

## A woman taking up the pen: Anna Weamys and *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia*

Merve AYDOĐDU ÇELİK<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

A popular romance by a popular courtier, Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* was the best-selling prose fiction of the 1590s England. Sidney wrote the *Old Arcadia*, which consisted of five books, earlier than the *New Arcadia*. In the *New Arcadia*, a revision of the *Old Arcadia*, which was composed of three books, he followed the original plotline while he also added new episodes and reshaped some narratives. The product of an arduous work, it broke off mid-sentence due to Sidney's untimely death in 1586. This incomplete text was published in 1590. In the posthumously published 1593 *Arcadia*, a merger of the *Old Arcadia* and *the New Arcadia*, Sidney invited the reader to continue his text (the original ending of the older version). Even though he used the male personal pronoun to address his successors, Anna Weamys was the only woman to take up the challenge. Writing at a time when female romance reading and writing were frowned upon by the patriarchal culture and authorship was predominantly considered to be a male activity, Weamys not only interpreted the narrative threads Sidney left unfinished from a female point of view but she also produced her own independent work. Within this framework, taking into consideration the question "Is a pen a metaphorical penis?" Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar pose, and the cultural understanding of romance and women's preoccupation with the genre in the seventeenth century, this paper examines how Weamys shatters the hegemony of Sidney in *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia* (1651) in order to establish her literary authority as a female author.

**Keywords:** Anna Weamys, Sir Philip Sidney, romance, authorship, women's writing.

## Kaleme sarılan bir kadın: Anna Weamys ve *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia*

### Öz

Popüler bir saraylı tarafından kaleme alınan popüler bir romans olan Sir Philip Sidney'in *Arcadia'sı* 1590'larda İngiltere'de en çok satan nesir kurmaca olmuştur. Sidney beş kitaptan oluşan *Old Arcadia'yı* *New Arcadia'dan* önce yazmıştır. *Old Arcadia'nın* bir tashihi olan ve üç kitaptan meydana gelen *New Arcadia'da* orijinal olay örgüsünü takip etmekle birlikte, romansa yeni bölümler de eklemiş ve bazı hikâyeleri yeniden şekillendirmiştir. Zorlu bir çalışmanın ürünü olan eser, 1586'da Sidney'in zamansız ölümüyle birlikte tamamlanmamış bir cümle ile yarıda kesilmiştir. Yarım kalmış bu metin 1590'da yayımlanmıştır. Sidney'in ölümünden sonra basılan ve *Old Arcadia* ile *New Arcadia'nın* birleşimi olan 1593 tarihli *Arcadia'da* ise Sidney okuyucuyu metnini devam ettirmeye davet etmiştir (eski nüshanın sonu). Kendisi her ne kadar haleflerine hitap ederken erkek kişi zamirini kullansa da, Anna Weamys ipi göğüslemek isteyen tek kadın olmuştur. Kadınların romans

<sup>1</sup> Dr., Bağımsız arařtırımcı (Tekirdađ, Türkiye), merve\_aydogdu1987@hotmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7354-9705 [Makale kayıt tarihi: 01.10.2019-kabul tarihi: 20.11.2019; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.648878]

türünde eserler okuması ve yazmasının ataerkil kültür tarafından hoş karşılanmadığı ve yazarlığın ağırlıklı olarak erkek aktivitesi olarak kabul edildiği bir dönemde Weamys yalnızca Sidney'in yarım bıraktığı anlatıları kadın bakış açısıyla ele almakla kalmamış, aynı zamanda kendi bağımsız eserini de üretmiştir. Bu çerçevede, bu çalışma, Sandra Gilbert ve Susan Gubar'ın "kalem metaforik bir penis midir?" sorusunu ve onyedinci yüzyılda romansın kültürel anlamı ve kadınların tür ile olan meşguliyetini de dikkate alarak, Weamys'in *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia* (1651) eserinde bir kadın yazar olarak edebi otoritesini kurmak amacıyla Sidney'in hâkimiyetini ne şekilde yıktığını inceler.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Anna Weamys, Sir Philip Sidney, romans, yazarlık, kadın yazını.

### Introduction

Romance has always been the most persistent genre in literature. It emerged in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to celebrate the chivalric deeds of the knights, it remained fashionable during the medieval era and, from the sixteenth century onwards, infiltrating into different genres, it managed to survive albeit losing its autonomy as a genre. Its all-pervasive nature renders it almost impossible to define neatly what romance is as its features are traceable in the Greek and Anglo-Norman stories, in Shakespearean drama, in Gothic and Victorian novels, in Romantic poetry, and even in the fantasy fiction of the twentieth century. Although it is "notoriously difficult to define, largely because there is so much of it that spills over" (Davenport, 2004, p. 130), there are also some generic topoi that distinguish romance from other genres such as "the theme of love and adventure, a certain withdrawal from their own societies on the part of both reader and romance hero, profuse sensuous detail, simplified characters" and "a serene intermingling of the unexpected and the everyday" (Beer, 1970, p. 10). It is interesting that the features listed that help the contemporary reader determine the boundaries of romance were the ones that caused its disapproval by the sixteenth and seventeenth century reviewers of the genre.

