

*The Defense of Poesie*  
Sir Phillip Sidney

THE  
DEFENCE OF  
Poesie.

By Sir Phillip Sidney,  
Knight.



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When the right vertuous E.W. and I were at the Emperours Court together, wee gave our selves to learne horsemanship of Jon Pietro Pugliano, one that with great commendation had the place of an Esquire in his stable: and hee according to the fertillnes of the Italian wit, did not onely affoord us the demonstration of his practise, but sought to enrich our mindes with the contemplations therein, which he thought most precious. But with none I remember mine eares were at any time more loaden, then when (either angred with slow paiment, or mooved with our learnerlike admiration) hee exercised his speech in the praise of his facultie. He said souldiers were the noblest estate of mankind, and horsemen the noblest of souldiers. He said they were the maisters of warre, and ornaments of peace, speedie goers, and strong abiders, triumphers both in Camps and Courts: nay to so unbleeved 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 Pedenteria in comparison, then would he adde certaine praises by telling us what a peerless beast the horse was, the one serviceable Courtier without flattery, the beast of most bewtie, faithfulness, courage, and such more, that if I had not beene a peece of a Logician before I came to him, I thinke he would have perswaded me to have wished myselfe a horse. But thus much at least, with his no few words he drave into me, that selflove is better than any gilding, to make that seem gorgious wherein ourselves be parties. Wherein if Pulianos strong affection and weake

arguments will not satisfie you, I will give you a nearer example of my selfe, who I know not by what mischance in these my not old yeares and idlest times, having slipt 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, then good reasons, beare with me, since the scholler is to be pardoned that followeth in the steps of his maister. And yet I must say, that as I have more just cause to make a pittifull defence of poor Poetrie, which from almost the highest estimation of learning, is falne to be the laughing stocke of children, so have I need to bring some more available proofes, since the former is by no man bard of his deserved credit, the silly lat[t]er, hath had even the names of Philosophers used to the defacing of it, with great daunger of civill warre among the Muses. And first trully to all them that professing learning envey against Poetrie, may justly be objected, that they go very neare to ungratefulnesse, to seeke to deface that which in the noblest nations and languages that are knowne, hath bene the first light giver to ignorance, and first nurse whose milk litle & litle enabled them to feed afterwarde of tougher knowledges. And will you play the Hedge-hogge, that being received into the den, drave out his host? Or rather the Vipers, that with their birth kill their parents? Let learned Greece in any of his manifold Sciences, be able to shew me one booke before Musaeus, Homer, & Hesiod, all three nothing else but Poets. Nay let any Historie bee brought, that can say any writers were there before them, if they were not men of the same skill, as Orpheus, Linus, and some other are named, who having bene the first of that country that made pennes deliverers of their knowledge to the posteritie, nay, justly challenge to bee called their Fathers in learning. For not onely in time they had this prioritie, (although in it selfe antiquitie be venerable) but went before them, as causes to draw with their charming sweetnesse the wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge. So as Amphion, was said to moove stones with his Poetry, to build Thebes, and Orpheus to be listened to by beasts, indeed stonie and beastly people. So among the Romans, were Livius, Andronicus, and Ennius, so in the Italian language, the first that made it aspire to be a treasure-house of Science, were the Poets Dante, Bocace, and Petrarch. So in our English, wer Gower, and Chawcer, after whom, encoraged & delighted with their excellent foregoing, others have folowed to bewtify our mother toong, aswel in the same kind as other arts. This did so notably shew itself, that the Philosphers of Greece durst not a long time appear to the world, but under the mask of poets. So Thales, Empedocles, and Parmenides, sang their naturall Philosophie in verses. So did Pithagoras and Phocillides, their morall Councels. So did Tirteus in warre matters, and Solon in matters of pollicie, or rather they being Poets, did exercise their delightfull vaine in those points of highest knowledge, which before them laie hidden to the world. For, that wise Solon was directly a Poet, it is manifest, having written in verse the notable Fable of the Atlantick Iland, which was continued by Plato. And trully even Plato who so ever well considereth, shall finde that in the body of his worke though the inside & strength were Philosophie, the skin as it were and beautie, depended most of Poetrie. For all stands upon Dialogues, wherein hee faines many honest Burgesses of Athens speak of such matters, that if they had bene set on the Racke, they would never have confessed them: besides his Poeticall describing the circumstances of their meetings, as the well ordering of a banquet, the delicacie of a walke, with enterlacing meere Tales, as Gyges Ring and others, which, who knows not to bee flowers of Poetrie, did never walke into Appollos Garden. And even Historiographers, although their lippes sound of things done, and veritie be written in their foreheads, have bene glad to borrow both fashion and perchance weight of the Poets. So Herodotus entituled his Historie, by the name of the nine

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Muses, and both he and all the rest that followed him, either stale, or usurped of Poetrie, their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battels which no man could affirme, or if that be denied me, long Orations put in the mouths of great Kings and Captains, which it is certaine they never pronounced. So that truly Philosopher, nor Historiographer, could at the first have entered into the gates of popular judgements, if they had not taken a great passport of Poetrie, which in all nations at this day where learning flourisheth not, is plaine to be seene: in all which, they have some feeling of Poetry. In Turkey, besides their lawgiving devines, they have no other writers but Poets. In our neighbor Countrey Ireland, where truly learning goes verie bare, yet are their Poets held in a devout reverence. Even among the most barbarous and simple Indians, where no writing is, yet they have their Poets who make & sing songs which they call Arentos, both of their Auncestors deeds, and praises of their Gods. A sufficient probability, that if ever learning come among them, it must be by having their hard dull wittes softened and sharpened with the sweete delights of Poetrie, for untill they finde a pleasure in the exercise of the minde, great promises of much knowledge, wil little persuade them that know not the frutes of knowledge. In VVales, the true remnant of the auncient Brittons, as there are good authorities to shew, the long time they had Poets which they called Bardes: so thorow all the conquests of Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans, some of whom, did seeke to ruine all memory of learning from among them, yet do their Poets even to this day last: so as it is not more notable in the soone beginning, then in long continuing. But since the Authors of most of our Sciences, were the Romanes, and before them the Greekes, let us a little stand upon their authorities, but even so farre as to see what names they have given unto this now scorned skill. Among the Romanes a Poet was called Vates, which is as much as a diviner, foreseeer, or Prophet, as by his conjoynd words Vaticinium, and Vaticinari, is manifest, so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestowe upon this hart- ravishing knowledge, and so farre were they carried into the admiration thereof, that they thought in the chanceable hitting upon any of such verses, great foretokens of their following fortunes, were placed. Whereupon grew the word of Sortes Vergilianae, when by suddaine opening Virgils Booke, they lighted upon some verse of his, as it is reported by many, whereof the Histories of the Emperours lives are full. As of Albinus the Governour of our Iland, who in his childhood met with this verse Arma amens capio, nec sat rationis in armis: and in his age performed it, although it were a verie vaine and godlesse superstition, as also it was, to think spirits were commaunded by such verses, whereupon this word Charmes derived of Carmina, commeth: so yet serveth it to shew the great reverence those wittes were held in, and altogether not without ground, since both by the Oracles of Delphos and Sybillas prophesies, were wholly delivered in verses, for that same exquisite observing of number and measure in the words, and that high flying libertie of conceit proper to the Poet, did seeme to have some divine force in it. And may not I presume a little farther, to shewe the reasonableness of this word Vatis, and say that the holy Davids Psalms are a divine Poeme? If I do, I shal not do it without the testimony of great learned men both auncient and moderne. But even the name of Psalmes wil speak for me, which being interpreted, is nothing but Songs: then that it is fully written in meeter as all learned Hebritians agree, although the rules be not yet fully found. Lastly and principally, his handling his prophecie, which is meerly Poeticall. For what else is the awaking his musical Instruments, the often and free chaunging of persons, his notable Prosopopeias, when he maketh you as it were see God comming in his majestie, his telling of the beasts joyfulness, and hils leaping, but a heavenly poesie, wherein almost he sheweth himselfe a passionate lover of that unspeakable

and everlasting bewtie, to be seene by the eyes of the mind, onely cleared by faith? But truly now having named him, I feare I seeme to prophane that holy name, applying it to Poetry, which is among us throwne downe to so ridiculous an estimation. But they that with quiet Judgements wil looke a little deeper into it, shal find the end & working of it such, as being rightly applied, deserveth not to be scourged out of the Church of God. But now let us see how the Greekes have named it, and how they have deemed of it. The Greekes named him poieten, which name, hath as the most excellent, gone through other languages, it commeth of this word poiein which is to make: wherein I know not whether by luck or wisdom, we Englishmen have met with the Greekes in calling him a Maker. Which name, how high and incomparable a title it is, I had rather were knowne by marking the scope of other sciences, then by any partial allegation. There is no Art delivered unto mankind that hath not the workes of nature for his principall object, without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend, as they become Actors & Plaiers, as it were of what nature will have set forth. So doth the Astronomer looke upon the starres, and by that he seeth set downe what order nature hath taken therein. So doth the Geometritian & Arithmetitian, in their divers sorts of quantities. So doth the Musitians intimes tel you, which by nature agree, which not. The natural Philosopher thereon hath his name, and the morall Philosopher standeth upon the naturall vertues, vices, or passions of man: and follow nature saith he therein, and thou shalt not erre. The Lawier saith, what men have determined. The Historian, what men have done. The Gramarian, speaketh onely of the rules of speech, and the Rhetoritian and Logitian, considering what in nature wil soonest proove, and perswade thereon, give artificiall rules, which still are compassed within the circle of a question, according to the proposed matter. The Phisitian wayeth the nature of mans bodie, & the nature of things helpfull, or hurtfull unto it. And the Metaphisicke though it be in the second & abstract Notions, and therefore be counted supernaturall, yet doth hee indeed build upon the depth of nature. Only the Poet disdeining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect into another nature: in making things either better then nature bringeth foorth, or quite a new, formes such as never were in nature: as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chymeras, Furies, and such like; so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely raunging within the Zodiack of his owne wit. Nature never set foorth the earth in so rich Tapistry as diverse Poets have done, neither with so pleasaunt rivers, fruitfull trees, sweete smelling flowers, nor whatsoever els may make the too much loved earth more lovely: her world is brasen, the Poets only deliver a golden. But let those things alone and goe to man, for whom as the other things are, so it seemeth in him her uttermost comming is imploied: & know whether she have brought foorth so true a lover as Theagenes, so constant a friend as Pylades, so valiant a man as Orlando, so right a Prince as Xenophons Cyrus, so excellent a man every way as Virgils Aeneas. Neither let this be jestingly conceived, bicause the works of the one be essencially, the other in imitation or fiction: for everie understanding, knoweth the skill of ech Artificer standeth in that Idea, or fore conceit of the worke, and not in the worke it selfe. And that the Poet hath that Idea, is manifest, by delivering them foorth in such excellencie as he had imagined them: which delivering foorth, also is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build Castles in the aire: but so farre substancially it worketh, not onely to make a Cyrus, which had bene but a particular excellency as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyrusses, if they will learne aright, why and how that maker made him. Neither let it be deemed too sawcy a comparison, to ballance

