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Sidney's Classicism and Its Relation to the Countess of Pembroke's Circle

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SIDNEY'S CLASSICISM AND ITS RELATION TO

THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE'S CIRCLE

BY

CYRENA MARGARET EVERIST

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of the Requirements for the Degree of
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PREFACE

Sir Philip Sidney's Place in the history of English literature has been very definitely fixed by writers who have carefully studied his life, his works, and his times. Of his illustrious sister, Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, little has been said. Miss Young has written the only modern biography of her. Her place as a reviver of the classicism has been given a short space in histories of drama. Elsewhere in the history of English literature she has been referred to as a patroness of literary men.

It shall be, therefore, the purpose of this paper, first to determine what the principles of the particular kind of classicism were that the Countess tried to keep alive; second, to determine her qualifications to carry on literary activity; third, to analyze the contributions to classic and pastoral drama, made by the Countess herself and those who were inspired by her example; and fourth, to decide whether or not her influence went beyond the field of the drama.

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CHAPTER I

THE CLASSICISM OF SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

According to mythology Janus, a god of beginnings, had two faces, one looking east and one west. The ancients greatly envied the unique ability of this god to see in two directions at the same time. Moderns frown on the Janus and urge man to turn away from the past, to look to the present and to the future and even to forget the past. In some phases of human endeavor this is sound advice and a practical philosophy. It is not, however, satisfactory to approach to literature by looking in one direction. English literature has often looked backward as well as forward. There have been recurrent periods in the progress of literary history when greater strides ahead have been preceded by periods in which great men have seen fit to study the past.

Of the retrospective periods in literature, those in which great men have looked back to the classic writers of ancient times for inspiration bid vigorously for interest and attention. The history of English literature from the Renaissance up to the present has seen three periods in classic revival. During the Elizabethan Age there were two revivals which practically merged into one. The Age of Queen Anne saw the third. Each of these revivals had its own interpretation of the forms and ideals

of the ancients and each had its own particular lessons to learn from them. Felix Schelling has said:

An important name is identified with each: Sir Philip Sidney, whose classicism was concerned with externals, and soon overwhelmed with the flood of romanticism on which he was 'the first fair freight'; Ben Jonson, whose classicism came alike by study and by nature; and Pope, who long after stands for the culmination of a movement, which, losing its aims and substituting too often mere form for living principle, is none the less worthy of a greater respect and consideration than has been accorded it at the hands of some critics.¹

All three of these revivals are of consequence in the history of literature, but our concern in this paper will be with the first, namely, that of Sidney and his followers, headed by his illustrious sister, Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke.

The classic principles of Sidney were the result of his firm belief that the future of English literature depended on a return to the ancients. During his lifetime he expended great energy in advocating such a movement and after his death we find his devoted sister taking up the cause with some temporary success.

The principles of Sidney are, strangely enough, easily understandable in his prose treatise, but are not so readily apparent in his other writings where one would expect to find them. It is to the essay, The Defence of Poesie, that one must look for the classic rules laid down by Sidney and followed out by the colorful circle of literary men who looked

1. Felix Schelling, Shakespeare and Demi-Science, "Ben Jonson and the Classical School," pp.60-61.

to him and his sister for encouragement and inspiration.

The Defence of Poesie was published in 1595², but the date of its composition has never been determined. Authorities vary in dating it from 1579 to 1584.³ Perhaps Sidney's phrase in the essay itself "in these my not old yeares and idlest times"⁴ point to 1580, the year he spent in retirement from the Court to his sister's place, Wilton. The only definite date on which there is to work is 1579, when Gosson's School of Abuse appeared.⁵ It is generally agreed that Sidney wrote to defend poetry from this attack. Sidney's essay was only one of a group of 'defence' literature which appeared about this time. Of these the most notable was that of Daniel, one of the most devoted members of the Countess's circle. Daniel's Defence of Rhyme, not appearing until 1602⁶ cannot be taken as a guide to the classical principles of the Sidneian group.

Before taking up the ideals set forth by Sidney, it might be profitable to discover why Sidney felt the need to return to classic models. We are so accustomed to think of the Age of Elizabeth in superlatives that it is difficult to imagine anyone living in the age itself and advocating the return to the ancients or to translations of the ancients for models. We think of it as an age of a Marlowe and of a Shakespeare. A study of a few dates is sufficient to correct our mistaken attitude toward the middle years of this age. Sidney was killed at Zutphen in 1586;⁷

2. Malcolm W. Wallace, The Life of Sir Philip Sidney, p.239.

3. Ibid., p.239.

4. Sir Philip Sidney, The Defence of Poesie, ed. by Albert Feuillerat, p.3.

5. Malcolm Wallace, op.cit., p.237.

6. Hardin Craig, Shakespeare, p.75.

7. Ibid., p.74.

Marlowe's Tamberlaine is dated about 1587;⁸ Shakespeare was not mentioned in London until 1592, when Greene wrote A Groatworth of Wit.⁹ The fact is then that literature was at a low ebb when Sidney wrote his famous essay. This point is made by T.S. Eliot:

The essay of Sidney in which occur the passages ridiculing the contemporary state, so frequently quoted, may have been composed as early as 1580; at any rate, was composed before the great plays of the age were written.¹⁰

In addition to the poor quality of contemporary literature, Sidney's education may have been a contributing factor in his flight to the classics. In keeping with the age he was given a thorough Latin training, and it is interesting to note that the earliest extant writing of his is a letter written in that language. The letter is a part of a correspondence carried on with his father's friend, William Cecil, later made Baron of Burghley.¹¹ The letter is dated 1569, when Sidney was a boy of fifteen. The fact that this letter was written in Latin may not be an indication of any early interest in the classical tongue. The tone of the letter is one of friendliness. Yet, during 1570, the very next year, Sidney again had occasion to address William Cecil.¹² This time he had a formal request to make - a request seeking preferment for his tutor. This more formal letter used English, and is, by the way, the earliest extant piece of composition of Sidney in English. The first letter was merely a friendly note; the second, a formal request which he hoped to

8. Hardin Craig, op.cit., p.74.

9. Ibid., p.75.

10. T.S. Eliot, "An Apology for the Countess of Pembroke," in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p.32.

11. Malcolm Wallace, op.cit., p.94.

12. Ibid., pp.95-96.

have granted. Unless, then, he preferred Latin as a means of communication, why did he use the languages in this manner - Latin for informality, English for formality?

While this early use of Latin may not be significant, surely his correspondence with Hubert Languet, the French scholar, with whom Sidney became friendly, is not to be entirely disregarded. This correspondence was carried on in Latin although French might have been used just as well. Sidney had made a friend of Languet during his conventional continental tour, and the two carried on a correspondence for years after Sidney had left for England. The fact that Sidney continued the use of Latin as a means of communication seems to indicate a growing fondness for the language.

It might not be wide of the mark to further hazard the suggestion that the continental tour itself may have influenced him to advocate his own particular type of classicism. One of the characteristics of Sidney and his followers was their interest in the classics through the translations. Their translations into English were often from the French and Italian, which in turn had been taken directly from the Greek and Latin. During Sidney's travel through Italy and France he became extremely conscious of the progress of the classic revivals in those countries, and what more natural than his recommendation of a like revival in his own country?

He believed implicitly in the acceptance of classical usages for the cultivated drama of school and court which he looked forward hopefully to see develop in England, as it had already developed in Italy and France.¹³

Thoroughly imbued with the classics and the classic language in his boyhood, further convinced of their superiority in his friendships, and even in his travels, Sidney gave expression to his ideals in The Defence of Poesie. Schelling has compactly expressed the ideals here represented when he says:

The classicism of Sidney is that of his age, and shows itself in two characteristics; the reaffirmation of ancient aesthetic theory and in metrical experiments in English verse modelled on classical prosody. In the former Sidney was the companion of Gascoigne, King James, Webbe, and the author of the 'Art of English Poesy'; in the latter, of Harvey,¹⁴ Stanilhurst, Fraunce, and Spenser himself.

Although The Defence of Poesie contains the most definite and vigorous statement of Sidney's classical tendency, yet to fully comprehend his ideals it is necessary to go beyond the essay. Evidence on Sidney's fondness for the classics may be found in all his works. Since, however, it is our task to trace Sidney's classicism into the works of those associated with the Countess of Pembroke, we shall limit our analysis to a study of The Defence of Poesie, Arcadia, and The Lady of May. The reason for choosing the first is obvious. A word of explanation for the others is necessary. The Arcadia was selected because of its close association with the Countess. (This work was written at Wilton and dedicated to the

¹³. Felix Schelling, op. cit., p.110.

¹⁴. Ibid., p.61

Countess.) In addition, the Arcadia amplifies the classicism of The Defence of Poesie and was one of the important works of that period which revived the classical pastoralism.

The Countess of Pembroke's attempt to keep alive her brother's ideals was directed first of all toward the drama. Yet, Sidney himself kept aloof from that field so far as his own contributions were concerned. He had very definite views on the drama as shall be pointed out in the discussion of his essay. However, we are limited to The Lady of May for Sidney's application of his dramatic principles. This court mask is his only work of a dramatic nature, and, although it is not of great importance among his works, it is to be considered here because of its dramatic nature.

It is, then, to The Defence of Poesie that we turn to find the direct expression of Sidney's classic principles. So convinced was Sidney of the superiority of the classic writers that he made his major defence of poetry on the ground that the ancients regarded poetry in almost a sacred light. His assumption was that poetry must be well respected since it was one of the "light givers to ignorance,"¹⁵ and was at the same time one of the first means of expression of the ancients. He presumed that poetry needed no other defence since it was respected by the ancients, and took it for granted that they were infallible in their judgment at least in regard to poetry.

15. The Defence of Poesie, op.cit., p.4.

It is from his definition of poetry that we learn one of the principles most followed by the Countess's group. Here is a very simple definition of that often defined art. Sidney's definition was patterned after that of Aristotle. To Sidney,

Poesie therefore, is an Art of Imitation
a speaking picture, with this end to teach
 and delight.¹⁶

Perhaps no other single phase of Sidney's philosophy was so practiced as this idea of imitating or borrowing,

nothing of what is, hath bin, or shall be,
 but range only reined with learned discretion
 into the divine consideration of what may be and
 should be. These be they that as the first and
 most noble sort, may justly be termed Vates: so
 these are waited on in the excellentest languages
 and best understandings, with the fore described
 name of Poets. For these indeed do meerly make
 to imitate and imitate both to delight and teach,
 and delight to move men to take that goodnessein
 hand, which without delight they would flie as
 from a stranger; and teach to make them know that
 goodnesse whereunto they are moved; which being
 the noblest scope to which ever any learning was
 directed, yet want there not idle tongues to barke
 at them.¹⁷

It was to this ideal of imitation of only what was the best that led to the popularity of translation not only with the Countess, but also with her followers. The Countess's translation of de Mornay's Discourse of Life and Death may be traced to the ideal expressed by her brother. The same sort of inspiration may have led to the translation of the Psalms undertaken jointly by Sidney and his sister. As shall be shown later

16. The Defence of Poesie, op.cit., p.9.

17. Ibid., p.10.

several of the dramatic contributions of the Countess and her circle were translations of the French tragedian, Garnier. To the fondness of imitation may be traced the popularity of the sonnet form, which was raised to a new height by Sidney himself, and was ardently pursued by the poets of the century, both within and without the immediate circle of Sidney and the Countess.