### Sociocultural position of romance: An overview

A typical attitude to the genre in the aforementioned era was that of disdain, disavowal, and even disgust. Associating romance with unrestrained sexuality goes back as early as Dante Alighieri's (1265-1321) *Divine Comedy* (1320) in which, Francesca da Rimini and his brother-in-law engage in a sexual intercourse having read an Arthurian romance in the fifth canto of *Inferno*, and the anxiety that women would be influenced by its erotic content was the original cause as to its disapproval since then. Juan Luis Vives, likewise, was severely against it as he thought that it would stir erotic feelings and its themes based on war and bloodshed were not suitable for women and Christians:

A custom has grown up, worse than any pagan usage, that books in the vernacular ... treat no subjects but love and war. Concerning such books, I think nothing more need be said if I am speaking to Christians. How can I describe what a pestilence this is, since it is to place straw and dry kindling wood on the fire? ... What does a girl have to do with weapons, the very mention of which is unbecoming to her ... A young woman cannot easily be of chaste mind if her thoughts are occupied with the sword and sinewy muscles and virile strength ... How much better would it be for [the girls] to enter into life blind and deaf, as our Lord says in the gospel, rather than to be cast into the fire of hell with both eyes and both ears (2000, pp. 73-74).

Vives, by means of an obvious reference to the Scripture, argues that women, who are interested in its themes of love and adventure, would soon lose their innocence and deviate from the path to Heaven. He therefore states that "a woman should avoid these books as she would a viper or a scorpion ... [she] will not take such books into her hands, nor will she defile her mouth with obscene songs" (2000, p. 78).

Robert Burton (1577-1640) in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) believes that romance is read only by “silly Gentlewomen” who are “incensed by reading amorous toyes, *Amadis de Gaul*, *Palmerin de Oliva*, *the Knight of the Sunne*” and thus are “set on fire” (qtd. in Hackett, 2000, p. 66), and Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) in *The Christian State of Matrimony* (1541) warns that women should “not read fables of fond and light love” as “*Books of Robin Hood*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Troilus* and such like fables do but kindle in liars like lies and wanton love” (qtd. in Aughterson, 1995, p. 106). Roger Ascham (1515-1568) in *The Schoolmaster* (1564) rehearses the cultural assumption regarding the gender owing to its commitment to pleasure and aimless bloodshed: “bawdie bookes ... out of the Italian tonge, whereby ouer many yong willes and wittes allured to wantonnes, do now boldly contemne all seuere bookes that sounde to honestie and godlines ... as ... *Morte Arthure*: the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye” (1870, p. 80). Thomas Underdowne’s (1566-1587) preface to his translation of Heliodorus’ *Ethiopica* (1577) repeats Vives’s and Ascham’s interpretation of romance: “If I shall commend the reading of it to any, I might find other better to be commended ... *Morte Darthur*, *Arthur of Little Britain*, yea, and *Amadis of Gaule*, etc. account violent murder, or murder for no cause, manhood: and fornication and all unlawful lust, friendly love” (qtd. in Moore, 2000, p. 317). Jacques Amyot (1513-1593) criticizes romance because it has no pedagogical value and it is disconnected from reality. He believes that it cannot be an intellectual product because only those who are mentally unstable can write it. According to him, romances “are usually so dissonant and so removed from any resemblance to truth that they are more similar to the dreams of a sick man who raves in his fits of fever than to the inventions of a man of acumen and judgment ... [There is] no erudition, no knowledge of antiquity, nor a single thing, in truth, from which one may profit” (qtd. in Mentz, 2006, p. 34). Even Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*, one of the most widely read fictions of the Renaissance for almost two hundred years (Keenan, 2008, p. 197; Hadfield, 2010, p. 432; Wright, 1958, p. 389), is a target of criticism due to its sensuous content: Henry Percy (1564-1632) cautions his son against women who read “an *Arcadia*, or some love discourses, to make them able to entertain a stranger upon a hearth in a Privy Chamber” (qtd. in Newcomb, 2004, p. 130). Thomas Powell (1572-1635) in *Tom of All Trades or The Plaine Path-way to Preferment* (1631) warns the patriarchs against it alike:

In stead of Song and Musicke, let them [daughters or wives] learne Cookery and Laundrie. And in stead of reading Sir Philip Sidneys *Arcadia*, let them read the grounds of good huswifery. I like not a female Poetresse at any hand. Let greater personages glory in their skill in musicke, the posture of their bodies, their knowledge in languages, the greatnesse, and freedome of their spirits: and their arts in arreigning of mens affections, at their flattering faces. This is not the way to breed a private Gentlemans Daughter (qtd. in Hackett, 2000, p. 106).

In the same year with Powell, Wye Saltonstall (1602-1640) in *Picturæ Loquentes* (1631) expresses the dangers of the genre for young girls: “she reades now loves historyes as *Amadis de Gaule* and the *Arcadia*, & in them courts the shaddow of love till she know the substance” and he advises them to “shun such pleasure/As doth pervert the mind by strong temptation” (qtd. in Hackett, 2000, p. 107). Charles Cotton (1630-1687) in a poem, likewise, represents *Arcadia* as a sensuous text:

The happy Object of her [the nymph] Eye  
Was Sidney’s living Arcady;  
Whose amorous tale had so betray’d  
Desire in this all-lovely Maid;  
That, whilst her Cheek a blush did warm,  
I read Loves story in her form:  
And of the Sisters the united grace,

Pamela's vigour in Philoclea's Face (Garrett, 1996, p. 259).

