

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-15833-6 - Sir Philip Sidney: The Defence of Poesie Political Discourses
Correspondence Translation
Edited by Albert Feuillerat
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The Prose Works
of
Sir Philip Sidney

In Four Volumes
Volume III

Cambridge University Press

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Right honorable my singulor good Lorde. Sir Nicholas Bagnoll
 hath requeste my humble letters to your L. for the sum of hundred
 poundes out of the treasure, w^{ch} he for his nece'ssary doct^r desire to
 receive here and to pay at his cominge into Irelande.
 I do take it that there is as much due unto him, and boysh
 I know the w^{ch}dit my father hath in him, dothe stretch to a matter
 of greater importance, so that this fewe these fewe yeres shall only
 serve, humbly to advortise your L. that I selle it for assured my
 father will be very well satisfied wth it.
 furder I can not proceede, but referringe it fully to your L^{tes}dispo-
 sitiones humbly leave your L. to the protection of the Almightye
 Frome Leyster house. this 8th of February. 1586.

Your Lps. moste humbly
 at commaundment

Philip Sidney

Facsimile of Sir Philip Sidney's handwriting

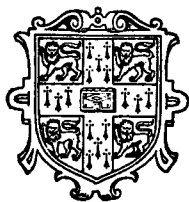
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SIR PHILIP SIDNEY



THE DEFENCE OF POESIE
POLITICAL DISCOURSES
CORRESPONDENCE
TRANSLATION

EDITED BY
ALBERT FEUILLERAT



CAMBRIDGE
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

FEUILLERAT'S edition of the complete works of Sir Philip Sidney has long been out of print, but has continued to be in demand by scholars. Bibliographical research has shown that Feuillerat did not work from the best copy-texts, and that many of his readings are corrupt. Further, three more manuscripts of Sidney have been discovered since Feuillerat's edition was printed. It may, however, be many years before a new and definitive edition is published, and it has therefore been decided to reissue with minor corrections the complete prose works in Feuillerat's edition. The publisher gratefully acknowledges the advice of Professor R. W. Zandvoort and Mrs Jean Bromley in connection with this reprint.

The prose works are divided among the four volumes as follows: vol. I, *Arcadia*, 1590; vol. II, *Arcadia*, 1593 and *The Lady of May*; vol. III, *The Defence of Poesie*, Political Discourses, Correspondence and Translation; vol. IV, *Arcadia* (original version). These volumes combine with Professor Ringler's newly edited *Complete Poems* to make all Sidney's works available again.

The parts of Feuillerat's prefatory notes which are not relevant to this reprint have been removed; the remaining parts are set out below.

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The books and manuscripts from which the text was set up are of a very miscellaneous nature. The treatise on poetry has been printed from the Ponsonby quarto, and this choice, to begin with, should be justified. Two quartos appeared in the year 1595, the one published by Ponsonby under the title of *The Defence of Poesie*, the other published by Olney under the title of *An Apology for Poetry*. That Ponsonby was the originator of the publication is made clear by the following entries in the Register of the Stationers' Company:

[29 november 1594]

William Ponsonby Entred for his copie under the handes of the Wardens A booke entituled A treatise in commendacon of Poetrie or the Defence of posey written by Sir Phillip Sidney

[12 april 1595]

Henrie Olney Entred for his copie under the handes of the Wardens a booke entituled An Apologie for Poetrie
 This belongeth to Master Ponsonby by a former Entrance and an agrement is made between them wherby Master Ponsonby is to enjoy the copie according to the former Entrance.

Nor can it be doubted that the Ponsonby text is the more authoritative of the two. It contains two passages not to be found in Olney's quarto; and it was preferred by the Countess of Pembroke when the folio of 1598 was prepared for the press. This seemed sufficient to warrant the choice of it, even though the other quarto presents a text somewhat purer.

The "Discourse on Irish Affairs"—which might just as well have been entitled "A Defence of Sir Henry Sidney"—follows the unique, unfortunately incomplete, autograph in the British Museum (Cotton, Titus, B. xii).

More than twenty copies of the "Letter to Queen Elizabeth

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touching the marriage with Monsieur” are known to exist. They, for the most part, supply very poor texts; in some cases, it even looks as if the scribes had contented themselves with reproducing the general import rather than the exact words. I have selected the one preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, where it is to be found among the papers of the French Ambassador who negotiated the marriage. It must have been obtained through some intelligence agent and was probably copied from the original. The text is certainly excellent.

