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Sir Philip Sidney's Ourania

Nathaniel Baxter

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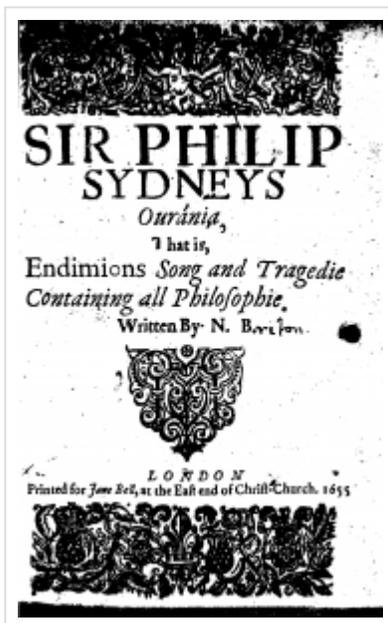
Early Visions of Florida

Poetry • Stories • Chronicles from an American Borderland

Nathaniel Baxter, Sir Philip Sidney's

Ourania

Nathaniel Baxter, born in Colchester, Essex, received his Master's degree from Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1577. Following his time at Magdalen College, Baxter held several posts in the church, including warden of St. Mary's College, Youghal, Ireland, where he probably knew Edmund Spenser. Baxter published a number of sermons, letters, and books on Puritanism, including A Sovereign Salve for a Sinful Soul (1577), The Lectures of J. Calvin upon Jonas (1578), and Answer of Nathaniel Baxter ... to Mr. Jo. Downes (1633). In 1606 Baxter published his most notable work, excerpted here, Sir Philip Sydney's Ourania, That is, Endimions Song and Tragedie Containing all Philosophie (1606).



Baxter's importance in the literary world relies upon his connection to the Sidney family: he tutored Sir Philip Sidney in Greek and remained connected to the family throughout his life. The Ourania is prefaced by poems dedicated to the women of the Sidney family; beyond this, Sidney appears as

a character in the conclusion of the poem as *Astrophil*. In the poem, Baxter is presented as *Endymion*, a shepherd, who is approached by *Cynthia* (Sir Philip's sister, Lady Pembroke) and her nymphs, who ask *Endymion* to sing. Within the text, in an apparent effort to evoke a sense of distance and the exotic, Baxter makes multiple references to Florida. These inclusions indicate that Florida had some place in the minds of the most prominent Elizabethan poets, with whom Baxter was acquainted. The selection below is from a 1655 printing, with minor orthographic changes, and was selected for its relevance to "terra Florida." A table at the bottom glosses antiquated terms and classical references in this highly allusive poem.

Edited by Jay Looney, University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Suggested Reading

_____. "Baxter, Nathaniel." *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 3. Edited by Leslie Stephen. Smith, Elder (London, 1885). 433-34.

Baxter, Nathaniel. *Sir Philip Sydneys Ourania, That is, Endimions Song and Tragedie Containing all Philosophie* (1606).

Eccles, Mark. "Brief Lives: Tudor and Stuart Authors." *Studies in Philology* 79:4 (1982). 1-135.

Now must we speake of earths blessed mother.

The lowest Planet swifter then other,

Lowest of all, and neerest to our view,

Resplendent Phoebe, chaste, powerfull and true.

Glorious Nurse of all this lower frame,

Infusing moysture to the burning flame,

Of parching Phoebus, whose fierie beames,

She doth allay, and coole with moistning streames.

The Moone, Lyana, Phoebe, Cynthia,

Shepheards call her in Terra Florida

One of her names I doe ascribe to thee,

In whom her princely vertues seated be.
Dee'r Princesse Laureat of Hellicon,
Deigne to accept it from endymion,
Since thou participat'st with her in qualitie,
Her name thy mightinesse shall dignifie.
I call her Phoebe now for difference,
Betweene thy selfe and her Magnificence.
All things upon, and all within the round,
Unto her Soveraigntie are deeply bound,
Her greatnesse is the nine and thirtieth part,
Of all the earth as shepherds finde by Art.
In eight just houres, and seaven and twenty daies,
She runs through the twelve Zodiack signes alwaies,
She swiftly passeth through the Zodiacke,
Great Phoebus in her course to overtake.
In twelve houres and nine and twenty dayes,
She over takes the Sunne, Ptolomie saies.
And this is justly called heavens wonder,
That these two Planets distant farre asonder,
Once every month, meet in conjunction.
To celebrate matrimoniall function.
O joyfull time when these two Lovers meet!
When with sweet Congies one doth th' other greet.

