

The Sources of Spenser's "Amoretti"

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MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

'THE DEBATE OF THE SOUL AND THE BODY' IN MS. DIGBY 86.

It appears to have escaped notice that stanzas 28 to the end of the 'Debate of the Soul and the Body' in MS. Digby 86, that is, nearly two-thirds of the poem, are identical with the poems called 'Doomsday' and 'Death,' printed by Morris in the *Old English Miscellany*. The version of the Debate contained in the first 27 stanzas of the Digby poem is also found in MS. Harl. 2253, though with considerable verbal differences and variations in the order of lines and stanzas. The Digby poem is printed by Stengel, and the Harleian by Wright in *Latin Poems Attributed to Walter Mapes*, in stanzas of four lines, mono-rhymed. From a comparison of the two texts it is clear that internal rhyme also originally formed part of the metrical scheme, though in some lines it has been obscured owing to the words having been arranged in a wrong order, and in some others it is missing altogether. The Debate proper is followed by an account of the Seven Signs before Judgment in the same stanza, still showing traces of internal rhyme. From the end of this section the two texts cease to correspond in any particular, though each is still concerned with the general theme of death.

The next section in the Digby text, beginning at stanza 28, is identical with 'Doomsday,' but contains two additional stanzas, 38 and 39, and it is followed without a break, from stanza 41 to the end, by 'Death,' with the omission of its four opening stanzas. The complete absence of internal rhyme from stanza 28 to the end is itself an indication that 'Doomsday' and 'Death' did not originally form part of the Digby poem, although they are written in a very similar stanza. Moreover, 'Death' contains a distinct speech of the soul to the body, in which striking similarities to the 'Address of the Soul to the Body' in the twelfth-century Worcester Cathedral Fragments have more than once been pointed out.

BEATRICE ALLEN.

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THE SOURCES OF SPENSER'S 'AMORETTI.'

The sources of Spenser's *Amoretti* have not received thorough investigation so far, but enough has been done to show that the poet owed something to foreign influence. There are some suggestions of borrowings

from Desportes¹. Of all the proofs brought forward of the influence of the Abbé de Thiron, probably the most convincing to the language-trained student is that afforded by the resemblance in theme and phrasing between *Amoretti*, xv:

Ye tradefull Merchants, that with weary toyle,
and *Diane* I, xxxii:

Marchands, qui recherchez tout le rivage more.

It has already been shown² that analogous poems exist in the Italian anthologies, and there is every likelihood that Spenser knew these collections. But the discovery made by Fitzmaurice-Kelly³ about thirty years ago that one sonnet of the *Amoretti* is completely translated from Torquato Tasso makes a greater impression on the student accustomed to translation from and into foreign languages. We may be pardoned for bringing the Italian and English once more to the notice of readers, because this translation has not received the attention it deserved.

Amoretti, LXXXI.

Fayre is my love, when her fayre golden heares,
with the loose wynd ye waving chance to marke:
fayre when the rose in her red cheekes appeares,
or in her eyes the fyre of love does sparke.

Fayre when her brest lyke a rich laden barke,
with pretious merchandize she forth doth lay:
fayre when that cloud of pryde, which oft doth dark
her goodly light with smiles she drives away.

But fayrest she, when so she doth display,
the gate with pearles and rubyes richly dight:
throgh which her words so wise do make their way
to beare the message of her gentle spright.

The rest be works of natures wonderment,
but this the worke of harts astonishment.

Tasso, *Rime*⁴, 14 (Pisa, 1821).

Commenda le bellezze della sua donna, e in specie la bocca.

Bella è la donna mia, se del bel crine
L' oro al vento ondeggiar avvien ch' io miri,
Bella, se volger gli occhi in vaghi giri,
O le rose fiorir tra neve e brine.

E bella, dove poggi, ove s' inchina;
Dov' orgoglio l' inaspra a' miei desiri,
Belli sono i suoi sdegni, e quei martiri,
Che mi fan degno d' onorato fine.

¹ Cp. L. E. Kastner, *Spenser and Desportes*, *Mod. Lang. Review*, iv, pp. 65 ff.

² By Prof. Berdan of Yale; cp. F. J. Carpenter, *Reference Guide to E. Spenser*.

³ Cp. Carpenter, *op. cit.*

⁴ Vol. II, p. 25 (Solerti).

Ma quella, ch' apre un dolce labro, e serra,
 Porta di bei rubin sì dolcemente,
 È beltà sovra ogn' altra altera ed alma.

Porta gentil della prigion dell' alma,
 Onde i messi d' Amor escon sovente,
 E portan dolce pace, e dolce guerra.

