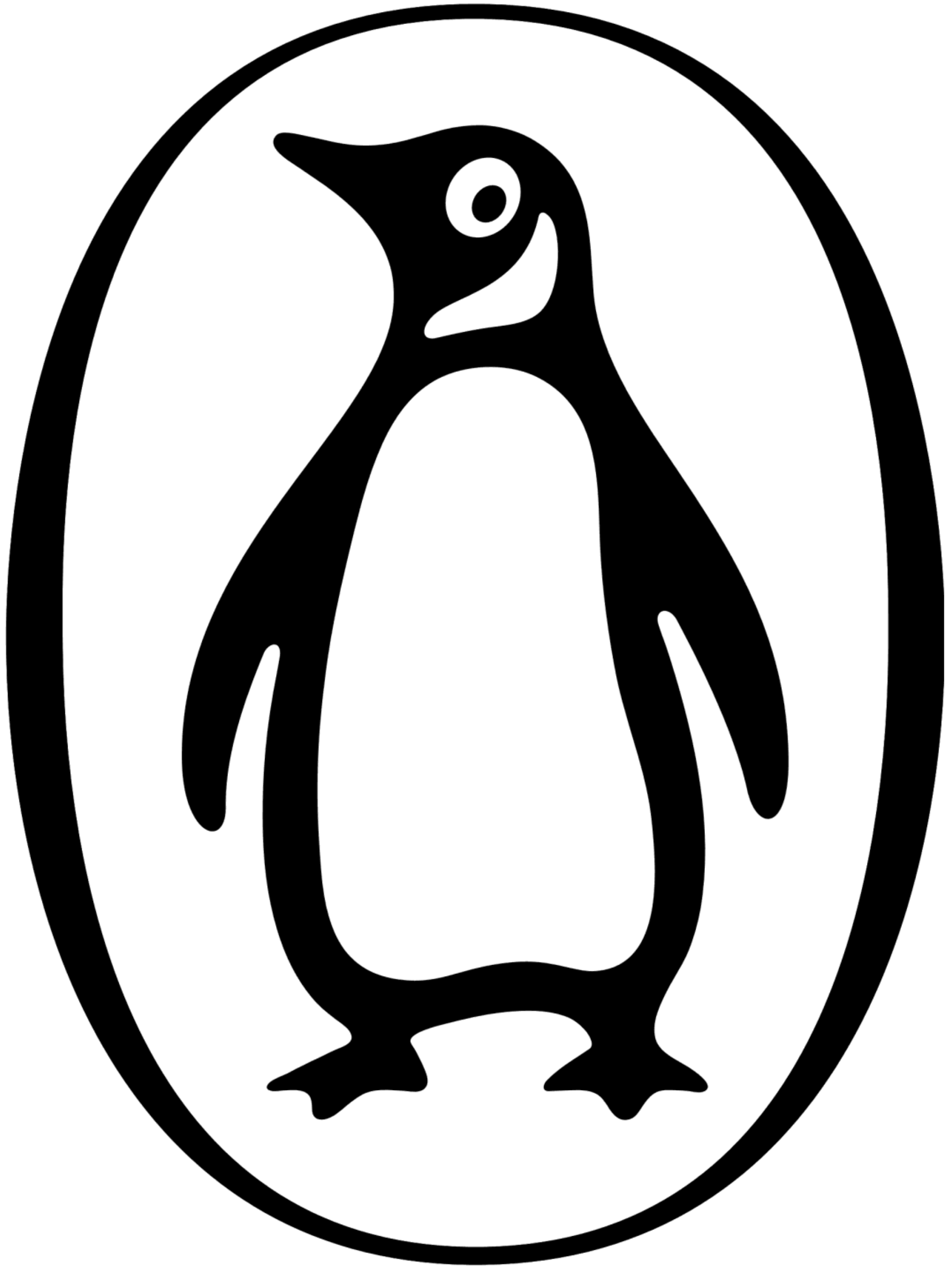

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Sidney's 'The Defence of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism

Edited and with an Introduction and Notes by
GAVIN ALEXANDER

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Chronology

GREECE AND ROME

Historical events	*Authors*
BC	
c. 1250–800 Greek Dark Age	
c. 800–Period of colonization; emergence of city-states	
c. 750–Greek colonization of Sicily	*c.* 750–700 Homer, Hesiod
c. 600–Beginnings of democracy in Athens	*c.* 600 Sappho, Alcaeus
509 Rome expels the king and Republic founded, according to tradition	
490–479 Persian wars	Aeschylus (525–456), Pindar (*c.* 522–443)
478–429 Athenian ascendancy	Sophocles (496–406), Euripides (480–406)
431–404 Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta, ending with surrender of Athens	Socrates (469–399) 427 Gorgias brings formal rhetoric to Athens Aristophanes (*c.*448–380)
404–371 Spartan ascendancy	Isocrates (436–338), Plato (*c.* 428-c. 348)
359–336 Rule of Philip II of Macedon	Demosthenes (*c.* 383–322)
336–323 Rule of Alexander the Great	Aristotle (384–322)
323–'Hellenistic Age'; Ptolemaic rule in Egypt	Menander (*c.* 342–292)
c. 300 Museum and Library at Alexandria founded	Theocritus (*c.* 308–c. 240)
246–146 Republican Rome successful in wars with Macedon, Syria and Carthage, and in conquest of Sicily	Plautus (*c.* 254–184), Ennius (239–169), Terence (*c.* 190–159) second or first century BC 'Demetrius', *On Style*
60–42 First triumvirate (60); Caesar defeats Pompey (48); Caesar murdered (44); Republicans defeated at Philippi (42) by Octavian and Antony	Cicero (106–43)
31 Octavian defeats Antony and Cleopatra at Actium; end of Hellenistic Age	Virgil (70–19); *Aeneid* published posthumously Horace (65–8)
31 BC–14 AD Rule of Octavian as Augustus	Ovid (43 BC–18 AD)
AD	
14–37 Tiberius; 37–41 Caligula; 41–54 Claudius; 54–68 Nero; 69 Year of the four emperors	Seneca (*c.* 4 BC–65 AD) Lucan (39–65)
69–79 Vespasian; 79–81 Titus; 81–96 Domitian; 96–98 Nerva; 98–117 Trajan; 117–38 Hadrian	First century AD 'Longinus', *On the Sublime* Quintilian (*c.* 35-c. 100)

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	Plutarch (*c.* 50-c. 125)

ENGLAND AND EUROPE

Historical events	*Authors*
	Dante (1265–1321); Petrarch (1304–74); Boccaccio (1313–75)
1337–1453 Hundred Years War between England and France	Gower (?1330–1408), Chaucer (*c.* 1343–1400), Lydgate (?1370–1449)
1455–85 Wars of the Roses 1509–47 Rule of Henry VIII (born 1491)	
	1511–12 Erasmus, *De ratione studii* ('On the Method of Study', 1511), *De copia* (On Copiousness', 1512)
1516 Birth of Princess Mary	1516 Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*; More, *Utopia*; Colet and Erasmus devise model humanist curriculum at St Paul's School
1517 Luther posts his Wittenberg theses	
1520 Henry VIII given title *Fidei Defensor* by Pope Leo X	
	1526 Tyndale, *New Testament* in English
	1528 Castiglione, *The Courtier* Death of Skelton (?1460–1529)
1530 Henry VIII Supreme Head of the Church in England	
	1531 Elyot, *The Governor*
1532–33 Henry VIII divorces Catherine of Aragon, is excommunicated, and marries Anne Boleyn; birth of Princess Elizabeth	1535 Coverdale, *Bible* in English; execution of More (?1477–1535)
1536 Anne Boleyn executed; Henry VIII marries Jane Seymour; smaller abbeys suppressed	1536 Latin translation of Aristotle, *Poetics*
1537 Birth of Prince Edward	
1538 Breaking of images in churches	1538 Elyot, Latin–English Dictionary
1539 Dissolution of the monasteries	1539 '*Great' Bible* in English
1541 Henry VIII assumes titles of King of Ireland and Head of Church in Ireland	*c.* 1541 Susenbrotus, *Epitome troporum ac schematum* ('Outline of Schemes and Tropes')
1542 Birth and accession of Mary, Queen of Scots	Death of Wyatt (1503–42)
1544 War with France; capture of Boulogne	
	1546 Puttenham matriculates at Christ's College,

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	Cambridge
1547 Death of Henry VIII; accession of Edward VI	Death of Surrey (1517–47)
1549 War with France; Act of Uniformity	1549 *Book of Common Frayer*; Du Bellay, *Defence et illustration de la langue Françoise* ('Defence and Illustration of the French Language')
1553 Death of Edward VI; accession of Mary	1553 Wilson, *Art of Rhetoric*
1554 Wyatt's rebellion; execution of Lady Jane Grey; Mary marries Philip of Spain	1554 Philip Sidney born; first edition of 'Longinus', *On the Sublime*
1555–56 Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer burned	1555 First instalment of Phaer's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*
	1556 Puttenham admitted to Middle Temple
1557 War with France	1557 *Songs and Sonnets* ('Tottel's Miscellany')
1558 Loss of Calais; death of Mary	
1558–1603 Rule of Elizabeth I	
1559 Mary, Queen of Scots marries French Dauphin; Acts of Uniformity	1559 *Mirror for Magistrates* (after suppressed edition of 1555; enlarged edition 1563) 1560 *Geneva Bible*
	1561 Hoby's transalation of Castiglione, *The Courtier*; Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem* ('Seven Books on Poetics')
1562–98 French Wars of Religion	1563 *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Church of England
	1565 Golding's translation of Ovid, *Metamorphoses*; Sackville and Norton, *Gorboduc*
1566 Birth of James of Scotland	
1567 Dutch revolt; James succeeds to Scottish throne after Mary's abdication	1567/8 Sidney matriculates at Christ Church, Oxford
	1568 Bishops' Bible
1569 Northern rebellion of Catholic earls	
1570 Pope excommunicates Elizabeth I	1570 Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*; Castelvetro, Italian translation of Aristotle, *Poetics,* with commentary
1571 Battle of Lepanto	
1572 St Bartholomew's Day Massacre	1572 Latin translation of 'Longinus', *On the Sublime*
	1572–75 Sidney in Europe (in Paris during St Bartholomew's Day Massacre)
	1573 Gascoigne, *A Hundred Sundry Flowers*
1574 Persecution of English Catholics	
	1575 Gascoigne, *Posies* (including *Certain Notes of Instruction*)
1576 Sack of Antwerp; Frobisher's voyage begins; Jesuit mission to England;	

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opening of the The Theatre	
1577 Drake's voyage around the world begins; Curtain Theatre and Blackfriars Theatre open	1577 Peacham, *Garden of Eloquence*; death of Gascoigne (*c.* 1534–77)
	1578 Lyly, *Euphues*
1579 Sidney writes against Elizabeth's projected marriage to the French Duke of Alençon	1579 Gosson, *School of Abuse,* Spenser, *Shepheardes Calender* (both dedicated to Sidney); North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*
	c. 1580 Sidney writing *Arcadia, Defence of Poesy, Astrophil and Stella*
	1580–81 Tasso, *Gerusalemme liber ata* ('Jerusalem Delivered')
1581 Execution of Edmund Campion	1581 Newton's translation of Seneca's *Tragedies*; Daniel matriculates at Magdalen Hall, Oxford
	1582 Gosson, *Plays Confuted*; Hakluyt, *Voyages*
1583 Irish rebellion defeated	
1584 Assassination of William of Orange; failure of Ralegh in Virginia	
1585 English intervention in Low Countries	
1586 Babington plot; trial of Mary, Queen of Scots	1586 Webbe, *Discourse of English Poetry*; Death of Sidney (1554–86) after Battle of Zutphen
1587 Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots; Sidney's funeral; Pope proclaims crusade against England	1587 Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*; Marlowe, *Tamburlaine* first performed
1588 Defeat of Spanish Armada	
	1589 Puttenham, *Art of English Poesy*
	1590 Sidney, *Arcadia*; Spenser, *The Faerie Queene,* 1–3; Marlowe and Shakespeare both active
1591 Increased measures against recusants	1591 Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*; Harington's translation of Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* (prefaced by 'A Brief Apology of Poetry'); ?death of Puttenham (*c.* 1529–1590 or 1591)
1592 Rose Theatre opens	1592 Daniel, *Delia*
	1593 Sidney, *Arcadia* (composite edition); Daniel, *Cleopatra*; Drayton, *Idea*; Peacham, *Garden of Eloquence,* 2nd edition; death of Marlowe (1564–1593)
1594 Swan Theatre built	1594 Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller*; Daniel, *Cleopatra*
1595 Execution of Robert Southwell (Catholic poet)	1595 Sidney, *Defence of Poesy* published; Daniel, *The Civil Wars,* 1–4
1596 Essex storms Cadiz	1596 Spenser, *The Faerie Queene,* 4–6
	1598 Sidney's other works printed with *Arcadia*; first

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	instalment of Chapman’s Homer
1599 Essex imprisoned; Globe Theatre opened	1599 Daniel, *Poetical Essays* (including *Musophilus);* death of Spenser (1552–99)
1600 Fortune Theatre built; birth of Prince Charles, future King Charles I	
1601 Execution of Essex	1601–02 *The Works of Samuel Daniel*; death of Nashe (1567–1601)
	1602 Campion, *Observations in the Art of English Poesy*
1603 Death of Elizabeth I	
1603–25 Rule of James I	1603 Daniel, *Defence of Rhyme*
1604 Hampton Court	
conference	
1605 Gunpowder Plot	1605 Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*
	1611 Authorized Version of the Bible
	Death of Harington (*c.* 1561–1612)
1614 ‘Addled’ Parliament (procedural chaos caused by rift within Privy Council)	
	1616 Jonson, *Works*; death of Shakespeare (1564–1616); Chapman’s complete translation of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
1618 Rebellion of Bohemia against Holy Roman Empire; start of Thirty Years War	Death of Ralegh (?1554–1618)
	Death of Daniel (1562/3–1619)
	Death of Campion (1567–1620)
1623 Failure of Spanish match project for Prince Charles	1623 Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies* (‘First Folio’); *The Whole Works of Samuel Daniel*
1625 Death of James I	
1625–1649 Rule of Charles I; his wife Henrietta Maria of France a practising Catholic	
1625; 1626; 1628–29 Abortive Parliaments dominated by Puritan opposition	Death of Bacon (1561–1626)
	1627 Drayton, *Battle of Agincourt* (including the ‘Epistle to Reynolds’)
1628 Assassination of Duke of Buckingham	
1629–40 Personal rule of Charles I (no Parliaments)	

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1630 Birth of future Charles II	
	Death of Donne (1572–1631) and Drayton (1563–1631); birth of Dryden (1631–1700)
1633 Laud made Archbishop of Canterbury	1633 Publication of Donne's *Poems*; death of Herbert (1593–1633); publication of Herbert's *The Temple*
	1634 Performance of Milton's *Comus*; death of Chapman (?1559–1634)
1637 Attempts to impose Anglican Prayer Book and episcopacy on Scotland	1637 Publication of Milton's *Lycidas*; death of Jonson (1572/3–1637)
1638 National Covenant (pledge to resist innovations in religion) signed by Scottish presbyterians	
1639–40 Bishops' Wars in Scotland	
1640 Short Parliament; Long Parliament	1640 Jonson, *Works* (including *Horace, his Art of Poetry,* and 'A Fit of Rhyme against Rhyme'); death of Alexander (?1567–1640)
1642 Beginning of English Civil War	

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Introduction

> 'Nevertheless, let it be said that if poetic imitation designed for pleasure has any arguments to show that she should have a place in a well-governed city, we would gladly receive her back from exile, for we are very conscious of her spell… So it would be right for poetry to return from exile if she could defend herself in lyric or in some other metre?'
>
> 'Certainly.'
>
> 'And we might allow her patrons… to speak on her behalf in prose to show that she is not only a source of pleasure, but also a benefit to societies and human life. And we shall listen favourably, since it will be our gain if she turns out to be not only pleasing, but also useful.'
>
> Plato, *Republic,* 10.607[1]

The imagination has always had its critics. When Plato's Socrates outlines his ideal state he is forced to make the tough decision to exclude all poetry (that is, all imaginative literature), with the exception of hymns to the gods and poems in honour of great men. Poetry corrupts because it peddles fictions, either poor copies of reality or dangerous phantasms; it tells stories which glorify vice, wantonness and depravity; engaging the mind with fiction is a bad habit to get into for those who would be morally good in fact. If subsequent literary criticism can be thought of as a response to Plato's kindly gesture of leaving the door ever so slightly open at the conclusion of what remains the most cogent and challenging critique of the arts, then we notice several things. First, that poetry might make her defence in verse, as Horace was to do in his *Ars poetica* ('The Art of Poetry'). Second, that this will be a defence, a speech on behalf of poetry before a judge and jury of philosophers. Third, that the only admissible defence will be that poetry is a force for social good, that it is intimately connected with politics, with public and private morals, that it has social responsibilities and can discharge them well.

Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* meets Plato's specifications perfectly, both in its form – a speech for the defence – and in its content – an argument that literature is a force for moral and social good. It is edited here with other texts of the period 1575–1640, in verse and in prose, which share a pressing need to define literature, to defend it against its critics, and to generate the rules and standards needed by English literature in what was felt to be its fledgling state. Fiction involves the making of imaginary worlds. Its theorization, and the generation of artificial rules for its organization and verbal expression, coincided with the making and legislation of new worlds in reality. The English Renaissance was a period of religious reform, of colonization, of nation building and the resistance of foreign invasion. It was the job of literature to comprehend the changing world of its readers, to offer fictions which could help them make sense of their lives. And it is no coincidence that the criticism which attempted to make sense of that literature is full of the language of military conquest and defence, of colonization and international trade, of architecture, nation building, reformation, revolution, and legislation. When Samuel Daniel defends the role of poetic form in

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framing poetic fictions, he echoes God's role as creator: 'For the body of our imagination being as an unformed chaos without fashion, without day, if by the divine power of the spirit it be wrought into an orb of order and form, is it not more pleasing to nature…?' (p. 216). For Sidney, likewise, the poet, by which he means the writer of imaginative literature in verse or prose, 'doth grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth or, quite anew…: her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden' (pp. 8–9). The making of fictions, narrative structures, and poetic forms has much in common both with the philosophical imagining of the ideal state and with attempts to imagine and create England's political future. These analogies were acknowledged and exploited by Renaissance critics. But many also found that the activities overlapped not only metaphorically but actually: Sidney, for one, was intensely engaged in European politics and in new world exploration and colonization.

We cannot expect to find in Renaissance literary criticism a careful guide to how we should read Renaissance literature. Nor can we expect always to recognize early versions of the concerns of more recent literary critics and theorists. It is much more interesting than that. Sidney, Daniel, George Puttenham and the other writers represented here show both a larger philosophical and ethical scope than we might expect, and a greater concern for details of language, genre, and poetic form than we might care for. To understand why they chose to write at all, and to write in the way they did, we need to try to look at their world as they did.

THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

The period spanned by this edition – 1575–1640 – is bounded at either end by momentous changes. At its start, reformation, counter-reformation, and the establishment of a national Protestant church. At its end, civil war, regicide and a short-lived republic. The term 'Renaissance' is applied to the phase of English cultural development coinciding with the Reformation and extending into the seventeenth century. Our Renaissance was in many ways a delayed reaction to an impulse which began in fourteenth-century Italy. The rebirth which 'renaissance' signifies was of classical literature and culture. Learning had already begun to move out of the monasteries of medieval Europe into the newly established universities; under the enlightened patronage of princes and grandees it took an equally firm root in the Renaissance court. Central to the redefinition of culture which this power shift marked was the rediscovery and reappraisal of the ancient world, its history, philosophy and literature. To give a few relevant examples. Aristotle's *Poetics,* by and large neglected in the Middle Ages, was looked at with fresh eyes, and by the middle of the sixteenth century had begun a domination of literary criticism which was to last two centuries. Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* ('The Education of the Orator'), the most comprehensive classical treatise on rhetoric, survived only in parts until complete manuscripts were unearthed in the fifteenth century. And many speeches by Cicero were similarly recovered from the lumber rooms of neglected monastic libraries, including a speech in defence of the Greek poet Archias – facing deportation by Cicero's political enemies – which

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offered Renaissance critics many of the arguments they needed to defend their own poets. The canon of classical wisdom, always the foundation of modern learning, was reappraised, revised, and extended. Hence the feeling, as evident in the minds of most Renaissance scholars as it is in the minds of many modern scholars, that a great gulf separates the Renaissance and medieval mentalities, and that the Renaissance scholar could rightly feel that he had more in common with Plato, Cicero and Horace than with Aquinas, Duns Scotus or Chaucer.

Two symptoms of the English Renaissance concern us in particular. One was the newly devised school curricula which put the study of rhetoric and of literature at their centre. The other was the translation and imitation of classical models. By the end of our period, many of the major classical authors had been translated into English for the first time, and some more than once: Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, Tacitus, Livy, Pliny, and Suetonius from Latin; Homer, some Aristotle, Plutarch and various prose romances from Greek (though often via French or Latin). Other authors were accorded the close attention of imitation, Horace and Catullus offering especially popular material for English lyric poets to revisit and give their own versions of. The new classics of French, Spanish and Italian literature were also brought into English: Du Bartas, Montaigne, Montemayor, Ariosto, Tasso. And those Continental authors who seemed most to embody the new way of looking and writing were imitated closely – Petrarch's lyric poems being perhaps the best-known example. By the end of the Elizabethan period, the new classics of English literature – works like Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590) and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590–96) – were being published. They were works of complex texture, woven from the threads of Greek, Latin, and modern European classics, and yet all the more original for that.

The writing of literary criticism was one other area where English authors were stimulated by classical and Continental examples. But their work was no mere rehash. What was at stake for English writers and theorists of literature? The Renaissance in England started to bear fruit as England broke from Rome. Before the 1530s, England had been one among many nations, all members of one Roman Church, their princes constantly squabbling over issues of dynastic succession, marrying each other's daughters, fighting wars sometimes with, sometimes against, each other. What Henry VIII did in rejecting the supremacy of Rome set England apart, its island status now a clear sign that it was unique in Europe, different from the rest, sovereign and self-sufficient. Its culture had always been measured against that of the Continent, and its authors had been happy to take inspiration, especially from French and Italian sources. But the Reformation gave an edge to questions about rivalry and dependence. England now had much more to prove. The same was to some extent true of its Continental rivals, for the counter-reformation led to some reconsideration and readjustment of the practices and ideologies of Rome. And the rivalry became a matter of which country was the most like ancient Greece and Rome in its language and literature, of which could be the most authentically classical. Parallel movements can be seen in each major European country. These include the study of the vernacular, to vindicate it as a vehicle of scholarship and poetry worthy of comparison to the classical languages; the theorization of vernacular versification and experiments with classical systems of versification, again to put

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the modern language on a footing with Greek and Latin; and the defence of vernacular literature, together with the generation of the rules needed to give it more confidence. In Protestant England the stakes were high: the self-confidence of English literature, its sovereignty, its right to claim authentic descent from the classics – these concerns seem to move in parallel to questions of national sovereignty, as the England of Elizabeth I, so recently delivered from a Catholic monarch and her husband, the King of Spain, encountered the threats of the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, of Catholic rebels and plotters, of a plan to marry Elizabeth to a Catholic French prince, and of an uncertain succession. Literary and political nationalism worked hand in hand.

For William Webbe, 'reformation' is naturally the right word to use for his plan to remodel the rules of English versification: like the reformed Church, English poetry should free itself from the superstitions and customs of the Dark Ages and rebuild itself to accord with the authentic, ancient model. For Daniel, 'reformation' should signify not an abrupt change in poetic doctrine, but rather an enlightened process of revision and improvement. It is 'the whole state of rhyme in this kingdom' which Thomas Campion's proposed system threatens 'to overthrow'; where the naturalization of new words is concerned, Daniel protests that some writers introduce foreign words and give them 'without a parliament, without any consent or allowance' the rights of 'free-denizens [naturalized citizens] in our language'. Faced with the 'alarum' of his 'adversary' and the threat of 'fealty' to a 'foreign' literary power, Daniel makes it very clear that this is war (pp. 208, 233, 229, 227).

Much work was to be done to establish the state of letters on firm foundations. There were too few vernacular classics – big, ambitious works on classical lines which could offer inspiration and encouragement to future generations of writers. And the rules needed by all artists were in a muddle. The English and Scottish could always boast Latin authors in prose and verse with international reputations. But when it came to vernacular literature, English prose lacked elegance and its verse regulation. English, after all, was a minor language, spoken only on a small island at the edge of the world. Why anyone would therefore bother writing English literature is a question debated in Daniel's *Musophilus*. When we look back via the prose of Dr Johnson or the verse of Dryden, it is too easy to view the history of the English language and its literature as a gentle, inevitable evolution towards regularity and refinement, and the idea of English as a world language as a foregone conclusion. But we must not forget what Dryden and Johnson knew well – that the Renaissance achievement had been sudden and substantial, and that the story of the language and literature they wrote, as of the nascent British Empire, really began in the sixteenth century.

To some, English literature seemed resolutely parochial. Many writers, as Michael Drayton observes (ll. 187–95), preferred not to have their works printed and instead kept them close or allowed them to circulate only in manuscript. Sidney was in this category; had he not died prematurely, perhaps the writings which had such a great impact on English literature in the 1590s would not have made it to the press for many more years. And although the printing presses were busy before this time, most printed literature was, as far as the learned and progressive were concerned, popular or old-fashioned. Webbe prefaces his

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Discourse of English Poetry by surveying 'the innumerable sorts of English books and infinite fardles of printed pamphlets wherewith this country is pestered, all shops stuffed, and every study furnished'. He hopes that by a thorough scrutiny of modern English poetry 'we may not only get the means, which we yet want, to discern between good writers and bad, but perhaps also challenge from the rude multitude of rustical rhymers, who will be called poets, the right practice and orderly course of true poetry'.[2] Although both drama and prose fiction remain peripheral to literary criticism in the period (except when included in discussions of 'poetry' broadly defined), the same aim of taking a popular kind of literature and elevating it to a more correct form is squarely that of Jonson as dramatist or Sidney as author of prose romance.

English Renaissance literary criticism comes in various forms. Because Horace's *Ars poetica* was itself a poem, the versified art was attempted by some on the Continent; Jonson's translation of Horace represents this kind. Others wrote extended treatises, not so much on the model of Aristotle's brief *Poetics* as on that of such rhetoric books as Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*: Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* is an example of this kind. Another kind is modelled on the classical oration, and may be a speech in praise of or in defence of literature in general, as we get par excellence in Sidney's *Defence of Poesy.* Other works address a particular issue and have a narrower scope, as Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme* at least appears to. And from these basic options all sorts of combinations were possible: Drayton, for example, takes the topos of surveying the national literature (exemplified by the final section of Sidney's *Defence* and the last chapter of Puttenham's Book I) and makes a poem out of it. Comment on literature was also to be found in rhetoric manuals (Henry Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence*) and works on learning in general (Daniel's *Musophilus*; Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning).*

Certain characteristics distance Renaissance literary criticism from the normal procedures of modern criticism. First, we see the predominance of the discussion of first principles rather than the detailed appraisal of specific works and authors: Renaissance critics prefer to deal in ideas and ideals rather than in actualities, and in many cases might better be called literary theorists. Second, classical rhetoric dominates these works in two fundamental ways: they are rhetorical through and through, directed at winning a particular argument on a particular occasion; and they view literature as a sort of rhetoric, aimed, in the most important common formulation, at instructing and delighting the reader, and not to be thought of as the self-expression of the author. Third, where we value originality and consider it as diametrically opposed to the imitation of previous authors and texts, Renaissance critics seem to value imitation above originality, or rather as a route to originality. Fourth, and relatedly, rules of all kinds are seen not as an encumbrance or even a necessary evil, but as a fundamental condition of any writing – without clear rules and conventions art is impossible. Most importantly, where we now tend to see the scholarly study of literature and literary theory as inhabiting a different world from the writing of literature, and expect there to be little communication between the two, Renaissance literary criticism is usually the work of writers of literature, and is aimed at readers and authors alike: it shows how to write, and how writing ought to be read.

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HUMANISM AND LITERATURE

Before we proceed further, we need to look more closely at the intellectual background of those readers and authors, and at the movement known now as humanism. Humanism is a nineteenth-century name for an intellectual position central to the Renaissance. It values engagement with the classics, but within the civic framework out of which those classics came. The humanist author or reader will not simply accept that all modern writing must bow before the ancients and derive from them, but will be intensely interested in the relations and tensions between past and present texts. The humanist will also see intellectual activity as connected to civic activity, will wish authors to influence political life and politicians to be scholars. As Ben Jonson argues in *Discoveries* (published posthumously in 1640), the humanist reader was to be critical rather than slavish:

> I know nothing can conduce more to letters than to examine the writings of the ancients, and not to rest in their sole authority, or take all upon trust from them… For to all the observations of the ancients, we have our own experience; which if we will use and apply, we have better means to pronounce. It is true they opened the gates and made the way that went before us, but as guides, not commanders… Truth lies open to all; it is no man's several.[3]

The training of critical humanist readers was a serious business, leading to a boom in the foundation of schools, and a complete reappraisal of the system of elementary education. Desiderius Erasmus, the single most influential of the sixteenth-century humanists, divided knowledge into that of words (*verba*) and that of things (*res).* Words came first, and so elementary education – an education in Latin rather than the vernacular – was about mastering the arts of language: that is, grammar and rhetoric. After this, students could start to think about things – abstract concepts, types of argument. In teaching younger schoolboys to recognize rhetorical features, literary texts were preferred precisely because they made learning more fun. In *De ratione studii* ('On the Method of Study', 1511) Erasmus describes the new method. After learning grammatical rules and the rules of versification, the student should:

> have at your fingertips the chief points of rhetoric, namely propositions, the grounds of proof, figures of speech, amplifications, and the rules governing transitions. For these are conducive not only to criticism but also to imitation. Informed then by all this you will carefully observe when reading writers whether any striking word occurs, if diction is archaic or novel, if some argument shows brilliant invention or has been skilfully adapted from elsewhere, if there is any brilliance in the style, if there is any adage, historical parallel, or maxim worth committing to memory.

