epistles as rich affective expression are not distinct alternatives, but go hand in hand. The affective rhetoric of familiar letters is both what Erasmus tries to teach Servatius, and the bond through which he tries (unsuccessfully here) to structure their pedagogical relationship.

Erasmus is convinced that, had he reciprocated the offered epistolary love, Servatius would have developed his writing more effectively. A more willing pupil than Servatius, Philip Sidney asks Languet for advice about learning to write. “My pen I only practice when I write to you,” he complains, “but in truth I begin to find that by writing ill I only learn to write ill, and therefore I wish you would give me some rules for improving my style.”24 Languet's advice is a humanist favorite—double translation of Cicero.25 Yet, in the Erasmian tradition, Languet warns against Ciceronian idolatry, an

24 Sidney to Languet, Venice, 19 December 1573 (Pears 8).
25 “Take one of his letters and translate it into another language; then . . . shut the book and turn it back into Latin; then
admonition Philip Sidney would later repeat to his brother Robert.26 Furthermore, Languet makes clear that focusing on Cicero is not strictly about verba, but indeed that the res is equally important, for he recommends his letters, “not only for the beauty of the Latin, but also for the very important matter they contain.”27 I want to pursue this emphasis on matter in the tradition of Renaissance epistolary instruction further, and to think about how teaching the “matter” of familiar letters matters when it comes to expressions of affection.

Inventing Affection: De Conscribendis Epistolis and the Sidney-Languet Correspondence

As an example of sixteenth-century humanist epistolary instruction, the Sidney-Languet correspondence inevitably reveals Erasmian influences, and more specifically the practices outlined in De conscribendis epistolis. Part textbook, part teacher’s manual, De conscribendis exerted a powerful influence on epistolary texts across Europe, including in England.28 In the grammar school curriculum (and Erasmus' influence is here massive), epistles tended to be taught at the gateway to the upper forms to introduce theme writing, and Erasmus structures De conscribendis to teach them this way. Themes themselves served as mini-orations, a brief exercise version of the complex argument that was the endpoint of rhetorical education from ancient times. As Roger Kuin has shown, at its best the humanist familiar letter witnesses a productive tension between oration and conversation, the “edge of form.”29

27 Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 1 January 1574 (Pears, 20).
29 Roger Kuin, “A Civil Conversation: Letters and the Edge of Form,” Textual Conversations in the Renaissance: Ethics,
In *De conscribendis* Erasmus, with typical humanist optimism about the precocity of average students, introduces this edge in fifth grade. He identifies various types of letters, suggests how to lead students to compose them, and outlines materials to provide, himself offering sample letters and materials gathered from letter collections. The schoolroom process of teaching letter writing would go something like this: First, the teacher would set up the a full scenario and include background information. One example Erasmus uses is the following: There were two friends, Lucius and Antonius, who enjoyed idle fun and indulgence together in their youth.\(^\text{30}\) After wasting his patrimony, Lucius left, reformed, and is now dedicated to studies. He writes to his friend Antonius to convince him to change his ways. Next the teacher encourages students to think about the proper tone and argumentative strategy, given the sender, receiver, and message, here a persuasive theme. (Do you want to admonish? Do you want to address the issue directly? Might it be better simply to narrate your own change of heart? Should you combine these strategies?) Next would be to choose arguments out of the topics, for example the *topoi* of the honorable, the praiseworthy and the pleasant, that are common for persuasive themes, and which students would have learned in their rhetorical training. Boys might then be sent off to gather material, select their best arguments, and compose the letter. Or, for less advanced students, the teacher would likely recommend matter to them.

Letter writing, then, involves invention strategies for specific scenarios or genres of letters: letters of consolation, letters of accusation, letters of exhortation, self-defense, begging, and so forth. More than that, Erasmus is quite explicit about the generic situations in which friends will often find themselves in their correspondences. Erasmus outlines ways to come up with things to write about, invention strategies, when writing to acquaintances generally, and friends specifically. And his

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\(^{30}\) Erasmus' advice for composing this persuasive epistle (really advice to schoolmasters about how to teach it) can be found in *CWE* 25:29–38.
invention strategies for letters between friends often focus on ways to demonstrate and manage affection.