It is evident that romance and women's engagement with it were associated with unchastity and sensuality. The anxiety that romance might incite feelings, desires and thoughts other than what the patriarchy allows was adequate enough to label the genre improper, -even dangerous- for the female sex. Likewise, the assumption that the genre has no instructional value fed the fear that women would deviate from the patriarchal teachings and abandon their religious, familial, and domestic duties. In other words, it was thought that women, who would be triggered by its erotic, heroic and adventurous content, would deny their culturally determined roles and eventually threaten/disrupt the patriarchal hierarchy. If romance itself and women who read it were unacceptable at all, those who were engaged in writing activities were thought to be worse. As Ferguson states, a woman was only thought to be "a docile user of the pen who follows men's instructions and spends most of her writing time copying men's (or the Bible's) words" (1996, p. 154). That is, female writing was thought to be complementary to the patriarchy, and women were allowed to write only within the boundaries of patriarchal and religious teachings.

### **The function of romance for female authors**

Romance, indeed, for women, had the effect and function the patriarchy was anxious about. The female author, aware of her subordinate position, became "an agent, capable of negotiating her marginal position and of intervening creatively in a masculine discursive system" (Pacheco, 2002, p. xv), and she could "insist on her own agency" (DeZur, 2014, p. 111) through romance. Anna Weamys, likewise, oppressed by religious and social impositions as a seventeenth-century woman, must have found an opportunity to intervene into male literary tradition through *A Continuation* as its author. Focusing on women and their experiences, and foregrounding female characters Sidney did not give priority to not only serve for her "a kind of staging area" (Teskey, 1989, p. 7) where she can propose fresh ideas and solutions to women's problems, but they also reflect how she -as an early modern woman- perceived women and their social environment. In other words, given that romance functions as "a locus in which [she] can validate female experience" and in which she can "decry the fundamental injustice of the patriarchal society that condemns [women]" (Boro, 2009, p. 195), *A Continuation* turns out to be an "oppositional genre" (Krontiris, 1988, p. 26) and provides a venue for "reflecting on gender constraints" (Newcomb 129) for Weamys. It, indeed, enables her to dismantle Sidney's masculine hierarchy through which she grasps "a kind of authorial power" (Kinney, 2009, p. 208).

On the other hand, it is necessary to point out that if women taking up the pen had created anxiety in men, Weamys must have equally felt "the anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984, p. 51) because the dedication to the Perpoint sisters that precedes the text manifests her feeling that she has intruded into a domain she does not belong to: "If I had not observed that the greatest humilitie, reigns in the bosoms of the Noblest Personages, I should not presume to Dedicate *this most unworthie Fabrick* to your Honours; especially when I consider the *poorness of my endeavours* ... my ambition was not raised so high a pitch ... until I received Commands from those that cannot be disobeyed" (Weamys, 1994, p. 109) [emphasis added]. Gilbert and Gubar believe that it is "an anxiety built from complex and often only barely conscious fears of that authority which seems to the female artist to be by definition inappropriate to her sex" (1984, p. 51). Weamys, likewise, seems to be aware that what she attempts to deviates from her socially determined role since writing was considered to be an engagement solely belonging to men at the time, and she therefore, either underestimates her writing skills -she adopts the modesty topos typical to female authors of her time- or, she argues to have been forced to write.

When Gilbert and Gubar scrutinized this anxiety on the part of the female writers of the nineteenth century in their seminal work *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), they started with a question: “Is a pen a metaphorical penis?” (1984, p. 3). The answer was supposed to be in the affirmative because, in the dichotomous relationship between women and men, men were associated with culture and women with nature. Women were thought to be biological reproducers while men reproduced culture. That is, women used their womb for reproduction while men employed the pen to sustain culture and society. The rule was valid for literature too: “Male sexuality ... is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poet’s pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis” (1984, p. 4). In other words, it was men who beget literature. Gilbert and Gubar stated that “the patriarchal notion that the writer ‘fathers’ his text just as God fathered the world is and has been all-pervasive in Western literary civilization” (1984, p. 4). They further remarked that “the text’s author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. More, his pen’s power, like his penis’s power, is not just the ability to generate life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays claim” (1984, p. 6). That is, the text was the child of a man, or a man possessed the text. What is more, if he had the ownership of the text, he was also the “owner/possessor of the subjects of his text, that is to say of those figures, scenes, and events -those brain children” (1984, p. 7). He became the master, the owner, the father over the text simultaneously. Women picking up the pen, therefore, were threat to man and his duly-authorized status as the owner of the text. Within the framework of an assumption that the pen is a metaphorical penis, Gilbert and Gubar asked how women could produce literature.<sup>2</sup> After all, women were always seen as mothers to children but never to the texts. Reading, writing and thinking were “by definition male activities” and “inimical to ‘female’ characteristics” (1984, p. 8). Accordingly, “the pen has been defined as not just accidentally but essentially a male ‘tool,’ ... not only inappropriate but actually alien to women” (1984, p. 8). Women were supposed to remain in domestic sphere giving birth to children only. Those who disobey were thought to have “grotesquely crossed boundaries dictated by Nature” (1984, p. 8). It is seen that women had no chance but to steal the pen from its so-called rightful owners. Gilbert and Gubar, indeed, defines female speech “angry revolt against male domination” (1984, p. 35) accordingly.

