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Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic

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Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic



HAKESPEARE couples lunatic, lover, and poet as 'of imagination all compact' (*Dream* v.i.7-8); Spenser finds that Phantastes' chamber is filled with 'leasings, tales, and lies' (*F.Q.* II.ix.51.9) and that his eyes seem 'mad or foolish' (*F.Q.* II.ix.52.7); Drayton speaks of the 'doting trumperie' of imagination;¹ when men's minds become 'inflamed', says Bacon, 'it is all done by stimulating the imagination till it becomes ungovernable, and not only sets reason at nought, but offers violence to it'.² These views of imagination and its activity, echoed in other important literature of the age of Elizabeth, hardly suggest a favorable view of the faculty assigned to the poet. The explanation of such derogatory views lies in the popular psychology of the period. This study therefore proposes, first, to examine the psychological account of the operation of imagination and thus to show not only the disrepute but the specific grounds of the disrepute of the faculty and, secondly, to indicate briefly how the particular grounds for disrepute influence the view of imagination expressed by poets and literary critics, are indeed converted into a justification of the poet's imagination.

The general view seems to be that the Elizabethan criticism, much of which is highly defensive of poetry, is evoked by the so-called 'Puritan' attack upon poetry. That the Puritan attack played a large part in eliciting the defenses is certain, but the condemnation is sometimes much less direct, and much less influential upon the criticism, than is sometimes thought. After all, much of the stock in trade of the attacks consisted of criticism of the morality of actors, of the opportunity for vice presented by the gathering of a theater audience, and even of the littering of the

¹ Michael Drayton, *The Tragical Legend of Robert, Duke of Normandy* (*The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J. William Hebel, Oxford, 1931-1941, I, 262).

² Francis Bacon, *Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning* (*The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding et al., London, 1889-1892, IV, 406).

streets by playbills—to which arguments we do not find much direct response in the poetic. Examination reveals that the Elizabethan defenses of poetry do surely as much to overcome the disrepute of imaginative activity which is fostered by the popular³ psychology as they do to meet the charges of the Puritan attack. But that Elizabethan criticism does this we can show only by presenting the particular grounds of disrepute to which the critics respond.

I

The technicalities, individual refinements, and variations among the psychologists describing imagination are beyond the scope of this study; for it is concerned to establish those characteristics which are common to most of the writers and which therefore are most apt to have been common knowledge among the fairly well-read men we may assume the Elizabethan critics to have been.

Always the imagination or fantasy⁴ is seen as a power operating in a framework of other faculties and functions. In a definite hierarchical order of communication, knowledge travels from the so-called 'outer' senses (the five primary senses), to the 'inner' (Common Sense, Imagi-

³ The current psychology is a thread which weaves itself everywhere into the tissue of Elizabethan thought and influences views on subjects from education to witchcraft. The currency and influence of the contemporary psychology are suggested not only by the number of works published on the subject but by the number of editions through which most of these went. Significantly, in translating Guglielmo Grataroli, William Fulwood declares that the faculties of the brain have been so often 'seene in the bookes of many' that his discussion would be 'superfluous' (*Castel of Memorie*, London, 1573, sig. B^v). The 'many' include of course a long line of earlier commentators stretching back to Aristotle (*De anima*). We expect the Elizabethan critic, then, to be aware of the psychology.

⁴ Although in classical times the functions of imagination and fantasy were carefully distinguished on the bases of passive or active function, by Elizabethan times the distinctions had, for the most part, been lost and terms like 'phantasy', 'fantsie', even 'fancy', are used interchangeably with 'imagination'. Thus in his translation of Grataroli, Fulwood lists as the first faculty of the brain 'Fantasie (or immagination[)]' (sig. B^v). On a single page of *Mirum in Modum* John Davies of Hereford uses 'Imagination' and 'Fantasie' interchangeably (*The Complete Works of John Davies of Hereford*, ed. Rev. A. B. Grosart, Edinburgh, 1878, 1, 6)—this despite his declaration that, unlike others, he will make 'distinction' (1, 7). Even though he lists them as separate faculties, Pierre de LaPrimaudaye concludes that he will 'use these two names *Fantasie* and *Imagination* indifferently', since so many regard them as 'the same facultie and vertue of the soule', and still later uses the term 'fancie' as a synonym (*The Second Part of the French Academie*, tr. T. B., London, 1594, pp. 155, 157). See also Robert Burton, who discusses the '*Phantasy*, or imagination' (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith, New York, 1938, p. 139) and uses 'fancy' as synonym (pp. 222, 223).

nation and/or Fantasy, Sensible Reason, and Memory, which occupy cells in the brain), and thus to the highest rational, incorporeal powers (the Intellect or Wit or Understanding, and the Will). More specifically, the general course of communication runs from the perception of the outward senses to common sense, or directly to imagination, which unites the various reports of the senses into impressions that are in turn submitted to the examination of a rational power and then passed to memory which retains the impressions and reflects them back to the Imagination and Sensible Reason, should they turn to it to recall past incidents. Beyond these faculties and functions lies the overseeing and judging power of the highest Understanding, which in turn informs the Will.

Ultimately, then, all knowledge, thought, and action depend upon the transmission of data through a hierarchy of powers. And in this 'instrumental'⁵ system, imagination is a key faculty; for, as Wright puts it, 'whatsoever we vnderstand, passeth by the gates of our imagination'.⁶ Moreover, by imagination 'wee apprehend likenesse and shapes of things of particulars receyued',⁷ the 'formes of things',⁸ and a sound, healthy imagination is one which reflects to higher powers only accurate images of reality, else, in the instrumental scheme, sound knowledge, proper thought and action become impossible. Therefore, imagination in its healthy reproductive capacity ought—like a mirror—to reflect accurate sensible impressions of the external world, and upon the need for such accuracy in the images of imagination the greatest stress is placed.

Knowledges next organ is *Imagination*;
A glasse, wherein the obiect of our Sense
Ought to reflect true height, or declination,
For vnderstandings cleare intelligence,

says Greville.⁹ An 'obiect' must be 'made no greater nor lesse then it is in deed' (Bright, p. 86; see also pp. 78–79). The concern of the Elizabethan

⁵ See, for example, LaPrimaudaye, p. 149; Timothy Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie*, printed by Thomas Vautrollier (London, 1586), pp. 77, 104; Levinus Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, tr. Thomas Newton (London, 1581), fol. 14r; Juan Huarte Navarro, *Examen de Ingenios*, tr. R. C., Esquire (London, 1594), p. 75.

⁶ Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (London, 1604), p. 51.

⁷ Stephen Batman, *Batman vppon Bartholome* (London, 1582), Bk. III, chap. 11.

⁸ André DuLaurens, *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight: of Melancholike diseases . . . of Old Age*, tr. Richard Surphlet (London, 1599), p. 8.

⁹ Sir Fulke Greville, *A Treatie of Humane Learning (Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville)*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, New York, 1945, I, 156).

is that the imagination deliver accurate images. When it faces toward reason, Bacon expects imagination to have 'the print of Truth' (*Works*, III, 382).

