



# EDWARD DE VERE NEWSLETTER NO. 53

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## Was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, the "E.K." of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*? [Part 5 of 7]

*The Shepherd's Calendar* is dedicated on the title page to "Master Philip Sidney". Sidney is also mentioned in E.K.'s dedicatory epistle. Thus, any inquiry into the identity of E.K. must of necessity consider Sidney's relationship with both Spenser and E.K. As well, if E.K. was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, it is necessary to consider the nature of Sidney's relationship with Oxford.

Nothing is known with certainty about the circumstances under which Edmund Spenser first made the acquaintance of Philip Sidney; however, their paths are unlikely to have crossed in any significant way prior to 1579. Sidney studied at Oxford, Spenser at Cambridge. In May, 1572, a year after he had completed his university training, Sidney set off on his continental grand tour, from which he returned in June, 1575. In 1576, he spent several months in Ireland. In the following year, he was on the continent from February to June, and with his sister Mary at Wilton in the late summer and fall. During 1578, Sidney appears to have spent considerable time at court; however, for most of that year, Spenser was living in Kent. Thus, the likeliest time for Sidney and Spenser to have formed an acquaintance was during 1579-80, while Spenser was in the service of Sidney's uncle, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. If this assumption is correct, the opportunity for extensive personal interaction between Sidney and Spenser was limited to a one-year period which began in the summer of 1579 and ended in July of

1580, when Spenser took up permanent residence in Ireland (Duncan-Jones 39, 55-6, 86, 108, 121, 133, 136, 138; Heninger 239).

Details of Spenser's life during the late 1570's are meagre. From the spring of 1578 to the summer of 1579, it is generally agreed that he was employed in Kent as secretary to John Young, Bishop of Rochester (Berry li; Hamilton 669), although E.K.'s gloss to the April eclogue says that Colin (i.e., Spenser) "perteyneth to some Southern noble man", which suggests that Spenser was in the service of a lord, rather than a prelate (Oram 77, 114).

By July of 1579, Spenser seems to have moved to London, and entered the service of the Earl of Leicester (Berry li; Duncan-Jones 162; Oram xvi). He was certainly in Leicester's service by October of 1579, when he wrote a long letter (begun on October 5 and continued on October 15 and 16) to Gabriel Harvey from Leicester House.

This letter provides important evidence that Spenser's relationship with Sidney was still at an early stage in October of 1579. Spenser's comments to Harvey reveal that he was getting to know both Sidney and his friend, Edward Dyer ("they have me, I thank them, in some use of familiarity"), and that their opportunities for contact were limited by the fact that Sidney and Dyer were resident at court:

as for the two worthy Gentlemen, Master Sidney and Master Dyer, they have me, I thanke them, in some use of familiarity. . . .

I will impart yours [i.e., Harvey's verses] to Maister

Sidney and Maister Dyer at my nexte going to the Courte (Grosart 7, 9).

Spenser's comments to Harvey also make it clear that his relationship with Sidney in 1579 was not one of writer and patron. In his letter of October 15 and 16, he makes no mention of dedicating *The Shepheardes Calender* to Sidney. On the contrary, he is still debating the advisability of dedicating the work to "his excellent Lordship" (presumably Leicester), and somewhat anxiously asks Harvey's further advice on this point:

And that you may perceive how much your Counsel in all things prevaileth with me, and how altogether I am ruled and over-ruled thereby: I am now determined to alter mine owne former purpose, and to subscribe to your advisement: being notwithstanding resolved stil, to abide your farther resolution. My principal doubts are these. First, I was minded for a while to have intermitted the uttering of my writings: leaste by over-much cloying of their noble eares, I should gather a contempt of myself, or else seeme rather for gaine and commoditie to doe it, for some sweetnesse that I have already tasted. Then also, me seemeth, the work too base for his excellent Lordship [Leicester], being made in honour of a private Personage unknowne, which of some yl-willers might be upbraided, not to be so worthie, as you knowe she is; or the matter not so weightie, that it should be offred to so weightie a Personage: or the like. The selfe former Title stil liketh me well ynough, and your fine Addition no lesse. If these, and the like doubttes, maye be of importaunce in your seeming, to frustrate any parte of your advice, I beseeche you without the least selfe love of your own purpose, councill me for the beste: and the rather doe it faithfullye, and carefully, for that, in all things I attribute so muche to your judgement, that I am evermore content to annihilate mine owne determinations, in respecte thereof (Grosart 6-7).