Among the divisions of poetry, "most notable be the Heroick, Lyrick, Tragick, Comick, Satyrick, Iambick, Elegiack, Pastorall, and certaine others;"¹⁸ Most of these types were clearly those popular with the ancients, particularly the heroic, elegiac, and the pastoral. In turning English literature into pastoral channels Sidney's influence was second only to Spenser's. It is interesting to note here that Spenser was one of the few contemporaries praised in the 'defence.' "The Shepheards Kalender, hath much Poetrie in his Egloges, indeed woorthie the reading, if I be not deceived."¹⁹

It is, however, in his remarks on the drama, which he included in his discussion of poetry that Sidney most definitely aligned himself as a classicist, and urged the observance of rules of "honest civilitie."²⁰ By strict observance of the classical unities of time, place, and action, Sidney hoped that English drama would survive. As we have already noted, the drama of the time was in need of renewed vigor, and Sidney felt that the return to classic rules would bring the needed purification.

18. The Defence of Poesie, op.cit., p.10.

19. Ibid., p.37.

20. Ibid., p.38.

Shakespeare and Marlowe were yet to prove that English drama could survive and ignore the classical unities. With these facts before us it is not surprising to find Sidney praising the Senecan tragedy of Sackville and Norton.

Excepting Gorboducke, which notwithstanding as it is full of stately speeches, and wel sounding phrases, clyming to the height of Seneca his style and as full of notable morallitie, which it dooth most delightfully teach, and so obtaine the very end of Poesie.²¹

Yet Sidney regretted that Gorboduc could not be taken as a model for English tragedy because it violated both unity of time and of place. And to Sidney,

the Stage should alway represent but one place, and the uttermoste time presupposed in it should bee both by Aristotles precept, and common reason but one day; there is both manie dayes and places, inartificially imagined. But if it bee so in Gorboducke howe much more in all the rest, where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Affricke of the other, and so manie other under Kingdomes, that the Player when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived.²²

Sidney then solved the difficulty that might arise from trying to tell a story in observance with the unities of time and place by reminding the dramatist that he was free to invent.

And do they not know that a Tragedie is tied to the lawes of Poesie and not of Historie: not bounde to follow the storie, but having libertie either to faine a quite new matter or to frame the Historie to the Tragical conveniencie.²³

21. The Defence of Poesie, op.cit., p.38.

22. Ibid., p.38.

23. Ibid., p.39.

Still another Senecan principle was advocated by Sidney and followed quite strictly by the devotees of the Countess. This concerned the action to be presented on the stage. Sidney believed that stage action should be limited and that many incidents promoting the plot development should be reported rather than acted. "Againe many things may be told which cannot be shewed; if they know the difference betwixt reporting and representing."²⁴ In the advocacy of these rules Sidney was completely over-ruled as soon as Marlowe established his own path of tragic art.

Although the contemporaries of Sidney did not follow him in the unities of time, place, and action, yet there is at least one modern critic who believes that Sidney was followed in the unity of feeling. That critic is T.S. Eliot, who says:

My point is this: that the Elizabethan drama did tend to approach the unity of feeling which Sidney desires.... And it did this, not because docile dramatists obeyed the wishes of Sidney, but because the improvements advocated by Sidney, happened to be those to which a maturing civilization would make for itself. The doctrine of Unity of Sentiment, in fact, happens to be right.²⁵

Sidney's views on this matter are very clearly defined and for him there should be no mixing of comedy and of tragedy. His argument was that it was not done by the ancients, except in a few cases and even then "they never or verie daintily matche horne Pipes and Funeralls."²⁶

Briefly then, from The Defence of Poesie, we gain a partial knowledge of Sidney's classicism. We learn that the poet advocated the imitation of the ancients in form and in subject; that he urged a moral tone to be

24. Sir Philip Sidney, op.cit., p.39.

25. T.S. Eliot, op.cit., p.34.

26. Sir Philip Sidney, op.cit., p.40.

introduced into poetry by making poetry's aim to teach and to delight. In drama especially, Sidney felt that the ancient models should be followed. He stressed the classical unities of time, place, and action.

To determine the full force of Sidney's classicism, it is necessary to probe somewhat beyond the mere statement of principles as they are found in The Defence of Poesie. This is particularly true in regard to the pastoralism which was so prominent an element of both the prose and the poetry of the new century. Yet a discussion of pastoralism is not found in the critical essay. Pastoralism is merely mentioned as one of the divisions of poetry. It is, however, a classical development. The philosophical shepherds and shepherdesses were not Renaissance inventions. The idealization of the comforts of the woodland setting was not new. Theocritus and the Greek poets of the third century B.S. had invented the pastoral mode.²⁷ Virgil had carried it on, and the Renaissance merely revived it. It was not necessary for the Countess to go as far back as the ancients for an expression of the pastoralism of the period. The Arcadia of her brother served as the model of Elizabethan pastoralism. Sidney's prose work and Spenser's poem, The Shepherd's Calendar, set the standards for the pastoralism. These works furnished the poetic names for characters, beautiful woodland Arcadias, disguises, mistaken identities, and simple carefree existences in a rustic setting far removed from the complexity of court life.

27. Hardin Craig, op.cit., p.304.

Although the Arcadia lacks classical unity, the pastoral elements of the ancients are found in abundance. Hence a brief analysis of those elements lends itself to a more complete understanding of Sidney's classicism as it was followed by the Countess and her group.

The setting of the story in delightful Arcadia is almost Virgilian.

Arcadia amonge all the Provinces of Grece was ever had in singular reputation, partly for the sweetnes of ye Aire and other naturell benefittes: But, principally, for the moderate and well tempered myndes of the people, who, (fynding howe true a contentation ys gotten by following the Course of Nature, And howe the shyning Title of glory so much affected by other Nations, doth in deede help litle to the happiness of lyfe) were the onely people, which as by their Justice and providence, gave neyther Cause nor hope to their Neighboures to annoy them, So were they not stirred with false prayse, to truble others quyett.²⁸

This ideal country contained the shepherd, who was given a thoughtful turn of mind.

Even the Muses seemed to approve their good determination, by chosing that Contrie as their cheefest repairing place, and by bestowing their perfections so largely there, that the very Shepherdes themselves had their fancyes opened to so highe conceiptes (as the most learned of other nations have bene longe tyme since content) both to borrow their names, and imitate their coming.²⁹

Here too, are the mistaken identities and the classical disguises.

The two heroes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, become respectively, Dorus, a shepherd and Zelamane, an Amazon. Before the story ends they have assumed

28. Sir Philip Sidney, Arcadia, ed. by A. Feuillerat, vol. iv, p. 1.

29. Ibid., p. 1

further disguises, as Palladius and Daiphantes, in order to avoid the disgrace of facing trial for the murder of Basilius, the king.

In addition to these purely pastoral devices, there is another classical theory found in the Arcadia, namely, man's tragic destiny. Here is a king, the father of two daughters, consulting the oracle at Delphos and receiving the confusing answer:

The Elder care shall from thy careful face
By Princely meane bee stolne, and yet not lost;
They Younger shall with Natures bliss imbrace
An uncouth Love, whicke Nature hateth moste:
Thou with thy Wyffe adultery shalt committ,
And in the Throne, a forreyn State shall sitt,³⁰
All this on thee this fatall yeare shall hitt.

The harrassed king tries to escape his destiny, but the prophecy overtakes him in spite of himself. Thus is included in Arcadia the popular classical theory that man cannot control his own destiny.

It is, perhaps, rather unfortunate that while Sidney had such definite views about the drama, that he did not contribute writings in that field. In view of the Elizabethan idea that the courtier be skilled in all fields of human endeavor, it is even more remarkable that Sidney did not write plays. He was apparently content to let the professionals keep that field for themselves. Most of the dramatists were not courtiers, and Sidney may have felt that it was unbecoming to his position to become a dramatist.

Hence, for an application of Sidney's classical principles to the drama, we must content ourselves with his mask, The Lady of May, published for the first time with the third (1598) edition of the Arcadia, but

probably written in 1579.³¹ The mast was presented before Elizabeth at

^{30.} Arcadia, op.cit., p.2

^{31.} Sir Philip Sidney, The Lady of May, ed. by A. Feuillerat, vol.2, p.333.

Wanstead. The Lady of May cannot be regarded as more than a rather casual application of Sidney's pastoral principles. Here is the Queen walking through the garden. She is met by a country woman who asks that the Queen solve a love problem of her beautiful daughter. There are two suitors for the daughter's love, one a forester, and the other a shepherd. Both conform to the classical ideal. They are described thus by the May Lady;

....the one a forrester named Therion, the other Espilus a shepherd very long even in love; forsooth, I like them both, and love neigher, Espilus is the richer, but Therion the livlier: Therion doth me many pleasures, as stealing me venison out of these forests, and many other such like and prettier services.....This shepheard Espilus of a mild disposition as his fortune hath not done me any wrong but feeding his sheepe, sitting under some sweete bush, sometimes they say he records my name in doleful verses.³²

The two suitors then engage in a song contest to prove their worth. After some dispute the affair is decided in favor of the shepherd, who bursts into a joyful tune:

Silvanus long in love, and long in vaine,
At length obtaind the point of his desire
When being askt now that he did obtaine
His wished weale, what more he could require:
Nothing sayd he, for most I joy in this,
That Goddesse mine, my blessed being sees.³³

From the three works of Sir Philip Sidney mentioned above the Countess and her followers took their inspiration, and for at least a decade kept alive the classicism he advocated. Following the example of the Countess they wrote dramas which followed with great strictness the unities of time, place, and action. Their plots have all the simplicity of Seneca. Their plays are devoid of tragic struggle. Furthermore, there was embodied into

32. E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, Vol.3, p.491.
33. The Lady of May, oplocit., p.338.

both their dramatic and non-dramatic poetry the pastoralism set forth by Sidney in Arcadia and The Lady of May. The exact nature of the work of the Countess and her circle is to be taken up more fully in a later chapter.