If the report of the senses is accurately delivered, man's reactions are healthy and proportional; but if false reports are rendered, matters are 'otherwise taken then the obiect requireth' (Bright, p. 86); man's reasoning is good 'so farre as the naturall principles lead, or outward obiectes be sincerely taken, & truly reported to the minds consideration' (Bright, p. 73). But when fantasy reports 'mishapen obiects', the mind is off balance and reason is 'troden vnder foote'.¹⁰ If fantasy is 'marred', says Sir John Davies, wit perceives everything falsely.¹¹ Indeed, as a consequence of the theory that it was the inaccurate report of imagination which misled reason, it was common opinion that injured minds—for example, those of idiots or madmen—could reason as well as those of ordinary men, but were misled by the faulty reporting of faulty imagination. Reason would be only as accurate as the images presented to it. As an instrument for correct reason, then, imagination should present accurate, mirror-like images.

Furthermore, since reason is conventionally described as the power which distinguishes good from evil, the ultimate result of inaccurate images of reality is immorality. Since the higher soul is itself incorruptible, the odium falls on the false images of fantasy:

But if a frenzy do possess the brain;
It so disturbs and blots the forms of things,
As Phantasy proves altogether vain,
And to the Wit, no true relation brings.

Then doth the Wit admitting all for true,
Build fond conclusions on those idle grounds!
Then doth it fly the Good, and Ill pursue!
Believing all that this false spy propounds.

(Sir John Davies, p. 193)

Indeed, 'Some ascribe all vices to a false and corrupt imagination . . . de-luding the soul with false shews and suppositions', declares Burton (p. 221).

¹⁰ Thomas Nashe, *Terrors of the Night* (*The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Rev. A. B. Grosart, London and Aylesbury, 1883-1885, III, 233).

¹¹ *Nosce Teipsum*, in *An English Garner*, ed. Edward Arber (Birmingham, 1877-1896), v, 193. Subsequent references to Sir John Davies will be to *Nosce Teipsum* in Vol. v of Arber's text.

Obviously, then, a good deal of the reputation of imagination depends upon the accuracy of its images; for if this most important instrument of the soul, container of all images and source of knowledge, is inaccurate, distorts reality, it betrays reason and thus immorality results. According to the psychologists, with inaccurate representations of reality we are little better off than—indeed we may be—madmen or idiots. Nevertheless, to the psychologist, imagination, in both passive and active operation, is, for the most part, notoriously fragile, highly inaccurate in its reproductions of life; thereby misleads the soul in general and reason in particular; is, in short, as we shall now see, a most fallible and consequently disreputable faculty.

II

The widespread disrepute of imagination as a falsifying and misleading faculty rested, even in its passive functions, upon many elements. A rather obvious one was its close tie to and dependence upon the senses, which had been condemned from classical through medieval times to the Renaissance, their disrepute dramatized in accounts of the conflict of the spirit with the animal flesh or philosophized in Platonic descriptions of the secondary and inadequate reality of sensory objects. This unfavorable view the psychologists continue, and to it they add. Wright's derogatory view of the senses as faculties which relate us to 'bruite beastes' (p. 7) is a usual one. Thus merely as a near neighbor of the senses in the instrumental scheme, imagination shares their general disrepute. 'For *Fantacie* beeing neere the outward *Sences*, | Allures the *Soule* to loue things bodily,' says Davies of Hereford (*Works*, I, 9-10). The world's things, then, 'do, by fits, her [the soul's] Phantasy possess', agrees Sir John Davies (p. 186).

And for the psychologists, as might be expected, the senses are suspect not only because they are tied to the flesh and in their very nature corrupt, but also because they fail in providing that accurate picture of life which Elizabethan psychology demands for healthy functioning. Only before the fall of man, concludes Bright, did the outer senses 'perfectly and sincerely' present 'the condition of sensible things' (p. 122). It follows, then, as Greville has it, 'So must th'Imagination from the sense | Be misinformed' (*Poems and Dramas*, I, 157). Thus the fallibility of the senses, since they supply the images of imagination, affects the reliability and hence the reputation of imagination. Moreover, about the senses hangs the suggestion of immorality, in which fantasy, their

neighbor, shares: imagination, like the senses, is attracted by things of the body.

But, according to the psychologists, the very nature of the imagination itself and its susceptibility to all sorts of influences produces monstrously deformed reflections of external reality in the mirror which it is supposed to be. Greville, after telling us, as does writer after writer, that imagination should function as a 'glasse', decries the lack of veracity in the distorted 'pictures' of '*Imagination*' which are 'still too foule, or faire; | Not like the life in lineament, or ayre' (*Poems and Dramas*, I, 156). Despite the fact that it is the function of the faculty to present accurate pictures of reality, imagination makes 'vntrue reports' (DuLaurens, p. 74). 'Corrupt' is a favored adjective for the faculty.¹² 'Fonde and absurde imaginations' and 'apparitiōs and sights' (Lemnius, fol. 132^v) are more often associated with imagination than the clear images required of sound and healthy imagination.

And the distortion of real objects when reflected in the imagination is the result of its own great fragility. The agencies which corrupt its images and thus upset its healthy functioning in the hierarchical organization are almost innumerable and practically inescapable. In fact, fantasy may operate 'as life is led, wel, or amisse' (Davies of Hereford, I, 8). Thus gluttony fills the head with 'fantasyes'.¹³ A bad constitution will lead to the fantastic dreams of imagination (Lemnius, fols. 95^r, 113^r). Much always depends upon the impressionability of the brain, and to the lack of a proper degree of moisture for the impression of images are due, for example, the distorted imaginations of old age.

As has perhaps already been suggested, not only the distortion but also the disrepute of some of its agents helps to make imagination a disreputable faculty in the Elizabethan mind, and it soon becomes clear why Huarte remarks that 'the sciences which appertaine to the imaginatiue, are those, which such vtter as dote in their sicknesse, and not of those which appertaine to the vnderstanding, or to the memorie' (p. 63).¹⁴ And as might be expected from Shakespeare's reference to lunatics, perhaps as frequent a disreputable relationship as any is that to mad-

¹² See Burton, p. 222, and Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1930), p. 33.

¹³ Andrew Boorde, *Dyetary*, in *The First Booke of the Introduction of Knowledge and A . . . Dyetary of Helth*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, Early English Text Society, Extra Series, No. 10 (London, 1870), p. 250; see also Batman, Bk. VI, chap. 27.

¹⁴ Among such 'sciences' Huarte later lists poetry (p. 108).

ness; 'for', as Batman has it, 'by madnesse that is called *Mania*, principally y^e imagination is hurt' (Bk. vii, chap. 6), while DuLaurens refers to the 'foolish and vaine imaginations' of 'franticke' men (p. 79). Indeed, so closely tied to imagination is the frenzy of madness that the prescription for madness is confinement of the patient to a room where there are no pictures to stimulate the imagination (Batman, Bk. vii, chap. 5; Boorde, *Dyetary*, p. 298), and hence, often, to a wholly dark room. It is this conventional association of idiocy and madness with fantasy that Spenser recognizes when he tells us that Phantastes 'mad or foolish seemd' (*F.Q.* II.ix.52.7). As a result of madness, of course, the images of imagination are distorted and the instrumental process is disturbed; for 'frenzy' mangles 'the forms of things' so that fantasy makes a false report to the understanding (Sir John Davies, p. 193).

