MATERIALS FOR A STUDY OF SPENSER'S THEORY OF FINE ART

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SPENSER'S THEORY OF FINE ART

BY

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ABBREVIATIONS

Amor.	Amoretti
Astro.	Astrophel
Colin.	Colin Clouts Come Home Againe
Daph.	Daphnaida
Ded. Sonnet, F. Q.	Dedicatory Sonnets preceding the Fairie Queene
Epithal.	Epithalamion
F. Q.	The Faerie Queene
1 Hymne	An Hymne in Honour of Love
2 Hymne	An Hymne in Honour of Beauty
3 Hymne	An Hymne of Heavenly Love
4 Hymne	An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie
Ireland	A View of the Present State of Ireland
Muses	The Teares of the Muses
R. of R.	Ruines of Rome
R. of T.	The Ruines of Time
S. C.	The Shepheardes Calender
V. of World's V. . .	Visions of the World's Vanitie

INTRODUCTION

Edmund Spenser left to posterity no treatise on the subject of fine art. In the *Shepheardes Calendar* his commentator, E. K., reports, in the argument prefixed to *October*, that Spenser wrote a book entitled *The English Poet*, in which he discoursed at length concerning the art of poetry. This study, containing the substance of Spenser's opinions on literary criticism, apparently was never published, and has never been discovered in manuscript. It doubtless paralleled in Spenser's literary work the *Defense of Poesie* in that of Sir Philip Sidney, and its loss is a matter of lasting regret to all students of poetry. Though Spenser's own contemporaries probably did not see *The English Poet*, they knew its value. Thus one of them, William Webbe, writes:

'Among all other his workes whatsoeuer, I would wysh to haue the sight of hys English Poet, which his freend E. K. did once promise to publishe, which whether he performed or not, I knowe not; if he did, my happe hath not beene so good as yet to see it.'[1]

And Todd says, in his account of the poet's life:

'Considering the exquisite taste, as well as the extensive learning of Spenser, the loss of his critical discourse entitled *The English Poet* is .... much to be regretted.'[2]

[1] William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetry*, in Haslewood's *Ancient Critical Essays* 2. 25.

[2] J. H. Todd, *Spenser's Works* (London, 1805) 1. clviii.