If we may accept the tribute of Sidney's great friend and biographer, Fulke Greville, Sidney hoped, not by his writings, "but both his wit and understanding bent upon his heart, to make himself and others, not in words or opinions but in life and action, good and great."³⁴ It is doubtful that Fulke Greville realized the full truth of his tribute when he wrote about his friend. Sidney died in 1586, and in keeping with the traditions of the Elizabethan courtier he had not published his works. They were known only to literary coteries. Yet, Sidney was the ideal gentleman and courtier. Surely, then, he fulfilled his desire "to make himself and others, not in words or opinions but in life and action, good and great." During his lifetime he was a constant source of inspiration to his friends and to his relatives. His death at the age of thirty-two cut short a well-rounded career which even in the few years of his life had brought success as a writer of prose, poetry, and political discourses. His advice was valued by his relatives, friends, and his Queen. He could entertain a courtly audience with light chatter and at the same time command respect on the battlefield. Our age likes to boast of its accomplishments and to call itself an age of youth. Yet, how few modern men have crowded so many excellencies into a life of thirty-two short years.

The confidence with which the Countess of Pembroke set about to keep his ideals alive is evidence enough of his inspiration. Even in the face

34. Fulke Greville, The Life of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. by A.B. Grosart, p.21

of the popularity of the type of drama produced by Marlowe and Shakespeare, she sought and succeeded in keeping alive the classic spirit so urgently advocated by her brother.

In seeking to revive the interest in the classics it was not necessary for the Countess to return to the classics directly. Just as the sonnet was carried to England by Surrey after it had enjoyed a great popularity in Italy and France, just so a knowledge of the classics came to our circle in a similar round about fashion. There was a tremendous interest in translations during this century, and hence it was not always necessary for the writer to go directly to the classic sources for his inspiration. The lives of the great Romans were familiar to the Elizabethan, not directly from Plutarch, but from North's translation in 1579.³⁵ Virgil's Aeneid was perhaps known both in the original and through Surrey's and Stanyhurst's translations of it. As far as drama was concerned, the classic principles of Seneca were brought to England from the French and Italian adaptations of them. Probably the French school was of greater influence than the Italian. Thus when the Countess sought to revive a classic interest in the drama, she did not go directly to Seneca, but to Garnier. Her example was followed by Fulke Greville, Thomas Kyd, and Samuel Daniel. Although these classical tragedies were soon overshadowed by Shakespeare and Marlowe, it is remarkable that they were written so late in the century.

35, Hardin Craig, op.cit., p.74.

It may be said then that the classic principles of Sidney were concretely expressed in The Defence of Poesie, but that his pastoralism was best illustrated in Arcadia and The Lady of May. We have further observed that Sidney's advocacy of the classic revival came at a time when the literature of England was in need of vigor and inspiration. We may also have seen that the inspiration of the Countess in carrying out the ideals of her brother may have come indirectly from the classics, and that the influence of France and Italy was important in bringing the classics to England.

It must be borne in mind that France stimulated England's intellectual energy in two ways - by imparting her own knowledge, ideas, and example which she herself derived from Greece and ancient and modern Italy. England benefited not merely by the French power of absorbing the spirit and forms of Greek, Latin, and Italian literature.³⁶

We have noted that Sidney's influence was cut short by an early death. It will now be our task to see just how this influence was continued by his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, who devoted her life to editing, publishing her brother's work; and how she became a writer and translator on her own account.

36. Sidney Lee, The French Renaissance in England, p.453.

CHAPTER II

MARY HERBERT, THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE, A PROMOTER OF SIDNEY'S IDEALS

Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse:
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother.
Death ere thou hast slain another
Fair and learn'd as good as she,
Time shall throw a dart as thee.

Marble piles let no man raise
To her name, for after-days
Some kind woman, born as she,
Reading this, like Niobe
Shall turn marble, and become¹
Both her mourner and her tomb.

Instead of quibbling over the authorship of this epitaph, which appears on the Countess of Pembroke's tomb, a more profitable inquiry might occupy the critics. Why anyone's sister or mother? Why not let the lady's merit be her claim to a place in the literary hall of fame? Why not Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, a literary patroness? What does it matter whether the verse be Ben Jonson's or William Browne's of Tavistock? Perhaps the lady's own contributions are not great literary masterpieces, but she surely has earned her place as a patroness of literature by encouraging a Spenser, a Daniel, a Breton, to mention only a few of those who saw fit to dedicate to her. As one who fostered Sidney's ideals she

1. William Browne, "On the Countess Dowager of Pembroke," Poetry of the English Renaissance, ed. by J. Wm. Hebel and Hoyt H. Hudson, p. 585.

has made her own place. It will be our aim to show that she was admirably suited by ancestry, education, and her own charm to carry on those ideals.

Even a cursory glance at the roster of her ancestors reveals an impressive list of famous names. Her maternal grandfather was John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland; her uncle was Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; the wife of another uncle on her mother's side was the famous Jane Grey; her own mother, Lady Mary, was prominent at the court of Elizabeth, and a woman of intellect. Her paternal grandfather, Sir William Sidney, was a man of great note in the reign of Henry VIII. Her father was the play-fellow of the king's son, Prince Edward.²

Mary Sidney was born in 1561, at Ticknell, near Brewdley in Wales, where her father had been appointed Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales. Mary was one of six children; three of them died in childhood. She grew up with her elder brother, Philip, and a younger one, Robert, who had been named for his uncle, the Earl of Leicester.

The Dictionary of National Biography tells us that she was educated with a knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.³ Her mother had been active at the Court and more than once had to use her own influence to secure favors for her husband. As a result of her own active life, she no doubt realized the importance of educating her children to cope with the intrigue of a life at Court. Within her lifetime women were assuming a new importance.

2. Malcolm Wallace, op.cit., pp.1-5.

3. "Mary Herbert," Dictionary of National Biography.

Some idea of woman's growing importance in world affairs can be gained by quoting from Lewis Einstein:

During the Renaissance woman was to become the equal of man. Even then the avowed object of conversation was to promote friendly intercourse between sexes...The woman of the Renaissance was in no sense of the word an inferior creature.⁴ In England, as well, women, no longer satisfied to remain in their former sphere and anxious to follow the example of their Italian sisters, desired to shine in the pursuit of letters. Lady Jane Grey still passes for a wonder of erudition, and Queen Elizabeth is said to have known eight languages.⁵

J.J. Jusserand has also commented upon the Tudor woman:

Women appeared in the foreground: a movement of general curiosity animated the age and they participated in it quite naturally. They will become learned if necessary, rather than remain in the shade; they will no longer rest contented with permission to read books written for their fathers, brothers, lovers, or husbands; some must be written on their own account, consulting their preferences and personal caprices; and they had good reason to command; one of them sat on the throne.⁶

Knowing of the Countess's literary activities, we may feel quite satisfied that her education was one which fitted her for the life she was soon to begin.

Her last surviving sister died in 1575, and Queen Elizabeth, wrote to Sir Henry suggesting that Mary be sent to court in order to escape the rigorous climate of Wales. The letter is one of the few kindly communications Sir Henry received from his Queen, and since it embarked his daughter upon a career so momentous it is worth quoting here:

4. Lewis Einstein, The Italian Renaissance in England, pp.86-87.

5. Ibid., p.112.

6. Jules J. Jusserand, The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare, p.89-90

Good Sidney:

Although we are well assured that by your wisdom and great experience of wordly chances and necessities, nothing can happen unto you so heavy but you can and will bear them as they ought to be rightly taken, and, namely, such as happen by the special appointment and work of Almighty God which he hath lately showed by taking unto Him from your company a daughter of yours, yet, forasmuch as we conceive the grief you yet feel thereby, as in such cases natural parents are accustomed, we would not have you ignorant (to east your sorrow as much as may be) how we take part of your grief upon us, whereof these our letters unto you are witness, and will use no further persuasions to confirm you respecting the good counsel yourself can take of yourself but to consider that God doth nothing evil, to whose holy will all is subject and must yield at times to us uncertain. He hath yet left unto you the comfort of one daughter of very good hope, whom, if you shall think good to remove from those parts of unpleasant air (if it be so) into better in these parts, and will send her unto us before Easter, or when you shall think good, assure yourself that we will have a special care of her, not doubting but as you are well persuaded of our favor toward yourself, so will we make further demonstration thereof in her, if you will send her unto us. And so comforting you for the one, and leaving this our offer of our good will to your own consideration for the other, we commit you to Almighty God.⁷

Thus it was that Mary, then still thirteen, was sent to Court where she was celebrated for her beauty and charm. We feel confident that she met Castiglione's requirements of a court lady, "I wish this lady have knowledge of letters, music, painting, and to know how to dance and make merry;

7. Malcolm Wallace, op.cit., pp.149-150.

accompanying the other precepts that have been taught the Courtier with discreet modesty and with the giving of a good impression of herself.⁸

Her career at Court was scarcely launched when a marriage was arranged for her, probably through her uncle, the Earl of Leicester. The plans for the marriage are revealed in letters from her father to the Earl, in which the difficulties of raising a satisfactory dowry were discussed. The prospective bridegroom was Henry Herbert, the second Earle of Pembroke. The plans culminated in marriage in 1577.

The Earl of Pembroke was about twenty-seven years his wife's senior and the marriage was his third. His first had been to Lady Catherine Grey, sister to Lady Jane Grey. Interestingly enough, the two sisters were married the same day at Durham House, the London residence of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. Little did the Earl dream that his host that day would be the grandfather of Mary Sidney. More interesting still is the fact that Mary Sidney's godfather was William Herbert, the father of the man who later became her husband.⁹ The amazing interweaving of these two families, the Herberts and the Sidneys offers an interesting study in itself.

The first marriage of the Earl was dissolved by Queen Mary in 1554. 1562-63 saw the second marriage of the Earl. The bride was Catherine, daughter of George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury. In 1575 Catherine died childless, and the Earl married Mary Sidney two years later. Two sons, William, 1580-1630, and Philip, 1584-1650, and one daughter, Anne, were born of this union. The daughter died in childhood, but the sons lived to
8. Count Baldesar Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, translated from
Italian by L.E. Opdycke, p.180.

carry on the literary traditions of the family and became patrons of literary men.

After the marriage the Countess was installed at Wilton, her husband's estate, and it is indicated that most of her mature years were spent there. On New Year's day 1578 she came to court to present Queen Elizabeth with an embroidered doublet of lawn. Her husband's tastes were like her own in that he, too, was interested in literary ventures. "Neither cared for the glitter of court, and they joined in their stately Baynard's Castle, on what is now the Thames Embankment, and at their seat at Wilton, in charitable offices and in the patronage of scholarship and religion."¹⁰

It is Wilton, however, which is the focal point of our interest. Wilton was evidently the training ground for the poets, rather than the London estate. In dedicatory epistles and in complimentary verse the Countess is usually located as the mistress at Wilton.

