

**POETRY, WITH
REFERENCE TO
ARISTOTLE'S POETICS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649200108

Poetry, with reference to Aristotle's Poetics by John Henry Newman & Albert S. Cook

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN & ALBERT S. COOK

**POETRY, WITH
REFERENCE TO
ARISTOTLE'S POETICS**

John Henry Newman, cardinal

POETRY, WITH REFERENCE TO
ARISTOTLE'S POETICS

EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

ALBERT S. COOK

PROFESSOR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
IN YALE UNIVERSITY



BOSTON, U.S.A.

PUBLISHED BY GINN & COMPANY

1891

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1891,
By ALBERT S. COOK,
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

TYPOGRAPHY BY J. S. CUSHING & Co., BOSTON, U.S.A.

PRESSWORK BY GINN & Co., BOSTON, U.S.A.

1
Cott

INTRODUCTION.

NEWMAN'S essay challenges the attention of students of English on three several grounds. The first is his eminence as a stylist, the second his attempt to determine fundamental poetic principles, and the third his inclusion of ancient and modern writers in a single view.

Newman is justly celebrated as a master of lucid, copious, straightforward, vigorous prose. The simple manliness of his more popular writing contrasts favorably with the affectation and caprice of many of his contemporaries, and its qualities will never grow old, whatever may be the judgment of posterity on some of its author's opinions. Newman's mind was nourished by liberal studies, and from those studies he extracted the kernel of substance, not contenting himself with the husk of accident. From his acquaintance with language and literature he gained the ideas of a prince among men, as well as the accuracy of a grammarian. The breathing thoughts and burning words with which he became familiar, at once quickened his intelligence and enlarged its sphere, so that he became capable of reasoning both amply and subtly. His convictions, whether acceptable to others or not, and though subject to change for what he esteemed sufficient cause, were at all events based upon inquiry and meditation; they were not the mere rags and shreds of others' thought,

caught up and worn at secondhand. His definition of originality, on page 22 of the present essay, might have been framed from an inspection of the workings of his own mind. Conviction gives birth to decision, a striking quality of his prose, and it generates the power of arrangement, which he discusses on pages 26 and 27. In fact, his prose casts over the reader the spell exerted by the excellent novelist or poet. The mind is gently, yet firmly, directed into certain channels, and made to follow the course marked out for it. For the time being, one feels himself in the hands of a strong yet reasonable and beneficent master, and has neither the energy nor the desire to resist his will. It is sufficient that the superior mind is aware of the goal toward which our footsteps are guided.

There are some, who, after repeated examination of Newman's thought, will doubt its sufficiency, yet even they can not resist the impression produced by its orderly development. It is the province of all art to cheat us with gradation. The highest altitude of a bas-relief may be only some insignificant fraction of an inch, yet the spectator will persuade himself that he sees in it the natural proportions of a whole group of human forms. The setting sun of a landscape piece may be actually represented by an opaque, dull yellow, yet appear to glow with the whitest of dazzling light. The novelist's climax may be an insignificant event, which in real life would be passed by without remark, yet we shall be excited to the uttermost as we approach and reach it. Gradation deceives us with the semblance of wholes, of adequacy, of truth, of singular importance. Newman is aware of this, as he explicitly avers, and few modern

writers have made a more effective use of the principle. He masses and groups particulars, the individual significance of which we can not help confessing, with reference to a generalization which seems to follow of itself, unaided by effort on our part or his. Link by link the chain of his logic is wound about us, and before we know it we are bound hand and foot in a bondage so pleasing that we almost prefer it to liberty. Whether he deliver an address, conduct an argument, or relate a story, the result always seems predestined; easily, insensibly, yet inevitably, the reader feels himself impelled toward a foregone conclusion.

Other marks of Newman's style there doubtless are, such as the absence of remote and passing allusion; the sparing, but convincing, use of simile, of which there is an example on page 4; its stately harmony; the mastery of language which he himself recommends, so that speech becomes the most diaphanous of veils, or rather like that clear light in which *Æneas* shone, when the enshrouding mist was parted and resolved itself into the colors of the sky. But it is no part of my purpose to write an essay on Newman's style; it is sufficient to feel assured that it represents something more than verbal jugglery, that it stands for art in a larger sense, that it embodies the features of a personality rather than the mere dexterities of rhetorical craftsmanship.

A second claim upon our attention arises from his inquiry into the principles which underlie great poetry. It is scarcely too much to say that the best poetry has been produced at epochs when these principles were well understood, and that they can only be perfectly understood in epochs which are capable of producing

the best poetry. The fact, therefore, that there is at present a growing interest in the investigation of the canons of poetic art is at once an augury rich with hope, and a monition to which the promptest and most cheerful obedience should be rendered.

The third reason is to be found in the catholicity of Newman's knowledge and taste. He is not the partisan of a school or clique. He can admire a scientist like Aristotle, or tragedians like the immortal three of Greece. Sophocles does not blind him to the merits of Euripides, nor yet of Shakespeare. In one breath he couples Scott and Crabbe, in another Scott and Homer, and in still another, this time for purposes of censure, Scott and Cowper. For a certain trait he extols Bernard Barton, for another he criticises Virgil. One who is acquainted with so wide a range of poetry, if he be, like Newman, a person of fine discernment, sound intuitions, and correct principles of reasoning, may render inestimable service to the student at almost any stage of his progress. To the beginner he offers a method, and to the more advanced inquirer a means of rectifying partial or erroneous views; to all a stimulus to independent reading and reflection. It is impossible to contrast and endeavor to harmonize productions of widely sundered ages and nationalities, yet of the same general design and character, without winning in the pursuit some of the most precious rewards which culture has it in her power to bestow.

To yield the most satisfactory results, the opinions of Newman should be compared with those of other writers on the same subject, with those of Aristotle himself, of Plato, and of derivative writers like Sidney and Shelley.