Later in the letter, Spenser returns to the vexing question of dedications. He tells Harvey of Sidney's displeasure at Steven Gosson's recent dedication to him of *The School of Abuse*, and draws the conclusion that it is "follie" for a writer not to take into consideration beforehand both the "inclination and qualitie" of the dedicatee:

Newe Bookes I heare of none, but only of one, that writing a certaine Booke, called *The Schoole of Abuse*, and dedicating it to Maister Sidney, was for hys labor scorned: if at leaste it be in the goodnesse of that nature to scorne. Suche follie is it, not to regarde aforehande the inclination and qualitie of him to whome wee dedicate oure Bookes. Suche mighte I

happily incurre entituling my *Slomber* and the other Pamphlets unto his honor. I meant them rather to Maister Dyer (Duncan-Jones 232; Grosart 8; Hamilton 337).

By "his honor", Spenser presumably refers to Leicester, since Sidney was not knighted until 1583 (Duncan-Jones 249). If, on the other hand, "his honor" is a reference to Sidney, it could scarcely be more evident that Spenser did not view Sidney as a patron at this time ("suche [scorn] mighte I happily incurre entituling my *Slomber* and other Pamphlets unto his honor").

Further evidence of the fact that Sidney's "great friendship" with Spenser commenced after -- not before -- the publication of *The Shepheardes Calender* is found in an anecdote from Aubrey's *Lives*:

Among others, Mr Edmund Spenser made his address to him [Sidney], and brought his *Faerie Queen*. Sir Philip was busy at his study, and his servant delivered Mr Spencer's book to his master, who laid it by, thinking it might be such kind of stuff as he was frequently troubled with. Mr Spenser stayed so long that his patience was wearied, and went his way discontented, and never intended to come again. When Sir Philip perused it, he was so exceedingly delighted with it that he was extremely sorry he was gone, and where to send for him he knew not. After much enquiry he learned his lodging, and sent for him, mightily caressed <him>, and ordered his servant to give him [. . .] pounds in gold. His servant said that was too much; 'No,' said Sir Philip, 'he is . . .', and ordered an addition. From that time there was a great friendship between them to his dying day (Clark 248-9; Duncan-Jones 120).

Spenser first announced his intention of commencing serious work on *The Faerie Queen* in a letter to Gabriel Harvey in April, 1580 (Grosart 38; Stern 56). Thus, Aubrey's anecdote seems to date Sidney's warm friendship with, and patronage of, Spenser to a time when Spenser was living in Ireland, where he took up permanent residence in the summer of 1580.

The evidence of Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* also lends support to the hypothesis that Sidney was not Spenser's close friend or patron as early as 1579. In the *Defense*, likely written about 1582, Sidney's praise of the *Calender* is mixed, and he refuses to endorse its linguistic experiments:

*The Shepherd's Calendar* hath much poetry in his eclogues, indeed worthy the reading, if I be not deceived. That same framing of his style to an old rustic language I dare not allow, since neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sannazaro in Italian did affect it (Duncan-Jones 232-6; Shepherd 133).

Given this background, it comes as something of a surprise to find Sidney's name on the title page of *The Shepheardes Calender*:

The Shepheardes Calender  
Conteyning twelve Aeglogues propotionable  
to the twelve monthes.

Entitled  
To the Noble and Vertuous  
Gentleman most worthy of all titles  
both of learning and chevalrie M.  
Philip Sidney (Oram 2).

