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A Defence of Ryme

Samuel Daniel

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SEMPER EADEM

A

Defence of Ryme:

Against a Pamphlet entitled:

*Observations in the Art of
English Poesie.*

Wherein is demonstratiuely pro-
ued, that Ryme is the fittest har-

monie of words that comportes
with our Language.
By Sa: D.

AT LONDON
Printed by V.S. for *Edward Blount*.

To all the worthie Lo-
uers and learned Professors of Ryme,
within his Maiesties Dominions,

S. D.



Worthie Gentlemen, about a yeare since, vpon the great reproach giuen to the Professors of Rime, and the vse therof, I wrote a priuate letter, as a defence of mine owne vndertakings in that kinde, to a learned Gentleman a great friend of mine, then in Court. VVhich I did, rather to confirm my selfe in mine owne courses, and to hold him from being wonne from vs, then with any desire to publish the same to the world.

But now, seeing the times to promise a more regarde to the present condition of our writings, in respect of our Soueraignes happy inclination this way; whereby wee are rather to expect an incoragement to go on with what we do, then that any innouation should checke vs, with a shew of what it would do in an other kinde, and yet doe nothing but depraue: I haue now giuen a greater body to the same Argument. And here present it to your view, vnder the patronage of a Noble Earle, who in bloud and nature is interested to take our parte in this cause, with others, who cannot, I know, but holde deare the monuments that haue beene left vnto the world in this manner of composition. And who I trust will take in good parte this my defence, if not as it is my particular, yet in respect of the cause I vndertake, which I heere inuoke you all to protect.

Sa: D.

TO
WILLIAM HERBERT EARLE

O F P E M B R O O K E.



He Generall Custome, and vse of Ryme in this kingdome, Noble Lord, hauing beene so long (as if from a Graunt of Nature) held vnquestionable; made me to imagine that it lay altogether out of the way of contradiction, and was become so natural, as we should neuer haue had a thought to cast it off into reproch, or be made to thinke that it ill-became our language. But now I see, when there is opposition made to all things in the world by wordes, wee must nowe at length likewise fall to contend for words themselues; and make a question, whether they be right or not. For we are tolde how that our measures goe wrong, all Ryming is grosse, vulgare, barbarous, which if it be so, we haue lost much labour to no purpose: and for mine owne particular, I cannot but blame the fortune of the times and mine owne Genius that cast me vpon so wrong a course, drawne with the current of custome, and an vnexamined example. Hauing beene first encourag'd or fram'd thereunto by your most Worthy and Honourable Mother, receiuing the first notion for the fomall ordering of those compositions at *Wilton*, which I must euer acknowledge to haue beene my best Schoole, and thereof alwayes am to hold a feeling and gratefull Memory. Afterward, drawne farther on by the well-liking and approbation of my worthy Lord, the fosterer of mee and my *Muse*, I aduentured to bestow all my whole powers therein, perceiuing it agreed so well, both with the complexion of the times, and mine owne constitution, as I found not wherein I might better imploy me. But yet now, vpon the great discouery of these new measures, threatning to ouerthrow the whole state of Ryme in this kingdom, I must either stand out to defend, or else be forced to forsake my selfe, and giue ouer all. And though irresolution and a selfe distrust be the most apparent faults of my nature, and that the least checke of reprehension, if it fauour of reason, will as easily shake my resolution as any mans liuing: yet in this case I know not how I am growne more resolu'd, and before I sinke, willing to examine what those powers of iudgement are, that must beare me downe, and beat me off from the station of my profession, which by the law of nature I am set to defend.

And the rather for that this detractor (whose commendable Rymes albeit now himselfe an enemy to ryme, haue giuen heretofore to the world the best notice of his worth) is a man of faire parts, and good reputation, and therefore the reproach forcibly cast from such a hand may throw downe more at once then the labors of many shall in long time build vp againe, specially vpon the slippery foundation of opinion, and the worlds inconstancy, which knowes not well what it would haue, and:

*Discit enim citius, meminitque libentius illud
Quod quis deridet quam quod probat & veneratur.*

And he who is thus, become our vnkinde aduersarie, must pardon vs if we be as ielous of our fame and reputation, as hee is desirous of credite by his new-old arte, and must consider that we cannot, in a thing that concernes vs so neere, but haue a feeling of the

wrong done, wherein euery Rymer in this vniuersall Iland as well as my selfe, stands interested. So that if his charitie had equally drawne with his learning hee would haue forborne to procure the enuie of so powerfull a number vpon him, from whom he cannot but expect the returne of a like measure of blame, and onely haue made way to his owne grace, by the prooffe of his abilitie, without the disparaging of vs, who would haue bin glad to haue stood quietly by him, & perhaps commended his aduventure, seeing that euermore of one science an other may be borne, & that these Salies made out of the quarter of our set knowledges, are the gallant proffers onely of attemptiue spirits, and commendable though they worke no other effect than make a Brauado: and I know it were *Indecens, & morosum nimis, alienæ industriæ, modum ponere*. We could well haue allowed of his numbers had he not disgraced our Rhyme; Which both Custome and Nature doth most powerfully defend. Custome that is before all Law, Nature that is aboue all Arte. Euery language hath her proper number or measure fitted to vse and delight, which, Custome intertaining by the allowance of the Eare, doth indenize, and make naturall. All verse is but a frame of wordes confinde within certaine measure; differing from the ordinarie speach, and introduced, the better to expresse mens conceipts, both for delight and memorie. Which frame of wordes consisting of *Rithmus* or *Metrum*, Number or Measure, are disposed into diuers fashions, according to the humour of the Composer and the set of the time; and these *Rhythmi* as *Aristotle* saith are familiar amongst all Nations, and *è naturali & sponte fusa compositione*: And they fall as naturally already in our language as euer Art can make them; being such as the Eare of it selfe doth marshall in their proper roomes, and they of themselues will not willingly be put out of their ranke: and that in such a verse as best comports with the Nature of our language. And for our Ryme (which is an excellencie added to this worke of measure, and a Harmonie, farre happier than any proportion Antiquitie could euer shew vs) dooth adde more grace, and hath more of delight than euer bare numbers, howsoeuer they can be forced to runne in our slow language, can possibly yeeld. Which, whether it be deriu'd of *Rhythmus*, or of *Romance* which were songs the *Bards & Druydes* about Rymes vsed, & therof were caled *Remensi*, as some Italians hold; or howsoeuer, it is likewise number and harmonie of words, consisting of an agreeing sound in the last silables of seuerall verses, giuing both to the Eare an Eccho of a delightfull report & to the Memorie a deepe impression of what is deliuered therein. For as Greeke and Latine verse consists of the number and quantitie of sillables, so doth the English verse of measure and accent. And though it doth not strictly obserue long and short sillables, yet it most religiously respects the accent: and as the short and the long make number, so the Acute and graue accent yeelde harmonie: And harmonie is likewise number, so that the English verse then hath number, measure and harmonie in the best proportion of Musike. Which being more certain & more resounding, works that effect of motion with as happy successe as either the Greek or Latin. And so naturall a melody is it, & so vniversall as it seems to be generally borne with al the nations of the world, as an hereditary eloquence proper to all mankind. The vniuersallitie argues the generall power of it: for if the Barbarian vse it, then it shews that it swais th'affection of the Barbarian, if ciuil nations practise it, it proues that it works vpon the harts of ciuil nations: If all, then that it hath a power in nature on all. *Georgieuez de Turcarum moribus*, hath an example of the Turkish Rymes iust of the measure of our verse of eleuen sillables, in feminine Ryme:

neuer begotten I am perswaded by any example in *Europe*, but borne no doubt in *Scythia*, and brought ouer *Caucasus* and *Mount Taurus*. The Sclauonian and Arabian tonges acquaint a great part of *Asia* and *Affrique* with it, the Moscouite, Polack Hungarian, German, Italian, French, and Spaniard vse no other harmonie of words. The Irish, Briton, Scot, Dane, Saxon, English, and all the Inhabiters of this Iland, either haue hither brought, or here found the same in vse. And such a force hath it in nature, or so made by nature, as the Latine numbers notwithstanding their excellencie, seemed not insufficient to satifsie the eare of the world thereunto accustomed, without this Harmonicall cadence: which made the most learned of all nations labour with exceeding trauaile to bring those numbers likewise vnto it: which many did with that happinesse, as neither their puritie of tongue, nor their materiall contemplations are thereby any way disgraced, but rather deserue to be reuerenced of all gratefull postertie, with the due regard of their worth. And for *Schola Salerna*, and those *Carmina Prouerbialia*, who finds not therein more precepts for vse, concerning diet, health, and conuersation, then *Cato*, *Theognes*, or all the Greekes and Latines can shew vs in that kinde of teaching: and that in so few words, both for delight to the eare, and the hold of memorie, as they are to be imbraced of all modest readers that studie to know and not to depraue.

Me thinks it is a strange imperfection, that men should thus ouer-runne the estimation of good things with so violent a censure, as though it must please none else, because it likes not them. Whereas *Oportet arbitratore esse non contradictores eos qui verum indicaturi sunt*, saith *Arist.* though he could not obserue it himselfe. And milde Charitie tells vs:

----- *non ego paucis*
Offendor maculis quas aut incuria fudit
Aut humana parum cauet natura.

For all men haue their errors, and we must take the best of their powers, and leaue the rest as not appertaining vnto vs.

Ill customes are to be left, I graunt it: but I see now howe that can be taken for an ill custome, which nature hath thus ratified, all nations receiued, time so long confirmed, the effects such as it performes those offices of motion for which it is imployed; delighting the eare, stirring the heart, and satisfying the iudgement in such sort as I doubt whether euer single numbers will do in our Climate, if they shew no more worke of wonder then yet we see. And if euer they prooue to become any thing, it must be by the approbation of many ages that must giue them their strength for any operation, or before the world wil feele where the pulse, life, and enargie lies, which now we are sure where to haue in our Rymes, whose knowne frame hath those due staies for the minde, those incounters of touch as makes the motion certaine, though the varietie be infinite. Nor will the Generall sorte, for whom we write (the wise being aboue bookes) taste these laboured measures but as an orderly prose when wee haue all done. For this kinde acquaintance and continuall familiaritie euer had betwixt our eare and this cadence, is growne to so intimate a friendship, as it will nowe hardly euer be brought to misse it. For be the verse neuer so

good, neuer so full, it seemes not to satisfie nor breede that delight as when it is met and combined with a like sounding accents. Which seemes as the iointure without which it hangs loose, and cannot subsist, but runnes wildely on, like a tedious fancie without a close: suffer then the world to inioy that which it knowes, and what it likes. Seeing that whatsoer force of words doth mooue, delight and sway the afections of men, in what Scythian sorte soeuer it be disposed or vttered: that is true number, measure, eloquence, and the perfection of speach: which I said, hath as many shapes as there be tongues or nations in the world, nor can with all the tyrannical Rules of idle Rhetorique be gouerned otherwise then custome, and present obseruation will allow. And being now the trym, and fashion of the times, to sute a man otherwise cannot but giue a touch of singularity, for when hee hath all done, hee hath but found other clothes to the same body, and peraduenture not so fitting as the former. But could our Aduersary hereby set vp the musicke of our times to a higher note of iudgement and discretion, or could these new lawes of words better our imperfections, it were a happy attempt; but when hereby we shall but as it were change prison, and put off these fetters to receiue others, what haue we gained, as good still to vse ryme and a little reason, as neither ryme nor reason, for no doubt as idle wits will write, in that kinde, as do now in this, imitation wil after, though it breake her necke. *Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim.* And this multitude of idle writers, can be no disgrace to the good, for the same fortune in one proportion or other is proper in a like season to all States in their turne: and the same vnmeasurable confluence of Scriblers hapned, when measures were most in vse among the Romanes, as we finde by this reprehension,