Moreover, it was not only the matter of who possessed the text. The content of male texts victimized and underestimated women as well. Women were represented to be submissive or weak if they are angel-like or monstrous if they have some power. Female authors, therefore, had to transcend the images of angel or monster in their works. As Gilbert and Gubar stated, “women in patriarchal societies have historically been reduced to *mere* properties, to characters and images imprisoned in male texts” (1984, p. 12) [emphasis in the original]. Those women who pick up the pen, thus, had to go out of “the glass coffins of patriarchy” (1984, p. 44) and rehabilitate their public image by representing themselves in contradistinction to the patriarchal assumptions of femininity.

Since both patriarchy and its texts subordinate and imprison women, before women can even attempt that pen which is so rigorously kept from them they must escape just those male texts which ... deny them the autonomy to formulate alternatives to the authority that has imprisoned them and kept them from attempting the pen (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984, p. 13).

Women, in other words, had to fight against their representation in male texts that deny them agency, power, perseverance, intelligence, or solidarity. They had to negotiate with the stereotypical representation of femininity imposed by male vision. Gilbert and Gubar believed that by the end of the eighteenth century, “women were not only writing, they were conceiving fictional worlds in which

<sup>2</sup> “Where does such an implicitly or explicitly patriarchal theory of literature leave literary women? If the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate texts?” (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984, p. 7)

patriarchal images and conventions were severely, radically revised” (1984, p. 44). Despite the unfavourable cultural interpretation of romance and female authorship during the Renaissance, it was Anna Weamys who turned out to be the one to take up the challenge, to produce her only work and complete Sir Philip Sidney’s unfinished romance *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* as early as the first half of the seventeenth century.

### A woman taking up the pen: Anna Weamys

A popular romance by a popular courtier, Sidney’s *Arcadia* was widely read in England “running through thirteen editions in the century after its original appearance in 1593” (Hobby, 1988, p. 89). Sidney wrote the *Old Arcadia*, which consisted of five books, earlier than the *New Arcadia*. In the *New Arcadia*, a revision of the *Old Arcadia*, which was composed of three books, he followed the original plotline while he also added new episodes and reshaped some narratives. The product of an arduous work, it broke off mid-sentence due to Sidney’s untimely death in 1586. This incomplete text was published in 1590. In the posthumously published 1593<sup>3</sup> *Arcadia*, a merger of the *Old Arcadia* and the *New Arcadia*, Sidney invited the reader to continue his text (the original ending of the older version):

But the solemnities of these marriages, with the Arcadian pastorals, full of many comical adventures happening to those rural lovers; the strange stories of Artaxia and Plexirtus, Erona and Plangus, Hellen and Amphialus, with the wonderful chances that befell them; the shepherdish loves of Menalcas with Kalodulus’s daughter; the poor hopes of the poor Philisides in the pursuit of his affections; the strange continuance of Claius and Strepthon’s desire; lastly, the son of Pyrocles, named Pyrophilus, and Melidora, the fair daughter of Pamela by Musidorus, who even at their birth entered into admirable fortunes; may awake some other spirit to exercise his pen in that wherewith mine is already dulled (1907, p. 630) [emphasis added].

Even though Sidney employed the male possessive adjective to invite the authors to continue his romance, Weamys, whose text was one of the three sequels written, was the only woman to take up the pen.<sup>4</sup> She benefited from Sidney’s romance as “a flexible template for her own independent fiction” (Hackett, 2000, p. 109) and completed the unfinished episodes of her selection based on a female perspective. Owing to her act of writing and her employing the genre particularly unfavourable for women, Weamys’s *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney’s Arcadia* (1651) is “an important landmark in the history of women’s writing” (Travitsky, 1996, p. 253).<sup>5</sup>

The significance of Weamys’s act is obvious in that even the stationer’s note that precedes the text reiterates the cultural assumption prevalent in the seventeenth century. He does not think of Weamys’s text an original production, but one whose true value originates from its first author:

Marvel not to find Heroick Sidney’s renowned Fansie pursued to a close by a Feminine Pen: Rather admire his propheticall spirit now as much, as his Heroical before ... Sir Philip’s fantasie incarnate ... In brief, no other than the lively Ghost of Sidney, by a happie transmigration, speaks through the organs of this inspired Minerva (Weamys, 1994, p. 110).

<sup>3</sup> “In 1593, under the aegis of Sidney’s sister, the Countess of Pembroke, a composite edition was published in five books: the two-and-a-half book fragment of the *New Arcadia* was completed by the last two-and-a-half acts of the *Old Arcadia* ... The composite text of 1593 was left with a narrative gap between the two sections: the *New Arcadia* section breaks off in mid-sentence with Pyrocles fighting Anaxius, and the *Old Arcadia* section begins with the safe return of Philoclea and Pamela to their father’s house” (Cullen, 1994, p. xxxvi).

<sup>4</sup> Gervase Markham and Richard Beling were the other authors who continued the work and they wrote *The English Arcadia, Alluding his Beginning from Sir Philip Sidney’s Ending* (1607 and 1613) and *A Sixth Book to the Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (1624) respectively (Moore, 2000, pp. 322-23).

<sup>5</sup> Its importance also stems from the fact that it is “the second piece of original prose romance” (Hager, 2005, p. 419) written by an Englishwoman (the first one is Lady Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*).