the highest point of mans wit, with the efficacie of nature: but rather give right honor to the heavenly maker of that maker, who having made man to his owne likenes, set him beyond and over all the workes of that second nature, which in nothing he sheweth so much as in Poetry; when with the force of a divine breath, he bringeth things foorth surpassing her doings: with no small arguments to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected wil keepeth us from reaching unto it. But these arguments will by few be understood, and by fewer graunted: thus much I hope will be given me, that the Greeks with some probability of reason, gave him the name above all names of learning. Now let us go to a more ordinary opening of him, that the truth may be the more palpable: and so I hope though we get not so unmatched a praise as the Etimologie of his names will graunt, yet his verie description which no man will denie, shall not justly be barred from a principall commendation. Poesie therefore, is an Art of Imitation: for so Aristotle termeth it in the word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth to speake Metaphorically. A speaking Picture, with this end to teach and delight. Of this have bene three generall kindes, the chiefe both in antiquitie and excellencie, were they that did imitate the unconceivable excellencies of God. Such were David in his Psalmes, Salomon in his song of songs, in his Ecclesiastes and Proverbes. Moses and Debora, in their Hymnes, and the wryter of Jobe: Which beside other, the learned Emanuell, Tremelius, and F. Junius, doo entitle the Poeticall part of the scripture: against these none will speake that hath the holie Ghost in due holie reverence. In this kinde, though in a full wrong divinitie, were Orpheus, Amphion, Homer in his himnes, and manie other both Greeke and Romanes. And this Poesie must be used by whosoever will follow S. Paules counsaile, in singing Psalmes when they are mery, and I knowe is used with the frute of comfort by some, when in sorrowfull panges of their death bringing sinnes, they finde the consolation of the never leaving goodnes. The second kinde, is of them that deale with matters Philosophicall, either morall as Tirtus, Phocilides, Cato; or naturall, as Lucretius, and Virgils Georgikes; or Astronomicall as Manilius and Pontanus; or Historicall as Lucan: which who mislike the fault, is in their judgement quite out of tast, & not in the sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge. But bicause this second sort is wrapped within the fold of the proposed subject, and takes not the free course of his own invention, whether they properly bee Poets or no, let Gramarians dispute, and goe to the third indeed right Poets, of whom chiefly this question ariseth: betwixt whom and these second, is such a kinde of difference, as betwixt the meaner sort of Painters, who counterfeyt onely such faces as are set before them, and the more excelent, who having no law but wit, bestow that in colours upon you, which is fittest for the eye to see, as the constant, though lamenting looke of Lucretia, when she punished in her selfe another faulte: wherein hee painteth not Lucretia whom he never saw, but painteth the outward bewty of such a vertue. For these third be they which most properly do imitate to teach & delight: and to imitate, borrow nothing of what is, hath bin, or shall be, but range onely reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be. These be they that as the first and most noble sort, may justly be termed Vates: so these are waited on in the excellentest languages and best understandings, with the fore described name of Poets. For these indeed do meerly make to imitate, and imitate both to delight & teach, and delight to move men to take that goodnesse in hand, which without delight they would flie as from a stranger; and teach to make them know that goodnesse whereunto they are moved: which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to bark at

them. These be subdivided into sundry more special denominations. The most notable be the Heroick, Lyrick, Tragick, Comick, Satyrick, Iambick, Elegiack, Pastorall, and certaine others: some of these being tearmed according to the matter they deale with, some by the sort of verse they liked best to write in, for indeed the greatest part of Poets, have apparelled their poetickall inventions, in that numbrous kind of writing which is called vers. Indeed but apparelled verse: being but an ornament and no cause to Poetrie, since there have bene many most excellent Poets that never versified, and now swarme many versifiers that need never answeere to the name of Poets. For Xenophon who did imitate so excellently as to give us effigiem justii imperii, the pourtraiture of a just Empyre under the name of Cyrus, as Cicero saith of him, made therein an absolute heroicall Poeme. So did Heliodorus, in his sugred invention of that picture of love in Theagenes & Chariclea, and yet both these wrote in prose, which I speake to shew, that it is not ryming and versing that maketh a Poet, (no more than a long gown maketh an Advocate, who though he pleaded in Armour, should be an Advocat and no souldier) but it is that faining notable images of vertues, vices, or what els, with that delightfull teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a Poet by. Although indeed the Senate of Poets hath chosen verse as their fittest raiment: meaning as in matter, they passed all in all, so in manner, to go beyond them: not speaking table talke fashion, or like men in a dreame, words as they chanceably fall from the mouth, but peasing each sillable of eache word by just proportion, according to the dignitie of the subject. Now therefore it shal not be amisse, first to way this latter sort of poetrie by his workes, and then by his parts, and if in neither of these Anatomies hee be condemnable, I hope we shall obtaine a more favourable sentence. This purifying of wit, this enriching of memorie, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we cal learning, under what name so ever it come forth, or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the finall end is, to lead and draw us to as high a perfection, as our degenerate soules made worse by their clay-lodgings, can be capable of. This according to the inclination of man, bred many formed impressions. For some that thought this felicity principally to be gotten by knowledge, and no knowledge to be so high or heavenly, as acquaintance with the stars; gave themselves to Astronomie: others perswading themselves to be Demygods, if they knew the causes of things, became naturall and supernaturall Philosophers. Some an admirable delight drew to Musicke; and some the certaintie of demonstration to the Mathematicks: but all one and other having scope to know, & by knowledge to lift up the minde from the dungeon of the bodie, to the enjoying his owne divine essence. But when by the ballance of experience it was found that the Astronomer looking to the stars might fall in a ditch, that the inquiring Philosopher might be blind in him self, & the Mathematician, might draw forth a straight line with a crooked hart. Then lo did prooffe, the overruler of opinions make manifest, that all these are but serving sciences; which as they have [each] a private end in themselves, so yet are they all directed to the highest end of the mistresse knowledge by the Greeks [called] architectonike, which stands as I thinke, in the knowledge of a mans selfe, in the Ethike and Politique consideration, with the end of well doing, and not of well knowing onely. Even as the Sadlers next ende is to make a good Saddle, but his further ende, to serve a nobler facultie, which is horsmanship, so the horsemans to souldiery: and the souldier not only to have the skill, but to performe the practise of a souldier. So that the ending end of all earthly learning, being verteuous action, those skills that most serve to bring forth that, have a most just title to be Princes over al the rest: wherein if we can shew, the Poet is worthy to have it before any other competitors: among whom principally to challenge it, step

forth the moral Philosophers, whom me thinkes I see comming towards me, with a sullen gravitie, as though they could not abide vice by day-light, rudely cloathed for to witness outwardly their contempt of outward things, with books in their hands against glorie, whereto they set their names: sophisticatedly speaking against subtiltie, and angry with any man in whom they see the foule fault of anger. These men casting larges as they go of definitions, divitions and distinctions, with a scornful interrogative, do soberly aske, whether it be possible to find any path so ready to lead a man to vertue, as that which teacheth what vertue is, & teacheth it not only by delivering forth his very being, his causes and effects, but also by making knowne his enemie vice, which must be destroyed, and his cumbersome servant passion, which must be mastred: by shewing the generalities that contains it, and the specialties that are derived from it. Lastly by plaine setting downe, how it extends it selfe out of the limits of a mans owne little world, to the government of families, and mainteining of publike societies. The Historian scarcely gives leisure to the Moralist to say so much, but that he loaden with old Mouse-eaten Records, authorising himselfe for the most part upon other Histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation Heresay, having much ado to accord differing writers, & to pick truth out of partiality: better acquainted with a 1000. yeres ago, then with the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goes, then how his owne wit runnes, curious for Antiquities, and inquisitive of Novelties, a wonder to yoong folkes, and a Tyrant in table talke; denieth in a great chafe, that any man for teaching of vertue, and vertues actions, is comparable to him. I am Testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuncia vetustatis. The Philosopher saith he, teacheth a disputative vertue, but I do an active. His vertue is excellent in the dangerlesse Academy of Plato: but mine sheweth forth her honourable face in the battailes of Marathon, Pharsalia, Poitiers, and Agincourt. Hee teacheth vertue by certaine abstract considerations: but I onely follow the footing of them that have gone before you. Old aged experience, goeth beyond the fine witted Philosopher: but I give the experience of many ages. Lastly, if he make the song Booke, I put the learners hand to the Lute, and if he be the guide, I am the light. Then he would alleage you innumerable examples, confirming storie by stories, how much the wisest Senators and Princes, have bene directed by the credit of Historie, as Brutus, Alphonsus of Aragon, (and who not if need be.) At length, the long line of their disputation makes a point in this, that the one giveth the precept, & the other the example. Now whom shall we find, since the question standeth for the highest forme in the schoole of learning to be moderator? Truly as mee seemeth, the Poet, and if not a moderator, even the man that ought to carry the title from them both: & much more from all the other serving sciences. Therefore compare we the Poet with the Historian, & with the morall Philosopher: and if hee goe beyond them both, no other humaine skill can match him. For as for the divine, with all reverence it is ever to be excepted, not onely for having his scope as far beyond any of these, as Eternitie exceedeth a moment: but even for passing ech of these in themselves. And for the Lawier, though Jus be the daughter of Justice, the chiefe of vertues, yet because he seeks to make men good, rather formidine poenae, then virtutis amore: or to say righter, doth not endeavor to make men good, but that their evill hurt not others, having no care so he be a good citizen, how bad a man he might be. Therefore, as our wickednes maketh him necessarie, and necessitie maketh him honorable, so he is not in the deepest truth to stand in ranck with these, who al endeavour to take naughtinesse away, and plant goodnesse even in the secretest cabinet of our soules: and these foure are all that any way deale in the consideration of mens manners, which being the supreme knowledge, they that best breed it, deserve the best