When Spenser ultimately made this decision is unclear. E.K., writing on April 10, 1579, refers to the dedication to Sidney as a *fait accompli*; however, Spenser's letter to his friend Gabriel Harvey reveals that he was still planning to dedicate the work to Leicester ("his excellent Lordship") as late as October 16. It thus seems likely that Spenser's final decision to dedicate his work to Sidney was taken between mid-October and December 5, the date on which the *Calender* was entered in the Stationers' Register (Oram xvi).

It has been necessary to discuss in some detail the uncertainties connected with the title page dedication to Sidney because of the manner in which this seemingly straightforward dedication is later undercut by Spenser's poem "To His Booke" and by E.K.'s dedicatory epistle.

As Luborsky has pointed out, Spenser's poem "To His Booke", which immediately follows the title page, also seems to function as a dedication, and indeed occupies the position normally reserved for a dedication in published books of the Elizabethan period:

Were 'To His Booke' a dedication, however, it would be in its expected place because 'before the death of Henry the Eighth the customary order of title page, dedication and epistle to the reader is established in more pretentious books.' By 1579 this order seems

unvarying for the first two elements. Is Spenser's poem, in addition to being the author's address to his work, a dedication? (38).

As Luborsky explains, "To His Booke", has three traits peculiar to a dedication: "statement of source (genre), the defense of a given poetic theory; and mystification, often suggested by anonymity" (Luborsky 38-9; Oram 12):

TO HIS BOOKE.

Goe little booke: thy selfe present,  
As child whose parent is unkent:  
To him that is the president  
Of noblesse and of chevalree,  
And if that Envie barke at thee,  
As sure it will, for succoure flee  
Under the shadow of his wing  
And asked, who thee forth did bring,  
A shepherds swaine saye did thee sing,  
All as his straying flocke he fedde:  
And when his honor has thee redde,  
Crave pardon for my hardyhedde.  
But if that any aske thy name,  
Say thou wert base begot with blame:  
For thy thereof thou takest shame.  
And when thou art past jeoparddee,  
Come tell me, what was sayd of mee:  
And I will send more after thee.

Immerito

Because of the dedication to Sidney on the title page of *The Shepheardes Calender*, it is often assumed that he is the unnamed "president/ Of noblesse and of chevalree" who, in lines 1-7 of "To His Booke", is asked to extend his protection to the *Calender*. However, the evidence of Sidney's participation in chivalric pageantry by 1579 does not support this assumption. Sidney made his debut as a tilter at Whitehall in the Accession Day tilt of 1577, and participated in a tournament in 1579 (Duncan-Jones 106, 144; Strong 7). In 1578, his *Lady of May* masque was performed during Leicester's entertainment of the Queen at Wanstead (Duncan-Jones 106, 148, 195), but whether this literary venture (in which Sidney did not himself take part) qualifies as an exercise in chivalry is debatable. Thus, the epithet "president/ Of noblesse and of chivalry", if applied to Sidney in 1579, would have been both an exaggeration of his chivalric achievements, and a considerable slight to those nobles and courtiers who, at the time, enjoyed far greater reputations in the

tiltyard. It thus seems fairly clear that "To His Booke" is not merely an amplification of Spenser's original title page dedication to Sidney, and that, in fact, it functions as a separate dedication of the *Calender* to some other unnamed person, likely a member of the nobility, since line 11 refers to "his honor". It has been suggested that this unnamed nobleman is Leicester, to whom Spenser originally intended to dedicate the *Calender* (Luborsky 39). However, one might legitimately wonder whether the "president/Of noblesse and of chevalree" whom Spenser asks to protect the *Shepherdess Calender* "under the shadow of his wing" is Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, particularly when it is recalled that Spenser later asked Oxford's protection for his work in a dedicatory sonnet to *The Faerie Queen*:

Receive most Noble Lord in gentle gree,  
The unripe fruit of an unready wit:  
Which by thy countenance doth crave to bee  
Defended from foule Envies poisonous bit.