*Mutauit mentem populus leuis, & calet uno
Scribendi studio, pueri, patrésque seueri,
Fronde comas vincti coenant, & carmina dictant.*

So that their plentie seemes to haue bred the same waste and contempt as ours doth now, though it had not power to disualew what was worthy of posteritie, nor keep backe the reputation of excellencies, destinied to continue for many ages. For seeing it is no matter that satisfies the iudiciall, appeare it in what habite it will, all these pretended proportions of words, howsoeuer placed, can be but words, and peraduenture serue but to embroyle our vnderstanding, whilst seeking to please our eare, we intrall our iudgement: to delight an exterior sense, we smoothe vp a weake confused sense, affecting sound to be vnsound, and all to seeme *Seruum pecus*, onely to imitate the Greekes and Latines, whose felicitie, in this kind, might be something to themselues, to whome their owne *idioma* was naturall, but to vs it can yeeld no other commoditie than a sound. We admire them not for their smooth-gliding words, nor their measures, but for their inuentions: which treasure, if it were to be found in Welch, and Irish, we should hold those languages in the same estimation, and they may thanke their sword that made their tongues so famous and vniuersall as they are. For to say truth, their Verse is many times but a confused deliuerer of their excellent conceits, whose scatterd limbs we are faine to looke out and ioyne together, to discern the image of what they represent vnto vs. And even the Latines, who

professe not to be so licentious as the Greekes, shew vs many times examples but of strange crueltie, in torturing and dismembing of wordes in the midst, or disioyning such as naturally should be married and march together, by setting them as farre asunder, as they can possibly stand: that sometimes, vnlesse the kind reader, out of his owne good nature, wil stay them vp by their measure, they will fall downe into flatte prose, and sometimes are no other indeede in their naturall sound: and then againe, when you finde them disobedient to their owne Lawes, you must hold it to be *licentia poetica*, and so dispensable. The striuing to shew their changable measures in the varietie of their Odes, haue beene very painefull no doubt vnto them, and forced them thus to disturbe the quiet streame of their wordes, which by a naturall succession otherwise desire to follow in their due course.

But such affliction doth laboursome curiositie still lay vpon our best delights (which euer must be made strange and variable) as if Art were ordained to afflict Nature, and that we could not goe but in fetters. Euery science, euery profession, must be so wrapt vp in vnecessary intrications, as if it were not to fashion, but to confound the vnderstanding, which makes me much to distrust man, and feare that our presumption goes beyond our abilitie, and our Curiositie is more than our Iudgement: laboring euer to seeme to be more than we are, or laying greater burthens vpon our mindes, then they are well able to beare, because we would not appeare like other men.

And indeed I haue wished there were not that multiplicitie of Rymes as is vsed by many in Sonets, which yet we see in some so happily to succeed, and hath beene so farre from hindering their inuentions, as it hath begot conceit beyond expectation, and comparable to the best inuentions of the world: for sure in an eminent spirit whome Nature hath fitted for that mysterie, Ryme is no impediment to his conceit, rather giues him wings to mount and carries him, not out of his course, but as it were beyond his power to a farre happier flight. Al excellencies being sold vs at the hard price of labour, it followes, where we bestow most thereof, we buy the best successe: and Ryme being farre more laborious then loose measures (whatsoever is objected) must needs, meeting with wit and industry, breed greater and worthier effects in our language. So that if our labours haue wrought out a manumission from bondage, and that wee goe at libertie, notwithstanding these ties, wee are no longer the slaues of Ryme, but we make it a most excellent instrument to serue vs. Nor is this certaine limit obserued in Sonnets, any tyrannical bounding of the conceit, but rather a reducing it in *giram*, and a iust forme, neither too long for the shortest proiect, not too short for the longest, being but onely employed for a present passion. For the body of our imagination, being as an vnformed *Chaos* without fashion, without day, if by the diuine power of the spirit it be wrought into an Orbe of order and forme, is it not more pleasing to Nature, that desires a certaintie, and comports not with that which is infinite, to haue these clozes, rather than, not to know where to end, or how farre to goe, especially seeing our passions are often without measure: and wee finde the best of the latines many times, either not concluding, or els otherwise in the end then they began. Besides, is it not most delightfull to see much excellently ordred in a small-roome, or little, gallantly disposed and made to fill vp a space of like capacitie, in such sort, that the one would not appeare so beautifull in a larger circuite, nor the other do so well in a lesse: which often we find to be so, according to the powers of nature, in the workeman. And these limited

proportions, and rests of Stanzas: consisting of 6. 7. or 8. lines are of that happines, both for the disposition of the matter, the apt planting the sentence where it may best stand to hit, the certaine close of delight with the full body of a iust period well carried, is such, as neither the Greekes or Latines euer attained vnto. For their boundlesse running on, often so confounds the Reader, that hauing once lost himselfe, must either giue off vnsatisfied, or vncertainly cast backe to retriue the escaped sence, and to find way againe into his matter.