commendation. The Philosopher therefore, and the Historian, are they which would win the goale, the one by precept, the other by example: but both, not having both, doo both halt. For the Philosopher setting downe with thornie arguments, the bare rule, is so hard of utterance, and so mistie to be conceived, that one that hath no other guide but him, shall wade in him till he be old, before he shall finde suffiecient cause to be honest. For his knowledge standeth so upon the abstract and generall, that happie is that man who may understand him, and more happie, that can apply what he doth understand. On the other side, the Historian wanting the precept, is so tied, not to what should be, but to what is, to the particular truth of things, that his example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore a lesse fruitfull doctrine. Now doth the peerlesse Poet performe both, for whatsoever the Philosopher saith should be done, he gives a perfect picture of it by some one, by whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he coupleth the generall notion with the particuler example. A perfect picture I say, for hee yeeldeth to the powers of the minde an image of that whereof the Philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pearce, nor possesse, the sight of the soule so much, as that other doth. For as in outward things to a man that had never seene an Elephant, or a Rinoceros, who should tell him most exquisitely all their shape, cullour, bignesse, and particuler marks, or of a gorgious pallace an Architecture, who declaring the full bewties, might well make the hearer able to repeat as it were by roat all he had heard, yet should never satisfie his inward conceit, with being wisse to it selfe of a true lively knowledge: but the same man, assoon as he might see those beasts wel painted, or that house wel in modell, shuld straightwaies grow without need of any description to a judicial comprehending of them, so no doubt the Philosopher with his learned definitions, be it of vertues or vices, matters of publike policy or privat government, replenisheth the memory with many infallible grounds of wisdom, which notwithstanding lie darke before the imaginative and judging power, if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of Poesie. Tully taketh much paines, and many times not without Poeticall helpes to make us know the force, love of our country hath in us. Let us but hear old Anchices, speaking in the middest of Troies flames, or see Ulisses in the fulnesse of all Calipsoes delightes, bewaile his absence from barraine and beggarly Itheca. Anger the Stoickes said, was a short madnesse: let but Sophocles bring you Ajax on a stage, killing or whipping sheepe and oxen, thinking them the Army of Greekes, with their Chieftaines Agamemnon, and Menelaus: and tell me if you have not a more familiar insight into Anger, then finding in the schoolemen his Genus and Difference. See whether wisdom and temperance in Ulisses and Diomedes, valure in Achilles, friendship in Nisus and Eurialus, even to an ignorant man carry not an apparant shining: and contrarily, the remorse of conscience in Oedipus; the soone repenting pride in Agamemnon; the selfe devouring crueltie in his father Atreus; the violence of ambition, in the two Theban brothers; the sower sweetnesse of revenge in Medea; and to fall lower, the Terentian Gnato, and our Chawcers Pander so exprest, that we now use their names, to signify their Trades: And finally, all vertues, vices, and passions, so in their owne naturall states, laide to the view, that we seeme not to heare of them, but clearly to see through them. But even in the most excellent determination of goodnesse, what Philosophers counsaile can so readily direct a Prince, as the feined Cirus in Xenophon, or a vertuous man in all fortunes: as Aeneas in Virgill, or a whole Common-wealth, as the Way of Sir Thomas Moore's Eutopia. I say the Way, because where Sir Thomas Moore erred, it was the fault of the man and not of the Poet: for that Way of patterning a Common-wealth, was most absolute though hee perchaunce hath not so

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absolutely performed it. For the question is, whether the fashioned Image of Poetrie, or the regular instruction of Philosophie, hath the more force in teaching? Wherein if the Philosophers have more rightly shewed themselves Philosophers then the Poets, have attained to the high toppe of their profession (as in truth *Mediocribus esse poetis non Dii, non homines, non concessere columnae.*) it is (I say againe) not the fault of the Art, but that by fewe men that Art can be accomplished. Certainly even our Saviour Christ could as well have given the morall common places of uncharitableness and humbleness, as the divine narration of Dives and Lazarus, or of disobedience and mercy, as the heavenly discourse of the lost childe and the gracious Father, but that his through searching wisdom, knew the estate of Dives burning in hell, and Lazarus in Abrahams bosome, would more constantly, as it were, inhabit both the memorie and judgement. Truly for my selfe (mee seemes) I see before mine eyes, the lost childs disdainful prodigalitie, turned to envy a Swines dinner: which by the learned Divines are thought not to be Historical acts, but instructing Parables. For conclusion, I say the Philosopher teacheth, but he teacheth obscurely, so as the learned onely can understand him, that is to say, he teacheth them that are already taught. But the Poet is the food for the tenderest stomacks, the Poet is indeed, the right populer Philosopher. Whereof Esops Tales give good prooffe, whose prettie Allegories stealing under the formall Tales of beastes, makes many more beastly than beasts: begin to hear the sound of vertue from those dumbe speakers. But now it may be alleadged, that if this imagining of matters be so fit for the imagination, then must the Historian needs surpasse, who brings you images of true matters, such as indeed were done, and not such as fantastically or falsely may be suggested to have bin done. Truly Aristotle himselfe in his discourse of Poesie, plainly determineth this question, saying, that Poetrie is philosophoteron and spuodaioteron, that is to say, it is more Philosophicall and more [studiously serious] then History. His reason is, because Poesie dealeth with katholou, that is to say, with the universall consideration, and the Historie with kathekaston, the particular. Now saith he, the universall wayes what is fit to be said or done, either in likelihood or necessitie, which the Poesie considereth in his imposed names: and the particular onely maketh whether Alcibiades did or suffered this or that. Thus farre Aristotle. Which reason of his, as all his is most full of reason. For indeed if the question were, whether it were better to have a particular act truly or faithfully set downe, there is no doubt which is to be chosen, no more than whether you had rather have Vespacians Picture right as he was, or at the Painters pleasure nothing resembling. But if the question be for your owne use and learning, whether it be better to have it set downe as it should be, or as it was; then certainly is more doctrinable, the fained Cyrus in Xenophon, then the true Cyrus in Justin: and the fained Aeneas in Virgill, then the right Aeneas in Dares Phrigius: as to a Ladie that desired to fashion her countenance to the best grace: a Painter shuld more benefite her to pourtrait a most sweete face, writing Canidia upon it, then to paint Canidia as shee was, who Horace sweareth was full ill favoured. If the Poet do his part aright, he will shew you in Tantalus Atreus, and such like, nothing that is not to be shunned; in Cyrus, Aeneas, Ulisses, each thing to be followed: where the Historian bound to tell things as things were, cannot be liberall, without hee will be Poeticall of a perfect patterne, but as Alexander or Scipio himselfe, shew things, some to be liked, some to be disliked, and then how will you discern what to follow, but by your own discretion which you had without reading Q. Curtius. And whereas a man may say, though in universall consideration of doctrine, the Poet prevaieth, yet that the Historie in his saying such a thing was done, doth warrant a man more in that he shall follow. The answeere is manifest, that if he stand upon that

was, as if he should argue, because it rained yesterday, therefore it should raine to day, then indeede hath it some advantage to a gross conceit. But if hee knowe an example onely enformes a conjectured likelihood, and so goe by reason, the Poet doth so farre exceed him, as hee is to frame his example to that which is most reasonable, be it in warlike, politike, or private matters, where the Historian in his bare, was, hath many times that which we call fortune, to overrule the best wisdom. Manie times he must tell events, whereof he can yield no cause, or if he do, it must be poetically. For that a fained example (for as for to moove, it is cleare, since the fained may be tuned to the highest key of passion) let us take one example wherein an Historian and a Poet did conurre. Herodotus and Justin doth both testifie, that Zopirus, King Darius faithfull servant, seeing his maister long resisted by the rebellious Babilonians, fained himselfe in extreame disgrace of his King, for verifying of which, he caused his owne nose and eares to be cut off, and so flying to the Babylonians was received, and for his knowne valure so farre creadited, that hee did finde meanes to deliver them over to Darius. Much like matter doth Livy record of Tarquinius, and his sonne. Xenophon excellently faineth such another Strategeme, performed by Abradates in Cyrus behalfe. Now would I faine knowe, if occasion be presented unto you, to serve your Prince by such an honest dissimulation, why you do not as well learne it of Xenophons fiction, as of the others veritie: and truly so much the better, as you shall save your nose by the bargaine. For Abradates did not counterfeyt so farre. So then the best of the Historian is subject to the Poet, for whatsoever action or faction, whatsoever counsaile, pollicie, or warre, strategeme, the Historian is bound to recite, that may the Poet if hee list with his imitation make his owne; bewtifying it both for further teaching, and more delighting as it please him: having all from Dante his heven to his hell, under the authority of his pen. Which if I be asked what Poets have done so? as I might well name some, so yet say I, and say again, I speake of the Art and not of the Artificer. Now to that which commonly is attributed to the praise of Historie, in respect of the notable learning, is got by marking the successe, as though therein a man shuld see vertue exalted, & vice punished: truly that commendation is peculiar to Poetrie, and farre off from Historie: for indeed Poetrie ever sets vertue so out in her best cullours, making fortune her well-wayting handmayd, that one must needs be enamoured of her. Well may you see Ulisses in a storme and in other hard plights, but they are but exercises of patience & magnanimitie, to make them shine the more in the neare following prosperitie. And of the contrary part, if evill men come to the stage, they ever goe out (as the Tragedie writer answered to one that misliked the shew of such persons) so maniced as they litle animate folkes to follow them. But the Historie being captived to the trueth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing, and an encouragement to unbrideled wickednes. For see we not valiant Milciades rot in his fetters? The just Phocion and the accomplished Socrates, put to death like Traytors? The cruell Severus, live prosperously? The excellent Severus miserably murdered? Sylla and Marius dying in their beds? Pompey and Cicero slain then when they wold have thought exile a happinesse? See we not vertous Cato driven to kill himselfe, and Rebell Caesar so advanced, that his name yet after 1600. yeares lasteth in the highest honor? And marke but even Caesars owne words of the forenamed Sylla, (who in that onely, did honestly to put downe his dishonest Tyrannie) Litteras nescivet: as if want of learning caused him to doo well. He ment it not by Poetrie, which not content with earthly plagues, deviseth new punishments in hell for Tyrants: nor yet by Philosophy, which teacheth Occidentos esse, but no doubt by skill in Historie, for that indeed can afford you Cipselus, Periander, Phalaris, Dionisius, and I know not how many more of the same

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kennel, that speed well enough in their abhominable injustice of usurpation. I conclude therefore that he excelleth historie, not onely in furnishing the minde with knowledge, but in setting it forward to that which deserves to be called and accounted good: which setting forward and moving to well doing, indeed setteth the Lawrell Crowne upon the Poets as victorious, not onely of the Historian, but over the Philosopher, howsoever in teaching it may be questionable. For suppose it be granted, that which I suppose with great reason may be denied, that the Philosopher in respect of his methodical proceeding, teach more perfectly then the poet, yet do I thinke, that no man is so much philophilosophos as to compare the philosopher in mooving with the Poet. And that mooving is of a higher degree than teaching, it may by this appeare, that it is well nigh both the cause and effect of teaching. For who will be taught, if he be not mooved with desire to be taught? And what so much good doth that teaching bring foorth, (I speake still of morall doctrine) as that it mooveth one to do that which it doth teach. For as Aristotle saith, it is not gnosis but praxis must be the frute: and how praxis can be without being moved to practice, it is no hard matter to consider. The Philosopher sheweth you the way, hee enformeth you of the particularities, as well of the tediousnes of the way, as of the pleasaunt lodging you shall have when your journey is ended, as of the many by turnings that may divert you from your way. But this is to no man but to him that will reade him, and reade him with attentive studious painfullnesse, which constant desire, whosoever hath in him, hath already past halfe the hardnesse of the way: and therefore is beholding to the Philosopher, but for the other halfe. Nay truly learned men have learnedly thought, that where once reason hath so much over-mastered passion, as that the minde hath a free desire to doo well, the inward light each minde hath in it selfe, is as good as a Philosophers booke, since in Nature we know it is well, to doo well, and what is well, and what is evill, although not in the wordes of Art which Philosophers bestow uppon us: for out of naturall conceit the Philosophers drew it; but to be moved to doo that which wee know, or to be mooved with desire to know. Hoc opus, hic labor est. Now therein of all Sciences I speake still of humane (and according to the humane conceit) is our Poet the Monarch. For hee doth not onely shew the way, but giveth so sweete a prospect into the way, as will entice anie man to enter into it: Nay he doth as if your journey should lye through a faire vineyard, at the verie first, give you a cluster of grapes, that full of the taste, you may long to passe further. Hee beginneth not with obscure definitions, which must blurre the margent with interpretations, and loade the memorie with doubtfullnesse: but hee commeth to you with words set in delightfull proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for the well enchanting skill of musicke, and with a tale forsooth he commeth unto you, with a tale, which holdeth children from play, and olde men from the Chimney corner; and pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the minde from wickednes to vertue; even as the child is often brought to take most wholesome things by hiding them in such other as have a pleasaunt taste: which if one should begin to tell them the nature of the Alloes or Rhabarbarum they should receive, wold sooner take their physic at their eares then at their mouth, so it is in men (most of which, are childish in the best things, til they be cradled in their graves) glad they will be to heare the tales of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas, and hearing them, must needes heare the right description of wisdom, value, and justice; which if they had bene barely (that is to say Philosophically) set out, they would sweare they be brought to schoole againe; that imitation whereof Poetrie is, hath the most conveniencie to nature of al other: insomuch that as Aristotle saith, those things which in themselves are horrible, as cruel battailes, unnatural monsters, are made in poetickall imitation,