As Erasmus sets out full scenarios in *De conscribendis* and instructs teachers how to help students develop their epistles, so Languet presents a living scenario to Sidney and guides his literary production by prompting matter that would likely have been familiar from Sidney's schooldays. Languet's letters often seem to incite a response in kind, which makes sense if he is teaching through advice and through example the art of letter writing. At one point, Languet explicitly explains the process: “I shall now and then sport with you in such letters as the ones which aroused you, in order to give the opportunity of exercise in writing letters of a versatile sort, as you refute my complaint or in turn make complaints about me. This kind of exercise is thought to be most beneficial.”

I will now illustrate this process by turning to an early instance in the correspondence of a complaint/apology pair, one of the common genres of friendly exchange, and specifically the complaint about failing to write. After cataloging several other affective strategies, I will then spend some time on a consolation that Sidney wrote—a letter that both demonstrates his growing rhetorical sophistication and maps some of the complex emotional terrain of these letters—before concluding with thoughts about a pedagogical affect that structures not only these letters, but perhaps Sidney's subsequent attitudes toward writing.

Erasmus comments that there are frequent causes for complaints and apologies between friends, and identifies common complaints as: remissness in writing, not carrying out instructions, thoughtlessly revealing secrets, problems with letters, not consulting a friend in a serious matter, or underestimating a friend's good will by concealing the need for help (CWE 25:214–15). In all of these cases, a level affection and attachment is the basis for the complaint, a sense that an intimacy that has

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31 Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 1 January 1574. Qtd. in Berry, *The Making of Sir Philip Sidney*, 36.
been violated by the friend's behavior. Erasmus' first example of the complaint/apology types is a pair of letters, the first bearing the accusation of not writing frequently enough and the second a defense that the recipient has written but could find no one to carry post. As the least intimate of the friendly complaints, grumbling over a friend's dilatory correspondence both presumes familiarity and promotes the frequent epistolary exchange that would develop deeper intimacy.

This complaint appears frequently in Languet's letters, including and early one in which he accuses Sidney of carelessly failing to write on his journey from Vienna to Venice. Erasmus' advice for complaints is that “We shall condemn the omission itself, but excuse the intention as far as possible. We shall say that we wonder what the reason was, but would rather believe anything other than that he was remiss in his duty as a friend” (CWE 25:210). Erasmus' sample letter warns against trying the old excuses about having no time or lacking a letter carrier, yet adds that “I would rather make any conjecture than suppose you have been remiss in your duty” (CWE 25:211). Languet mixes these elements and feeds Sidney material for response in his accusation:

I did not desire a laboured letter, only a word or two, as, “this day we arrived here in safety,” or the like. You remember how earnestly I begged this of you when you were leaving me. But you will say, “it matters little to you whether you hear or not; when I arrive at Padua or Venice, then I will write to you.” You might have done both, and if you had, I should have thought myself greatly obliged by you. However, I would rather suppose that you have met no one to whom you could trust a letter for me, than either that you disregard your promises, or that your affection for me has begun to fail. That it was strong when you left me, I knew by the tears which hardly suffered you to say farewell. I forgive you this crime, and every other which you shall henceforth commit against me, if

32 See CWE 25: 210–1, 214 for these sample letters.
you will only be careful not to let your thirst for learning and acquiring information, lead
you into danger.\textsuperscript{33}

Languet gives Sidney specific arguments to rebut (e.g., you will say it doesn't matter to you whether
you hear or not), hands him a conventional excuse (about not finding anyone to carry post) and refers
to the affection which Sidney had shown and which he assumes hasn't been lost, all following
Erasmian precedent.

Sidney's response follows Erasmian advice while picking up the threads Languet has left. An
apology to a friend, Erasmus says, must do three things: rebut the complaint while showing we are
appreciative, repel the suspicion, and provide convincing explanations to clear ourselves (CWE
25:214). Erasmus' apology letter writer protests an enduring affection before insisting that letters he
sent didn't get through and that he could find no one else in whom to entrust one. When Sidney replies
to Languet, he begins by picking up his mentor's language: “Nay, but I do not say 'it matters little to
you whether you hear or not,' for I am well aware how that 'love is full with anxious fear.'” His protests
of honesty show how conventional he recognizes is his excuse: “But this I will say, and say with truth,
that I met literally no one who was going toward Vienna.” Sidney then defends himself against the
accusation that his affection has slackened, and, again mirroring the Erasmian example, defends his
own character. Erasmus' defendant claims not to have been beguiled by new friendships nor so puffed
up with success as to value his friend less. Sidney defends himself as not being so boyishly foolish nor
womanishly inconstant nor brutishly ungrateful as to fail to hold fast his friendship or to allow his
affection to slacken.\textsuperscript{34}

