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**MICHAEL DRAYTON'S *POLY-OLBION*:  
A STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE**

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## Abstract (English)

This dissertation provides a study of Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612; 1622), a loco-descriptive poem divided into two parts consisting of eighteen and twelve Songs, respectively, each one being prefaced by an engraved map. The verse describes the topography of the English and Welsh counties and the historical feats that took place in the locations in question: the "narrators" are local landscape features, such as woodlands, forests, mountains and valleys, but mainly rivers. In the first part only, each Song closes with a learned prose commentary by the antiquarian John Selden.

The study's purpose is to highlight the position *Poly-Olbion* held in the network of seventeenth-century and subsequent English literature and culture. It aims to bring together the fragmentary criticism and literary influence of the poem into a coherent view leading to a joint analysis of its contents and the history of its reception. It thus reveals, on the basis of a large amount of information, the interaction of synchronic and diachronic perspectives in order to discuss the poem's matter in the light of contemporary and later criticism, and vice versa.

The reasons for the many ever-shifting opinions on *Poly-Olbion* are related both to the times and modes of composition and to its content. The work is therefore first contextualised in Drayton's life and times, as an essential milestone in the poet's search for patronage and career, which also aims to provide an explanation of the difficulties the work may have encountered in the book market. An analysis of the two main topics dealt

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with in *Poly-Olbion* – the topography and the history of Britain – sheds some light on Drayton's possible authorial intentions and his sources, as well as on the kind of readership he might have had in mind and the reasons for the work's poor success (according to Drayton himself) in the book market.

The use of topography is discussed as an organisational device for antiquarian matter, and is also connected with Drayton's rhetorical description of the land of Britain, fragmented among dozens of narrative voices belonging to the local landscape, and to the function of engraved maps prefacing each Song. A coherent picture emerges, uniting the map, the topographical content of each Song, and the single landscape features telling their stories, into an entity containing in itself space and time – connecting specific (present) places to specific (past) events, and unifying these two temporal dimensions. So, the single locality is at the same time historically separated from, but physically united with, the rest of Britain, a relationship that connects Drayton's use of both topography and history. This issue is more likely connected with the almost contemporary debates on the Union of England (and Wales) and Scotland, a country which Drayton would have liked to describe, but never managed to.

The role of Britain's history in *Poly-Olbion* is first of all analysed in the context of the Drayton-Selden diatribe concerning the sources, methods and contents for the study of British history. Selden's approach tends to dismantle centuries of Galfridian legends and stories, in order to restore the few reliable sources available for the study of a very fragmented and uncertain British history, while Drayton trusts the Old Welsh/British sources on which the Galfridian legends were based, which he saw as the remains of the knowledge the ancient Druids had orally committed to the song of Bards. A final, crucial point in the discussion, highlighting the issue of the union, or lack of it, of the kingdom is the analysis of the matter relating to the kingdom's origins, especially with regard to the

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Saxons (English) and the British (Welsh) peoples. Drayton and Selden devote numerous lines to the ancestry of these peoples, as well as to that of the Danes and the Normans, demonstrating great knowledge of biblical, mythological, and fictional genealogies. What results from these networks of interrelations is a "unified fragmentation" of the inhabitants of Britain, which also characterises its landscape.

This amount of information on the *Poly-Olbion* matter is filtered through a survey of the large though uneven amount of criticism the poem has been exposed to through the centuries, as well as through an analysis of the work's literary influence to date. Attention is brought on the ways in which the work was received: by being read in its own right, or subsumed under a specific socio-cultural label determining its meaning *a priori* – that is to say, the layers of meanings it acquired, or failed to acquire, in the course of time, because of changing literary vogues. Indeed, taking the years of *Poly-Olbion's* publication as a starting point, this study is retroactive in its consideration of the sources, matter, and literary background, but also proactive, in its observation of the subsequent criticism on and literary influence of the poem, bearing in mind Drayton's possible authorial intentions. In turn, the use of contemporary criticism and its approaches cannot but lead to a global retroactive view of *Poly-Olbion* – of the ways it should have been, would be, and actually was read and studied. The issue of a varied and discordant reception is actually one of the main problems *Poly-Olbion* has had to face. After a long gestation, the poem was published in two parts in the course of ten momentous years, and was believed to have been "anachronistic" as early as the publication of the first edition in 1612, even by the poet himself. The "perspectival" view this dissertation presents has therefore been part of *Poly-Olbion's* story all along. Paradoxically, the criticism and literary influence of the poem from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century – what has been written on it, and the ways in which it has been understood

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– can be extremely helpful in order to study Drayton’s work and pin down its strong relationship with the passing of literary and cultural vogues.

