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Unveiling Shared Thematic Threads: A Comparative Study of Jamil Buthainah and Sir Philip Sidney^(*)

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a comparative study of two poets from different cultures and eras: Jamil Buthainah, a late seventh-century Arab Udhri poet, and Sir Philip Sidney, an English Elizabethan poet. Based on Jamil Buthainah's *Diwan* and Sidney's sonnets in *Astrophil and Stella*, the analysis focuses on four shared thematic threads: the blamers and slanderers, the portrayal of the beloved, the beloved's eyes, and the speakers' idealization of their love objects. Rather than seeking to identify any influence of one poet on the other, as there was none, this study highlights the poets' similar experiences in love—both were deeply in love but did not marry their beloveds. Additionally, both works exclusively address the theme of the speakers' thwarted love for their women. This paper aims to explore the similarities and differences in how Jamil Buthainah and Sidney loved and expressed their love, examining where their experiences converge and diverge. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the diversity and richness of poetic expression across different ages and cultures.

Keywords: Jamil Buthainah, Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, Udhri poetry, comparative studies, love poetry.



Introduction

Jamil, born around 660 CE, spent most of his life in the Hijaz, the western region of present-day Saudi Arabia. He fell in love with his cousin but he suffered the agony of seeing his beloved, Buthainah, wedded to another man, a torment that haunted him throughout his life. Her marriage was the beginning of ceaseless sorrow, interspersed with fleeting moments of bliss when they stole clandestine meetings. Yet, these encounters angered her family and husband, prompting relentless pursuit by authorities. Harassed and hunted, Jamil was forced to wander from place to place until he ended in Egypt where he died in 701. Jamil as poet-lover composed his poetry on his thwarted love which is the only theme of his verses. Jamil b. Ma'mar, the most celebrated among the Udhri poets, was so deeply infatuated with his beloved Buthainah that he is commonly known as Jamil Buthainah, suggesting that his very name signifies his devotion to her. "His obsession for Buthainah seems to swallow up half his name, to the exclusion of the expected indications of his place of origin, his tribe, or perhaps what attributes he embodies" (Serrano, 2018, 157).

Udhri poetry is a genre of Arabic love poetry known for its themes of unfulfilled love, longing, and the suffering of the lover. The name 'Udhri' comes from the tribe of Bani Udhra, to which Jamil belonged. This tribe was known for its passionate and often tragic love stories. Udhri poetry typically depicts a love that cannot be realized, often due to societal constraints or tribal conflicts. Jamil's poems for his beloved, Buthainah, exemplify this and Jamil is "rightly regarded as the greatest representative" (Jayyusi, 1983, 321) of this genre. In Udhri poetry, the poet often portrays himself as a martyr to love, consumed by his passion and destined to die from heartbreak. As Al-Youssef notes: "intense pain comes before chastity as the primary criterion of Udhri poetry" (32). Unlike the poetry of the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays, which is full of sexually explicit scenes, Jamil's poetry depicts a lover "who no matter where he is can never turn his thoughts from Buthayna, ... it is not pleasure that keeps him pinned in place, but instead the torment imposed by insurmountable separation" (Serrano, 2018, 157). The influence of Jamil and Udhri poetry extended far beyond its time. It inspired many poets in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and



Urdu traditions, solidifying the concept of the all-consuming, tragic love story.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) was an English poet, courtier, diplomat, and soldier during the Renaissance period. He is best known for his significant contributions to English literature, particularly his influential work *Astrophil and Stella*, which is a sonnet sequence exploring themes of love, desire, virtue and unrequited passion. Sir Philip Sidney's contributions to English literature and his role in the cultural and political life of the Elizabethan court have left a lasting legacy. He is considered one of the founders of English Renaissance literature and his work helped to shape the development of the sonnet and other poetic forms. According to Dennis Kay, Sidney is "central to the literary achievement of the Elizabethan epoch" (1987, 41). *Astrophil and Stella* is considered "the most important of Elizabethan sonnet cycles" (Smith, 1952, 142).