The stationer argues that the romance should not be regarded a female product, but in which Weamys passively transmits what Sidney created earlier. Likewise, one of the commendatory poems written by James Howell underestimates her authorship. Even though he seems to celebrate Weamys's work, he covertly praises Sidney's art:

If a Male Soul, by Transmigration, can  
Pass to a Female, and Her spirits Man,  
Then sure some sparks of Sydney's soul have flown  
To flames, for 'tis the course of Enthean fire  
To warm by degrees, and brains to inspire (Weamys, 1994, p. 115).

Howell celebrates Weamys in appearance, but he does thus only "upon her *additional*s to Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*" (Weamys, 1994, p. 115) [emphasis added]. It is seen that both the stationer and Howell underrate Weamys's authorial agency by making use of the transmigration metaphor. On the other hand, despite its somewhat misleading title, as Cullen states, Weamys is "no mere docilely derivative women writer appending herself to a man's work" (1994, p. xliii), but her act of writing is an important attempt to carve an autonomous space within male literary tradition. What is more, it should be kept in mind that, even if Weamys's work is considered to be a continuation, it can still "challenge the authority of a single author" (Simonova, 2015, p. 8) as it includes episodes, incidents, dialogues, characters, ideas, and viewpoints absent in the source text.<sup>6</sup> In other words, it not only shows that Weamys has first read Sidney's work and decided to complete it afterwards, but it also demonstrates that her attempt blurs the distinction between passively consuming a text simply by reading it and actively producing another one by taking up the pen. In this sense, taking into consideration the cultural appreciation of romance and the initial attempts to downplay her literary skill, it would be safe to argue that Weamys tries to establish her literary authority as a female author and shatter Sidney's hegemony over the text by writing *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia*. Spiller likewise avers that Weamys "articulates her own theory of romance ... through her refusal to create a relationship with Sidney" and she thereby "demonstrates her own skills as a reader and writer of romance" (2000, p. 243).

First of all, that Weamys aims to assert her authorial agency is observable when she writes down a background for each character:

In the time that Basilius King of Arcadia, with Genecea his Queen, and his two renowned daughters, the Paragons of the Wold, Pamela and Philoclea, were retired from the Court to a private lodge amongst the shepherds, there to fresh themselves with their pleasant & harmless sports. In the time that Pyrocles, son and heir to the good Evarchus King of Macedon, disguised himself to an Amazonian Ladie, for the love of his Venus, the sweet Philoclea. And Musidorus Prince of Thassalia disrobed himself of his glorious raiment, and put on Shepherds weeds, for the sight of the stately Pamela (Weamys, 1994, p. 117).

Introduction to the characters, though briefly, which proves her determination to surpass his dominance over the text, eliminates the obligation to read Sidney's *Arcadia* earlier than Weamys's *A Continuation* to learn about the previous incidents. What is more, that Weamys privileges female characters slightly neglected such as Mopsa, Helena, and Urania and inserts Philisides into the narrative only to kill him within a page both reinforces her position as a female author and reveals her literary intentions. That is, she establishes her literary authority not only by giving voice and providing agency to female characters

<sup>6</sup> "The narratives from the *New Arcadia* Weamys continues are these: Plangus's love for Erona; Helen's love of Amphialus, Claius's and Strephon's love of Urania; the tale of Mopsa; and the love of Philisides. These narratives compromise Weamys's selection of her Sidneian past" (Cullen, 1994, p. xliii).

formerly silenced or sneered at by Sidney but also by doing away with him by the end of her romance. Indeed, as Cullen aptly suggests, “Weamys’s having the fragment of a male precursor as the main source for her ‘continuation’ [should] not inevitably suggest an especially feminine subservience” (1994, pp. xxxi-xxxii). That is, given that Weamys’s act is dissident in the seventeenth century cultural context, what she aims at should not be disregarded as “a choice of female aesthetic docility” (Cullen, 1994, p. xxxii). Rather, it should be regarded a significant move -both in terms of her and the history of women’s writing- because Weamys thereby “places her self on the same stage as the ‘learned Sidney’” (Cullen, 1994, p. xxxii). In this sense, it would not be wrong to state that Weamys’s romance is also a “feminist rebuke” (Simonova, 2015, p. 202) to Sidney’s *Arcadia*.

Weamys establishes her literary authority as a female author by means of the servant Mopsa whom Sidney formerly mutes. Her re-fashioning Mopsa enables her to interrogate the cultural assignments that oppress women based on gender and class because, a woman and a servant at once, Mopsa represents the least privileged section of the society. Mopsa is the daughter of Miso and Dametas who are King Basilius’s servants in Sidney’s *Arcadia*. She is so ugly that her appearance is ridiculed with a poem. She is the opposite of ideal feminine beauty with “her hair like Crapal stone” and “her mouth heav’nly wide” (Sidney, 1907, p. 14). She is not given the right to tell a story, either. When the princesses Pamela and Philoclea and the servants Miso and Mopsa decide to tell stories to each other, they “draw cuts” (Sidney, 1907, p. 198) to choose who will recount the next story. Even though Mopsa picks the shortest straw, as soon as she starts her story, she is interrupted by Philoclea to recount it another time. Lamb remarks that women “are not allowed to talk for very long” (1990, p. 94) in *Arcadia*, and “despite its sympathy for women, the *New Arcadia* conveys a strong sense of the danger of women’s speech” (1990, p. 90). Mopsa, likewise, who belongs to the lowest stratum of the society, is silenced by the princesses. Weamys, in *A Continuation*, on the other hand, gives Mopsa the right to speak. She thereby “subverts the traditional power structure as seen in the *Arcadia* in which men tell stories to women ... and women’s stories are often cut short” (Campbell, 2006, p. 182).

