Take-Home Quiz

The first two sonnets of Sir Philip Sydney's sequence *Astrophil and Stella* examine aspects of the suffering associated with love.

Loving in truth, and fain* in verse my love to show, — desiring
That she (dear She) might take some pleasure of my pain:
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain:
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sun-burn'd brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay,
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows,
And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.
Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite--
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart and write."

Not at first sight, nor with a dribbed* shot — badly aimed
Love gave the wound, which while I breathe will bleed;
But known worth did in mine of time proceed,
Till by degrees it had full conquest got:
I saw and liked, I liked but loved not;
I lov'd, but straight did not what Love decreed.
At length to love's decrees I, forc'd, agreed,
Yet with repining* at so partial lot. — complaining
Now even that footstep of lost liberty
Is gone, and now like slave-born Muscovite* — refers to political oppression by the Russian Tsars
I call it praise to suffer tyranny;
And now employ the remnant of my wit
To make myself believe that all is well,
While with a feeling skill I paint my hell.

Choose either sonnet and discuss in a short essay what it says about the nature of that suffering. Your essay should fit the following requirements:

1. It should be 1-3 pages long, in 12 point font, double spaced, and with 1-inch margins.
2. It should be free of spelling and grammatical errors (and this will be one of the primary grading criteria).
3. It should discuss how Sydney's argument is enhanced by the form of the poem and its imagery.
4. It should discuss how the poem connects to some of the cultural developments and concerns of the Renaissance.

You may research the poems if you wish, but such research may not necessarily help you. If you do read about the poems, make sure that you write about what I am asking for in the above points, rather than what you read.

Due date: November 24, 2009