Erasmus in fact recommends that literary texts should be studied as literature:

> Now in approaching each work the teacher should indicate the nature of the argument in the particular genre, and what should be most closely observed in it. For instance, the essence of the epigram lies in its pointed brevity… In tragedy, he will point out that particular attention should be paid to the emotions aroused, and especially, indeed, to the more profound. He will show briefly how these effects are achieved. Then he will

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> deal with the arguments of the speakers as if they were set pieces of rhetoric. Finally, he should deal with the representation of place, time, and sometimes action, and the occurrence of heated exchanges [*stichomythia*], which may be worked out in couplets, single lines, or half-lines.[4]

Dramatic dialogue is here to be studied as if it is formal rhetoric. And students would go on to practise the writing and performing of certain literary kinds as part of their rhetorical training. Features of rhetoric given special emphasis included *prosopopoeia* (the representation of imaginary or absent speakers), *topographia* (the representation of places real or imaginary), *ethos* (the credible persona of the speaker), and *pathos* (the stirring of the reader's or audience's emotions). One favourite exercise was to make the student compose an oration in the person of one character from literature or history addressing another: poets and dramatists had learned many of their skills by the time they left school. The literature they studied and imitated was used not only as a store of good speeches and illustrations of rhetorical figures. It also furnished many of the so-called commonplaces – adages, maxims, examples from stories – of which the orator needed to have an ample store so that he could always find the right arguments and illustrate them appropriately. Good commonplaces encountered in this way were to be entered throughout a man's life in a commonplace book, with alphabetical headings under moral topics like bravery, foolhardiness, piety and generosity. The rhetorical education thus gave its students a skill and a resource which would be put to work when the perfect young humanists became poets and dramatists instead of politicians, diplomats or churchmen.

For the humanists rhetoric was the master discipline, the most fundamental and important form of learning. As Thomas Nashe puts it in 1589: 'Amongst all the ornaments of arts, rhetoric is to be had in highest reputation, without the which all the rest are naked'.[5] And literature was central to the rhetorical curriculum. But both arts were open to criticism. Rhetoric was first recognized as an art which could be taught in the later fifth century BC, when Socrates was revolutionizing philosophy, and other new approaches to knowledge and argument were competing in the Athenian educational marketplace. Already in these early days philosophers, most notably Plato, were keen to dent rhetoric's prestige, either out of professional rivalry (because it encroached on what philosophy regarded as its turf – dialectical argument), or out of a more sincere worry about rhetoric's apparent indifference to the truth and its ability to inveigle reason by appealing to the emotions. Plato's arguments against rhetoric – notably in the dialogues *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* – were related to his arguments against poetry, and both arts responded by forming their own similar myths. For the orators, rhetoric is the cause of society, as the fourth-century orator Isocrates spells out in a passage echoed in this edition by Peacham in his *Garden of Eloquence* (see pp. 248–9, and note 2 on that text):

> because there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other and to make clear to each other whatever we desire, not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and, generally speaking, there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish. (*Nicocles,* 6–9)

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For the poets, as Horace argues in the *Ars poetica,* the myths about Orpheus taming wild beasts and Amphion building Thebes with their song tell us that we have poets to thank for the beginnings of human society. As Thomas Lodge summarizes the argument: 'poets were the first raisers of cities, prescribers of good laws, maintainers of religion, disturbers of the wicked, advancers of the well-disposed, inventors of laws, and lastly the very footpaths to knowledge and understanding'.[6] These mythic defences were used to argue that rhetoric and imaginative literature were forces for good in society, teaching the right and the good, inculcating morals, and, far from being either specious distractions from the truth or peddlers of immorality, essential to human progress.

But the moral authority of both rhetoric and imaginative literature remained open to attack: it was still possible for rhetoric to be used to prosecute an innocent man, or recommend a bad course of action; literature was mostly about sex and violence and tended to excite rather than to educate its readers. One answer to this last objection was that only bad readers use literature to bad ends: good readers (with the help of good teachers) will emulate the good they see and treat representations of immorality as warnings of what is to be shunned. Another answer was that one morally bad poet doesn't make poetry bad. Writers on literature and rhetoric gravitate towards ideals, because the stronger arguments are to be made about what literature and rhetoric can be rather than what they have been. Cicero defines the ideal orator, an idea 'which we can have in our minds even if we do not see it' (*Orator* ['The Orator'], 101), just as Sidney speaks 'of the art and not of the artificer' (p. 20). The ideal orator had to be 'a good man, skilled in speaking' (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria,* 12.1.1), a broad remit:

> The art of speaking well, that is to say, of speaking with knowledge, skill and elegance, has no delimited territory, within whose borders it is enclosed and confined. All things whatsoever, that can fall under the discussion of human beings, must be aptly dealt with by him who professes to have this power, or he must abandon the name of eloquent. (Cicero, *De or atore* ['On the Orator'], 2.2.5)

The Greek historian Strabo adjusted the arguments to define the ideal poet:

> Can one believe that a poet who can introduce characters delivering speeches, commanding armies, and performing other virtuous actions, is himself a humbug and a mountebank, capable only of bewitching and cajoling his audience without doing them good?… One cannot be a good poet without first being a good man. (*Geography,* 1.2.5)[7]

And Ben Jonson echoes Cicero:

> I could never think the study of wisdom confined only to the philosopher, or of piety to the divine, or of state to the politic. But that he which can feign a commonwealth (which is the poet), can govern it with counsels, strengthen it with laws, correct it with judgements, inform it with religion and morals, is all these. We do not require in him mere elocution [style], or an excellent faculty in verse, but the exact knowledge of all virtues and their contraries, with ability to render the one loved, the other hated, by his proper embattling them.[8]

It is easy to see how the Renaissance writer of imaginative literature becomes a composite figure, an ideal orator-poet: a good man, with broad knowledge and

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experience, skilled in the arts of language, and writing fiction which benefits his country and its people. What Sir John Harington says of poetry is at the heart of the humanist position:

> this I say of it, and I think I say truly, that there are many good lessons to be learned out of it, many good examples to be found in it, many good uses to be had of it, and that therefore it is not, nor ought not to be, despised by the wiser sort, but so to be studied and employed as was intended by the first writers and devisers thereof, which is to soften and polish the hard and rough dispositions of men, and make them capable of virtue and good discipline, (p. 263)

This may seem a curious view, but just as old arguments about the moral perils of literature are repeated in current debates about sex and violence in film and television, so the old answer may still apply to what is best in our literary culture and in contemporary novels or films or plays: that it can indeed 'soften and polish the harsh and rough dispositions of men', that it is what makes us civilized.

IDEAS OF IMITATION

Renaissance writers are for the most part little interested in exploring their own hearts, or in laying them bare to their readers. To read their work appropriately we need to leave behind our post-Romantic prejudices, and most importantly the assumption that literature is self-expression. Even when a poet writes in the first person, the 'I' is a character, a rhetorical construction intended to provide the reader with something he or she wants to read about. It is a representation or imitation of life rather than life itself, and it is often imitative in a further respect, copying the scenario, method or style of a previous writer. The hero of Sidney's amorous sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* (*c.*1581, printed 1591) bears many similarities to his author, and their biographies overlap playfully. But he is not Sidney because this is literature and not life, and he cannot be Sidney because he is also composed of elements drawn from previous sonnet sequences, notably Petrarch's. One word crops up repeatedly in the efforts of Renaissance critics to explain how literature works in this regard, and that word – imitation – has several meanings. We encounter one meaning when Sidney tells us that 'Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word *mimēsis,* that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth' (p. 10). And we encounter another when he tells us that the three things needed by the writer are 'art, imitation and exercise' (p. 43). Elizabethan authors were alive to the distinction, and could find the two meanings contrasted in the important discussion of imitation in Roger Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* (1570); but their roots run deeper still.

Discussion of literary *mimesis* begins with Plato. In Plato's philosophy the world we live in is composed of imperfect versions of the perfect ideas of things which exist in a realm beyond the visible universe. There is one idea or Platonic form of a chair in this realm of true ideas; every chair in the world is just a flawed copy of that idea. Art imitates the world. The painter or sculptor or poet copies things observed in the world, and so his art is at two removes from the truth – offering

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imitations of imitations. Where the philosopher may hope to come close to the idea of beauty, the painter can only try to represent a particularly beautiful person, and that person is hardly the same thing as beauty itself. Aristotle circumvents this argument by ignoring Plato's theory of ideas and redefining *mimesis.* The artist does not simply offer poor simulacra of things observable in the world, people who exist, events which happened. He represents things which could be, according to rules of verisimilitude rather than fact: the test is credibility and not accuracy; the artist imitates possibilities. *Mimesis* becomes the representation of universals – characters in archetypal scenarios behaving in ways which tell us about human nature, for better or worse. Imitation comes close to creation.

These two versions *of mimesis* stand behind the discussions of Renaissance critics, but they come filtered through subsequent classical treatments. One successful remodelling of Plato by Cicero, Seneca, and the Neoplatonist Plotinus reintroduced the Platonic *idea* as something in the artist's mind – if we wish to represent Venus in sculpture or words we imitate an idea of beauty and not a particular woman. Just as, in Plato's creation myth *Timaeus,* the world is formed by the mimetic art of a divine craftsman, so the worlds of fiction are formed by the mimetic art of artists who become, in some Renaissance criticism, gods who preside over a 'second nature'. On the other hand, Aristotle's redefinition of *mimesis* as the representation of the universal and the possible was debased into a theory of character types, especially evident in comic drama.

Running parallel to these philosophical theories of imitation is the rhetorical practice of imitation, related insofar as it believed that art must proceed by copying the finest observable examples, in this case literary and stylistic models. Aristotle had observed that it is through *mimesis* that we learn (hence the child's love of play-acting), and the educators in Rome and the Hellenistic world made imitation the keystone of the rhetorical education. By copying approved models students learned how to write and speak well themselves. Again, different versions of this ideology were inherited by Renaissance humanists. A particular sixteenth-century controversy concerned the slavish imitation of Cicero's admired prose style; objectors to this practice include Sidney. Appropriately enough, it was Cicero who had suggested that the teacher must 'show the student whom to copy, and to copy in such a way as to strive with all possible care to attain the most excellent qualities of his model' (*De oratore,* 2.22.90). Quintilian stressed, on the other hand, that a number of model authors should collectively give us 'our stock of words, the variety of our figures, and our methods of composition' (*Institutio oratoria,* 10.2.1). He used Plato's arguments to criticize the imitation of a single model, for 'whatever is like another object, must necessarily be inferior to the object of its imitation, just as the shadow is inferior to the substance, the portrait to the features which it portrays, and the acting of the player to the feelings he endeavours to reproduce' (10.2.11): 'the mere follower must always lag behind' (10.2.10). And Seneca developed what became the most popular images for this more eclectic approach: we should copy the bees 'and sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading' before using our natural gifts to 'so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence

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it came'. Even if one particular author has captured your imagination and is the object of your imitation, 'I would have you resemble him as a child resembles his father, and not as a picture resembles its original; for a picture is a lifeless thing' (*Epistulae morales* ['Moral Letters'], 84.5–8). It was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that the doctrine of literary imitation was overturned, although Daniel offers an important precursor: 'all our understandings are not to be built by the square of Greece and Italy. We are the children of nature as well as they; we are not so placed out of the way of judgement but that the same sun of discretion shineth upon us' (p. 217). For the most part, though, originality was not seen as requiring an avoidance of imitation, but rather imitation of a more sophisticated nature.

A third type of imitation came at the other end of the writing process, when the reader came to judge the work and the events it portrayed. Since we learn through imitation, our behaviour will to an extent be modelled on what we read. The negative version of this theory saw readers and theatregoers as under threat from the representations of immoral behaviour in poems, stories, and plays. The Elizabethan theatre controversy, led by Puritans like Stephen Gosson, was an argument over whether theatre was a danger to society in this respect; the issue never went away, and when the Puritans took over London in the Civil War the theatres were actually closed down. Indeed, this theory of imitation survives in our current fears that cinematic representations of murderers and rapists lead to murder and rape. Plutarch advised caution: 'The young student must… be taught that we praise not the action represented by the imitation but the art shown in the appropriate reproduction of the subject. Since poetry often narrates by imitation wicked actions and bad emotions or traits of character, the young man must not necessarily accept admirable or successful work of this kind as true, or label it beautiful, but simply commend it as suitable and appropriate to the subject'.[9] And many advanced the somewhat lame argument that 'the wantonest poets of all, in their most lascivious works… sought rather by that means to withdraw men's minds… from such foul vices than to allure them to embrace such beastly follies as they detected'.[10]

But critics preferred the positive version of readerly imitation, inspired by Cicero's account of his own moral formation in his speech in defence of Archias the poet. His virtue and resolve would be nothing 'had I not persuaded myself from my youth up, thanks to the moral lessons derived from a wide reading, that nothing is to be greatly sought after in this life save glory and honour' (*Pro Archia poeta* ['In Defence of Archias the Poet'], 6.14):

> All literature, all philosophy, all history, abounds with incentives to noble action, incentives which would be buried in black darkness were the light of the written word not flashed upon them. How many pictures of high endeavour the great authors of Greece and Rome have drawn for our use, and bequeathed to us, not only for our contemplation, but for our emulation! These I have held ever before my vision throughout my public career, and have guided the workings of my brain and my soul by meditating upon patterns of excellence, (ibid.)

The language is again Platonic. The ideas we find in fiction are the patterns for our own imitations in life. These three ideas of imitation, then, are connected in

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complex ways and share top billing in a literary culture which places a high value on copying. The three ideas are often distinguished nowadays: imitation as representation is labelled *mimesis,* the Greek term; imitation of literary and stylistic models is labelled by the Latin term *imitatio*; and the readerly behavioural imitation may be called emulation. But when Renaissance critics label literature 'an art of imitation', they intend some overlap.

POETICS AND RHETORIC

We have already seen that rhetoric took up a position at the centre of Renaissance intellectual culture. And that it was a social, ethical and intellectual ideal, and not just a successful trick. We need now to look at how intertwined rhetoric and poetics were in this period, for unless we recognize rhetoric as the discursive system which contained both literature and poetics, Renaissance literary criticism makes little sense. Already in the classical period, it was recognized that poetry and rhetoric had a great deal of common ground. The poets were often credited with originating the art of language which rhetoric systematized, analogies between the orator and the poet or the play-actor were common, and quotations from the poets were commonly used in illustrations of rhetorical figures. As Cicero put it: 'The truth is that the poet is a very near kinsman of the orator, rather more heavily fettered as regards rhythm, but with ampler freedom in his choice of words, while in the use of many sorts of ornament he is his ally and almost his counterpart' (*De oratore,* 1.16.70). The success of rhetoric in the Hellenistic period had eclipsed what attempts at literary criticism and poetics had been made. For this reason Aristotle's *Poetics* lay neglected, most discussion of literature was offered in passing in works of rhetorical theory, and authors were happy to adapt the theory of rhetorical composition and performance to their literary writings.