The year 1850 was a momentous one in the life of the Countess. In March of that year her brother Philip came down to Wilton, having been banished from the court by the Queen for his advice against her proposed French marriage. In April of that year the first son was born to the Earl and the Countess. This son, William, became famed for his association with Shakespeare in later years. The year was further made significant by its literary activity. It was during that year that Philip and the Countess retired to a small house at Ivy Church near Wilton and the famous Arcadia, which was to set a new style for prose, was begun.¹¹ This prose

9. Dictionary of National Biography, "Henry Herbert."

10. Felix Schelling, op.cit., "Sidney's Sister, Pembroke's Mother," p.106.

11. Dictionary of National Biography, "Mary Herbert,"

romance was written for the express amusement of the Countess and was not intended for publication.

Much has been said about the literary merits of Philip Sidney's Arcadia, and it is not our purpose to add to these comments. Our interest in it rests in the fact that it seems to have been the starting point for the literary career of the Countess. John Aubrey, the breezy commentator of the seventeenth century, attributed a part of the Arcadia to the Countess's pen. Aubrey's work is now regarded as entertaining, but not necessarily authentic. His remarks about the Countess were often not flattering. It was in the Natural History of Wiltshire that he suggested that parts of Arcadia were written by a woman:

I shall now passe to the illustrious Lady Mary Countesse of Pembroke, whom her brother hath eternized in his Arcadia; but many or most of the verses in the Arcadia were made by her Honour, and they seem to have been writt by a woman. Twas a great pity Sir Philip had not lived to have put his land hand to it.¹²

Although authorities do not agree that Mary had any part in the composition of the romance, they do know that she was the one who superintended its publication, and that Sidney dedicated the manuscript to her.¹³

Sidney's dedicatory epistle seems to have been the earliest complimentary offering to the Countess. Miss Young's life of the Countess contains a chronological list of dedications to the lady. She lists first Thomas Howell's dedicatory epistle of 1581.¹⁴ If Miss Young's work is accurate, than Philip Sidney's Arcadia must have been the first of the many such compliments that the Countess received in the course of the next ten or

12. John Aubrey, Natural History of Wiltshire, ed., John Briton, p.89.

13. Malcolm Wallace, op.cit., p.233.

14. Frances B. Young, Mary Sidney: Countess of Pembroke, p.157.

twenty years. This is an engaging theory, at least from a sentimental standpoint, if from no other. Sidney was his sister's guiding genius, and it is an arresting thought that he may have been the first to pay her the compliment of addressing a piece of his work to her.

During the stay at Wilton, Sidney began his translation of the Psalms. The part that the Countess had in this work is not a matter of speculation. The first forty-three of the Psalms were the work of Sidney and the remaining one hundred six were the work of the Countess.¹⁵ "They remained in manuscript until 1823, when they were printed from 'a copy of the original manuscript transcribed by John Davies of Hereford' - a member of the Countess of Pembroke's literary circle."¹⁶

The happiness of 1580 was to be overshadowed by the successive tragedies of 1586. On May 5, of that year, Henry Sidney died; on August 11, the Countess lost her mother; and the greatest blow of all came on October 17, when Philip died at Zutphen.

We do not know what literary efforts may have occupied the Countess, other than those mentioned, before the death of Sidney. As Miss Young has suggested, the Countess may have written much more than has come to us.

It is of course perfectly possible that new works from her hand may yet be discovered. As has already been suggested, she must have written more than has come down to us. But at any rate enough remains to show her an interesting, if not a significant or important figure among the greater literary personages of her great time.¹⁷

Following the death of her brother the Countess devoted herself to keeping

15. Malcolm Wallace, op.cit., p.323.

16. Ibid., p.323.

17. F.B. Young, op.cit., p.141.

alive the ideals which Sidney promoted. From the year 1586 the Countess became known as a patroness of literature. A later member of the Sidney family has indicated the activity of her ladyship:

Henceforth her main object, and done well worthy of her was to become his literary executor., whereby she also made herself recognised as the bountiful patroness of deserving poets and authors. Spenser in gratitude, dubbed her, 'Urania' in his verses, whilst her praises from nearly all other great Elizabethan writers there was no end.¹⁸

Coming from a descendant of the Countess this praise may be slightly discounted on the grounds of prejudice, and a desire to overemphasize the importance of an ancestor.

Other evidence is, however, not lacking. Sidney Lee has paid tribute in the French Renaissance in England, where he says:

The inaugurators of the classical reaction inherited the literary feeling and ambition of Sir Philip Sidney who was a patron-saint of the new movement. His accomplished sister, the Countess of Pembroke, and his intimate friend, Fulke Greville, were leaders of the classical champions and their influence easily lead professional men of letters to give their efforts some practical aid.¹⁹

Another tribute is found in George Ballard's Memoirs of British

Ladies:

She had an excellent natural genius; and having the advantages of a polite education, when according to the custom of that age, literature was reckoned a considerable part of politeness, she made an illustrious appearance among the literati of that time who have given ample testimony of her great merit.²⁰

18. Philip Sidney, The Sidneys of Penshurst, p.114.

19. Sidney Lee, The French Renaissance in England, p.312.

20. George Ballard, Memoirs of British Ladies, p.183.

The most satisfactory estimate is that of Felix Schelling:

But without enumeration here, none so completely fulfills our conditions of a patron, a writer herself, and an encourager of letters, as does the sister of the renowned Sir Philip Sidney, Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, who long survived her heroic brother and that honorable gentleman, her husband, Henry Herbert, second Earl of Pembroke...She stands, the center, if not altogether the guiding spirit, of a group of writers, who, in a sense, maintained the aristocratic and cultivated traditions which the lamented Sir Philip had conceived and dreamed of a future for English literature.²¹

Although there is abundant evidence that the Countess was a leader of a certain little group of writers, there is some uncertainty as to her method of exerting her influence. The group is referred to as the circle of the Countess or as the Sidneans, yet we do not know whether there were any actual meetings of the group as such. It is more likely that the poets came under her spell when they were guests at her country place at Wilton. Whether they came there in groups or individually will have to remain open to speculation.

While we do not know just how the Countess conducted her court, we do know that she had no difficulty in finding models on which to pattern it. There were similar circles in England as well as on the continent. She was probably familiar with the English salon on her own account and she may have learned of the French and Italian activities from her brother who saw their workings when he was on his continental tour.

An interesting parallel was drawn between the court of the Countess and that of the Duchess of Urbino by Nicholas Breton, one of her devotees.

²¹. Felix Schelling, op.cit., p.100.

In 1592, Breton's The Pilgrimage to Paradise, ioyned with the Countess of Pembrookes loue was published with the following dedication to the Countess:

I know not how, but, with falling at the feete of your fauour, to craue pardon for my imperfection: who hath redde of the Duchesse of Urbina, may saie, the Italians wrote wel: but who knowes the Countess of Penbrooke, I thinke hath cause to write better: and if she had many followers? haue not you no seruants? and if they were so mindfull of their fauours: shall we be forgetfull of our dueties? no, I am assured, that some are not ignorant of your worth which will not be idle in your service....if shee were the fauorer of learning, you are the mainteiner of Arte, and if she had the beauty of Nature, you beautifie Nature, with the blessing of the spirite.²²

Some of the modern critics have drawn this same parallel, but they do not all credit Breton as the originator.

Another parallel has been pointed out by A.H. Upham, a critic of our own time. To him the court of Margaret of Navarre, a sister of King Francis of France, was a predecessor of that of our English Countess.²³

"For many years Margaret, a brilliant attractive and a thoroughly capable woman of the Renaissance had a coterie of poets and after 1540 encouraged them in the study of Platonic philosophy."²⁴

John Aubrey's Brief Lives, however, compared Wilton to a college:

In her time Wilton house was like a College, there were so many learned and ingeniose persons. She was the greatest patronesse of witt and learning of any lady in her time. She was a great chymist and spent yearly a great deal in that study.²⁵

22. Nicholas Breton, The Works on Verse and Prose, ed., A.B. Grosart, vol.1.

23. A.H. Upham, The French Influence of English Literatura, p.58.

24. Ibid., p.58.

25. John Aubrey, Brief Lives, ed., A. Clark, Vol. 1, p.311.

From this information we might imagine that Wilton entertained the Countess's proteges for rather long stretches at a time. She may have maintained scholars there as she did Dr. Moffat, a chemist, and Samuel Daniel, who became the tutor of William, the son of the Countess.

Daniel himself spoke of Wilton as a school, when he dedicated his Defence of Ryme, in 1607, to William Herbert, the son of the Countess:

Hauing been first encourag'd and
fram'd thereunto by your most worthy and
honorable mother, and received the first
motion for the formall ordering of those
compositions at Wilton which I must euer
acknowledge to have been my best schoole,
and thereof alwayes am to holde a feeling
and gratefull memorie.²⁶

The comparisons of the Countess's circle to the court of the Duchess of Urbino and to the salon of Margaret of Navarre suggest another analogy. Since it has been freely acknowledged that the Countess inherited the literary ideals of her brother, may it not be possible that she modelled her own literary group on the Areopagus? Sidney was one of the leading figures of that society, whose purpose was to "interest itself in the possibility of reproducing in English the quantitative meters of Greek and Latin verse."²⁷ The ideals of the group must have appeared to the Countess who strove to promote classic principles in her proteges. In addition to the similarity of ideals of these two groups, neither the Areopagus nor the Countess's circle had a set organization.²⁸ This point has been quite definitely established for the Areopagus group, and to date there has been no data discovered to indicate that the Countess's circle operated as a

26. Samuel Daniel, A Defence of Ryme, ed., A.B. Grosart, Vol.4, pp.35-36.

27. J.W.Hebel, H.H.Judson, Poetry of the English Renaissance, p.933.

28. Ibid., p.933.

club. Of still greater significance is the identity of membership of the two groups. Besides Sidney, the Areopagus included Edmund Spenser, Edward Dyer, Fulke Greville, Samuel Daniel, Abraham Fraunce, and Gabriel Harvey.²⁹ All of these men were also associated with the Countess with, perhaps, the exception of Dyer.³⁰

An interesting comparison of the Areopagus and the French group of poets who dubbed themselves "La Pléiade" has been made by J.B. Fletcher. He points out that Sidney's Defence may have been modelled on La Defense et Illustration de la Langue Francaise of Joachim du Bellay which appeared in 1549.³¹ One of the points of similarity of the Areopagus and La Pléiade is the derivation of their names; they both are from the Greek. The likeness did not rest in a similarity of titles however. "The programme in each case starts from a rehabilitation of the true function of poetry based upon Plato's Poetics."³² The ideals of the French group have been neatly stated by Henry Osborn Taylor:

But the full resources of the mother tongue should be utilized, and above all, there was need to ennoble its literary forms through that veritable imitation of the Greek and Latin Classics which lay in appropriating the truth and nobility presented in them.³³

The similarity of the Areopagus group and the French writers is a convincing link between the Countess's group and the Areopagus. One of the leaders of La Pléiade was Pierre Ronsard, who gave extravagant praise to Robert Garnier, "'prince of tragiques' saying that if Bacchus should descend to Hades now, he would bring back with him not Aeschylus, but

29. A.H. Upham, op.cit., p.25.

30. F.B. Young, op.cit., p.157ff.

31. Jefferson B. Fletcher, "Areopagus and Pléiade," Journal of Germanic Philology, Vol.2, p.452.

Garnier."³⁴ Garnier was on more or less intimate terms with Du Bellay, Baif, Pontus de Tyard, Jodelle, Belleau, and Dorat, all of whom were identified with La Pleiade. The point I wish to make is that Garnier was the French tragedian whom the Countess believed to be the best exponent of the Sidnean ideals and the one to whom she turned when she looked for a contemporary Senecan model. Since Garnier was so closely connected with La Pleiade, is it not reasonable that the Countess took the Areopagus for her source of inspiration rather than the court of the Renaissance Urbino or of Margaret of Navarre? Surely, her circle was as analogous to the Areopagus as the Areopagus was to La Pleiade.