The problem of the dedication of *The Shepherdess Calender* is further compounded by E.K.'s epistle to Gabriel Harvey. As Luborsky's analysis shows, E.K.'s epistle also functions as a dedication:

If [To His Booke] is dedicatory in part, what then is E.K.'s so-called Dedicatory Epistle? It is in the position of the conventional explicatory letter to the reader and takes on the tasks of such a letter: praise of the author and his work. It serves also as a critical and editorial preface. But it is something else, too, something I have found no precedent for. It seems to be a letter asking Harvey to be joint patron with Sidney of the entire work (Luborsky 39-40).

As Luborsky suggests, the reader cannot help but be puzzled by the manner in which E.K. pointedly ignores the title page dedication to "Master Philip Sidney", and dedicates both his own "labour" and the "patronage of the new Poete", to Gabriel Harvey:

To the most excellent and learned both  
Orator and Poete, Mayster Gabriell Harvey, his  
Verie special and singular good frend E.K. commen-  
deth the good lyking of this his labour,  
and the patronage of the  
new Poete (Oram 13).

At the close of the epistle, E.K. goes even further than this, and states that "upon some particular and

special considerations" he has "vowed", not only his own "labour", but, seemingly, the *Calender* itself ("the maydenhead of this our commen frends Poetrie") to Harvey. E.K. acknowledges that the author himself had "already in the beginning dedicated [the *Calender*] to the Noble and worthy Gentleman, the right worshipfull Ma. Phi. Sidney, a special favourer and maintainer of all kind of learning". But, after this glancing reference to Sidney, E.K. closes the epistle with a request that Harvey -- not Sidney -- protect the anonymous author and his work:

These my present paynes, if to any they be pleasurable or profitable, be you judge, mine own good Maister Harvey, to whom I have both in respect of your worthinesse generally, and otherwyse upon some particular and special considerations vowed this my labour, and the maydenhead of this our commen frends Poetrie, himselfe having already in the beginning dedicated it to the Noble and worthy Gentleman, the right worshipfull Ma. Phi. Sidney, a special favourer and maintainer of all kind of learning. Whose cause I pray you Sir, yf Envie shall stur up any wrongful accusasion, defend with your mighty Rhetorick and other your rare gifts of learning, as you can, and shield with your good wil, as you ought, against the malice and outrage of so many enemies, as I know wilbe set on fire with the sparks of his kindled glory. And thus recommending the Author unto you, as unto his most special good frend, and my selfe unto you both, as one making singuler account of two so very good and so choise frends, I bid you both most hartely farwel, and commit you and your most comendable studies to the tuicion of the greatest.

Your owne assuredly to be commaunded E.K.  
(Oram 20).

It is clear from the foregoing paragraph that E.K. stops just short of completely overriding Spenser's dedication of *The Shepherdess Calender* to Sidney. As Luborsky puts it:

[E.K.] asks Harvey to be Spenser's patron ('the patronage of the new Poete'). What then is the role of Sidney? The reference to him is ambiguous because it leads nowhere. . . . [either] Sidney is impotent as a patron in protecting Spenser (Harvey will have to do that), or Sidney needs Harvey's help (39-41).

Why E.K. chose to take the unusual step of all but ignoring the title page dedication to Sidney can only be guessed at. It may have resulted from personal animosity between Sidney and E.K. Alternatively, word of Sidney's negative reaction to the archaic language of the *Calender* may have reached E.K.'s

ears while the eclogues were circulating in manuscript prior to April 10th, 1579 (Oram 195). In any event, whatever E.K.'s "particular and special considerations" may have been, they prompted him to dismiss Sidney in a very pointed (albeit courteous) aside, and dedicate his own part in the *Calender* to Gabriel Harvey.

