GEORGE PUTTENHAM'S CRITICAL WRITINGS IN RELATION TO CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH HUMANISTIC CRITICISM

James E. Lauck

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, OHIO

June, 1955

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the present study was to examine Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie in the light of the humanistic critical theory which dominated Elizabethan criticism in order to determine to what extent Puttenham's critical thought reflects the ideas of his contemporaries concerning the nature, purpose, and value of literary production, and to determine to what extent Puttenham was an original critic.

The study does not present a chronology of the evolution of critical theory from antiquity through the Middle Ages or attempt to ascertain specific sources for Puttenham's Arte. It does, through example and comparison with the critical ideas of his contemporaries, establish the degree of Puttenham's acceptance or refutation of the major critical tenets of Plato, Aristotle, Horace, and Quintilian.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ABOUT PUTTENHAM

Scholars are not in general agreement concerning the value of The Arte of English Poesie as criticism or the relative position that the work should occupy among Elizabethan critical treatises. Selections from Puttenham's work are omitted from all except the most specialized anthologies. Smith and Parks categorize the Arte as ". . . a methodical though uninspired work,"[1] while Willcock and Walker call it ". . . the most ambitious and comprehensive work in Elizabethan criticism."[2] Atkins refers to the Arte as ". . . a work . . . which, strangely enough, has failed until quite recently to receive adequate attention."[3] Saintsbury explains Puttenham's apparently second-rate rank among Elizabethan critics by maintaining that

> . . . he was just a little too old: that having been--as from a fairly precise statement of his he must have been--born cir. 1530-35, he belonged to the early and uncertain generation of Elizabethan men of letters, the

---

[1]James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks, editors, The Great Critics (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1932), p. 258.

[2]George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker, editors (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1936), p. lx.

[3]J. W. H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Renascence (London: Methuen and Company, 1947), p. 156.

> Googes and Turbervilles, and Gascoignes, much less to that of Shakespeare and Jonson. But what he had he gave: and it is far from valueless.[4]

Scholars contend that Puttenham was ". . . unconcerned with the abstract theories on which the bulk of Renaissance criticism was expended,"[5] and that he was ". . . primarily concerned with the rhetorical elements in poetry, and, with external form and versification."[6] Spingarn divides English Renaissance criticism into four stages. The first phase, represented by Thomas Wilson's The Arte of Rhetorique, stressed the Medieval conception of the allegorical purpose of poetry. Critics of the second phase, including Puttenham, were primarily concerned with problems of versification and prosody. The third category comprises the apologists, with Sidney as their leader; and the fourth phase, dominated by Ben Jonson, emphasized classicism.[7]

G. Gregory Smith stresses the indebtedness of Elizabethan critics to French and Italian critics and to one

---

[4]George Saintsbury, A History of Criticism (London: William Blackwood and Sons, Ltd., 1934), II, 183.

[5]The Arte, p. x.

[6]Marvin Theodore Herrick, The Poetics of Aristotle in England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), p. 30.

[7]J. E. Spingarn, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), pp. 261-81.

another.[8] English Renaissance critics took what they needed from whatever works were available and customarily failed to indicate the sources from which they had borrowed. Spingarn states that Puttenham was especially indebted to Scaliger and Minturno, leading literary critics of the Italian Renaissance, for his conception of the poet.[9] Puttenham, a university-trained courtier who travelled on the continent, was undoubtedly capable of reading classical literature in the originals. Greek spellings are used occasionally in the Arte, and Latin words, phrases, and lengthy quotations are frequent. Saintsbury concludes that Puttenham ". . . shows a better knowledge of leonine and other medieval Latin verse, not merely than Webbe, but even than Ascham."[10] Any systematic attempt to establish the exact derivation of Puttenham's ideas may not, at the present time, at least, be feasible. Atkins says that "To look for definite sources is a somewhat fruitless task."[11]

---

[8]G. Gregory Smith, editor, Elizabethan Critical Essays (London: Humphrey Milford, 1904), I, lxxxi.

[9]A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, p. 264.

[10]A History of Criticism, p. 183.

[11]English Literary Criticism: The Renascence, p. 176.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF POETS AND POETRY

Puttenham's definition of the poet parallels that of his contemporaries. A poet is ". . . as much to say as a maker. And our English name well conforms with the Greeke work: for . . . they call a maker Poeta."[12] Elizabethan critics, as a group, constantly celebrate the poet as a creator and poetry as the creation. Sidney shares Puttenham's enthusiasm for the word as well as for its meaning:

> The Greekes called him a Poet . . . I know not, whether by lucke or wisedome, wee Englishmen haue mette with the Greekes in calling him a maker. . . .[13]

The poem is a creation in that it is something man-made that had not previously existed in the world of art. The poet, however, cannot be expected to create something from nothing; thus the most perfect, or the most imperfect, creation remains a good, or a poor imitation. The success of a poet, as an imitator, depends upon the degree of resemblance of the copy to the original. Ascham explains that

---

[12]George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, Edward Arber, editor (London: Alexander Murray and Son, 1869), p. 19.