delightfull. Truly I have known men, that even with reading Amadis de gaule, which God knoweth, wanteth much of a perfect Poesie, have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesie, liberalitie, and especially courage. Who readeth Aeneas carrying old Anchises on his backe, that wisheth not it were his fortune to performe so excellent an Act? Whom doth not those words of Turnus moove, (the Tale of Turnus having planted his image in the imagination) fugientam haec terra videbit? Usqueadeone mori miserum est? Wher the Philosophers as they think scorne to delight, so must they be content little to moove; saving wrangling whether Virtus be the chiefe or the onely good; whether the contemplative or the active life do excell; which Plato and Poetius well knew: and therefore made mistresse Philosophie very often borrow the masking raiment of Poesie. For even those hard hearted evill men who thinke vertue a schoole name, and know no other good but indulgere genio, and therefore despise the austere admonitions of the Philosopher, and feele not the inward reason they stand upon, yet will be content to be delighted, which is all the good, fellow Poet seemes to promise; and so steale to see the form of goodnes, (which seene, they cannot but love) ere themseves be aware, as if they tooke a medicine of Cheries. Infinit proofes of the straunge effects of this Poeticall invention, might be alleaged: onely two shall serve, which are so often remembered, as I thinke all men know them. The oone of Menemus Agrippa, who when the whole people of Rome had resolutely divided themselves from the Senate, with apparent shew of utter ruine, though he were for that time an excellent Orator, came not among them upon trust either of figurative speeches, or cunning insinuations, and much lesse with farre set Maximes of Philosophie, which especially if they were Platonike, they must have learned Geometrie before they could well have conceived: but forsooth, he behaveth himselfe like a homely and familiar Poet. He telleth them a tale, that there was a time, when all the parts of the bodie made a mutinous conspiracie against the belly, which they thought devoured the frutes of each others labour: they concluded that they would let so unprofitable a spender starve. In the end, to be short, for the tale is notorious, and as notorious that it was a tale, with punishing the belly they plagued themselves; this applied by him, wrought such effect in the people, as I never red, that onely words brought foorth: but then so sudden and so good an alteration, for upon reasonable conditions, a perfect reconcilment ensued. The other is of Nathan the Prophet, who when the holy David, had so farre forsaken God, as to confirme Adulterie with murther, when he was to do the tendrest office of a friend, in laying his owne shame before his eyes; sent by God to call againe so chosen a servant, how doth he it? but by telling of a man whose beloved lambe was ungratefully taken from his bosome. The Application most divinely true, but the discourse it selfe fained; which made David (I speake of the second and instrumentall cause) as in a glasse see his owne filthinesse as that heavenly Psalme of mercie well testifieth. By these therefore examples and reasons, I thinke it may be manifest, that the Poet with that same hand of delight, doth draw the mind more effectually then any other Art doth. And so a conclusion not unfitly ensue, that as vertue is the most excellent resting place for al worldly learning to make his end of, so Poetry being the most familiar to teach it, and most Princely to move towards it, in the most excellent worke, is the most excellent workeman. But I am content not onely to decipher him by his workes (although workes in commendation and dispraise, must ever hold a high authoritie) but more narrowly will examine his parts, so that (as in a man) though altogither may carrie a presence full of majestie and bewtie, perchance in some one defectuous peece we may finde blemish: Now in his parts, kindes, or species, as you list to tearme them, it is to be noted that some Poesies have coupled together two or three kindes, as the

Tragicall and Comick, whereupon is risen the Tragicomicall, some in the manner have mingled prose and verse, as Sanazara and Boetius; some have mingled matters Heroicall and Pastorall, but that commeth all to one in this question, for if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtfull: therefore perchance forgetting some, and leaving some as needlesse to be remembered. It shall not be amisse, in a word to cite the speciall kindes, to see what faults may be found in the right use of them. Is it then the Pastorall Poeme which is misliked? (For perchance where the hedge is lowest they will soonest leape over) is the poore pipe disdained, which sometimes out of Moelibeus mouth, can shewe the miserie of people, under hard Lords and ravening souldiers? And again by Titerus, what blessednesse is derived, to them that lie lowest, from the goodnesse of them that sit highest? Sometimes under the prettie tales of Woolves and sheepe, can enclude the whole considerations of wrong doing and patience; sometimes shew that contentions for trifles, can get but a trifling victory, wher perchance a man may see, that even Alexander & Darius, when they strave who should be Cocke of this worldes dunghill, the benefit they got, was, that the afterlivers may say, Haec memini & victum frustra contendere Thirsim. Ex illo Coridon, Coridon est tempore nobis. Or is it the lamenting Elegiack, which in a kinde heart would moove rather pittie then blame, who bewaileth with the great Philosopher Heraclitus; the weaknesse of mankinde, and the wretchednesse of the world: who surely is to bee praised either for compassionate accompanying just causes of lamentations, or for rightlie painting out how weake be the passions of woefulnesse? Is it the bitter but wholesome Iambick, who rubbes the galled minde, in making shame the Trumpet of villanie, with bolde and open crying out against naughtinesse? Or the Satirick, who Omne vafer vitium ridenti tangit amico, who sportingly, never leaveth, till he make a man laugh at follie; and at length ashamed, to laugh at himself; which he cannot avoyde, without avoyding the follie? who while Circum praecordia ludit, giveth us to feele how many headaches a passionate life bringeth us to? How when all is done, Est Ulubris animus si nos non deficit aequus. No perchance it is the Comick, whom naughtie Play-makers and stage-keepers, have justly made odious. To the arguments of abuse, I will after answer, onely thus much now is to be said, that the Comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life, which he representeth in the most ridiculous & scornfull sort that may be: so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one. Now as in Geometrie, the oblique must be knowne as well as the right, and in Arithmetick, the odde as well as the even, so in the actions of our life, who seeth not the filthinesse of evill, wanteth a great foile to perceiue the bewtie of vertue. This doth the Comaedie handle so in our private and domesticall matters, as with hearing it, wee get as it were an experience what is to be looked for of a niggardly Demea, of a crafty Davus, of a flattering Gnato, of a vain-glorious Thraso and not onely to know what effects are to be expected, but to know who be such, by the signifying badge given them by the Comaediens. And little reason hath any man to say, that men learne the evill by seeing it so set out, since as I said before, there is no man living, but by the force truth hath in nature, no sooner seeth these men play their parts, but wisheth them in Pistrinum, although perchance the lack of his owne faults lie so behinde his backe, that he seeth not himselfe to dance the same measure: whereto yet nothing can more open his eies, then to see his owne actions contemptibly set forth. So that the right use of Comaedie, will I thinke, by no bodie be blamed; and much lesse of the high and excellent Tragedie, that openeth the greatest woundes, and sheweth forth the Ulcers that are covered with Tissue, that maketh Kings feare to be Tyrants, and Tyrants manifest their tyrannicall humours, that with stirring the affects of

Admiration and Comiseration, teacheth the uncertaintie of this world, and uppon how weak foundations guilden roofes are builded: that maketh us know, Qui scepra Saevus duro imperio regit, Timet timentes, metus in authorem redit. But how much it can move, Plutarch yeeldeth a notable testimonie of the abhominable Tyrant Alexander Pheraeus, from whose eyes a Tragedie well made and represented, drew abundance of teares, who without all pittie had murdered infinite numbers, and some of his owne blood: so as he that was not ashamed to make matters for Tragedies, yet could not resist the sweete violence of a Tragedie. And if it wrought no further good in him, it was, that in despite of himself, withdrew himselfe form hearkening to that which might mollifie his hard heart. But it is not the Tragedie they doe mislike, for it were too absurd to cast out so excellent a representation of whatsoever is most woorthie to be learned. Is it the Lyricke that most displeaseth, who with his tuned Lyre and well accorded voice, giveth praise, the reward of vertue, to vertuous acts? who giveth morall preceptes and naturall Problemes, who sometimes raiseth up his voyce to the height of the heavens, in singing the laudes of the immortall God? Certainly I must confesse mine owne barbarousnesse, I never heard the old Song of Percy and Duglas, that I founde not my heart mooved more than with a Trumpet; and yet is it sung but by some blinde Crowder, with no rougher voyce, then rude stile: which being so evill apparelled in the dust and Cobwebbes of that uncivill age, what would it worke, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar? In Hungarie I have seene it the manner at all Feastes and other such like meetings, to have songs of their ancestors valure, which that right souldierlike nation, think one of the chiefeest kindlers of brave courage. The incomparabl Lacedemonians, did not onelie carrie that kinde of Musicke ever with them to the field, but even at home, as such songs were made, so were they all content to be singers of them: when the lustie men were to tell what they did, the old men what they had done, and the yoong what they would doo. And where a man may say that Pindare many times praiseth highly Victories of small moment, rather matters of sport then vertue, as it may be answered, it was the fault of the Poet, and not of the Poetrie; so indeed the chiefe fault was, in the time and custome of the Greekes, who set those toyes at so high a price, that Philip of Macedon reckoned a horse-race wonne at Olympus, among his three fearfull felicities. But as the unimitable Pindare often did, so is that kind most capable and most fit, to awake the thoughts from the sleepe of idlenesse, to embrace honourable enterprises. Their rests the Heroicall, whose verie name I thinke should daunt all backbiters. For by what conceit can a tongue bee directed to speake evil of that which draweth with him no lesse champions then Achilles, Cirus, Aeneas, Turnus, Tideus, Rinaldo, who doeth not onely teache and moove to a truth, but teacheth and mooveth to the most high and excellent truth: who maketh magnanimitie and justice, shine through all mistie fearfulnessse and foggie desires. Who if the saying of Plato and Tully bee true, that who could see vertue, woulde be woonderfullie ravished with the love of her bewtie. This man setteth her out to make her more lovely in her holliday apparell, to the eye of anie that will daine, not to disdaine untill they understand. But if any thing be alreadie said in the defence of sweete Poetrie, all concurrith to the mainteining the Heroicall, which is not onlie a kinde, but the best and most accomplished kindes of Poetrie. For as the Image of each Action stirreth and instructeth the minde, so the loftie Image of such woorthies, moste enflameth the minde with desire to bee woorthie: and enformes with counsaile how to bee woorthie. Onely let Aeneas bee worne in the Tablet of your memorie, how hee governeth himselfe in the ruine of his Countrey, in the preserving his olde Father, and carrying away his religious Ceremonies, in obeying Gods Commaundment, to leave Dido,