The dissertation contends *inter alia* that the analysis of the *Poly-Olbion* matter as filtered by its literary influence points at the poem’s importance as the model and apex of a literary genre – the topo-chorographical depiction of the land of Britain, whether in verse or prose – which, though deemed secondary, proves to have survived to date, especially via the contamination with seventeenth-century river and country-house poetry, as well as later loco-descriptive literature. These subgenres, in turn, testify, together with *Poly-Olbion* criticism, to Drayton’s views of the political and socio-cultural nature of Great Britain, and the ways in which they were read, understood, and elaborated upon by critics and authors in the course of four centuries.

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## Abstract (Italian)

Il *Poly-Olbion* (1612; 1622) di Michael Drayton è un poema loco-descrittivo suddiviso in due parti costituite, rispettivamente, da diciotto e dodici Canti, ciascuno dei quali preceduto da una mappa. I versi descrivono la topografia delle contee dell'Inghilterra e del Galles, e i fatti storici che accaddero nelle località in questione. La voce narrante si alterna tra vari elementi paesaggistici, come foreste, montagne, valli, ma soprattutto fiumi. Nella prima parte del poema ciascun Canto si conclude con un commento dell'antiquario John Selden.

Questo studio si propone di evidenziare il ruolo del *Poly-Olbion* nel quadro della letteratura e della cultura inglese dal Seicento a oggi. Mira anche a unificare la vasta e frammentaria critica e i dati sull'influsso letterario del poema in una visione coerente finalizzata a un'analisi congiunta dei contenuti e della storia della sua ricezione. Esso fa inoltre uso dell'interazione tra prospettive sincroniche e diacroniche al fine di trattare della materia del poema alla luce della critica secentesca, fino a quella dei giorni nostri.

Le motivazioni alla base delle varie e mutevoli opinioni sul *Poly-Olbion* sono collegate sia ai tempi sia alle modalità della composizione e del contenuto. L'opera viene innanzi tutto contestualizzata all'interno dell'epoca e della vita di Drayton, in quanto pietra miliare della sua carriera e della sua reputazione presso i mecenati. Questi dati si propongono anche di fornire una spiegazione alle difficoltà che il poema potrebbe aver incontrato nel mercato librario, difficoltà denunciate dallo stesso poeta.

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L'analisi dei due principali argomenti del *Poly-Olbion* – la topografia e la storia della Gran Bretagna – getta luce sulle possibili intenzioni autorali di Drayton e sulle sue fonti, come pure sul tipo di lettori che potrebbe aver avuto in mente e sulle ragioni alla base della scarsa commercializzazione dell'opera.

L'uso della topografia in quanto stratagemma organizzativo per la materia antiquaria viene discusso e messo in relazione alla descrizione retorica della terra di Gran Bretagna, frammentata in dozzine di voci narranti, appartenenti al paesaggio locale, nonché al ruolo delle mappe che aprono ciascun Canto. Emerge così un quadro coerente che unisce mappa, materia topografica e singole località narranti in un'entità che contiene in sé spazio e tempo, collegando specifici luoghi (del presente) a specifici eventi (del passato), unificando così nel luogo queste dimensioni temporali. La singola località è nel contempo storicamente divisa e fisicamente unita al resto della Gran Bretagna: relazione, questa, che collega l'uso draytoniano della topografia e della storia. Questo punto, infatti, è probabilmente legato ai dibattiti quasi contemporanei relativi all'Unione tra Inghilterra (e Galles) e Scozia, paese su cui Drayton avrebbe voluto scrivere, senza peraltro riuscire nell'intento.

Il ruolo della storia britannica nel *Poly-Olbion* viene innanzitutto analizzato nel quadro della diatriba tra Drayton e Selden riguardante le fonti, i metodi, e i contenuti del suo studio. Mentre l'approccio di Selden tende a distruggere secoli di storie e leggende risalenti in ultima analisi a Geoffrey of Monmouth, in modo da restituire alla ricerca le poche fonti affidabili per lo studio di una storia britannica assai frammentaria e lacunosa, Drayton si affida alle fonti antico-gallesi/britanniche su cui si basavano le leggende galfridiane, e che il poeta considerava come resti di una conoscenza che gli antichi druidi avevano affidato oralmente al canto dei bardi. Il punto finale, e cruciale, della discussione, collegato al discorso riguardante l'Unione dei due Regni sotto Giacomo VI/I, è l'analisi della

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materia relativa alle origini della *nazione*, in particolare quella riguardante i sassoni (inglesi) e i britanni (gallesi). Drayton e Selden dedicano molto spazio alle origini di questi popoli, come pure a quella dei danesi e dei normanni, dimostrando grande conoscenza di genealogie bibliche, mitologiche e leggendarie. Quanto risulta da queste interrelazioni è una ossimorica frammentazione unificata degli abitanti della Gran Bretagna – la stessa frammentazione unificata che ne caratterizza il paesaggio.