I do not mean to suggest that Erasmus' text was a unique source for ideas in a unique

\textsuperscript{33} Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 19 November 1573 (Pears, 1–2).
\textsuperscript{34} Sidney to Languet, Venice, 5 December 1573 (Pears, 3–4).
correspondence, but rather to assert that as a typical humanist epistolary treatise (indeed prototypical), it demonstrates typical strategies for expressing affection which are deployed in a typical manner as Languet leads Sidney into more sophisticated compositional skills. Other kinds of accusation/apology pairs appear in the correspondence, often on themes Erasmus identified as common between friends. There are later exchanges that again focus on failing to send letters, and one mark of Sidney's growing compositional maturity appears when he initiates complaints against Languet rather than just responding.\textsuperscript{35} The topics that the two address, however, are both appropriate to their particular situation and unspontaneous. These are taught and learned ways to present or defend one's love.

To claim that these kinds of affective expression are taught and learned does not turn them into mere technique and empty them of affective power. It does, however, require revising a romantic notion of “love” or “affection” as immanent realities existing independently of their “expression” or of the material medium, here \textit{litterae} (both epistles and inscribed symbols encoding words) responsible for facilitating affective bonds. Lorna Hutson has argued that humanists revised the feudal system of symbolizing the pledge of fealty through material symbols, rings or other tokens, with an amity developed in the exchange of texts. Texts significantly transformed relations, however, because texts themselves suasively articulated the terms of friendship and, Hutson argues, thereby introduced rhetorical instability into these relationships.\textsuperscript{36} Yet one factor mitigating this instability is conventionality, which permits both routinization and individual ingenuity. Drawing on object relations psychoanalysis, Anthony Giddens has emphasized the importance of routines in developing

\textsuperscript{35} Sidney eases into these complaints. His first move in this direction appears in a letter of 26 February, 1574, where he claims to have been preparing a remonstrance with Languet for failing to write when Languet's letter arrived (Pears, 40). Next is a humorous complaint on 29 April 1574 in reply to Languet's joking attack blaming the English for the fact that Sidney has failed to write (Pears, 53–54). His apologetic strategy, in other words, is counterattack.

the trust necessary for creative involvement in the complex, risky, open-ended modern world.\textsuperscript{37} If early modern humanist friendship, as Hutson suggests, is more complex, risky and open-ended than its aristocratic feudal counterpart, the affective routines of epistolary friendship themselves contribute to an environment of secure attachment and trust from which creative engagement, which includes rhetorical risk-taking, is made possible. Roger Kuin, making a similar point, argues that the formal rhetorical advice of \textit{De conscribendis} does not restrict but rather enables authorial freedom by cultivating an urbane \textit{ethos}, “there is . . . no contradiction between his stressing of freedom and this insistence on rhetoric. . . . Rhetoric . . . is the instrument for the training of instinct, in its strict considerations to be left behind upon the maturing of personal civilization and taste.”\textsuperscript{38} What Sidney learns so well in this correspondence is how to express conventional ideas in unique ways, ways that fit his personality, the situation in which he writes, and the developing relationship between Languet and himself. His Latin may rarely achieve that elegant unbalanced parallelism characteristic of Ciceronian eloquence, but in learning to invent conventional matter, \textit{res} as much as \textit{verba}, he certainly learns more than to sew peacock feathers on a crow. This developing literacy is firmly rooted in a social relationship, creating affective bonds in the acts of articulating them.