'Astrophil' and 'Stella' are derived from Greek and Latin, meaning star-lover and star respectively. The title itself aptly portrays the central theme of the work. Sidney is believed to have fallen in love with Penelope Devereux, but for some reasons he could not marry her and she became the wife of Lord Rich. "Though it makes no difference to the quality of the sonnets whether Stella is Penelope Devereux . . . or an entirely imaginary lady" (Smith, 1952, 152), critics point out that there are external as well as internal evidence that Astrophil and Stella signify Sidney and Penelope. The 108 sonnets and 11 songs which make up *Astrophil and Stella* series provide a record of his love for Stella. Penelope Devereux (1561-1607) was a beautiful and intelligent woman, considered one of the most admired ladies of the court. She was the daughter of Walter Devereux, 1st Earl of Essex, and Lettice Knollys. At the age of 14, she met Philip Sidney, and many believe she served as the inspiration for his famous sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*.

Discussion

This paper delves into the world of love poetry through a comparative study of two seemingly disparate poets: Jamil Buthainah, the late seventh-century Arab Udhri poet, and Sir Philip Sidney, the English Elizabethan poet. Despite the chronological and cultural distances that separate them, there are remarkable similarities in their love experiences and works. Both



poets were deeply enamored, yet their affections remained unfulfilled. Their works solely explore the subject of thwarted love, albeit through distinct artistic and cultural lenses.

By textually analyzing Jamil Buthainah's Diwan and Sidney's sonnets in *Astrophil and Stella*, and given the breadth of potential topics, this paper focuses on four key thematic threads: the blamers and slanderers, the portrayal of the beloved, the beloved's eyes, and the speakers' idealization of their love objects. By highlighting points of divergence and convergence in the way these two poets address these shared themes, we can better appreciate their poetic works and gain a richer, deeper understanding of how cultural and social contexts shape poetic expression.

Blamers and Slanderers

One of the recurring themes in the works of both poets is the presence of blamers and slanderers. This part explores how these figures are depicted, their impact on lovers, and the strategies employed to counter them. This theme is particularly prominent in Jamil Buthainah's poetry, where the impact of slander is deeply personal and vividly portrayed. Many of his lines express his anger, frustration, and suffering caused by slanderers and their relentless efforts to keep him away from Buthainah. In Jamil's poetry, "the blamer . . . is content with blame, reproach, and advice, while the slanderer seeks to fabricate words and spread them for the purpose of gossip; to sever the bonds between lovers and to split their union"¹ (Ibrahim, Ahmed, & Ali, 2022, 159).

Slanderers are usually strangers, while blamers are both strangers and people known to Jamil.

My companions reproached me for you, O Buthainah.

Do not blame me; love has wounded my heart (Jamil, 1967, 33).

It is not only Jamil who fears slanderers; Buthainah, as the following dialogue shows, is willing to meet Jamil but she fears "the eyes of slanderers watching" her.

If you love or desire to meet us in private,

Then set a time and place for us to meet.

Unable to hold back my tears, I said:

¹ Translations of all quotes from Arabic sources are mine



Is there any place more beautiful than this evening's gathering?

She replied: I fear the envying detractors,

And the eyes of slanderers watching me (Jamil, 1967, 79).

Despite the pain he suffered, Jamil did not accept being blamed for his love for Buthainah. To counter slanderers and thwart their attempts to sow discord, they devised an effective strategy: feigning hatred for Buthainah in the presence of slanderers, often referring to her by other names. This strategy, a covert shield against relentless slander, was a decision they both made. As evidenced by one of their important dialogues, Buthainah actively participated in deciding and executing this strategy. In fact, it is Buthainah who requests Jamil not to “reveal [their] secret” and to “keep [his] eyes lowered” if he comes to see her lest their love should be “clear to those who watch.” To make sure that their strategy works, she clearly and firmly asks him to “feign hatred” and he readily obliges and promises to “direct [his] gaze elsewhere” when he meets her. He also promises to “refer to [her] by other names.” In the last two lines of this dialogue, Jamil asserts that they are not the first lovers to follow this strategy, emphasizing its historical and practical significance.