From the foregoing material, it can be inferred that relations between E.K. and Philip Sidney were not entirely cordial in April, 1579. If E.K. was Oxford, it can be expected that his own relationship with Sidney was similarly strained at this time. It is thus necessary to examine in detail the surviving historical evidence of the relationship between Oxford and Philip Sidney.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence to examine. Although Sidney and Oxford were courtiers of about the same age and were distantly related through a web of family connections, there are almost no surviving records of personal contact between them apart from the celebrated tennis court quarrel.

It has been conjectured by Sidney's most recent biographer that Oxford's marriage to Anne Cecil afforded an early cause for conflict between the two men. The Sidneys and the Cecils were related through the Fitzwilliam family (Lady Burghley's mother was a Fitzwilliam, as was Sir Henry Sidney's sister), and a marriage was arranged between Anne Cecil and Philip Sidney. A formal settlement was drawn up on August 6, 1569. Unfortunately, these carefully laid plans fell apart quite suddenly in 1571, when Oxford, in a move which seems to have come as a surprise to everyone, married Anne Cecil (Duncan-Jones 46-53). Whether this turn of events caused Sidney to bear some resentment towards Oxford is unknown.

The tennis court quarrel between Oxford and Sidney occurred eight years later, in August, 1579. On the surface, the quarrel appears irrelevant to the question of E.K.'s identity, since it did not occur (if the April 10th date of E.K.'s epistle can be relied upon) until four months after E.K. had finished his work on *The Shepheardes Calender*. However, E.K.'s dis-

missive attitude to Sidney in the *Calender* is precisely the attitude Oxford can be expected to have displayed toward Sidney in the politically charged months of 1579. Thus, the tennis court quarrel, a momentary eruption of the underlying conflicts which simmered throughout 1579, sheds light on the identity of E.K.

The primary source for the quarrel is Fulke Greville's "infuriatingly opaque" account, which gives few concrete details beyond the fact that the altercation took place in the royal tennis court and quickly attracted the attention of the French delegation "who had that day audience" with the Queen in a chamber whose windows overlooked the tennis court. By modern standards, the exchange of insults was mild: Oxford called Sidney a "puppy", and Sidney gave him the lie. A day or so later, ignoring the rules of precedence and degree, Sidney challenged Oxford to a duel. Both the Queen and the Privy Council stepped in, and, on one level, the matter came to an end (Berry xlviix-xlix; Duncan-Jone 160-5; Smith 63-9). On another level, it did not. An insight into Sidney's outraged personal feelings is provided by his letter of August 28, 1579 to Sir Christopher Hatton:

As for the matter depending between the Earl of Oxford and me, certainly, Sir, howsoever I might have forgiven him, I should never have forgiven myself, if I had lain under so proud an injury as he would have laid upon me, neither can anything under the sun make me repent it, nor any misery make me go one half-word back from it. Let him, therefore, as he will, digest it. For my part, I think tying up makes some things seem fiercer than they would be (Duncan-Jones 164).

A more prudent point of view is provided by Sidney's friend Hubert Languet, who in a letter written from Antwerp on October 14, 1579, chastises Sidney for his rashness in issuing a challenge to Oxford:

[B]e careful lest under the influence of swashbucklers you should overstep the bounds of your native modesty. In this very quarrel, sound as your position was, you have gone further than you ought to have done, for when you had flung back the insult thrown at you, you ought to have said no more; as a matter of fact, carried away by your quick temper, you sent him a challenge . . . (Ward 171-2).

In the same letter, Languet expresses his opinion that Sidney has been "unfortunate" in being "drawn into this contention" and warns him against possible retaliation by the French:

Since your adversary has attached himself to Anjou's party, if your wooer [Alencon] shall return to you with a crowd of French noblemen about him, you must be on your guard, for you know the fiery nature of my countrymen (Pears 165; Ward 172).

Languet's comments situate the Oxford-Sidney tennis court quarrel squarely in the context of the 1579 marriage negotiations with Francois, Duke of Alencon. It is thus necessary to consider the quarrel against the background of political and personal maneuvering which led up to it.