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though not onelie all passionate kindness, not even the humane consideration of vertuous gratefulnesse, would have craved other of him: how in stormes, how in sports, how in warre, how in peace, how a fugitive, how victorious, how besieged, how beseiging, how to straungers, how to Allies, how to enemies, how to his owne. Lastly, how in his inwarde selfe, and how in his outwarde government, and I thinke in a minde moste prejudiced with a prejudicating humour, Hee will bee founde in excellencie fruitefull. Yea as Horace saith, Melius Chrisippo & Crantore: but truly I imagin it falleth out with these Poet-whippers, as with some good women who often are sicke, but in faith they cannot tel where. So the name of Poetrie is odious to them, but neither his cause nor effects, neither the summe that containes him, nor the particularities descending from him, give any fast handle to their carping dispraise. Since then Poetrie is of all humane learnings the most ancient, and of most fatherly antiquitie, as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings; Since it is so universall, that no learned nation doth despise it, nor barbarous nation is without it; Since both Romane & Greeke gave such divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of making; and that indeed the name of making is fit for him, considering, that where all other Arts retain themselves within their subject, and receive as it were their being from it. The Poet onely, onely bringeth his owne stufte, and doth not learn a Conceit out of a matter, but maketh matter for a Conceit. Since neither his description, nor end, containing any evill, the thing described cannot be evil; since his effects be so good as to teach goodnes, and delight the learners of it; since therein (namely in morall doctrine the chiefe of all knowledges) hee doth not onely farre pass the Historian, but for instructing is well nigh comparable to the Philosopher, for moving, leaveth him behind him. Since the holy scripture (wherein there is no uncleanesse) hath whole parts in it Poeticall, and that even our Savior Christ vouchsafed to use the flowers of it: since all his kindes are not only in their united formes, but in their severed dissections fully commendable, I thinke, (and thinke I thinke rightly) the Lawrell Crowne appointed for triumphant Captaines, doth worthily of all other learnings, honour the Poets triumph. But bicause we have eares as well as toongs, and that the lightest reasons that may be, will seeme to waigh greatly, if nothing be put in the counterballance, let us heare, and as well as we can, ponder what objections be made against this Art, which may be woorthie either of yeelding, or answering. First truly I note, not onely in these mysomousoi, Poet-haters, but in all that kind of people who seek a praise, by dispraising others, that they do prodigally spend a great many wandring words in quips and scoffes, carping and taunting at each thing, which by sturring the spleene, may staie the brain from a th[o]rough beholding the worthinesse of the subject. Those kind of objections, as they are full of a verie idle easinesse, since there is nothing of so sacred a majestie, but that an itching toong may rub it selfe upon it, so deserve they no other answer, but in steed of laughing at the jeast, to laugh at the jeaster. We know a playing wit can praise the discretion of an Asse, the comfortablenes of being in debt, and the jolly commodities of being sicke of the plague. So of the contrary side, if we will turne Ovids verse, Ut lateat virtus, prox imitate mali, that good lye hid, in nearnesse of the evill. Agrippa will be as mery in shewing the vanitie of Science, as Erasmus was in the commending of folly: neither shal any man or matter, escape some touch of these smiling Raylers. But for Erasmus and Agrippa, they had an other foundation then the superficial part would promise. Marry these other pleasaunt fault-finders, who will correct the Verbe, before they understande the Nowne, and confute others knowledge, before they confirme their owne, I would have them onely remember, that scoffing commeth not of wisdom; so as the best title in true English they get with their

meriments, is to be called good fooles: for so have our grave forefathers ever tearmed that humorous kinde of jesters. But that which giveth greatest scope to their scorning humor, is ryming and versing. It is alreadie said (and as I thinke truly said) it is not ryming and versing that maketh Poesie: One may be a Poet without versing, and a versefier without Poetrie. But yet presuppose it were inseperable, as indeed it seemeth Scalliger judgeth truly, it were an inseperable commendation. For if Oratio, next to Ratio, Speech next to Reason, be the greatest gift bestowed upon Mortalitie, that cannot bee praiseless, which doth most polish that blessing of speech; which considereth each word not onely as a man may say by his forcible qualitie, but by his best measured quantity: carrying even in themselves a Harmonie, without perchance number, measure, order, proportion, be in our time growne odious. But laie aside the just praise it hath, by being the onely fit speech for Musicke, (Musicke I say the most divine striker of the senses) Thus much is undoubtedly true, that if reading be foolish without remembring, Memorie being the onely treasure of knowledge, those words which are fittest for memory, are likewise most convenient for knowledge. Now that Verse far exceedeth Prose, in the knitting up of the memorie, the reason is manifest, the words (besides their delight, which hath a great affinitie to memorie) being so set as one cannot be lost, but the whole woorke failes: which accusing it selfe, calleth the remembrance back to it selfe, and so most strongly confirmeth it. Besides one word, so as it were begetting an other, as be it in rime or measured verse, by the former a man shall have a neare gesse to the follower. Lastly even they that have taught the Art of memory, have shewed nothing so apt for it, as a certain roome divided into many places, well & thoroughly knowne: Now that hath the verse in effect perfectly, everie word having his natural seat, which must needs make the word remembred. But what needes more in a thing so knowne to all men. Who is it that ever was scholler, that doth not carry away som verse of Virgil, Horace, or Cato, which in his youth hee learned, and even to his old age serve him for hourelly lessons; as Percontatorem fugito nam garrulus idem est, Dum tibi quisq; placet credula turba sumas. But the fitnes it hath for memorie, is notably proved by all deliverie of Arts, wherein for the most part, from Grammer, to Logick, Mathematickes, Physick, and the rest, the Rules chiefly necessa[r]ie to be borne away, are compiled in verses. So that verse being in it selfe sweet and orderly, and being best for memorie, the onely handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it. Now then goe we to the most important imputations laid to the poore Poets, for ought I can yet learne, they are these. First, that there beeing manie other more frutefull knowledges, a man might better spend his time in them, then in this. Secondly, that it is the mother of lyes. Thirdly, that it is the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilent desires, with a Sirens sweetnesse, drawing the minde to the Serpents taile of sinfull fansies; and herein especially Comedies give the largest field to eare, as Chawcer saith, how both in other nations and in ours, before Poets did soften us, we were full of courage given to martial exercises, the pillers of man-like libertie, and not lulled a sleepe in shadie idlenes, with Poets pastimes. And lastly and chiefly, they cry out with open mouth as if they had shot Robin-hood, that Plato banisheth them out of his Commonwealth. Truly this is much, if there be much truth in it. First to the first. That a man might better spend his time, is a reason indeed: but it doth as they say, but petere principium. For if it be, as I affirme, that no learning is so good, as that which teacheth and moveth to vertue, and that none can both teach and move thereto so much as Poesie, then is the conclusion manifest; that incke and paper cannot be to a more profitable purpose employed. And certainly though a man should graunt their first assumption, it should follow (mee thinks) very unwillingly, that

good is not good, because better is better. But I still and utterly deny, that there is sprung out of the earth a more fruitfull knowledge. To the second therefore, that they should be the principall lyers, I answer Paradoxically, but truly, I think truly: that of all writers under the Sunne, the Poet is the least lyer: and though he wold, as a Poet can scarecely be a lyer. The Astronomer with his cousin the Geometrician, can hardly escape, when they take upon them to measure the height of the starres. How often thinke you do the Phisitians lie, when they averre things good for sicknesses, which afterwards send Charon a great number of soules drowned in a potion, before they come to his Ferrie? And no lesse of the rest, which take upon them to affirme. Now for the Poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth: for as I take it, to lie, is to affirme that to bee true, which is false. So as the other Artistes, and especially the Historian, affirming manie things, can in the clowdie knowledge of mankinde, hardly escape from manie lies. But the Poet as I said before, never affirmeth, the Poet never maketh any Circles about your imagination, to conjure you to beleeve for true, what he writeth: he citeth not authorities of other histories, even for his entrie, calleth the sweete Muses to inspire unto him a good invention. In troth, not laboring to tel you what is, or is not, but what should, or should not be. And therefore though he recount things not true, yet because he telleth them not for true, he lieth not: without we will say, that Nathan lied in his speech before alleaged to David, which as a wicked man durst scarce say, so think I none so simple, wold say, that Esope lied, in the tales of his beasts: for who thinketh Esope wrote it for actually true, were wel wothie to have his name Cronicled among the beasts he writeth of. What childe is there, that comming to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old Doore, doth beleeve that it is Thebes? If then a man can arrive to the childes age, to know that the Poets persons and dooings, are but pictures, what should be, and not stories what have bin, they will never give the lie to things not Affirmatively, but Allegorically and figuratively written; and therefore as in historie looking for truth, they may go away full fraught with falshood: So in Poesie, looking but for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative groundplat of a profitable invention. But hereto is replied, that the Poets give names to men they write of, which argueth a conceit of an actuall truth, and so not being true, prooveth a falshood. And dooth the Lawier lye, then when under the names of John of the Stile, and John of the Nokes, hee putteth his Case? But that is easily answered, their naming of men, is but to make their picture the more lively, and not to build anie Historie. Painting men, they cannot leave men namelesse: wee see, wee cannot plaie at Chestes, but that wee must give names to our Chessmen; and yet mee thinkes he were a verie partiall Champion of truth, that would say wee lyed, for giving a peece of wood the reverende title of a Bishop. The Poet nameth Cyrus and Aeneas, no other way, then to shewe what men of their fames, fortunes, and estates, should doo. Their third is, how much it abuseth mens wit, training it to wanton sinfulnessse, and lustfull love. For indeed that is the principall if not onely abuse, I can heare alleaged. They say the Comedies rather teach then reprehend amorous conceits. They say the Lirick is larded with passionat Sonets, the Elegiack weeps the want of his mistresse, and that even to the Heroical, Cupid hath ambitiously climed. Alas Love, I would thou couldest as wel defend thy selfe, as thou canst offend others: I would those on whom thou doest attend, could either put thee away, or yeeld good reason why they keepe thee. But grant love of bewtie to be a beastly fault, although it be verie hard, since onely man and no beast hath that gift to discern bewtie, graunt that lovely name of love to deserve all hatefull reproches, although even some of my maisters the Philosophers spent a good deale of their Lampoyle in setting foorth the excellencie of it, graunt I

