

Introduction

Philip Sydney is regarded as one of the most august writers of the Elizabethan period. Some critics have even gone so far as to say that he is nearly as important as Shakespeare, and that the complete works of both should be read in order to have a full understanding of Elizabethan literature. (Donoghue 16:10-18:09). *Arcadia*, if not Sydney's magnum opus, is at least certainly his most dense piece of work. It is a massive, sprawling text, epic in scope, and with over two dozen major characters. Like Chaucer before him, Sydney was unable to complete this undertaking before his untimely death. Still, *Arcadia* inspired many authors who came after, including Shakespeare himself, as well as many others who were inspired to create their own romances.

One of those authors was a woman named Anna Weamys, who took it upon herself to write her own sequel to the unfinished *Arcadia*. It is the only piece of literature that she is known to have written. Her primary occupation was painting miniature portraits. Not much else is known about her other than she was the daughter of a clergyman named Lodowick Weamys (Collins).

In her continuation of *Arcadia*, she provides a resolution to several storylines left unfinished by Sydney, the culmination of which is a wedding where a number of the characters become engaged. One scholar has referred to this as "presenting narrative resolution as erotic union," which is something that I find intriguing (Moore 323). I cannot help but find parallels to the modern culture of fanfiction. I believe Weamys's work certainly fits under that description. It does not even have a title of its own. It is merely a "continuation" of something that came before.

Some tend to view fanfiction as a more recent development, where its origins date back to fan-made magazines based on popular characters and TV shows, going back no earlier than the Twentieth Century. But works like Weamys's prove that the tradition goes back much further. Depending on how loosely we want to define "fanfiction," it could be grown to encompass most if not all literature. But, even going by the strictest of definitions, Weamys's romance counts.

The focus on marrying the characters sticks out as particularly reminiscent of modern-day fanfiction writing. The preoccupation with relationships and certain characters becoming engaged to others is one of the most widespread attributes of fanfiction writing in the Internet age. As we can see, that desire traces back at least several centuries.

How should we view texts like Weamys's in relation to the works that they are derived from? Would someone be "incorrect" to view her continuation as a "canon" resolution to Sydney's original? Questions of canonicity are definitely a major point of contention in our modern pop culture world. Are the sequels to *Star Wars* made by the Disney Company a "real" continuation, even though they were not written by the original creator George Lucas? If it does not matter if the original author was involved, does that mean that anyone who posts their own ending to a story online is just as valid in their claims of "canonicity"? I myself tend to be of the mind that a work must have been written by (or at least authorized by) the original creator in order to attain "canon" status, but I can admit that such discussions are mostly frivolous to begin with.

Any reader wanting to dive into Weamys's story is recommended to have already read Sydney's original *Arcadia*. While the plot can still be mostly enjoyed on its own (and I have done my best to fill in the gaps where needed), it is clear that Weamys assumed that the reader

would already be familiar with what Sydney had written (it's called a continuation for a reason, after all). All that being said, Weamys's text is a fascinating artifact in the history of English prose storytelling and in the development of fanfiction culture.

By: Dakota James McIntyre

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A Continuation of Sir Philip Sydney's *Arcadia*.¹

Wherein is handled the Loves of *Amphialus* and *Helen* Queen of *Corinth*, Prince *Plangus* and *Erona*: With the History of the Loves of old *Claius* and young *Strephon* to *Urania*.

In the time that *Basilius* King of *Arcadia*, with *Genecea* his Queen, and his two renowned daughters, the Paragons of the World, *Pamela* and *Philoclea*, were retired from the Court to a private lodge amongst the shepherds, there to refresh themselves with their pleasant and harmless sports. In the time that *Pyrocles*, son and heir to the good *Evarchus* King of *Macedon*, disguised himself as an Amazonian Lady, for the love of his Venus, the sweet *Philoclea*. And *Musidorus* Prince of *Thassalia* disrobed himself of his glorions rayment, and put on Shepherds weeds, for the sight of the stately *Pamela*. And when *Cupid* displayed his quivers throughout his circle, and brought the famousest Princes in the world to adore his mother's beauty: Then Prince *Plangus*, son to the King of *Iberia*,² at the first view of *Erona*, a Queen in *Lydia*,³ was made a Prisoner to her who was a Prisoner. And he whose resolutions were altogether fixed on the rare beauty of *Erona*, resolved with himself, either to release his incomparable Jewel out of a doleful Prison, or else to lose his life in the enterprise.⁴