Me thinkes we should not so soone yield our consents captiue to the authoritie of Antiquitie, vnlesse we saw more reason: all our vnderstandings are not to be built by the square of *Greece* and *Italie*. We are the children of nature as well as they, we are not so placed out of the way of iudgement but that the same Sunne of Discretion shineth vpon vs, wee haue our portion of the same vertues as well as of the same vices, *Et Catilinam Quocunque in populo videas, quocunque sub axe*. Time and the turne of things bring about these faculties according to the present estimation: and, *Res temporibus non tempora rebus seruire oportet*. So that we must neuer rebell against vse: *Quem penes arbitrium est, & vis & norma loquendi*. It is not obseruing of *Trochicques* nor their *Iambicques*, that wil make our writings ought the wiser: All their Poesie, all their Philosophie is nothing, vnlesse we bring the discerning light of conceipt with vs to apply it to vse. It is not bookes, but onely that great booke of the world, and the all-ouerspreading grace of heauen that makes men truely iudiciall. Nor can it be but a touch of arrogant ignorance, to hold this or that nation Barbarous, these or those times grosse, considering how this manifold creature man, wheresoeuer hee stand in the world, hath alwayes some disposition of worth, intertaines the order of societie, affects that which is most in vse, and is eminent in some one thing or other, that fits his humour and the times. The Grecians held all other nations barbarous but themselues, yet *Pirrhus* when he saw the well ordred marching of the Romanes, which made them see their presumptuous error, could say it was no barbarous maner of proceeding. The *Gothes*, *Vandales* and *Longobards*, whose comming downe like an inundation ouerwhelmed, as they say, al the glory of learning in *Europe*, haue yet left vs still their lawes and customes, as the originalls of most of the prouinciall constitutions of Christendome; which well considered with their other courses of gouernement, may serue to cleere them from this imputation of ignorance. And though the vanquished neuer yet spake well of the Conqueror: yet euen thorow the vnsound couerings of malediction appeare those monuments of trueth, as argue wel their worth and proues them not without iudgement, though without Greeke and Latine.

Will not experience confute vs, if wee shoulde say the state of *China*, which neuer heard of Anapestiques, Trochies, and Tribracques, were grosse, barbarous, and vnciuile? And is it not a most apparent ignorance, both of the succession of learning in *Europe*, and the generall course of things, *to say, that all lay pittifully deformed in those lacke-lèarning times from the declining of the Romane Empire, till the light of the Latine tongue was reuiued by Rewcline, Erasmus and Moore*. When for three hundred yeeres before them about the comming downe of *Tamburlaine* into *Europe*, *Franciscus Petrarcha* (who then no doubt likewise found whom to imitate) shewed all the best notions of learning, in that degree of excellencie, both in Latin, Prose and Verse, and in the vulgare Italian, as all the wittes of posteritie haue not yet much ouer-matched him in all kindes to this day: his great Volumes written in Moral Philosophie, shew his infinite reading, and most happy power of

disposition: his twelue *Æglogues*, his *Affrica* containing nine Bookes of the last Punicke warre, with his three Bookes of Epistles in Latine verse, shew all the transformations of wit and inuention, that a Spirite naturally borne to the inheritance of Poetrie & iudiciall knowledge could expresse: All which notwithstanding wrought him not that glory & fame with his owne Nation, as did his Poems in Italian, which they esteeme aboue al whatsoever wit could haue inuented in any other forme then wherein it is: which questionles they wil not change with the best measures, Greeks or Latins can shew them; howsoever our Aduersary imagines. Nor could this very same innouation in Verse, begun amongst them by *C. Tolomæi*, but die in the attempt, and was buried as soone as it came borne, neglected as a prodigious & vnnaturall issue amongst them: nor could it neuer induce *Tasso* the wonder of *Italy*, to write that admirable Poem of *Ierusalem*, comparable to the best of the ancients, in any other forme then the accustomed verse. And with *Petrarch* liued his scholer *Bocacius*, and neere about the same time, *Iohannis Rauenensis*, and from these *tanquam ex equo Troiano*, seemes to haue issued all those famous Italian Writers, *Leonardus Aretinus*, *Laurentius Valla*, *Poggius*, *Blondus*, and many others. Then *Emanuel Chrysolaras* a Constantinopolitan gentleman, remowmed for his learning and vertue, being imployed by *Iohn Paleogus* Emperour of the East, to implore the ayde of christian Princes, for the succouring of perishing *Greece*: and understanding in the meane time, how *Baiazeth* was taken prisoner by *Tanburlan*, and his country freed from danger, stayed still at *Venice*, and there taught the Greeke tongue, discontinued before, in these parts the space of seauen hundred yeeres. Him followed *Bessarion*, *George Trapezantius*, *Theodore Gaza*, & others, transporting Philosophie beaten by the Turke out of *Greece* into christendome. Hereupon came that mightie confluence of Learning in these parts, which returning, as it were *per postliminium*, and heere meeting then with the new inuented stampe of Printing, spread it selfe indeed in a more vniuersall sorte then the world euer heeretofore had it. When *Pomponius Lætus*, *Æneas Syluius*, *Angelus Politianus*, *Hermolaus Barbarus*, *Iohannes Picus de Mirandula* the miracle & Phoenix of the world, adorned *Italie*, and wakened vp other Nations likewise with this desire of glory, long before it brought forth, *Rewclen*, *Erasmus*, and *Moore*, worthy men I confesse, and the last a great ornament to this land, and a Rymer. And yet long before all these, and likewise with these, was not our Nation behind in her portion of spirite and worthinesse, but concurrent with the best of all this lettered worlde: witnesse venerable *Bede*, that flourished aboue a thousand yeeres since: *Aldelmus Durotelmus* that liued in the yeere 739. of whom we finde this commendation registred. *Omnium Poetarum sui temporis facilè primus, tantæ eloquentiæ, maiestatis & eruditionis homo fuit, vt nunquam satis admirari possim vnde illi in tam narbara ac rudi ætate facundia accreurit, vsque adeo omnibus numeris tersa, elegans & rotunda, versus ededit com antiquitate de palma contendentes.* Witnesse *Iosephus Deuonius*, who wrote *de bello Troiano*, in so excellent manner, and so neere resembling Antiquitie, as Printing his Worke beyond the Seas, they haue ascribed it to *Cornelius Nepos*, one of the Ancients.