For how often have we seen lovers,

If they fear, they feign hatred when they appear (Jamil, 1967, 92).

In Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, slanderers who attempt to separate the lover from his beloved are absent. However, blamers do appear in some sonnets. While blamers in Jamil's poetry are both strangers and companions, in Sidney's work, the blamers are Astrophil's friends (or those he refers to as friends) and the court ladies. His friends primarily criticize him for his emotional involvement with a married woman, cautioning him about the serious consequences of such an illicit relationship. In Sonnet 14, one of Astrophil's friends warns that...

desire

Doth plunge [his] well-informed soul even in the mire

Of sinful thoughts, which do in ruin end.

Astrophil, just like Jamil, rejects the friend's advice. He already has “pain enough” and the blamer's “rhubarb words . . . grieve [him] worse.” While both Jamil and Buthainah adopt the feigning-hatred strategy to avoid slander, there is not textual evidence of Stella's direct involvement in



encountering Astrophil's blamers. Astrophil refutes his blamer's suggestion that his love is sensual:

If that be sin which doth the manners frame,
Well stayed with truth in word and faith of deed,
Ready of wit and fearing nought but shame:
If that be sin which in fix'd hearts doth breed
A loathing of all loose unchastity,
Then love is sin, and let me sinful be (Sonnet 14).

In sonnet 21, Astrophil listens to his admonisher's criticisms and acknowledges them all. "But it is the acknowledgment of man who agrees because he cannot be bothered to argue the question" (Tucker, 1973, 57). Unlike Jamil, who takes slanderers seriously, Astrophil is unwilling to engage in debate with blamers, he simply retorts with a rhetorical question, "Hath this world aught so fair as Stella is?," suggesting that despite all logical arguments made by his friend, the beauty and allure of Stella make her worth the folly of his infatuation. In sonnet 51, the admonisher's words irritate Astrophil. He is impatient and he directs him sternly to find other people who can bear his "wisdom's heav'nly sway" and "unsuited speech." In sonnet 54, it is the court ladies that reproach him. They think that he is incapable of love because he doesn't follow the conventions lovers usually follow. Astrophil defends himself asserting that he is really not one of those "who in their lips Love's standard bear" and he does not care as long as "Stella know[s] [his] mind." In his love, he argues, he does not adhere to Cupid's prescriptions for love's "right badge is worn but in the heart."

Portrayal of the Beloved

Another important issue tackled in this study is the depiction of the beloved in the works of the two poets. Both Stella and Buthainah are central figures, prominently featured in their respective works. Their physical beauty and character receive special attention, with each poet employing specific poetic devices and conventions to portray their beloved.

Most of the imagery and similes related to Stella's characterisation as a person involve Cupid and his arrows. Stella is depicted as such a beautiful woman that Cupid takes her face as a dwelling place. She attracts Cupid with her "joyful face," "fair skin," and "beamy eyes" which resemble the



“morning sun on snow” (Sonnet 8). Due to her extraordinary beauty, Stella’s heart becomes Cupid’s refuge and her lips become his playground. In sonnet 13, with Stella adorning his head and crest, Cupid is elevated above the other two gods, Jove and Mars. In sonnet 17, Cupid’s power is reignited by Stella’s beauty. Fearing Mars’s love for her is declining, Venus asks Cupid, her son, to strike him with his arrows. Frustrated by her son’s inaction, Venus throws him out and breaks his bows and arrows. Seeing Cupid’s distress, Nature steps in and

Of Stella’s brows make him two better bows,
And in her eyes of arrows infinite.