The ideas about literature inherited by Renaissance humanists were intrinsically rhetorical. Not, at least at first, the formalism of Aristotle, but the reader – and audience-centred model of Horace. The most conspicuous sign of the rhetorical cast of literary theory is the ubiquity of a formula which is central to Sidney's case in the *Defence*: that poetry, by which he means all fiction, must delight, move, and teach. This formula belongs to rhetoric, and describes the job of the orator: 'For the best orator is the one who by his oratory instructs, pleases, and moves the minds of his audience. To instruct is a debt to be paid, to give pleasure a gratuity to confer, to rouse emotion a sheer necessity' (Cicero, *De optimo genere oratorum* ['On the Best Type of Orator'], 3). So common is the triadic formula *do cere, delectare, movere* (to teach, to delight, to move) that it lies almost unnoticed behind many passages in this edition, as when Daniel talks of the 'offices of motion' of rhyming verse: 'delighting the ear, stirring the heart, and satisfying the judgement' (p. 212). Horace had adapted it famously in the passage from the *Ars poetica* in which he tells us that 'Poets aim either to profit, or to delight, or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life' (333–4).

The need to understand literature as rhetoric led to some problems. Rhetoric was traditionally divided into three kinds: (i) the deliberative rhetoric of political

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debate, a matter of recommending or dissuading from a particular policy or course of action; (ii) the judicial or forensic rhetoric of the law courts, speeches either for the prosecution or the defence; and (iii) ceremonial or demonstrative rhetoric (known as epideictic), the rhetoric of praise or blame. As Aristotle explains in the *Rhetoric,* the first two require a judgement about the future and the past respectively, whereas the only judgement in the third case is of the skill of the speaker (1358b). And as Thomas Wilson put it in *The Art of Rhetoric* (1553; second edition 1560), one of the first English rhetoric manuals: 'Nothing can be handled by this art but the same is contained within one of these three causes'.[11]If literature was in any way rhetorical, to which kind did it belong? The awkward answer was to the third kind, the rather inert epideictic. This seemed to work for the odes of praise which formed the bulk of the canon of the early Greek lyric poet Pindar, and it could be made to work for such a genre as satire. As long as drama was to be understood as commending virtues and exposing vices, a play too could be seen as an instance of epideictic rhetoric. But when it came to sonnets, long prose narratives or epic poems, it seemed less to be a case of rhetoric containing literature than of literature containing rhetoric.

Literary works, indeed, were fond of representations of rhetorical occasions. Sidney's *Arcadia* ends with a lengthy judicial scene; Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (written c.1602, printed 1609) contains an extended deliberative debate; praise of the mistress was a staple of love poetry. But the similarities did not end there. Rhetoric divided itself into five parts, and these corresponded to the five successive stages of any rhetorical performance. These were *inventio* (the finding of materials), *dispositio* (the arrangement of those materials), *elocutio* (the translation of ideas into words and the deployment of rhetorical figures), *memoria* (the memorization of the outline of the oration), and *actio* or *pronuntiatio* (its performance). Any piece of writing seemed to proceed in this way. A writer first generates a basic scenario or conceit; he then arranges the argument or plot; and he then puts the plan into words. The final two stages only applied in the case of a play, but the parallel remained important: actors had to memorize, and their performances were always compared to those of orators, with both deploying a common arsenal of gesture and vocal effect.

One important remodelling of learning, by the French philosopher and logician Petrus Ramus, assigned *inventio, dispositio* and *memoria,* as concerned with *res* (matter), to logic, and reduced rhetoric to a concern only with *verba* (words), which meant *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio.* Furthermore, *elocutio* was always the area of rhetoric which most naturally shared common ground with literature. It seemed natural, then, that efforts to adapt rhetoric to literature emphasized *elocutio.* Readers with a rhetorical education were always able to read poems and see plays in all sorts of other rhetorical ways, but insofar as literary criticism absorbed rhetorical theory, it was the theory of *elocutio,* or style. The third book of Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* is substantially a treatment of poetic *elocutio.* Under *elocutio* rhetorical theory distinguished at least three kinds of style (high/grand, middle/mixed, low/plain), and it is these same kinds that are still invoked when we talk of Milton's grand style or Herbert's plain style. The theory also codified the kinds of choice any writer faces in the expression of ideas and the patterning of words, distinguishing innumerable rhetorical figures. These

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would be either schemes – arrangements of words other than the ordinary – or tropes, which were concerned with changes of meaning. *Anaphora,* by which consecutive clauses commence with the same word or phrase, is a scheme. Metaphor is a trope. Often thought of now as mere embellishment, rhetorical figures were tools of thought and expression, and were expected to work hard to delight, instruct, and move. As Puttenham puts it: 'a figure is ever used to a purpose, either of beauty or of efficacy' (p. 169). Schemes and tropes construct the language of Renaissance poets and prose writers. They were taught carefully in schools, so that young students would have a repertoire of hundreds of figures, which they had been trained to recognize in texts, and had practised in their own compositions. Books from the period show the evidence of this rhetorical training, their margins cluttered with the reader's efforts to label the schemes and tropes used in the text. If we remember this, the rhetorical figures employed in plays, poems, and stories must be thought of not only as aimed at affecting audience and reader, but as intended to be recognized and analysed, enjoyed as evidence of impressive technique.

But things are even more complicated than this. Quintilian puts it very clearly: 'It was, then, nature that created speech, and observation that originated the art of speaking' (*Institutio oratoria,* 3.2.3). People all the time use patterns of speech which are found in the rhetoric textbooks, without realizing they are doing so. This is why figures of speech do not seem artificial, unless used clumsily. Longinus looks at uses of the figure *hyper-baton,* in which syntax is deliberately disordered, in just this way:

> These consist in the arrangement of words or ideas out of their normal sequence, and they carry, so to speak, the genuine stamp of powerful emotion. People who really are angry or frightened or indignant or carried away by jealousy or any other feeling – for there are innumerable forms of emotion, and indeed no one would be able to say just how many – often, after they have brought forward one point, will rush off on a different tack, dropping in other points without rhyme or reason, and then, under the stress of their agitation, they will come right round to their original position. Dragged rapidly in every direction as if by a veering wind, they will keep altering the arrangement of their words and ideas, losing their natural sequence and introducing all sorts of variations. In the same way the best authors will use *hyperbaton* in such a way that imitation approaches the effects of nature. For art is perfect only when it looks like nature, and again, nature hits the mark only when she conceals the art that is within her.[12]

What all this means is that poets and dramatists who have had a rhetorical training may use a figure of speech which is taken to denote a certain emotion in order to signify that emotion in the character who is speaking instinctively. Not all literary rhetoric, therefore, is oratory.

Rhetoric is all about persuading a particular audience by appeals to reason and emotion, and with care taken to consider well who they are, and also what they think of the speaker. It is a contingent art, ready to adapt its resources to changing discourses and occasions. Renaissance literary rhetoric is equally flexible, adapting to the different readers and audiences who transform text into meaning. There were occasional challenges to the predominance of the rhetorical

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model. The Italian critic Ludovico Castelvetro, in his important edition of Aristotle's *Poetics* (1570; second edition 1576), is one who insists that pleasure, and not utility, is the main, even the sole, aim of poetry. The abiding criticisms of rhetoric were echoed by others who nevertheless accepted the validity of the rhetorical model. In Book 1 of *The Advancement of Learning,* Bacon had observed the tendency of words to engross authors in all areas of learning at the expense of subject matter, and Sir William Alexander insists on looking at the substance of literary works and not only 'that external gorgeousness, consisting in the choice or placing of words, as if it would bribe the ear to corrupt the judgement' (p. 298).

But most were happy to align rhetoric with moral utility, as the humanist education had trained them to do. Ann Moss comments:

> The underlying assumption that most of literature is to be classed as epideictic rhetoric and, therefore, by definition, devoted to praise or censure, together with the mentality produced by the commonplace book and its morally based classification system, ensured that pupils trained to read rhetorically would be programmed to read morally. The art of combining rhetoric and rectitude could be seen as integral to the range of expertise which literary critics were beginning to claim as theirs alone.[13]

In striving to produce orators, the humanist education presented its students with many ways in which they could conceive of literature as rhetorical. Literature could be rhetoric: a poem of praise was pure epideictic. Literature could also contain rhetoric on the large scale – a set-piece oration in a play, for instance – and on the smallest – a good example of a figure of speech. Literary theorists since Horace had taken over the tripartite aim of rhetoric – to teach, delight, and move – and applied it to imaginative literature. So the aims of a work of poetry, drama or prose fiction could be conceived of rhetorically, as the persuasion of an audience to change its view or outlook. In light of the prevalence of rhetorical ways of thinking about and analysing language and literature, it is no surprise that when someone who had been through the humanist curriculum came to write imaginative literature, the result should admit of rhetorical analysis and engage with the idea of rhetoric in many ways and on many levels. And it is no surprise that Renaissance literary criticism should be so dominated by the rhetorical model, both in its theories and in its methods of argument.

MATTER AND WORDS: GENRE, DECORUM, RHETORIC, VERSIFICATION

When Sidney digresses to discuss the state of literature in England he complains about the low levels of attainment on two fronts, and divides his subsequent treatment according to these same 'two principal parts, matter to be expressed by words and words to express the matter' (p. 44). The distinction between matter (*res*) and words (*verba*) may seem artificial – it is especially the case in poetic language that what is said cannot always be separated from how it is said. But it is a distinction which imparts clarity to the theory of literary composition, and allows Sidney successively to consider, as we will here, genre and decorum under *matter,* and rhetorical *elocutio* and versification under *words.*

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Genre and Decorum

The classification of literature by kind is another example of the primacy of Plato's ideal forms in Western thought. Plato made a simple distinction on the basis of the method of representation: either the voice of the actor or narrator merges with that of the character, as in plays and direct speech, or the voice of the author is the only one represented directly, as in narrative and reported speech; a mixture of these two sorts of representation gave a third kind, part narrative, part direct speech, instanced by Homer. In the *Poetics* Aristotle combined these factors with others – including the metre or metres used and the kinds of things represented – in order to define tragedy and epic generically. In the meantime names for kinds of poem proliferated in Greek practice; some were named by metre, as in the iambic, and others by occasion or content, as in the marriage poem or *epithalamion.* Horace's *Ars poetica* had the greatest influence on subsequent literary criticism, and followed from the work of the Alexandrian scholars whose classifications of literature by kind and merit determined which works of which ancient authors were allowed to survive through manuscript copying. Horace offers an array of kinds of literature, including epic, tragedy, comedy, lyric, pastoral, satire, elegy, and epigram and in each case gives the rules or guidelines of good practice as he saw them. By choosing a kind of literature an author embraced expectations as to the sort of matter it would contain, and certain fundamental conventions for its arrangement and style. The style of poetry fit for tragedy, for example, was not to be used in comedy; plays should have five acts and any bloodiness should be kept offstage; an epic should begin *in medias res.*

Until the eighteenth century the theory of genre is always delivered prescriptively rather than descriptively, but this does not mean that it only concerns authors and cannot be applied by readers to texts. Aristotle's prescriptions, after all, had been based squarely on the practices of past tragedians, and took Sophocles' *Oedipus rex* as the ideal. Generic conventions offer readers the instruments with which to evaluate works of literature, but in the Renaissance such evaluation was not in the first instance inflexible or doctrinaire. Only with the rise of neoclassical criticism, the belated progeny of Aristotle's rediscovered *Poetics,* did rule-based criticism come to dominate. The best-known example is the doctrine of the dramatic unities of time, place, and action – the laws which stated that the events in a play should span no more than a day, should occur in one place, and should comprise a single action or chain of events. Outlined in Castelvetro's 1570 edition of the *Poetics,* the unities were recommended by Sidney and acknowledged by subsequent writers, but only came to dominate critical discourse in the later seventeenth century under the influence of the more rigorous French. For the committed neoclassical critic, Shakespeare simply wouldn't do, and only plays written strictly according to the unities were acceptable. When Shakespeare himself was writing, the attitude to rules was more relaxed, and this contributes to the distinctive and varied achievement of late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century English literature. Shakespeare knew what the unities were, and that Jonson liked to observe them. But he could enjoy flouting them in *The Winter's Tale* (*c.*1611) as much as he could enjoy observing them in *The Tempest* (*c.*1611). Literature is not in this period the slave

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of theory, but a critical reader of it: literature and criticism exist in a state of fruitful symbiosis.

It was only in the sixteenth century that the triad of the epic, dramatic and lyric genres was firmly established, but from the start it struggled to contain those kinds of poetry which derived not from classical models but from medieval ones, and especially those mixed kinds which combined elements from both sources. So at the same time as generic criticism sought to combine Horace and Aristotle to develop a viable theory of genre, it had to account for tragicomedy, for works which mixed prose and verse, and for the heroic poem, with its combination of elements from classical epic and medieval romance. Sidney's own *Arcadia* is a heroic poem in prose with verse elements, an epic romance in five books or acts with a dramatic tragicomic plot structure, and direct influences from Homer and Virgil as well as classical drama, the Greek prose romance, the medieval chivalric romance, the sixteenth-century heroic poem, the Renaissance prose romance, classical pastoral poetry and the Renaissance pastoral romance. Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* offers an even more bewildering blend. In *The Defence of Poesy,* Sidney's simple argument about such brilliant generic mixing is that 'if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful' (p. 25). And yet such mixtures only hold together because of the internal tension of each separate genre. Sidney and Spenser did not wish to write without generic convention, but to be able to play with it. And the reader's job is to know what is going on.

