

George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, 1589.

Chapter III: *How Poets were the first priests, the first prophets, the first Legislators and politicians in the world.*

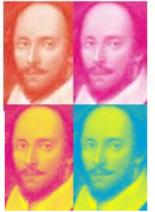
...Poesie was the original cause and occasion of their first assemblies, when before the people remained in the woods and mountains, vagrant and diapered like the wild beasts....Poets...were the first that intended to the observation of nature and her works, and especially of the Celestial courses, by reason of the continual motion of the heavens, searching after the first mover....and so were the first Priests and ministers of the holy mysteries. And because for the better execution of that high charge and function, it behooved them to live chaste, and in all holiness of life, and in continual study and contemplation....so also were they the first Prophets....And for that they were aged and grave men, and of much wisdom and experience in the affairs of the world, they were the first lawmakers to the people, and the first politicians....

Chapter III: *How Poets were the first Philosophers, the first Astronomers and Historiographers and Orators and Musicians of the world.*

...Speech itself is artificial and made by man, and the more pleasing it is, the more it prevails to such a purpose as it is intended for: but speech by meter is a kind of utterance, more cleanly couched and more delicate to the ear than prose is, because it is more current and slipper upon the tongue, and withal tunable and melodious, as a kind of Music, and therefore may be termed a musical speech or utterance, which cannot but please the hearer very well. [It] is briefer and more compendious, and easier to bear away and be retained in memory, than [prose]. It is beside a manner of utterance more eloquent and rhetorical than the ordinary prose, which we use in our daily talk: because it is decked and set out with all manner of fresh colors and figures, which makes that it sooner inveigles the judgment of man, and carries his opinion this way and that....So as the Poets were also from the beginning the best persuaders and their eloquence the first Rhetoric of the world. Even so it became that the high mysteries of the gods should be revealed and taught....The same also was meetest to register the lives and noble gests of Princes, and of the great Monarchs of the world, and all other the memorable accidents of time: so as the Poet was also the first historiographer. Then forasmuch as they were the first observers of all natural causes and effects...they were the first Astronomers and Philosophists and Metaphysics. Finally, because they did altogether endeavor themselves to reduce the life of man to a certain method of good manners, and made the first differences between virtue and vice, and then tempered all these knowledges and skills with the exercise of a delectable Music by melodious instruments, which withal served them to delight their hearers, and to call the people together by admiration, to a plausible and virtuous conversation, therefore were they the first Philosophers' Ethic, and the first artificial Musicians of the world

Chapter VIII: *In what reputation Poesie and Poets were in old time with Princes and otherwise generally, and how they be now become contemptible and for what causes.*

...In all former ages and in the most civil countries and commonwealths, good Poets and Poesie were highly esteemed and much favored of the greatest Princes....they were thought for



their universal knowledge to be very sufficient men for the greatest charges in their commonwealths, were it for counsel or for conduct, whereby no man need to doubt but that both skills may very well concur and be most excellent in one person.... But in these days (although some learned Princes may take delight in them) yet universally it is not so. For as well Poets as Poesie are despised, and the name become, of honorable infamous, subject to scorn and derision, and rather a reproach than a praise to any that uses it: for commonly who so is studious in the Art or shows himself excellent in it, they call him in disdain a *fantastical*: and a light-headed or fantastical man (by conversion) they call a Poet....among men such as be modest and grave, and of little conversation, nor delighted in the busy life and vain ridiculous actions of the popular, they call him in scorn a *Philosopher* or *Poet*....In other ages it was not so, for we read that Kings and Princes have written great volumes and published them under their own regal titles....Queens have also been known to be studious, and to write large volumes....Therefore, let none other meaner person despise learning.