This is a summary account of the most interesting work hitherto accomplished on the *Amoretti*. Further research enables us to make some additions to our knowledge of the sources. Of all the foreign sonneteers who influenced Spenser, the most important is undoubtedly Torquato Tasso. Three complete sonnets, of which one has already been quoted, are translations from the Italian. The other two are as follows:

Amoretti, LXXII¹.

Oft when my spirit doth spred her bolder winges,
 In mind to mount up to the purest sky:
 it down is weighd with thought of earthly things
 and clogd with burden of mortality,

Where when that soverayne beauty it doth spy,
 resembling heavens glory in her light:
 drawne with sweet pleasures bayt, it back doth fly,
 and unto heaven forgets her former flight.

There my fraile fancy fed with full delight,
 doth bath in blisse and mantleth most at ease:
 ne thinks of other heaven, but how it might
 her harts desire with most contentment please.

Hart need not with none other happinesse,
 but here on earth to have such hevens blisse.

Tasso², 47 (Pisa, 1821).

Ritorno dal cielo alla sua donna.

L' alma vaga di luce e di bellezza,
 Ardite spiega al Ciel l' ale amorose;
 Ma sì le fa l' umanità gravose,
 Che le dechina a quel, ch' in terra apprezza.

E de' piaceri alla dolce esca avvezza,
 Ove in sereno volto Amor la pose
 Tra bianche perle e mattutine rose,
 Par che non trovi altra maggior dolcezza.

E fa quasi augellin, ch' in alto s' erga,
 E poi discenda alfin ov' altri il cibi;
 E quasi volontario s' imprigioni.

E fra tanti del Ciel graditi doni,
 Sì gran diletto par che in voi delibi,
 Ch' in voi solo si pasce, e solo alberga.

¹ Spenser keeps very close to Tasso at the beginning.

² Vol. II, p. 98 (ed. Solerti).

Amoretti, LXXIII.

Being my selfe captvyed here in care,
 My hart, whom none with servile bands can tye,
 but the fayre tresses of your golden hayre,
 breaking his prison forth to you doth fly.

Lyke as a byrd that in ones hand doth spy
 desired food, to it doth make his flight:
 even so my hart, that wont on your fayre eye
 to feed his fill, flyes backe unto your sight.

Doe you him take, and in your bosome bright,
 gently encage, that he may be your thrall:
 perhaps he there may learne with rare delight,
 to sing your name and prayses over all.

That it hereafter may you not repent,
 him lodging in your bosome to have lent.

Tasso¹, 167 (Pisa, 1821).*Alla sua donna lontana.*

Donna, poichè fortuna empia mi nega
 Seguirvi, e cinge al piè dure catene;
 Almen per le vostre orme il cor ne viene,
 Cui laccio, oltre i bei crini, altro non lega.

E fa quasi augellin, che l' ali spiega
 Dietro ad uom, che dolce esca in man ritiene,
 Che di cibarsi ne' vostri occhi ha spene,
 E questa è la cagion ch' ognor vi sega.

Prendetel voi, e dentro al vostro seno
 Riponetel benigna, e quivi poi
 Felice prigioniero i giorni spenda.

Forse avverrà, che i dolci affanni suoi
 Canti, e 'l bel vostro nome, e 'l suono intenda,
 Quanto cingon d' intorno Adria, e Tirreno.

Amoretti, LXXII, is worthy of attention. It is noted as indicating Spenser's 'inner feelings².' The sonnet probably does express Spenser's feelings, because by the use of the possessive '*my spirit*,' he has made it quite his own, but it is curious to see that the feelings were originally Tasso's.

This does not exhaust Spenser's debt to Tasso. Sonnets LXXVI and LXXVII are to be compared with Tasso, 134, *Il seno di madonna*, where we likewise find the apples of Atalanta and of the Hesperides, and where the general idea in English and Italian is the same. The first quatrain of *Amoretti*, LXXXIV:

Let not one sparke of filthy lustfull fyre
 breake out, that may her sacred peace molest:

is modelled on Tasso's 137 (Pisa, 1821):

¹ Vol. II, p. 319 (ed. Solerti).
² Carpenter, *op. cit.*; cp. also Professor Erskine's praise of this sonnet in *The Elizabethan Lyric*.

L' amor lascivo e non l' onesto debbe celarsi.

Uom di non pure fiamme acceso il core,
Che lor ministra esca terrena immonda,
Chiuda il suo foco in parte ima e profonda,
E non rispanda il torbido splendore.