[13]Sir Philip Sidney, An Apologie for Poetrie, Edward Arber, editor (London: Alexander Murray and Son, 1868), p. 24.

> Imitation is a facultie to expresse liuelie and perfitely that example: which ye go about to folow. And of it selfe, it is large and wide: for all the workes of nature, in a maner be examples for arte to folow.[14]

Sidney, using Aristotle as his authority, further explains the act of imitation: . . .

> Poesie therefore is an arte of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word Mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfetting, or figuring foorth: to speake metaphorically, a speaking picture. . . .[15]

Puttenham's definition varies little from Sidney's, but it is interesting to note that, with the inclusion of two adjectives, he, like Ascham, stresses the importance of fidelity on the part of the imitator:

> . . . a Poet may in some sort be said a follower or imitator, because he can expresse the true and liuely of euery thing is set before him, and which he taketh in hand to describe: and so in that respect is both a maker and a counterfaitor: and poesie an art not only of making, but also of imitation.[16]

Since the position of poetry in England had been made precarious by the Puritans, Elizabethan critics, who were themselves poets in the belletristic as well as in the critical sense, faced the problem of self-vindication. Gosson, in his famous attack, choosing Plato as his strongest

---

[14]Roger Ascham, "The Scholemaster," William Aldis Wright, editor, English Works (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1904), p. 264.

[15]An Apologie for Poetrie, p. 26.

[16]The Arte, p. 20.

ally,[17] denounced poets and their products as demoralizing agents. Elizabethan critics realized that their theorizing upon the value of poetry in the Elizabethan cosmos must be based upon logic rather than upon mere rationalization. The reasoning the critics used in devising their sugar-coated pill theory, though basically Horatian, represents a fusion of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Horatian concepts.

Poetry, in order to justify itself, must be intrinsically moral. Poetry, as a generating force, is, and always has been, the greatest and best truth teacher. Both Lodge[18] and Puttenham, using Horace as their authority, point out that ". . . all the oracles and answers of the gods were given in meeter or verse."[19]

That religion could be effectively taught through poetry was recognized by Plato, who allowed only hymns to the gods and praises of famous men in his ideal state. Elizabethan critics agree that the foremost function of poetry is to proclaim the excellencies of God. To deny poetry is to deny ". . . the holy Dauids Psalmes."[20]

---

[17]Stephan Gosson, The Schoole of Abuse, Edward Arber, Editor (London: Alexander Murray and Son, 1868), p. 20.

[18]Thomas Lodge, "Defence of Poesie," Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 71.

[19]The Arte, p. 23.

[20]An Apologie for Poetrie, p. 23.

Puttenham devotes more space to the religious value of poetry than any other Elizabethan critic. Historically, poets

> . . . were the first that instituted sacrifices of placation, with inuocations and worship to them, as to Gods: and inuented and stablished all the rest of the obseruances and ceremonies of religion, and so were the first Priests and ministers of the holy misteries.[21]

In showing the relationship between the ancient and the contemporary moral function of poetry, Puttenham affirms that

> . . . these hymnes to the gods was the first forme of Poesie and the highest and the stateliest, and they were song by the Poets as priests, and by the people or whole congregation as we sing in our Churches the Psalmes of Dauid. . . .[22]

Next to the celebration of God, Puttenham ranks ". . . the worthy gests of noble Princes,"[23] and on down the scale:

> . . . the praise of vertue and reproofe of vice, the instruction of moral doctrines, the reuealing of sciences naturall and other profitable Arts, the redress of boistrous and sturdie courages by perswasion, the consolation and reprofe of temperate myndes, finally the common solace of mankind in all his trauails and cares of this transitorie life.[24]

Unlike Sidney, Puttenham has little to say about

---

[21] The Arte, p. 23.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 45.

[24] Ibid., p. 39.

dramatic form and structure. His interest in the drama is in its moral content. Tragic poets represent the capitulation of ". . . infortunate and afflicted Princes."[25] Since not all princes are virtuous, it is proper that, after the death of an ignoble prince, his outrageous behavior be shown upon the stage as a warning to those who might be tempted to use unjust methods to achieve their aims. The purpose of the comedy is the rebuke of vice in ordinary men, and its salutary effect is that it makes ". . . the people ashamed rather than afeard."[26] Puttenham's conception of comedy as a teacher through example is identical with Sidney's,[27] and he is in agreement with Whetstone, who concludes that the comedy ". . . showes the confusion of Vice and the cherising /sic/ of Vertue."[28]

Not subsidiary to the moral and instructive purpose of poetry is the purpose of gratification. Puttenham's attitude toward the efficacy of poetry that delights as it teaches parallels the attitudes of Ascham,[29] Lodge,[30]

---

[25]The Arte, p. 49.

[26]Ibid., p. 46.

[27]An Apologie for Poetrie, p. 44.