say, what they will have graunted, that not onelie love, but lust, but vanitie, but if they will list scurrilitie, possesse manie leaves of the Poets bookes, yet thinke I, when this is graunted, they will finde their sentence may with good manners put the last words foremost; and not say, that Poetrie abuseth mans wit, but that mans wit abuseth Poetrie. For I will not denie, but that mans wit may make Poesie, which should be eikastike, which some learned have defined figuring fourth good things to be phantastike, which doth contrariwise infect the fancie with unwoorthie objects, as the Painter should give to the eye either some excellent perspective, or some fine Picture fit for building or fortification, or containing in it some notable example, as Abraham sacrificing his sonne Isaack, Judith killing Holofernes, David fighting with Goliath, may leave those, and please an ill pleased eye with wanton shewes of better hidden matters. But what, shal the abuse of a thing, make the right use odious? Nay truly though I yeeld that Poesie may not onely be abused, but that being abused it can do more hurt then anie other armie of words: yet shall it be so farre from concluding, that the abuse should give reproach to the abused, that contrariwise, it is a good reason, that whatsoever being abused, doth most harme, being rightly used (and upon the right use, ech thing receives his title) doth most good. Do we not see skill of Phisicke the best ramper to our often assaulted bodies, being abused, teach poyson the most violent destroyer? Doth not knowledge of Law, whose end is, to even & right all things, being abused, grow the crooked fosterer of horrible injuries? Doth not (to go to the highest) Gods word abused, breed heresie, and his name abused, become blasphemie? Truly a Needle cannot do much hurt, and as truly (with leave of Ladies be it spoken) it cannot do much good. With a sword thou maist kill thy Father, and with a sword thou maist defende the Prince and Country: so that, as in their calling Poets, fathers of lies, they said nothing, so in this their argument of abuse, they proove the commendation. They alledge herewith, that before Poets began to be in price, our Nation had set their hearts delight uppon action, and not imagination, rather doing things worthie to be written, then writing things fit to be done. What that before times was, I think scarcely Sp[h]inx can tell, since no memorie is so ancient, that hath not the precedens of Poetrie. And certain it is, that in our plainest homelines, yet never was the Albion Nation without Poetrie. Marry this Argument, though it be leveled against Poetrie, yet is it indeed a chain-shot against all learning or bookishnes, as they commonly terme it. Of such mind were certaine Gothes, of whom it is written, that having in the spoile of a famous Cittie, taken a faire Librarie, one hangman belike fit to execute the frutes of their wits, who had murdered a great number of bodies, woulde have set fire in it. No said an other verie gravely, take heed what you do, for while they are busie about those toyes, wee shall with more leisure conquer their Countries. This indeed is the ordinarie doctrine of ignorance, and many words sometimes I have heard spent in it: but bicause this reason is generally against al learning, as well as Poetrie, or rather all learning but Poetrie, because it were too great a digression to handle it, or at least too superfluous, since it is manifest that all government of action is to be gotten by knowledge, and knowledge best, by gathering manie knowledges, which is reading; I onlely with Horace, to him that is of that opinion, jubeo stultum esse libenter, for as for Poetrie it selfe, it is the freest from this objection, for Poetrie is the Companion of Camps. I dare undertake, Orlando Furioso, or honest king Arthure, will never displease a souldier: but the quidditie of Ens & Prima materia, will hardly agree with a Corcelet. And therefore as I said in the beginning, even Turkes and Tartars, are delighted with Poets. Homer a Greeke, flourished, before Greece flourished: and if to a slight conjecture, a conjecture may bee apposed, truly it may seem, that as by him their learned

men tooke almost their first light of knowledge, so their active men, received their first motions of courage. Onely Alexanders example may serve, who by Plutarche is accounted of such vertue, that fortune was not his guide, but his footestoole, whose Acts speake for him, though Plutarche did not: indeede the Phoenix of warlike Princes. This Alexander, left his schoolemaister living Arितotle behinde him, but tooke dead Homer with him. Hee put the Philosopher Callithenes to death, for his seeming Philosophicall, indeede mutinous stubbornnesse, but the chiefe thing hee was ever heard to wish for, was, that Homer had bene alive. Hee well founde hee received more braverie of minde by the paterne of Achilles, then by hearing the definition of fortitude. And therefore if Cato misliked Fulvius for carrying Ennius with him to the field, It may be answered, that if Cato misliked it, the Noble Fulvius liked it, or else he had not done it, for it was not the excellent Cato Uticensis, whose authoritie I would much more have revered: But it was the former, in truth a bitter punisher of faultes, but else a man that had never sacrificed to the Graces. He misliked and cried out against all Greeke learning, and yet being foure score yeares olde began to learne it, belike fearing that Pluto understood not Latine. Indeede the Romane lawes allowed no person to bee to the warres, but hee that was in the souldiers Role. And therefore though Cato misliked his unmustred person, he misliked not his worke. And if hee had, Scipio Nasica, (judged by common consent the best Romane) loved him: both the other Scipio brothers, who had by their vertues no lesse surnames then of Asia and Afficke, so loved him, that they caused his bodie to be buried in their Sepulture. So as Catoes authoritie beeing but against his person, and that answered with so farre greater then himselfe, is herein of no validitie. But now indeede my burthen is great, that Plato his name is laide uppon me, whom I must confesse of all Philosophers, I have ever esteemed most worthie of reverence; and with good reason, since of all Philosophers hee is the most Poeticall: yet if hee will defile the fountain out of which his flowing streames have proceeded, let us boldly examine with what reasons hee did it. First truly a man might maliciously object, that Plato being a Philosopher, was a naturall enemy of Poets. For indeede after the Philosophers had picked out of the sweete misteries of Poetrie, the right discerning true points of knowledge: they forthwith putting it in methode, and making a Schoole Art of that which the Poets did onely teach by a divine delightfulness, beginning to spurne at their guides, like ungratefull Prentices, were not content to set up shop for themselves, but sought by all meanes to discredit their maisters, which by the force of delight being barred them, the lesse they could overthrow them, the more they hated them. For indeede they found for Homer, seven cities, strave who should have him for their Cittizen, where so many Cities banished Philosophers, as not fit members to live among them. For onely repeating certaine of Euripides verses, many Atheniens had their lives saved of the Siracusans, where the Atheniens themseves thought many Philosophers unworthie to live. Certaine Poets, as Simonides, and Pindarus, had so prevailed with Hiero the first, that of a Tyrant they made him a just King: where Plato could do so little with Dionisius, that he himselfe of a Philosopher, was made a slave. But who should do thus, I confesse should requite the objections made against Poets, with like cavilations against Philosophers: as likewise one should do, that should bid one read Phaedrus or Simposium in Plato, or the discourse of love in Plutarch, and see whether any Poet do authorise abhominable filthinesse as they doo. Againe, a man might aske, out of what Common- wealth Plato doth banish them, in sooth, thence where himselfe alloweth communitie of women. So as belike this banishment grew not for effeminate wantonnesse, since little should Poetical Sonnets be hurtful, when a man might have what woman he listed. But I honor Philosophicall instructions, and

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blesse the wits which bred them: so as they be not abused, which is likewise stretched to Poetrie. S. Paul himselfe sets a watch-word uppon Philosophie, indeed upon the abuse. So doth PLato uppon the abuse, not upon Poetrie. Plato found fault that the Poettes of his time, filled the worlde with wr[o]ng opinions of the Gods, making light tales of that unspotted essence; and therefore wold not have the youth depraved with such opinions: heerein may much be said; let this suffice. The Poets did not induce such opinions, but did imitate those opinions already induced. For all the Greeke stories can well testifie, that the verie religion of that time, stood upon many, and many fashioned Gods: Not taught so by Poets, but followed according to their nature of imitation. Who list may read in Plutarch, the discourses of Isis and Osiris, and of the cause why Oracles ceased, of the divine providence, & see whether the Theology of that nation, stood not upon such dreams, which the Poets indeede superstitiously observed. And truly since they had not the light of Christ, did much better in it, then the Philosophers, who shaking off superstition, brought in Atheisme. Plato therefore, whose authoritie, I had much rather justly consture, then unjustly resist: ment not in generall of Poets, in those words of which Julius Scaliger saith; Qua autoritate barbari quidam atq; hispidi abuti velint ad poetas e rep. Exigendos. But only ment to drive out those wrong opinions of the Deitie: wherof now without further law, Christianitie hath taken away all the hurtfull believe, perchance as he thought nourished by then esteemed Poets. And a man need go no further then to Plato himselfe to knowe his meaning: who in his Dialogue called Ion, giveth high, and rightly, divine commendation unto Poetrie. So as Plato banisheth the abuse, not the thing, not banishing it, but giving due honour to it, shall be our Patron, and not our adversarie. For indeed, I had much rather, since truly I may do it, shew their mistaking of Plato, under whose Lyons skinne, they would make an Aslike braying against Poesie, then go about to overthrow his authoritie; whome the wiser a man is, the more just cause he shall finde to have in admiration: especially since he attributeth unto Poesie, more then my selfe do; namely, to be a verie inspiring of a divine force, farre above mans wit, as in the forenamed Dialogue is apparant. Of the other side, who would shew the honours have bene by the best sort of judgements graunted them, a whole sea of examples woulde present themselves; Alexanders, Caesars, Scipioes, all favourers of Poets: Laelius, called the Romane Socrates himselfe a Poet; so as part of Heautontimoroumenon in Terence, was supposed to bee made by him. And even the Greeke Socrates, whome Appollo confirmed to bee the onely wise man, is said to have spent part of his olde time in putting Esopes Fables into verses. And therefore full evill should it become his scholler Plato, to put such words in his maisters mouth against Poets. But what needs more? Aristotle writes of the Arte of Poesie, and why, if it should not bee written? Plutarche teacheth the use to bee gathered of them, and how, if they should not bee reade? And who reades Plutarches either Historie or Philosophie, shall finde hee trimmeth both their garments with gardes of Poesie. But I list not to defend Poesie with the helpe of his underling Historiographie. Let it suffice to have shewed, it is a fit soyle for praise to dwell uppon; and what dispraise may set uppon it, is either easily overcome, or transformed into just commendation. So that since the excellencies of it, may bee so easily and so justly confirmed, and the lowe creeping objections so soone trodden downe, it not beeing an Art of lyes, but of true doctrine; not of effoeminatenesse, but of notable stirring of courage; not of abusing mans wit; but of strengthening mans wit; not banished, but honored by Plato; Let us rather plant more Lawrels for to ingarland the Poets heads (which honor of being Lawreate, as besides them onely triumphant Captaines were, is a sufficient authoritie to shewe the price they ought to bee held in) then suffer the ill favoured