Well equipped by heritage, education, and inherent culture the Countess was prepared to set a striking example to her coterie. Before going into the dramatic contributions of the Countess and her circle, it may be well to mention the other known literary productions of the lady. As Miss Young and Miss Lucie have pointed out, there more than likely are many works of the Countess which have been lost or which were published anonymously in the many miscellanies of the time. There have come down to us only two original poems. The first of these was called The Doleful Lay of Clorinda and was published in 1595 in the appendix of Spenser's Astrophel, a tribute to Sidney. Spenser called the Countess Clorinda in his poem, and it was presumably from Spenser's poem that the Countess's poem took its title. The quality of the verse in this first poem of the Countess is so superior to the second that there is some doubt that the

32. J.B. Fletcher, op.cit., p.452.

33. Henry O. Taylor, Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century, Vol.1, p.334.

34. Ibid., p.344

Countess was the author. The second poem has been definitely attributed to her. This was called Astrea, and was first published in 1602, in Davison's Poetical Rhapsody. The complete title of the poem is descriptive, "a pastoral dialogue between two shepherds, Thenot and Piers, in praise of Astrea, made by the excellent Lady, Lady Mary, Countess of Pembroke, at the Aueenes Maisties deing at her house at _____ Anno 15__." The place and the year were left evidently in anticipation of a promised visit of the Queen. There is no mention of such a visit in Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, but "we learn that in the beginning of 1600 she was in North Wiltshire. Rowland White says in a letter to Robert Sidney in October, 1599 'Lord Herbert's. to have two hundred horse sent up by his father to conduct her Majesty's person!'"³⁵

The dialogue is divided into stanzas in which Thenot extols some virtue of Astrea. Thenot is answered in the last half of the stanza by Piers who declares the praise inadequate and seeks to use more extravagant phrases. The Astrea of the dialogue is presumably the Queen.

In addition to these poems her ladyship was occupied, as were many Elizabethans, with translations. Her work on the Psalms has already been mentioned. It might be added, however, that this translation was indicative of the Elizabethan seriousness and of the deeply moral tone which was so pleasing to the Countess as well as to the Elizabethans in general. A work undertaken by the Countess alone was a translation of Du Plessis Mornay's Le Excellent Discours de la Vie et de la Mort. Mornay was a friend of Philip Sidney, and this work of the Countess was undertaken after

35. H.T. R. "Mary Sidney," The Gentleman's Magazine, Pt. 2, p.255.

after he had done a translation of the French writer. The translation of the Countess was dated 1590, at Wilton. Miss Young has included in the appendix to her book a third translation which had never before been published. This is The Triumphe of death, translated out of the Italian by the Countesse of Pembroke. A copy of this translation of Petrarch is among the Petyt Mss. at the Library of the Inner Temple in London. "It is the only translation (ancient or modern) of the 'Trionfo della Morte' that keeps the terza rima of its Italian original."³⁶ Of the translation of Garnier's Marc-Antoine we shall postpone discussion to the next chapter. The chief literary contributions of Mary Herbert were, then, translations. A survey of her work "is to show her a conscientious editor, a verse writer of average ability, and a translator of great merit."³⁷

A study of the life of the Countess reveals her to be well prepared to carry forth the classic ideals of Sidney, and her inspiration was weighty enough to encourage a little group of writers who stand apart in this age to follow her example in the field of translation of classical tragedies and even to write original ones. As we have seen, the ideals of Sidney were very definitely expressed in regard to the salvation of English drama. Very clearly he advocated the setting up of Senecan models. In the attempt to find such a model the Countess turned to Robert Garnier, the French protagonist of Senecan ideals.

36. F.B. Young, op.cit., pp.148-49.

37. Ibid., p.149.

CHAPTER III

THE DRAMATIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE COUNTESS AND HER CIRCLE

It is not difficult to understand why Robert Garnier made such a strong impression on the Countess, who sought a dramatist who would meet the Senecan principles laid down by Sidney in The Defence of Poesie. Garnier was born in 1534, in LaFerte-Bernard, which is in the province of Maine, France. He was educated for the bar and was a lawyer of some success. He was a cultured and erudite gentleman for whom writing was an avocation. This in itself must have been pleasing to the Countess who had been reared in the Elizabethan world where the ideal gentleman was he who was many-sided in his interests. We should remember here that it was not Sidney's purpose to write for publication and that none of his works were published during his life time. For Sidney writing was a pastime to be enjoyed in a select and cultured circle.

The refinement of Garnier's dramas must have also pleased Mary Herbert. While he conformed to the rules of Seneca, yet his refinement of Senecan themes must have been given him great standing with the group who were to imitate him. The very differences of Garnier's dramas from the true Senecan dramas made a great claim for attention in the coterie of

the Countess. C.F. Tucker Brooke, in The Tudor Drama, has succinctly pointed out the difference between Garnier and Seneca:

The differences between the tragedies of Seneca and the Franco-Latin plays which at this period were attracting the fastidious notice of the English blue-stockings are rather striking. Garnier, like most of French classicists, made a point of outdoing his masters in all that pertained to correctness. The melo-dramatic sensationalism of the Latin poet - the feature which made him in a sense the father of English tragedy - is carefully pruned from the plays by Garnier. The ghost is banished as ill-bred, stage action, so far as it existed, carefully replaced by seemingly moralizing and tedious narrative. The part of the chorus is increased and the lyric effect in every way intensified. Dramatic conflict and spectacular interest are refined away, and the plays affect the reader solely as collections of graceful elegiacs.¹

To the modern theater goer or even to the Shakespearean addict these plays would not offer any appeal. It must be borne in mind, however, that neither the Garnier plays nor the English imitations of them were written for the stage. There is no accepted record of their production, and it is doubtful that they were intended for more than philosophical exercises. As for the Countess, it has been indicated that her purpose in translating from Garnier was as much a protest against the vulgarism of the contemporary state productions as it was the result of creative impulse. She sought to prevent the dramatist from violating the classic rules of her brother, and she sought to do so by diverting his mind into classic channels by translating from the author whom she felt met her requirements.

Still another difference between Seneca and Garnier must have scored

1. C.F. Tucker Brooke, The Tudor Drama, p.198.

a point with the Countess. That was the Christian philosophy of Garnier. In Seneca suicide was often courted and encouraged; In Garnier it was never sanctioned. The characters of Garnier may express discouragement, but they never become entirely embittered. In this Garnier's characters resemble not the classical type, but rather the characters of Shakespeare, for Garnier, as Shakespeare, made man master of his own fate.

Although some of the unfortunate people in his (Garnier's) dramas exclaim against Fate, and lament the cruelty of the decrees of Destiny, the wiser characters constantly remind them that the fault is not with God or the Stars, but with themselves.²

Garnier wrote eight plays on the Senecan plan. These plays were published singly and were then collected in an edition of 1580. The plays were Porcie, 1568, Hippolyte, 1573, Cornelie, 1574, Marc Antoine, 1578, La Troade, 1578, Antigone, 1579, Les Juivres, 1580, and Bradamante, 1580. Three of these plays, Porcie, Cornelie, and Marc Antoine treat Roman themes. Garnier followed the tendency of his age in writing of Antony, and took for him theme Jodelle's La Cleopatre Captive, 1552, famed as the earliest French tragedy. The Cleopatra and Antony themes remained popular down to Marmontel in 1750 or to Sardou and Moreau in 1892.³

The Countess was, then, on popular ground when she chose Marc Antoine as the play for translation. Her work was dated 1590, but was published May 3, 1592, under the title, Anthionius, 'a tragedie wrytten also in French by Robert Garnier...donne in English by the Countesse of Pembrok.' The second publication was in 1595, under the title The Tragedie of Antoine.⁴

2. C.F. Tucker Brooke, op.cit., p.49.

3. A.W. Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature, Vol.2, p.186.

4. E.K. Chambers, op.cit., Vol.3, p.337.

The only modern edition of the work is that of Miss Alice Lucie, who, in 1897, published the translation together with an account of the life of the Countess.

The play of Garnier had all the simplicity of Seneca both in plot and form. It was the story of Antony's love for the supposedly faithless Cleopatra, and of his chagrin at being overcome in battle by Octavius. This humiliation led Antony to suicide and that, in turn, led to Cleopatra's similar fate. Nowhere in the play do the two lovers meet, thus recognizing the classical requirement that no action be portrayed on the stage. All activity takes place off the stage and news of action is brought to the audience by report.

The form of the play is also true to the Senecan models. It is divided into five acts, each followed by the classical chorus. The chorus summarizes the disclosures of the preceding act. In the first act Antony appears on the stage alone and utters a monologue of the faithlessness of Cleopatra and of shame of his defeat at the hands of Octavius.

Since cruell Heav'ns against me
 obstinate,
 Since all mishappes of the round
 engine doo
 Conspire my harme: since men, since
 powers divine,
 Aire, earth, and Sea are all iniurious:
 And that my Queene herself, in whome
 I liu'd,
 The Idoll of my hart doth me pursue:
 It's mute I dye.⁵

Cleopatra does not appear until the second act. She speaks to her companions Eras and Charmion:

5. Antoine, ed., A. Lucie, Act I, pp.1-7.

That I haue thee betraid, deare Antione,
 My life, my soule, my sunne? I had such thought?
 That I haue thee betraide my Lord, my King?
 That I would break my vowed faith to thee?
 Leave thee? deceive thee? yield thee to the rage
 Of mightie foe? Ieuer had that hart?
 Rather sharpe lightning lighten on my head:
 Rather may I to deepest mischeefe fall.
 Rather the opened earth deuower me:
 Rather fierce Tigers feed them on my flesh:
 Rather, o rather let our Niles send,
 to swallow me quicke, some weeping crocodile.⁶

It is not, however, until the fifth act that Cleopatra arouses a feeling of sympathy, and then only during her pathetic advice to her children, whom she urged to flee rather than fall into the hands of Octavius.

