Spenser's Sonnets "As Published"

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DISCUSSIONS.

SPENSER'S SONNETS 'AS PUBLISHED.'

MR J. C. SMITH, in his complimentary but unfortunately incomplete review of my paper on *Spenser and Lady Carey*, hesitates to accept either its position (in entirety) or the traditional view of the *Amoretti*, and finally proposes a new, definite theory of their composition¹. He says (p. 280): 'It seems to me possible that Spenser *did* indite a series of complimentary sonnets to Lady Carey; that some misunderstanding arose between them just before his departure for Ireland, and that they afterwards had, or feigned, a quarrel; or, more simply, that absence soon wore out his conventional devotion; that, in either case, he presently fell genuinely in love, and used up parts of this complimentary series in addresses to her whom Prior would have called his "real flame."

This conclusion accedes to my main contention, restoring the series (in first intention, at least) to Spenser's courtly mistress, Lady Carey². Mr Smith, however, suggests that it was reshaped to apply to Elizabeth Boyle, and he notes in this connexion (p. 280, *n.* 2) that: 'Mr Long himself glances, in one sentence, at the plausibility of just such a *contaminatio*, but in the opposite sense; i.e., he thinks that sonnets originally written to Spenser's wife may have been incorporated in the complimentary set.' This is news to me, and unwelcome. I did state (p. 264) that: 'In this event [Spenser's supposed marriage in 1594] the utmost that can be claimed for Elizabeth Boyle is the appending or interspersing of later sonnets³.' This is not opposite to, but identical with, what Mr Smith has chosen to claim.

The view is beset with difficulties. It implies that Spenser, in finishing the work prepared for his 'real flame,' was an astonishingly

¹ See *The Mod. Lang. Rev.*, Vol. III, pp. 256—67 (April 1908) and Vol. V, pp. 273—81 (July 1910).

² Mr Smith's attitude toward the question whether Charillis is Lady Carey vacillates. Where he rejects it (p. 276) before accepting it (pp. 279, 280), he passes over the entire argument (Vol. III, p. 259, *n.* and pp. 264—5), merely rejecting two suggestions as to why Spenser and the records disagree. He offers a third (p. 280), the possibility of which I admit. But, in any case, Spenser's ignorance of the relative ages of two married sisters—seventh and tenth among eleven children—proves no 'want of intimacy' with the family. And it is always possible that Spenser may have been right, and the scanty record a case of miscopying.

³ More explicitly yet I stated (p. 262): 'In this case [that Spenser, when paying court to Lady Carey, was already married] the *Amoretti* could not have been addressed to the lady who became his wife.'

negligent craftsman; for he leaves the *Amoretti*, as Mr Smith admits¹, with a glaringly inappropriate ending. Spenser's finish is nowhere more exquisite than in the *Epithalamion*. If the two are intended as companion pieces—regardless of the unrelated fragments printed between, regardless too of the fact that the *Epithalamion* has a separate title-page—Spenser's omission of all trace of connexion is anomalous and incongruous with his usual delicate transitions². Again, the marriage date (June 11th) is precise: it renders disproportionate the stretch of twenty-one sonnets (in a sequence of eighty-eight) after the second Easter and ending some time before the marriage. This is incontestable evidence that Spenser did not make over the structure to harmonize with his marriage song. Indeed, Mr Smith admits (p. 280) that: 'The parting which Spenser bewails [at the end of the sequence] would thus belong to the original series.' It does, in fact, harmonize with the opening sonnet of the series, and is an ending paralleling those of the sequences by Thomas Watson and Sidney. At most, then, Spenser interspersed a number of sonnets and changed, tacitly, the last—though not the first—name of the lady.

If Spenser was thus a slovenly poet in praising his 'real flame,' he was also for once curiously tactless. The court circle, familiar with Spenser's service of Lady Carey, must have seen in the series one more tribute to her whom Nash says 'in all his writings he [Spenser] prizeth.' Intimation that another Elizabeth now was meant must have cost Spenser the enmity of one of the Queen's intimates. On the other hand, if Spenser gave no intimation—and we know of none—these praises of his 'real flame' were an unworthy equivocation, praises inevitably misunderstood by all but a narrow circle—a circle, too, where poetry cannot have been highly valued (for the name of Elizabeth Boyle never appears conjoined with that of Spenser). Surely, the game was not worth the candle.