Mopsa recounts a mini romance in which there is a reciprocal love between a maiden and a knight. Giving agency to female characters such as the nymphs who abduct the knight, a maiden who freely consummates love and goes on a quest to save her beloved, the aunts who provide her with the nuts, and an old woman who instructs her, Mopsa turns the patriarchal culture of seventeenth century in which men are always known to be powerful, intelligent and brave, upside down. In other words, Mopsa becomes the spokesperson for Weamys through whose story-telling she voices her proto-feminist concerns. Mopsa’s mini romance not only reverses the gender roles, but it also plays with one of the most representative generic conventions of romance: there are no damsels in distress, but there is a knight in trouble captured and helplessly waiting to be saved. Weamys, by means of providing Mopsa with the chance to talk Sidney denies her earlier, builds her own narrative free from his influence, and she thus proves her authority as a female author who celebrates -and gives importance to- female achievement, female agency, and female solidarity.

The story of Helena and Amphialus privileges the female character alike, and thus helps Weamys reinforce her position as a female author. In Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Helena has unrequited love for Amphialus who is in love with Philoclea. The love triangle she is captivated by leads to tragic consequences since she desperately falls in love with Amphialus when he, indeed, woos her on behalf of Philoxenus. Upon a fatal misconception, Amphialus murders his friend Philoxenus and his father Timotheus, and leaves Corinth. Unable to do without him, Helena decides to follow Amphialus straightaway: “for this cause have I left my country, putting in hazard how my people will in time deal



by me, adventuring what perils or dishonours might ensue, only to follow him who proclaimeth hate against me” (Sidney, 1907, pp. 54-55). It is seen that Helena -as a quick-tempered, impetuous, irrational, and passionate woman- has the negative personal traits traditionally accorded to women to evince their so-called inferiority to men by the patriarchal culture. She also proves to be an inefficient queen as she cannot think wisely or act responsibly.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, before she falls in love with Amphialus, she derides marriage which, according to her, stands for submission: “I as then esteeming myself born to rule, and thinking foul scorn willingly to submit myself to be ruled” (Sidney, 1907, p. 54). Interestingly enough, her arrogance that she would never submit turns into obedience when she blindfoldedly follows Amphialus. In other words, Sidney seems to punish her owing to her irresponsible behaviour, and her arrogance. She is also represented to be a helpless woman who only cries over Amphialus’s wounded body:

With that the body moving somewhat, and giving a groan, full of death’s music, she fell upon his face, and kissed him, and withal cried out; “O miserable I, that have only favour by misery;” and then would she have returned to a fresh career of complaints, when an aged and wise gentleman came to her ... and withal, that it was fitter to show her love in carrying the body to her excellent surgeon, first applying such excellent medicines as she had received of him for that purpose, rather than only show herself a woman-lover in fruitless lamentations (Sidney, 1907, p. 414) [emphasis added].

She perpetuates the cultural assumptions regarding women when she helplessly complains and laments. She cannot figure out what to do until “an aged and wise gentleman” -who embodies reason and experience contrary to Helena’s hysteria and inexperience- appears and instructs her to cure his wounds. The narrative finishes at that point. It is seen that Sidney does not provide Helena with the chance to be happy, to act responsibly, or to correct her mistakes.

Weamys, on the other hand, shatters Sidney’s patriarchal-oriented narration in her version of Helena. She invalidates the patriarchal assumption that women cannot think reasonably. Contrary to Sidney who represents Helena as an incompetent ruler and a helpless woman, Weamys portrays her as one who is attentive to her surroundings. For instance, the moment Clytiffon arrives at Corinth, people start to gossip while Helena “whose *watchfull* eyes and *attentive* ears could not pass by any suspicious whisperings, but [who] would always make *strict enquire* of the cause of them” (Weamys, 1994, p. 132) [emphasis added] monitors their reaction. Moreover, although she is in love with Amphialus, she succeeds in controlling her feelings as expected of a responsible ruler: “this [Philoclea and Amphialus’ marriage] *fancie* of Helena made such a wound within her breast, that a thousand of sighs had free passage there, and in silence she did think out her complaints” (p. 133). She evolves into an even-tempered, mature woman who can “moderate” how she feels “within the bounds of reason” (p. 134). She also turns out to be the person to look after Amphialus:

When Helena had convened her beloved Amphialus to her renowned Citie Corinth, and lodged him in the richest furnished Chamber that could be devised, yet all she thought too mean for such an incomparable Guest: then she advised with her skillfull Chyrurgeons how she might have his wounds healed; and had always an especial care to see the salves applied to them her self (pp. 129-30).

It is notable Helena decides to take care of Amphialus without any external instruction. The absence of an experienced male figure Sidney holds -most probably stemming from the assumption that women

<sup>7</sup> In this sense, Sidney is likely to agree with John Knox (1513-1572) in which he argues in *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558) that female rule is against natural and cultural order: “To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city is repugnant to nature; contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance, and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice” (Orlin, 2009, p. 132).

cannot make decisions themselves but always need advice- is a significant narrative detail as Weamys excludes such a character deliberately to stress Helena's agency.