breath of such wrong speakers once to blow upon the cleare springs of Poesie. But sice I have runne so long a Carrier in this matter, me thinkes before I give my penne a full stoppe, it shall be but a little more lost time, to enquire why England the Mother of excellent mindes should be growne so hard a stepmother to Poets, who certainly in wit ought to passe all others, since all onely proceeds from their wit, beeing indeed makers of themselves, not takers of others. How can I but exclaime. *Musa mihi causas memoria quo numine laeso.* Sweete Poesie that hath aunciently had Kings, Emperours, Senatours, great Captaines, such as besides a thousandes others, David, Adrian, Sophocles, Germanicus, not onelie to favour Poets, but to bee Poets: and of our nearer times, can present for her Patrons, a Robert King of Scicill, the great King Fraunces of Fraunce, King James of Scotland; such Cardinalls as Bembus, and Bibiena; suche famous Preachers and Teachers, as Beza and Melanchthon; so learned Philosophers as Fracastorius, and Scaliger; so great Orators, as Pontanus, and Muretus; so pearcing wits, as George Buchanan; so grave Counsailours, as besides manie, but before all, that Hospitall of Fraunce; then whome I thinke that Realme never brought forth a more accomplished Judgement, more firmly builded upon vertue: I say these with numbers of others, not onely to read others Poesies, but to poetise for others reading; that Poesie thus embraced in all other places, should onely finde in our time a hard welcome in England. I thinke the verie earth laments it, and therefore deckes our soyle with fewer Lawrels then it was accustomed. For heretofore, Poets have in England also flourished: and which is to be noted, even in those times when the trumpet of Mars did sonnd lowdest. And now that an over faint quietnesse should seeme to strowe the house for Poets. They are almost in as good reputation, as the Mountebanckes at Venice. Truly even that, as of the one side it giveth great praise to Poesie, which like Venus (but to better purpose) had rather be troubled in the net with Mars, then enjoy the homely quiet of Vulcan. So serveth it for a peece of a reason, why they are lesse gratefull to idle England, which now can scarce endure the paine of a penne. Upon this necessarily followeth, that base men with evill wits undertake it, who thinke it inough if they can be rewarded of the Printer: and so as Epaminandas is said with the honor of his vertue to have made an Office, by his execising it, which before was contemtible, to become highly respected: so these men no more but setting their names to it, by their own disgracefulnesse, disgrace the most gracefull Poesie. For now as if all the Muses were got with childe, to bring forth bastard Poets: without any commission, they do passe over the Bankes of the Helicon, till they make the Readers more wearie then Post- horses: while in the meane time, they *Queis meliore luto finxit praecordia Titan*, are better content to suppress the out- flowings of their wit, then by publishing them, to be accounted Knights of the same order. But I that before ever I durst aspire unto the dignitie, am admitted into the companie of the Paper-blurrers, do finde the verie true cause of our wanting estimation, is want of desert, taking upon us to be Poets, in despite of Pallas. Now wherein we want desert, were a thankwoorthie labour to expresse. But if I knew I should have mended my selfe, but as I never desired the title, so have I neglected the meanes to come by it, onely over-mastered by some thoughts, I yeilded an inckie tribute unto them. Marrie they that delight in Poesie it selfe, should seek to know what they do, and how they do: and especially looke themselves in an unflattering glasse of reason, if they be enclinable unto it. For Poesie must not be drawne by the eares, it must be gently led, or rather it must lead, which was partly the cause that made the auncient learned affirme, it was a divine gift & no humane skil; since all other knowledges lie readie for anie that have strength of wit: A Poet no industrie can make, if his owne Genius be not carried into it. And therefore is an old Proverbe, *Orator fit, Poeta*

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nascitur. Yet confesse I alwaies, that as the fertilest ground must be manured, so must the highest flying wit have a Dedalus to guide him. That Dedalus they say both in this and in other, hath three wrings to beare itself up into the aire of due commendation: that is Art, Imitation, and Exercise. But these neither Artificall Rules, nor imitative paternes, we much comber our selves withall. Exercise indeed we do, but that verie fore-backwardly; for where we should exercise to know, we exercise as having knowne: and so is our braine delivered of much matter, which never was begotten by knowledge. For there being two principall parts, Matter to be expressed by words, and words to expresse the matter: In neither, wee use Art or imitation rightly. Our matter is, Quodlibet, indeed though wrongly performing, Ovids Verse. Quicquid conabar dicere, Versus erit: never marshalling it into anie assured ranck, that almost the Readers cannot tell where to finde themselves. Chawcer undoubtedly did excellently in his Troilus and Creseid: of whome trulie I knowe not whether to mervaile more, either that hee in that mistie time could see so clearly, or that wee in this cleare age, goe so stumblingly after him. Yet had hee great wants, fit to be forgiven in so reverent an Antiquitie. I account the Mirrour of Magistrates, meetly furnished of bewtiful partes. And in the Earle of Surreis Lirickes, manie thinges tasting of a Noble birth, and worthie of a Noble minde. The Shepheards Kalender, hath much Poetrie in his Egloges, indeed woothie the reading, if I be not deceived. That same framing of his style to an old rusticke language, I dare not allow: since neither Theocritus in Greeke, Virgill in Latine, nor Sanazara in Italian, did affect it. Besides these, I doo not remember to have seene but fewe (to speake boldly) printed, that have poetically sinnewes in them. For proove whereof, let but moste of the Verses bee put in prose, and then aske the meaning, and it will be founde, that one Verse did but beget an other, without ordering at the first, what should bee at the last, which becomes a confused masse of words, with a tingling sound of ryme, barely accompanied with reasons. Our Tragedies and Commedies, not without cause cryed out against, observing rules neither of honest civilitie, nor skilfull Poetrie. Excepting Gorboducke, (againe I say of those that I have seen) which notwithstanding as it is full of stately speeches, and wel sounding phrases, clyming to the height of Seneca his style, and as full of notable morallitie, which it dooth most delightfully teach, and so obtaine the verie ende of Poesie. Yet in truth, it is verie defectious in the circumstaunces, which greeves mee, because it might not remaine as an exact moddell of all Tragedies. For it is faultie both in place and time, the two necessarie Companions of all corporall actions. For where the Stage should alway represent but one place, and the uttermoste time presupposed in it, should bee both by Aristotles precept, and common reason, but one day; there is both manie dayes and places, inartificially imagined. But if it bee so in Gorboducke, howe much more in all the rest, where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Affricke of the other, and so manie other under Kingdomes, that the Player when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now you shall have three Ladies walke to gather flowers, and then we must beleeve the stage to be a garden. By and by we heare newes of shipwrack in the same place, then we are too blame if we accept it not for a Rock. Upon the back of that, comes out a hidious monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a Cave: while in the meane time two Armies flie in, represented with foure swords & bucklers, and then what hard hart wil not receive it for a pitched field. Now of time, they are much more liberall. For ordinarie it is, that two yoong Princes fall in love, after many traverses she is got with childe, delivered of a faire boy: he is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is readie to get another childe, and all this is in two houres space: which howe

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absurd it is in sence, even sence may imagine: and Arte hath taught, and all auncient examples justified, and at this day the ordinarie players in Italie will not erre in. Yet will some bring in an example of Eunuche in Terence, that containeth matter of two dayes, yet far short of twentie yeares. True it is, and so was it to be played in two dayes, and so fitted to the time it set foorth. And though Plautus have in one place done amisse, let us hit it with him, & not misse with him. But they will say, how then shall we set foorth a storie, which contains both many places, and many times? And do they not know that a Tragidie is tied to the lawes of Poesie and not of Historie: not bounde to follow the storie, but having libertie either to faine a quite new matter, or to frame the Historie to the most Tragicall conveniencie. Againe, many things may be told which cannot be shewed: if they know the difference betwixt reporting and representing. As for example, I may speake though I am here, of Peru, and in speech digresse from that, to the description of Calecut: But in action, I cannot represent it without Pacolet's Horse. And so was the manner the Auncients tooke, by some Nuntius, to recount things done in former time or other place. Lastly, if they will represent an Historie, they must not (as Horace saith) beginne ab ovo, but they must come to the principall poynte of that one action which they will represent. By example this will be best expressed. I have a storie of yoong Polidorus, delivered for safeties sake with great riches, by his Father Priamus, to Polmimester King of Thrace, in the Troyan warre time. He after some yeares, hearing the overthrowe of Priamus, for to make the treasure his owne, murthereth the Childe, the bodie of the Childe is taken up, Hecuba, shee the same day, findeth a sleight to bee revenged moste cruelly of the Tyrant. Where nowe would one of our Tragedie writers begin, but with the deliverie of the Childe? Then should hee saile over into Thrace, and so spende I know not how many yeares, and travaile numbers of places. But where dooth Euripides? even with the finding of the bodie, the rest leaving to be told by the spirite of Polidorus. This needes no futher to bee enlarged, the dullest witte may conceive it. But besides these grosse absurdities, howe all their Playes bee neither right Tragedies, nor right Comedies, mingling Kinges and Clownes, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in the Clowne by head and shoulders to play a part in majesticall matters, with neither decencie nor discretion: so as neither the admiration and Commiseration, nor the the right sportfulnesse is by their mongrell Tragicomedie obtained. I know Apuleius did somewhat so, but that is a thing recounted with space of time, not represented in one moment: and I knowe the Auncients have one or two examples of Tragicomedies, as Plautus hath Amphitrio. But if we marke them well, wee shall finde that they never or verie daintily matche horne Pipes and Funeralls. So falleth it out, that having indeed no right Comedie in that Comicall part of our Tragidie, wee have nothing but scurrilitie unwoorthie of anie chaste eares, or some extreame shewe of doltishnesse, indeede fit to lift up a loude laughter and nothing else: where the whole tract of a Comedie should bee full of delight, as the Tragidie should bee still maintained in a well raised admiration. But our Comedients thinke there is no delight without laughter, which is verie wrong, for though laughter may come with delight, yet commeth it not of delight, as though delight should be the cause of laughter. But well may one thing breed both together. Nay rather in themselves, they have as it were a kinde of contrarietie: For delight wee scarely doo, but in thinges that have a conveniencie to our selves, or to the generall nature: Laughter almost ever commeth of thinges moste disproportioned to our selves, and nature. Delight hath a joy in it either permanent or present. Laughter hath onely a scornfull tickling. For example, wee are ravished with delight to see a faire woman, and yet are farre from beeing mooved to laughter. Wee laugh at deformed