Not only does the accepted association with madness cast further aspersion on the reputation of imagination and its images, but madness is frequently linked with the disease of melancholy and its distorted imagination. However, in its own right melancholy had a claim on the power to distort images of imagination, a claim easily as great as that of madness, since almost anything from diet (e.g., DuLaurens, p. 104; Lemnius, fol. 143^v) to sin (e.g., Bright, pp. 187-189; Burton, pp. 156, 176) could cause melancholy. And when we consider that melancholy was considered a disease and was itself tied to 'enuy, emulation, bitternesse, hatred, spyght, sorcery, fraude, subtlety, deceipte, treason, sorrow, heauinesse, desperation, distrust, and last of all to a lamētable and shamefull end' (Lemnius, fol. 23^v), the relation between imagination and melancholy is clearly not to the advantage of imagination. And that association, with its consequent distortion of images, is almost inevitable: as Lemnius has it, 'No man but is subiect to Melācholy' (fol. 136^v).

Typical of the connection made between melancholy and imagination, with consequent disrepute for imagination from the distortion and resultant lack of veracity of images on the one hand and its bad associations on the other, is the comment of Lemnius, according to whom melancholy persons 'feeding theyr owne Phantasies' see 'that which was not so in deede' (fol. 150^r). Although some types of melancholy are said to encourage intellectual activity, by far the more frequent view is that of Nashe: 'And euen as slime and durt in a standing puddle, engender toads and frogs, and many other vnsightly creatures, so this slimie melancholy humor still still thickning as it stands still, engendreth many mishapen obiects in our imaginations' (*Terrors, Works*, III, 232-233).

With all commentators, the result is similarly the distortion of images in imagination. For DuLaurens, the cold and black of melancholy affect 'principally the imagination, presenting vnto it continually blacke formes and strange visions' (p. 91). For Bright, the result is 'monsters, which nature neuer bred' (p. 106); and Burton says, 'that melancholy men and sick men, conceive so many phantastical visions, apparitions to themselves, and have such absurd suppositions . . . can be imputed to naught else but to a corrupt, false, and violent imagination' (p. 222).

Specifically, it is the fumes from the melancholy humors which, rising into the brain, do the distorting (Bright, p. 102). Thus, not only the fumes of melancholy, but those of other humors affect and distort fantasy. Any 'ill humours' may send 'confused ymaginations and vayne foolish visions' into the brain (Lemnius, fol. 95^r). For example, the fumes of choler, ascending to the brain, change 'stronglye the brayne and the vertue imaginatiue' (Batman, Bk. iv, chap. 10), resulting in 'phantasticall imaginations' (Lemnius, fol. 132^v). And when we consider the conventional view expressed by DuLaurens' statement that 'there is not one bodie in the whole world to be found of so equall a mixture, as that there is not some excesse in one of the foure qualities ouer and aboute the rest' (p. 169), so that the perfectly balanced combination of humors is impossible, we can see how deplorably little accuracy and integrity the imagination could be conceded.

But we are not done, for the passions also distort imagination: 'you may well see how the imagination putteth greene spectacles before the eyes of our witte, to make it see nothing but greene, that is, serving for the consideration of the Passion'; and thus 'a false imagination corrupteth the vnderstanding, making it beleeeve that thinges are better than they are in very deede' (Wright, pp. 51, 52). Again there is no correspondence to external reality. Affections 'In fancy make us heare, feele, see impressions, | Such as out of our sense they doe not borrow' (Greville, *Poems and Dramas*, I, 157). It was inevitable, then, that the lover's imagination should be conventionally described as corrupted.

Even the occupations of men distort their imaginations, again making imagination 'deliuer thinges vnto the minde after an impure sort' and 'otherwise then they are indeed' (Bright, pp. 78-79; see also DuLaurens, p. 98). The Elizabethan had even to reckon with susceptibility to the influence of the devil who might imprint upon his imagination 'such things as neither men nor deuilles themselues can possibly perfourme' (LaPrimaudaye, p. 156). In view of the possibilities described, the chances

for a healthy imagination, producing sound and accurate images, would seem, to an Elizabethan, rather remote.

Thus the 'sickness' of the imagination—tied to idiocy, old age, madness, and gluttony; susceptible to the vagaries of every constitution, the fumes of every humor, the influences of every occupation, producing visions impossible, 'monsters', images 'mishapen', 'fonde and absurde', 'confused'—in short, 'false'.

Hitherto we have considered imagination as acting rather passively so that its disrepute seems to stem chiefly from its very openness to influences which in turn make its testimony unreliable. In this role imagination seems perhaps abused as much as it abuses. But imagination is not merely passive. As Bacon puts it: 'Neither is the Imagination simply and only a messenger; but is invested with or at leastwise usurpeth no small authority in itself, besides the duty of the message' (*Works*, III, 382). Imagination receives and conveys images, but, as Huarte has it, it also devises 'some others of his own framing' (p. 79). The imagination 'taketh what pleaseth it, and addeth thereunto or diminisheth', says the translator of LaPrimaudaye (p. 155); and he speaks of the 'newe and monstrous things it forgeth and coyneth' (p. 156): the verbs as well as the adjectives are significant. So Bright finds that, under the influence of melancholy, the fantasy 'compoundeth, and forgeth disguised shapes', that it 'fayneth vnto the heart' terrible 'counterfet goblins' (pp. 103–104).¹⁵ For Burton, fantasy not only receives objects and retains them for a while, but also has the power of 'making new of his own'; 'by comparison' to the objects provided by sense, he continues, fantasy 'feigns infinite others unto himself' (p. 139).

'Feign', 'forge', 'frame', 'coyn'—all are words for the active, in a sense creative, functioning of imagination. Although words like 'feigning' or 'forging', which are particularly popular, suggest the improbability of the products of imagination, they also convey the building power of the faculty. And in this active functioning, of course, the possibility of a lack of correspondence to life—with consequent disrepute—becomes as pronounced as it can be; for imagination, left to its own devices, may make what it will, creating in almost absolute disregard of

¹⁵ In the examples of distortion of images by vapors of melancholy humor, the imagination, as we have seen, seems passive. However, the imagination of the melancholy man is also often regarded as abnormally active and creative in its own right. The disrepute of the disease of melancholy, and, for that matter, of the other agents of distortion, follows imagination, of course, into its active operation.

the images furnished by the senses and hence fashioning often the fondest impossibilities. A brief examination of this activity of the imagination—feigning—will make clearer the concept of the operation of imagination and explain why the active imagination might be accused of producing monsters and lies.

Although imagination feigns the unreal, for the Elizabethan psychologist pursuing his empirical approach, its unreal images are in a very tangible way still derived ultimately from impressions of real objects. Like all other images and almost everything in the mind, feigned images have their origin, through the senses, in the external world. Feigning, even at its wildest, is based ultimately on external reality, framing from it, and, sometimes, even according to it. Thus objects never seen are created upon the basis of ‘particulars receyued, though they bee absent: As when it seemeth that we see golden hills, either else when through the similitude of other hills we dreame of the hill Parnasus’ (Batman, Bk. III, chap. 11); without matter from life the ‘fantasie can doe nothing’, but with it can forge all sorts of impossibilities (LaPrimaudaye, p. 156). Thus it is that out of the images with which it is supplied fantasy may, as we have seen, feign ‘new of his own’ ‘by comparison’ with the forms of things which it has received. Consequently even the wildest dreams, products of imagination, are conventionally described as having their source in images from real life. Without ‘Patterns’ imagination cannot feign its ‘things vnlikely’ (Davies of Hereford, *Works*, I, 8).

