The *Continuation* by Anna Weamys (1631–1698) participates in a long and complex tradition of supplementing Philip Sidney’s romance, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*. Sidney’s text was the most widely read secular text of this period, going through 18 print runs between 1590 and 1660 (STC 22539 – Wing S3768), almost twice as many as Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (9 runs, STC 23080 – 23085) and Warner’s *Albion’s England* (6 runs, STC 25081 – 25084). It must also be remembered that the volume entitled *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* was, from 1598 onwards, actually a constantly expanding collection of works. At first this was limited to gathering Sidney’s own *Lady of May*, *Certain Sonnets*, *Astrophil and Stella*, and *Defence of Poesy* into a single volume, the only ‘collected works’ accorded to any author at the time other than Chaucer. Later, works by other authors which continued and complemented Sidney’s *Arcadia* were included in the volume by publishers determined to keep stoking the fires of Sidney’s popularity by offering constantly new and expanded versions of the text: these additions included William Alexander’s ‘bridging passage’ (1621, STC 22545, p. 326) which filled a gap in the middle of the narrative left unfinished at Sidney’s death, and a competing version of the same passage by James Johnson (1638, STC 22550, p. 625); a sequel, or sixth book, added by Richard Bellings (1628, STC 22547, p. 483); an index (1655, Wing S3768, sig. Iii6著名的); and the poems ‘A Remedy for Love’, which the printer claimed had been written by Sidney but ‘Heretofore omitted in the Printed Arcadia’ (1655, Wing S3768, sig. Iii4著名的). Alongside this, an astonishing number of translations, adaptations, imitations, annotations, and responses in the plastic arts attest to a continuous and lively audience to the text from the time of its first printing in 1590 until the Restoration. Moreover, this is a tradition which is initiated and sanctioned by Sidney himself at the end of his Arcadia, where he invites the reader to continue his romance:

> 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 Plexirturis, Erona and Plangus, Helen and Amphilaus, with the wonderful chances that befall them; the Shepherds and loves of Menalcas with Kalodulus daughter: the poor hopes of the poor Philisides in the pursuit of his affections; the strange continuance of Klauis and Strephon’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. (1593, STC 22540, p. 244)

Despite the desperate attempts of Sidney’s surviving friends and family to prevent others from adding to, imitating, and adapting the text, for fear that the public image of the text, the author, and his family might be affected, readers of Sidney took up his invitation to continue the text in great numbers. Sidney’s death at the age of 32 on the battlefield at Zutphen in the Netherlands, attempting to defend Dutch Protestant communities from the incursions of the Catholic Spanish, also added a political and religious touch to the public memory of him. In responding to Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Anna Weamys was entering into a long-established tradition with complex, but nevertheless definite, political and social connotations.
The recent edition of Weamys’s *Continuation* provides readers with a well-structured text with a scholarly apparatus and a modern-spelling text for ease of consultation. Its editor was, however, prevented by the large number of variant spellings of the authoress’s Scottish name from providing very much biographical information about her, and much more has now come to light, which can be briefly summarised here. Anna Weamys’s father, Lodowick Weamys, was the second son of the second son of David Wemyss, Baron Wemyss and Methil. He left Scotland for England in 1615, when he was enrolled as a fellow commoner at Queens’ College, Cambridge. He was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in 1621, and was made Doctor of Divinity in 1624. He was given a number of livings between 1622 and 1642, including the election in 1631 to a Prebendary of Westminster Abbey. Weamys claimed, in a legal document from the early 1640s, to be ‘one of the king’s chaplains’. During the time of this success, Lodowick Wemys married Jane Bargrove, who was related to Isaac Bargrove, another of King Charles’s chaplains, and Anne Weamys was born in 1631. She had one brother, James, who is mentioned in a legal document in the 1650s, but of whom no more is known, and possibly a sister, Jane, whose marriage is recorded in the 1660s. The good fortune of the family came to an end in the 1640s. After the outbreak of the civil war, witnesses were brought to testify in the House of Lords that Lodowycck Weamys had defamed parliament as ‘led by a few schismatistical lords and commons’. Weamys himself repeatedly refused summons to appear before the Lords, and he was subsequently deprived of his livings and an order was issued to commit him to the Fleet. Whether or not he was ever imprisoned is unsure, although he was free again in 1645 when he was in Oxford with the king. During this time his wife and children were left to fend for themselves, and there are a number of petitions in the records of both houses in which Jane Bargrove Wemyss at first bargains and then begs to have at least some of her husband’s income restored to her so that she is not reliant on the charity of others. By the late 1640s the entire family were living back in London, although it is unclear what Lodowick Weamys was doing during this period. At some time during these years the young Anna Weamys read Sidney’s *Arcadia* and proceeded to produce a continuation of her own, in which the desperate anxieties of a child of war can be seen in her fantasies of a stable, peaceful kingdom. Nothing more is known of Anna Weamys after the publication of the *Continuation*, although her funeral monument in Westminster Abbey shows that she died unmarried at the age of 67.