If Stella’s face is Cupid’s dwelling place in sonnet 8, it is the court of virtue in sonnet 9. Astrophil portrays Stella’s beauty as an architectural masterpiece designed by Nature. Her face is adorned with Nature’s finest elements—gold, alabaster, pearl, marble, and more.

In sonnet 29, Stella strikes a deal with Cupid granting him all the weapons he requires (her eyes, her lips, her breasts, her legs, flesh and skin) to control the land surrounding her provided that he leaves her “life and liberty.” In sonnet 44, though Stella’s kindness is undeniable and “Her heart, sweet heart, is of no tiger’s kind,” her chilling indifference is bewildering. Astrophil seeks to understand this paradox and comes to the conclusion that her brilliant mind, a “heav’nly ... place,” transforms his sorrowful words into “tunes of joy” leaving her blissfully unaware of their true meaning. In sonnet 68, Stella is described as the “World of [his] wealth, and heav’n of [his] delight.”

Jamil’s poetry celebrates the beloved’s beauty, employing a rich array of detailed descriptions of her external beauty and character. Buthainah’s smile is charming and her teeth are “as bright as stars in a dark sky” (Jamil, 1967, 22). They are “slightly spaced,” and the words that emanate from her mouth are likened to “pearls scattered, their string unstrung” (Jamil, 1967, 97). Buthainah is depicted as a woman with “a waist, like a fold of silk, slender and fine” (Jamil, 1967, 134) and “a bosom like a silver gallipot” (Jamil, 1967, 66). She is a corpulent woman with a “lithe waist and plump buttocks” (Jamil, 1967, 58). Her skin is so tender that “water almost grazes her skin when she bathes” (Jamil, *Diwan Jamil Buthainah*, 43). Jamil’s beloved takes pride in her figure. Unlike other women who usually curse the



wind, Buthainah feels delighted when it blows and wraps her clothes tightly around her, accentuating her curvaceous body.

You see the other women cursing the wind when it blows,

But Buthainah rejoices when the wind blows for her (Jamil, 1967, 45).

While Sidney dedicates numerous lines to the description of Stella's lips, Jamil, like other Udhri poets, devotes many lines to the delightful and "sweet" taste of the beloved's saliva. In one instance, he says, "With slightly spaced teeth, if her saliva were used to heal the dead, they would rise from their graves" (Jamil, 1967, 105). Jamil even endearingly addresses Buthainah with names related to her saliva: "Don't you know, O you with sweet-tasting saliva, that I remain thirsty if I do not see your face?" (Jamil, 1967, 223).

It is not only Buthainah's beauty which is exceptional in Jamil's eyes. Her "charm [is] unmatched [and] her dignity [is] unparalleled" (Jamil, 1967, 98). Jamil finds lies from her more appealing than the truth from someone he despises. Buthainah's words are as sweet as honey and when people suggest that Jamil should seek cure for his ailment, he says: "By God, you, O Buthainah, are my cure (Jamil, 1967, 33).

Beloved's Eyes

In Sidney and Jamil's portrayals of the beloved, Stella and Buthainah's eyes become the focal point, imbued with profound significance. Considered windows to the soul, the eyes transcend mere physical beauty, radiating an irresistible power that captivates the lover. They are the most potent tools in the beloved's arsenal, ensnaring the heart through their captivating depths.

Stella's eyes figure prominently in more than 20 sonnets, with some entirely devoted to them. Two types of imagery are mainly used in their characterisation.

- (1) Celestial imagery: frequently compared to celestial bodies such as stars and the sun, the sonnets extol the brilliance and illuminating qualities of the beloved's eyes. In Sonnet 26, Stella's eyes are described as "two stars" that govern Astrophil's life. In Sonnet 48, they are called "morning stars," and Astrophil implores Stella not to turn them away from him. He desires her to look at him and shine upon him with her



light, affirming that he would rather die while seeing her than live without her sight.