But it is when we see how fantasy handles its raw material in the creation of its original images that their unreality is fully explained. Perhaps as a result of the belief in the concreteness and tangibility of the empirically perceived images, Elizabethan doctrine pictured imagination as almost literally cutting up its images into parts and then rejoining them into forms that never exist in the external world of nature. A centaur as an imaginary creation could result from cutting away the head of a horse and substituting the torso of a man. Imagination, ‘being not tied to the laws of matter, may at pleasure join that which nature hath severed, and sever that which nature hath joined, and so make unlawful matches and divorces of things’ (Bacon, *Works*, III, 343). Instead of merely receiving the images of external objects passively and conveying them whole to higher powers, imagination not only ‘taketh what pleaseth it’ but ‘addeth thereunto or diminisheth, changeth and rechangeth, mingleth and vnmingleth, so that it cutteth asunder and seweth vp againe, as it listeth’ (LaPrimaudaye, p. 155). For Huarte, ‘this imagina-

tion hath force not onely to compound a fygure possible with another, but doth ioyne also (after the order of nature) those which are vnpossible, and of them growes to shape mountains of gold, and calues that flie' (p. 132). 'The imagination', says DuLaurens, 'compoundeth and ioyneth together the formes of things, as of Golde and a mountaine, it maketh a golden mountaine' (p. 74). Thus it is that the imagination of man may 'faine . . . flying asses' (*ibid.*, p. 75).

When Bright, then, says 'compoundeth', he is using the word in an exact way. And so too when Davies of Hereford speaks of the faculty as crippling the whole and making whole the crippled, making and marring (*Works*, I, 8)—of '*Fantacie*, | Which doth so forme reforme, and it deforme, | As pleaseth hir fantasticke faculty' (*ibid.*, I, 7)—he has not only described the instability of imagination and the unreality of its products but given us an accurate account of the processes from which that unreality results.

In this way, then, the imagination 'forgeth disguised shapes'. As a result of such severing and compounding, the shapes of imagination must prove unreal, and it is the unreality of its products which is accented—as these very comments suggest. Not only does it 'reforme' but it also 'deforme' reality. Crippling or recreating life, it wrests from reality 'things vnlkely', joining, as Huarte put it, things 'which are vnpossible' to create its 'golden hils' or 'flying asses'. Almost invariably it is described as creating the disreputably incredible and false—'terrible' and 'monstrous fictions' that do not depend at all upon 'externall occasiō', building 'fancies' that are 'vayne, false, and voide of ground' (Bright, pp. 102–103). Monsters, wild dreams, and chimeras—'monstrous and prodigious things' (Burton, p. 140)—are traditionally its products. Speaking of the force of imagination 'in such as are awake', Burton exclaims: 'how many chimaeras, anticks, golden mountains, and castles in the air, do they build unto themselves!' (p. 220) and finds that, through the vagaries of imagination, not only the sick but even the well may 'conceive . . . phantastical visions, apparitions to themselves' (p. 222). LaPrimaudaye emphasizes both the monstrous and distorted quality of fantasy's images: 'it is a wonder to see the inuentions it [fantasy] hath after some occasion is giuen it, and what new and monstrous things it forgeth and coyneth, by sundry imaginations arising of those images and similitudes, from whence it hath the first paterne' (p. 156). Out of such a background come Spenser's '*Infernall Hags, Centaurs, feendes, Hippodames*' (*F.Q.* II.ix.50.8), which abound in Phantastes' chamber. This 'fayned fantasie'

which misinforms reason is, for DuLaurens, 'vntrue', 'false' (p. 74), while for Scot the imaginations of some melancholy men conceive 'strange, incredible, and impossible things' (p. 30) making them 'beleeve they see, heare, and doo that, which never was nor shall be' (p. 38). As Spenser puts it, in a 'fayning fansie' occur 'Sights neuer seene' ('An Hymne in Honour of Love', lines 254-255) and 'such as in the world were neuer yit' (*F.Q.* II.ix.50.4). The giddy fantasy manufactures 'those things which neuer haue bin, shalbe, or can be', says LaPrimaudaye. 'For it staieth not in that which is shewed vnto it by the senses that serue it' (p. 155). Different as the connotations are, it is not very far from this and some of the preceding language to Sir Philip Sidney's description of poets who 'to imitate borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be'.¹⁶

The power of fantasy actively to create monstrously distorted visions, lies about external reality, is, then, a cardinal tenet of Elizabethan psychology. These creations are called 'tales', 'fables', 'fictions', 'lyes', 'leasings'.¹⁷ And although imagination feigns not only the grotesque or the monstrous but also the beautiful, not only 'flying asses' and chimeras but also 'golden hills' and 'castles in the air', all are incredible and therefore disreputable. The bias of the material in the psychological writings stands very heavily against this active function of the faculty.

And the lack of control over imagination is shown not only by the easy distortion of its images but by their unpredictable, accidental sequence. 'Now shee *Chimeraes*, then shee *Beauties* frame' (Davies of Hereford, *Works*, I, 8). Haphazardly imagination makes monsters one moment and castles in the air the next. In the Elizabethan psychology, the images of imagination are idly capricious, fleeting and inconstant, purposeless and insubstantial, succeeding each other, without control or order, in a restless procession. A faculty 'still in motion', creating 'toyes' (Davies of Hereford, *Works*, I, 8), its forming, reforming and deforming provide a quickly changing scenery for the mind. 'Pow'refull yet . . . most vnstaid', it 'resteth not' in its creation of 'visions vaine' (*ibid.*, I, 7), but remains forever busy; even in sleep 'A thousand dreams, phantastical and light, | With fluttering wings, do keep her still awake!' (Sir John

¹⁶ *An Apologie for Poetrie*, in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith (London, 1904), I, 159. (Subsequent references to Sir Philip Sidney will be to the *Apologie* in Vol. I of Smith's text.) From these quotations it is perhaps even not very far to William Wordsworth's 'The light that never was, on sea or land, | The consecration, and the Poet's dream' ('Elegiac Stanzas: Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm').

¹⁷ Bright, pp. 102, 104; Nashe, *Terrors* (*Works*, III, 233); Spenser, *F.Q.* II.ix.51.9; Huarte, p. 118.

Davies, p. 176; cf. also Scot, pp. 101–102 and Bright, p. 118). It is ‘another *Proteus, or a Chameleon*’ (Burton, p. 223). Speaking appropriately of the ‘giddinesse of Fantasie’, LaPrimaudaye’s translator finds the faculty ‘sudden, & so farre from stayednes, that euen in the time of sleep it hardly taketh any rest’, being occupied in dreams of impossibilities (p. 155). It is for him a ‘light and dangerous’ faculty (p. 153). This is the background of thought that Spenser turns into metaphor when he tells us that Phantastes’ chamber is filled with buzzing flies which represent ‘idle thoughts and fantasies’ (*F.Q.* II.ix.51.1–6), and appropriately Spenser describes Phantastes’ wit as forever restless (*ibid.* II.ix.49.9).

There are, in the psychological views of the active, feigning imagination, hints of control and even of value. Some value in feigning is suggested by its creation of ideal beauties, and some control of feigning by ‘paterne’ is suggested in the view that a ‘Pernasus’ of imagination is created by ‘similitude of other hils’ or that images are created ‘by comparison’ to those from life. And, although references to this function are comparatively infrequent, the imagination feigns healthily when it conjures up images of future possibilities. In the balanced soul, comes often ‘a great imagination to see what is to come’ (Huarte, p. 240). Indeed, at times in a good sort of melancholy, says DuLaurens, the melancholy man can ‘by the forwardness of his imagination . . . see that which must come to passe, as though it were present before him’ (p. 98).