What should I name *Walterus Mape*, *Gulielmus Nigellus*, *Geruasius Tilburiensis*, *Bracton*, *Bacon*, *Ockam*, and an infinite Catalogue of excellent men, most of them liuing about four hundred yeeres since, and haue left behinde them monuments of most profound iudgement and learning in all sciences. So that it is but the clouds gathered about our

owne iudgement that makes vs thinke all other ages wrapt vp in mists, and the great distance betwixt vs, that causes vs to imagine men so farre off, to be so little in respect of our selues. We must not looke vpon the immense course of times past, as men ouer-looke spacious and wide countries, from off high Mountaines and are neuer to iudge of the true Nature of the soyle, or the particular syte and face of those territories they see. Nor must we thinke, viewing the superficiall figure of a region in a Mappe that wee know strait the fashion and place as it is. Or reading an Historie (which is but a Mappe of men, and dooth no otherwise acquaint vs with the true Substance of Circumstances, than a superficiall Card dooth the sea-man with a Coast neuer seene, which alwayes prooues other to the eye than the imagination forecast of) that presently wee know all the world, and can distinctly iudge of times, men and maners, iust as they were. When the best measure of man is to be taken by his owne foote, bearing euer the neerest proportion to himselfe, and is neuer so farre different and vnequall in his powers, that he hath all in perfection at one time, and nothing at an other. The distribution of giftes are vniuersall, and all seasons hath them in some sort. We must not thinke, but that there were *Scipioes, Cæsars, Catoes* and *Pompeies*, born elsewhere then at *Rome*, the rest of the world hath euer had them in the same degree of nature, though not of state. And it is our weakenesse that makes vs mistake, or misconceiue in these delineations of men the true figure of their worth. And our passion and beliefe is so apt to leade vs beyond truth, that vnlesse we try them by the iust compasse of humanitie, and as they were men, we shall cast their figures in the ayre when we should make their models vpon Earth. It is not the contexture of words, but the effects of Action that giues glory to the times: we finde they had *mercurium in pectore* though not *in lingua*, and in all ages, though they were not Ciceronians, they knew the Art of men, which onely is, *Ars Artium*, the great gift of heauen, and the chiefe grace and glory on earth, they had the learning of Gouvernement, and ordring their State, Eloquence inough to shew their iudgements. And it seemes the best times followed *Lycurgus* councill: *Literas ad vsum saltem discebant, reliqua omnis disciplina erat, vt pulchre parerent vt labores perferrent, &*. Had not vnlearned *Rome* laid the better foundation, and built the stronger frame of an admirable state, eloquent *Rome* had confounded it vtterly, which we saw, ranne the way of all confusion, the plaine course of dissolution in her greatest skill: and though she had not power to vndoe her selfe, yet wrought she so that she cast her selfe quite away from the glory of a common-wealth, and fell vpon that forme of state she ever most feared and abhorred of all other: and then scarce was there seene any shadowe of pollicie vnder her first Emperours, but the most horrible and grosse confusion that could be conceiued, notwithstanding it still indured, preseruing not only a Monarchie, locked vp in her own limits, but therewithall held vnder her obedience, so many Nations so farre distant, so ill affected, so disorderly commanded & vniustly conquerd, as it is not to be attributed to any other fate but to the first frame of that common-wealth, which was so strongly ioynted and with such infinite combinations interlinckt, as one naile or other euer held vp the Maiestie thereof. There is but one learning, which *omnes gentes habent scriptum in cordibus suis*, one and the selfe-same spirit that worketh in all. We haue but one body of Iustice, one body of Wisedome throughout the whole world, which is but apparaed according to the fashion of euery nation.

Eloquence and gay wordes are not of the Substance of wit, it is but the garnish of a nice

time, the Ornaments that doe but decke the house of a State, & imitatur publicos mores: Hunger is as well satisfied with meat serued in pewter as siluer. Discretion is the best measure, the rightest foote in what habit soeuer it runne. *Erasmus, Rewcline and More*, brought no more wisdome into the world with all their new reuiued wordes then we finde was before, it bred not a profounder Diuine than Saint *Thomas*, a greater Lawyer than *Bartolus*, A more accute Logician than *Scotus*: nor are the effects of all this great amasse of eloquence so admirable or of that consequence, but that *impexa illa antiquitas* can yet compare with them. Let vs go no further, but looke vpon the wonderfull Architecture of this state of *England*, and see whether they were deformed times, that could giue it such a forme. Where there is no one the least piller of Maiestie, but was set with most profound iudgement and borne vp with the iust conueniencie of Prince and people. No Court of Iustice, but laide by the Rule and Square of Nature, and the best of the best commonwealths that euer were in the world. So strong and substantial, as it hath stood against al the storms of factions, both of belief & ambition, which so powerfully beat vpon it, and all the tempestuous alterations of humorous times what soeuer. Being continually in all ages furnisht with spirites fitte to maintaine the maiestie of her owne greatnes, and to match in an equall concurrencie all other kingdomes round about her with whome it had to incounter. But this innouation, like a Viper, must euer make way into the worlds opinion, thorow the bowelles of her owne breeding, & is alwayes borne with reproch in her mouth; the disgracing others is the best grace it can put on, to winne reputation of wit, and yet is it neuer so wise as it would seeme, nor doth the world euer get so much by it, as it imagineth: which being so often deceiued, and seeing it neuer performes so much as it promises, me thinkes men should neuer give more credite vnto it. For, let vs change neuer so often, wee cannot change man, our imperfections must still runne on with vs. And therefore the wiser Nations haue taught menne alwayes to vse, *Moribus legibusque presentibus etiamsi deteriores sint*. The Lacedaemonians, when a Musitian, thinking to winne him-selfe credite by his new inuention, and be before his fellowes, had added one string more to his Crowde, brake his fiddle, and banished him the Cittie, holding the Innouator, though in the least things, dangerous to a publike society. It is but a fantastike giddinesse to forsake the way of other men, especially where it lies tollerable: *Vbi nunc est respublica, ibi simus potius quam dum illam veterem sequimur, simus in nulla*. But shal we not tend to perfection? Yes, and that euer best by going on in the course we are in, where we haue aduantage, being so farre onward, of him that is but now setting forth. For we shall neuer proceede, if wee be euer beginning, nor arriue at any certayne Porte, sayling with all windes that blow: *Non conualescit planta quæ sæ transfertur*, and therefore let vs hold on in the course wee haue vndertaken, and not still be wandring. Perfection is not the portion of man, and if it were, why may wee not as well get to it this way as an other? and suspect these great vndertakers, lest they haue conspired with enuy to betray our proceedings, and put vs backe vpon an other course, of purpose to ouerthrow the whole action of glory when we lay the fairest for it, and were so neere our hopes? I thanke God that I am none of these great Schollers, if thus their hie knowledges doe but giue them more eyes to looke out into vncertaintie and confusion, accounting my selfe, rather beholding to my ignorance, that hath set me in so lowe an vnder-roome of conceipt with other men, and hath giuen me as much distrust, as it hath done hope, daring not