[28]George Whetstone, "The Dedication to 'Promos and Cassandra,'" Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 60.

[29]The Scholemaster, p. 283.

[30]Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 67.

Sidney,[31] Webbe,[32] and Nashe.[33] The derivation of pleasure, as well as instruction, from poetry is essential, for "Pleasure is the chiefe parte of mans felicity in this world."[34]

Among Elizabethan commentators upon the function of poetry, Puttenham is unique in that he alone gives a clear statement of the Aristotelian doctrine of catharsis. Although ecstatic joy and profound grief are extreme opposites in the full range of human emotions,

> . . . it is a peece of joy to be able to lament with ease, and freely to poure forth a mans inward sorrowes and the greefs wherewith his minde is surcharged. This was a very necessary deuise of the Poet and a fine, besides his poetrie to play the Phisitian, and not onely by making the very greef it self (in part) cure of the disease.[35]

To the Elizabethan critics, poetry was the divine product of a divinely inspired mind. Plato, in Ion, had said that the poet, while under the spell of inspiration, receives messages from the Deity and communicates them to the world in the manner of a seer. Lodge asks, "Who then

---

[31]An Apologie for Poetrie, p. 27.

[32]Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 250.

[33]Thomas Nashe, "The Anatomie of Absvrditie," Ronald B. McKerrow, editor, The Works of Thomas Nashe (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904), I, 34.

[34]The Arte, p. 60.

[35]Ibid., p. 61.

doothe not wonder at poetry? who thinketh not that it procedeth from aboue?"[36] Puttenham says that poetry ". . . can not grow, but by some diuine instinct, the Platonics call it furor."[37]

Puttenham, like Sidney, reiterates Aristotle's belief that man possesses an innate instinct for imitation. So dominant is the natural instinct that in all societies poetry existed before law, government, philosophy, or science. In his history lesson on the evolution of poetry, Puttenham shows that poetry did not originate with the Latins and Greeks. The Chaldeans and Hebrews produced pleasant poetry before them, and poetry existed in realms that the Greeks and Romans considered barbarian. Wild and natural poetry has never ceased to exist in the world. Persians, Americans, and cannibals use verse, rather than poetry, for the expression of their highest and holiest matter. Poetry exists before art.

Poetry civilizes as it delights and teaches. Puttenham,[38] Lodge,[39] Sidney,[40] and Webbe,[41] with Quintilian and

---

[36]Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 70.

[37]The Arte, p. 20.

[38]Ibid., p. 22.

[39]Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 71.

[40]An Apologie for Poetrie, p. 21.

[41]Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 234.

Horace as their authorities, use as their examples Orpheus, who tamed the wild beasts with his music; and Amphion, whose lyre moved stones for the building of Thebes. Before the moving powers of poetry brought them together for the common purpose of expressing themselves in assembly, men, lawless, and poorly clad, roamed through the forests in the manner of wild beasts.

The Arte was not intended to be a defence of, nor an apology for, poetry; yet there is much in the work to indicate that Puttenham was not unconcerned with the Puritan attacks. Both poets and poetry are held in contempt in Elizabethan England, and the poet is disdainfully called a 'phantasticall.'[42] Puttenham, being unwilling, or perhaps thinking it unnecessary to enter into a full-fledged defence, asserts that the contemporary distrust of the art of poetry proceeds from ". . . the barbarous ignoraunce of the time."[43] In the same manner as Lodge[44] and Sidney,[45] Puttenham catalogues the famous rulers and conquerors who have revered poetry and held poets in high esteem. The king of Macedonia,

---

[42]The Arte, p. 34.

[43]Ibid., p. 34.

[44]Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 70.

[45]An Apologie for Poetrie, p. 60.

Amyntas, enjoyed the works of Euripedes, and Alexander the Great loved the poems of Homer. Puttenham regrets that royal interest in poetry has declined throughout the world. In ancient times the princes themselves authored great volumes. Puttenham notes that members of Elizabeth's court have written commendable poems, but he admonishes them for suppressing their works or having them published without mention of the author's name. His attitude toward anonymous publication is extremely interesting, for his Arte was published anonymously. Doubt concerning the authorship of the work has existed ever since.

Puttenham's theory of the nature and function of poets and poetry clearly parallels that of his contemporaries. A poet creates as he imitates, and he instructs as he delights. Poetry, held in the highest esteem by the greatest men of all ages, is so natural to man that it has existed and will continue to exist either with or without the aid of art.

CHAPTER IV

PROSODY

Puttenham's Arte cannot be so conveniently classified as most of the other critical works of the English Renaissance. It is not a defence; yet many of its ideas are similar to those used by the defenders. It is not a history, although origins and developments are meticulously traced. As a poet's handbook, however, the Arte has no equal in Elizabethan literature, and its usefulness as a source book of poetic method must have been great.