Then he became an humble suitor to *Artaxia*, Queen of *Armenia*, under whose custody the fair Lady was, telling her his life was bound up in *Erona's*. And then would he vow it was pity so sweet a creature should pass by the pleasures of her life in so solitary a place. And sometimes he would pray for her, and then again he would praise her. But *Artaxia* would no ways be persuaded to any compassion: the more he desired, the more she denied, which he perceiving, with a soft voice and deep sigh, he broke out into these words,

“Great Queen, if my grief and groans cannot mollify your heart, nor the remembrance that once I was your beloved Kinsman, nor yet the beauty of *Erona* can be a sufficient remedy to cure your anger; yet call to mind she was your royal Brother's Mistress;⁵ and can you imagine that he would have endured the thought that *Erona's* blood should so innocently be shed! No, but assure yourself, that whensoever a drop of it is spilt, out of his ashes there will rise a Revenger to root you out of your Kingdom.”

But *Artaxia* arose out of her throne with a graceful Majesty, and did protest she would be revenged on her brother's murderers:⁶ “For,” said she, “although my brother did love and honour

¹ Anna Weamys published this sequel to Philip Sydney's *Arcadia* in 1651, 65 years after Sydney's death in 1586. Sydney's version was not completed at the time of his death. *Arcadia* is a region in Greece that has come to be associated with a mythological utopian wilderness.

² An ancient kingdom centered in what is now the nation of Georgia.

³ An ancient kingdom in what is now western Anatolia.

⁴ Weamys begins her work with a short summary of the events of Sydney's original.

⁵ *Artaxia's* brother is *Tiridates*, the king of *Armenia*, who was rejected by *Erona*.

⁶ *Tiridates* was killed in a war he waged on *Lydia* after *Erona* rejected him.

Erona too well, yet her hate of him was the cause of his being slain, and of his subjects' overthrow. And Prince *Plangus*, if your affections be never so extremely set upon *Erona*, yet I am resolved to keep her life in my power. But because you shall have no occasion given you, to brand me with the title of Tyrant Queen, in the word of a Princess I do promise you, that if within two years after the day of my brother's death, you can procure Prince *Pyrocles* and *Musidorus* to accept of a combat against two others of my choosing, to obtain the liberty of *Erona*; if they overcome those Knights of my electing, that day shall *Erona* be at her own disposal: but if my Champions manifest their valour to that height, as to receive the victory, the same day *Erona's* body shall be consumed to ashes, and I shall endeavour to gratify their courage."

Plangus joyfully accepted of this proposition, since he could obtain no better. And well he knew the Princes cared not for their proud looks, nor feared the glittering of their swords; yet little did he know the craftiness of *Artaxia*. But such subtle Policy seldom ends with an happy conclusion.

And now in hopes of a prosperous journey, he bends his course towards *Greece*, there to deliver his message, upon which his life depended. But he had not travelled many days, before he had surprised a Letter, the superscription was to *Plaxirtus*, brother to *Leonatus* King of *Paphlagonia*;⁷ he without fear or dread, broke it open, and read it. He had no sooner perused it over, but that he wished it closed again. Then cried he out aloud, "Can it be possible? Is *Artaxia* such a deceitful Politician? Can her lips utter that which is so far at distance from her heart? And can flattering make her seem the less cruel? No sure, her very name will be hateful to all Posterity."

"See here," saith he to some of his servants that were with him, "see here a Letter from *Artaxia* to *Plexirtus*, how she praises him for a treacherous act, how she condoles with him for the death of *Pyrocles* and *Musidorus*, the two gloriousest Princes that ever lived in the world; how she promises him to end the Tragedy with a Comedy; she tells him the Gods set to their help to revenge her brother's death; and then she acknowledges herself and her Kingdom his, according to her proclamation."

Thus *Plangus* was breathing out his griefs, but had not altogether eased himself, before he was interrupted by a messenger, who not being accustomed to complements, came to him, and certified him that he came from *Armenia*, and that he was servant to that Nobleman, to whom *Artaxia* and he reposed so much confidence in, to intrust *Erona* to be under his charge; and that now, contrary to the Articles agreed upon between them, *Plaxirtus* had brought the news to *Artaxia* of the death of *Pyrocles* and *Musidorus*, which had been procured by his contrivance; and said he, "She hath married him in requital. And by this time he hath besieged my Lords Castle where *Erona* is confined. Then my Lord having intelligence of it, immediately sent me

⁷ An ancient region in north-central Anatolia.