Adieu deare children, children deare adieu:
 Good Isis you to place of safetie guide,
 Farre from our foes, where you your luies may leade
 In free estate deuoid of seruile dread.
 Remember not, my children, you were borne
 Of such a Princelie race: remember not
 So manie braue Kings which haue Egipt rul'de,

For your high courage such remembrance well
 Seeing your fall, with burning rages fill.⁷

There are only two violations of the unities, and these so slight that they are hardly violations. The first is a violation of place. A part of Act II and all of Act V apparently take place in the monument. Miss Lucie comments that "this rule of the unities was not a fixed law and is often violated with Seneca."⁸ In addition to this violation, Acts IV and V have more than three actors on the stage at one time.

When the Countess undertook to translate this tragedy of Garnier, she did not make any attempt to improve on it. She had selected it because

6. Antoine, op.cit., p.387-399.

7. Ibid., Act V, pp.1850-1859.

8. Alice Lucie, Antoine, p.37.

it met her demands, and her translation was a literal one. She did not attempt to put it into rhyme, but chose blank verse for her conveyance.

Here again Miss Lucie's authority may be quoted:

She followed the text of the original so closely that the English verse is often rough, and the inverted sentences sometimes give a strained effect to the measures; but if we consider that "Marlowe's mighty line" though it had existed for thirty years first became the property of the English public in Tamburlaine, printed in 1590, we must admit that she used the new metre with a very considerable degree of skill.⁹

In the choruses, however, the Countess followed the text less closely and put them into rhyme. Hence, the choruses show the Countess's skill as a poet better than the body of the translation.

Nature made us not free
When first she made us liue:
When we began to be
To be began our woe:
Which growing euermore
As dying life dooth growe,
Do more and more us grieue
And trie us more and more.¹⁰

The reason for the Countess's choice of Garnier as an exponent of the classic principles discussed by Sidney in The Defence of Poesie became apparent even with a cursory glance at her translation of Marc-Antoine. The play fits the pattern of Sidney very aptly. It observes the unities almost to the letter. There is little or no action on the stage. The progress of the play is made by monologue or dialogue. The main characters do not meet. There is no tragic struggle on the stage. The Countess chose a model which admirably suited her purpose.

9. Ibid., p.44.

10. Ibid., p.175-180.

This careful translation of the Countess is not to be regarded as a literary production of great merit. Its importance lies in the effect it had in its own time. Following close upon the translation of the Countess there appeared eleven plays in a similar vein. C.F. Tucker Brooke gives a list of ten plays exclusive of the Countess's, but A.M. Witherspoon, whose work shows the influence of Brooke, adds a play of Elizabeth Carew to this genre.¹¹ Witherspoon is in error in giving this author the name Carew. It has been established that this lady was Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess of Falkland.¹²

One of the first and by far the most important contributors to this list of plays was Samuel Danier, whose Tragedy of Cleopatra was first published in 1594. Daniel's friendship with the Sidneys and the Herberts has many angles and it is quite natural that he should have been among the early followers of the Countess. Soon after 1590 he became the tutor of her son, William. A.B. Grosart suggests that Daniel's trip to Italy may have been taken with a member of the Herbert family.¹³ In 1591 his sonnets were published 'against his will' at the end of Sidney's Atrophel and Stella. His many dedications to the Countess and her son indicate his willingness to acknowledge his indebtedness to this illustrious family.

His dedication poem to the Countess at the beginning of the play, contains fourteen stanzas and begins:

11. A.M. Witherspoon, The Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama, p.84,ff.
12. E.K. Chambers, op.cit., p.247.
13. A.B. Grosart, The Works in Prose and Verse of S.Daniel, Vol.1, p.xvii.

Loe heere the labour which she did impose
 Whose influence did predominate my Muse;
 To starre of wonder of my desires first chose
 To guide their trauels in the course I use;
 She, whose cleare brightnesse had the powre
 t'infuse
 Strength to my thoughts, from whence these
 motions came,
 Call'd up my spirits from out their low repose
 To sing of State, and tragicke notes to frame.¹⁴

The play of Daniel is a continuation of the Garnier plot, but it is not a translation. In Daniel's play, Antony's death precedes the opening scene. Cleopatra opens the play with a long speech in which she offers excuses for herself and expresses concern over the fate of her children. In this play Cleopatra is more alive and gives advice to her son, Caesario, to avenge the wrongs of Egypt. Instead of urging him to forget his royal birth, she reminds him of his duty. The son is entrusted to a tutor, who betrayed him to death at the hand of Octavius Caesar.

Daniel makes the tutor, Rodon, seem an inhuman villian in his betrayal of Cleopatra's confidence in him. In Act Iv, Rodon is found, after the death of Caesario, telling his friend Seleucus of the parting between Cleopatra and her son. Throughout the scene Rodon plays up the trust Cleopatra had in him, thus making his crime seem doubly villianous. Even Cleopatra's Advice to Caesario was sprinkled with confidence in Rodon:

Then unto him, O deer sonne (she saies)
 Sonne of my youth, flie hence, O flie, begone,
 Reserue thy selfe, ordain'd for better daies,
 For much thou hast to ground thy hopes upon
 Leaue me (thy wofull Mother) to endure
 The fury of this tempest heere alone:
 Who cares not for her selfe, so thou be sure;
 Thou mayst reuenge, when others can but mone,
Rodon will see thee safe, Rodon will guide
 Thee and thy wayes, thou shalt not need to feare.¹⁵

In the second scene of Act V, the dialogue becomes quite animated and offers the only contrast to the long, though at times rather lyric, speeches of the other scenes. Here by means of short questions of the chorus and short answers of Nuntius, the messenger, the reader is told of Cleopatra's death. This scene shows Daniel's ability to picture a climax. He describes the faithful friends of Cleopatra unwilling to live after her. Charmion and Eras apply the asp to themselves and are found dying beside their beloved Queen.

In both of the scenes described above, the reader feels that Daniel approached but did not quite reach his full power as a dramatist. There is the feeling that he was restricted and held in check by the classic rules of his friend Sidney. However, the fact that he never broke from those rules is indication of his own satisfaction with them.

Here as in the Garnier play is simplicity of plot with few violations of classical unities. In Act III, scene 2, there are four characters of the stage at one time. Apparently, however, the action takes place in one location, and in the space of one day's duration.

The only claim to greatness in the translation of the Countess and the play of Daniel is that Shakespeare also used the Cleopatra story. The two plays mentioned here may have been used by Shakespeare when he wrote his own heroid Antony and Cleopatra:

Shakespeare must have known Daniel's
Cleopatra and the Countess of Pembroke's
Antonius, a Tragedie, which had been
Daniel's model for his first version.¹⁶

14. Samuel Daniel, Cleopatra, ed., A.B. Grosart, Vol.3, p.23.

15. Ibid., Act IV, pp.898-907.

16. Hardin Craig, op.cit., p.725.

Yet, how different is Shakespeare's treatment of the story. Here is a conflict of wills, a story of passion, even a political struggle presented to an audience before their eyes, not merely described by rather stationary characters. Here Antony and Cleopatra met upon the stage, expressed their loves and hates. If the only claim to greatness for the play of the Countess and Daniel, is association with Shakespeare, it is rather ironical in that they strove against the type of play they may have inspired.

Daniel's second tragedy on the classical model was Philotas, first published in 1604, and reprinted in 1607. This play was similar in form, but took its plot from the life of Alexander. The 1607 edition was printed with an apology for the play. As a result of an earlier edition of the play, Daniel was called before the Privy Council to answer the charge that the plot showed sympathy with the revolt of Essex. The apology added was to ward off further charges of a similar nature.

Although neither of Daniel's classical plays are to be ranked as his best work, yet we cannot help but feel that he did more than pay a debt of gratitude by writing them. Daniel was too skilled a writer to have done two dramas merely to pay tribute to his patroness. Surely, he must have felt that her cause was meritorious or he would not have entered into its defence so earnestly. In speaking of the two plays of Daniel, George Saintsbury said:

I cannot think of any of the English
tragedies which are so distinctly couched
in the form of the Senecan model.¹⁷

17. George Saintsbury, Works of S. Daniel, ed., A.B. Grosart, Vol. 3, p.vii.

Of Daniel's more important contributions which were not of the classical and dramatic mold we shall see more later. The two plays just mentioned are his only works which are to be classed with the dramatic compositions of a purely classical stamp.

The play of Samuel Brandon, which appeared in 1598, may be taken as the next link, in that it is on the same subject as the first of Daniel's classical dramas. This play was called The Tragi-comoedi of the Virtuous Octavia. Nothing is known about the facts of the life of Brandon, and this play is the only work of his which has remained. He is not mentioned in contemporary documents. His play is, however, associated with the Cleopatra play of Daniel. "This is in the manner of Daniel's Cleopatra."¹⁸ According to the Dictionary of National Biography the plot of Brandon was taken from the life of Augustus by Suetonius and that of Mark Antony by Plutarch and "follows to some extent classical models."¹⁹ Brandon's play emphasizes the part of Antony's wife, Octavia, in this popular story. Not long after his marriage to Octavia, the sister of Julius Caesar, Antony went to Syria, and thence to Egypt where he soon forgot his wife, as he renewed his love for Cleopatra. Octavius then made war on Antony at Pelusium, than at Actium to the "utter destruction of both Antony and Cleopatra."²⁰

It would be interesting to know just what, if any, connection Brandon had with the members of the coterie of Mary Herbert. That is as yet, at least a matter of speculation. The surprising thing is that even his one play has come down to us and has merited the edition by so eminent a

18. E.K. Chambers, op.cit., p.236.

19. Dictionary of National Biography, "Samuel Brandon."

20. Samuel Brandon, Octavia, ed., R.B. McKerrow.

scholar as R.B. McKerrow.

There is no uncertainty about Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke's connections with the Countess's circle. His friendship with Philip, which resulted in his biography of Sidney, is well known. A.B. Grosart has indicated that there was a bond of kinship as well as friendship which bound Greville to his friend and hence also to Mary Herbert.

...inasmuch as Sir Philip Sidney was likewise a descendant and representative of the Beauchamps, through the Dudleys, Greys, and Talbots, Vicounts Lisle, the two life-long friends were related, viz., by Elizabeth, grandmother to our Sir Fulke, Lord Brooke.²¹

In addition to this bond with the group resulting from his friendship with Sidney and his sister, it has been shown that Greville was on friendly terms with another member of the circle. Daniel dedicated his Musophilus to Greville, and the two corresponded during the Campion versification controversy.²² Thus the link joining this section of the circle is a firm one. Owing to the paucity of biographical material in the age it is difficult to establish facts and it is satisfying to be able to make a link as definite as the one just mentioned.