The most common appeal in judgements of generic correctness is to the principle of decorum or, in Puttenham's term, decency – to what is suitable or fitting. Each genre had its decorum – so that a one-liner would be a breach of decorum in a tragedy, and a grave moral discourse not fitting in a comedy. And the principle could also judge whether the language of a poem or play was suitable to the conventions of the metre or style employed. But decorum is invoked most insistently in relation to people: what is fitting behaviour in a certain kind of writing for a certain kind of person – a king, a general, a shopkeeper, a shepherd – and how they should be represented as speaking. And it always related to contemporary social order. An author might be criticized for failing to elevate the language of regal figures above that of their servants, or for allowing those servants to speak the same language as their masters. Both classical and Renaissance cultures shared rigid class systems which gave an edge to the discourse of decorum. In the period of the English Renaissance the social hierarchy was bolstered by sumptuary laws which determined what each rank was entitled or obliged to wear. To make a shepherd speak as well as a knight – an accusation wrongly levelled by Jonson at Sidney – was therefore a sort of stylistic crime, an anarchistic blow struck against a necessary social order.[14]

Rhetoric

Book I of Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* is a history of poetry at the same time as an effort to prescribe the conventions of the different genres; the result is that its prescriptions seem more than normally anachronistic. Sidney's theory is conceived primarily in terms of the heroic poem, and specific treatment of individual genres is only offered in passing, when Sidney defends poetry by its parts, and when he turns to assess the state of English literature. Daniel is even

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less concerned with generic questions. For many English Renaissance critics, Horace was too well-known to need repeating, and said all that was needed. They were far more concerned about the theory and practice of words than that of matter. As we have seen, rhetorical *elocutio,* the stage of composition which dressed ideas in words, was the focus of literary criticism in the rhetorical tradition. Puttenham's Book 3 is about the use in poetry not of rhetoric in general, but of *elocutio* in particular. Again, Abraham Fraunce's *The Arcadian Rhetoric* (1588), influenced by Ramus' restriction of rhetoric to only *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio,* offered a handbook of these two stages with illustrations from Homer, Virgil, Du Bartas (French), Tasso (Italian), Boscán (Spanish), and Sidney, as yet available only in manuscript. And he was followed by John Hoskyns, whose manuscript *Directions for Speech and Style* (*c.*1599) was based almost exclusively on examples from Sidney's *Arcadia,* and confirmed the strong association between the best new writing and a firm grasp of *elocutio.*

From the theory of *elocutio* come many of the critical standards which writers aimed at and readers could apply. Rhetoric distinguished types of style – most commonly the grand, middle, and low or plain, but also intermediate styles between each of these. Competing models might offer not three but four styles, as in the *On Style* of the Greek critic Demetrius, which dealt with the plain, the grand, the elegant, and the forceful styles. In developing their theories of style Renaissance critics absorbed suggestions that the three main styles were respectively best suited to moving, delighting, and teaching. A style, especially in prose, might be labelled for the author whose model the writer followed – Ciceronian, Senecan or Tacitean. Relatedly, rhetoric had amassed a set of labels for particular stylistic virtues, usually arranged into sets and subsets. These included such virtues as purity, clarity, correctness (in relation to decorum), grandeur, rapidity, sincerity, solemnity, vehemence, abundance, sweetness and simplicity. At its simplest a style was about the amplitude of syntactic units (from small to large), about the types of rhetorical figures deemed suitable (mostly schemes, mostly tropes, a middle course), and about the amount of variety in the deployment of different kinds of sentence shape or figure. The efforts of writers to form their own styles on the best models and to deploy them correctly were met by the ability of readers to appreciate writing in terms of the various styles and virtues.

Renaissance prose modelled itself in theory and practice on classical example, and notably in its adoption of the classical model of the rhetorical period. The period, or periodic sentence, is all about rhythm, and its theory is a theory of rhythm rather than of meaning. The theorists even treated the use of verse rhythms in prose, a practice which was highly recommended, especially at climactic moments. Punctuation in the periodic sentence is also about distinguishing units of rhythm rather than dependent or independent units of sense (as we now use it). It is because of these differences that Renaissance prose can be hard to follow, that in editions in the original spelling and punctuation that punctuation may be somewhat perplexing, and that in editions in modernized punctuation – like this one – that punctuation may not always seem quite to work. The period is a long sentence made up of various parts, all clearly related to each other syntactically; these parts will balance each other, highlighting antithesis as

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well as producing a satisfying rhythm and internal logic. 'Suspended syntax' is a name often given to this style, since it tends to build towards a conclusion which is held in suspense, and it is only at the conclusion that the relations of the many interdependent parts become clear. The word 'period' means a circuit, and therefore signifies a completed, measured circle of meaning. The period comprises two other units of rhythm: the smallest is called the comma, and the intermediate unit is called the colon. Marks of punctuation borrowed the terms for these units and sometimes coincide with them: what we call a full stop is still in American English called a 'period'.

The opening sentences in this edition provide a good example of the periodic style. In the following quotations, the original punctuation has been preserved; it is not perfect even in its own terms, but since it marks units of rhythm fairly well, it is instructive:

> When the right virtuous Edward Wotton and I, were at the Emperor's court together, we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship of John Pietro Pugliano, one that with great commendation had the place of an esquire in his stable: and he according to the fertileness of the Italian wit, did not only afford us the demonstration of his practice, but sought to enrich our minds with the contemplations therein, which he thought most precious.

So far we have one period ending at the full stop; it comprises two *cola* divided by the colon, and each colon is made up of four *commata,* marked by the commas, so that each half of the sentence is rhythmically balanced. Sidney continues:

> But with none I remember mine ears were at any time more loaden, than when (either angered with slow payment, or moved with our learner-like admiration) he exercised his speech in the praise of his faculty. He said soldiers were the noblest estate of mankind, and horsemen the noblest of soldiers. He said they were the masters of war, and ornaments of peace, speedy goers and strong abiders, triumphers both in camps and courts: nay to so unbelieved a point he proceeded, as that no earthly thing bred such wonder to a prince, as to be a good horseman.

Here Sidney's middle style employs various schemes, including the parallel syntax of *isocolon* ('He said… He said…') and the mirror structure of *chiasmus* ('soldiers… noblest… noblest… soldiers'). And we notice a general tendency to balance and antithesis at the smallest and largest levels, proceeding by pairs contrasted or complemented.

Elocutio gives us the balanced periodic style, and the possibility of its antithesis. It gives us the patterning of words through rhetorical schemes. And it gives us the transformations or turns in words and their meanings through tropes. In each case literary effect is constructed according to a model, and that model is established in relation to accepted norms – how people speak in particular everyday situations, what word order is normal and expected, what meanings and usages raise no eyebrows. If anything is typical of the Renaissance literary mentality, it is this habit of conceiving of patterns and transformations in relation to models, norms, and conventions. The simplest way to see this is to think of the plots of Shakespeare's plays as sentences, and to observe how they too proceed through

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the embracing or rejecting of models and conventions, through balanced, antithetical construction, through stylized patternings of subplot and mirrored characters, through transformations and turns. The *elocutio* of Puttenham's Book 3 gives us much more than the tools with which to analyse particular lines and stanzas of verse.

Versification

The other aspect of words given special prominence by English Renaissance critics was their arrangement in verse. And it was because this was an area in which classical models could not be converted into English straightforwardly that a debate developed which focused, as no other area of literary criticism was able to, the issue of dependence on the ancients versus independence from them. Old English verse had been accentual in nature, its lines regulated by patterns of accents but with variable syllable counts; the accents were hammered home by alliteration. Since the Norman invasion English language and literature had developed in close proximity to French, and although some writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries tried to revive the old alliterative and accentual verse, the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer and his successors was not unlike French medieval verse, which counted syllables rather than accents. In the sixteenth century, as today, there were different opinions about the line Chaucer wrote. Did the line used in *Troilus and Criseyde* (written c.1385) and *The Canterbury Tales* (written in the 1380s and 1390s) have a fixed number of syllables, obscured by changes in pronunciation? Did it have four stresses in each line, as a vestige of the Old English alliterative verse, or did it have five, as a forerunner of the Elizabethan pentameter? The line written by Sir Thomas Wyatt in the early sixteenth century is not substantially different, and it is only with the Earl of Surrey and some of his late-Henrician contemporaries that the modern system emerges clearly. In Surrey, as in the verse of George Gascoigne, the line is fixed in respect both of syllable count and of accentual pattern, and we have true accentual-syllabic verse. That the rules had evolved was not registered by all, and Puttenham, for one, remains confused. But the future belonged to the accentual-syllabic system.

At the same time, in the middle of the sixteenth century, scholar poets were attempting to rethink English versification far more radically. The impulse was humanist and, in its English form, Protestant. Our verse, like other European poetry, was felt to be most characterized by its use of rhyme, and rhyme was seen as a monkish corruption of Latin verse belonging to the Dark Ages. Roger Ascham in *The Schoolmaster* (1570), was one of the first openly to criticize 'our rude beggarly rhyming, brought first into Italy by Goths and Huns, when all good verse and all good learning too were destroyed by them, and after carried into France and Germany, and at last received into England by men of excellent wit indeed, but of small learning and less judgement in that behalf'.[15] But he was only following similar movements in other European countries in suggesting that it might be better to write verses in the vernacular according to the quantitative system of the Greeks and Romans. Quantitative poetry, musical in origin, is regulated neither by syllable count nor by accent, but by patterning syllables according to their length. Either naturally or by the application of elaborate rules,

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syllables would be designated long or short; a long syllable took twice as long to say as a short one. Lines of quantitative verse were built of distinct feet, units of two or more syllables either long or short. From the iamb (short-long), for example, could be composed an iambic line of various lengths, and some metres also allowed for combinations of feet and substitutions of one foot for another. The heroic line of Homer and Virgil, seen as the pinnacle of the classical achievement, was the dactylic hexameter. Of its six feet, the penultimate had to be a dactyl (long-short-short), and the final foot a spondee (long-long), but the other four could be either, making it a metre of varied and flexible rhythm.

The most important experiments with the classical system were headed by Sidney in the late 1570s and early 1580s, and are famously discussed in a printed exchange of letters between the poet Edmund Spenser and his friend Gabriel Harvey, a Cambridge academic. Their discussions are fairly technical, concerning such vexed questions as whether ordinary pronunciation or artificial rules are the best guide to quantity – if the rules tell us that the second syllable of 'carpenter' is long, does it matter how we pronounce it? And Spenser's quantitative poetry does him little credit. In Sidney's hands, though, the quantitative system becomes a vehicle which at its best introduces a completely new sound into English verse. Literary history tends to put these experiments down as a misguided attempt to make a major road out of a dead end. But it is important to notice that they coincide exactly with the period in which the rules and conventions of the accentual-syllabic system were being settled, and it is equally important to recognize that this is no coincidence.

We can look at an example of the iambic pentameter of George Gascoigne, the author of *Certain Notes of Instruction*:

> I smile sometimes, although my grief be great,
> To hear and see these lovers paint their pain;
> And how they can in pleasant rhymes repeat
> The passing pangs, which they in fancies feign.
> But if I had such skill to frame a verse,
> I could more pain than all their pangs rehearse.
> ('Gascoigne's Passion', ll. *1–6*)

The problem with this kind of poetry, as Sidney realized, is that it has no movement apart from what can be described metrically – every unit of sense, like every line, is composed of five regular iambic feet. If we were to pretend that this was prose, it would not sound any different, and the iambic pattern is beaten out by an alliterative stamping of feet. What Gascoigne and his contemporaries had achieved was the establishing beyond any doubt of the accentual-syllabic system. Sidney's response was twofold. On the one hand to see what would happen if the English language were to have other metrical systems imposed on it. And on the other hand to grant the accentual-syllabic system the status of a set of abstract rules to which any line of verse must confirm absolutely, but could confirm as quietly as it wished. The significance of the second response is especially lasting. Sidney recognized that the metrical system could be conceptualized independently of the words and phrases which realize it in verse. It became abstract, a set of rules to which a line of verse must conform rather than a way

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each line must sound. It could then be stretched, put under pressure, realized very literally in some lines and only just in others; and always for effect. There are many signs of this new way of thinking about metre in Sidney's poetry. One is that a syllable does not have to be thumped to be stressed – it just needs to bear more stress than its neighbour. So as a line is pronounced there will be all kinds of fluent and shifting emphases, rather than a binary pattern of ons and offs, heavy and light syllables. But the most obvious sign of a new flexibility is the reversed foot, and the most common example of that is the reversed first foot, inverting the stress pattern of the first two syllables, so that the line begins with a stressed syllable. Once the rules become abstract it is possible to manipulate the imagined pattern, by reaching in and turning the first, or the third, or the fourth foot. The line still conforms to the rule within the dispensation of this new licence. Examples of all these effects can be seen in the sestet of *Astrophil and Stella,* 47:

> Virtue, awake: beauty but beauty is;
>   I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
> Leave following that, which it is gain to miss.
>   Let her go. Soft, but here she comes. Go to,
> Unkind, I love you not—: O me, that eye
> Doth make my heart give to my tongue the lie.

These developments were helped along by the experiments of Sidney and his contemporaries with the quantitative system. It seems to have been the case that the Latin verses on which schoolboys were brought up were recited according to an accepted Anglicized pronunciation, and not in the musical way which would demonstrate each syllable's quantity audibly. It is likely that English verses in classical metres were treated similarly: once a word had been bound into the quantitative pattern it was free to be pronounced as it would be in ordinary speech. The poems which resulted were not, therefore, intended to be chanted in a strict way, and, as in the new accentual-syllabic poems, English phraseology could be put in tension with a different metrical pattern. It is possible to argue, in fact, that Sidney's quantitative experiments taught him to separate metre and rhythm in the first place. The sound patterns and rhythms which result are strikingly new. We may look at a brief example, and observe how Sidney gives order by the use of rhetorical schemes which pattern his phrases in parallel – the broad term for such parallel constructions is *isocolon*; when we have phrases beginning with the same word we call it *anaphora*; when phrases end in the same way, we have *epistrophe*; when they do both, we have *symploce.* All of these devices are used here as a way of patterning the phrases in the absence of rhyme. The metrical pattern in each line is dactyl (long-short-short), trochee (long-short), spondee (long-long):

> For though my sense befrom me,
> And I be dead who want sense,
> Yet do we both live in you.
>
> Turnèd anew by your means,
> Unto the flower that ay turns,

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As you, alas, my Sun, bends:

Thus do I fall to rise thus,
Thus do I die to live thus,
Changed to a change, I change not.

Thus may I not be from you,
Thus be my senses on you,
Thus what I think is of you,
Thus what I seek is in you:
All what I am, it is you.
(Certain Sonnets, 25, ll. 21–34)

The classical experiments encouraged poets to think about other ways of patterning their lines, and the rhetorical figures treated by Puttenham became increasingly common in both kinds of verse. The experiments also taught poets to view the accentual-syllabic system in terms of feet, with stress or its lack substituted for length and shortness respectively. They taught them to separate rhythm and metre, enabling the intonations and rhythms of speech to find their way into verse. And they encouraged them to do without rhyme on occasion. Arguably, and in spite of the important earlier precedents of Surrey and Thomas Norton's and Thomas Sackville's tragedy *Gorboduc* (*c*.1561) in introducing blank verse to epic and drama, the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton would not have been possible without this period of experimentation and rapid evolution.

At the same time, a third, parallel, area of activity saw Sidney and others learning from Continental poetry, experimenting with the old fixed forms like the sestina, imitating such complex forms as the Petrarchan *canzone,* translating Continental poems or the words of songs in such a way as to reproduce the original verse form, and imitating particular features of French and Italian versification. This activity brings new materials – images, conceits, arguments, personae – into English verse, and brings such features as the trochaic line and the feminine ending into English prosody. Lyric poetry especially was greatly enriched by this less contentious area of experiment.