Nor can I admit that Mr Smith has disposed of the envoi to the *Epithalamion*. 'It is,' he says (p. 275), 'in vain to try to rehabilitate the traditional view while the epilogue to the *Epithalamion* blocks the way.' He therefore proposes a diverse reading of the line:

Song! made in lieu of many ornaments.

The ornaments, I contend, are poetic tributes in the same sense as in the sixth line:

Be unto her a goodly ornament.

This explains the envoi as an apology for the absence of other poems in honour of Spenser's 'owne love³.' Mr Smith, to differentiate the lines, considers the ornaments to be 'the bridegroom's presents,' which he supposes may have arrived late because the wedding had been set

¹ See *The Mod. Lang. Rev.*, Vol. v, pp. 279 f.

² No such separation is found in *Astrophel* or in the *Fowre Hymnes*.

³ Spenser further indicates this by invoking the Muses (st. 1) who have often helped him 'others to adorne' now to

Helpe me mine owne loues prayses to resound.

He cites the example of Orpheus in apology for such unconventionality.

forward. This involves no little historical fiction. Moreover, it is the poem and not the wedding which Spenser accuses of 'cutting off' the ornaments; and one can readily understand how such a noble theme, when once conceived, 'would not stay' its 'dew time to expect,' but would demand immediate expression. Mr Smith admits that his explanation is prosaic; is it, then, Spenserian? A case parallel to this is found in the *Shepheardes Calendar*, toward the close of the December eclogue, in 'the fragrant flowres' (l. 109):

Ah! who has wrought my Rosalind this spight,
To spill the flowres that should hir girlond dight?
(ll. 113—4.)

E. K. glosses this: '*The fragrant flowres*, sundry studies and laudable partes of learning, wherein our Poet is seene, be they witesse which are privie to this study.' If then the ornaments must naturally be regarded as poetic tributes, one cannot link the poem to the *Amoretti* as they stand: for the sequence contains too many poems, rather than too few, to fit the circumstances.

Mr Smith's argument against my (supposed) position is directed chiefly (p. 275) against a courtship of Lady Carey and Elizabeth Boyle at the same time. No one, I think, has entertained the idea. Not that it is in itself unreasonable, as Mr Smith urges: for Spenser's patron, Raleigh, carried on such a dual courtship of the Queen and Elizabeth Throckmorton; and, as to publication of the praises of two women in one volume, it may be noted that Spenser dedicated *Astrophel* to Sidney's widow, while in that poem he told of Sidney's exclusive and whole-souled devotion to another woman, Stella. But the idea is a chimera. Mr Smith says of me (p. 275): 'He evidently feels the difficulty of allowing the real and the imaginary wooing to synchronize, and he seeks to avoid it by disputing the received date of the former.' But such synchronism never occurred to me: my suggestion of an early date for Spenser's marriage was due to quite another reason (see the note at the end of this paper). Spenser could hardly have courted Elizabeth Boyle during his stay in London; and it is to that time—to 1589-91—that I referred the composition of the *Amoretti*¹. Although I stated (p. 264) it to be 'almost incredible' that they were not written then, Mr Smith infers (p. 275) that I date them 'as published' to 1592-3-4, on four grounds which I do 'not indeed urge' but 'would probably admit.' All these Mr Smith makes no attempt to controvert when he suggests (p. 280) the date 1589-91; nor need he, for they all depend on *Am. LXXX*, which he therefore must regard as one of the later sonnets addressed to Spenser's 'real flame.' The assumption is made because this sonnet alludes to the completion of six books of the *Faerie Queene*. It is none the less unnecessary. (1) The version alluded to may have been a first draft, and