after you, to let you understand that he was not furnished with conveniences well enough to hold out long: therefore as you love *Erona*, so come with speed to relieve her. Now I have finished my message, and I must be gone.” So with less reverence than he used when he came, he hastily went his way. *Plangus* being cast into such an astonishment, that he let him go at his pleasure, without so much as inquiring after *Erona's* welfare. But at length, he roused himself out of his amazement, and then would have poured out his soul in complaints, had he not espied his news-monger galloping almost out of his sight, then sending his eyes after him, he made a virtue of necessity, and contented themselves that they were spectators of the nimble Nag, which showed his unwillingness to rest his foot upon the ground, before he entered his native soil. This tempted *Plangus* to discover his fancy, which he did in these terms, certainly said he,

“There is a charm in Beauty, that Beast do homage to, and must obey; that now makes the Nag to trip so fast away to do *Erona* service. Shall I then be worse than a beast? no, although I cannot pass along with thee; yet my heart shall always keep before thee. And dear *Erona*, though now I turn my face from thee, yet my deeds shall always declare to be for thee, and shall endeavour to clear the clouds that now obscure thy brightness.”

Thus, between hope and despair, he mounted his horse, and commanding his servants to follow him, he resolved to go into *Macedon*,⁸ to report the news to *Evarchus*, of his son's and nephew's death. For he was persuaded that *Evarchus* would not be backward from bringing to due punishment the causers of his unspeakable loss. And by that means he thought he might handsomely show his valour, and prove it upon his Lady's enemies. Yet sometimes fears would make conspiracies within him, and almost overwhelm him, until he recalled his senses, and considered, that it was not a daunted spirit that could serve *Erona*. Then setting spurs to his horse, he travelled in a night and a day without once opening his lips; silence, in his opinion being the best companion to a troubled mind.

But at last he entered into the pleasant country of *Arcadia*, which was adorned with stately woods: No cries were heard there but of the lambs, and they in sport too sounded their voices to make their playfellow lambs answer them again in imitation of the like. And the abundance of shady trees that were there, were so beautiful with the sweet melody of birds, that any one, save love-sick *Plangus*, might think it a sufficient harmony to draw away their delight from any other vanity of the world. Besides, there were the Shepherds piping to their pretty Shepherdesses, whilst they cheerfully sang to pleasure them again. In this sweet place, he sat himself down, with an intention to rest his wearied limbs under a branched tree, whilst his servants refreshed themselves, and baited their horses, but no ease could be harboured in his disquieted heart, his eyes being no sooner closed, but that he imagined he saw *Erona* burning in their unmerciful fire: at which sight he staringly opened them, and determined with himself, that

⁸ Macedonia.

since sleep would procure no comfort to him, other then Tragical scenes, he would never enjoy any contentment before he had settled *Erona* in her throne in safety.

He had not been long in this perplexity, before he was kindly examined the cause of his sadness. *Plangus* hearing the question, and musing extremely who it should be that to his thinking should ask so strange an one, heaved up his head, which before he had carelessly held down, and seeing onely an ancient man attended by his two Daughters, and hoping he would be a companion suitable to his disposition, he courteously answered him, that it would be but a trouble to him to understand the occasion of his grief, “For,” said he, “it will be too melancholy a story to rehearse to you, unless you were in a capacity to help me.”

“It is possible I might do you service, replied the old man; for now you are in *Arcadia*, where I am King, and having retired from my Court to a private Lodge, which is seated in a Grove hardby,⁹ I with my two daughters, happening now to walk for recreation into this pleasant place, and I perceiving you being a stranger, lying in such a forlorn posture, I must confess it was incivility in me to disturb you, but my compassion would submit to no casualties that could hinder my desired knowledge. And now I hope it will be no inconvenience to you to relate your own History to me.”

But *Plangus*, with humble reverence excused his denial, and beseeched *Basilus* first to grant him his pardon, since it was a fault of ignorance, and not of perverseness. And that he promised himself, that he would choose rather to be his Surgeon to heal his wounds, than in the least to mar or make them.

Basilus would suffer him no longer to go on with his frivolous civilities, and telling him they should serve his turn, made him sit down. Then *Plangus* related all circumstances in the same manner, that afterward the divine *Philoclea* sweetly declared to her lover, the admirable *Pyrocles*. And believe me, she told it with more liveliness and quickness of wit, than *Plangus* did himself: For oftentimes his thought was strayed from his story, to sigh, with gazing upon the splendor of *Pamela* and *Philoclea*, for he conceited that in their beauties he might see *Erona*’s. But alas poor Prince! *Cupid* in that had blinded him, for although *Erona* might deserve a large share of praises, yet the two Sisters could not be paralleled. But when he had concluded his passionate relation, he earnestly craved release of *Basilus*: who answered him, that he governed a quiet and a peaceable Country, and that he should very unwillingly teach his people the way of dissention; but yet he would command a Guard of *Arcadians* to conduct him safe into *Macedon*.