But an especially legitimate manifestation of the feigning power of imagination occurs when, feigning images which act as counters of thought, it invents, and thus aids in the discovery or creation of new and valuable matter. From the ‘Fancie’, says Davies of Hereford, come ‘all maruellous *Inuentions*’ and thus ‘all *Artes and Sciences*’ (*Works*, I, 6). Huarte speaks similarly of the ‘invention of arts’ which results from the conjunction of understanding ‘with the memorie, or with the imaginatiue’ (p. 67) and declares that ‘From a good imagination, spring all the Arts and Sciences, which consist in figure, correspondence, harmonie, and proportion’, listing poetry, music, eloquence, medicine, mathematics, astrology, government, art of warfare, painting, drawing, reading, ‘& the engins and deuises which artificers make’ (p. 103). It is this power of fantasy of which Puttenham is thinking when he declares that fantasy presents ‘visions, whereby the inuentiue parte of the mynde is so much holpen, as without it no man could devise any new or rare thing’.¹⁸

¹⁸ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, 1936), p. 19.

Thus, although rarely treated at much length, imagination as inventor has a sound reputation. It is worth noting that this reputable function of active imagination is presented at times, as in Huarte, as the result of co-öperation with the higher understanding. Thus, given purpose and direction, feigning is good imagination. Here feigning, even though an active function of imagination, is that good imagination which results for the psychologists from the control of reason.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, the weight of the material is against the faculty. It remains essentially a faculty tied to sense and disease, uncontrolled, easily distorted and distorting and hence lying, idle and purposeless, flighty and inconsistent, and therefore irrational and immoral in the instrumental scheme. Yet to these sources of disrepute must be added one more—its dangerous alliance with the emotions, and hence with action.

Conventionally it is imagination, and specifically its images, which stimulate emotion; and the very nature of the emotion, in the theory, depends upon the nature of the images. Even in his definition of passions, Wright, principal writer on the emotions, reveals how inextricably emotion and imagination are related; for a passion is 'a sensual motion of our appetitive facultie, through imagination of some good or ill thing' (p. 8). Indeed we 'cannot love, hate, feare, hope, &c. but that by imagination' (*ibid.*, p. 31). As he tells us in his chapter 'The manner how Passions are mooved', the objects of imagination are communicated to the heart—generally accepted as seat of the emotions¹⁹—which is thus aroused to irascible (avoiding) or concupiscible (desiring) reactions with, of course, subsequent appropriate action (Wright, p. 45).²⁰

In the natural course of events, the process of arousing emotion outlined by the psychologists may be not only acceptable but necessary; for the avoiding and approaching reactions are natural responses to life, necessary to survival. However, reactions are proportional to the stimulus, the image in imagination. If that image is a true and accurate picture of the object, reactions are also proportional and desirable. 'Perturbations naturall', says Bright, arise 'vpon an outward accasion, if the bodie be well tempered, and faultles in his instruments, and the obiect made no greater nor lesse then it is in deed, and the hart, aunswer proportion-

¹⁹ See Ruth L. Anderson, *Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays* (Iowa City, 1927, University of Iowa Humanistic Studies, Vol. III, No. 4), p. 73.

²⁰ For parallel accounts, see also Sir John Davies, p. 177; Bright, p. 81; Burton, p. 224; and Huarte, p. 31.

ally thereunto', but the 'vnnatural' arise when external life is 'otherwise taken then the obiect requireth' (p. 86).²¹ When an object is 'deliuered otherwise then it standeth in nature', then is 'the hart moued to a disorderly passion' (Bright, p. 93).

The emotions are not in themselves, then, evil, but the distorted pictures of imagination which are presented to the heart make them so: the distorted images create distorted, excessive emotions. Discussing such perturbations, Burton declares 'that the first step and fountain of all our grievances in this kind is a distorted imagination, which, misinforming the heart, causeth all these distemperatures, alteration and confusion, of spirits and humours'. And the distortion of emotions, he declares, takes place when 'to our imagination cometh, by the outward sense or memory, some object to be known . . . which he, misconceiving or amplifying, presently communicates to the heart, the seat of all affections' (p. 219). The forged 'shapes' and 'counterfet goblins, which the brayne dispossessed of right discerning, fayneth vnto the heart' stimulate irrational terror (Bright, pp. 103–104); the feigned 'monstrous fictions' delivered to the heart cause it to break out 'into that inordinate passion, against reason' (*ibid.*, p. 102). And the process may develop into a pernicious cycle; for after the distorted images produce inordinate passion against reason, the passion may in turn further distort the images of imagination, which again return to create further excesses in feeling and further mislead reason (Wright, p. 52). Thus if the 'obiect' is accurately presented to the heart, reactions are proportional and adequate; but if it is distorted, so are the passions, becoming ungovernable and defying reason.²²

Ultimately, then, the result of the relation between imagination and emotion is again that 'the vnderstanding looking into the imagination, findeth nothing almost but the mother and nurse of his passion for consideration'; thus it is that the conjunction of imagination and passion puts 'greene spectacles before the eyes of our witte' so that it cannot make proper decisions (Wright, p. 51). Passion and imagination are in league against reason. Although, when accurate, images may lead to natural emotion and sound action, the familiar failure in the veracity of images once more upsets the healthy operation of the instrumental

²¹ Bright does not make here the usual Elizabethan distinction, according to which perturbations are distinguished from other emotions as unruly and excessive.

²² On the distortion of the images of fantasy by emotion see also Greville, *Treatie (Poems and Dramas, I, 157)*, and *Caelica (Poems and Dramas, I, 145)*; Burton, p. 221; Shakespeare, *Dream v.1.21–22*.

scheme, leading to irrational and hence immoral behavior. The association between imagination and emotion reflects, once more, little credit upon the imagination, and the insistent demand is, again, for the veracity of images and the rule of reason.

III

Such disrepute, then, creates a formidable problem for the adherents of poetry to which in the Renaissance the faculty imagination is assigned; and, in his defense of poetry, it is clearly to the disrepute of imagination that Sidney responds when he declares that poetic imagination 'is not wholie imaginatiue, as we are wont to say by them that build Castles in the ayre' (p. 157), and it is surely the psychological descriptions of imagination which lead Puttenham similarly to distinguish between the good phantasy of the poet and the bad phantasy of others and to defend 'despised' poets and poetry on the grounds that 'the phantasticall part of man (if it be not disordered) [is] a representer of the best, most comely and bewtifull images or apparances of thinges to the soule and according to their very truth. If otherwise, then doth it breede *Chimeres* & monsters in mans imaginations, & not onely in his imaginations, but also in all his ordinarie actions and life which ensues' (pp. 18-19). We turn then to showing how adherents of poetry and of imaginative activity respond to the grounds of disrepute and how, drawing in defense upon familiar Renaissance materials, they evolve, as a result, significant views of imaginative activity.