It is known that it is Helena who restores Amphialus's health in Weamys's text. Moreover, although she suffers from unrequited love, she is not desperate but plans to win Amphialus. She successfully handles the situation she is in, and she writes a letter to Philoclea, her rival in Sidney's *Arcadia*, in which she seeks compassion for him: "let me therefore intreat you to shew your compassion to him by mildness, and suffer his punishment, may be sincere affection to me; and you will infinitely above measure oblige your devoted servant" (p. 137). Philoclea, in return, "command[s] [Amphialus] to put in execution Helena's demands" (p. 142):

I humbly crave of you not to refuse Beautie and Honor when it is so virtuously presented to you by the famous Queen Helena, whose love-lines surpasses all others. Therefore if you esteem of me, prove it by entirely loving of her, who, I am sure, will endow you with all such blessings as may enrich your contentment. And now with full satisfaction, that you will grant me my request, I close up these abrupt lines (p. 145).

It is seen that much as Weamys makes use of the same topic, the love triangle empowers women while Amphialus's independence is restricted. Not being exposed to an arranged marriage, Helena is granted the option to marry the person she is in love with. In other words, Weamys rewards Helena who is previously punished and not given the chance to be happy by Sidney. The episode also promotes female solidarity. Represented to be Helena's rival in Sidney's version, Philoclea turns out to be the one who helps Helena. Their rivalry-evolved-into-friendship thereby helps Weamys communicate the message that women should support each other to create opportunities to realise their wishes. According to Cullen, "if Weamys were a Victorian woman novelist, we might find her emphasis on marriage and sentiment subservient and conventional, but in her own historical context, marriage and romance have at least the potential to be empowering: they are the agency for her appropriation of a masculine text" (1994, p. xliii). In this sense, Helena the triumphant, who eventually marries Amphialus, indicates her literary authority that circumvents Sidney's romance. Refashioning Helena as an able woman, Weamys also reveals her concerns as to seventeenth century women's problems.

The episode of Claius, Strephon and Urania also helps Weamys reinforce her literary authority over Sidney's material. Weamys utilizes the source text only to exploit Sidney's version. In *Arcadia*, Urania is the absent heroine who only functions as a vehicle for Claius and Strephon to emphasize their unbreakable friendship and unrequited love for Urania. Their relationship constitutes a Petrarchan pattern: Urania is chaste, beautiful, and unattainable; Claius and Strephon passionately chase her.<sup>8</sup> While the suitors are able to express their love by turns, Urania is mute and she is even physically absent in the text. The shepherds lament over her departure but they do not tell who she is, where or why she has gone.

On the other hand, Weamys's *A Continuation* foregrounds the neglected character, and contrary to Sidney who merely employs her for ornamental purposes, Weamys recounts Urania's story and provides reasons for her acts. It is not the shepherds or their love but Urania's experience is the focus of the

<sup>8</sup> CLAIUS: "I pray thee, Strephon, if these glorious shows / Of courts admired greatness, do not close / Thy mind from former thoughts, where can thy lays / Find other subject than Urania's praise? / Or, dost thou fondly think, thou wert to blame / To breathe among these lords Urania's name? / Or, is it certain that her flames in thee / Are quenched, that lately doubled were in me?" (Sidney, 1907, p. 672)

STREPHON: "Nor so, nor thus; that verse I last day made, / As with my flock I sat in Hestar's shade: / I studied it, yet all ray study was, / I vow, to strive to let Urania pass. / For 'twas the only name my pen would write, / My thoughts imagine, or my lips indite. / Am I not bold when night's vast stage is set. / And all the stars and heavenly audience met. / To speak my mind, while their bright twinkling flame / Seems to rejoice to hear Urania's name?" (Sidney, 1907, p. 673)

episode. Urania is still as beautiful as to make Claius and Strephon fall in love with her. The shepherds are “both slaves to Urania’s piercing Eyes” (Weamys, 1994, p. 170) and they follow her with “eyes fixed on her in celestial admiration” (p. 168). In *Arcadia*, there is no information as to why Urania leaves home, but Weamys -to shatter the Petrarchan fashion of cold, distant and cruel woman in the first place- underlines that Urania “retired into solitarie Groves ... studying for the probablest Antidotes that might cure their distempers” (p. 175). It is further learnt that she escapes from the shepherds because “it hath been always contrarie to [her] chaste disposition, to accept the least motion concerning a married life” (p. 171). In other words, her intentional escape from being courted or getting married is suggestive of a “struggle to avoid the constructing of sexual relations by patterns of domination and submission” (Waller, 1991, p. 55). Given that both patriarchal practices and Petrarchan love suppress women and the female voice, the solution Weamys provides Urania with turns out to be voluntary isolation and to remain single.

On the other hand, it would be too unrealistic a solution even for Weamys to bestow Urania with bachelorhood considering the seventeenth century culture. Urania is forced into an arranged marriage by her parents to marry Antaxius, “the wealthy Hearsman” (Weamys, 1994, p. 183). She is given the chance to express her reluctance:

Too great a burden for me to bear oppresses me, Antaxius is too officious in his love, I wish he were more calm; my Parents rigor is too intolerable, unless by disobedience had been palpable; I have never offended them wilfully, no not in this their desired Match, except they interpret my silence for a refusal, that being the onely symptom of my discontent, nor do I reveal my affection to any but thee my Sparrow (p. 181).

