Not Sidney’s great-nephew Algernon but a more distant relative proved keen to establish that ancestry as significant, and on poetic rather than ideological grounds. Anne Bradstreet nonetheless tied herself and her subject in knots when writing *An Elegie upon That Honourable and Renowned Knight, Sir Philip Sidney, Who Was Untimely Slaine at the Seige of Zutphon, Anno 1586* (dated 1638), despite this insistence: “Let then, none dis-allow of these my straines,/Which have the self-same blood yet in my veines.” As if excusing it, Bradstreet styles the *Arcadia* “penn’d in . . . youth,” emphasizing: “This was thy shame, O miracle of wit” (149). Addressing him that way, however, she reveals how she partly shares the admiration she rejects as misplaced: “Yet doth thy shame (with all) purchase renown,/What doe thy vertues then? Oh, honours crown!” (149). She herself finds “Divinity within thy Book,” together with “learning, valour, and morality,/Justice, friendship, and kind hospitality,” while insisting on a generalization that she herself undermines as an ambivalent female admirer:

> severer eyes but scorn thy Story,  
> And modest Maids, and Wives, blush at thy glory;  
> Yet, he’s a beetle head, that cann’t discry  
> A world of treasure, in that rubbish lye. (150)

Bradstreet’s moralizing muddles even her presentation of Sidney’s versatility (”*Mars and Minerva* did in one agree,/Of Armes, and Arts, thou should’st a patterne be”), for “*Mars* himself was ta’n by *Venus* gin” furnishes one answer to her dismayed question: “O Princely *Philip*, rather *Alexander,*/Who wert of honours band, the chief Commander./How could that *Stella*, so confine thy will?” (149, 151). Rosamond Rosenmeier takes a more
favorable view of this poem, characterizing it as “enthusiastic,” and thus vitally different from “the significantly revised (and flattened) version ... as it appeared in Several Poems nearly 40 years later.” “The claims for the poet in 1638 and for her relationship to the famous Sidney are hyperbolic,” Rosenmeier nonetheless acknowledges, but with the further claim that such exaggeration holds interest because “Sidney’s literary reputation by 1638 was in eclipse.”2 But Edmund Waller during the early Caroline period wrote with the conviction that Sidney’s prestige as a poet could not be higher, celebrating the Arcadia as filled with “treasure” unaccompanied by “rubbish.”

Justifying his first collection of poems (1645), Waller maintains: “I may defend the attempt I have made upon poetry, by the examples (not to trouble you with history) of many wise and worthy persons of our own times; as Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Fra: Bacon, Cardinal Perron (the ablest of his countrymen), and the former Pope.”3 Mindful that gentlemen, except when young, should not stoop to the frivolity of writing verses, much less having them printed, Waller produces a roll call of literary figures whose social eminence made their precedent irreproachable, however little those other than the first named now command attention for their stature as poets. Peering past his ostensible addressee (Lady Sophia Bertie), Waller thus directs his preface to a broader audience including possibly disapproving men; he writes over her head “to trouble” her “with history,” even when claiming not to do so. Her gender nonetheless proves advantageous, permitting Waller to strike a cavalier pose, disavowing any intention of putting his verses into any wider circulation himself and placing them entirely at her disposal:

if you publish them, they become your own; and therefore, as you apprehend the reproach of a wit and a poet, cast them into the fire; or, if they come where green boughs are in the chimney, with the help of your fair friends (for thus bound, it will be too stubborn a task for your hands alone), tear them in pieces, wherein you shall honour me with the fate of Orpheus; for so his poems, whereof we only hear the fame (not his limbs, as the story would have it), I suppose were scattered by the Thracian dames. (1: ix)

Waller here combines a banteringly erotic note with a rationalizing view of the legendary Orpheus’s dismemberment: even in that remote figure, he could discern the familiar-seeming instance of a poet whose carelessly offered verses could be as carelessly “scattered” by the “dames” they address.4 But Waller’s urbane self-deprecation with respect to his writing also invokes another flattering choice of forebear in Sidney, whose Defence presents its author’s ironic “example of my selfe” as one “who I know not by what mischance in these my not old yeares and idlest times, having slipt