In the face of the disrepute the adherents of poetry even depend upon the psychological view, seem even to glory in the power to distort. Where, according to the psychology, imagination, severing and joining, feigns 'things which neuer haue bin, shalbe, or can be', 'castles in the air', 'golden mountains', incredible beauties or monsters, and what 'never was nor shall be', the poet's imagination similarly creates imaginary composites, 'formes such as neuer were in Nature, as the *Heroes*, *Demigods*, *Cyclops*, *Chimeras*, *Furies*, and such like', a 'golden' world beyond the 'brasen' world of nature (Sidney, p. 156), beyond the 'bare *Was*' of history (*ibid.*, p. 168). The poet casts 'life in a more purer mold'.²³ Poetry makes 'things seeme better then they are by nature'.²⁴ The 'Bodie' of a poet's work is 'fictiue', and for his purposes the poet creates what

²³ Drayton, *The Tragical Legend of Robert, Duke of Normandy* (*Works*, I, 285).

²⁴ Nicholas Ling, *Politeuphuia: Wits Common wealth* (London, 1598), fol. 52^r. Cf. also Puttenham, p. 304.

seems even 'beyond Possibilitie to bring into Act'; scorning 'a Lord Maiors naked *Truth*', the poet's is a 'going beyond life'.²⁵ To mend men's minds, says Chapman, poets create 'shapes of Centaurs, Harpies, Lapithes' (*Poems*, pp. 22-23). Joining and severing, the poet creates 'things which in nature would never have come to pass'.²⁶

Indeed the poetical view insists repeatedly that feigning is the very criterion of what is poetry. He who does not feign is a mere versifier or a historian and no poet; feigning is the poet's function and fiction his product:²⁷ 'hee is call'd a *Poet*, not hee which writeth in measure only; but that fayneth and formeth a fable'.²⁸ With Touchstone's punning verdict that 'the truest poetry is the most feigning' (*As You Like It* III.iii. 19-20), almost every poet and critic of the period would agree.

But, parallel though they may the psychological account, these very statements contain, of course, a distinction from the psychological view; for poet and critic, the poet's freedom to feign is a wonderful creative power which, unlike the psychologists, they exalt and in which they glory. In their very agreement with the psychologists lies a difference. The difference is emphasized, however, by their distinction between good use and abuse, between good and bad imagination. Poetic imagination is a good imagination. Poetic feigning is feigning with a difference. And the good imagination, which is the poetic, is good and reputable principally because it is controlled. Reacting against the current disrepute and drawing upon contemporary and classical thought, their poetic asserts the very controls demanded in the psychological view. The distortion of the poet's feigning is not haphazard, but deliberate and purposeful, moral and rational; his creations are, indeed, 'true' rather

²⁵ George Chapman, dedicatory epistle to *Odysseys* (*The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. Phyllis Brooks Bartlett, New York, 1941, p. 407).

²⁶ Bacon, *Of the Dignity . . . of Learning* (*Works*, IV, 292); see also *Description of the Intellectual Globe* (*Works*, V, 504). Cf. Shakespeare, *Dream* V.i.14-15.

²⁷ See Sidney, p. 160; Francis Meres's *Treatise 'Poetrie': A Critical Edition*, ed. Don Cameron Allen (Urbana, Ill., 1933, Univ. of Illinois Studies in Lang. and Lit. XVI), pp. 71, 73-74; Richard Mulcaster, *Positions*, ed. Robert H. Quick (London, 1888), p. 269; Sir John Harrington, 'Preface to . . . *Orlando Furioso*' (*Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith, London, 1904, II, 203, 204); Samuel Daniel, dedicatory epistle to *The Civill Wars* (*The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel*, ed. Rev. A. B. Grosart, London, 1885-1896, II, 6); Drayton, 'To . . . Henry Reynolds, Esquire, of Poets and Poesie,' (*Works*, III, 229); John Marston, *Satires* (*The Works of John Marston*, ed. A. H. Bullen, Boston, 1887, III, 283-284); Thomas Blundeville, *The True Order and Methode of Wrying and Reading Hystories* (London, 1574), sig. [E4]v.

²⁸ Ben Jonson, *Discoveries 1641; Conversations . . . 1619*, ed. G. B. Harrison (London, [1923]), p. 89.

than false. His imaginative creation and its emotional effect are guided by the conscious purpose, ordering, reason, and morality of the writer to secure, in turn, directly or indirectly, rational and moral effects. It is, again, feigning with a difference. As we have seen Sidney put it, it is not the same imagination that builds 'Castles in the ayre': the 'figuring foorth good things', says Sidney, is to be distinguished from the infection of 'the fancie with vnworthy obiects' (p. 186).²⁹ It is necessary, as Puttenham indicates, to make 'difference betwixt termes'; it is the failure of the ignorant to make such a distinction that prompts them to term the poet's work '*phantasticall*, construing it to the worst side' (p. 18).³⁰ Poetic imagination is, by the addition of various controls, transformed—a far cry from the diseased imagination of the psychology. Poetic imagination is good imagination.

What then is the good imagination from which the bad is to be distinguished?

Basis for much of the disrepute of imagination in the psychological exposition is, we have seen, the lack of veracity in its content or product, its proneness to false and gross distortion of reality which misleads head and heart. But good imagination, insist the defenders of poetry, does not lie. Influenced by the complexly interacting emphases on plausibility and decorum found in contemporary and classical rhetoric and in classical literary criticism,³¹ the defenders declare, almost unanimously although sometimes inconsistently, that the poet's, the good imagination does not lie, for it creates lifelike, verisimilar imitations of life which thus tell the truth about life. In this process the necessity for reasonable and plausible as well as vivid resemblance to real life requires the poet's control over feigning, yet leaves room for the poet's license to create

²⁹ See also *Sir Fulke Greville's Life of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford, 1907), p. 223.

³⁰ Murray W. Bundy has already pointed out that by distinguishing men of good fantasy 'from mere *phantastici*' the Renaissance attempted to avoid the disrepute of the coupling, through imagination, of lunatics and poets ('Fracastoro and the Imagination', *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hardin Craig*, ed. Baldwin Maxwell et al., Stanford Univ., 1941, p. 47).

³¹ The contemporary rhetorics, for example, often inherit doctrines from classical literary criticism and return them to criticism in Elizabethan times, while the very classical literary criticism which influences later rhetoric and poetic is itself often based on ancient rhetoric. See, for example, Donald L. Clark, *Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance* (New York, 1922, Columbia Univ. Studies in Eng. and Comp. Lit.), pp. 80–81, and note also Clark, pp. 31–32, 42. The general influence of the contemporary rhetoric upon Elizabethans, their literature and criticism in particular, has been so frequently pointed out as to require no further examination in this study.

more than exact reproductions. Though it is an exact reproduction of no specific external reality, the verisimilar imitation *seems* true; though the poet's images do go beyond life, they are nevertheless true since, as verisimilar imitations, they resemble life; are, therefore, probable and lifelike. The poet creates 'things like truth' (Chapman, dedication to *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*), frames 'his example to that which is most reasonable' (Sidney, p. 168). Indeed, argues the defender, it is the exact copy of reality which, compared to the poet's, may be 'foolish' (*ibid.*, p. 170), whereas the poet's power to feign may create the greater 'likelihood' (*ibid.*, pp. 167, 168). His license to feign may, paradoxically, permit him to create a greater verisimilitude than is at times present in the odd reality of life itself. He is thus 'both a maker and a counterfaior' (Puttenham, p. 3). By definition, the poet, for Ben Jonson, is a 'fainer' who 'writes things like the Truth' (*Discoveries*, p. 89). To a degree then, 'things like the Truth', the rhetorical and ancient critical principle of verisimilitude, reconciles the distortion of feigning with the demands of veracity. By adopting the bridle of verisimilitude, critic and poet at once preserve freedom for poetic imagination and avoid the disrepute of the traditionally false, ungoverned, distorting imagination. The poet's creations are still licensed and beyond life; yet, controlled by the doctrine of verisimilar imitation, they retain the veracity of being like life.