In July, 1578 Francois, Duke of Alencon, made a formal proposal of marriage to Queen Elizabeth and on January 5, 1579 his agent Simier arrived in England with full powers to negotiate and conclude the marriage. Months of controversy followed, with Elizabeth's counsellors, courtiers and churchmen split into two hopelessly divided factions. The pro-marriage faction was led by Lord Burghley and the Earl of Sussex, while a more numerous group, led by Leicester, Sir Francis Walsingham, the Earl of Pembroke and Sir Christopher Hatton, opposed the marriage. Oxford sided with Burghley and Sussex, Sidney with Leicester and Walsingham.

By the summer of 1579, the situation had reached flash-point as a result of the Queen's agreement to Alencon's proposed visit to England. This development caused Leicester to retire from court to his country estate at Wanstead. Shortly thereafter, Simier was shot at on the grounds of Greenwich Palace. Simier considered Leicester to be the instigator of the attempted assassination and, in retaliation, informed the Queen early in July of Leicester's secret marriage to Lettice Knollys. In her fury, Elizabeth would have committed her former favourite to the Tower had not Sussex intervened on Leicester's behalf.

In the midst of this emotionally charged state of affairs, Alencon arrived secretly in England on Au-

gust 17. On the following day, the situation was exacerbated by the publication of *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf*, an anti-Alencon tract by John Stubbs (whose right hand was brutally stricken off in November as punishment for his presumption). At some time between August 17 and August 25, the Earl of Leicester, reported to be "in great grief" (i.e., anger) met at Baynard's Castle, the London home of the Earl of Pembroke, with a group which included Walsingham, Sir Henry Sidney, Philip Sidney and, perhaps, Edmund Spenser. It was "almost certainly" as a result of this secret conference, that Sidney, acting as his uncle's champion (as he was to do again five years later on the publication of *Leicester's Commonwealth*) wrote a *Letter to Queen Elizabeth touching her marriage with Monsieur*, advising the Queen against marriage with Alencon (Berry xiii, xxxv-xxxvi, xlvi-xlviii; Duncan-Jones 266-9; Read 8).

The tennis court quarrel between Oxford and Sidney occurred during this same tension-filled week, and it seems reasonable to conclude that it had nothing to do with tennis, and everything to do with Sidney's letter to the Queen (Duncan-Jones 164; Stern 65). In Fulke Greville's account in his *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, the quarrel is embedded in a twenty-five page justification of Sidney's *Letter to Queen Elizabeth*, and is the sole incident recounted in these two chapters. It is therefore clear that, for Greville, the tennis court quarrel had significance solely in relationship to Sidney's letter to Queen Elizabeth opposing the French marriage. In the opening paragraph of Chapter V, Greville sets the scene:

The next doubtfull Stage hee [Sidney] had to act upon (howsoever it may seem private) was grounded upon a publique and specious proposition of marriage, between the late famous Queen, and the Duke of Anjou (Smith 45-6).

The remainder of Chapter V is devoted to an exposition of Sidney's ten arguments against the marriage. The chapter ends with a telling comment which hints that Sidney wrote the *Letter to Queen Elizabeth* at Leicester's behest:

These (I say) and such like threatning probabilities made him [Sidney] joyn with the weaker party, and

oppose this torrent; even while the French faction reigning had cast aspersions upon his Uncle of Leicesters, and made him, like a wise man (under colour of taking physick) voluntarily become prisoner in his chamber (Smith 60).