SIDNEY, PUTTENHAM, DANIEL

Sidney

Sir Philip Sidney was born in 1554 and died in 1586. Knighted in 1583 only so that he could stand proxy for a foreign prince in a courtly ceremony, the man who for most of his career was Mr Philip Sidney could nevertheless claim aristocratic descent. His mother was the daughter of the Duke of Northumberland, and for most of his life Sidney was the heir to her two brothers, the Earl of Warwick and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Queen Elizabeth's first and most lasting favourite. And his family was at the centre of Elizabethan politics: Sidney's father, at various points in time, ran both Ireland and Wales for the Queen. Sidney was therefore brought up for a significant career at court, and great things came to be expected of the talented and charismatic young man who in 1572, after studying

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at Shrewsbury School and Christ Church, Oxford, was packed off on a three-year grand tour of the Continent. This period gave him a network of Protestant correspondents in France, Germany, and the Low Countries, and helped to form his internationalist outlook on politics and culture. It also took him to Italy, the seat of the Renaissance. In the years that followed the Queen granted Sidney a few diplomatic duties, but although he figured prominently in court entertainments and tilts, preferment was slower to come Sidney's way than he felt he deserved. He may have ruined his chances of advancement in 1579 by writing a letter to Elizabeth I in which, speaking for a faction headed by his uncle Leicester, he set out the reasons why she should not marry the French Duke of Alençon. His literary writings, which are assumed to date from 1577 onwards, are usually presented, with his encouragement, as the fruits of enforced idleness. We should not be misled. *The Defence of Poesy* shows that Sidney had real ambitions for the future of English literature; his patronage of other writers, including Spenser, shows that he would back up his convictions with his limited financial resources; and his own works show him exploring every kind of writing and taking English literature forward by leaps and bounds. His successors saw him as their master in prose style and versification, and in the sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* and the prose romance *Arcadia* they found two works which were to have an enormous impact on subsequent writing.

Sidney's works remained in manuscript during his lifetime, although whilst the *Arcadia* seems to have circulated fairly freely, *Astrophil and Stella* and *The Defence of Poesy* were probably read by fewer people. When he died in the Low Countries in 1586, as one of the leaders of the English force sent to help the Dutch Protestants resist Catholic Spain, he was known principally as a promising courtier and a generous patron. He was given, in early 1587, an elaborate funeral in St Paul's Cathedral, preceded by a massive procession through London. Though cynics point out that this might have helped to distract a querulous nation after the execution of Mary Queen of Scots eight days earlier, it also speaks for the value put on him by those friends and family he left behind. And it was friends and family who eventually took charge of printing his literary remains. Bounced into action by the plan of a London printer to put out an unauthorized edition, Sidney's close friend Fulke Greville was behind the printing in 1590 of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia,* the prose romance named for Sidney's sister. Sidney had completed the work in around 1580 and had subsequently undertaken a large-scale revision of it, each of the first three books more than doubling in size. But he left the work unfinished, in the middle of an extended epic episode which had taken the work far away from its framework of a pastoral romance with chivalric inset tales and verse interludes. It was this unfinished revision which Greville decided to have printed, and this authorized text was followed straightaway, in 1591, by an unauthorized printing of Sidney's sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella.* At this point Sidney's sister took over, and in 1593, at her instigation, appeared an edition of the *Arcadia* with an ending tacked on from the original version. This was followed in 1595 by *The Defence of Poesy,* beaten to the shops by a pirated version entitled *An Apology for Poetry,* which was subsequently withdrawn. In 1598 all three works were gathered together, along with an early courtly entertainment and a selection of poems called *Certain Sonnets,* in an edition of the *Arcadia* which was in effect Sidney's collected works. This book was

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reprinted frequently in the subsequent century, proving a far bigger seller than the works of Shakespeare, Jonson, Spenser or Donne.

Other Englishmen had written works of criticism in Latin: important precursors are an oration in praise of poetry ascribed to Henry Dethick and John Rainolds (*c.*1572), and Richard Wills' *De re poetica* ('On Poetry', 1573). But the *Defence* is the first attempt at sustained literary criticism in English, and remains one of the very best. The editor of *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden* judges that 'If we could have but one sixteenth-century book on poetry, it should be that of Sidney'.[16] Sidney can stand for all the rest – a score of significant works of French, Italian, and neo-Latin criticism – because he has absorbed and learned from them. Ideas resembling his theories can be found in such works, to the extent that there is very little in Sidney's *Defence* which is truly original. But it gives those ideas a force, clarity, and cohesion which they had lacked in the more pedantic and expansive treatises of the Continental critics. Why did Sidney write it? There are different ways of answering this question. A controversy was raging in England in the late 1570s and early 1580s, as Puritans attacked all manner of games and pastimes, and especially the theatre, which they saw as a danger to public morals, both for the subject matter represented, and because of the sorts of things which happen when large numbers of people are gathered together for purposes other than worship. Stephen Gosson had dedicated one such Puritan attack, *The School of Abuse,* to Sidney in 1579 and, Spenser tells his friend Harvey, 'was for his labour scorned, if at least it be in the goodness of that nature to scorn'.[17] Thomas Lodge replied to Gosson, and Gosson wrote several subsequent works; other, often anonymous, authors joined in on either side. The works have little to say about literature, and are not represented in this edition. The controversy may have encouraged Sidney to gather his thoughts about literature, but he says little about drama, nothing about the stage, and only engages generally with the argument that poetry is 'the nurse of abuse' in the section in which he refutes well-known charges. If the *Defence* sets out to answer anyone, it is Plato.

Perhaps a better answer is that Sidney was genuinely interested in the theory of literature and in the prospects for English literature. This certainly tallies with his efforts in his other writings, and even fifteen years after it had been written, the impact of the printed *Defence* was more positive than negative: it was valued less as a defence than as a manifesto. Sidney typically frustrates attempts to understand his motives, however. He himself calls the work 'this ink-wasting toy of mine' at its close, and undercuts it at the opening by comparing it to the self-interested praise of horsemanship of his riding instructor. The irony of the cleverest writers in this edition is a joy, but it muddies the waters no end. We might compare Sidney to Harington, who tells us in the preface to his English version of Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* (1591), that when translating an episode in which the hero is rebuked by an enchantress in the form of his tutor:

> straight I began to think that my tutor, a grave and learned man, and one of a very austere life, might say to me in like sort, 'Was it for this that I read Aristotle and Plato to you, and instructed you so carefully both in Greek and Latin, to have you now become a translator of Italian toys?' But while I thought thus, I was aware that it was no toy that could put such an honest and serious consideration into my mind.[18]

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The resort to irony and paradox involves criticism in the game with meaning which is literature. The treatises which should tell us how to interpret must themselves be interpreted. We are further confused if we remember that Sidney's *Defence* is a piece of rhetoric. Modelled closely on the form of the classical oration, it is both a speech for the defence in a court of philosophical law and an epideictic praise of poetry. Even when rhetorical theory attempts to insist that the good orator must be a good man and must believe what he says, it makes clear enough that the important thing is not to believe but to be believed: the job of persuasion does not require conviction, only the ability to be convincing. Sidney may therefore be more intent on winning the argument than on building a viable literary theory, and this aspect certainly accounts for a common experience: the *Defence* will carry you along with it, charm you into submission, and have you reaching for superlatives, but you will not be able to recount its arguments afterwards.

A wide range of classical and modern works got Sidney thinking about literary theory. He is familiar with Plato's dialogues, including the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*; he has read Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*; like most of his contemporaries he knows Horace's *Ars poetica* backwards. He is unlikely to have read Longinus' *On the Sublime,* a work which made little impact before the later seventeenth century, but he has read the rhetoric books of Cicero and, probably, Quintilian, and Plutarch's influential essay on 'How the Young Man Ought to Study Poetry'. Claims are often made for particular affinities to various medieval and Renaissance critics, philosophers, and theologians, but it seems most likely that Sidney absorbed much current and recent thinking informally, in conversation or at second hand. It is possible that he read, or dipped into, recent works of criticism in Italian by Minturno, Castelvetro, Mazzoni, Tasso, and others, and it is certain that he had some familiarity with the general shape of literary practice and theory in France and Spain. But particular modern sources have proved hard to establish. The exception is the lengthy Latin treatise *Poetices libri septem* ('Seven Books on Poetics') of 1561, written by the Frenchman Julius Caesar Scaliger. Even here, though, Sidney's attention is highly selective, and he is not put off by Scaliger's ability to ignore all literature not written in Greek or Latin. Sidney is no philosopher, and, for all his impressive scholarship, no scholar. His interest is not so much in what others say as in what their writings can help him to think; he applies his poet's imagination to the task of assembling a single edifice from the assorted fragments of previous writers, and what he produces is entirely his own.

Sidney is notably ahead of his time in England in his careful use of Aristotle's *Poetics*; that his application of it was less rigid than was common in the later seventeenth century further complicates the picture. Here again, in a way, he is ahead of the game – he can see that much is to be learned from Aristotle, but he absorbs rather than reflects this learning in his development of the literary theory presented in the *Defence* and in his writing of, for instance, the *Arcadia.* Those familiar with the cultural montages and patchworks of postmodernism will enjoy this characteristically Elizabethan approach to the writings of the past. All sources and influences can be combined; no writer is so grand that they may not be twisted beyond recognition, taken out of context, or merged into a hybrid with

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another. Sidney's theory can reconcile Plato and Aristotle because it comes naturally to him to think round categories. And his fiction can merge Homer, Virgil, the *Poetics,* the *Ars poetica,* Heliodorus, Ariosto, the popular romance, Montemayor and many more because writing and reading is more interesting that way.

The Defence of Poesy is a defence of imaginative literature. Sidney follows Aristotle in insisting that the origin of 'poesy' and 'poetry' from the Greek word for 'making' means that poetry signifies the making of fictions, and not the use of verse. Histories in verse may not be poems; prose romances are. Sidney's own *Arcadia, a* prose romance with verse interludes, is therefore a poem throughout, and its author a poet. This extension of the key term is important, for it allows us to read Sidney's theory both sideways, as applying to all Renaissance literature, and forwards, as applying equally to eighteenth-century novels or twenty-first-century films. At the work's centre stands a simple definition, sharing elements with other such definitions from rhetorical and literary treatises, but adding a twist of Sidney's own: 'Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word *mimēsis,* that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture – with this end: to teach and delight' (p. 10). Three elements make up this definition. The first is the Aristotelian version of imitation as the representation of an action according to naturalistic principles of necessity and probability. The second element is the rhetorical and Horatian goal of teaching and delighting. The third element, introduced with Sidney's characteristic wordplay, is the metaphor of the speaking picture. The comparison of literature to painting goes back via Plutarch and Horace to the early Greek poet Simonides' observation that painting is silent poetry and poetry talking painting. Horace, relatedly, observes that things seen impress the imagination more than things spoken, and a parallel rhetorical tradition emphasizes appeals to the mind's eye through vivid description (the figure of *enargeia).* Sidney also draws on recent developments in the theory of painting as well as on the prevalence of visual metaphors in the philosophy of understanding. But that the 'speaking picture' of fiction appears to be the link between the author's act of representation and the teaching and delighting of the reader is an original touch. It is also far from straightforward. Aristotle had insisted that fiction imitates an action first of all, and characters only as a consequence – plot is the soul of the literary work. But in view of Sidney's emphasis later in the *Defence* on exemplary characters or 'images', we may be inclined to take the speaking picture not as an image of the plot but as a portrait of an exemplary character. This, however, is to simplify Sidney's point. The sum of what the poem represents is likened to a picture, and because language is its medium it has a voice. If we think of portraits this is only to engage the strand of metaphors which sees a whole work as an individual with a voice and a body – a surrogate for the work's author.

Sidney gives an ideal account of poetry. He speaks 'of the art and not of the artificer' (p. 20). If criticisms can be levelled at that art because of particular poems and poets, we should 'not say that poetry abuseth man's wit, but that man's wit abuseth poetry' (p. 35). And it is an ideal account of an idealizing poetry. In one of the most famous passages in the *Defence,* Sidney likens the work

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of the poet to that of nature (pp. 8–9). All other forms of learning are based on nature; only poetry can create its own world. He introduces this section by telling us that those other arts are 'actors and players, as it were, of what nature will have set forth' (p. 8). To 'set forth' is to write, express or publish: Sidney subtly invokes the common image of the book of nature (in this case as a dramatic text) to align creation with writing even before he compares the poet to nature. He goes on: 'Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done, neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely: her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden' (p. 9). Sidney's argument comes to depend on the ability of poetry not to differ from nature but to exceed it, and this is the clearest example of how his theory diverges, for its own purposes, from most practice: Sidney's ideal poetry does not only represent Aristotelian universals, but things and characters 'better than nature bringeth forth' (p. 8), both 'what may be and should be' (p. 11). Sidney goes on to borrow from the Neoplatonic response to Plato's critique of imitation. The poet works by forming an '*idea* or fore-conceit of the work', and it is this Platonic ideal form which he imitates. The idea as form rather than substance is also what is impressed on the mind of the receptive reader. Sidney even says that the skill of the poet lies in the making of the idea, not the work itself, and the proof of that skill not in the work but in the work's ability to transform its reader: 'not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him' (p. 9). Imitation as *mimesis* and imitation as readerly emulation are bridged by the power of the authorial idea.

Since the authority of imaginative literature is made to depend on its ability to teach, rather than only to give pleasure or impress critics, Sidney must set it beside the other disciplines – philosophy and history. Sidney read philosophy and was deeply attached to the study of history, but for the purposes of his argument he sacrifices poetry's two rivals. Philosophy gives only precepts, whereas poetry can exemplify those precepts and give the reader a lifelike instance of the beautiful and the good. History is bound by what is supposed to have happened, so its characters will be a mixture of good and bad, and its events lacking in reason and coherence; if the historian is to teach he must poetically impose order and pattern on his materials. What is more, poetry is unique in having the power to move its readers both 'with desire to be taught' and 'to do that which it doth teach' (p. 22). Sidney remembers the third element of the rhetorical triad, submerged both in Horace and in his own central definition, and makes moving the clinching argument. In its ideal form poetry is thoroughly rhetorical, concerned with transforming individuals and the world around it, teaching not what to think but what to do, and inspiring the reader with a desire to act accordingly.

Sidney did not have to take his arguments this far. Plutarch, in his essay on 'How the Young Man Ought to Study Poetry', which Sidney studied closely, insists that poetry 'is an imitation of the lives and manners of men, who are not perfect, pure, and irreproachable, but involved in passions, false opinions, and ignorance'.[19] Homer's heroes are mixtures of virtue and vice, like real people, and

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the reader must learn to discriminate bad from good. This argument, though, would let history back into the reckoning, and so Sidney, relying heavily on a few good characters (Cyrus and Aeneas foremost), sticks to his idealist guns. He also almost completely ignores allegory, a topic covered in depth in Harington's *Apology* and central to any reading of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene.* Sidney would have seen it as a dated medieval system which detracts from the rhetorical purpose and responsibility of the author by making it possible to read a wholesome moral into any story; his silence, though, has not stopped critics from making allegories of his own literary works. Any lingering feeling that Sidney's rhetorical fiction may not be justified and that the representation of realities may be preferable is extinguished brilliantly in the section in which Sidney disposes of the charge that poets are liars. All other forms of learning deal in affirmations, and those affirmations are often found to be untrue: 'Now, for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth, for, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false' (p. 34). Historians lie in trying to tell the truth; the poet only deals in ideals and so can concentrate on the higher truths which are the province of the philosopher. Fiction is not only justified and defended; it is transformed into the best form of knowledge and means of learning, the surest route to virtue.