Of the “Defence of the Earl of Leicester” there are two manuscripts, one among the Sidney Papers, in the possession of Lord de Lisle, the other in the Bibliothèque Nationale. The latter belongs to the same collection as the “Letter to Queen Elizabeth,” and comes from the same source. The former is written in a somewhat late hand, possibly as late as the end of the seventeenth, or early eighteenth, century; but it is supposed to be a copy of an original which was long in the family archives (see description on p. 392), and from certain peculiarities in spelling I am inclined to believe that this original must have been in Sidney’s own hand¹. This seemed to give it a value which the other copy could not claim.

If we except Sidney’s “Letter to his Brother,” often circulated at the time (here printed from Harleian 444), we have, in general, but one copy, usually an autograph², of the private and official letters collected in this edition. These letters, 114 in number³, are scattered all over Europe (one has even strayed so far as New York), and the places where the originals are to be found have been indicated in the Notes. Many have already been printed,

¹ Probably the same MS as the one printed by Collins, and which had, in Robert Sidney’s hand, the mention: “In my uncles own hand.”

² The letters are to be considered as autographs, unless otherwise stated in the notes.

³ I have not been able to obtain a copy of Sidney’s letter to Lord Willoughby (14 July 1586), preserved among the MSS of the Earl of Ancaster. An abstract is to be found in Report XIII of the Historical MSS Commission, App. VI, p. 210. Zouch mentions also a letter to Belerius, written by Sidney during his last illness, in so beautiful a Latin style that it was presented to the Queen. This letter is lost.

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in full or in part, and in this case I have collated them with the originals, whenever possible¹. Several are made public for the first time.

* * *

A Woorke concerning the Trewnesse of the Christian Religion was published in 1587. From the title-page we learn that the book was “Begunne to be translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney Knight, and at his request finished by Arthur Golding.” Again, in the Dedication to the Earl of Leicester, Golding asserts that Sidney “being delighted with the excellencie of this present work, began to put the same into our Language for the benefite of this his native Countrie, and had proceeded certeyne Chapters therein” when he had to leave England for the Netherlands, asking Golding to finish the translation. Which the latter did, though he could have found it in his heart “to have forborne the undertaking of so great a taske.” The words last quoted seem to imply that Sidney had not made much progress when he gave up the task; but this is of little help when we have to decide how many chapters are to be attributed to his pen. Fortunately, a comparison of the English version with the French original at once reveals that the two translators had totally different methods. The one—whom for brevity’s sake I shall call *A*—manages to be faithful to the sense without being a slave to the letter. The meaning is rendered with astonishing accuracy and yet the writer gives the impression that he is uttering his own thoughts. The terseness of the French is preserved, nay, in many cases, improved. And from this conciseness the style derives remarkable lucidity and beauty. One might very well suppose that the book was originally written in English.

The other translator—*B*—on the contrary, adheres to the text more closely, but is accurate in being literal. He servilely follows the foreign sentence and renders it word for word. His only ambition seems to be “very cleare, and very faithfully answering his author’s intent.” With this object in view, he does not

¹ This is notably the case of Sidney’s correspondence with Hubert Languet. Those who are familiar with Pears’s edition will see that such a collation was no unnecessary task.

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hesitate, when unable to find the equivalent for a French word, to paraphrase, using two or even three expressions where the sense requires one. Such superfluity obscures the meaning and produces a certain honest, heavy mediocrity which smells of the lamp of industrious toil without having any redeeming originality of style.

Now we have no example of a prose translation by Sidney; but we possess several specimens of versions from the French by Arthur Golding, and there is not the least doubt that his notion of what a prose translation should be is identical with that of *B*. Take, for instance, Calvin's *Sermons*, or Jacques Hurault's *Politicke, Moral and Martial Discourses*, and you will find the same literalness, the same tendency to paraphrase, and, more generally speaking, the same toilsome industry.

To Sir Philip Sidney, therefore, must be attributed the part of the translation where the method of *A* has been applied, *videlicet* the Preface to the Reader and chapters I to VI inclusively (with possibly the exception of the last paragraph of chapter VI where one can detect the method of *B*). The Dedication to the King of Navarre and the remaining chapters constitute Golding's share. Two chapters, however, the XIVth and XVth, which treat of the immortality of the soul, must remain doubtful. Here we find the accurateness and eloquence which are characteristically in the manner of *A*, and also paraphrases which are no less characteristic of *B*. As it is impossible to say whether we have a draft by Sidney touched up by Golding, or some exceptionally happy version, written in a moment of inspiration, by Golding, I have not felt justified in including these chapters in this reprint.

I have reserved for an Appendix, as doubtful, the Essay entitled *Valour anatomized in a Fancie*. It was attributed to Sidney by James Howell; but it is also to be found among Donne's Works and I am far from sure that this piece was really written by Sir Philip.

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