For these reasons, simple conventions can be significant. For Erasmus, the opening of a familiar letter is important for signaling intimacy. The letter, Erasmus says, citing Turpulius for a ubiquitous classical definition, “is a mutual conveyance between absent friends” (CWE 25:20). Arguing against the elaborate formality of the medieval \textit{ars dictaminis}, Erasmus encourages brevity: “enter at once into the middle of the subject, dispense with needless prefaces, use the most telling words, narrate the outcome of a story in such a way that one may infer what went before, and avoid reviewing the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{38}] Kuin, “A Civil Conversation,” 153.
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substance of the letter to which we are replying” (CWE 25:21). So when, as one example among many, Languet begins a letter of 22 January 1574 “I am glad you have decided on going to Padua,” the illusion of an ongoing conversation signals friendship.\(^3^9\) The abrupt opening is especially powerful when combined with a satirical or joking tone, Erasmus providing examples from Cicero such as “Is this the way you abandon your poor old friend” or “My word? Who would have thought you such a hero!” (CWE 25:79). Sidney frequently jokes, as when he begins “Behold at last my letter from Padua! not that you are to expect any greater eloquence than is usually to be found in my epistles,” or, as part of a humorous argument, triumphs, “You certainly have behaved with a good deal of temper, seeing that I sent you so fierce a challenge, and I applaud your meekness.”\(^4^0\)

A careless or disorganized letter, even more than the brief opening, signals intimacy, attachment, even love. Erasmus instructs that when letter writers appear disorganized in their thoughts (even when that appearance comes from skillful insinuation), “we shall say that this aberration follows from the incredible extent of our love, which knows neither limit nor regularity, that our feelings run away with our pen, and that we are beginning again at the point at which we should have broken off, because as we write we seem to be carrying on a conversation with the dearest of friends in his very presence” (CWE 25:75). This commonplace finds repeated expression in the correspondence. Sidney claims, “I hardly know what I have been writing to you, but you will take all for the best, and continue to love me as you have ever done.”\(^4^1\) Languet provides several examples of the carelessness topos, as when he asks Sidney to excuse his informality, because the relief from sorrows that comes from corresponding with Sidney drives him to “write at random any thing that comes into my head” or claims his letters contain “trifles,” his “foolish feelings, which I throw into the paper as they arise only

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\(^3^9\) Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 22 January 1574 (Pears, 25).
\(^4^0\) Sidney to Languet, Padua, 15 January 1574 (Pears, 22); Sidney to Languet, Venice, 28 May 1574 (Pears, 64).
\(^4^1\) Sidney to Languet, Venice, 6 January 1574 (Pears, 16).
to fill it up, and satisfy your curiosity, since you desire to hear from me." 42 Even more powerfully, he
claims in another letter that the grief of Sidney's absence is so powerful that every time he takes pen in
hand he grieves so much that he forgets to write, and so he "will write nevertheless without
arrangement whatever comes into my mind." 43

This last example points to the emotional power expressions of presence and absence have in
cementing the love of correspondents. Erasmus presents an example from Cicero, "Upon my life, my
dear Atticus, neither my house at Tusculum, which otherwise is a favourite sojourn for me, nor even
the Isles of the Blest mean so much to me that I can be without you for so many days" (CWE 25:205).
Languet leads Sidney in a clever exchange based on the idea that the pain of absence can be stirred by a
physical reminder of the person. Among his many sighs over the painfulness of Sidney's absence,
Languet at one point complains that a portrait of Sidney pleases but "renews the pain I felt at losing
you." 44 Sidney cleverly responds, in a letter composed just after his arrival at Padua, that he enjoys the
acquaintance of Languet's friends who are now with him (an implicit analogy to Languet's enjoying the
portrait), but even more is reminded by their presence of how much Languet loves him and takes care
of him without desert. 45 These physical reminders allow the correspondents to demonstrate affection by
emphasizing that letters are a secondary pleasure, an unsatisfactory substitute for the real pleasure of
physical presence, increasing desire without providing the satisfaction of union. "I think it right without
any delay to write you a few words from hence," Sidney comments near the beginning of this letter
(apparently having learned his lesson from Languet's scolding for sending no notice on the road to
Venice), "for your satisfaction and my own, as far as communication by letter can be satisfactory." 46