At times Sidney seems to present poetry as an irresistible force, just as the orators do rhetoric, as a perfect mechanism which delights, moves, and teaches a passive reader; the reader is then compared to a child, tricked into taking the sugar-coated pill. But ultimately Sidney follows Plutarch in requiring activity from the reader – he puts meaning in the reader's hands. The feigned Cyrus, the perfect image of virtue created by the poet, can only 'make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him' (p. 9). The reader must ask questions, must want to learn both the why and the how. This concession offers us a slender bridge between Sidney's theory and his practice. His *Arcadia* is stocked with characters whose evident vices we are meant to laugh at and shun; and its central characters, two princes and two princesses, are equipped with most of the virtues Sidney's theory would have us be moved to emulate. But the princes especially, like the Homeric heroes Plutarch refers to, have their bad sides too: they make mistakes, and are driven to unjustifiable actions by their passions. They are human. Sidney's model only holds if we accept that in practice it requires more effort from the reader. The same can be said of that other great Elizabethan monument, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene.* The theory of poetry is simple. But poetry itself will always break theoretical models into pieces, turn those pieces into metaphors, look at them this way and that, and find a way of transforming them into something new and unexpected. The *Arcadia* is not a sixteenth-century *Aeneid,* but Sidney still intends that it will not only delight (as it certainly does) but that it will also transform its readers – that it will make them wiser and better and inspire them to act accordingly.

Puttenham

George Puttenham was born in around 1529 and died in 1590 or 1591. His maternal uncle was Sir Thomas Elyot, author of *The Book Named The Governor* (1531). Puttenham studied at Christ's College, Cambridge from 1546, may also

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have studied at Oxford, entered the Middle Temple in 1556, and spent time on the Continent after this date and probably before. Connected by birth or marriage to various significant courtiers, most of his writings seem to have had a court focus or occasion, although he appears never to have achieved any notable court position. He names many now lost works, including a poem to Edward VI, a treatise on decorum, a work on the history of English, a comedy *Gynecocratia* ('The Rule of Women'), an Arthurian verse romance, and a probably allegorical cycle of love poems illustrating rhetorical figures. Two other works survive in manuscript: a treatise defending Elizabeth I's treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots, and *Partheniads* (*c.* 579–82), a series of poems in praise of Elizabeth I. The Queen granted him £1,000 in 1588 for his 'good, true, faithful, and acceptable service', and it was to Elizabeth that he evidently dedicated the manuscript of *The Art of English Poesy.*

Puttenham probably started to work on the *Art* in the late 1560s, may have finished most of Books 1 and 2 in the 1570s, and substantially revised the whole in the mid-1580s. It was printed in 1589 and new passages were still being added while it was in press. Although Puttenham was still working on his *Art* after Sidney's death, therefore, it is the work of a man belonging to the same generation as Sidney's father, and Puttenham's literary tastes are decidedly mid-century. The plan of the work is elegant. Book 1 is on poets and poesy, defining the art in terms familiar from Sidney and then offering a fanciful historical account of the different genres; Book 2 turns from matter to words, treating the subject of versification in considerable detail; Book 3 is on rhetoric in poetry, includes a substantial discussion of decorum in both *res* and *verba,* and is dominated by a systematic account of the rhetorical figures. Puttenham leans heavily on Scaliger and other Continental critics, on the *Institutio oratoria* of Quintilian, and on the *Epitome troporum ac schematum* ('Outline of Schemes and Tropes') of Susenbrotus (*c.*1541), which is typical of Renaissance rhetorical treatises in attending to *elocutio* alone. He is less interested than Sidney in classical philosophy and literary criticism, and although he has a good line in tongue-in-cheek pedantry, in general he seems happier to borrow uncritically and leave questions begged. He himself admits towards the end of Book I that 'what we have written of the ancient forms of poems we have taken from the best clerks writing in the same art' (p. 103). Of Book 2, however, he goes on to claim that 'we may truly affirm to have been the first devisers thereof ourselves, as *autodidaktoi,* and not to have borrowed it of any other by learning or imitation' (p. 103).

Puttenham is no Aristotle, and the affection in which he is held by students of the English Renaissance can appear like a very English love of the quaint and unintentionally comical. But the *Art* provides an important repository of normative views about poetry, always memorably expressed, is usefully characteristic of Elizabethan literary culture in its guileless jumbling together of all manner of disparate influences, and for all its eccentricities is in certain parts important and influential. One such part is Book 3. Puttenham borrows many of the details from the conventional sources, but his tripartite distinction between schemes, tropes, and figures of thought, while not unprecedented, is unusual and coherent. The decision to give English names to the figures combines the

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household at Wilton where he probably taught her sons and worked with her on various literary projects. At her request he wrote a play *Cleopatra* (1594), on proper classical lines, which served as a companion piece to her *Antonius* (1592), a translation from the French of Robert Gamier. Daniel rapidly achieved a high reputation as a lyric poet, and was encouraged to attempt more ambitious projects. In 1595 the first four books of his *Civil Wars,* a poetic account of the Wars of the Roses, were printed, dedicated to a new patron, Lord Mountjoy. Other associations with important courtiers, including Fulke Greville, were developed at this time, and in 1599 appeared Daniel's *Poetical Essays,* which reprinted the *Civil Wars* (now grown to five books), *Cleopatra,* and *The Complaint of Rosamond* (originally a companion to *Delia),* and included also the *Letter from Octavia* and *Musophilus: Containing a General Defence of Learning.*

Musophilus, excerpts of which are included here, is a dialogue between two speakers, Musophilus and Philocosmus, who represent opposing positions on the value of the intellectual and contemplative life, and of learning, eloquence and literature. Philocosmus is worldly and cynical, Musophilus an idealistic and defensive alter ego of Daniel. Daniel dedicated the poem to Greville, and in a later printing wrote that the work represents his own self-examination in a period of crisis when he almost gave up writing. In 1601 and 1602 Daniel's *Works* appeared, adding a sixth book of the *Civil Wars* and a revised *Delia*. Daniel appears to have had a good standing with the Queen, and when she died in 1603 he acted quickly to secure his place at court. He wrote a *Panegyric Congratulatory,* either performed or given in manuscript to the new King, James VI of Scotland, as he made his trip south to London. When the work was printed a little later in 1603 it included a selection of verse epistles to prominent courtiers and, in its second issue, Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme,* a timely essay on the tension between tradition and innovation in English literary and, through a substantial strand of metaphors and analogies, political culture. Daniel came to enjoy the patronage of James VI and I's Queen, Anne of Denmark, and his career at the Jacobean court included commissions to write masques, entertainments, and pastoral dramas for court performance. In 1604 he was rather unsuccessfully employed by Queen Anne as Licensor of the Children of the Queen's Revels, and in 1605 he wrote a play for this children's company, *Philotas,* the resemblance of whose classical theme to the recent fall of the Earl of Essex landed Daniel in trouble with the authorities. By now he seems to have earned the dislike of Ben Jonson, Daniel's rival for the attentions of several key courtiers and for court masque commissions. Daniel steered clear of Jonson's theatrical turf, finished the *Civil Wars* (dedicating its last book to the Countess of Pembroke) and embarked on his largest project, a prose history of England, starting from the Conquest, and ending with the death of Edward III in 1377, which was published in instalments in 1612 and 1618. He died in 1619, and came to be most valued as a historian, both for the clarity and strength of his prose and for his unusually modern approach. Daniel was not the slave of accepted accounts and legends, but scrutinized sources and formed his own objective and sometimes revisionist views. Just as in the *Defence of Rhyme,* he shows an uncommon ability to look sympathetically at the issues and mentalities of England's medieval past, and a profound sense of the limits of historical knowledge and the dangers of wishful thinking.

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Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme* is his most celebrated work, which is odd when we consider that it is an intervention in a debate about versification. Daniel had never picked up the classical strand of Sidney's prosodic legacy, and as the publication of English verses in classical metres dwindled through the 1590s he would not have expected ever to have to argue about this issue. But the publication in 1601 of Thomas Campion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesy* left Daniel in no doubt that something had to be said, and that he was the one to say it. Campion (1567–1620) was educated at Cambridge and Gray's Inn, and was to study medicine at Caen in France, receiving a medical degree in 1605. A handful of his poems had been included alongside Daniel's in the 1591 *Astrophil and Stella,* and his Latin *Poemata* ('Poems') were published in 1595. Campion's greatest talent is as a lyric poet, and in this area he continues to have a substantial reputation. His ear for verbal melody is matched only by Tennyson's, and is evidence of the musical gifts which saw him contribute to the music for several masques which he devised. He published a number of songbooks between 1601 and 1617 for which he wrote the words and in most cases the music; his songs are characterized by elegance, simplicity and wit, and achieve a match of words and music – in rhythm, intonation, syntax and mood – which is rarely found elsewhere. As a Latinist, composer and writer of lyric poetry, Campion's interest in the question of metrics is unsurprising. Music made verse quantitative, and in one song Campion wrote a strictly quantitative text which he set quantitatively, using only two note values for the long and short syllables. But for the most part the theory advanced in *Observations* is kept separate from his practice as poet and composer, a weakness which Daniel pounces on.

As an alternative to barbaric rhyme, Campion suggests various ways of introducing greater regulation into metre. His quantitative system is moderate, allowing many licences in the construction of lines, and leads in the examples he gives to a supple rhythm which avoids the monotony of some accentual-syllabic lines (Gascoigne's, for instance) and to which earlier quantitative experiments, especially with the hexameter, also tended. Daniel's response is to accuse Campion of reinventing the wheel, showing that Campion's theory makes little possible that was not already. The debate thus comes down to rhyme, and to the view of English cultural history which can argue that a revolution in versification is desirable. Daniel's arguments about the value of rhyme in tying stanzas together are eloquent and persuasive, but it is when he thinks more generally about English culture that his *Defence* really takes wing. The succession of James I had not been certain. Elizabeth I had always refused to name a successor, and there were fears of a fight for the crown and of foreign claims which might see a Catholic on the throne. Even if James did become King of England, it was feared that a monarch who saw himself as a significant political philosopher might wish to reform the English law and institutions along Scottish or other lines. Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme* becomes a defence of custom and the traditional, unwritten, English constitution and common law, gentle advice to a new monarch about the attachment of the freeborn English to their ancient rights. In this respect it predicts the relations between literature and politics which operate in the period of the Civil War and in the works of John Milton. Pretending that English rhyme is as old as the hills, rather than a recent innovation brought to England by French invaders, Daniel is able to base his argument on what is natural to English.

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There is no answer to his appeal to 'custom that is before all law, nature that is above all art' (p. 210) which does not sound like pettiness and innovation for its own sake. And Daniel is able to explode Campion's simplistic picture of English cultural history (in which the monkish Dark Ages only end with the advent of the North European humanists of the early sixteenth century) with a roll-call of scholars of the Italian Renaissance of the two previous centuries. Daniel also insists on the value and integrity of medieval scholarship and society. He likens England's ancient constitution to its solid Gothic buildings and initiates an important reappraisal of medieval culture. Human nature is always the same; what looks like progress is only change. Daniel makes his argument with Campion not an isolated argument over technicalities but a fight for the soul of English culture; the right of the English to do things their way is defended against the knee-jerk classicizing implicit in the humanist project. And yet Daniel's copious Latin quotations demonstrate that he stands not against classical learning, but against its misuse, that he is not anti-humanist, but wishes rather to see a better and more realistic marriage of the classical and the vernacular.

It is the metaphors Daniel uses which give coherence and scope to the *Defence.* These are not only the political images of the 'state of rhyme', of reformation, parliament and citizenry, but a series of structural metaphors which liken the action of poetic form to the divine construction of the cosmos or, in common with Puttenham, to the construction of buildings. Daniel is a poet of the firm monosyllables which form the building blocks of English verse, and his language has a kinetic strength which is most felt when it refuses to be moved. Only Daniel can come out with the poetic prose of 'we must stand bound to stay' (p. 227), six monosyllables, four of them verbs of compulsion and stasis. Daniel expands his argument by metaphor, analogy and connection until it operates almost on a cosmic scale, and it is this which makes his relativistic conclusion such a glorious shock. Even if Campion had initially felt minded to reply, there is really nothing which can be said in answer to Daniel's closing words: 'But this is but a character of that perpetual revolution which we see to be in all things that never remain the same, and we must herein be content to submit ourselves to the law of time, which in few years will make all that for which we now contend *nothing*' (p. 233).

OTHER VOICES

The remaining texts gathered in this edition offer a selection of analogues, alternative emphases, paradigmatic statements, and examples of literary criticism in verse. It is impossible in an edition of this size to offer a comprehensive account of the development of literary criticism in the English Renaissance, but it is hoped that these selections will help the reader to follow various lines of development. The passages chosen are rich in implication and connection to the three main texts, and also fill a few representative gaps.

George Gascoigne was born in around 1534 and died in 1577. Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, he entered Gray's Inn in 1555 and tried unsuccessfully to make his way at court. In 1561 he married Elizabeth Breton, a widow and the mother of the poet Nicholas Breton. However, she was already

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married, and Gascoigne was involved in protracted legal proceedings to secure their marriage and her property. Gascoigne was frequently involved in legal wrangling, usually without success, and also failed as a farmer and member of Parliament. He had some success in attracting patronage, but his mounting debts may have caused his ejection from Gray's Inn and did lead to a spell in Bedford Gaol for debt. Between 1572 and 1574 he joined the English expedition to aid the Dutch against Spain, ending with four months as a Spanish prisoner. After his return he concentrated on courting patronage and having his works printed (he claimed that the 1573 edition of *A Hundred Sundry Flowers* was unauthorized), and in 1575 appeared *The Posies of George Gascoigne,* which ends with *Certain Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Rhyme in English.* Among the innovative works included in these collections are *Supposes,* a prose comedy based on Ariosto; *Jocasta,* a blank verse tragedy derived from Euripides; and *The Adventures of Master F.I.,* a raunchy novella; other works published separately include the verse satire, *The Steel Glass* (1576). His many poems play on occasions and personae, blurring fact and fiction (we do not, for example, know if the addressee of *Certain Notes of Instruction* actually existed), and Gascoigne uses his works to advertise his courtly connections and soldiery. Although Drayton, in the 1620s, saw him as obsolete (To Henry Reynolds', ll. 73–8), the later Elizabethans agreed that he was of great importance; as Nashe put it in 1589: 'Master Gascoigne is not to be abridged of his deserved esteem, who first beat the path to that perfection which our best poets have aspired to since his departure'.[20] Above all, Gascoigne was praised for his metrical facility, and *Certain Notes of Instruction* marked a significant step forward, providing a simple metrical theory which accounted for current practices and encouraged the refinements of the subsequent generation. It is often referred to as the first piece of literary criticism in English, and therefore makes an appropriate point of departure.

