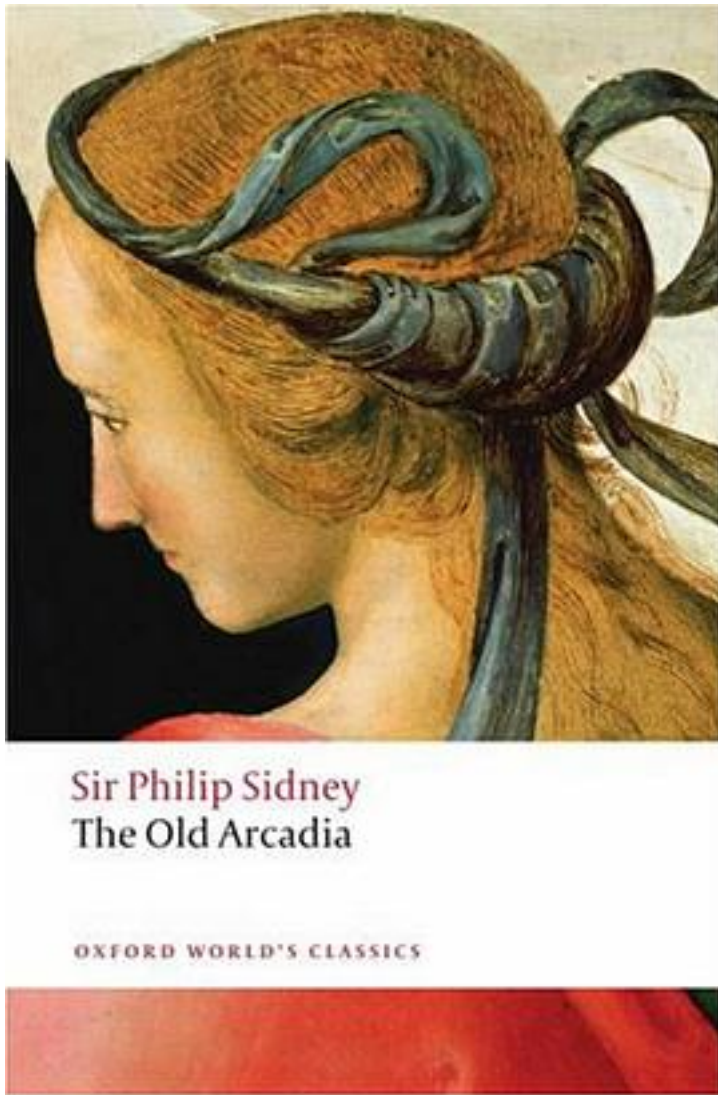


The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia



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Basilus, a foolish old Duke, consults an oracle as he imperiously wishes to know the future, but he is less than pleased with what he learns. To escape the oracle's horrific prophecies about his family and kingdom, he withdraws into pastoral retreat with his wife and two daughters. When a pair of wandering princes fall in love with the princesses and adopt disguises to gain access to them, all manner of complications, both comic and serious, ensue. Part-pastoral romance, part-heroic epic, Sidney's long narrative work was hugely popular for centuries after its first publication in 1593, inspiring two sequels and countless imitations, and contributing greatly to the development of the novel.

在线阅读本书

Philip Sidney was in his early twenties when he wrote his `Old' Arcadia for the amusement of his younger sister, the Countess of Pembroke. The book, which he called 'a trifle, and that triflingly handled', reflects their youthful vitality.

The `Old' Arcadia tells a romantic story in a manner comparable to that of Shakespeare's early comedies. It is divided into five `Acts', and abounds in lively speeches, dialogues, and quasi-dramatic tableaux. Two young princes, Pyrocles and Musidorus, disguise themselves as an Amazon and a shepherd to gain access to the Arcadian Princesses, who have been taken into semi-imprisonment by their father to avoid the dangers foretold by an oracle.

As a vehicle for Sidney's prophetic ideas about English versification, the `Old' Arcadia also includes over seventy poems in a wide variety of metres and genres. In clarity, symmetry, and coherence the `Old' version is greatly superior both to the ambitious but unfinished `New' Arcadia and the amalgamated, `composite' version, a hybrid monster which Sidney himself never envisaged.

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