42 Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 13 May 1574 (Pears, 64); Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 17 July 1574 (Pears, 85).
43 Languet to Sidney, Prague, 10 March 1575 (Pears, 92).
44 Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 1 January, 1574 (Pears, 21).
45 Sidney to Languet, Padua, 15 January, 1574 (Pears, 22–3).
46 Sidney to Languet, Padua, 15 January, 1574 (Pears, 22).
If a correspondence is an unsatisfactory conversation between absent friends, then the letters themselves have a complex, and not entirely stable, role in this conversation. By bearing the weight of an absent friend's presence, epistles become heavily cathected. In his recent study of vernacular familiar letters in the English Renaissance, Gary Schneider identifies epistolary commonplaces that figure physical affection. He points to representations of the body (e.g. the hands, mouth, voice), especially in recognizable gestures of love or intimacy (holding the letter writer in one's hands in holding the letter, hearing the writer's sweet voice, sent letters that long to kiss the recipient). He also discusses the ways “the materiality of the letter . . . commonly represented affect,” such as when writers have difficulty confining their sentiments within a page, or take a letter's brevity as a sign of waning affection. These commonplaces often find a precedent in classical and Renaissance Latin epistolography, as we can witness when Sidney imagines, in the letter cited above, that he has “the very Hubert in my hands and before my eyes.” Such expressions of presence, however, ultimately locate the epistle in an economy of desire. The pleasures letters bring, as Sidney acknowledges, are not entirely satisfactory, and create the need for more letters. “If you love me do not break off your habit of writing,” Languet pleads, “I cannot tell you what pleasure your letters give me.” It is impossible to disentangle this common sentiment from Languet's fulfilling his teacherly duty to spur Sidney to write, or from its potentially frustrating affective urgency. Languet places Sidney in the difficult position of having to manage his magister's affections, compelled to participate in a relationship of loving exchange.

Such compulsion, less direct, appears in an exchange that leads Sidney to produce his first

48 Sidney to Languet, Padua, 15 January 1574 (Pears, 23).
49 Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 1 January 1574 (Pears, 22).
consolation. In a letter of 26 March, 1574, Languet prefaces a long discussion of the religious wars raging in western Europe with a self-pitying lament:

> the lowliness of my station and abilities, as well as increasing age, does not suffer me to be useful either in public or in private, although the will is not wanting. And therefore I fear no danger, since I see that my life is of no good to any one, and that death will but deliver me from the wretchedness in which I live; for what can be more distressing to a man, who has the feelings of humanity, than to be a witness of such crimes, as for 10 or 12 years have been, and still are, perpetrated in my unhappy France and Belgium?\(^50\)

Sidney understands what he is being prompted to produce, and his consolation of 15 April is a rhetorical *tour de force*. Erasmus notes different strategies for the letter of consolation, depending on whether the sorrows are temporary or lasting, and especially depending on the character of the recipient. In this instance, the political troubles to which Languet alludes are long-lasting. Erasmus advises:

> But if the misfortune seems to be one that will last, we shall use other methods of alleviating it. We shall endeavour to show either that it is not really a misfortune at all, or that it is not so serious as it appears. This may be achieved by pointing out in detail, with some amplification, any possible advantages that may result from it. For there is no evil so grave that some advantage may not be reaped from it. (CWE 25:150)

This is clearly how Sidney angles his consolation. Not only does he find the progress of the Huguenots salutary, but, speaking of Belgium, he “cannot see how it could have happened better; for though that beautiful country is all on fire, you must remember that the Spaniards cannot be driven from it without

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\(^{50}\) Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 26 March 1574 (Pears, 42–3).
all this conflagration.”\textsuperscript{51} He explains also how Italy falling to the Ottomans, far from undesirable, is to be preferred because it will remove a “rotten member” while uniting Europe against a common foe, and because Italy's very decadence will contaminate its conquerors.\textsuperscript{52}

Erasmus' example consolatory letters use long lists of historical examples, a convention to which Sidney cleverly alludes and dismisses (thereby allowing the learned Languet to piece such an argument together for himself) with reference to the structural situation that he plays on throughout—a youth consoling a man older, wiser, and more experienced: “What if I should offer you consolation, by citing from remote history examples of other kingdoms, which have not only recovered from a far more desperate condition, but have afterwards mastered the world? My youth and my deficiencies forbid this.”\textsuperscript{53} Though the youth-master rhetorical situation reverberates through the letter, Sidney knowingly splits the consolation for external evils from the private consolation for Languet's stated sense of worthlessness, providing the personal example “that I have derived more advantage from my acquaintance with you, than from all the time I have spent on my travels.”\textsuperscript{54} He concludes this consolation by again brilliantly smoothing over the potentially awkward age-related situation even as he seizes an opportunity to display his own erudition:

But my dear Hubert, do not think it is either arrogance, which I hope is not one of my faults; nor mere loquacity, which, however, Xenophon thought no fault in young Cyrus; but an inclination or rather impulse of my mind that has moved me to write thus much to you: I was desirous to do what I could to relieve you from that distress, which I perceived was somewhat disturbing you; and yet I readily allow that all this simply comes under the

\textsuperscript{51} Sidney to Languet, Venice, 15 April 1574 (Pears, 48).
\textsuperscript{52} ibid. (Pears, 48).
\textsuperscript{53} ibid. (Pears, 47).
\textsuperscript{54} ibid. (Pears, 49).
proverb, Sus Minervam.\textsuperscript{55}

That concluding adage is particularly interesting. A favorite of Erasmus' in \textit{De conscribendis}, he uses it in two of his five example letters of consolation.\textsuperscript{(CWE 25:152, 170)} The second of these instances contains another striking parallel: “Why do I set a sow to teach Minerva? It is not talkativeness but benevolence that makes my letters too long” (CWE 25:170). Excusing the consolation's length as a sign not of loquacity but good will, so close by the adage \textit{sus Minervam}, strongly suggests affiliation between Erasmus' textbook and Sidney's writing. Given that this is an initiatory consolation (Languet will provide plenty of similar opportunities), it would be unsurprising if Sidney were leaning heavily on models.\textsuperscript{56}

Interestingly, Kathy Eden has used the first of those example consolations from Erasmus' text to introduce the argument that Erasmian intimacy arises from a close interplay of epistles and adages.\textsuperscript{57} If Erasmus' consolatory “words do relieve . . . grief,” she writes, “they do so less by rehearsing a predictable argument than by reaffirming a bond between the one who writes and the one who reads—a bond at once rooted in and expressed by the shared philosophical knowledge that allows for appreciation of such proverbial wisdom.”\textsuperscript{58} If a similar intimacy develops in the lament/consolation exchange of Sidney and Languet, a further possibility ought to be contemplated. Just as the material fact of an adage can convey intimacy, so might the joint knowledge of a rhetorical exercise. Kuin suggests that Sidney and Matthæus Wacker enjoy a kind of precocious schoolboy nudge and wink in a letter, filled with Ciceronianisms and overflowing with emotive overstatement, Wacker sent Sidney in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} ibid. (Pears, 49).
\item \textsuperscript{56} Even if there is a whiff of the schoolroom about this performance, the progress Sidney has made in his Latin literacy can be measured by comparing this letter to the awkward and affected display piece, quoted from above (n. 25), he wrote to William Cecil in spring 1568/9, the first of his surviving letters. On this letter to Cecil, see Kuin, “A Civil Conversation,” 156–7.
\item \textsuperscript{57} “Philosophy is the best giver of consolation. . . . Since from the very cradle you have been nurtured on her milk, as we might say, what do I set a sow to teach Minerva or carry owls to Athens?” (CWE 25:152).
\end{itemize}
Sidney and Wacker develop a richer and more playful shared irony than Languet and his pupil ever do (despite Sidney's sometimes painful efforts); yet it is still possible in the initiatory consolation and elsewhere to discern an understanding between them that Sidney, following his mentor's advice, is “practicing writing diligently.”

If Sidney and Languet share not only the intimacy of a proverb they each can identify, *sus Minveram*, but even more share the knowledge that they are engaging in an Erasmian rhetorical exercise, such intimacy would amplify the fact that their exercises in producing epistolary affect simultaneously develop substantive bonds between the two. Indeed, this letter addresses a theme that will continue to appear in the correspondence: the somber outlook for the Protestant cause. Having broached this topic in the initiatory lament/consolation exchange, Languet will continue to tie the grim setbacks for moderate Protestantism to his own depression, bemoaning his political disappointments and shrinking circle of friends: “If any misfortune befall you I shall be the most unhappy of men; for the only thing that gives me pleasure is our friendship, and the hopes I have conceived of your character. For the ruin of my country, and the calamities that have lately befallen my friends, have made my life more mournful than death itself.”