"Stella's eyes" are considered Nature's masterpiece in Sonnet 7, and Astrophil ponders why Nature, when creating her "chief work," Stella's "sun-like" eyes, chose to wrap their bright beams in "colour black." Astrophil suggests three possibilities; one of them is that Nature graciously veils Stella's eyes in blackness to obscure their dazzling light, lest it may hurt the vision of those who gaze into them.

Stella's eyes are the source of Astrophil's light in Sonnets 89 and 76. In Stella's absence, he remains in "cold woe." In Sonnet 76, Stella's eyes are compared to the sun, first bringing gentle light and warmth, "like Aurora prove/ Of gentle force." As she comes closer, the beams of her eyes grow stronger and more intense, overwhelming him, just like the sun at noontime.

Her flamy glist'ring lights increase with time and place;

My heart cries, 'Ah, it burns'; mine eyes now dazzl'd be.

In sonnet 86, where Astrophil grapples with a sudden change in Stella's demeanor, "change of looks," Astrophil argues that even if he deserves punishment and disdain, he wishes to be granted a single favour: "Use something else to chasten [him] withal/ Than those blest eyes, where all [his] hopes do dwell." In sonnet 103, Stella's eyes are "fair planets" that shone on the streams of "happy Thames" and "the boat [carrying Stella] for joy could not to dance forbear."

(2) Weaponry imagery: Stella's eyes are depicted as powerful instruments, used by Cupid as arrows to pierce and capture Astrophil's heart. In sonnet 48, "their beamy darts" pierce Astrophil's heart, causing incurable wounds. Astrophil calls Stella a killer and begs her to kill him quickly with her gaze.

Dear killer, spare not thy sweet cruel shot:

A kind of grace it is to kill with speed.

Stella's eye-beams are often described as Cupid's arrows. In sonnet 20, the darkness of her eyes serves as the hiding place where Cupid waits in ambush.

So tyrant he no fitter place could spy,

Nor so fair level in so secret stay,



As that sweet black which veils the heav'nly eye:
There himself with his shot he close doth lay.

In the Arab culture, a woman's beauty is often synonymous with the allure of her eyes. The eyes of the beloved hold paramount significance in Arabic poetry, serving as a focal point of the poet's adoration and yearning. Envisioned as the mirror to the heart, the eyes play a pivotal role in igniting and sustaining love. In his *The Ring of the Dove*, Ibn Hazm states that “by means of a glance, the lover can be dismissed, admitted, promised, threatened, upbraided, cheered, commanded or forbidden” (68). Buthainah's eyes receive more attention than any other part of her body. The eye language is the language Buthainah uses to communicate with Jamil when verbal communication is not possible, especially in the presence of her family members. Jamil cannot forget Buthainah's last glance on the day of their separation; it nearly killed him (Jamil, 1967, 163). On another occasion, when they “met unexpectedly” and camels were about to leave, Buthainah “signaled [to Jamil] with her eyelid and her tears welled up” (Jamil, 1967, 116). Buthainah's eyes are often described as large, beautiful eyes and as black eyes with brilliant whites, *najla* and *hawra* respectively. In addition to the colour imagery, two types of imagery are mainly used to describe Buthainah's eyes:

- (1) Hunting imagery: her eyes are portrayed as emitting darts and arrows, symbolizing their ability to captivate the lover and pierce his heart. This convention is inherited from pre-Islamic poets and is a hallmark of Udhri poetry.

She shot me with an arrow whose feather is *kohl*;
It did not harm my skin, but it deeply wounded my heart (Jamil, *Diwan Jamil Buthainah*, 30).

This verse uses the metaphor of an arrow feathered with *kohl*, a traditional eye cosmetic, to describe the powerful and piercing effect of the beloved's gaze. Despite causing no physical harm, the gaze leaves a profound emotional wound in Jamil's heart.

She captured my heart with her eyes and a mouth,
That looked like hails when she opened it (Jamil, 1967, 58).