¹ In *Am. LIV* the imagery drawn from the theatre connotes the environment of London; and it may not be merely fanciful to read in *Am. xxiv* an allusion to Lyly's *Woman in the Moon*.

probably was, since the sonnet was written fully two years before their publication. (2) The allusion in *F. Q.*, v, xi (necessarily later than July 1593) is likely to have been, as Mr Smith admits, an afterthought. (3) The last lines of Book III appear to have been a makeshift to round off the volume rather than the original ending of the Amoret-Scudamour story. No other book has so definite an ending—it is Spenser's custom throughout to suggest an immediate continuation—except Book VI. There a similar artifice appears. (4) The completion of Books IV—VI in 1591–2 does not imply anomalous speed. In part they may have been planned and written before Spenser went to London in 1589. In part they are regarded as early material reworked. Mr Smith, in his edition of the *Faerie Queene* (Vol. I, p. xi), allows but intermittent work on the first instalment until 1588–9, and therefore reduces the earlier—and probably more difficult—work to a period not very dissimilar in length.

Not only is *Am. LXXX* no obstacle to dating the sequence within Spenser's stay in London: it ceases to be even a drawback in view of the fact that the episode concluding Book VI—the marriage of Essex with Sidney's widow—was of greatest interest at that time. This was therefore probably composed then, at first perhaps as a separate pastoral¹. Its incidental praise of the lady of the *Amoretti* (*F. Q.*, VI x) further confirms the evidence that they were then in the making. Should Mr Smith insist, notwithstanding, that *Am. LXXX* must be regarded as a later insertion, he must then reckon with it as a positive argument that Spenser had not altered his first intention; for it terms Spenser's lady 'the handmayd of the Faery Queene'—an expression very appropriate in the case of Lady Carey², very inapt in the case of Elizabeth Boyle.

If, despite these considerations, we are to believe that Spenser reshaped the *Amoretti* to suit the bride of the *Epithalamion*, some evidence of such reshaping should be perceptible. Mr Smith accordingly advances (pp. 277–8) certain 'positive evidence that would lead us to identify the mistress of the *Amoretti* with the bride of the *Epithalamion*.' The evidence consists of two 'general correspondences,' four 'striking' correspondences, and the 'tone' of certain sonnets.

Of the first 'general' correspondence (*Am. LXXX* with *Epi. 14*), it may be said that to sing one's 'loves prayes' is no very close parallel, and might be used for a diversity of loves. As to the second, the refrain of the *Epithalamion*, though approximated in *Am. XIX*, l. 7 (not 14), is equally foreshadowed long before in *Sh. Cal.*, August, ll. 151–2, 159–60, 166, and in *The Teares of the Muses*, ll. 21–2.

Still less convincing are the four 'striking' correspondences. The

¹ Spenser's close relations with Essex in 1591 are evident from his fulsome praises of Essex's secretary Alabaster in *Colin Clout*, ll. 400–15.

² The high favour of Lady Carey is evidenced (in Nichols' *Progresses*) by Queen Elizabeth's New Year gift to her in 1588–9 of 34 oz. of gilt plate. This exceeded in value her gift to any other lady of her rank. Of twenty baronesses only two received more, and of fourteen countesses only three. Among fifty-eight in all, Lady Carey in this count ranked seventh—a place markedly above her station.

first (*Am.* XIII with *Epi.* IX) is in fact a striking contrast. In the sonnet, the lady's bearing is 'proud'; in the song, 'So farre from being proud.' Though in both the eyes are fixed on the ground, in the sonnet, 'Her faire face she reares up to the skie,' and 'That same lofty countenance seemes to scorne'; whereas in the song, 'Her modest eyes' are 'abashed to behold So many gazers,' and she 'Ne dare lift up her countenance too bold.' The first explicitly constitutes a symbolic portrayal of 'goodly temperature,' of 'Myld humblesse, mixt with awfull majesty' (ll. 4—5; see also *Am.* XXI), precisely paralleling the 'temperance' of Charillis in *Colin Clout* (l. 551), as Mr Smith might have observed I had noted (p. 265). In the song, however, there is no admixture of pride¹. Mr R. E. Neil Dodge (*Spenser's Poetical Works*, pp. 716—7) rightly singles out this pride as a characteristic of the lady of the Amoretti². It is but fair to suggest that the disappearance of this pride in the *Epithalamion*, if taken to indicate the gradual and finally complete triumph of the lover, creates an artistic link between the poems, the trait being conventional and perhaps naught but a literary artifice. Yet, as Mr Dodge notes, in the sonnets the lady's 'friends' accuse her of something like a *mésalliance* (see *Am.* LXVI). Certainly nothing parallels this in the marriage song.