Tale quantità di informazioni sulla materia oggetto del *Poly-Olbion* viene filtrata mediante uno studio della critica favorevole e sfavorevole al poema fino ai nostri giorni, nonché mediante un'analisi del suo influsso letterario fino al ventesimo secolo. Si discutono le modalità di ricezione dell'opera, a volte letta in quanto tale, a volte nell'ambito di una particolare etichetta socio-culturale che ne determina il significato *a priori* – ovvero la stratificazione che ne ha caratterizzato o meno il significato nel corso del tempo, per il susseguirsi delle mode letterarie. Prendendo come punto di partenza gli anni della pubblicazione del *Poly-Olbion*, questo studio si rivela retroattivo per la sua considerazione delle fonti, del contenuto, e del background letterario, ma anche proattivo, per le osservazioni relative alla critica successiva e all'influsso letterario del poema, mai perdendo di vista le probabili intenzioni dell'autore. A sua volta, l'uso della critica contemporanea e dei suoi approcci non può che portare a una visione globale retroattiva del *Poly-Olbion* – dei modi in cui avrebbe dovuto essere, sarebbe stato, e fu effettivamente letto e studiato. La questione della ricezione varia e discordante è in effetti uno dei primi e decisivi problemi che il *Poly-Olbion* ha dovuto affrontare: dopo una lunga gestazione, il poema fu pubblicato in due parti, nel corso di dieci anni cruciali, e fu considerato "anacronistico," persino dallo stesso poeta, già al tempo della pubblicazione della prima parte nel 1612. In definitiva, la visione "prospettica" presentata in questa tesi è stata sempre parte della storia del *Poly-Olbion*: paradossalmente, la critica e l'influsso letterario

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del poema dal diciassettesimo al ventunesimo secolo – ciò che ne è stato scritto, e come è stato capito – possono essere molto utili per lo studio dell'opera di Drayton e per comprenderne il forte legame col susseguirsi delle mode letterarie e culturali.

Questa tesi dimostra dunque in che modo l'analisi della materia del *Poly-Olbion*, filtrata attraverso il suo influsso letterario, sottolinei l'importanza dell'opera in quanto modello e apice di un genere letterario – la descrizione topo-corografica della Gran Bretagna, in versi o in prosa – che, sebbene ritenuto secondario, ha dato prova di essere sopravvissuto fino ai nostri giorni, in particolare mediante la commistione con la *river poetry* e il *country-house poem* del Seicento, e le opere loco-descrittive del Sette-Ottocento. Questi sottogeneri dimostrano, a loro volta, assieme alla critica del *Poly-Olbion*, le opinioni di Drayton sulla natura politica e socio-culturale della Gran Bretagna, e i modi in cui queste sono state lette, comprese, e rielaborate da critici e autori nel corso di quattro secoli.

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## Foreword

Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612; 1622) is a loco-descriptive poem in Alexandrine couplets, divided into two parts consisting of eighteen and twelve Songs, respectively; each song is prefaced by an engraved map and an argument in iambic tetrameters summarising the content to follow. The verse in both parts describes the topography of the English and Welsh counties and the historical feats that took place in the locations in question, the "narrators" being local landscape features, such as woodlands, forests, mountains and valleys, but mainly rivers. In the first part only, each Song closes with a learned prose commentary by the antiquarian John Selden.

In the working canon of English literature classes, *Poly-Olbion* has seldom gone beyond bare mention or occasional reading of select passages. It is readily remembered for being extremely long, for a total of nearly 15,000 lines;<sup>1</sup> but since other such-like works, like Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, are considered essential milestones in the teaching of Early Modern English literature, the problem cannot simply be the length of the poem. One reason may lie in the general perception that Drayton's poetic skills cannot be compared to Spenser's or Milton's, or to those of his more renowned contemporary, William Shakespeare. This is now the received opinion, although, in his time, Drayton was highly appreciated, particularly for his historical poetry. However, in the course of the centuries, *Poly-Olbion* – perhaps his most

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<sup>1</sup>The exact number is 14,718. J.F. Fry, "Drayton's 'Poly-Olbion'," *Notes and Queries* 108 (1903): 214.

criticised and, according to the poet himself, unsuccessful work – was just the poem for which Drayton continued to be mentioned, and with which he was most immediately associated.