Greville begins Chapter VI with a further apology for Sidney's *Letter*, from which it is necessary to quote at length:

Thus stood the state of things then: And if any judicious Reader shall ask, Whether it were not an error, and a dangerous one, for Sir Philip being neither Magistrate nor Counsellor, to oppose himself against his Sovereigns pleasure in things indifferent? I must answer, That his worth, truth, favour, and sincerity of heart, together with his reall manner of proceeding in it, were his privileges. Because this Gentlemans course in this great business was, not by murmur among equals, or inferiours, to detract from Princes; or by a mutinous kind of bemoaning error, to stir up ill affections in their minds, whose best thoughts could do him no good; but by a due address of his humble reasons to the Queen her self, to whom the appeal was proper. So that although he found a sweet stream of Sovereign humors in that well-tempered Lady, to run against him, yet found he safety in her self, against that selfness which appeared to threaten him in her. For this happily born and bred Princess was not (subject-like) apt to construe things reverently done in the worst sense; but rather with the spirit of annointed Greatness (as created to reign equally over frail and strong) more desirous to find waies to fashion her people, than colours, or causes to punish them.

Lastly, to prove nothing can be wise, that is not really honest; every man of that time, and consequently of all times may know, that if he should have used the same freedome among the grandees of Court (their profession being not commonly to dispute Princes purposes for truths sake, but second their humours to govern their Kingdomes by them) he must infallibly have found Worth, Justice, and Duty lookt upon with no other eyes but Lamia's; and so have been stained by that reigning faction, which in all Courts allows no faith currant to a Sovereign, that hath not past the seal of their practising corporation.

Thus stood the Court at this time; and thus stood this ingenuous spirit [Sidney] in it. If dangerously in mens opinions who are curious of the present, and in it rather to doe craftily, than well: Yet, I say, that Princely heart of hers was a Sanctuary unto him; And as for the people, in whom many times the lasting images of Worth are preferred before the temporary visions of art, or favour, he could not fear to suffer any thing there, which would not prove a kind of Trophy to him. So that howsoever he seemed to stand alone, yet he stood upright; kept his access to her Majesty as before; a liberall conversation with the French, revered amongst the worthiest of them for himselfe, and born

in too strong a fortification of nature for the less worthy to abbord, either with question, familiarity, or scorn.

In this freedome, even while the greatest spirits, and Estates seemed hood-winkt, or blind; and the inferior sort of men made captive by hope, fear, ignorance; did he enjoy the freedome of his thoughts, with all recreations worthy of them.

And in this freedome of heart being one day at Tennis . . . Smith 61-3).

The gist of Greville's oblique comments is that the Queen was angry with Sidney for his letter ("he found a sweet stream of Sovereign humors in that well-tempered Lady, to run against him"), a reaction which was seemingly shared by almost everyone else at court ("howsoever he seemed to stand alone, yet he stood upright"). Furthermore, Sidney was in danger of being punished for his temerity ("that Princely heart of hers was a Sanctuary unto him" . . . "this happily born and bred Princess was . . . more desirous to find waies to fashion her people, than colours, or causes to punish them"). Elizabeth seems to have considered banishing Sidney from the Court, but decided against it (he "kept his access to her Majesty as before"); however, his access to the French delegation was likely curtailed, since Greville finds it necessary to point out that it was not entirely cut off (he "kept . . . a liberall conversation with the French"). Despite this "liberall conversation", Sidney's *Letter* had clearly provoked anger among the French: while Greville says that he continued to be "reverenced amongst the worthiest of them for himselfe", Sidney seemingly had to keep out of the way of the "less worthy", who might otherwise have "abboarded" him with "question, familiarity, scorn" or, perhaps, worse.

Greville's account of the tennis court quarrel follows immediately after the paragraphs quoted above. It seems likely that he was an eye-witness, and could have told a great deal more than he did; however, he is deliberately allusive. Because of this, it is impossible to arrive at any firm conclusion as to who was playing tennis when the quarrel began, although it seems to have been Oxford, who is reported to have "continue[d] his play" when the quarrel ended (Ogburn 620; Smith 66). Neither is it possible to be certain exactly what Oxford said to Sidney, although

it seems that he told him to leave the tennis court. Although Greville offers no explanation for this, there is a hint contained in his emphasis on the reaction of the French delegation:

The French Commissioners unfortunately had that day audience, in those private Galleries, whose windows looked into the Tennis-Court. They instantly drew all to this tumult: every sort of quarrels sorting well with their humors, especially this. Which Sir Philip perceiving, and rising with inward strength, by the prospect of a mighty faction against him; asked my Lord, with a loud voice, that which he heard clearly enough before. Who (like an Echo, that still multiplies by reflexions) repeated this Epithet of Puppy the second time (Smith 65).