- (2) Animal imagery: the beloved's body is often likened to that of the gazelle and the beloved's eyes are compared to the gazelle's large, dark



and brilliant eyes. The gazelle and oryx are symbols of elegance and gracefulness in the Arab culture. They are known for their prominent eyes that stand out against their sleek, slender faces.

Her eyes are dark and clear, exquisitely formed,
As if her father were a gazelle or her mother an oryx (Jamil, 1967, 218).

She captivated me with the eyes of a gazelle amidst a herd,
And a bosom like a silver gallipot, and a neck (Jamil, 1967, 66).

Idealization of the Beloved

Stella in Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and Buthainah in Jamil's *Diwan* are both idealized figures of unattainable love, but they are portrayed within different cultural and poetic traditions, reflecting their respective contexts and the poets' cultural and social backgrounds. Udhri poets tend to idealize their beloveds depicting them as perfect in both external beauty and character. Jamil frequently portrays Buthainah's physical features in exceptionally complimentary terms. He employs vivid and evocative imagery to highlight her beauty, describing her radiant face, captivating eyes, and graceful movements. He compares Buthainah to beautiful animals such as the gazelle and oryx and natural and precious objects, such as the moon, stars, and gems, emphasizing her unparalleled beauty and purity. Jamil uses comparative phrases to indicate that Buthainah is incomparable. It is true that on many occasions, Buthainah's beauty, including her eyes and figure, is likened to that of a gazelle, but on other occasions, Buthainah is presented as more beautiful than that beautiful animal.

A gazelle with a dark hide, and a slim body,
Left alone in the desert, separated from her herd,
Could not be more beautiful in eyes or neck,
When revealed, her beauty cannot be resisted (Jamil, 1967, 22).

Buthainah is not only more beautiful than the gazelle; in many lines, Jamil insists that Buthainah is the most beautiful creature.

In her neck and eyes, she is God's finest creation,
Resembling a gentle young deer (Jamil, 1967, 172).

Celestial imagery is used to exalt Buthainah's beauty.

She is the full moon in beauty, while other women are stars;



What a vast difference there is between the stars and the full moon (Jamil, 1967, 104).

Jamil portrays Buthainah as his muse, profoundly inspiring his poetry and creative expression. When attempting to compose verses on other subjects or women, he finds himself unable to do so.

If I compose poetry without mentioning her, Neither my muse nor my heart will cooperate (Jamil, 1967, 105).

Reflecting the impact of Islamic traditions, Jamil employs religious language and references to the Quran to elevate his beloved to a semi-divine status. The convergence of love language and religious language is unsurprising, as Jamil's devotion to Buthainah parallels, if not surpasses, his religious devotion. Hamori says that the “poaching or religious language is meant . . . to express the extent of this dangerous devotion” (as cited in Alharthi, 2021, 112). For example, to emphasize the unparalleled beauty and favoured status of his beloved, he compares her to the Night of Power (Lailatu al-Qadr)².

She is favoured over people just as

The Night of Decree is favoured over a thousand months (Jamil, 1967, 104).

For Jamil, those who die of love are martyrs, just like those who fall in *jihad*.

They say to me, “Jamil, go off , wage jihad!”

Yet what jihad except the one for the ladies would interest me?

Every conversation among them is a joy,

And killed in their midst is a martyr (Jamil, *Diwan Jamil Buthainah*, 67).

Jamil remembers Buthainah even at times when he should be solely in communion with God, suggesting that he “came to regard his love

2 Also known as the Night of Power or the Night of Decree is one of the most significant nights in the Islamic calendar. It is believed to be the night when the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. This night is described as better than a thousand months (Quran 97:3), making it an extraordinarily blessed time for worship and prayer.



metaphorically as a religion, with the beloved as its deity” (Farrin, 2011, 100).

As I pray I weep at the thought of her,
Woe unto me for what the two angels³ write (Jamil, 1967, 203).
Between Safa and Marwah, I remembered you,
Amidst the throngs of pilgrims, moving and surging.
And while circumambulating (doing *tawaf*), I recalled you with a
memory

That is death itself, or even surpasses it (Jamil, 1967, 131).