The subjunctive 'chiuda' rendered by 'Let,' etc., does not permit us to doubt that here we have Spenser's starting-point, however much he modifies the latter part of the sonnet. *Amoretti*, iv, apparently contains reminiscences of various spring poems, Du Bellay's *Du 1^{er} jour de l'an*, Lucretius' invocation to Venus, and a short lyric of Tasso's (II, p. 289, ed. Solerti):

ride la terra, e 'l Ciel d' intorno
E di bel manto adorno. . .
Di giacinti, e viole il Pò si veste.

Spenser's sonnet runs:

For lusty spring . . .
warnes the Earth with divers colord flowre
to decke hir selfe, and her fair mantle weave.

The peculiar construction of sonnet LVI, where each quatrain begins:

Fayre be ye sure, but . . . ,

is after the type of stanzas of Tasso's (iv, p. 69, ed. Solerti):

Voi sête bella, ma . . . ,

each stanza commencing in the same way.

The concluding sonnet of Spenser's sequence bears some resemblance to another Italian poem¹. It might be objected that here we have a Petrarchan *cliché*, that the dove had come down as a model of fidelity from the ancients. It is true that there are half-a-dozen foreign sonnets of the same type as Spenser's, and Spenser may have read them all. His familiarity with Tasso, however, suggests this author as probably a more likely model than any of the others.

I have quoted most of the important examples of translation and resemblance between Spenser and Tasso. The influence of Tebaldeo, Serafino and Bembo is slighter, though Spenser read these also. Petrarch occasionally furnished the phrasing, and is here, as in any sonneteer of the Renaissance, the source of many of the themes. Other sonnets, again, derive from the natural history of the time, which Lyly found so useful for his figures of speech more than ten years before Spenser—the lion, 'kind to yielded prey,' the panther, whose spotted hide pleased 'all beasts,' the cuckoo, which (strange to say) was thought to be a

¹ Tasso, II, p. 439 (ed. Solerti)

type of vanity and boasting, because it continually repeated its own name. These sonnets are among the most curious in the sequence.

A tabulation of sources will be convenient for reference. The sonnets given for comparison are not translated or imitated in the English in every case. Some of the foreign sonnets are analogous poems, and throw light on the English. It would be possible to cite Italian or French poems of the same type other than Tasso's in several instances, but, taking Spenser's close acquaintance with Tasso's work into consideration, the probabilities are in favour of a debt to Tasso. This debt may be merely in some cases the force of Tasso's example. It is nevertheless a debt.

Amoretti.

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| II | For viper cp. Bartholomaeus Anglicus: <i>De Proprietatibus Rerum</i> , lib. xviii. |
| III ¹ | Cp. Tasso, II, p. 52 (ed. Solerti): 'Veggio quando tal vista.' |
| IV | Cp. Du Bellay ² , <i>Vers lyriques</i> , VI (1549); Tasso, II, p. 289: 'Felice primavera.' |
| { V | Cp. Tasso, II, p. 54 (Solerti): 'Questa rara bellezza.' |
| { XXI ³ | Tasso, II, p. 115 (Solerti): 'Qualhor madonna' (effect of lady's eyes on lover); Tasso, 355 (Pisa), <i>Amor casto</i> : 'Non regna brama.' |
| XII | Phrasing, cp. Petrarch, III, XXI (ed. Salani, 1925). |
| XIII | Cp. Tasso, II, p. 316 (Solerti): 'Quell' alma.' |
| XVI | Phrasing, cp. Petrarch, III. |
| XVIII ⁴ | Serafino, Sonnet 117 (ed. 1548). |
| XX | Cp. Bartholomaeus, lib. xviii; Tebaldeo, 90 (1550). |
| XXII ⁵ | Cp. Tasso, 166 (Pisa): <i>Amor casto</i> . |
| XXV | Phrasing, Petrarch ⁶ , cxxxiv, Canzone 20, v. 88. |
| XXVII | First quatrain, cp. Horace, <i>Odes</i> , IV, x; innumerable analogies. |
| XXVIII | { Cp. Ronsard, <i>Astrée</i> , XI. |
| XXIX | |
| XXXI | Cp. Desportes, <i>Cléonice</i> , 74, and its source P. Sasso: 'Perche el sordo aspe.' |
| XXXVI | Phrasing, cp. Petrarch, XXI. |
| XLII | First and second quatrains, Tebaldeo, 35: 'Si dolce è la passion.' |
| XLIII | Cp. Tasso, Nos. 164, 166 (Solerti): 'Vuol che l' ami costei,' 'Se taccio il duol s' avanza.' |
| XLV | First quatrain, Tebaldeo ⁷ , 36.
Third quatrain, cp. Tasso, 109 (Pisa). |
| { XLVII | Cp. Tasso, No. 88, Vol. II (Solerti): 'M' apre talor madonna' (Beauty and Cruelty). |
| { XLIX | Cp. Tasso, No. 74, Vol. II (Solerti): 'O più crudel.' |

¹ The poet's awe in presence of the beloved is as old as love poetry itself. Sappho expresses it, and her poem was often imitated at the Renaissance. Petrarch expresses the same feeling.