The systematic scholarly study of *Poly-Olbion* did not begin until the early twentieth century, and sprang from a handful of dissertations made in the 1920s and 30s, particularly concerned with Drayton's sources, but also with the historical appreciation of his works from his times to date.<sup>2</sup> These studies, in turn, set the pace for further debate on the *Poly-Olbion* sources, showing the complexity of the poem,<sup>3</sup> which began to be analysed in the 1960s, particularly the actual blending between mimetic and non-mimetic material.<sup>4</sup> Studies on the poem's connection to the cultural and literary background of the early seventeenth century were first carried out in the late 1960s and early 1970s, respectively in a German monograph concerned with the relationship between Drayton's works (especially his historical poetry), the use of historical sources and antiquarianism, and in a French monograph dedicated entirely to *Poly-Olbion*, its literary value,

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<sup>2</sup>V.E. Hull, "The English and Welsh Topographical Sources of Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* with special reference to Camden's *Britannia* and Saxton's *Atlas*" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1926); Hilda Taylor, "Topographical Poetry in England During the Renaissance" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1926); Isaac Gourvitch, "The Life and Work of Drayton, with particular reference to the *Polyolbion* and its sources" (PhD dissertation, University of London, King's College, 1930); Russell Noyes, "The Influence and Reputation of Michael Drayton" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1932); Russell Noyes, "Drayton's Literary Vogue since 1931," *Indiana University Studies* 22 (1935): 3-23.

<sup>3</sup>See Isaac Gourvitch, "The Welsh Element in the *Poly-Olbion*: Drayton's Sources," *Review of English Studies* 4 (1928): 69-77; Isaac Gourvitch, "Drayton's Debt to Geoffrey of Monmouth," *Review of English Studies* 4 (1928): 394-403; Isaac Gourvitch, "A Note on Drayton and Philemon Holland," *Modern Language Review* 25 (1930): 332-6.

<sup>4</sup>W.H. Moore, "The Fusion of History and Poetry in the *Poly-Olbion*" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1963); W.H. Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," *Studies in Philology* 65 (1968): 783-803; H.P. Duchemin, "Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*: A Critical and Historical Study" (PhD dissertation, Birkbeck College, University of London, 1975); H.P. Duchemin, "Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* and the Alexandrine Couplet," *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980): 145-60; H.P. Duchemin, "'Barbarous Ignorance and Base Detraction': The Struggles of Michael Drayton," *Albion* 14 (1982): 118-38.

and sources.<sup>5</sup> Since then, several critical approaches – New Criticism, New Historicism, landscape and cartography studies, etc. – have been applied to Drayton’s poem, whether on its own or dealt with more or less extensively while discussing other works.<sup>6</sup> Most of them, however, have focused only on specific aspects or passages.

This dissertation provides a study of Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*, which aims, first of all, to bring together the previous, often fragmented, work done on the poem: that is to say, its role in Drayton’s career, its connections with the contemporary literary and cultural background, as well as with politics, and its use of topo-chorographical matter. This information is used as the basis for an analysis of *Poly-Olbion* which is – taking the years of its publication as a starting point – not only retroactive in its consideration of the sources and literary background, but also proactive, in its observation of the subsequent criticism and literary influence of the poem, bearing in mind Drayton’s possible authorial intentions. At the same time, the use of contemporary criticism and its approaches cannot but lead, in turn, to a global retroactive view of *Poly-Olbion*, of the ways it should have been, would be, and was actually read and studied. Indeed, the issue of a varied and discordant reception is one of the main and earliest problems *Poly-Olbion* has had to bear with: after a long gestation, the poem was published in two parts in the course of ten momentous years, and was believed to have been “anachronistic” as early as the publication of the first edition in 1612, even by the poet himself.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>P.G. Buchloh, *Michael Drayton, Barde und Historiker, Politiker und Prophet* (Neumunster: Wachholtz, 1964); Alice d’Haussy, *Poly-Olbion, ou l’Angleterre vue par un élisabéthain* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1972).

<sup>6</sup>See, for instance, R.F. Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973); S.P. Revard, “The Design of Nature in Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*,” *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 17 (1977): 105-17; B.C. Ewell, “Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*: England’s Body Immortalized,” *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978): 297-315.