Jamil and Buthainah's bond transcends the ordinary. Their love story, believed to have begun prenatally, extends beyond the constraints of earthly life, promising an eternity together:

My soul was attached to her before our birth,
And in cradle after the birth.
Love grew as we grew up and continued growing
And it will not come to an end even if we pass away (Jamil, 1967, 77).

My heart will love you so long as I'm alive, and if I die
My echo will trail yours among graves (Jamil, 1967, 110).

In *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney crafts an idealized portrait of Stella. He extols her stunning beauty, impeccable character, profound intellect, and virtue. Yet, she remains frustratingly out of reach. Through sophisticated imagery, extended metaphors, allusions to mythological figures, and the traditions of courtly love, Sidney elevates Stella to a pedestal. She becomes not just paragon of beauty but a symbol of perfect love and a source of endless creative inspiration for Astrophil.

In more than 20 sonnets of the first half of the sequence, Sidney shows Astrophil idealizing Stella and his love for her (Tucker, 1973, 73). In many of these sonnets, he relies heavily on mythology and conventional imagery associated with Platonic love. In Sonnet 9, Sidney employs an extended architectural metaphor to idealize Stella. Her face is described as "Queen Virtue's court," adorned with "Nature's choicest furniture." It has been "Prepar'd by Nature's choicest furniture." Her forehead is "built of alabaster

3 According to the Islamic faith, the two angels assigned to each person, tasked with recording their deeds, both good and bad.



pure”; her lips are “Red porphyry,” through which “sometimes comes forth her Grace”; her cheeks are of “Marble mix’d red and white”; and her eyes are made of “touch”; through these eyes Stella, “this heav’nly guest” gazes but finds nothing as beautiful as her own face. It is Cupid himself, the god of love, who drew her eyes from “Beauty’s mine,” emphasizing their perfect and divine origin.

In more than ten sonnets, the word "heav’nly" is used to characterise Stella and various parts of her body. In sonnet 9, as already mentioned, Stella is a “heav’nly guest.” In sonnet 20, Stella has a “heav’nly eye” veiled by the darkness that Cupid takes as a perfect hiding place. In sonnet 41, Astrophil’s victory in a tournament is attributed to “the beams” from Stella’s “heav’nly face.” Stella’s head, in sonnet 44, is of a “heav’nly nature” that transforms Astrophil’s complaints into “tunes of joy.” In sonnet 52, Stella is “That virtuous soul, sure heir of heav’nly bliss.” In sonnet 66, Stella’s eyes are Astrophil’s “heav’n” and her glance is a heavenly text in sonnet 67. In sonnet 68, she is Astrophil’s “World of [his] wealth, and heav’n of [his] delight.” In sonnet 73, Astrophil calls her “my Star” and “heav’nly fool” and her face is “Beauty’s throne.” In sonnet 80, Stella’s lips are described as “Nature’s praise, Virtue’s stall, Cupid’s cold fire, Whence words, not words but heav’nly graces, slide.” In sonnet 24, she is “The richest gem of love and life.”

Stella is presented as the embodiment of virtue and epitome of beauty. In sonnet 40, she is a goddess whose temple is Astrophil’s heart. In sonnet 25, Virtue decides to take “Stella’s shape . . . so that it might shine sweetly to mortal eyes.” In sonnet 40, she is requested by Astrophil to deign from “the height of Virtue’s throne” to think of a wretch who has long desired her grace. In sonnet 3, Stella’s face is presented as the book in which Nature writes “What Love and beautie be.”