The second 'striking' correspondence (*Am.* xv with *Epi.* x)—dwelling on the charms of the person—consists of the opening lines addressed respectively to 'Ye tradefull Merchants' and 'ye merchants daughters' (though the lady is in no wise besmirched with mercantile relations), and the concluding lines descriptive of the beloved's spiritual excellence as seen by 'few' or 'no' eyes. But 'Her mind adorned with vertues [accomplishments] manifold' suggests intellectual attainments suitable to the learned Lady Carey rather than the vivacity implied in 'The inward beauty of her lively spright.' The physical resemblance amounts to eyes like 'saphyres,' and red lips (one's like rubies, the other's like cherries). In the sonnets are figured an ivory forehead, silver hands, and golden locks; in the song, a neck like marble, cheeks like red apples, paps like lilies, and a breast like a 'bowle of cream uncruddled.' The diversity of perspective is obviously suited to the more intimate occasion. From all this there issues no conclusive point of resemblance³.

The third 'striking' correspondence (*Am.* LXXXIII with *Epi.* XI) falls with least difficulty under the category of virtues: in them the resemblance is confined to two, modesty and chastity, qualities which a lover might well attribute to divers lady loves. In each case the lady appears too holy to be solicited by things evil. But this is characteristic of Spenser's general attitude toward love as heaven-born

¹ See *Epi.*, ll. 159—64, 210—4, 222, 234—5. In l. 306 is shown not pride, but modest dignity.

² See (enlarging Dodge's list) *Am.* v, XIII, XXXIII, LXV, LXXX, LXXXV, and less markedly *Am.* II, XVII, XXVII, XXXI, XXXII, XXXVIII, LV.

³ The similarity to Desportes' sonnet beginning 'Marchands' (*Diane* I, xxxii) has been pointed out by H. Littledale (*Mod. Lang. Rev.*, Vol. VI, p. 203). He fails to note that it had been pointed out before by L. E. Kastner and by Sidney Lee.

and pure (see *Teares of the Muses*, Erato, ll. 383—96; *Hymne to Love*, ll. 169—89; *Colin Clout*, ll. 782—90).

The fourth and last parallel (*Am.* LXIV with *Epi.* x), though Mr Smith fails to note the fact, was dealt with in my paper (p. 261, *n.*) because it had been advanced by Todd. It is unfortunately even less in point than the rest; for the sonnet deals with odours, the stanza with things visible. The impossibility of grounding an argument here is evident when in the sonnet we read that the lady's sapphire eyes resemble 'pincks.'

In short, the comparison reduces itself to red lips and cheeks, blue eyes, and a white bosom. 'Hath white and red in it such wondrous powre?' (*Hymne to Beautie*, l. 71). One may add that both have a smile like sunshine (*Am.* x and *Epi.* 119) and 'golden tresses' (*Am.* xv, xxxvii, lxxii, and *Epi.* 154). But yellow hair and sunshine smiles are no less conventional than ivory foreheads. Rosalind of the *Shepherd's Calendar* had 'golden locks' (June, l. 46); so has Spenser's figure of abstract beauty (*Hymne to Beautie*, ll. 92—105), and her eyes are also 'a parcell of the purest skie.' The less such comparisons are sought in the field of objective realizations of the poet's vision, and the more in his abstract conceptions of love and beauty (both in the *Hymnes* and the *Faerie Queene*), the ampler will be the investigator's reward.