adventure to goe alone, but plodding on the plaine tract I finde beaten by Custome and the Time, contenting me with what I see in vse. And surely mee thinks these great wittes should rather seeke to adorne, than to disgrace the present, bring something to it, without taking from it what it hath. But it is euer the misfortune of Learning, to be wounded by her owne hand. *Stimulos dat emula virtus*, and when there is not abiltie to match what is, malice wil finde out ingines, either to disgrace or ruine it, with a peruerse incounter of some new impression: and which is the greatest misery, it must euer proceed from the powers of the best reputation, as if the greatest spirites were ordained to indanger the worlde, as the grosse are to dishonour it, and that we were to expect *ab optimis periculum, à pessimis dedecus publicum*. Emulation the strongest pulse that beats in high mindes, is oftentimes a winde, but of the worst effect: For whilst the Soule comes disappoynted of the obiect it wrought on, it presently forges an other, and euen cozins it selfe, and crosses all the world, rather than it wil stay to be vnder hir desires, falling out with all it hath, to flatter and make faire that which it would haue. So that it is the ill successe of our longings that with *Xerxes* makes us to whippe the Sea, and send a cartel of defiance to mount *Athos*: and the fault laide vpon others weaknesse, is but a presumptuous opinion of our owne strength, who must not seeme to be maistered. But had our Aduersary tought vs by his owne proceedings, this way of perfection, and therein fram'd vs a Poeme of that excelencie as should haue put downe all, and beene the maisterpeece of these times, we should all haue admired him. But to depraue the present forme of writing, and to bring vs nothing but a few loose and vncharitable Epigrammes, and yet would make vs belieue those numbers were come to raise the glory of our language, giueth vs cause to suspect the performance, and to examine whether this new *Arte*, *constat sibi*, or, *aliquid sit dictum quod non sit dictum prius*.

First we must heere imitate the Greekes and Latines, and yet we are heere shewed to disobey them, euen in their owne numbers and quantities: taught to produce what they make short, and make short what they produce: made beleeeue to be shewd measures in that forme we haue not seene, and no such matter: tolde that heere is the perfect Art of versifying, which in conclusion is yet confessed to be vnperfect, as if our Aduersary to be opposite to vs, were become vnfaithfull to himselfe, and seeking to leade vs out of the way of reputation, hath aduentured to intricate and confound him in his owne courses, running vpon most vn-euen groundes, with imperfect rules, weake proofes, and vnlawfull lawes. Whereunto the world, I am perswaded, is not so vnreasonable as to subscribe, considering the vniust authoritie of the Law-giuer. For who hath constituted him to be the *Radamanthus* thus to torture sillables, and adiudge them their perpetuall doome, setting his *Theta* or marke of condemnation vpon them, to indure the appoynted sentence of his crueltie, as hee shall dispose. As though there were that disobedience in our wordes, as they would not be ruled or stand in order without so many intricate Lawes, which would argue a great peruersenesse amongst them, according to that, *in pessima republica plurimæ leges*: or, that they were so farre gone from the quiet freedome of nature, that they must thus be brought backe againe by force. And now in what case were this poore state of words, if in like sorte another tyrant the next yeere should arise and abrogate these lawes and ordaine others cleane contrary according to his humor, and say that they were onely right, the others vniust, what disturbance were there here, to whome should we obey?

Were it not farre better to holde vs fast to our old custome, than to stand thus distracted with vncertaine Lawes, wherein Right shal haue as many faces as it please Passion to make it, that wheresoeuer mens affections stand, it shall still looke that way. What trifles doth our vnconstant curiositie cal vp to contend for, what colours are there laid vpon indifferent things to make them seeme other then they are, as if it were but only to intertaine contestation amongst men; who standing according to the prospectiue of their owne humour, seeme to see the selfe same things to appeare otherwise to them, than either they doe to other, or are indeede in themselues, being but all one in nature. For what a doe haue we heere, what strange precepts of Arte about the framing of an Iambique verse in our language, which when all is done, reaches not by a foote, but falleth out to be the plaine ancient verse consisting of tenne sillables or fiue feete, which hath euer beene vsed amongst vs time out of minde. And for all this cunning and counterfeit name can or will be any other in nature then it hath beene euer heretofore: and this new *Dimeter* is but the halfe of this verse diuided in two, and no other then the *Cæsura* or breathing place in the midst thereof, and therefore it had been as good to haue put two lines in one, but only to make them seem diuerse. Nay it had beene much better for the true English reading and pronouncing thereof, without violating the accent, which now our Aduersarie hath heerein most vnkindely doone: for, being, as wee are to sound it, according to our English March, we must make a rest, and raise the last sillable, which falles out very vnnaturall in *Desolate, Funerall, Elizabeth, Prodigall*, and in all the rest sauing the Monosillables. Then followes the English *Trochaicke*, which is saide to bee a simple verse, and so indeede it is, being without Ryme; hauing here no other grace then that in sound it runnes like the knowne measure of our former ancient Verse, ending (as we terme it according to the French) in a feminine foote, sauing that it is shorter by one sillable at the beginning, which is not much missed, by reason it falles full at the last. Next comes the *Elegiacke*, being the fourth kinde, and that likewise is no other then our old accustomed measure of fiue feete, if there be any difference, it must be made in the reading, and therein wee must stand bound to stay where often we would not, and sometimes either breake the accent, or the due course of the word. And now for the other foure kinds of numbers, which are to be employed for *Odes*, they are either of the same measure, or such as haue euer beene familiarly vsed amongst vs. So that of all these eight seuerall kinds of new promised numbers you see what we haue. Onely what was our owne before, and the same but apparrelled in forraine Titles, which had they come in their kinde and naturall attire of Ryme, wee should neuer haue suspected that they had affected to be other, or sought to degenerate into strange manners, which now we see was the cause why they were turnd out of their proper habite, and brought in as Aliens, onely to induce men to admire them as farre-commers. But see the power of Nature, it is not all the artificiall couerings of wit that can hide their natiue and originall condition which breakes out thorow the strongest bandes of affectation, and will be it selfe, doe Singularitie what it can. And as for those imagined quantities of sillables, which haue bin euer held free and indifferent in our language, who can inforce vs to take knowledge of them, being *in nullius verba iurati*, & owing fealty to no forraine inuention; especially in such a case where there is no necessitie in Nature, or that it imports either the matter or forme, whether it be so, or otherwise. But euery Versifier that wel obserues his worke, findes in our language, without all these