Although only two plays of Greville survived, he indicated in his work on Sidney that he had contributed to the growing list of plays on the Cleopatra theme. His reason for destroying these tragedies is another indication of the serious and moral tone of those who followed in the classical vein.

Lastly, concerning the Tragedies themselves: They were in their first creation three: Whereof Antoine and Cleopatra, according to their irregular

21. A.B. Grosart, ed.: Fulke Greville's Works in Verse and Prose Complete, Vol. 1, p.xviii.

passions, in forsaking empire to follow sensuality, were sacrificed in the fire. The executioner, the author himself. Not that he conceived it to be a contemptible younger brother to the rest; but lest, while he seemed to looke over-much upward, he might stumble into the astronomer's pit.²³

The two plays on the classical pattern are Alaham, 1600 (?), and Mustapha, 1603(?). The dates of both these plays are uncertain as has been indicated by E.K. Chambers.²⁴ The form of both of them is rigidly classical, but the plots are not of the same stamp as the tragedies already treated. Here is a departure from the Cleopatra theme.

The first of the plays has its setting in Ormus, an island at the entrance of the Persian gulf. The plot is exposed in a prologue uttered by a ghost of a former king of Ormus. The central character in the play itself is Alaham, who is urged to acts of murder by his wife, Hala. In this play there is greater success in depicting character than in the previously discussed contributions of this group.

John Davies of Hereford, whom we shall link with the circle in the next chapter, praised the second play, Mustapha:

No line but reaches to the firmament
Of highest sense, from surest ground of wit;
No word but is like Phebus luculent.²⁵

Greville's second play, also conforms to the classic unities and claims interest for its originality of plot as does Alaham. Here again is an Oriental theme. Mustapha is the heir to the throne, but he is plotted against by Rossa, who seeks the power for her own son.

22. A.B. Grosart, ed.; Fulke Greville's works in Verse and Prose Complete Vol.1, p.xviii.

23. Fulke Greville, Ibid., Vol.4, "The Life of the Renowned Philip Sidney, p.155.

Although the works of Greville offered originality of plot, they too remained closet dramas as did the others of this intellectual coterie.

It should be added that there are to be found in these strange compositions not only characters as strongly conceived as they are subtly worked out, but situations full of awe and pathos; but everything, to recur to Lamb's inimitable phraseology is 'frozen and made rigid with intellect.'²⁶

Considered a part of the classical movement by Ward, Brooke, and Upham, are four plays of William Alexander, Earl of Stirling. There is some question as to his relationship with the group. Typical of the attitude of authorities in linking his name with that of the Countess is that of Upham: "Prominent among the men who enjoyed Lady Pembroke's patronage were also Nicholas Breton, John Davies of Hereford, and probably Sir William Alexander."²⁷ A bit of evidence, which is to me very convincing proof that he was very conscious of the classical movement, is mentioned only in the Dictionary of National Biography. That evidence is the fact that in 1613 he published a part of Sir Philip's Arcadia, "to be found in the fourth and after editions."²⁸ That this addition appeared in the lifetime of the Countess and was not discredited by her, seems to be evidence that there must have been a literary friendliness between the two. On the other hand Sir William was born and spent most of his life in Scotland. He was also a much younger man than most of the rest of the members of the circle, 1580-1640. However, his age need not have been a bar to the association.

24. E.K. Chambers, op.cit., p.331.

25. John Davies of Hereford, The Complete Works, ed., A.B. Grosart, Vol.2, p.53.

26. W.H. Ward, op.cit., p.615.

27. A.H. Upham, op.cit., pp.25-26.

Even though it is difficult to establish the definite status of this friendship, the four tragedies link Sir William to the classical movement. These plays were written in close succession; Darius, 1603; Croesus, 1604; The Alexandraean, 1605; and Julius Caesar, 1607. In 1607, they were published together under the title Monarchicke Tragedies. There is no record to show that they were ever produced, and thus they have at the very outset a strong bond with the dramas previously mentioned in this paper.

They are also like the others in form and plot. The characters are taken from the history of the Greeks and the Romans. The dialogue consists of long speeches during which only one or, at the most, two characters appear on the stage. The deaths are related by messengers, thus giving away to the Senecan stage decency. The chorus interposes with its reflections on difficulties of the characters. Langbaine in his Account of English Dramatick Poets, describes the plays of Stirling:

They are grave and sententious throughout, like the tragedies of Seneca; and yet where the softer and more tender passions are toucht, they seem as moving as the plays so much in vogue with the ladies of this age.²⁹

The comment of Brooke again links them to our circle:

Classical after the special manner of the French Senecans in the employment of metre, chorus, and messenger, and frankly incapable of public representation, these plays are probably an echo from the northern half of Britain of the strain of aristocratic closet tragedy which Lady Pembroke had introduced and Daniel established at the southern court.³⁰

28. Dictionary of National Biography, "Alexander, William."

29. Langbaine, G., Account of English Dramatick Poets, p.1.

30. C.F.T. Brooke, op.cit., p.201.

The editor of his Poetical Works describes the tragedies and furnished another bond:

The style of these tragedies effectually debarred them from the stage, being totally void of incident, and consisting almost wholly of long discussions and dissertations on moral subjects...It has been supposed that the author was enamoured of the classical authors and based his style upon theirs. 31

Although Thomas Kyd contributed to the classical drama as early as 1594, the same year that Daniel published his Cleopatra, he is of minor importance in the circle under discussion. He was really of greater importance as a successful dramatist than the others considered in this paper, but his position as a classicist is extremely slight. His translation of Garnier's Cornelie is the sole claim to his connection with the Countess. Just why he turned to Garnier has never been determined. Perhaps he hoped to gain her patronage by his translation. In the dedicatory epistle to the Countess of Sussex he indicated that he intended to translate Garnier's Porcie. However, his death in 1594 prevented him from carrying out his intention. Kyd was not particularly wise in his selection of Cornelie as it is rather lacking in dramatic interest. During the entire five acts Cornelia laments the death of her husband and her father. True, it was classically perfect. The characters appear singly or in two and issue long philosophical utterances.

While Kyd followed the Countess's example in translating from Garnier, his method of translation was far different from hers. The Countess gave a very literal translation of every line of Garnier, as has been commented

31. The Poetical Works of Stirling, Glasgow edition, Vol. 1, p.191.

on earlier; Kyd gave an extremely free one, omitting many lines and adding others of his own. The freedom of Kyd's translation may be due to his own skill as a dramatist, and not to any deficient knowledge of the French language, as Witherspoon suggests. Kyd's translation was not displeasing to F.S. Boas, who edited the dramatists works:

Yet the vigour and swing of the versification are not unworthy of the author of The Spanish Tragedy....His versions, too, of Garnier's choruses, though far from faithful to the original show much skill in the manipulation of varied strophe-forms. Herein, he resembles the Countess of Pembroke, but unlike her he has left a number of Garnier's lines untranslated, and has made some important additions of his own.³²

The identity of the last contributor to this group of plays is very little known. The Dictionary of National Biography lists her under both the names Carew and Cary. E.K. Chambers gives her a brief notice under the name Cary. He explains that he had originally omitted her name unintentionally. He gives as her dates 1586-1639.³³ The Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess of Falkland, in the Dictionary of National Biography has the dates 1585-1639. A.B. Dunster and W.W. Greg who have given a modern edition of The Tragedy of Miriam, first published in 1613, state that the author of the play was Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess of Falkland, and that she has been mistakenly called Carew. One of the bits of evidence that these editors offer to show that the play was the work of Elizabeth Cary is the dedication to John Davies of Hereford's Muses Sacrifice or Divine Meditations:

³². F.S. Boas, ed.; The Works of Thomas Kyd, p.xvi.

³³. E.K. Chambers, op.cit., p.247.

The dedication proves conclusively that Lady Falkland is the author of the play
This work is dedicated 'to the most noble and no lesse deseruedly renowned Ladyes as well Darlings, as Patronesses, of the Muses; Lucy, Countesse of Bedford; Mary, Countesse-Dowager of Pembroke, and Elizabeth, Lady Cary, Glories of Women.³⁴

The full title of the play indicates something of its plot. The Tragedy of Miriam, the Faire of Jewry. It deals with Miriam, married to the jealous Herod. After many trials, Miriam was murdered as a result of a mistaken message, reporting Herod's death. The play deserves mention with this group in that it observes the classical unities. It is divided into five acts, each having several scenes. Most of the other plays of the coterie were divided into perhaps two scenes or three at the most in each act, but in this play there are as many as eight scenes in one act. Each act is followed by a chorus, and again there are never more than three actors on the stage at any one time. There has been little or no contemporary criticism of this play. Perhaps, now that her identity has been established by Dunster and Greg she will be more fully treated.

Aside from this one play, which is of the classical stamp, we do not know that she had any connection with the other dramatists. Again the Dictionary of National Biography offers valuable information. We are told there that Lady Falkland was famous for her learning and devotion to the Catholic religion. She became a Catholic while on a journey into Ireland, but did not announce her new faith for a number of years. When she did so, she became estranged from her husband. It may be a little far-fetched to

34. A.B. Dunster, ed., The Tragedy of Miriam, p.xvi.

suggest that her church affiliation may have kept her aloof from the circle surrounding the Countess of Pembroke. Mary Herbert and her followers were all avowedly anti-Catholic in their religion, and they may not have pleased the Viscountess on that score.

With the play Miriam ends the influence of the Countess in the field of the purely classical mold. Admittedly, the dramas produced under her guidance are not great in the field of stage productions. They are, nevertheless, an important contribution in the history of dramatic development. It has not been my purpose here to emphasize the importance of the plays, but rather to show the influence of the Countess of Pembroke. To run counter to public dictates is always evidence of strength and courage. For the Countess to have so actively run counter to the ever growing popularity of the romantic tendencies in English drama was, to be sure, a brave attempt. Even though her movement was a temporary force, it was, nevertheless, a tenacious one. As Miss Lucie has indicated the plays of this circle place those of the romantic school into greater prominence through their failure.