Not only does the emphasis on verisimilitude obviate the charges of falsehood, and thus, to a degree, of immorality, but, since the verisimilar is the plausible or 'reasonable', the doctrine also dissipates the aura of irrationality with which the psychological view surrounds imagination. Moreover, the control of feigning by the need to resemble life means that good imagination will not create in the volatile, haphazard fashion suggested by the psychology.

But it is even more in the familiar doctrine that the poet presents in his feigning a higher truth than the exact, arid literal truth of reality that the poetic defends the veracity of his imagination as well as its rationality and purposiveness. Of course merely by feigning ideal composites of a higher degree of good or beauty, of a world and being superior to this (even as the psychologist himself suggests that imagination may create beauties as well as monsters), the poet presents a higher truth. His golden world is a better world and hence a world of higher truth; his imagination creates 'the best, most comely and bewtifull images or apparances of thinges to the soule' (Puttenham, p. 19). But, fusing with Platonic

and Aristotelian influences and the influence of medieval allegory, the rhetorical doctrine of presenting higher concepts and truths through their embodiment in the concrete furnishes the foundation for the poetic doctrine of the higher universal truth presented through the feigned image of poetry. The value of the example—particularly of the historical example—to communicate precepts is a commonplace of rhetoric. The very presentation of philosophical, especially moral, truth through the concrete example is familiar rhetorical doctrine. Thus in his *Arte of Rhetorique* (1560), Thomas Wilson even recommends the fictitious example, the fable, to teach ‘weightie and graue matters’³² and finds that ‘brute beastes’ provide excellent ‘paterns and Images of diuers vertues’ (p. 191). Taken up by the defenders of imaginative activity, these rhetorical dicta furnish perhaps the most popular defense: by his feigning, the poet illustrates virtues and thus teaches higher abstract truth by rhetorical example; indeed, because he feigns the concrete, the poet is superior to the philosopher in teaching higher truths. Like the orator, the poet ‘coupleth the generall notion with the particuler example’ (Sidney, p. 164). By his power of feigning the poet thus becomes the ‘right Popular Philosopher’ (*ibid.*, p. 167), conveying higher truths which ‘lye darke before the imaginatiue and iudging powre, if they bee not illuminated or figured foorth by the speaking picture of Poesie’ (*ibid.*, p. 165). The literal truth is thus a ‘barren truth’ for Drayton (*Works*, II, 284), who regards his fictionalized historical lives, his *Legends*, as examples teaching higher truth (*Works*, II, 382). So completely does this become the accepted version of the higher truth of poetry that Spenser, closely following Sidney, explains the intention of his allegory, *The Faerie Queene*, in these same rhetorical terms: ‘So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule’ (*F.Q.*, ‘A Letter of the Authors’). Poetry, therefore, is not ‘phantastique, or meere fictiue; but the most material, and doctrinall illations of Truth’ (Chapman, dedicatory epistle to *Odysseys, Poems*, p. 407). To illustrate the abstract virtue, the poet creates his fictive ‘Bodie’ and that conveys ‘a Soule’ (*ibid.*).

And it is not merely that the poet can do the job of the orator. ‘Truth builds in Poets faining’ (Chapman, dedicatory epistle to *Iliads, Poems*, p. 386): it is precisely the power of the poet’s fantasy to feign images, to distort, that permits him to create the most valid image or example and

³² Ed. G. H. Mair (Oxford, 1909), p. 198. See also Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* I.Pr.10–13, and particularly Bacon, *Of the Dignity . . . of Learning* (*Works*, IV, 456). For an account of the absorption of this rhetorical material by poetic, see Clark, pp. 138–161.

to communicate his ideals most effectively. By his power to distort, the poet may present the most perfectly adapted image for the communication of truth because he can mold his images exactly to convey his concepts. Precisely because he is not captive to a literal truth, he may better convey a higher truth. Puttenham puts the position well when he tells us that 'a fained matter' is not only more pleasing but 'works no lesse good conclusions for example then the most true and veritable: but often times more, because the Poet hath the handling of them to fashion at his pleasure.' In one day the poet may feign not only more but 'more excellent examples' than 'ages' of history provide. And such feigning, he concludes, is 'for a maner of discipline and president of commendable life' (pp. 40-41). By his feigning, the poet can provide the 'perfect patternne' (Sidney, p. 168). In this power to distort lies the superiority of the poet to the historian who, because he cannot feign, is 'so tyed . . . to what is, to the particuler truth of things, and not to the general reason of things, that hys example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore a lesse fruitfull doctrine' (*ibid.*, p. 164). The 'fained' Cyrus is 'more doctrinable' than the 'true' (*ibid.*, p. 168). Even Bacon, who does not always regard poetry very seriously, argues that the poet's power to feign beyond the limiting 'nature of things' permits him to present 'a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness' than can be found in 'true history' (*Works*, III, 343). Thus the very distortion, the charge of lies, is turned to an argument for the truth of poetic imagination, and for the superior truth of poetic imagination.

Clearly, this view of the power of the poet to control his image-examples, in molding them to fit his purpose of higher truth, emphasizes, again, disciplined feigning. It is because his feigning is controlled that the poet's creation of what 'neuer was' becomes the very agency of his higher truth. The poet must exercise conscious control to mold his image appropriately. Such control is rational and deliberate, not a matter of haphazard feigning. And it is not merely that the actual feigning is a disciplined activity, but that the ultimate guide and control even to that discipline is the wisely perceived rational and moral truth of the poet. For that matter, the very emphasis on use of the logical device of rhetorical example lends, further, an emphasis on the rational. Good feigning, a feigning which conveys higher truth and not 'lies', is controlled, rational.

But it is through the assimilated rhetorical doctrine of persuasion³³ by

³³ The rhetorical origins of the poetic doctrine of persuasion have been recognized for

moving emotion that the Elizabethan critic and poet justify, not only feigning, but the admitted emotional power of the feigned image. It is true, as this article has already suggested, that the feigned poetic image which presents higher truth acts as rhetorical example and, like the feigned or true images recommended by the rhetorics, may act as logical argument addressed to the understanding and thus persuade to higher truth. The view of the feigned image as example emphasizes, however, instruction or explanation as strongly as, or more strongly than, persuasion. But persuasion, according to the rhetoricians, was accomplished not only by appealing to intellect, but by moving emotion. And more, meeting the charges that the orator immorally makes the worse appear the better reason and that he stirs inordinate passion against reason and morality, charges leveled from classical times, the rhetoricians emphasize that the persuasion, even when emotional, is persuasion to good. Thus Cicero praises the influence of the orator in curbing and rousing passions in good causes and for good results (*De Oratore* II.ix.35), and Quintilian approves of the definition of rhetoric as the power to persuade men to do what they should (II.xv.35; see also II.xvi.10).³⁴ And this end is to be achieved not only by appealing to intellect but by moving emotion—and often specifically by arousing proper concupiscible and irascible emotions: thus, for example, the figure *Paradigma*, which, significantly, may be feigned or true, has, according to Peacham, the power ‘to perswade[,] moue, and enflame men with loue of vertue, and also to deterre them from vyce’,³⁵ and the writer of the persuasive epistle stimulates ‘loue to well doing’ and ‘hate vnto badnes’, according to Angel Day.³⁶

It is not even half a step from these familiar rhetorical dicta to the adaptation that the feigned images of vice and virtue in poetry persuade to good by stirring appropriate, desirable emotions—love (o-virtue) and hatred (of vice). Poetry, poet and critic declare, is persuasion. For Puttenham, ‘the Poets were also from the beginning the besf perswaders and their eloquence the first Rethoricke of the world’ (p. 8).

some time. See, for example, Clark, pp. 136–137; Rosemond Tuve, ‘Imagery and Logic: Ramus and Metaphysical Poetics’, *JHI*, III (1942), 369; William Ringler, commentary on John Rainolds, *Oratio in Laudem Artis Poeticae*, tr. Walter Allen, Jr. (Princeton, 1940, Princeton Studies in Eng. No. 20), pp. 21–22, 61.