Such sentiments push Sidney to continue working for the Philippist cause of the moderate, confessionally tolerant Protestant followers of Melanchthon. The urgency of that push comes as much from compelling Sidney to manage Languet's loneliness as from direct, avuncular moral encouragement.

**Pedagogical Affect**

Something in the correspondence, then, goes beyond friendship and develops what I would describe as

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60 Stillman, *Poetic Justice*, 33, notes the changing tone of the correspondence as the continental Protestant interests take a downward turn.
61 Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 17 July, 1574 (Pears, 85).
a pedagogical affect. Berry notes that Languet's expressions move beyond the rhetoric of Ciceronian amicitia and into Petrarchism. Raising the question of Languet's homosexual desire to dismiss it as highly speculative, he notes that nonetheless “there is no doubting [the] strength or the degree of pressure Languet's feelings for Sidney exerted upon him at this crucial stage.” An idealized neoplatonic humanist pedagogy may be a better model for understanding this powerful emotional pressure than the post-Freudian “homoerotic[ism]” that Berry finds an uncomfortable fit. Affectively charged intimate relationships between masters and students recur in the theory and practice of Renaissance education, and it is well within the pale of Renaissance humanism to understand these relationships erotically. Erasmus' letters to Servatius try to actuate such eroticism, though the framework groans under the strain of its conventions. Perhaps the most popular model appears in Ficino's De Amore, the Commentary on Plato's Symposium that is more an original dialogo d'amore than commentary. Ficino is at pains to chasten Platonic pederasty, yet presents the relationship between mentor and mentee as lushly erotic:

Lovers exchange beauty for beauty. A man enjoys the physical beauty of a youth with his eyes; the youth enjoys the man's beauty with his mind. The youth, who is beautiful in body only, by this practice becomes beautiful also in soul; the man, who is beautiful in soul only, feasts his eyes upon bodily beauty. Truly this is a wonderful exchange, equally honourable, indeed, to both, for it is equally honourable to learn and to teach. Erasmus in his letters to Servatius replicates this Platonic eros, as does Languet with Sidney. Consider, for example, Languet's letter of request:

And even if things so fall in with my desire, that I may see you once more, I shall not enjoy

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the pleasure long. I foresee what pain I shall suffer in parting from you, and I would gladly find some remedy for it; but nothing occurs to me, unless a portrait of you might perhaps be a relief to me. And though your likeness is so engraven on my heart, as to be always before my sight, yet I beg you kindly to indulge me so far as to send it to me, or bring it when you come back. . . . The sight of your portrait at our friend Abondius', wrought upon me so, that when I came home I wrote these verses, which I send you, though from my youth I have never tried my hand on anything of the kind. I venture to expose myself to your mirth . . . and request . . . that they may be written under the portrait.  

The older man's delight in seeing the youth, the stoic embarrassingly turned sonnet by love, and especially the image of the beloved engraved on the lover's heart, all replicate the structure of pedagogical Platonic eroticism, with Languet as the lover to Sidney's beloved.

Neil Rudenstein, who notes the consistent pedagogical tone in Languet, oddly claims, “Love is of course never mentioned in the Languet correspondence.” He means heterosexual love, the kind of love we might expect Sidney to feel for a young Italian woman, the kind of sexual love that is the subject of the Arcadia and Astrophil and Stella. But another kind of eros permeates the letters, one that puts Languet in a position that combines the advice-dispensing stoic patriarch with a needy, overwhelming, smothering “maternal” figure. Sidney knows that the request for a portrait provides him with the opportunity to write a “response to a request,” and he exercises himself in rejecting Languet's request to write his verses under the portrait, claiming it would be immodest (30). Yet, as we have seen throughout, the epistle as advanced composition exercise and the epistle as carrier of

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64 Languet to Sidney, Vienna, 22 January 1574 (Pears, 27).
complex affection cannot readily be distinguished. Although I think she sometimes underestimates the extent to which the correspondence is a self-conscious exercise, Duncan-Jones usefully identifies Languet’s “effusive declarations of attachment.” The affective bonds created by this correspondence, affective bonds that, again, are both the content of and the motivation for instruction, have a strong “maternal” component. As a “Dutch uncle,” Languet scolds and exhorts, pushing Sidney toward an active life when his protégé descants on the sweetness of leisurely retirement, counseling him constantly to marry; yet his intimacy both nurtures Sidney and threatens him with overwhelming emotional demands.