<sup>7</sup>In the preface “To the Generall Reader,” the author professed his disappointment: “In

The "perspectival" view which this dissertation presents has therefore been part of *Poly-Olbion's* story all along: paradoxically, the criticism and literary influence of the poem from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century – what has been written on it, and the ways in which it has been understood – can be extremely helpful in order to study Drayton's work and pin down its strong relationship with the passing of literary and cultural vogues.

The dissertation is divided into two parts. Part I (Chapters 1 to 3) explores Drayton's literary life, work and acquaintances in the Tudor and Stuart world, in order to highlight the position *Poly-Olbion* held in his career; the composition of *Poly-Olbion*; and the critical response to the poem from the date of publication to the present. This provides the literary, bibliographical, and critical background for the subsequent analysis, in Part II (Chapters 4 to 6), of *Poly-Olbion's* supporting themes – topography and chorography (or local history) – and, finally, of its literary influence from the seventeenth century to the present.

Despite what is commonly believed today, contemporary evidence shows that Drayton was a well-known poet in his time: he was a member of Prince Henry's circle, as well as an anti-Jacobean author much appreciated by his fellow intellectuals. In Chapter 1, an overview of his career, works, acquaintances, and patronage is provided: it reveals that Drayton was anything but a poet lacking appreciation and literary self-awareness, which he exploited to promote himself, more or less successfully, and which was irretrievably marked by the composition and publication of *Poly-Olbion*.

In Chapter 2, the composition of *Poly-Olbion* is analysed in terms of

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publishing this Essay of my Poeme, there is this great disadvantage against me; that it commeth out at this time..." *Poly-Olbion*, in *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J.W. Hebel, et al., 4 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1931), IV.vi\*. See also P.S.P. Weibly, "'To Any That Will read It': Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* as Monument, Emblem, Myth" (PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1982), 105.

its actual stages and of its immediate reception, through the discrepancy between the author's expectations and the actual sales, as shown by several bibliographical data. The printing process and the tentative estimate of the book's original retail price are outlined, in order to determine the kind of readership Drayton may have had in mind, as well as the reasons for the poem's possible lack of success, according to contemporary sources and, first of all, to the author himself.

Chapter 3 is meant to explore the manifold ways in which *Poly-Olbion* has been read and received to date. Its most problematic features – encyclopedism and prosody – are considered in the context of seventeenth-century literature, in order to record their reception in subsequent centuries. Indeed, *Poly-Olbion* was read as an organic literary work in its own right until around the 1640s, when its verse began to be left aside in favour of Selden's learned commentary, a source of rare historico-philological pearls for mid- and late seventeenth-century antiquarians. At the turn of the century Drayton's works were hardly considered to be part of the English literary canon, to come back into more general appreciation towards the mid-eighteenth century, along with the work of many other sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century authors, in the wake of the canonisation of Shakespeare as the national Bard. All through the nineteenth century *Poly-Olbion's* concern with landscape and topography continued to charm an elite of authors, while far less condescending was the critical outlook on the poem, by which it was mostly considered a verbose, cumbersome example of bad poetry. Only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was *Poly-Olbion* re-discovered for its representation of a long-lost, pastoral, proud Old England, still untouched by the Industrial Revolution and, later, threatened by the two World Wars. Since the early twentieth century the poem has been systematically studied from an academic point of view, concerned with the analysis of its multifarious subject-matter.

The role of topography as a thematic framework and as a way of organising poetic verse is analysed in Chapter 4, and compared to similar contemporary examples. Drayton's use of rhetorical *descriptio* is then discussed, in its various forms: from *copia*, or the abundance of detail, to pictorial representations possibly inspired by the theoretical principles of landscape painting. The role of the thirty maps prefacing each Song is then analysed in the context of the poem and of the contemporary spreading familiarity with maps and mapping. The chapter ends with a section on the poem's personifications of rivers, mountains, and valleys, and their narrative role. Chorography, or the description of local history, is the subject of Chapter 5, which is concerned with the way Drayton and Selden dealt, in *Poly-Olbion* Part I, with the feats of British history. First of all, their respective use of sources is described: whereas Drayton claimed to rely on originally oral, native sources, such as works in Old Welsh rehearsing the ancient songs of British Bards, Selden retained his humanist use of written, classical sources, and, in general, of sources he would consider valid according to his methodological principles. Drayton's and Selden's methods are then discussed: Drayton celebrated the Bardic tradition as the most faithful means of handing down national history, while Selden relied on "synchronisme," or the fusion of a chrono-philological assessment of the available sources. The final part of the chapter is concerned with the "matter of the Origins," e.g. the British and the Saxon theory on the descent of the British people, in Drayton's verse and Selden's prose; it also deals with the use of biblical, historical, and fictional genealogies, the ways in which they were employed to investigate the origins of England and Wales, and their general function in the poem.