unnecessary precepts, what numbers best fitt the Nature of her Idiome, and the proper places destined to such accents, as she will not let in, to any other roomes, then into those for which they were borne. As for example, you cannot make this fall into the right sound of a Verse.

None thinkes reward rendred worthy his worth:

vnlesse you thus misplace the accent vppon *Rendrèd* and *Worthiè*, contrary to the nature of these wordes: which sheweth that two feminine numbers (or Trochies, if so you wil call them) will not succede in the third and fourth place of the Verse. And so likewise in this case,

Though Death doth consume, yet Virtue preserues.

it will not be a Verse, though it hath the iust sillables, without the same number in the second, and the altering of the fourth place, in this sorte:

Though Death doth ruine, Virtue yet preserues.

Againe, who knowes not that we cannot kindly answeere a feminine number with a masculine Ryme, or (if you will so terme it) a *Trochei* with a *Sponde*, as *Weakenes* with *Confesse*, *Nature* and *Indure*, onely for that thereby wee shall wrong the accent, the chiefe Lord and graue Gouvernour of Numbers. Also you cannot in a Verse of foure feete, place a *Trochei* in the first, without the like offence, as,

Yearely out of his watry Cell.

for you shall sound it *Yeareliè* which is vnnaturall. And other such like obseruations vsually occure, which Nature and a iudiciall eare, of themselues teach vs readily to auoyde.

But now for whom hath our Aduersary taken all this paines? For the Learned, or for the Ignorant, or for himselfe, to shew his owne skill? If for the Learned, it was to no purpose, for euerie Grammarian in this land hath learned his *Prodia*, and alreadie knowes all this Arte of Numbers: if for the Ignorant, it was vaine: For if they become Versifiers, wee are like to haue leane Numbers, instede of fat Ryme: and if *Tully* would haue his Orator skill in all the knowledges appertaining to God and man, what should they haue, who would be a degree aboue Orators? Why then it was to shew his owne skill, and himselfe had obserued: so he might well haue done, without doing wrong to the fame of the liuing, and wrong to *England*, in seeking to lay reproach vppon her natiue ornaments, and to turne the faire streame and full course of her accents, into the shallow current of a lesse vncertaintie, cleane out of the way of her knowne delight. And I had thought it could neuer haue proceeded from the pen of a Scholler (who sees no profession free from the impure mouth

of the scorner) to say the reproach of others idle tongues is the curse of Nature vpon vs, when it is rather her curse vpon him, that knowes not how to vse hs tongue. What, doth he think himselfe is now gotten so farre out of the way of contempt, that his numbers are gone beyond the reach of obloquie, and that how friuolous, or idle soeuer they shall runne, they shall be protected from disgrace, as though that light rymes and light numbers did not weigh all alike in the graue opinion of the wise. And that it is not Ryme, but our ydle Arguments that hath brought downe to so base a reckning, the price and estimation of writing in this kinde. When the few good things of this age, by comming together in one throng and presse with the many bad, are not discerned from them, but ouer-looked with them, and all taken to be alike. But when after-times shall make a quest of inquirie, to examine the best of this Age, peraduenture there will be found in the now contemned recordes of Ryme, matter not vnfitting the grauest Diuine, and seuerest Lawyer in this kingdome. But these must haue the date of Antiquitie, to make them reuerend and authentical: For euer in the collation of Writers, men rather weigh their age then their merite, &

legunt priscos cum reuerentia, quand coetaneos non possunt sine inuidia. *Simplicius*
 And let no writer in Ryme be any way discouraged in his endeauour by this *longè posita*
 braue allarum, but rather animated to bring vp all the best of their powers, *miramur.*
 and charge withall the strength of nature and industrie vpon contempt, that
 the shew of their reall forces may turne backe insolencie into her owne holde. For, be sure
 that innouation neuer workes any ouerthrow, but vpon the aduantage of a carelesse
 idlenesse. And let this make vs looke the better to our feete, the better to our matter, better
 to our maners. Let the Aduersary that thought to hurt vs, bring more profit and honor, by
 being against vs, then if he had stode still on our side. For that (next to the awe of
 heauen) the best reine, the strongest hand to make men keepe their way, is that which their
 enemy beares vpon them: and let this be the benefite wee make by being oppugned, and
 the meanes to redeeme backe the good opinion, vanitie and idlenesse haue suffered to be
 wonne from vs; which, nothing but substance and matter can effect. for,

Scribendi rectè sapere est & principium & fons.

When we heare Musicke, we must be in our eare, in the vtter-roome of sense, but when we intertaine iudgement, we retire into the cabinet and innermost withdrawing chamber of the soule: And it is but as Musicke for the eare,

Verba sequi fidibus modulanda Latinis.

but it is a worke of power for the soule.

Numeróque modósque ediscere vitæ.