I suggested earlier that the correspondence decisively shifts tone and purpose around the time that Sidney returns to England and is therefore ready to take the reins of public duty. Languet acknowledges that Sidney is about to do what the correspondence has trained him to do. And yet, the apron strings are not broken as decisively as might at first appear. We noted Languet's letter from the summer of 1575, where Languet claims that he had previously been “playing” with Sidney to move him to write. Languet's insistence in that letter that he expects Sidney will now “write seldom or never,” but that he would be satisfied with just a brief reply, or “if it should not please you to do even this, it would be enough to desire our friend Griffin to write so much to me” might be taken at face value. But it begins to look like passive-aggressive guilt in light of the subsequent letter:

I know it is almost absurd to beg of you, that amid the turmoil of a court and so many temptations to waste time, you will not altogether give up the practice of the Latin language: still as this letter shows what progress you have made in it, and how well you can write when you apply your mind to it, if you cast away the study altogether, I shall be

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67 Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney* 74. I borrow the idea of Sidney's “Dutch uncles,” below, from her, though she does not specifically list Languet among them.
68 Languet to Sidney, Prague, Midsummer 1575 (Pears, 95–6).
compelled to charge you with doing it through indolence and love of ease. See how I repay you for your pleasant letter, by trying to persuade you to undertake a pursuit, which in men of your condition is generally held to mark the absence of common sense.\(^ {69} \) (97–8)

The very “silly jesting” Languet had insisted was behind them reappears. Attaching himself as a perhaps cloyingly permanent schoolmaster, Languet leans on Sidney to keep up the correspondence, to maintain the attachment to his mentor, all so that he can continue to practice writing exercises to enhance his Latin literacy.

**Conclusion**

The early phases of the Sidney-Languet correspondence reflect the constructedness and conventions of the affection the two express, and simultaneously a sense that this affect cannot simply be dismissed as fake or as content-less form. Sidney scholars have often taken the affect in these letters at face value. If what this essay has suggested is correct, it complicates the picture. But to say that it complicates the picture is not to underestimate the real emotional impact of these letters or the effect of that emotion on Sidney's development, especially in his relationship to the writing and learning processes. To glimpse the other side of this logocentric coin, consider what Lisa Jardine has asserted about *King Lear*’s approach to epistolary affect: “As discussed in Erasmian handbooks on letter-writing, the familiar letter structures and organizes feeling so as to manipulate its intensity at a distance and, in the absence of the persons involved, enabling persuasion to a desired outcome.” She continues, “*King Lear* elicits our revulsion towards such efficiency by presenting us with the prospect of a world in which real affection is deprived of instrumentality (the ability to influence the outcome of actions and events) precisely to the extent that a cynically operated technology of affect—of warmth and

\(^ {69} \) Languet to Sidney, Prague, 13 August 1574 (Pears, 97–8).
intimacy generated by letters—debases the heart's expressive resources, leaving 'nothing' to be said." \(^{70}\)

*Lear,* in this view, distinguishes between “real affection,” presumably allied to physical presence, and the “technology of affect” that epistolary instruction allows to be “cynically operated.” Indeed, epistolary technique “debases the heart's expressive resources,” as if without it the full presence of what is already there in the heart can somehow be expressed. This may be true of the ways Shakespeare's play presents the nature of feeling. We should be wary, however, of assuming that the heart's feelings are already sitting there, ready to overflow, and that rhetoric, especially careful rhetorical instruction in the *ars epistolica,* somehow spoils it. There is a middle ground between seeing this correspondence as an education in cynical operations and gazing at two overflowing hearts. The development of this pedagogical relationship over time and distance bonds teacher and pupil, enables them to structure feelings, and suggests both desire in their longing for each other and a potentially frustrating fussiness from Languet. Those desires and frustrations may characterize not only affections between people, but indeed, for Sidney, a relationship to writing itself.

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