In dealing with poetic types, Puttenham's range of material greatly exceeds that of any of his contemporaries; but his approach, historical and illustrative, is essentially the same as theirs. Ascham lists four major types of literature, Poeticum, Historicum, Philosophicum, and Oratorium, each with subdivisions. Lodge deals only with tragedy, comedy, and satire. Sidney's list includes heroic poetry, lyrics, tragedy, comedy, satire, iambic verse, elegies, and pastoral poetry. Webbe's literary types are comedies, tragedies, epigrams, and eclogues. Puttenham lists hymns, satire, comedy, tragedy, eclogues, history, epitaphs, epigrams, encomia, heroic poetry, triumphals, genethliaca, obsequies, and elegies. Puttenham's treatment of literary types is both more inclusive and more detailed than that of

his contemporaries, the minor forms receiving as much attention as the major ones.

After naming the literary types, Elizabethan critics (Ascham excepted) assign to each classification a specific purpose, and they are in agreement concerning what that purpose should be. For example, Lodge, Sidney, Webbe, and Puttenham agree that comedy should reveal the common errors of ordinary men and that tragedy should depict the calamities of erring princes. All of the critics name Roman and Greek writers who represent the highest attainment in the perfection of each type.

Saintsbury refers to the fondness for classical meters as ". . . the disease that . . . attacked all Europe"[46] and as the contemporary "craze"[47] among critics in England. Ascham is the most adamant in his insistence that English authors unswervingly follow Latin examples. He perceives that the essentially monosyllabic nature of the English language does not easily permit heroic poetry in the vernacular. This one obstacle to perfect metrical imitation is not, however, a logical excuse for laziness. Ascham is convinced that, if English writers try hard enough, they

---

[46]George Saintsbury, A History of English Prosody (London: Macmillan and Company, 1923), II, 168.

[47]Ibid., p. 170.

can, like the Greeks and Latins, achieve ". . . trew quantitie in euery foote and sillable."[48]

Webbe's position is the same as Ascham's. He is

> . . . fully and certainlie perswaded that if the true kind of versifying in imitation of Greekes and Latines had been practised in the English tongue, and put in ure /sic/ from time to time by our Poets, . . . it would long ere this haue aspyred to as full perfection as in anie other tongue whatsoeuer.[49]

Stanyhurst points to his own translation of Virgil's Aeneid as an example of how well Latin hexameters can be reproduced in English ". . . by a litle payneful exercise."[50]

Several critics, however, are against imitation of classical method, especially when a relentless effort to adapt Latin rules to English practice results in affectation and artificiality. Gascoigne advises the writer to use as many monosyllables as possible because

> . . . first the most auncient English wordes are of one sillable, so that the more monasyllables that you vse, the truer Englishman you shall seeme, and the lesse you shall smell of the Inkehorne. Also wordes of many syllables do cloye a a /sic/ verse and make it vnpleasant. . . .[51]

---

[48]The Scholemaster, p. 290.

[49]"A Discourse of English Poetrie," Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 278.

[50]Richard Stanyhurst, "Dedication to His Translation of the 'Aeneid,'" Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 139.

[51]George Gascoigne, Certayne Notes of Instruction, Edward Arber, editor (London: Alexander Murray and Son, 1868), p. 35.

Nashe dogmatically rejects hexameter verse in English and alleges that "Master Stannyhurst (though otherwise learned) trod a foule lumbring boystrous wallowing measure in his translation of Virgil."[52]

Puttenham's attitude toward Latinate English is contradictory. In Book II, Chapter III, he observes that

> . . . because our naturall and primitiue language of the Saxon English beares not any wordes (at least very few) of moe siliables then one . . . there could be no such obseruation of times in the sound of our wordes, and for that cause we could not haue the feete which the Greeks and Latines haue in their meetres. . . .[53]

In Book II, Chapter XII, Puttenham completely reverses his opinion concerning the inappropriateness of the Latin metrical manner in English. His change of attitude is, however, the result of reconsideration rather than of negligence. He cites Stanyhurst's translation of Virgil as a commendable example of the use of the hexameter in the English vernacular. He reverses his former pronouncement that the Greek and Latin systems, based upon quantity, are unsuited to English:

> . . . we will in this present chapter and by our own idle obseruations shew how one may easily and commodiously lead all those feete of the auncients into our vulgar langage.[54]

---

[52]"Fovre Letters Confvted," The Works of Thomas Nashe, I, 299.

[53]The Arte, p. 82.

[54]Ibid., p. 126.

The remainder of Book II (four chapters) is devoted to an analysis of Greek and Latin feet with English words used as examples for each.

The contemporary distrust of the vernacular as an enduring language is rarely expounded in Elizabethan criticism. Even Ascham, who maintains that ". . . the trew preceptes and perfite examples of eloquence"[55] are to be found only in the Greek and Latin tongues, allows composition in English, provided, of course, that it follow classical form and structure as closely as possible.