² The resemblance may be a coincidence, due to the season.

³ The Platonic sonnets of the *Amoretti* all contain favourite ideas of Tasso's. This poet was therefore one of the sources of the Platonism of Spenser's sonnets.

⁴ Professor Kastner gives Desportes, *Hipp.* 51, as source. Serafino is perhaps closer. The ultimate source of this type of sonnet is in such passages as Ovid, *Trist.* IV, vi, 1-16.

⁵ Desportes, *Diane*, I, 43, given by Kastner, is an analogous poem. The habit of writing such sonnets is probably to be traced to the example of Chariteo, who translated a passage in Virg. *Georg.* III, 13 ff., applying it to his lady. The type is common.

⁶ 'Hope and fear' was of course part of sonnetting vocabulary and may not come directly from Petrarch.

⁷ Desportes, *Hipp.* 18, imitates Tebaldeo

- LIII Cp. Bartholomaeus, lib. xviii.
 LIV Cp. Tasso, No. 712, Vol. III (Solerti): 'Riede la stagion lieta,' from second quatrain.
 LVI Tasso, No. 1022, Vol. IV (Solerti): 'Voi sète bella.'
 LVII Phrasing, cp. Petrarch, XXI, LXXXVI.
 LXV For bird cp. Tebaldeo, 39, and Sasso, *passim*.
 LXVII Cp. Tasso, II, p. 429 (Solerti): 'Questa fera gentil.'
 LXVIII¹ The Bible.
 LXX Closing couplet, cp. *F.Q.* II, xii, 75, and its source Tasso, *G.L.*, XVI, 15.
 LXXII Tasso, II, p. 98 (Solerti): 'L' alma vaga.'
 LXXIII Tasso, II, p. 319 (Solerti): 'Donna, poichè fortuna.'
 LXXVI } Tasso, III, p. 133 (Solerti): 'Non son si belli.'
 LXXVII }
 LXXX Cp. Tasso, III, p. 142 (Solerti): 'Vergine illustre.'
 LXXX Steed, *Virg. Aen.* XI, 492.
 LXXXI Tasso, II, p. 25 (Solerti): 'Bella è la donna mia.'
 LXXXIV Tasso, II, p. 194 (Solerti): 'Uom di non pure fiamme.'
 LXXXV Cuckoo², cp. Aldrovandi, *Ornith.*, lib. v, p. 424.
 LXXXVIII For day and night cp. *Astrophel and Stella*, 89.
 LXXXIX Cp. Tasso, II, p. 439 (Solerti): 'O vaga tortorella.'

JANET G. SCOTT.

GLASGOW.

JANE EYRE'S 'IRON SHROUD.'

In the thirty-fourth chapter of *Jane Eyre*, Jane, dominated for the time by St John Rivers and feeling herself pressed, step by step, towards a marriage against which all her true instincts rebel, expresses her anguished and paralysed reluctance in the following strange figure: 'My iron shroud contracted round me; persuasion advanced with slow sure step.' The metaphor belongs to a type which is very common with Charlotte Brontë, in which the idea of mental suffering is conveyed in the terms of violent and even fantastic physical pain. In *Villette* especially there are comparisons which for their abrupt vivid horror are like cries wrenched from a stoic by the rack. Lucy Snowe speaks of 'cutting injuries and insults of serrated and poison-dripping edge³,' of gnawing a file to satisfy hunger and drinking brine to quench thirst⁴, and describes her repressed longing for release in the shape of Sisera, turning on the nail 'with a rebellious wrench⁵.' Many of these images are, like the last, elaborations of Scripture; Jane Eyre's contracting shroud, however, is drawn from literature of a different kind. It is, I believe, a direct allusion to a story called *The Iron Shroud* by William Mudford, which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* for August 1830.

¹ Lee gives Desportes, *Diane*, II, 46, as the source. Spenser quotes *Judges* v, 12, *Ephes.* iv, 8 in 'captivity captive,' and paraphrases other well-known passages in the rest of the sonnet. Cp. *Acts* iii, 15; *Rom.* vi, 9; *I Cor.* xv, 55, 56, 57; *Rev.* i, 5, v, 9, vii, 14; *John* xv, 12; *Ephes.* v, 2; *I John* iv, 19.

² The 'merry cuckoo' (XIX) is different, belonging to spring songs. Cp. 'Sumer is icumen in.'

³ See *Villette*, ch. xxii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. xxiv.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. xii.