

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN  
ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE  
LITERATURE. RHETORIC AND POETRY  
IN THE RENAISSANCE: A STUDY OF  
RHETORICAL TERMS IN ENGLISH  
RENAISSANCE LITERARY CRITICISM**

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# RHETORIC AND POETRY IN THE RENAISSANCE

A STUDY OF RHETORICAL TERMS IN ENGLISH  
RENAISSANCE LITERARY CRITICISM

By

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TO  
MY FATHER AND MOTHER

## PREFACE

IN this essay I undertake to trace the influence of classical rhetoric on the criticisms of poetry published in England between 1553 and 1641. This influence is most readily recognized in the use by English renaissance writers on literary criticism of the terminology of classical rhetoric. But the rhetorical terminology in most cases carried with it rhetorical thinking, traces of whose influence persist in criticism of poetry to the present day.

The essay is divided into two parts. Part First treats of the influence of rhetoric on the general theory of poetry within the period, and Part Second of its influence on the renaissance formulation of the purpose of poetry. This division is called for not by the logic of the material, but by history and convenience. A third phase of the influence of rhetorical terminology I have already touched on in an article on *The Requirements of a Poet*,<sup>1</sup> where I have shown that historically the renaissance ideal of the nature and education of a poet is in part derived from classical rhetoric.

No writer today, who would treat of the criticism of the renaissance, can escape his deep indebtedness to Dr. Joel Elias Spingarn, whose *Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* has so carefully traced the debt of English criticism to the Italians. In going over the ground surveyed by him and by many other scholars I have been able to add but slight gleanings of my own. In this field it is my privilege only to review and to supplement what has already been discovered. But whereas others have called attention to the

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Philology*, Vol. XVI, No. 8, Dec., 1918.

classical and Italian sources for English critical ideas, I am able to show that in addition to these sources, the English critics were profoundly influenced by English mediæval traditions. That these mediæval traditions derived ultimately from post-classical rhetoric and that they were for the most part later discarded as less enlightened and less sound than the critical ideas of the Italian Aristotelians does not lessen their importance in the history of English literary criticism.

In so far as the text of quoted classical writers is readily accessible in modern editions, I offer my readers only an English translation. For quotations difficult of access I add the Latin in a footnote. In the case of those English critics whose writings are incorporated in the *Elizabethan Critical Essays* edited by Mr. Gregory Smith, or in the *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Dr. J. E. Spingarn, I have made my citations to those collections in the belief that such a practice would add to the convenience of the reader.

The greatest pleasure that I derive from this writing is that of acknowledging my obligations to my friends and colleagues at Columbia University who have so generously assisted me. Professor G. P. Krapp aided me by his valuable suggestions before and after writing and generously allowed me to use several summaries which he had made of early English rhetorical treatises. Professor J. B. Fletcher helped me by his friendly and penetrating criticism of the manuscript. I am further indebted to Professor La ✓ Rue Van Hook, Dr. Mark Van Doren, Dr. S. L. Wolff, Mr. Raymond M. Weaver, and Dr. H. E. Mantz for various assistance, and to the Harvard and Columbia University Libraries for their courtesy. My greatest debt is to Professor Charles Sears Baldwin, whose constant inspiration, enlightened scholarship, and friendly encouragement made this book possible.