Gascoigne, whose Certayne Notes was published only five years after Ascham's Scholemaster, strongly urges the poet to avoid imitation of Latin phrase and manner, for Latin and English are basically dissimilar. Latin, for example, places adjectives after nouns, a practice not ordinarily admissible in English. It is interesting to note, however, that Gascoigne will allow 'Temple ours' and 'mother myne.'[56] Stanyhurst reasons that Latinization of English is no more logical than Hellenization of Latin.[57] Webbe, in his plea for reform of English versifying, proposes that poets imitate the ancients except ". . . where

---

[55]The Scholemaster, p. 283.

[56]Certayne Notes of Instruction, p. 37.

[57]Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 142.

it would skant abyde the touch of theyr rules."[58]

Puttenham, early in the first book of the Arte, maintains that English is in no way inferior to Greek and Latin for poetic expression, ". . . our language being no lesse copious pithie and significatiue."[59] Furthermore, if art is to be thought of as ". . . a certaine order of rules,"[60] English admits as many rules as the classical languages, perhaps more. Like Gascoigne,[61] "E. K."[62] ("E. K." has been identified as Edward Kirke, but the evidence is not conclusive.), and Daniel,[63] Puttenham objects to the use of strange, unusual, or foreign words in English composition, except when such foreign words, through consistent usage, have been absorbed into the language of the courtiers, or when the importations seem to have no satisfactory counterparts in English. He concludes his discussion of language with a quotation from Horace, which stresses the ephemeral nature of unique or uncommon words.

---

[58]Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 229.

[59]The Arte, p. 21

[60]Ibid.

[61]Certayne Notes of Instruction, p. 35.

[62]"The Epistle Dedicatory to 'The Shepheards Calender,'" Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 130.

[63]Samuel Daniel, A Defence of Ryme, G. B. Harrison, editor (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1925), p. 45.

Puttenham follows Cicero and Quintilian in their insistence upon purity of the vernacular. Cicero urges the use of Latin that is pure and correct,[64] and Quintilian warns against the use of any word or expression that smacks of provincialism.[65] To Puttenham, pure and correct English is the brand of expression used by the court and by the educated people of London and its neighboring shires. Puttenham shares Quintilian's belief that archaic words, even though they possess the authority of age, result in affectation and should be used sparingly.[66] The poet, therefore, ". . . at these dayes shall not follow Piers Plowman nor Gower nor yet Chaucer for their language is out of vse with us."[67]

Lack of precedent in classical literature is the basic reason given by the humanists for rejection of rhyme. To Ascham, rhyme is a crude device introduced into poetry by barbarians. Ancient rhymed verse was inferior and quickly forgotten. Campion echoes Ascham's point of view and maintains that the adoption of rhyme by English writers

---

[64]Cicero, De Oratore, E. W. Sutton, translator (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1942), IV, 101.

[65]Quintilian, De Institutio Oratoria, H. E. Butler, translator (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1934), III, 195.

[66]Ibid., I, 131.

[67]The Arte, p. 157.

is a substitute (and a poor one) for quantity. He objects, too, to the sound of rhyme, which produces ". . . tedious affectation."[68] Gascoigne admits rhyme, but he warns the writer ". . . to beware of rime without reason."[69] Webbe also notes that rhyme was the contribution of barbarous invaders, but he does not think it logical to bar rhyme in English for that reason. The primary exponent of English rhyme is Daniel, who sees no reason why all contemporary theory and practice should ". . . be built by the square of Greece and Italie."[70]

Puttenham dwells longer upon the origins of rhyme than any other contemporary critic. Huns and vandals introduced rhyme, and soon ". . . the very Greekes and Latines themselues tooke pleasure in Riming verses, and vsed it as a rare and gallant thing."[71] In the days of Charlemagne, and afterward, rhyme in Latin poetry became the rule rather than the exception. Puttenham furnishes many examples of rhymed Latin verse written by poets, kings, and clergymen.

---

[68]Thomas Campion, "Obseruations in the Art of English Poesie," Percival Vivian, editor, Campion's Works (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 36.

[69]Certayne Notes of Instruction, p. 35.

[70]A Defence of Ryme, p. 18.

[71]The Arte, p. 27.

Like Campion, Puttenham considers rhyme a substitute for quantity: "For wanting the currantnesse of the Greeke and Latine feet, in stead thereof we make in th'ends of our verses a certaine tunable sound."[72] But, like Daniel, he maintains that rhyme definitely enhances English poetry and greatly augments the pleasure it produces.

In his discussion of geometric figures, Puttenham has no counterpart in Elizabethan literature. Willcock and Walker point out that Puttenham ". . . has been much laughed at"[73] because of the attention he gave to the figures which have remained little more than literary curiosities. Saintsbury states that Puttenham ". . . lays himself open to the rather cheap ridicule of many generations . . . by admitting and approving 'proportion in figure.'"[74] To Puttenham the figures are novelties of form which compel ". . . the maker to keepe him within his bounds."[75] His figures, like the sonnet, are exacting forms, whose rigid structures place heavy demands upon the ingenuity of the poet.

Puttenham is aware of the uniqueness of his ocular forms. He finds little to compare with them in classical

---

[72]The Arte, p. 90.