But when they meet long time they cannot stay,
Phoebus must part swift time calles him away.
Phoebe returnes to undertaken taske,
No houre granted in idlenesse to maske.
Phoebus parting gives her light sufficient,
T'lluminate th'inferior Continent.
Which like a faithfull wife she doth dispose,
Proportionable to the need of those,
That high or low have their habitation
Capable of her Constellation;
She waggoneth to Neptunes Palace then,
That wonneth in the mighty Ocean:
She views the Creeks, Ports, Havens, and Towers,
And gives them Floods and Ebbes at certaine houres
Which evermore she truly doth observe,
Not one momentall minute doth she swerve,
Which skill full Mariners as well can tell,
As little babies can their Crosserow spell:
Thence she doth search the Caverns of the deep,
Where strange and hydeous monsters use to keep,
Hydrrippus, Baelana, and Hydra fell,
Gendred by Cerberus Porter of Hell,
Hin'dring by vertue their venemous brood,

Drenching their spawne in the brinish flood.
That sayling passengers at their leasure,
Mought safely touch their port with pleasure.
She views the bottom of the Ocean,
Where never walked mortall living man.
There been shell-fishes innumerable,
Armed with scaly-shields impenetrable.
There lies Muscles with Pearles replenished,
Where with the Robes of Nimphes been garnished.
There growen the Scallop, Cockle, Welke and Oyster
The Tortoyse, Crevice, and creeping Lobster,
The Lympet, Sea-snail, with infinite moe,
Which in the treasury of Thetis go;
All these she cherisheth as if they were
The noblest creatures in the highest Sphere,
She gives them gifts that most of them should yawne,
At each full see for comforting their Spawne.
And to the sea she gives daily motion,
To ebbe and flow to voyde corruption.
She giv's her fertill generation,
And perfect Meanes of Vegetation.
So that Thetis hath more provision,
Of fish and fowle in great division:

Then all th'inhabitable Earth can show,
Or skill of mortall man can know.
But all that of the sea is said, or done;
Is to demonstrate the glory of the Moone,
For the seas place and constitution,
Requireth a speciall discourse alone.
And is reserved to his proper place,
So l'le proceede to speake of Phoebes grace,
And show how she within her Spherick Globe,
Cherisheth great Tellus and Flora's Robe;
Cotchelling all things in their infancie,
Till they have got strength and maturitie.
There is no man, or woman, Art, or Trade,
Nor any thing that mighty Pan hath made,
Nor Tree, nor, Plant, nor hearb, nor grass, nor flower,
But is maintained by her mighty power.
She shewes the Plowman when to sow the ground,
To crop, to fell, to have his timber sound;
She wizeth Surgeons when to ope a Vaine;
To ease the sicke, and stop it fast againe.
She showes Physitions times necessarie,
To purge by Pils, drink or Electuarie,
To cure Rheums, fluxes, and bodies laxative,

To give a medicine preparative,

To give a vomite, clister, or gargarise:

Marking the signe wherein fair Phoebe lyes.

These sacred vertues, qualities divine,

Do make her wonderfull in shepherds eie,

And strain the world to celebrate her name,

With lovely Hymnes and everlasting fame,

Thus were the heavens orderly disposed,

By glorious Pan as you have heard disclosed.

Glossary_

Term	Description
Artemis	Greek Mythology The goddess of the hunt and wilderness Also called Cynthia for her birthplace, Mount Cynthus
Cerberus	Greek mythology Multi-headed watchdog of the underworld
Clister	Medical Terms Injection of fluid into the rectum
Congee	Antiquated Ceremonious bow or show of respect
Cockle	Sea Creatures

Bivalve mollusk or clam

Cotchelling

Nautical

“A barge is said to go cotchelling when she discharges or takes up her cargo piecemeal at various ports, instead of taking a single cargo from one port to another.”

Crosserow

Antiquated

The alphabet

Cynthia

Greco-Roman Mythology

Epithet of Greek goddess Artemis, Greek goddess Selene, and Roman goddess Diana

Diana

Roman Mythology

A moon goddess

Electuary

Medical

Medicine mixed with honey or another sweetener

Endymion

Greek Mythology

Shepherd or astronomer

Lover of Selene

Flora

Roman Mythology

A goddess of flowers & the season of spring

Gargarize

Medical

To gargle

Gibbonsia

Sea Creatures

Montereyensis The “Crevice kelpfish”

A species of clinid

Pacific Coast of North America

Heliconia **Scientific/Botanic**

Genus of flowering plants

Native to tropical Americas

Hydra **Greco-Roman mythology**

Serpentine water monster

Also a constellation discovered by Ptolemy

Hydrrippus **Mythology**

Sea monster

Part fish & part horse

Limpet **Sea Creatures**

Aquatic snail

Moe **Antiquated**

More

Neptune **Roman Mythology**

The god of the sea

Pan **Greek Mythology**

A god of the wild

Phoebe **Greek Mythology**

One of the original titans Associated with the moon

Epithet of Artemis

Epithet of Selene

Phoebus

Greco-Roman Mythology

Epithet of Apollo

Associated with the sun

Ptolemy

Historical/Biographical

Greco-Roman historical figure

Tellus

Roman Mythology

A goddess of the earth

“Mother Earth”

Thetis

Greek Mythology

Sea Nymph or goddess of water

Whelk

Sea Creatures

Sea snail

Yawn

Antiquated

To be eager or express desire