It thus becomes clear that Sidney, who had just delivered an egregious insult to the Duke of Alencon and to the French nation by writing a letter openly opposing Alencon's proposed marriage to Queen Elizabeth, and who should have been very much aware of "the prospect of a mighty faction against him", made a conspicuous appearance in the tennis court just below the audience chamber in which the members of the French delegation were meeting with the Queen. In the circumstances, was Sidney's mere presence in the tennis court an affront and, perhaps, a deliberate provocation, to the French? Was this why Oxford told him to leave? Did Oxford call Sidney a puppy because, in the circumstances, his behaviour was childishly naive and dangerous?

Sidney's friend Languet appears to have thus construed the matter in his letters to Sidney in the autumn of 1579. Languet viewed Sidney's intervention in the French marriage negotiations as dangerous and presumptuous, and regretted that Sidney had been urged into action by those who were careless of the consequences to him, so long as they "effected their own object":

I am glad you have told me how your letter about the Duke of Anjou [i.e., Alencon] has come to the knowledge of so many persons; for it was supposed before, that you had made it known to show that you despised him, and cared nothing for his dislike; which appeared to me by no means a safe proceeding, and inconsistent besides with your natural modesty. And therefore I suspected that you had been urged to write by persons who either did not know into what peril they were thrusting you, or did not care for your danger, provided they effected their own object. Since however

you were ordered to write as you did by those whom you were bound to obey, no fair-judging man can blame you for putting forward freely what you thought good for your country, nor even for exaggerating some circumstances in order to convince them of what you judged expedient (Berry xlviiii-xlix).

Although Greville stoutly defends him (in an account written years after all the participants were dead), the general consensus at the time seems to have been that, in writing to the Queen, Sidney was meddling foolishly in matters that were far above his capacity. And this seems to be, essentially, what Oxford told him on the tennis court when he called him a "puppy".

The friction between the parties in favour of, and opposed to, the French marriage rose to a peak during Alencon's visit in August; however, it was by no means confined to a period of a few weeks. The stakes for both sides were high, and conflict over the proposed marriage was an integral part of court life during the whole of 1579, particularly in April, when the Queen formally asked the Privy Council's advice as to whether she should marry Alencon, and Simier had a number of conferences with the Council (Berry xv; Read 13).

In consequence, it would be unrealistic to expect that relations between Oxford and Sidney, who took opposing sides in this debate, were particularly cordial during April, 1579 when Leicester and Walsingham, Burghley and Sussex were battling at the Privy Council table over the French marriage. Thus E.K.'s attitude to Sidney in April of 1579, when he was penning his dedicatory epistle to *The Shepheardes Calender*, is entirely consistent with what we can expect Oxford's attitude toward Sidney to have been at that point in time. And, in fact, the solution to the whole puzzling question of the multiple dedications in *The Shepheardes Calender* -- to Sidney, to "the president/ Of noblesse and of chevalree", and to Gabriel Harvey -- may lie in a fuller understanding of the factional conflict at Court over the French marriage.

In summary, then, Oxford's relationship with Sidney in April 1579, satisfies an important test in establishing the identity of E.K. The dedicatory epistle



to *The Shepherdes Calender* suggests strongly that relations between E.K. and Sidney were somewhat strained in April of 1579. The tension at Court in April over the French marriage renders it extremely likely that relations between Oxford and Sidney were similarly strained in April, and the tennis court quarrel which broke out between the two men in August tends to confirm this view. Thus, E.K.'s relationship with Sidney parallels Oxford's, and lends support to the hypothesis that Oxford was E.K.

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