[73]Ibid., p. lvii.

[74]A History of English Prosody, II, 182.

[75]The Arte, p. 104.

literature, and he observes that no contemporary writer had given them any consideration. He admits, too, that they may not be readily approved, but ". . . time and vsage wil make them acceptable inough, as it doth in all other new guises."[76] Although Puttenham's figures have had little lasting effect upon English prosody, seventeenth century poets found a use for them.

Puttenham differs from his contemporaries in his treatment of prosody in both scope and detail. He devotes a short chapter to the epitaph, a form not dealt with by other Renaissance critics. His chapter on the epigram is as complete as and even more detailed than his chapter on the tragedy. Puttenham's concern with minutiae in his treatment of prosody and in his following discussion of ornament may vex the modern reader; but it should be remembered that Elizabethan, not twentieth century, craftsmen were his pupils and that thoroughness of instruction is ordinarily deemed a virtue.

---

[76]The Arte, p. 105.

CHAPTER V

ORNAMENT

Puttenham furnishes the only detailed study of ornament in Elizabethan criticism. Only rhyme, as a desirable or as an undesirable embellishment of poetry, receives universal consideration in Elizabethan criticism. Critics, especially the defenders, imply an awareness of the value of ornament as the "Sugercandie" antidote to the "Rubarb;"[77] but they do not clearly define ornament, nor do they offer any detailed analyses of its constituents. To Puttenham, ornament is as necessary to poetry as elegant clothing is to a lovely woman. Resplendent attire enhances the natural beauty of a woman and makes her more desirable; ornament enhances poetry and raises it above the level of ordinary expression. The source of ornament is

> . . . figures and figuratiue speaches, which be the flowers as it were and colours that a Poet setteth vpon his language by arte, as the embroderer doth his stone and perle, or passements of gold vpon the stuffe of a Princely garment, or as th'excellent painter bestoweth the rich Orient colours vpon his table of pourtraite. . . .[78]

Puttenham's treatment of figures and figurative speech

---

[77]Sir John Harington, "Preface to the Translation of 'Orlando Furioso,'" Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, 208.

[78]The Arte, p. 150.

is somewhat reminiscent of Longinus, who asserts that figures, properly used, contribute significantly to sublimity.[79] Book III, Of Ornament, shows a much more striking resemblance to Books VIII and IX of Quintilian's De Institutio Oratoria. Quintilian divides figures into three groups--figures of speech, figures of thought, and those that are figures of speech while they are at the same time figures of thought.[80] Puttenham observes the same classification. Those figures which appeal only to the ear of the reader, Puttenham calls Auricular. Those that leave a sense impression upon the mind, he terms sensable; and those that appeal to both the mind and the ear, he names sententious.

Like Quintilian,[81] Puttenham maintains that figures may exist in single words, clauses, sentences, or in several sentences. Words become auricular figures when they are lengthened (I-doen for doon, endanger for danger),[82] when they are shortened (twixt for betwixt, gainsay for againesay),[83] and when the internal orthography is altered (meeterly for meetly, goldylckes for goldlockes).[84] Quintilian allows

---

[79]Longinus, "On the Sublime," The Great Critics, p. 85.

[80]De Institutio Oratoria, III, 357.

[81]Ibid., p. 367.

[82]The Arte, p. 173.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Ibid.

similar word alteration when the result is pleasing to the ear.[85] Single words become sensable figures when they are used metaphorically (As the drie ground that thirstes after a shower.).[86]

Both Quintilian and Puttenham permit the omission of verbs when one word may serve the purpose of two or more:

> Iudge ye louers, if it be strange or no;
> My Ladie laughs for ioy, and I for wo.[87]

Puttenham's figures include all the standard ones--metaphor, irony, synecdoche, etc.--and a large number of highly technical terms that do not appear in twentieth century handbooks. Many of Puttenham's more than one hundred figures are dealt with by Quintilian, and in the same manner. Both define each figure, label it a virtue or a vice, and give examples of its appropriate or inappropriate use.

Interest is added to Puttenham's catalogue of figures by his attempt to give English names to the figures of speech which had previously been known only by Greek or Latin names. Puttenham admits the experimental nature of his undertaking and expresses the hope that his newly coined terms will not offend those who have been accustomed to the

---

[85] De Institutio Oratoria, I, 127; III, 541.

[86] The Arte, p. 189.

[87] Ibid., p. 177.

Greek and Latin names. His purpose is practical. Ladies of the court may more easily understand his translations. He is opposed to abandoning the classical names altogether, for the learned reader must be satisfied as well as the ladies, whose classical knowledge cannot be expected to compare with that of scholars. The standard classical names are placed above Puttenham's translations in the right hand margins of the manuscript. Thus metaphora, in Puttenham's "Englishing," become "transporte;"[88] Onomatopeia is "the New namer;"[89] and Ironia is "the Drie mock."[90] Although the classical names have survived, while Puttenham's terms have been forgotten, his experiment represents a noteworthy departure from tradition and shows an original turn of mind.