As final evidence that Spenser inserted later sonnets to his 'real flame,' Mr Smith urges that some are convincingly 'loverlike' and 'matter-of-fact.' But the circumstance that Spenser must have addressed Lady Carey without aspirations toward marriage does not necessitate the absence of a semblance of physical attraction. Platonic love did not demand such austerity. In point of fact certain sonnets (*Am.* x, lxxviii), which Mr Smith will perhaps admit were addressed to Lady Carey¹, are certainly not less intimate than the few he mentions. Altogether, it is inapt to draw a distinction between 'the real and the imaginary courtship' (p. 277) in view of the way that love-making and marriage were then conducted in court circles. What contemporary sonnet sequence have we that was addressed to the poet's future wife? Was Sidney's courtship of Stella 'imaginary,' and that of Frances Walsingham 'real'? Sixteenth-century passions must be read in the light of sixteenth-century ideals: Prior and Spenser had very different conceptions of Platonic love.

Nor is it reasonable to discount the evidence of Spenser's dedication of *Muiopotmos* by speaking of its 'comparative ardour' (p. 276). It is superlative. One could hardly say more than: 'I have determined to give my selfe wholly to you, as quite abandoned from my selfe, and absolutely vowed to your service.' This is quite another matter than his addresses to her sisters: 'To intimate my humble affection to your Ladship' (*Teares of the Muses*, Ded.), or 'To make knowne to your Ladship the humble affection and faithfull duetie which I have alwaies

¹ The first, because of its likeness to the sonnet to Lady Carey (see also the *Hymne to Love*, ll. 148—61); and the second, because it is an Easter sonnet, and therefore an integral portion of the structure.

professed, and am bound to beare, to that house from whence yee spring' (*Mother Hubberds Tale*, Ded.). The dedication to Lady Carey, unmistakable as a vow of service offered by a courtly lover (compare *Am.* LXXXII), places Spenser's ostensible, and therefore at least well feigned, devotion in 1590 beyond discussion¹.

Something might be made, indeed, of the fact that in the sonnets the stages of the lover's progress are well marked, were this unique. But, however 'matter-of-fact,' they are not clearer, except as regards chronological indications, than in Watson's *Hecatompethia*, or in Spenser's other conspicuous literary model, *Astrophel and Stella*². As to the chronology, it will be remarked that the stages are sometimes suggestive of literary artifice; for example, where the lady yields, as a kind of New Year's resolution, immediately after the New Year (*Am.* LXII, LXIII). It is to be borne in mind that, in the *Shepheardes Calendar*, Spenser had already known how to suit his passions to the characteristics of the months. And for this reason a similar suspicion rests on the wedding date (June 11th):

But for this time it ill ordained was,
To chose the longest day in all the yeare,
And shortest night, when longest fitter weare.

(*Epi.*, ll. 270—2.)

This literary use of occasions is evident again in bidding the lady of the sonnets (*Am.* LXX), 'Her selfe soone ready make To wayt on Love amongst his lovely crew.' Mr Smith would render this as 'getting ready for the wedding.' Rather, being in the second sonnet after Easter, this is an allusion to May day.

It should now be abundantly evident that the eighteenth-century assumption of the physical identity of the ladies of the *Amoretti* and the *Epithalamion* remains baseless. I must charge to my own lack of explicitness the misapprehensions into which Mr Smith, by my fault, has been led. His opinion on all matters concerning Spenser will command the attention of those familiar with his excellent work as an editor of the *Faerie Queene*.

PERCY W. LONG.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

The date of Spenser's marriage becomes disengaged from the foregoing contentions, since neither Mr Smith nor I regards Spenser's courtly and domestic love-making as synchronous. I suggested an early date (pp. 262—3) because Spenser's praise of three Elizabeths (*Am.* LXXIV) must seem incongruous if he had just courted and married a fourth—Elizabeth Boyle. It offered 'the only present escape from this dilemma' (p. 263) because the courtship of Lady Carey is patent and the marriage with Elizabeth Boyle rests on evidence which must be given face value, albeit reluctantly. Grosart's evidence of it in his edition of Spenser

¹ No promise of further work is made in the dedication because Spenser therein states that he is engaged in it. One is made, however, as I noted (p. 259) at the close of the appended series of visions, which, in the original issue of the *Complainte*, form part of the sub-division addressed to Lady Carey. It is for this reason that the sonnet following the sixth and last of the *Visions of Petrarch* is in the quarto not numbered 7.