The most iudiciall and worthy spirites of this Land are not so delicate, or will owe so much to their eare, as to rest vpon the out-side of wordes, and to be intertained with

sound: seeing that both Number, Measure, and Ryme, is but as the ground or seate, whereupon is raised the work that commends it, and which may be easily at the first found out by any shallow conceit: as wee see some fantasticke to beginne a fashion, which afterward grauity it selfe is faine to put on, because it will not be out of the weare of other men, and *Recti apud nos locum tenet error vbi publicus factus est*. And power and strength that can plant itselfe any where, hauing built within this compasse, and reard it of so high a respect, wee now imbrace it as the fittest dwelling for our inuention, and haue thereon bestowed all the substance of our vnderstanding to furnish it as it is: and therefore heere I stand foorth, onelie to make good the place we haue thus taken vp, and to defend the sacred monuments erected therein, which containe the honour of the dead, the fame of the liuing, the glory of peace, and the best power of our speach, and wherin so many honorable spirits haue sacrificed to Memorie their dearest passions, shewing by what diuine influence they haue beene moued, and vnder what starres they liued.

But yet now notwithstanding all this which I haue heere deliuered in the defence of Ryme, I am not so farre in loue with mine owne mysterie, or will seeme so froward, as to bee against the reformation, and the better settling these measures of ours. Wherein there be many things, I could wish were more certaine and better ordered, though my selfe dare not take vpon me to be a teacher therein, hauing so much neede to learne of others. And I must confesse, that to mine owne eare, those continuall cadences of couplets vsed in long and continued Poemes, are very tyresome, and vnpleasing, by reason that still, me thinks, they runne on with a sound of one nature, and a kinde of certaintie which stuffs the delight rather then intertaines it. But yet notwithstanding, I must not out of my owne daintinesse, condemne this kinde of writing, which peraduenture to another may seeme most delightfull, and many worthy compositions we see to haue passed with commendation in that kinde. Besides, me thinkes sometimes, to beguile the eare, with a running out, and passing ouer the Ryme, as no bound to stay vs in the line where the violence of the matter will breake thorow, is rather gracefull then otherwise. Wherein I finde my *Homer-Lucan*, as if he gloried to seeme to haue no bounds, albeit hee were confined within his measures, to be in my conceit most happy. For so thereby, they who care not for Verse of Ryme, may passe it ouer without taking notice thereof, and please themselues with a well-measured Prose. And I must confesse my Aduersary hath wrought this much vpon me, that I thinke a Tragedie would indeede best comporte with a blank Verse, and dispence with Ryme, sauing in the *Chorus* or where a sentence shall require a couplet. And to auoyde this ouerglutting the eare with that alwayes certaine, and ful incounter of Ryme, I haue assaid in some of my Epistles to alter the vsuall place of meeting, and to sette it further off by one Verse, to trie how I could disuse my owne eare and to ease it of this continuall burthen, which indeede seemes to surcharge it a little too much, but as yet I cannot come to please my selfe therein: this alternate or crosse Ryme holding still the best place in my affection.

Besides, to me this change of number in a Poem of one nature fits not so wel, as to mixe vncertainly, feminine Rymes with masculine, which, euer since I was warned of that deformitie by my kinde friend and countriman Maister *Hugh Samford*, I haue alwayes so auoided it, as there are not aboute two couplettes in that kinde in all my Poem of the Ciuill warres: and I would willingly if I coulde, haue altered it in all the rest, holding feminine

Rymes to be fittest for Ditties, and either to be set certaine, or else by themselues. But in these things, I say, I dare not take vpon mee to teach that they ought to be so, in respect my selfe holdes them to be so, or that I thinke it right; for indeede there is no right in these things that are continually in a wandring motion, carried with the violence of our vncertaine likings, being but onely the time that giues them their power. For if this right, or truth, should be no other thing then that wee make it, we shall shape it into a thousand figures, seeing this excellent painter Man, can so well lay the colors which himselfe grinde in his owne affections, as that hee will make them serue for any shadow, and any counterfeit. But the greatest hinderer to our proceedings, and the reformation of our errorrs, is this Selfe-loue, whereunto we Versifiers are euer noted to be especially subiect; a disease of all other, the most dangerous, and incurable, being once seated in the spirits, for which there is no cure, but onely by a spirituall remedy. *Multos puto, ad sapientiam potuisse peruenire, nisi putassent se peruenisse:* and this opinion of our sufficiencie makes so great a cracke in our iudgement, as it wil hardly euer holde any thing of worth, *Coecus amor sui*, and though it would seeme to see all without it, yet certainly it discernes but little within. For there is not the simplest writer that will euer tell himselfe, he doth ill, but as if he were the parasite onely to sooth his owne doings, perswades him that his lines can not but please others, which so much delight himselfe:

*Suffenus est quisque sibi. ----- neque idem
vnquam.
Æque est beatus, ac poema cum scribit,
Tam gaudet in se tamque se ipse miratur.*

And the more to shew that he is so, we shall see him euermore in all places, and to all persons repeating his owne compositions: and,

Quem vero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo.

Next to this deformitie stands our affectation, wherein we alwayes bewray our selues to be both vnkinde, and vnnaturall to our owne natiue language, in disguising or forging strange or vvnvsuall wordes, as if it were to make our verse seeme an other kind of speach out of the course of our vsuall practise, displacing our wordes, or inuesting new, onely vpon a singularitie: when our owne accustomed phrase, set in the due place, would expresse vs more familiarly and to better delight, than all this idle affectation of antiquitie, or noueltie can euer doe. And I can not but wonder at the strange presumption of some men that dare so audaciously aduenture to introduce any whatsoever forraine wordes, be they neuer so strange; and of themselues as it were, without a Parliament, without any consent, or allowance, establish them as Free-denizens in our language. But this is but a Character of that perpetuall reuolution which wee see to be in all things that neuer remaine the same, and we must heerein be content to submit our selues to the law of time, which in few yeeres wil make al that, for which we now contend, *Nothing*.

FINIS.