Finally, Chapter 6 makes use of the information regarding *Poly-Olbion's* reception and treatment of the topo-chorographical matter in order to provide an analysis of its literary influence to date. Indeed, the overview shows that Drayton's poem has never been completely forgotten, al-

though, it must be said, its readers have been very few, and usually poets themselves. It is worth noting that no other work of the kind, so discouraging in length and varied in subject matter, seems to have better thrived through four centuries of ever-changing literary vogues and canons. This may well be due to *Poly-Olbion's* celebrated (and much criticised) protean form, capable of adapting itself to, and consequently supporting, many kinds of interpretation.



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## Abbreviations

All quotations from Drayton's works are taken from *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J.W. Hebel, K. Tillotson, B.H. Newdigate (Oxford: Blackwell, 1931), also available online at the University of Virginia Library: [http://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/viewdocId=chadwyck\\_ep/uvaGenText/text/chep\\_1.1313.xml;brand=default](http://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/viewdocId=chadwyck_ep/uvaGenText/text/chep_1.1313.xml;brand=default).

Work titles will be abbreviated as follows:

BW = *The Barons Wars*, 2:9-128.

EG = *Eglogues*, 2:515-73.

EL = *Elegies*, 2:515-73.

EHE = *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, 2:131-308.

GS = *To Master George Sandys*, 3:206-8.

HC = *Harmony of the Church*, 1:1-44.

HR = *To....Henery Reynolds*, 3:226-31.

IM = *Ideas Mirrour*, 1:95-124.

ID = *Idea 1599*, 1:515-73.

M = *Matilda*, 1:209-46.

O = *The Owle*, 2:477-514.

OD = *Odes*, 2:343-77.

ME = *The Muses Elizium*, 3:245-326.

MO = *Mortimeriados*, 2:305-468.

PO = *Poly-Olbion*, 4:1-579.

R = *Robert, Duke of Normandy*, 1:247-304.



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# PART I







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## Chapter 1

# Michael Drayton as Man of Letters: Life and Works

Michael Drayton was born in Hartshill, Warwickshire, in 1563 and died in London in 1631. A prolific author, he wrote and published poems, and, in collaboration with other dramatists, numerous plays for the public theatre, most of which are now lost. These essential bits of information are nearly all the few certain facts known about his life. As has been noted in recent years, the non-factual nature of the extant evidence has encouraged reconstructions of Drayton's identity that are unreliable and inconclusive, inasmuch as they are often the result of fictionalised accounts.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 *Sources and Evidence*

The documents that can help to outline Drayton's life can be classified into the following types.

#### a. Documents mentioning Drayton

The evidence directly concerned with Drayton is mostly of a judicial

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<sup>1</sup>J.R. Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited* (London: Twayne, 1990), *passim*; Andrew Hadfield, "Michael Drayton's Brilliant Career," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 125 (2004): 119-47.

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nature.<sup>2</sup> He was called as a witness in a couple of trials<sup>3</sup> and last wills involving people with whom he was acquainted.<sup>4</sup> In 1627 he was also charged with, and then exculpated of, "suspicion of incontinency" with a woman at a London lodging house.<sup>5</sup> Many relevant details on his playwrighting in the years 1597-1602, including payments and attributions, can be found in Philip Henslowe's *Diary*.<sup>6</sup>

### b. Documents about his family

Some documents (mostly last wills and testaments) regarding one Christopher Drayton from Hartshill are considered valuable because he is believed to be Drayton's great-grandfather. His grandchild William, namesake of his son, to whom Christopher left part of his goods, can possibly be considered Michael's father.<sup>7</sup>

### c. Private correspondence

Several letters dating 1618-31 were published in the 1711 edition of Drummond's *Works*<sup>8</sup> and are now preserved in the Hawthornden

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<sup>2</sup>See B.H. Newdigate, *Michael Drayton and His Circle* (1941; rpt. Oxford: Blackwell, 1961). Henceforward cited in the main text as N and page number(s). Anne Lake Prescott, "Drayton, Michael (1563-1631)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online ed., ed. L. Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8042> (accessed February 20, 2008).

<sup>3</sup>See Kathleen Tillotson, "Drayton and the Gooderes," *Modern Language Review* 35 (1940): 341-9. Details can be found in the following documents: PRO C 24/261/28; PRO 4/313.

<sup>4</sup>See *Coram Rege Rolls*, Easter, 6 Jas. I, m. 483.