Plangus, in lowly submission, congratulated with *Basilus* for that favour, believing that time and entreaty would amplify his goodness, according to his ability. Then as he was appointing a place where the *Arcadians* should meet him, his servants presented themselves to him, and certified him, that the day was far spent, and that it would be necessary for him to go to

⁹ beside it

the next town, and there to lodge that night. *Plangus*, very well liked of their advice, that he might have the more freedom to contrive his best way to act his part he had already begun to play. Then after they had ended their sundry discourses, he parted from *Basilius* and the two surpassing sisters.

Now *Erona's* beauty had grounded such an impression in his heart, that no other thought, but of her perfections, could enter into his. She was his Image, her he worshipped, and her he would forever magnify. And until he came near the City, he busied his fancy in extolling his Lady. But there he was received by the governor of the Town with as great gallantry as could be expected, considering the short warning *Basilius* gave them, there wanting no cost that might be pleasing either to his eye or taste. A stately supper being provided, which was garnished with a royal banquet, sent from *Basilius*; and all was finished in so gorgeous a manner, that *Plangus* did assure himself he was no ordinary, nor yet unwelcome Guest. But all the sweet music with the plenty of delicacies was no more to *Plangus*, than the remembrance of his own misfortune. Yet having a Princely care not to show himself unthankful to the meanest supporter of his undeserved Festivals, he would oftentimes praise them for their bounty to him a stranger, and one that was no way able to make them the least requital, but they replied, that his acceptance was as much, and more than they deserved or expected. Then after they had a good while parleyed together upon several occasions, the Citizens returned to their houses, and *Plangus* went to his lodging, then prostrating himself before *Cupid* for his happy success in fulfilling of his own desires, beseeched him to unite *Erona's* affection as firmly to him, as his was unmoveable to her; and that both might be so well preserved, that at length they might enjoy the happy fruition of real friendship between him and *Erona*, at whose name he ended; and as if he received his life from thence, he fell into a little slumber, which continued for so short a time, that when he awaked, the clouds were not separated to give way to the approaching day, that was then extremely wished for by him, who determined to spend the hour-glass of his life in defence of his esteemed mistress.

By that time he had run over his thoughts to the end of his intended enterprises, *Phebus*¹⁰ spread his beams over his curtains, which cast so great a reflection upon him, that though his eyes were still dissembling sleep yet the Sun's brightness made him gaze about him, and seeing it so sweet a morning, he believed it to be an emblem of his prosperous success. In this persuasion he arose, and charging his servants to be in a readiness, he walked into a Gallery, where multitudes stood waiting for his presence, he kindly saluting them, and repeating his former speeches of courtesy and gratitude, he commanded his man to bring out his Steed; and then taking his leave of the *Arcadians*, saving the residue which *Basilius* appointed to wait on him, he raised himself upon the beast, which gently received him as willing to bear so loved a burden, and sprightly ambled along: but *Plangus* was forced to hold his bridle, and teach his Nag his bounds were no further than his Commission, by reason of a calling from a young Shepherd, who

¹⁰ Apollo. God of the sun in Greco-Roman mythology.

speedily running to *Plangus*, and in a breathless manner he certified him that he was sent by his Lord *Basilius* to excuse his absence, the occasion being his retiredness to so private a place, that with no convenience he could entertain him there agreeable to his greatness, nor yet to remove so far so suddenly.

Plangus requested the Shepherd to return his thanks and obedience to his Sovereign, and seeing it was a matter of no greater importance, he would endure no longer hinderances, but set spurs to his horse and galloped away with all expedition: but not without some turbulent passages that he was fain to endure, before he could attain to his desired haven: yet at last he arrived under the Dominions of *Evarchus* in *Macedon*, where he was welcomed by a company of dolorous persons, who without entreaty would participate with him in his sorrows, but alas! there were few comforters, all the people seeming like shadows in regard of the miss they had of their young Prince, who after he had brought so many Kings in subjection under his prowess and valour, should now himself be lost, none knowing where or how; but perpetually hearkening to several relations, which put them into more fears and doubts every day than they were in before.