Stella’s exaltation is further emphasized by a different kind of throne. Here, she is not portrayed as a supra-human being, but rather elevated to the company of humanity’s greatest figures. For Astrophil, “Stella” means “Princess of Beauty” in sonnet 28. In sonnet 10, Stella is a queen and “Reason” personified, kneels at her feet, unable to resist her dazzling “rays”. In Sonnet 36, Stella is depicted as a victorious conqueror and Love as her loyal “Lieutenant.” In sonnet 40, Astrophil describes how he has been



conquered, and subdued by Stella and implores her not to destroy him, as “noblest conquerors avoid wrecks.”

Stella is presented as a divine being and her divine nature is highlighted in many sonnets and in many ways. In sonnet 4, Astrophil argues with virtue that if it insists on taking control of him, Virtue needs to know that Stella enshrined in his heart is “so true a deity/ That Virtue, thou thyself shalt be in love.” As a goddess, he tells her, she should preserve the temple (his heart) where he offers her his devotions.

in my heart I offer still to thee,
Oh do not let thy Temple be destroyed (sonnet 40).

Both Buthainah and Stella are unattainable objects of love; they may respond sometimes but they never respond in the way their lovers want them to respond. Buthainah embodies the archetype of the unattainable beloved. Despite occasional interactions, her responses consistently fall short of Jamil's desires. This inaccessibility stems from a confluence of factors. Firstly, the social constraints imposed upon married women strictly limit her ability to meet with men outside her marriage. Furthermore, her family and husband maintain a watchful eye, further restricting her autonomy. Finally, Buthainah herself appears “stingy”⁴ in giving Jamil a chance to meet her.

While Jamil accuses his beloved of being stingy, Astrophil complains of his beloved's pride. In sonnet 31, addressed to the moon, Astrophil asks questions, two of which are aimed at his beloved, whom he implies is the conventional proud beauty who despises the lover she deliberately attracts:

Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth posses
Do they call virtue ungratefulness?

4 Buthainah's emotional reserve and reluctance to engage deeply in matters of the heart is a recurring theme in Jamil's poetry:

O Umm Dhi al-Wad, Buthainah, don't you know that I laugh remembering you, despite your stinginess?(Jamil,1967, 67).

I did not love her for her generosity, but rather she captivated me with coquetry and stinginess (Jamil, 1967, 177).



Conclusion

Jamil expresses his love in straightforward and unadorned terms, almost entirely eschewing philosophical references and allusions to earlier traditions or authorities on love. On a few occasions, he refers to famous lovers from his time and the pre-Islamic era. However, Jamil extensively alludes to the Islamic traditions and practices, using Quranic expressions to idealize his beloved and highlight the extent of his infatuation with her. In contrast, Sidney's poetry is replete with imagery and extended metaphors, drawing heavily on Greek and Roman mythology to illustrate Stella's beauty, his love for her, and the associated pain. He frequently invokes mythological figures such as Cupid, Venus, and Diana to enhance his poetic expression.

The sophistication of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* in terms of imagery, treatment of themes, and high allusiveness can be attributed to the Elizabethan environment in which Sidney lived. This complexity is also a result of Sidney's aristocratic background and the way he was educated to embrace an unusual degree of political, religious, and cultural responsibilities.

The simplicity of Jamil's poetry, however, is due to the Bedouin life he led. The simplicity of Bedouin life often translates into straightforward and unembellished poetic expressions. During Jamil's time, poetry was often recited orally rather than written down. Oral traditions favour simplicity and memorability, which are achieved through clear and direct language.

The similarities between the two works stem from the universal theme of love and the accompanying pangs of unrequited passion. The speakers in both works are not in harmony with society as evidenced by the presence of blamers and slanderers who reproach them and try to keep them away from their beloveds. Both speakers idealize their beloveds, portraying them as paragons of beauty and virtue. They elevate them to almost divine statuses, reflecting intense admiration and reverence. Both works devote great parts to characterising the beloved and emphasizing her unattainability. Despite the differences in cultural and social contexts, both poets successfully use the devices and conventions available to them to capture the timeless and universal experience of passionate, often thwarted love, making their works resonate across time and space.



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