Even though she is not willing to marry, Urania is compelled by her parents to get married. As well as parental oppression, she is kidnapped by Antaxius from whom she manages to escape, and she is abducted by a “Knight named Lacemon, who violently carrie[s] her away from her sheep” (p. 187). She is also able to escape from him who would try to realise “so heinous a trespass” (p. 188) upon her chastity. The young shepherd Lalus compels her to courtship alike. Weamys does not produce so transgressive a character because Urania is married by the end of the story as expected of a conventional romance heroine, but her resistance to Claius and Strephon initially, and to Antaxius, Lacemon and Lalus afterwards still indicates that she has “a certain element of autonomy in her character” (Dorrego, 2002, p. 71). In other words, however traditional Urania might seem, she is not simply a passive woman as she is in Sidney’s text given that Weamys delivers the reasons behind her action. If Weamys had not included abduction stories, Urania may have been qualified a weak and incapable woman, but she builds up the narrative so neatly and reasonably that marriage seems to be the best and the cleverest choice Urania can make. As Mitchell and Osland also state, “Urania’s actions consistently demonstrate a keen sense of pragmatism, rather than passivity or inaction” (2005, p. 79). While Sidney celebrates the Petrarchan love and its ennobling influence over suitors, Weamys is sensitive to women and their problems. Through the Urania episode, she both criticises the patriarchal culture that does not let women act individually and foregrounds the oppressive practices they have to endure. In *Arcadia*, Urania is an allegorical, absent character who simply serves to the interests of her suitors and to the author who generates her, but in *A Continuation*, she becomes a pragmatic one trying to choose the best for her own benefit among the few possibilities she has. Weamys, by re-fashioning Urania as an astute person and the protagonist of her story, both manifests her concerns *as a woman* and shatters Sidney’s auxiliary characterisation of her *as an author*.

Last but not least, that Weamys aims to surpass Sidney's literary dominance is documented when she deliberately situates him into the narrative. It is known that Philisides is one of the pseudonyms Sidney used (Simonova, 2015, p. 49; Campbell, 2006, p. 195). One might reckon that Weamys incorporates him into the text in order to pay "a personal tribute" (Simonova, 2015, p. 50), and thus, her act might be seen "memorial and celebratory" (Cullen, 1994, p. liv). What is interesting is that Philisides dies almost as soon as he appears in the text. His death is recorded as follows: "before the Sun had fully dried it, there was found Philisides the despairing Shepherd dead, yet not by other practices than a deep melancholy that over-pressed his heart" (Weamys, 1994, p. 195). One might also think that Philisides dies because he is unmarried and he cannot unite with his beloved. It seems reasonable as the other single character also dies in the end. However, the option that he is killed to complete an unfinished story is not plausible since Philisides shows up in the text only once. That is, he is basically an unnecessary character for the plotline. On the other hand, given that Philisides stands for Sidney, who is the source of Weamys's topic, and thus "carries an emblematic weight" (Simonova, 2015, p. 49), it is arguable that Weamys includes him in the romance only to reinforce her literary authority. In other words, Philisides's death turns out to be meaningful as he inevitably faces death to manifest Weamys's authorial power because although Weamys is inspired from the Sidneian text to produce her own, his death by the end of the text shatters his dominance and emblematic significance over the text. Indeed, given that the pen is equal to penis, when she picks up the pen, she steps on a male territory aiming at not biological but cultural production, and thus, she symbolically castrates him by downplaying his emblematic importance over the text. She thereby evolves into an autonomous, if not 100 % per cent authentic, author from the mimetic one whom Sidney is thought to transmigrate. Cullen, likewise, is of the opinion that Philisides is a deliberate addition within the scope of "an agonistic literary tradition" in which "the strong poet is murdered by the belated one, her triumph over his incompleteness asserted by the emphatic completeness of her own multiple endings" (1994, p. liv). Both by killing the character that stands for Sidney in the text and by providing textual closure he cannot achieve, Weamys the *subordinate* author surpasses Sidney the *master* author. She thereby establishes her literary authority as a female author who does not write a simple appendage to a masterpiece but who "re-initiates the act of writing the *Arcadia*" (Cullen, 1994, p. xl).

### Conclusion

*A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia* grants Anna Weamys the opportunity to deal with seventeenth century women's problems and to propose behavioural patterns for women different from what the patriarchal culture would assent to. Even though the romance is "especially vulnerable to being misconstrued: first, as 'only' a 'continuation'; second, as 'only' the product of female aesthetic passivity and conservatism" (Cullen, 1994, p. xxx), it is safe to conclude that *A Continuation* is an independent romance and a bold intervention into male literary culture. If its value *firstly* stems from the fact that it concretizes Weamys's presence as an author because the way she develops the plot removes the necessity to know about Sidney's text beforehand, *A Continuation's* primary importance lies behind the concerns of its author *as a woman* -among the coterie of male authors- who privileges issues related to women and the formerly unfavourable characters Mopsa, Helena and Urania helping them rise from "the glass coffin of the male-authored text" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984, p. 44). *A Continuation* as a romance written by a female pen and Anna Weamys as a woman taking up the pen challenge the cultural inscriptions, demonstrate that man is not the sole owner of the text, and that the pen is not a metaphorical penis as early as the seventeenth century. As it is expressed in the commendatory poem written by Frances Vaughan, Weamys encourages women to transcend the Renaissance ideals of femininity:

Lay by your needles, ladies, take the pen,  
The only difference 'twixt you and men. (1994, p. 116)

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