Today these plays interest the historian of literature less from their literary merit than because they indicate by their very failure, the soundness of the native growth which they attempt to displace.³⁵

Those, who have called the movement a failure, have emphasized the point that the plays of this period had little effect in influencing the general trend of dramatic development. Without seeming to take up a cudgel in defence of the Countess, the present writer thinks that those critics

35. A. Lucie, op.cit., p.50.

have misinterpreted the Countess's ideals. She wrote for an exclusive, intellectual circle as did her brother Philip. She had no desire or aim to please the populace. Therefore, when the populace demanded romantic plays, she need not have felt that her movement was defeated. She had influenced a group of dramatists to imitate her ideals and within her own circle the movement was a success. It has been pointed out earlier that the plays were not written with an eye to stage production. Hence, the fact that they were not produced is not evidence that they had failed. My point is that while the Countess's activity was a failure in its permanent effects on the drama, yet the movement accomplished all that the Countess expected and hoped that it would accomplish. In that sense, then, the Countess was a success. She did what she set out to do.

No treatment of the Countess's circle can be complete which merely traces her influence in promoting a series of classical dramas. Her influence did not stop there. The first chapter of this study indicated that the pastoralism of Philip Sidney was an important part of his contribution to literature. His essay, The Defence of Poesie, merely suggested his interest in pastoralism, while his prose romance was one of the great influences in that direction. When Mary Herbert set herself the task of fostering the ideals of her brother, she did not neglect his inclination toward the pastoral. It is a little difficult to trace the pastoralism of Sidney through the efforts of his sister because the pastoral took so many angles in its development. There were pastoral poems, pastoral dramas, to say nothing of the prose romances of the same genre of Sidney's Arcadia.

We may with some degree of certainty point to a few of the pastoral dramas which the Countess probably inspired. Here, as in the classical dramas, she led off with a contribution of her own. Her pastoral dialogue Astrea, one of the two poems of the Countess which have come to light, was true to the classical pastoral. In it there are the two conventional philosophical shepherds who utter praises of Astrea. The form of this dialogue has been discussed in the preceding chapter to this study.

Here as in the purely classical dramas, one of the most staunch admirers of the Countess was Samuel Daniel. In his sonnet series, Delia, there is a section called "A Pastorell" which W.W. Greg describes as "A rendering of the famous chorus of the first act of Tasso's Aminta."³⁶ Of a more dramatic nature, however, was The Queen's Arcadia, 1605. The play was called a 'trage-comedie,' and its purpose was served when it was presented by the Christ Church men during a royal visit to Oxford.

Davison's Poetical Rhapsody contained two other pastoral dramas which may show allegiance to the Countess. The first of these is A Song of Welcome, by Fulke Greville, and the second Dispraise of Courtly Life, by Sir Edward Dyer. Of Fulke Greville's allegiance to the Countess we may be certain. Of Dyer's we still hesitate. More than likely his allegiance was with Sidney, but whether or not he bore the same admiration for Mary that he did for Philip is a matter of conjecture.

These few titles do not exhaust the list of pastoral dramas of the Age of Elizabeth, but they do, so far as we know, complete the list of

36. W.W. Greg, Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama, p.120.

contributions in that field which are in any way connected with the Countess of Pembroke.

We may conclude the remarks on the dramatic importance of the Countess by saying that she upheld the traditions of her brother by producing first a piece of literature herself in the field that she hoped to influence. By her translation of Garnier's Marc*Antoine, she instigated a group of dramatists who, for a period of approximately twenty years kept the classical drama on the Sidnean principles alive in intellectual circles. By her original pastoral dialogue, Astrea, she induced at least three others to follow her.

The literary court of the Countess counted among its membership a number of satellites who cannot be placed in a discussion of the drama. Of their tributes to their patron we shall comment briefly in closing.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER TRIBUTES TO THE COUNTESS

In addition to the influence of the Countess of Pembroke's influence in the fields of classical and pastoral drama, her presence was felt in the realm of non-dramatic poetry. Her place here is one which must be traced solely from tributes paid her by admiring authors. There is no work of her own which inspired her clients. In this field she rules as a patroness of struggling poets. She and her husband gave financial aid to many of them, and encouraged many others by seeking positions for them with their court friends. It has been indicated in an earlier chapter that the home of the Herberts at Wilton was a haven for many of the poets, and that it was referred to as a school by Aubrey and Daniel.

Writing was in that day an uncertain method of making a livelihood and it was quite necessary that the poet enter the services of a powerful patron. Often poets addressed a person of wealth and position in a flattering dedicatory epistle for the sole purpose of gaining service in the retinue of that person. Usually the permission of the person was sought before publication. But human nature was in that day much as it is now, and it was not difficult for the poet to gain permission to use the name of some person he chose to dedicate his work. In fact some of the

early literature is full of obscure names, because it was a theory that by mention in a literary work the name of that person would be carried down in history. In some cases the theory has proved true, but unfortunately the only place where the name has remained in existence has been in the piece of literature. Aside from giving some literary student a problem to puzzle over, the name has no importance. On the other hand, some interesting associations have been uncovered by what appeared to be a casual mention of some personage. One instance of that sort of thing has been mentioned in the preceding chapter. The identity of Elizabeth Cary as the author of The Tragedy of Miriam was uncovered by her being mentioned in a dedicatory epistle of John Davies of Hereford.

To discover the real significance of the many references and dedications to the Countess of Pembroke is, then, a problem with many angles. Who were the poets seeking patronage, and who were those paying tribute to a literary artist?

Aside from the difficulty of determining the sincerity of the poet there is the difficulty of attributing the literary production to the right author. Fortunately, modern scholarship has made rapid strides in checking the works of the early writers, and many disputed works have been definitely placed. This was a problem which has been presented to those interested in the Countess of Pembroke. The cause of the difficulty arouses strangely enough from the fact that she was a literary patroness. Because she befriended poets, their writings were mistaken for her own.

There are two notable examples of such a mix-up already uncovered. One of the poets involved in such a case was Abraham Fraunce. Two of his

works bore the name of his patroness in their titles, and as a result they were for some time thought to have been from her pen. The works were The Countess of Pembroke's Emanuel and The Countess of Pembroke's Ivychurch. These are now acknowledged to be the works of Fraunce. This author very willingly acknowledged his indebtedness to the Sidneys and the Herberts and his record does not present the problems indicated above. He was befriended by Philip Sidney who aided him to secure an education. At Sidney's death he was given assistance by the Earl and the Countess. In his case it is not surprising that he was so kindly treated by the Countess. In addition to being a writer he was a lawyer of note. Such a well-rounded young man had little difficulty in securing a place in her affection. As a result of this association he dedicated his works to her. He did more than dedicate; his work has qualities which show that he shared her classical views:

Fraunce proved himself one of the most obstinate champions of the school which sought to naturalize classical metres in English verse. All his poems are in hexameters, and all are awkward and unreadable.¹

A tribute to him is found in Spenser's Colin Clout, which was written on Sidney's death. Fraunce is referred to in that poem as Corydon.²

Another poet whose work was thought to be that of the Countess was Nicholas Breton. His Pilgrimage to Paradise appeared in 1592 and joined to it was a poem called the Countess of Penbrookes loue. It was thought for some years that this last piece was the work of the Countess, but it

1. Dictionary of National Biography, "Abraham Fraunce," Vol.7, p.667.

2. Ibid.

has been now accredited to Breton. This poet also dedicated to her Wit's Trenchmour, The Ravisht Soule and Blasse Weeper. It is in connection with Breton that the only bit of scandal has been suggested.³ There seems little on which to base facts, but it has been hinted that the Countess was the woman referred to in Wit's Trenchmour.

Samuel Daniel was not satisfied to dedicate the works in the field of drama to his beloved patroness. In addition he dedicated to her Civil Warres, his long historical poem, and also his sonnet sequence. His prose Defence of Rime was dedicated to her son.

Just how far beyond these names the circle reached is difficult to say for the reasons already mentioned. The authorities on this period of Elizabethan literature agree on the names already discussed. Other writers who are listed as being linked with the activities of the Countess often paid her tribute in poems, but were not necessarily members of her circle. One of these John Donne, who praised the translation of the Psalms, another was Spenser, whose friendship with her brother was sufficient to give her a place in his regard.

To go on naming all the tributes great and small would not enhance the position of the Countess of Pembroke, whose reputation has already been established. The tribute of the modern critic T.S. Eliot furnishes a fitting tribute, although the writer of this paper does not entirely agree with the sentiment therein expressed:

3. Dictionary of National Biography, op.cit., p.667.

The chief channel through which the Countess of Pembroke's circle may have affected the course in English poetry is the great civilising influence of Spenser. Spenser exercised great influence on Marlowe; Marlowe first showed what could be done with dramatic blank verse, and Marlowe's great disciple Milton showed what could be done with blank verse in a long poem. So great the influence of Spenser seems to me, that I should say that without it we might not have had the finest developments of blank verse. Such a derivation in itself should be enough to rescue the Countess of Pembroke's friends and relatives from obscurity, enough to dignify their critical efforts, to raise them from ignominy of wealthy well-born amateurs of the arts, or obscurantist supporters of a fastidious and sterile classicism.⁴

4. T.S. Eliot, The Poetry and the Use of Criticism, "An Apology for the Countess of Pembroke." p.41.

CONCLUSION

As a result of this analysis, we may say that Sidney expressed a dissatisfaction with the contemporary conditions in the field of dramatic and non-dramatic poetry. He advocated as a reform measure, at a time when the quality of literary productions was at a low tide, a return to the classics for new vigor. He was definitely influenced in his advocacy of a return to the classics by his early training, his friendships, and his observations of the success of the classic revivals in Italy and France.

As was stated in the preface of this analysis, one of the purposes was to determine just what the classicism of Sidney was. A study of The Defence of Poesie revealed Sidney to advocate the imitation of the ancients in that they would teach the poet in form and subject matter. He further urged in regard to drama that the classic unities of time, place, and action be strictly observed. He held up Seneca as his model.

Again we have pointed out that the classicism of Sidney included pastoralism, and that this phase of his work is best studied from his Arcadia and The Lady of May. In these works are found the classic philosophical shepherd.

The early death of Sidney cut short his active part in the revival of the classics in his own country. However, his sister, Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke was well trained to carry forth the ideals he

proposed. She had been reared to take an active part in the affairs of the world, and when the time came, she carried on the principles of Philip.

In order to advance these principles she turned to literary production on her own account. Her search for a suitable conveyance to carry on her brother's work lead her to the plays of Garnier, the French tragedian. Garnier was a dramatist who wrote according to the Senecan principles. When the Countess translated his Marc-Antoine, she inspired the production of no less than eleven plays of a similar nature. She was followed by Daniel, Brandon, Greville, Kyd, Stirling, and Elizabeth Cary.

Another classic principle of Sidney was illustrated in his Arcadia and The Lady of May. Here he showed his fondness for the pastoral. In seeking to continue that phase of her brother's work, the Countess wrote a pastoral of her own, called Astrea. The followers of Sidney's pastoralism did not limit themselves to the drama, but included that element in their non-dramatic poetry.

Thus we may conclude that the Countess carried on with some degree of success the classic principles of Sir Philip Sidney.

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