*The *Continuation* is actually more of a ‘conclusion’ of Sidney’s work than its title suggests. In part Weamys is simply following Sidney’s instructions (quoted above) to conclude the adventures of his own characters, and is not tempted to create new characters and narratives which extend the romance in imaginary space and time in the same way that the marriages which end many romances (including Sidney’s) extend the dynasty in actual space and time. Weamys was, after all, extremely young when she wrote the *Continuation* – she was only twenty when it was printed, and may have written it significantly before that – and it is only to be expected that her work stays close to Sidney’s and does not venture too far from its source. The tone of Weamys’s work suggests, however, that delimiting the extent of the imaginary Arcadian world, tying off loose ends rather than encouraging the proliferation of intertwined narratives as romance so often does, is a central (if not a conscious) organising theme. The *Continuation* begins where the *Arcadia* ends, with the princes and princesses gathered for the double marriage of Pyrocles to Philoclea and Musidorus to Pamela. Before these weddings can take place, however, the reader’s attention is directed to the story of Helen and the rebel Amphialus. Amphialus was wounded in the *Arcadia* and is now being cared for by Helen, who hopes to have her unreciprocated love for Amphialus rewarded by curing him. Amphialus’s recovery, however, reveals that his earlier love for Philoclea is still uppermost in his mind; he is, however, willing to submit to her instructions as a faithful lover. When Philoclea commands him to discontinue his affections for her and direct them instead towards the worthy Helen, he immediately complies, and one of the great tragic inconveniences of the *Arcadia* is instantly resolved. Weamys proceeds to defuse all of the anxious doubts which are left raw and unanswered at the end of the *Arcadia*: Erona and Plangus are reconciled and added to the ranks of the marrying couples, and Clitophon’s temptation to betray Amphialus and take Helen for himself is diverted by the communal celebrations.

Weamys also shows herself to be extremely sensitive to the social tensions of Sidney’s *Arcadia*. The questionable civic and moral values of Sidney’s princely characters is highlighted in the *Arcadia* by the presence of characters of lowly social station – such as the shepherds Strephon and Klaius – who despite their lack of privilege or nobility of blood show themselves far better able to handle the moral and sexual temptations which confront them than their noble counterparts. In Weamys’s text, however, this counterfoil which leaves serious questions hanging over the conduct of the main characters of the *Arcadia* is itself undermined when it is revealed that the claims of Strephon and Klaius to be altruistic lovers of Urania, incapable of jealousy or possessiveness, was simply a ruse to throw off a third suitor. With this suitor sent off to follow a false trail in search of Urania, Strephon and Klaius are free to fall into a more ‘natural’ state of contention over the object of their desire. This contest eventually ends in violence, and it is left to the noble characters to exert their moral authority over their social inferiors – the princesses are asked to judge which of the lovers is more worthy of Urania. In staging this narrative, Weamys deftly changes this subversive narrative in the *Arcadia* into one in
which the status quo is restored and the naturalness of a hierarchy of power and virtue is reasserted.

In a compelling act of symbolic closure, Weamys ends her narrative with the death of Philisides, the autobiographical character whom Sidney had introduced into his Arcadia, thus encouraging generations of his readers to follow him in inserting their own stories into their continuations, adaptations, and imitations of his work. Weamys’s Philisides dies in the same way that Philip Sidney did, of a wound to the leg, although the fictional wound is given by Cupid’s arrow, and the real one by a gangrenous bullet-wound. In writing the death of Sidney into her continuation of his romance, Weamys symbolically removes the authority from the narrative, ending the continuous reduplication of narrative episodes which characterises romance and which defers any resolution to the problems of its characters in order to extend the imaginary timespan of the narrative. Weamys, however, is more interested in putting to rest the complexities of Sidney’s world of chivalric, political, and aristocratic misdemeanour which may too closely have resembled the world which crumbled about Weamys’s ears during the Civil War in the 1640s. Her final sentence is a childlike but striking condemnation of monarchies and the troubles caused by them during her lifetime: ‘And when [the princes] had sufficiently participated in the pleasures of this world, they resigned their crowns to their lawful successors, and ended their days in peace and quietness.’ It is an ending which moves to prevent further continuations of Sidney’s romance, as well as of the troubles afflicting the Stuart monarchy.

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