Musidorus wanted not bewailing neither; for well they knew *Pyrocles*' life was bound up in his, and that he loved and respected the *Macedonians* as much for *Pyrocles*' sake, as he did the *Thessalians* for his own sake, and that they learned one another virtuous qualities, which were equally distributed between them; therefore the whole Kingdom groaned under burdensome calamities for their witnessed loss: but by the entrance of *Plangus*, who was a stranger to them, their complaints were turned into whisperings, and their sighs into listenings, all being earnest to know who he was, and the cause of his Posting from city to city towards the Court. Some would believe the worst, and then would swear they did see sadness in his face; others would persuade themselves, it was his hasty travelling that made him seem careful. But *Plangus* not staying to hearken to their mistrustful uncertainties, kept on his former pace, till he was come within a mile of the Palace, where he was stopped by one *Kalodolus*, an ancient servant belonging to *Musidorus*, who hearing of the coming of a Foreigner, and infinitely longing to hear from his dear Master, and meeting *Plangus*, he fell down at his feet, and besought him to have commiseration upon him, and tell him of the safety of *Musidorus*.

This request silenced *Plangus* for a while, who could not imagine what reply to make to him: but having considered a little better of it, he broke his silence on this fashion. "Sir, it grieves me extremely that I cannot give you such satisfactory answer as I wish I could: however do not afflict yourself, for I dare assure you that he is happy, being a more glorious Prince, and far greater than all the Kingdoms of the World could make him."

"Why? Is he dead?" said *Kalodolus*. "Then all virtue is fled away: but I will follow thee *Musidorus*, where ere thou beest, I will not stay behind." Then snatching out a Rapier from him that was nearest him, he would have sent his soul to *Pluto*,¹¹ had it not been prevented by the

¹¹ Hades. God of the dead and the underworld in Greco-Roman mythology.

quick eye of *Plangus*, who apprehending his danger, leaped upon him, and with violence wrung the Rapier out of his hand, but yet he would not be pacified for a time, nor persuaded from practising his intended mischief, till reason over-swaying his patience, made him become a moderator of his own rashness; for said he, “What good can my death do to *Musidorus*? Shall I myself destroy, and do my Prince the wrong? No, I will live as long as fortune pleases, and guide my steps about the world, till I have found his Tomb, where I will solemnize such Obsequies as may be thought worthy to be titled the Funeral of so worthy a Prince. Then I will weep myself to tears upon his grave, to water that illustrious Plant, that certainly must needs spring up and flourish; for it is impossible so rare a thing can be obscured in the earth.”

Here *Kalodolus*’ speech was stopped by a flood, that would endure no longer to be hid within his aged carcass. And the noble *Plangus* answered him with sighs, as if his heart would break: then they both lookt so stedfastly in pity upon one another, that if a Painter had been present, he could not take, nor have a livelier Masterpiece of sorrow than this lover and servant represented, they being both void of comfort, and equally afflicted, until *Plangus* pluckt up his dead spirits, and advised *Kalodolus* to cease his complaints, and not to suffer grief to overrun his patience, for since *Musidorus* was dead, the only service he could do for him, was to help forward the revenging of the Actors in his death. And then he required him to direct him the way to *Evarchus*: which command *Kalodolus* instantly obeyed. And guiding him through stately Courts, paved all with Marble, and compassed in with Marble pillars, that were adorned with such goodly proportioned Statues, that had not *Plangus* been employed with matters of consequence, he would not so regardlessly have passed by them, without prying into their Story; which might perhaps have been beneficial unto him, to know the several tricks of warlike *Hercules*, as was there curiously engraven by famous Antiquaries. But *Plangus*’ thoughts were higher flown than these Portraits could reach to; those he valued like shadows in comparison of his valiant enterprises, that artificially his invention would lay before him, as if it were accomplished already. And in that unsatisfied persuasion he was brought to *Evarchus*, whose sight awakened him from his fabulous fantasy. And then with a sad reverence he kneeled down.

But the good King would not suffer that, but lifting him up, he entreated him to use no such ceremonies, but to discourse that which he earnestly wisht to know without any delays. So *Plangus* being extreme willing to fulfill *Evarchus*’ charge, though first to bring him by degrees to the hearing of those mournful tidings, he began with this Prologue:

“Most gracious Sir, did I not consider your wisdom in governing your passions, far surmounting other men’s, I should not so abruptly presume to be the messenger of such unfortunate news, as now I am. But since my life is hazarded in several respects, I know your goodness will no way persevere against me, for necessity hath no rule, and that is the reason which now enforces me to manifest that unto you, which I am loth to utter: But I assure my self, that your Majesty will no way despise the sovereign salve called Patience, that is a present Remedy for all afflictions.”