³⁴ On the superiority of emotional over merely intellectual appeal in persuasion, see Quintilian VI.ii.5.

³⁵ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London, [1577]), fol. vij^v.

³⁶ *The English Secretary* (London, 1599), [1], 47.

Further, the poet persuades to good, and is the best persuader to good.³⁷ Poetry 'doth intende the winning of the mind from wickednesse to vertue' (Sidney, p. 172); the poet's imitations 'moue men to take that goodnes in hande' (*ibid.*, p. 159). And it is precisely because his feigning stirs emotion most strongly—exactly because his feigned images of vice and virtue move more completely than exact copies of life, and can, under the wisdom of the poet, be molded to secure the proper moral emotional effect—that the poet is the best persuader to good.

That it is his feigning which is the source of the poet's power to persuade is clear. As we have just seen, it is the poet's 'imitations' that 'moue' men to goodness. It is 'fiction' which most persuades.³⁸ Persuasion is a matter not only of teaching but also of 'moouing to well doing', for 'moouing is of a higher degree then teaching' (Sidney, p. 171); and the 'moouing' is the effect of feigning. Whether 'a fayned example hath asmuch force to teach as a true example' Sidney regards as at least a question to be asked; but there is no possibility of dispute about which best moves men to good—'for as for to mooue, it is cleere, sith the fayned may bee tuned to the highest key of passion' (p. 169). The very power to distort, to feign, leads to a more intense moving to virtue. Thus the poet's feigning moves and persuades to good, stirring 'passion' to the very goal of virtue which it is the end, even according to the psychology, of true and exact images to attain.

But not only does the poet 'tune' his feigned images to secure emotional response, but, more specifically, he molds his images to secure the proper, moral response. In order to move to good, therefore, the poet presents feigned images of vice and virtue that secure appropriate concupiscible and irascible reactions: 'If the Poet doe his part a-right, he will shew you in *Tantalus*, *Atreus*, and such like, nothing that is not to be shunned; in *Cyrus*, *Aeneas*, *Vlisses*, each thing to be followed; where the Historian, bound to tell things as things were, cannot be liberall (without hee will be poetically) of a perfect patterne, but, as in *Alexander* or *Scipio* himselfe, shew dooings, some to be liked, some to be misliked. And then how will you discern what to followe but by your owne discretion, which you had without reading *Quintus Curtius*?' (Sidney, p. 168). Thus the feigned, and consequently 'perfect', images have the advantage of eliciting, under the poet's control, the proper psychological

³⁷ See Jonson, *Discoveries*, pp. 95–96; Puttenham, p. 196. For Jonson particularly, it is the poet's superiority in moving emotion which makes him preëminent.

³⁸ Puttenham, p. 196; Harington, in Smith (note 27 above), II, 204.

response. If he presents vices as well as virtues, he does so that men may learn 'by loathing such vile vices'.³⁹ His 'natural fictions' or 'things like truth' provide 'excitation to virtue, and deflection from her contrary' (Chapman, dedication to *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*).⁴⁰

Thus the criticism of the excessive emotional power of the imaginative activity is defended by the doctrine of persuasion to good. The very distortion of feigning and its resultant emotional power become the very means of persuasion to good; feigning and emotional effect are not only permitted but demanded.

The defensive value of the doctrine derives in part, of course, from the very assimilation of a reputable activity, persuasion, from a reputable art; but this defense pictures the poet once more as in control of his materials and makes once more the distinction between good imagination and bad, between proper use and abuse. The poet 'tunes' his feigned image; he must 'doe his part a-right'. The emphasis is, as Harington puts it, on imaginative activity 'being rightly vsed' (in Smith, II, 209). The poet molds his products, disciplined by his understanding of morality and by his practical, moral end. Good imagination is, once more, controlled imagination as distinct from the uncontrolled described by the psychologists. Moreover, since the poet's feigning has ultimately the reputable, practical purpose of persuasion, the charges of lightness, insubstantiality, and idleness are weakened. Most importantly, of course, the doctrine combats the disrepute based on the charges of excessive emotion which frustrates reason and morality—and this it does on the very grounds of the psychologist. The poet moves emotion to good by arousing through his feigned images of vice and virtue proper concupiscible and irascible reactions. Thus the reader of poetry reacts even as psychologist or Puritan attacker would have him and 'willeth good thinges, and refuseth the contrarie' (Bright, p. 77), just as the exactly apprehended image of the 'offensieue or pleasaunt obiect' (*ibid.*, p. 93) should make the heart answer with proper responses, according to the psychologist. The feigned image is a calculated and selected agent for achieving the end of virtue.

³⁹ William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetrie (Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith, London, 1904, I, 251)*. See also Harington, in Smith, II, 209.

⁴⁰ See also Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors (1612) (New York, 1941)*, sig. c3, and Jonson, *Discoveries*, p. 42, for very parallel views on love-hate responses. How current this view was is suggested by Gower's listing of each of the principal characters at the end of *Pericles* (v.iii.85-98) as a 'figure' of vice or virtue. It is interesting to speculate on how much of this rhetorical purpose lay behind Shakespeare's histories and tragedies.

Utilizing the very apparatus of psychology, agreeing with the psychologist concerning the power of the 'distorted' image to achieve heightened emotion, and, indeed, emphasizing it, poetic, through the assimilation of the rhetorical doctrine of persuasion, thus meets many of the charges against feigning. A far cry from the uncontrolled feigning of lunatic and melancholic that leads to the stirring of evil perturbations, the feigned image of poetry is the precisely controlled means of effective persuasion to good: it is the best example; it is the most effective mover.

Thus laboring to free the poetic imagination from the current disrepute of the faculty, Elizabethan poetic responds to the very bases of the disrepute. Although instrumental to the healthy operation of the soul, imagination, according to the psychology, is a faculty for the most part uncontrolled and immoral—a faculty forever distorting and lying, irrational, unstable, flitting and insubstantial, haphazardly making and marring, dangerously tied to emotions, feigning idly and purposelessly. And from the attempt to combat these grounds of disrepute through the adoption and adaptation of materials which were an absorbed part of every educated Elizabethan's background—materials often from the very psychology itself—there evolves a concept of poetic feigning: that poetic feigning is a glorious compounding of images beyond life, of distortions which are yet verisimilar imitations, expressing a truth to reality and yet a higher truth also, controlled by the practical purpose, the molding power and, in almost every aspect, by the reason and morality of the poet. Poetic imagination is disciplined imagination. Arising out of the natural interaction of important areas of thought, it becomes feigning with a difference: controlled feigning.