Henry Peacham was a clergyman about whom little is known. His *Garden of Eloquence* was first printed in 1577 and an expanded edition followed in 1593. It is a treatment of the rhetorical figures based on the *Epitome troporum ac schematum* of Susenbrotus (*c.*1541) and sees rhetoric as having a broad scope. As Peacham's title pages make clear, rhetoric is for readers as well as writers, and applies not only to oratory but to poetry and scripture too. Peacham's treatise is well organized and contains a great deal of original thought. In 1593 he adds to his accounts of the figures notes on 'the use' and 'the caution', demonstrating a strong sense that each figure must contribute appropriately to a coherent whole. The current edition includes the 1577 dedicatory preface and a passage from the 1593 dedication. Each offers a highly eloquent account of the importance of eloquence, and of the figures in particular.

William Webbe's *A Discourse of English Poetry* (1586) tells us that its author was a 'graduate', and that he worked as a tutor in the family of Edward Suliard, an Essex gentleman. The work combines standard humanist learning and a university outlook with a relish for contemporary English verse. Webbe is up to date and has a good ear; while his comments on poetry in general are conventional enough, his observations on versification are of real value. Like many of his contemporaries in the 1580s, including Sidney and Puttenham, he knows that he ought to prefer quantitative versification, but he is no dogmatist. His treatise includes

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quantitative translations of Virgil's first and second eclogues, and of the hymn in praise of Cynthia from the 'April' eclogue of Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579). The brief selection given here complements and adds to Gascoigne's *Certain Notes of Instruction.*

Sir John Harington (*c.*1561–1612) was the godson of Queen Elizabeth I and was educated at Eton, King's College, Cambridge, and Lincoln's Inn. Following the practices of his father, he was a great collector and compiler of literary manuscripts, and his family's manuscripts provide an important, and in some cases unique, source for the study of Tudor poetry. It was supposedly at Elizabeth I's command that he translated Ludo-vico Ariosto's great heroic poem *Orlando furioso.* His 1591 translation was followed in 1596 by *A New Discourse of a Stale Subject, Called the Metamorphosis of Ajax* [i.e. 'a jakes'], a wittily discursive account of Harington's invention of the water closet which attempts to gain court patronage and royal favour. The plan backfired, and Harington turned soldier, accompanying the Earl of Essex to Ireland in 1599; after the accession of James VI of Scotland as James I of England he repaired his reputation somewhat, acting as a tutor to the King's oldest son, Prince Henry. Numerous letters and short works survive, including a tract on the succession supporting King James VI's claim to the English throne and a translation of *Aeneid,* Book 6; his *Epigrams,* which circulated in different manuscript configurations in his lifetime, were printed posthumously in 1615. Harington's abiding reputation is of a well-educated wit, and a lively observer of his fellow humans and himself. As an introduction to his Ariosto he wrote 'A Preface, or rather a Brief Apology of Poetry, and of the Author and Translator of this Poem', the first part of which is included here. It borrows heavily from Sidney's *Defence of Poesy,* which Harington evidently possessed in manuscript, at times referring the reader to a work which was not to be printed for another four years, at other times lifting phrases without acknowledgement. Harington joined in the general veneration of Sidney in the literary and court culture of the 1590s, especially after the printing of *Arcadia* in 1590 and *Astrophil and Stella* in 1591. Whilst his debts in this case tread a fine line between imitation and plagiarism, he would have believed that direct borrowing could do Sidney little harm, and his use of the *Defence* shows how important it was recognized to be even before it was printed. His many original touches, including a useful account of allegory, and his brilliant writing justify his inclusion here.

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) is one of the most significant figures of the English Renaissance. Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, he was admitted to Gray's Inn in 1582 and was a successful barrister and MP. He early aspired to a significant position at court, but made little progress under Elizabeth I, in spite, or perhaps because, of the fact that his cause was championed by the Earl of Essex. Under James I he rose rapidly, from Solicitor General in 1607 to Lord Chancellor in 1618, and was made Viscount St Albans in 1621. But he fell spectacularly, after admitting to taking bribes as a judge. His *Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral* (1597) were expanded in editions of 1612 and 1625, and offer snapshots of new ideas and old wisdom on a great variety of subjects. The majority of his other writings form part of his 'Great Instauration' [restoration, renewal], an ambitious attempt to reform knowledge and learning. This gave to the later seventeenth century the preference for the study of the natural world and for the use of the

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passages selected here are some of those most cited and followed in the period up to 1640.

NOTES

Where possible reference is given to collections detailed in Further Reading. Quotations from classical texts are in most cases from editions in the Loeb Classical Library series.

1. *Classical Literary Criticism,* ed. Penelope Murray (Penguin Classics, 2000), 55. Hereafter *CLC*.
2. *Elizabethan Critical Essays,* ed. G. G. Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1904), 1.226–7. Hereafter *ECE.*
3. *Ben Jonson,* ed. C. H. Herford, and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford, 1925–52), 8.567; *English Renaissance Literary Criticism,* ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford, *1999),* 559. Hereafter *ERLC.*
4. Desiderius Erasmus, *Literary and Educational Writings* 2: *De copia, De ratione studii,* ed. Craig R. Thompson, Collected Works of Erasmus 24 (Toronto, 1978), 670, 687.
5. *The Anatomy of Absurdity* (1589), ECE, 1.334.
6. *A Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays* [1579], *ECE,* 1.75.
7. *Ancient Literary Criticism: The Principal Texts in New Translations,* ed. D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1972), 302. Hereafter *ALC.*
8. *Ben Jonson,* 8.595; *ERLC,* 568.
9. 'How the Young Man Ought To Study Poetry', *Moralia* ('Moral Essays'), 18b, in *ALC,* 513–14.
10. Webbe, *ECE,* 1.251.
11. *ERLC,* 82.
12. *On the Sublime,* 22, in *CLC,* 141–2.
13. 'Humanist Education', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism,* vol. 3: *The Renaissance,* ed. Glyn Norton (Cambridge, 1999), 153.
14. 'Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden', in *Ben Jonson,* ed. Ian Donaldson, The Oxford Authors (Oxford, 1985), 595 and 609; *ERLC,* 529 and 535.
15. *ECE,* 1.29–30; *ERLC,* 157.
16. *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden,* ed. Allan H. Gilbert (Detroit, 1962), 404. Hereafter Gilbert.
17. Spenser and Harvey, *Two Letters* (1580), *ECE,* 1.89.
18. ECE, 2.220; *ERLC,* 323.
19. *Moralia, 26a,* in *ALC,* 527.
20. Preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), *ECE,* 1.315.

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Further Reading

Subsections of this bibliography are ordered chronologically and/or generically, with the most useful works in each section tending to come first.

General Works, Reference, Historical and Cultural Background

The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol. 1: *Classical Criticism,* ed. George A. Kennedy (Cambridge, 1989). An excellent survey in eleven chapters.

The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol. 3: *The Renaissance,* ed. Glyn Norton (Cambridge, 1999). Sixty-one chapters covering a broad range of topics, some general, some specific, and with a good deal of overlap; especially useful are the sections on 'Poetics' and 'Structures of Thought', and four essays by Ann Moss.

William K. Wimsatt, Jr and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (New York, 1957). A whistle-stop tour by two masters of the subject.

The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton, 1993). A superb work of reference; detailed articles are the best place to start on any question and include substantial bibliographies: see e.g. 'Classical Poetics', 'Imitation', 'Platonism and Poetry', 'Renaissance Poetics', 'Representation and Mimesis', 'Rhetoric and Poetry' and articles on all aspects of versification.

Isabel Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry: A Students' Guide,* 2nd edn (London, 1994).

Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms,* 2nd edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991). Explains figures and other rhetorical terms; excellent appendix gives systematic overview of rhetoric.

Heinrich F. Plett, *English Renaissance Rhetoric and Poetics: A Systematic Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (Leiden and New York, 1995).

Susan Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485–1603,* Penguin History of Britain (London, 2001).

Mark A. Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain, 1603–1714,* Penguin History of Britain (London, 1997).

The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge, 1996).

The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1500–1600, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge, 2000).

George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, 1994).

Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric,* corrected edn (Oxford, 1989).

Rosalie Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1973).

Derek Attridge, *Well-Weighed Syllables: Elizabethan Verse in Classical Metres* (Cambridge, 1974).

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John Hollander, *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form,* 2nd edn (New Haven and London, 1985).

Classical Texts

Classical Literary Criticism, ed. Penelope Murray (London, 2000). Plato's *Ion* and relevant passages from the *Republic*; Aristotle, *Poetics*; Horace, *The Art of Poetry*; Longinus, *On the Sublime.* Includes an excellent introduction.

Ancient Literary Criticism: The Principal Texts in New Translations, eds. D.A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1972); abridged version, *Classical Literary Criticism,* eds. Russell and Winterbottom (Oxford, 1989). Superb translations and helpful apparatus.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and most of Plato's dialogues are available in the Penguin Classics series. Also useful is Plato, *Complete Works,* ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, 1997).

All classical texts are available in The Loeb Classical Library series in the original Greek or Latin with facing translation; the Loeb series is the only source for English translations of Cicero's treatises, Quintilian, Plutarch's essay on the study of poetry, and other important texts cited in the notes.

Renaissance Texts

Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (Detroit, 1962). An excellent anthology especially useful for its coverage of sixteenth-century Italian critics.

Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G.G. Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1904; frequently reprinted). Though this and Spingarn (below) may seem dated, they remain comprehensive and well thought-out anthologies. Especially worthy of study are works by Ascham, Lodge, Spenser, Harvey, Nashe and Meres. Includes fuller texts of Webbe, Harington and Campion.

Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J.E. Spingarn, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1908; frequently reprinted). In vol. 1 (1603–50), works by Jonson, Chapman and Milton are especially important, and fuller selections from Bacon and Alexander are included. Volumes 2 (1650–85) and 3 (1685–1700) take the story forward to the age of the critic.

English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance, ed. O.B. Hardison (London, 1967).

Literary Criticism of Seventeenth-Century England, ed. Edward W. Tayler (New York, 1967).

English Renaissance Literary Criticism, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford, 1999). A comprehensive selection with a useful introduction; strong on rhetoric.

Augustan Critical Writing, ed. David Womersley (London, 1997). Covers the period 1660–1750.

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(Asheville, N.C., 1998). A useful edition with apparatus and further reading.

Selected Poems of Thomas Campion, Samuel Daniel and Sir Walter Ralegh, ed. Ronald Levao (London, 2001).

Joan Rees, *Samuel Daniel: A Critical and Biographical Study* (Liverpool, 1964).

Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1992). Influential opening chapter on the political resonances of the *Defence.*

Editions of Other Authors

This list omits editions which are difficult to obtain or lack notes.

George Gascoigne, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres,* ed. G. W. Pigman III (Oxford, 2000). Text of 1573 with addition from *Posies* (1575) including ‘Certain Notes of Instruction’.

Thomas Campion, *The Works,* ed. Walter R. Davis (Garden City, N.Y. and London, 1969).

Francis Bacon: The Major Works, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford, 2002); reissue of *Francis Bacon,* ed. Brian Vickers, The Oxford Authors (Oxford, 1996).

Francis Bacon, *The Essays,* ed. John Pitcher (London, 1985).

Michael Drayton, *The Works,* ed. J.W. Hebel *et al,* 5 vols., corrected edn (Oxford, 1961).

Ben Jonson, ed. Ian Donaldson, The Oxford Authors (Oxford, 1985).

Ben Jonson, ed. C. H. Herford, and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford, 1925–52).

The discovery of an important manuscript treatise, *The Model of Poesy (c.* 1600), by William Scott is reported by Stanley Wells in *The Times Literary Supplement,* 26 September 2003.

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SIR PHILIP SIDNEY *THE DEFENCE OF POESY* (*c.* 1580; printed 1595)

When the right virtuous Edward Wotton and I were at the Emperor's court together, we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship of John Pietro Pugliano, one that with great commendation had the place of an esquire in his stable.[1] And he, according to the fertileness of the Italian wit, did not only afford us the demonstration of his practice, but sought to enrich our minds with the contemplations therein, which he thought most precious. But with none I remember mine ears were at any time more loaden, than when (either angered with slow payment or moved with our learner-like admiration) he exercised his speech in the praise of his faculty. * He said soldiers were the noblest estate of mankind, and horsemen the noblest of soldiers. He said they were the masters of war and ornaments of peace, speedy goers and strong abiders,* triumphers both in camps* and courts. Nay, to so unbelieved a point he proceeded, as that no earthly thing bred such wonder to a prince as to be a good horseman – skill of government was but a *pedanteria** in comparison. Then would he add certain praises by telling what a peerless beast the horse was, the only serviceable* courtier without flattery, the beast of most beauty, faithfulness, courage, and such more, that if I had not been a piece of a logician before I came to him, I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse.[2] But thus much at least with his no few words he drave into me, that self-love is better than any gilding to make that seem gorgeous wherein ourselves be parties. Wherein, if Pugliano's strong affection* and weak arguments will not satisfy you, I will give you a nearer example of myself, who (I know not by what mischance) in these my not old years and idlest times having slipped into the title of a poet am provoked to say something unto you in the defence of that my unelected vocation, which if I handle with more good will than good reasons, bear with me, since the scholar is to be pardoned that followeth the steps of his master. And yet I must say that, as I have more just cause to make a pitiful defence of poor poetry, which from almost the highest estimation of learning is fallen to be the laughing stock of children, so have I need to bring some more available proofs, since the former is by no man barred of his deserved credit, the silly latter[3] hath had even the names of philosophers used to the defacing* of it, with great danger of civil war among the Muses.

And first, truly, to all them that, professing learning, inveigh against poetry may justly be objected that they go very near to ungratefulness to seek to deface that which, in the noblest nations and languages that are known, hath been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges.[4] And will they now play the hedgehog that, being received into the den, drave out his host? Or rather the vipers, that with their birth kill their parents?[5] Let learned Greece in any of his manifold sciences* be able to show me one book before Musaeus, Homer, and Hesiod,[6] all three nothing else but poets. Nay, let any history be brought that can say any writers were there before them, if they were not men of the same skill, as

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*_censure_: criticize, form a judgement on

*_contexture_: fabric, body, connected structure

*_several_: separate

*_marshalled… degree_: arranged according to rank, put in its place

*_witty_: of the mind, clever

*_disposing_: arrangement

*_grave sentence_: serious moral dictum

*_witty conceit_: clever idea, plot

*_magnanimity_: greatness of soul, nobility

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**angle*: entice, catch

**the other*: i.e. sentence, conceit and rapture

**envied price*: value causing wish to emulate

**affectionately*: earnestly, zealously

**agreeable*: concordant, congruent

**regard*: attention, sympathy

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**tumour*: swelling

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*_numbers_: verse

*_private strain_: everyday idiom

*_decent thews_: fitting attributes or customs, manners according to decorum

*_turns_: tropes

*_colours_: rhetorical figures

*_nor_: neither

*_owe_: admit, own

*_wight_: person, character

*_bombard_: large, swollen jug, i.e. inflated (Horace: _ampulla_)

*_foot-and-half-foot words_: words a foot and a half in length (Horace: _sesquipedalia verba_)

*_elaborate_: careful, labouring

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**maw*: stomach

**voices*: opinion, common judgement

**suffrage*: vote, approbation

**doctrine*: teaching

**hand*: style, skill

**subtlest*: most discriminating, having most critical acumen

**mark*: attention, scrutiny

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