<sup>5</sup>See Bernard Capp, "The Poet and the Bawdy Court: Michael Drayton and the Lodging-House World in Early Stuart London," *The Seventeenth Century* 10 (1995): 27-37. Details can be found in the following documents: GL MS 9189/2; LMA Consistory Court Act Book 1626/7, 174; DL/C/622.

<sup>6</sup>See A.H. Bullen, "Drayton, Michael (1563-1631)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published 1888; N 104ff.

<sup>7</sup>This information was recorded by Benjamin Bartlett in his *History of Manceter* (1791). Quoted in N 4-9.

<sup>8</sup>See William Drummond of Hawthornden, *The Works of William Drummond of*

manuscript collection at the National Library of Scotland. Drayton's answers are often missing, but Drummond's letters can help to reconstruct the original correspondence, usually dealing with literary issues (N 177).

**d. Texts and paratextual matter in the editions of Drayton's works**

The evidence collected in Drayton's works provides numerous contextual references. While the textual ones are often rather obscure and can be interpreted only tentatively, the paratextual matter (dedications and commendatory verse) can help in the reconstruction of the poet's social relations, as do its evolution and alterations in the several editions of his works with regard to the dynamics of patronage management. The 1619 folio edition is especially useful in that it contains the only evidence of the poet's birth date and place (Fig. 1.1).<sup>9</sup>

**e. Texts and paratextual matter in the editions of other writers' works**

Beside being the author of commendatory verse for the works of other poets and dramatists (N 87ff), Drayton is referred to in numerous poetical works and dedications (Richard Barnfield, John Davies, Ben Jonson, William Drummond, etc.).

For a couple of centuries the evidence collected in the works of Drayton and other poets constituted the core of often sketchy and fictionalised overviews of the poet's life.<sup>10</sup> The first coherent account was attempted by

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*Hawthornden*, ed. J. Sage and T. Ruddiman (Edinburgh: Watson, 1711).

<sup>9</sup>These data are mentioned in the inscription round the author's portrait: "EFFIGIES MICHAELIS DRAYTON ARMIGERI, POETÆ CLARISS. ÆTAT. SVÆ L. A. CHR. CIC.DC.XIII," while his native town is mentioned in a Latin quatrain at the bottom of the same frontispiece: "Lux Hareshulla tibi (Warwici villa, tenebris, / Ante tuas Cunas, obsita) Prima fuit. / Arma, Viros, Veneres, Patriam modulamine dixti; / Te Patriae resonant Arma, Viri, Veneres." Quoted in N2.

<sup>10</sup>In his bibliographical survey listing and briefly describing notes, articles, and books on Drayton published between the late seventeenth century and 1979, J.L. Harner

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Figure 1.1: William Hole. *Michael Drayton*. Line engraving. Published 1619. London, National Portrait Gallery.

William Winstanley in his "Life of Mr. Michael Drayton," which appeared in *Englands Worthies* (1684), a *de viris illustribus* biographical collection.<sup>11</sup> The sources used by Winstanley were then mostly accepted, re-used, revised, and reprinted both in the prefaces to editions of Drayton's works<sup>12</sup> and in volumes dealing with the lives and works of famous English poets.<sup>13</sup> This approach culminated in the first *DNB* article on Michael Drayton, written by A.H. Bullen in 1888, which can be considered both the point of arrival of the critical method followed from the late seventeenth to the late nineteenth century and the point of departure of twentieth-century Drayton studies.

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describes as "brief" or "sketchy" most of the biographical overviews issued until the end of the nineteenth century. J.L. Harner, *Samuel Daniel and Michael Drayton: A Reference Guide* (Boston: Hall, 1980), 147, 150, 151, 154, 155, 160, 173.

<sup>11</sup>William Winstanley, "The Life of Michael Drayton," in *Englands Worthies: The Lives of the Most Eminent Persons from Constantine the Great to This Present Time* (London: Blagrave, 1684), 340-1.

<sup>12</sup>Charles Coffey, "An Historical Essay on the Life and Writings of Michael Drayton, Esq.," in C. Coffey, ed., *The Works of Michael Drayton, Esq.* (London: R. Dodsley, et al., 1748), 3-12; Robert Anderson, "The Poetical Works of Michael Drayton, Esq.," in R. Anderson, ed., *The Works of Michael Drayton, with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, 3 vols. (London: Arch, 1793), 3:i-vi; John Payne Collier, "Introduction," in *Poems by Michael Drayton from the Earliest and Rarest Editions, or from Unique Copies* (London: Nichols, 1856), i-li.