Although figures are the primary contributors to poetic embellishment, both Quintilian[91] and Puttenham warn against their excessive use. Indiscreet use of figure for the sole purpose of ostentation produces affectation rather than properly embellished art. Quintilian states that

> . . . where ornament is concerned, vice and virtue are never far apart, those who employ a vicious style of embellishment disguise their vices with the name of virtue.[92]

---

[88]The Arte, p. 189.

[89]Ibid., p. 192.

[90]Ibid., p. 199.

[91]De Institutio Oratoria, III, 505.

[92]Ibid., p. 215.

Similarly, Puttenham says:

> It hath bene said before how by ignorance of the maker, a good figure may become a vice, and by his good discretion, a vicious speech go for a vertue in the Poeticall science.[93]

Both Quintilian and Puttenham bar outright obscenity and seemingly innocent expressions that may, through double meaning, convey an obscene idea. Both include as vices affectation, redundancy, obscurity, ambiguity, and unwarranted use of foreign words ("The mingle mangle").[94]

Puttenham defines style as

> . . . a constant and continuall phrase or tenour of speaking and writing, extending to the whole tale or processe of the poeme or historie, and not properly to any peece or member of a tale. . . .[95]

Style is determined by the mental and moral nature of the poet and by his subject matter. Style is but "the image of man."[96] A man's seriousness, insincerity, haughtiness, or baseness is reflected in his composition. Puttenham expresses the Horatian concept that the poet should select subject matter that is proportionate to his ability. Thus

> . . . a high minded man chuseth him high and lofty

---

[93]The Arte, p. 256.

[94]Ibid., p. 259.

[95]Ibid., p. 160.

[96]Ibid., p. 161.

> matter to write of. The base courage, matter base and lowe, the meane and modest mind, meane and moderate matters after the rate.[97]

Puttenham's ideal poet, like Quintilian's perfect orator, ". . . must be a good man."[98] Quintilian, in Book XII, Chapter I, of the Institutio maintains that eloquence in a wicked man becomes a vice. Even Cicero might have been a greater orator had he been more virtuous. Virtue, although ". . . it is in part derived from natural impulses, will require to be perfected by instruction."[99] According to Quintilian, perfect moral character is molded by study of ethics, natural philosophy, and virtue as it has existed in great men of all ages. Quintilian's instruction is general; Puttenham's, specific.

Puttenham concludes his discussion of ornament with a lengthy and interesting discourse upon decency in human behavior. He admits that his discussion may seem inappropriate to his purpose in the Arte; nevertheless, since the poet's real self is certain to be reflected in his work, he should be aware of the virtues and vices of etiquette. Every action of the poet must conform to the rules of propriety and decency, and each stratum of society is governed

---

[97]The Arte, p. 161.

[98]Volume IV, p. 355.

[99]Ibid., p. 383.

by its own set of rules. Kings may distribute their gifts freely, but philosophers should not ask for them. Old men should eschew the company of young men; sages should not fraternize with fools; and rich men should not mingle with the poor. Certain actions are appropriate in their times and places. It is wrong to sleep all day and go hunting by torchlight. Propriety in dress is extremely important. Plain attire should be worn in the country; elegant dress, in the court. Gaudiness is never appropriate. Puttenham's emphasis upon decency and propriety in human behavior corresponds with the Renaissance concern with manners and decorum as exemplified by Castiglione's Courtier, Erasmus' Colloquies, and Elyot's Governour.

Puttenham points out that decency and propriety have been held in high esteem by men of all ages. His examples of impropriety include references to social blunders committed by the ancients as well as by contemporaries.

Puttenham's discussion of ornament shows a greater similarity to Quintilian's commentary than it does to the work of his contemporaries. Both his discussions of prosody and of ornament reveal a genuine interest in presenting in handbook form a usable guide to the technics of artistic literary expression.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that Puttenham's theories of imitation and creation are basically the same as those of his contemporaries. He agrees with them in accepting the idea propounded by Plato in Ion that the divinely inspired poet assumes the role of a prophet or seer. He does not, like Lodge and Sidney, discuss Plato's expatriation of the poet from the ideal state. He clearly adopts Aristotle's and Horace's tenet that the dual purpose of poetry is to delight and to instruct. Whether or not Puttenham agrees with Sidney in maintaining that moving is of a higher degree than teaching must be based upon speculation. Agreement may be inferred from the fact that an entire book of The Arte is devoted to analyses of the ornaments of style and composition. On the other hand, he is consistently concerned with the moral impact poetry may have upon man. Like his contemporaries, Puttenham stresses the civilizing effect poetry had and has upon the tribes and nations of the world.

The study has shown that Puttenham was not unconcerned with abstract theory. Much of Book I is devoted to exposition of the same theories of poetic art with which his contemporaries were concerned. It is correct to assert, however, that Puttenham offers no theory, either classical or original,

of the structure of the drama. The three unities, discussed in detail by Sidney, are not mentioned by Puttenham. His treatment of the drama is confined to its classical origins and its moral value as a teacher through example.