creatures, wherein certainly wee cannot delight. We delight in good chaunces, wee laugh at mischaunces. We delight to heare the happinesse of our friendes and Countrey, at which hee were worthie to be laughed at, that would laugh: we shall contrarily laugh sometimes to finde a matter quite mistaken, and goe downe the hill against the byas, in the mouth of some such men as for the respect of them, one shall be heartily sorie, he cannot chuse but laugh, and so is rather pained, then delighted with laughter. Yet denie I not, but that they may goe well together, for as in Alexanders picture well set out, wee delight without laughter, and in twentie madde Antiques, wee laugh without delight. So in Hercules, painted with his great beard and furious countenance, in a womans attyre, spinning, at Omphales commaundement, it breeds both delight and laughter: for the representing of so straunge a power in Love, procures delight, and the scornefulnesse of the action, stirreth laughter. But I speake to this purpose, that all the ende of the Comicall part, bee not uppon suche scornefull matters as stirre laughter onelie, but mixe with it, that delightfull teaching whiche is the ende of Poesie. And the great faulte even in that poynt of laughter, and forbidden plainly by Aristotle, is, that they stirre laughter in sinfull things, which are rather execrable then ridiculous: or in miserable, which are rather to be pitied then scorned. For what is it to make folkes gape at a wretched begger, and a beggerly Clowne: or against lawe of hospitalitie, to jeast at straungers, because they speake not English so well as we do? What doo we learne, since it is certaine, Nil habet infoelix paupertas durius in se, Quam quod ridiculos homines facit. But rather a busie loving Courtier, and a hartelesse thretning Thraso, a selfe-wise seeming Schoolemaister, a wry transformed Traveller: these if we saw walke in Stage names, which we plaie naturally, therein were delightfull laughter, and teaching delightfulness; as in the other the Tragedies of Buchanan do justly bring forth a divine admiration. But I have lavished out too many words of this Play-matter; I do it, because as they are excellling parts of Poesie, so is there none so much used in England, and none can be more pittifully abused: which like an unmannerly daughter, shewing a bad education, causeth her mother Poesies honestie to be called in question. Other sort of Poetrie, almost have we none, but that Lyricall kind of Songs and Sonets; which Lord, if he gave us so good mindes, how well it might be employed, and with how heavenly fruites, both private and publike, in singing the praises of the immortall bewtie, the immortall goodnes of that God, who giveth us hands to write, and wits to conceive: of which we might wel want words, but never matter, of which we could turne our eyes to nothing, but we should ever have new budding occassions. But truly many of such writings as come under the banner of unresistable love, if I were a mistresse, would never perswade mee they were in love: so coldly they applie firie speeches, as men that had rather redde lovers writings, and so caught up certaine swelling Phrases, which hang together like a man that once tolde me the winde was at Northwest and by South, because he would be sure to name winds inough, then that in truth they feele those passions, which easily as I thinke, may be bewraied by that same forciblenesse or Energia, (as the Greeks call it of the writer). But let this be a sufficient, though short note, that we misse the right use of the material point of Poesie. Now for the outside of it, which is words, or (as I may tearme it) Diction, it is even well worse: so is it that hony-flowing Matrone Eloquence, apparrelled, or rather disguised, in a Courtisanlike painted affectation. One time with so farre fet words, that many seeme monsters, but must seeme straungers to anie poore Englishman: an other time with coursing of a letter, as if they were bound to follow the method of a Dictionary: an other time with figures and flowers, extremely winter-starved. But I would this fault were onely peculiar to Versefiers, and had not

as large possession among Prose- Printers: and which is to be mervailed among many Schollers, & which is to be pitied among some Preachers. Truly I could wish, if at I might be so bold to wish, in a thing beyond the reach of my capacity, the diligent Imitators of Tully & Demosthenes, most worthie to be imitated, did not so much keepe Nizolian paper bookes, of their figures and phrase, as by attentive translation, as it were, devoure them whole, and make them wholly theirs. For now they cast Sugar and spice uppon everie dish that is served to the table: like those Indians, not content to weare eare-rings at the fit and naturall place of the eares, but they will thrust Jewels through their nose and lippes, because they will be sure to be fine. Tully when he was to drive out Catiline, as it were with a thunderbolt of eloquence, often useth the figure of repitition, as Vivit & vincit, imo in senatum, Venit imo, in senatum venit, &c. Indeede enflamed, with a well grounded rage, hee would have his words (as it were ) double out of his mouth, and so do that artificially, which we see men in choller doo naturally. And we having noted the grace of those words, hale them in sometimes to a familiar Epistle, when it were too much choller to be chollericke. How well store of Similiter Cadenses, doth sound with the gravitie of the Pulpit, I woulde but invoke Demosthenes soule to tell: who with a rare daintinesse useth them. Truly they have made mee thinke of the Sophister, that with too much subiltie would prove two Egges three, and though he might bee counted a Sophister, had none for his labour. So these men bringing in such a kind of eloquence, well may they obtaine an opinion of a seeming finesse, but perswade few, which should be the end of their finesse. Now for similitudes in certain Printed discourses, I thinke all Herberists, all stories of beasts, foules, and fishes, are rifled up, that they may come in multitudes to wait upon any of our conceits, which certainly is as absurd a surfet to the eares as is possible. For the force of a similitude not being to prove any thing to a contrary disputer, but onely to explain to a willing hearer, when that is done, the rest is a most tedious prattling, rather overswaying the memorie from the purpose whereto they were applied, then anie whit enforming the judgement already either satisfied, or by similitudes not to be satisfied. For my part, I doo not doubt, when Antonius and Crassus, the great forefathers of Cicero in eloquence, the one (as Cicero testifieth of them) pretended not to know Art, the other not to set by it, (because with a plaine sensiblenesse, they might winne credit of popular eares, which credit, is the nearest steppe to perswasion, which perswasion, is the chiefe marke of Oratorie) I do not doubt I say, but that they used these knacks verie sparingly, which who doth generally use, any man may see doth dance to his own musick, and so to be noted by the audience, more careful to speak curiously than truly. Undoubtedly (at least to my opinion undoubtedly) I have found in divers smal learned Courtiers, a more sound stile, then in some professors of learning, of which I can gesse no other cause, but that the Courtier following that which by practice he findeth fittest to nature, therein (though he know it not) doth according to art, thogh not by art (as in these cases he shuld do) flieth from nature, & indeed abuseth art. But what? methinks, I deserve to be pounded for straying from Poetrie, to Oratory: but both have such an affinitie in the wordish consideration, that I think this digression will make my meaning receive the fuller understanding: which is not to take upon me to teach Poets how they should do, but only finding my selfe sicke among the rest, to shew some one or two spots of the common infection growne among the most part of writers; that acknowledging our selves somewhat awry, wee may bende to the right use both of matter and manner. Whereto our language giveth us great occasion, being indeed capable of any excellent exercising of it. I knowe some will say it is a mingled language: And why not, so much the better, taking the best of both the other? Another will say, it wanteth

Grammer. Nay truly it hath that praise that it wants not Grammar; for Grammer it might have, but it needs it not, being so easie in it selfe, and so voyd of those combersome differences of Cases, Genders, Moods, & Tenses, which I thinke was a peece of the Tower of Babilons curse, that a man should be put to schoole to learn his mother tongue. But for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceit of the minde, which is the end of speech, that hath it equally with any other tongue in the world. And is perticularly happy in compositions of two or three wordes together, neare the Greeke, farre beyonde the Latine, which is one of the greatest bewties can be in a language. Now of versefying, there are two sorts, the one auncient, the other moderne. The auncient marked the quantitie of each sillable, and according to that, framed his verse: The moderne, observing onely number, with some regard of the accent; the chiefe life of it, standeth in that like sounding of the words, which we call Rime. Whether of these be the more excellent, wold bear many speeches, the ancient no doubt more fit for Musicke, both words and time observing quantitie, and more fit, lively to expresse divers passions by the low or loftie sound of the well-wayed sillable. The latter likewise with his rime striketh a certaine Musicke to the ear: and in fine, since it dooth delight, though by an other way, it obtaineth the same purpose, there being in either sweetnesse, and wanting in neither, majestie. Truly the English before any Vulgare language, I know is fit for both sorts: for, for the auncient, the Italian is so full of Vowels, that it must ever be combred with Elisions. The Duch so of the other side with Consonants, that they cannot yeeld the sweete slyding, fit for a Verse. The French in his whole language, hath not one word that hath his accent in the last sillable, saving two, called Antepenultima; and little more hath the Spanish, and therefore verie gracelessly may they use Dactiles. The English is subject to none of these defects. Now for Rime, though we doo not observe quan[t]itie, yet we observe the Accent verie precisely, which other languages either cannot do, or will not do so absolutely. That Caesura, or breathing place in the midst of the Verse, neither Italian nor Spanish have: the French and we, never almost faile off. Lastly, even the verie Rime it selfe, the Italian cannot put it in the last sillable, by the French named the Masculine Rime; but still in the next to the last, which the French call the Female; or the next before that, which the Italian Sdrucchiola: the example of the former, is Buono, Suono, of the Sdrucchiola, is Femina, Semina. The French of the other side, hath both the Male as Bon, Son; and the Female, as Plaise, Taise; but the Sdrucchiola he hath not: where the English hath all three, as Du, Trew, Father, Rather, Motion, Potion, with much more which might be sayd, but that alreadie I finde the triflings of this discourse is much too much enlarged. So that since the ever-praise woorthie Poesie is full of vertue breeding delightfulness, and voyd of no gift that ought to be in the noble name of learning, since the blames layd against it, are either false or feeble, since the cause why it is not esteemed in England, is the fault of Poet- apes, not Poets. Since lastly our tongue is most fit to honour Poesie, and to bee honoured by Poesie, I conjure you all that have had the evill luck to read this inck-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the nine Muses, no more to scorne the sacred misteries of Poesie. No more to laugh at the name of Poets, as though they were next inheritors to fooles; no more to jest at the reverent title of a Rimer, but to beleeve with Aristotle, that they were the auncient Treasurers of the Grecians divinitie; to beleeve with Bembus, that they were the first bringers in of all Civilitie; to beleeve with Scalliger that no Philosophers precepts can sooner make you an honest man, then the reading of Virgil; to beleeve with Clauserus, the Translator of Cornatus, that it pleased the heavenly deitie by Hesiod and Homer, under the vaile of Fables to give us all knowledge, Logicke, Rhetoricke, Philosophie,

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naturall and morall, and Quid non? to beleeeve with me, that there are many misteries contained in Poetrie, which of purpose were written darkly, least by prophane wits it should be abused: To beleeeve with Landin, that they are so beloved of the Gods, that whatsoever they write, proceeds of a divine furie. Lastly, to beleeeve themselves when they tell you they will make you immortal by their verses. Thus doing, your name shall flourish in the Printers shops. Thus doing you shalbe of kin to many a Poeticall Preface. Thus doing, you shal be most faire, most rich, most wise, most all: you shall dwel upon Superlatives. Thus doing, though you be Libertino patre natus, you shall sodeinly grow Herculea proles. Si quid mea Carmina possunt. Thus doing, your soule shall be placed with Dantes Beatrix, or Virgils Anchises. But if (fie of such a but) you bee borne so neare the dull-making Cataract of Nilus, that you cannot heare the Planet-like Musicke of Poetrie; if you have so earth- creeping a mind that it cannot lift it selfe up to looke to the skie of Poetrie, or rather by a certaine rusticall disdain, wil become such a mome, as to bee a Momus of Poetrie: then though I will not wish unto you the Asses eares of Midas, nor to be driven by a Poets verses as Bubonax was, to hang himselfe, nor to be rimed to death as is said to be done in Ireland, yet thus much Curse I must send you in the behalfe of all Poets, that while you live, you live in love, and never get favour, for lacking skill of a Sonet, and when you die, your memorie die from the earth for want of an Epitaphe.

FINIS.