

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



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Dan Breen

Volume 42, Number 4, Fall 2019

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533): Faith, Antiquity, and the Witch Hunt

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URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1068593ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068593ar>

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Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Breen, D. (2019). Review of [Brumbaugh, Barbara. Apocalyptic History and the Protestant Cause in Sir Philip Sidney's Revised Arcadia]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42(4), 206–208.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1068593ar>

**Brumbaugh, Barbara.**

***Apocalyptic History and the Protestant Cause in Sir Philip Sidney's Revised Arcadia.***

Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 468. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2018. Pp. xii, 543 + 4 ill. ISBN 978-0-86698-521-5 (hardcover) US\$84.

Readers of Sir Philip Sidney's writing have most often examined his work in close relation to two relevant contexts: the courtly social circles of which he and his family were part, and mid-sixteenth-century English politics, to which Sidney felt himself consistently drawn. The last twenty-five years in particular have witnessed much new research by such scholars as Maureen Quilligan, Margaret P. Hannay, and Mary Ellen Lamb, on the composition and circulation of coterie poetry. This research has in turn enhanced our understanding of literary production within the Sidney family as an enterprise that seems to have been by degrees either mutually referential or something close to communal. Yet Sidney, of course, belonged to other social and intellectual communities as well. A staunch evangelical, Sidney attempted to advocate for evangelical political causes and translated French evangelical writing most probably in the early 1580s. As Barbara Brumbaugh notes in her book *Apocalyptic History and the Protestant Cause*, that Sidney was working on these translations at the same time he was revising *Old Arcadia* suggests that Sidney-the-committed-evangelical may in fact be more fully integrated with Sidney-the-aspiring-politician and most especially Sidney-the-court-poet than many critics have acknowledged. Using Greville's 1590 edition of the text (that is, the "incomplete" revised *Arcadia*), Brumbaugh seeks to situate *Arcadia* firmly within a tradition of Renaissance epic that casts poetry and fiction as a model of and exhortation to virtuous action. By relating an allegorical, apocalyptic narrative patterned after (and possibly informed by evangelical commentaries upon) the Book of Revelation, *Arcadia* urges evangelical readers to labour on behalf of the true church and to participate actively in the just and inevitable unfolding of God's providence.

This argument is made most fully in chapters 1 through 4 and in chapter 10. Acknowledging that *Arcadia* does not seem to concern itself in an explicit sense with biblical interpretation, Brumbaugh uses her first chapter to discuss interpretive methodology in sixteenth-century evangelical commentaries on Revelation. Luther and his followers used an allegorical approach in order to

read Revelation into history, by arguing for specific correspondences between historical events and personages on the one hand, and images and topoi in Revelation on the other. Applying this method to *Arcadia*, Brumbaugh then focuses the following three chapters on the narrative back stories supplied by Pyrocles and Musidorus relating to their time in Asia Minor—significantly, the products of Sidney's extensive revisions. These narratives introduce allegorically a key theme in evangelical church history, namely the purity of the early church and the subsequent decay of devotional practice during centuries of Roman control. Recovering and giving new life to the ancient church was not only an important conceptual element of evangelical discourse; it was also consonant with the gradual revelation of divine providence. The book locates a series of correspondences between episodes in the Asia Minor narratives and scriptural accounts of the difficulties suffered by the early church, and in chapter 4 argues for a version of reform based on allegorical correspondences linking *Arcadia*, Revelation, and Exodus. As reflection on their own personal stories generates something like an awareness of the unfolding of providence in Pyrocles and Musidorus, so too does the encounter with the angel/Urania enable Strephon and Claius to develop clerical capacities most prized by evangelical reformers.

Other chapters in the book extend and broaden the discussion by reading *Arcadia* in relation to additional elements of evangelical concern with the Elizabethan church. Notably, chapters 8 and 9 introduce an account of the text as a commentary on the inadequate or incomplete nature of the Reformation in the late sixteenth century. In Amphialus, a character introduced in Sidney's revisions, Brumbaugh suggests that the text constructs a figure of the contemporary church, complete with the undesirable and potentially dangerous residue of Catholic tradition. *Arcadia* appropriates languages and imagery from evangelical critiques of Elizabethan ecclesiology and liturgy in its descriptions of Amphialus, and Amphialus himself exhibits some social practices which, in a devotional setting, many evangelicals considered objectionable: in his first meeting with Philoclea, for example, Amphialus kneels to her. Similarly, in its depiction of Queen Helen, *Arcadia* generates both a discourse of gratitude to Elizabeth for rescuing the church from its return to Roman Catholicism under Mary and a critique of Elizabeth's refusal to extend reforming principles further than she had.

Brumbaugh's book engages with and synthesizes an immense amount of learning, and generates what is, as far as I am aware, the only full-scale reading

of Sidney's revisions that implicates his evangelical convictions so thoroughly. The evidence the book adduces is never less than suggestive, and the sheer weight of this evidence should incline the balance in the argument's favour. Whether the reader finds it persuasive will depend in part on the reader's assessment of the book's claims about *Arcadia's* adoption of an evangelical allegorical method. While the book roots this approach to interpretation in Luther, it is worth noting that Sidney's evangelical commitments appear to have been more Reformed, and Calvin's understanding of and interest in Revelation is somewhat different from Luther's. If the significance of this method to *Arcadia* is granted, then it is worth noting further that its emphasis on the importance of narrative patterns of images and topoi can sometimes produce a Robertsonian effect, particularly in moments when specific correspondences seem tenuous. Finally, as Brumbaugh is fully aware, the notion of *Arcadia* as a biblical allegory must confront longstanding critical inertia in the study of Sidney's writing which has been reluctant to accord Sidney's evangelical commitments a place in his literary production. How the field will respond to this reading I am unsure, but scholars of early modern literature and religion should welcome the intervention.

DAN BREEN

Ithaca College

### **Chapman, George.**

#### ***Homer's Iliad*. Ed. Robert S. Miola.**

MHRA Tudor and Stuart Translations 20. Cambridge, UK: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2017. Pp. ix, 466. ISBN 978-1-78188-118-7 (hardcover) £35.

The publication and circulation of Greek texts during the European Renaissance was more extensive and influential than has previously been supposed. In England, for example, texts from ancient Greece were taken up widely in grammar schools and universities but also via the commercial theatre, as Tania Demetriou and Tanya Pollard have recently shown. The English playwright George Chapman was a key figure in this development, for his verse translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Robert S. Miola points out, "contributed