

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15835-0 - Sir Philip Sidney: The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia: Being the Original Version

Edited by Albert Feuillerat

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The Prose Works
of
Sir Philip Sidney

In Four Volumes
Volume IV

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SIR PHILIP SIDNEY



THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE'S

ARCADIA

BEING THE ORIGINAL VERSION

EDITED BY

ALBERT FEUILLERAT



CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1970

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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.

* * *

This first form of Sidney's celebrated romance is certainly inferior in literary value to the revised form published in 1590. Though it has the advantage of presenting a simpler and, in a way, more coherent story, it fully deserves the criticism which Sidney himself passed upon it when he wrote to his sister: "Here now have

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you (most deare, and most worthy to be most deare Lady) this idle work of mine...being but a trifle, and that triflingly handled. Your deare selfe can best witnes the maner, being done in loose sheetes of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest, by sheetes, sent unto you, as fast as they were done. In summe, a young head, not so well stayed as I would it were...¹” It is at best the immature work of a young man of great promise who is trying his hand at romance writing. But for that very reason it is of first-rate importance if we want to form a clear idea of Sidney's precocity of mind. A comparison between the two forms shows with what marvellous rapidity Sidney, in the space of some five years, gained not only in literary skill but also in richness and ripeness of thought. Sir Philip's progress as a story-teller has already, and on the whole satisfactorily, been studied by Dr Samuel Lee Wolff in his book entitled *The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction*; the study of Sir Philip as a thinker is an entirely unexplored field and will fully reward those who undertake it².

So far as is known, five manuscripts of the “old Arcadia” have escaped the ravages of time. Two are in Oxford, the one in the Bodleian Library (MS è Mus. 37), the other in the Library of Queen's College (R. 38/301). Another MS, from the Phillips Collection, bought by the late Miss Mary E. Davies, of Wedderburn House, Hampstead, is now in the British Museum. The two remaining MSS are in the United States: the Asburnham MS, in the Henry E. Huntington Library at San Marino, California; the Clifford MS, in the collection of Mr W. A. White, of New York.

¹ This letter was printed as a preface to the revised form; but it certainly applies to the older form (cf. prefatory note to the last part of the edition of 1613, vol. II, 350).

² It may be thought surprising that no attempt has been made here to give the chief results of such a comparison. Indeed I had at first contemplated to offer in this prefatory note at least an outline of the question. But I have since heard that Mr R. W. Zandvoort, of Nimeguen, has long been desirous to treat the same subject. So, in order not to forestall him I gave up the idea. I print, however, at the end of this volume a Table showing the relation of the “old Arcadia” to the 1590–93 Arcadia. This table does not pretend to be exhaustive or to go into minute details; but it will, I hope, facilitate the work of comparison.

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The text of the present edition is set up from the Clifford MS. This is a large quarto, carefully written in a sixteenth century English hand. It is in a beautiful state of preservation. This, and the fact that it is practically inaccessible to European scholars, were my chief reasons for choosing it in preference to the others.

In its present state the manuscript consists of 226 folios. This reckoning does not include two preliminary leaves and another leaf at the end, which are unnumbered. The first folio (which is also unnumbered) is blank. The text begins on folio 2 and ends on folio 216 r. The Clifford MS contains in addition "Divers and Sondry Sonnetts" covering folios 216 v–226 v. All these poems (with the exception of one which was never printed) are to be found in the 1598 edition.

The recto of each of the preliminary leaves is scribbled over with several names, apparently those of the successive owners of the MS: "Davide Morgan" (twice), "Hughe," "John Lloid" (three times), "Arthur Throgmorton," "Alexander Clifforde." In the same way, on the verso of the last leaf are found: "Alex. Clifforde" (twice), "Will^m Clyforde is my name," "Mountgomrey." It is somewhat startling to come across this conjunction of Mountgomrey with Clyforde. For it should be remembered that Anne Clifford, daughter of George Clifford, third Earl of Cumberland, married in 1630, as her second husband, Philip Herbert, fourth Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery and Sir Philip Sidney's nephew. But it would be dangerous to speculate too much on this coincidence.

My aim has been to reproduce the original as accurately as possible. The spelling and the punctuation have been carefully preserved. I have, however, corrected obvious mistakes and filled half a dozen blanks. All these emendations have been supplied from the 1590 and 1593 texts, and will be found indicated in a list at the end of the volume.

I am aware that a collation of the other MSS of the *Arcadia* would have been welcome. The dispersion of the MSS, and several other reasons which one can easily guess, have rendered this impossible. I have, however, ascertained that the list of

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variants which could have been gathered would not have been worth the trouble and cost involved¹.

¹ The title of the Phillips MS is interesting. It runs as follows: "A treatis made by Sir Phillip Sydney, Knyght, of certeyn accidents in Arcadia, made in the year 1580 and emparked to some few of his frends in his lyfe tyme and to more sence his unfortunat deceasse."

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