Puttenham was at least impersonally concerned with the Puritan attacks. Early in Book I he expresses regret that poetry in Elizabethan England had fallen into disrepute. Obviously vexed, he curtly alleges that the mass ignorance of his age is responsible for the current disdain of poets and poetry. He never refers to Gosson by name nor to the Puritans in general. It is to both Sidney's and Puttenham's credit that neither of them condescended to the personal name-calling which marks Lodge's Defence as crude and tactless.

Puttenham's approach was original although his ideas were not. He was an original critic in that his work ventures more clearly and to a much greater extent from the realm of theory into the field of practice. In the tradition of his contemporaries, however, his practice, like his theory, is firmly based upon classical precept and example. His meeters, figures of speech, and ornaments in general have the strength of classical acceptance and usage behind them. Although there is little in English Renaissance criticism which can be compared with Puttenham's extensive treatment of ornament, the study has revealed that the marked similarity

between Quintilian's discussion of embellishment in De Institutio Oratoria and Book III of the Arte can be no mere coincidence.

Puttenham deserves some credit as an experimenter or innovator. His ocular figures, while certainly unique in Elizabethan criticism, are not without precedent in ancient literature. Puttenham refers to poems written in the shape of an egg by Anacreon, a lyrical poet of the Fifth Century, B. C. His attempt to Anglicize the Greek and Latin names of the figures of speech is unparalleled in Elizabethan criticism.

The investigation has concluded that Puttenham's critical theory concerning the nature, purpose, and value of poetry is essentially the same as that of his contemporaries and that his theory is equally derived from classical doctrine.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

A. LITERARY WORKS

Ascham, Roger. "The Scholemaster," English Works. William Aldis Wright, editor. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1904. Pp. 171-302.

Butcher, S. H., translator. The Poetics of Aristotle. London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1925. 111 pp.

Butler, H. E., translator. The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian. 4 vols. London: William Heinemann, 1921.

Campion, Thomas. "Obseruations in the Art of English Poesy," Campion's Works. Percival Vivian, editor. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909. Pp. 31-56.

Cicero, De Oratore. E. W. Sutton, translator. 2 vols. London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1942.

Daniel, Samuel. A Defence of Ryme. G. B. Harrison, editor. London: The Bodley Head, Ltd., 1925. 45 pp.

Gascoigne, George. Certayne Notes of Instruction. Edward Arber, editor. London: Alexander Murray and Son, 1868. 40 pp.

Gosson, Stephen. The Schoole of Abuse. Edward Arber, editor. London: Alexander Murray and Son, 1868. 80 pp.

Nashe, Thomas. "The Anatomie of Absvrditie," The Works of Thomas Nashe. Ronald N. McKerrow, editor. London: A. H. Bullen, 1904. Vol. I, pp. 1-49.

_____. "Fovre Letters Confvted," Supra, pp. 254-335.

Plato. Phaedrus, Ion, Gorgias, and Symposium, with Passages from the Republic and Laws. Lane Cooper, translator. New York: Oxford University Press, 1938. 436 pp.

Puttenham, George. The Arte of English Poesie. Edward Arber, editor. London: Alexander Murray and Son, 1869. 320 pp.

_____. The Arte of English Poesie. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker, editors. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1936. 359 pp.

Sidney, Sir Philip. An Apologie for Poetrie. Edward Arber, editor. London: Alexander Murray and Son, 1868. 72 pp.

Smith, G. Gregory, editor. Elizabethan Critical Essays. 2 vols. London: Humphrey Milford, 1904.

B. CRITICAL WORKS

Atkins, J. W. H. English Literary Criticism: The Renascence. London: Methuen and Company, 1947. 371 pp.

Baldwin, Charles Sears. Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice. New York: Columbia University Press, 1939. 251 pp.

Cowl, R. P. The Theory of Poetry in England. London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1914. 319 pp.

Hall, Vernon, Jr. Renaissance Literary Criticism. New York: Columbia University Press, 1945. 260 pp.

Herrick, Marvin Theodore. The Poetics of Aristotle in England. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930. 198 pp.

Saintsbury, George. A History of Criticism. Vol. II. London: William Blackwood and Sons, Ltd., 1934. 593 pp.

_____. A History of English Prosody. Vol. II. London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1923. 583 pp.

Saintonge, Paul Frederick, Leslie Gale, and Helen Griffith. Horace, Three Phases of His Influence. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1936. 120 pp.

Smith, James Harry, and Edd Winfield, editors. The Great Critics. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1932. 952 pp.

Spingarn, J. E. A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance. New York: Columbia University Press, 1924. 350 pp.

C. MAGAZINE ARTICLE

Hale, Edward E., Jr. "Ideas on Rhetoric in the Sixteenth Century," PMLA, XVIII (July, 1903), 424-44.