² That here the final separation may have had a basis in fact is borne out by the omission of the sonnet to Lady Carey in the 1596 edition of the *Faerie Queene*.

proved entirely inconclusive, and the later surprising, tortuous evidence in *The Lismore Papers*—difficult and fragmentary as they are—leaves one who is familiar with Grosart's publications not sure that it is devoid of flaws (see *Anglia*, 1908, p. 83; also *The Lismore Papers*, I, i, xiv). It is desirable that a competent scholar, versed in palaeography, go over this ground. The suggestion of an early date was made less to further the cause of Lady Carey, than as an offering to Zoilus.

Nevertheless, Mr Smith here does me some injustice. I did not claim 'five children' (p. 276) for Spenser. I said (p. 262): 'Four, possibly five.' I now say: 'Four, very likely five'; for, far from discounting the evidence of Jonson that one of Spenser's children perished in the sack of Kilcolman, I regard it as highly trustworthy on account of his and Spenser's equally close connexion with Essex and Bacon. The sack was a matter likely to be talked of in that circle, at a time when Bacon's ambition was turning toward Ireland. Their friendship with Camden offers another connecting link. But, in any case, the *probabilities* are against even four children in four years and four months of married life.

Secondly, I did not argue that 'Sylvanus was not a minor in 1603.' Grosart says that the court record shows him appearing for himself. To disregard this is useless, since in 1605-6 there are several others to confirm it. If a marriage in 1581 is impossible, as Mr Smith avers (p. 277)—and no less so in 1583-4—why may he not suppose two marriages instead of twins? He would have in support of this the interesting argument of J. P. Collier. Otherwise, it must be admitted that the court records are due to a carelessness natural enough in an unsettled country in the case of a lad arrived at years of discretion (fourteen), but hardly so in the case of a child of eight. Most of Mr Smith's points in objection fall if this age is assumed, permitting a marriage in 1588. He can then depend solely on an assumption that the *Epithalamion* was really written, as the publisher's advertisement implies, 'not long before' 1594. For Spenser's official faithfulness to Rosalind in 1591 proves nothing: he is equally faithful at the time of the publication of *Colin Clout* in 1595, certainly after his marriage. Nor is it clear that the opening of the *Epithalamion* must be, as Mr Smith states (p. 277) without evidence, 'subsequent at least to the first instalment of the *Faerie Queene*, to *Daphnida*, and to the *Ruines of Time*.' I cannot discern in it any specific allusion to these poems. He might have noted that 'When ye list your owne mishaps to mourne' (l. 7) *does* allude to *The Teares of the Muses*; but that is commonly regarded as an early work. To be sure, the publisher's statement—a very different thing from the absent poet's statement—remains; but its force is lost when one recalls that a number of 'lost poems' of the period of 1580 remained unprinted. 'Written not long since' may have served merely to indicate that the *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion* were not among the poems which had been written 'long since'—some fifteen years before. The phrase is not equivalent to *newly*: it implies some interval.

The year of Spenser's marriage remains uncertain.

JOHN DONNE, DIPLOMATIST AND SOLDIER.

In *The Modern Language Review*, VI, 153, Professor Grierson suggests that the John Donne of my extracts from the accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber for 1597-8 (*M. L. Review*, v, 492) was not the poet, but the 'Mr Done' recommended to Essex by Cecil in January, 1599 for services in Ireland. If he will pursue his researches in the *Cecil Papers* (e.g. XI, 419, to take a sample reference noted by me, while preparing my communication of October last, for use in case this suggestion should be made) he will, I think, find that the Mr Done of 1599 was probably Captain Hugh Done.

E. K. CHAMBERS.

GERRARD'S CROSS.