<sup>13</sup>William Winstanley, "Mr. Michael Drayton," in *The Lives of the Most Famous English Poets* (London: Samuel Manship, 1687), 105-8; William Oldys, "Michael Drayton," in *Biographia Britannica*, 3 vols. (London: W. Innys, et al., 1750), 3:1744-9; Henry Headley, ed., *Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry: With Remarks*, 2 vols. (London: Cadell, 1787), 215; F.G. Waldron, "Michael Drayton," in *The Biographical Mirrour* (London: Harding, 1795), 102-11; Alexander Chalmers, "The Poems of Michael Drayton," in *The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper*, 4 vols. (London: Johnson, 1810), vii-xx; Ezekiel Sanford, "Select Poems of Michael Drayton with a Life of the Author," in *The Works of the British Poets: With the Lives of the Authors*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Mitchell, et al., 1819), 323-6; E.S. Brydges, "Michael Drayton," in *Imaginative Biography*, 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Oatley, 1834), 237-50; Robert Bell, "Michael Drayton, 1563-1631: With Notices of His Contemporaries," in *Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Great Britain, I: English Poets* (London: Longman, et al., 1839), 1-31; William Hazlitt, "Michael Drayton," in *Johnson's Lives of the British Poets Completed*, 2 vols. (London: Cooke, 1854), 180-2; Henry Morley, ed., *English Writers, X: Shakespeare and His Time: Under Elizabeth* (London: Cassell, 1893), 209-11.

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The still ongoing scholarly debate regarding the facts and interpretations of Drayton's life originated indeed in the late nineteenth century, after the discovery of previously unknown documents on the poet's social and cultural background. In 1895 Oliver Elton published *An Introduction to Michael Drayton*, a detailed survey providing new-found circumstantial information on the poet's life, background and patronage; the volume was revised, enlarged, and reprinted in 1905 as *Michael Drayton: A Critical Study*.<sup>14</sup> Elton examined Drayton's family tree, patrons, and sources, and attempted to decipher several obscure biographical references in his works. Debates on key issues, such as the identity of 'Idea' in the sonnets, gave an historico-philological boost to Drayton studies, and were fostered, beside Elton, by scholars like W.J. Courthope.<sup>15</sup> J.W. Hebel's five-volume edition of the complete works, published in the years 1931-41 with the help of other scholars like Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson, B.H. Newdigate, and Bent Juel-Jensen, exploited and improved on the method initiated by Elton, providing thorough annotation and references based on documentary research.<sup>16</sup> This material also served as the basis for what appears to be the most complete survey of Drayton's life to date: B.H. Newdigate's *Michael Drayton and His Circle*, published in 1941 as the sixth volume of the Hebel edition. Newdigate reorganised into a coherent whole both old and new evidence, providing a detailed chronological reconstruction of the poet's life, education, patronage relations, literary acquaintances, and works, as well as suggesting explanations for his social

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<sup>14</sup>Oliver Elton, *An Introduction to Michael Drayton* (Manchester: Spencer Society, 1895); Oliver Elton, *Michael Drayton: A Critical Study* (London: Constable, 1905). Henceforward quoted in the main text as E and page number(s).

<sup>15</sup>J.W. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 3:27-53. Drayton's life began to be often studied also as an indirect means of discovering new evidence regarding William Shakespeare. See, for instance, Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, *Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1907), 187-209.

<sup>16</sup>Michael Drayton, *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J.W. Hebel, K. Tillotson, and B.H. Newdigate, 5 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1931-41).

and literary choices. In 1965 Newdigate's method was taken up again by Christopher Whitfield, whose journal article on the Clifford Chambers mansion, based on extremely detailed archival research, portrayed the interweaving and interacting of Drayton with the Goodere family and the Polesworth circle.<sup>17</sup>

The later influence of the new-historicist perspective has led to a revisionist current, questioning the value of non-factual or fictionalised evidence, biased by instances of external mediation. In her *Michael Drayton Revisited* (1990), J.R. Brink argued that Drayton's "fictionalized biography" has led to particular selections and interpretations of his works: despite the documentary evidence, often misread by Newdigate, the core of what can be narrated about Drayton's life, in her view, are still for the most part "myths fictionalized from autobiographical statements in his works and dedications."<sup>18</sup> In his article "Michael Drayton's Brilliant Career" (2004), Andrew Hadfield approached the problem the other way round: if such biographical facts are mediated by the influence and self-presentation of the poet's *persona*, they tend to present, in Hadfield's words, "Drayton's published life as if it were synonymous with his real one,"<sup>19</sup> thus raising as many questions as answers in the mind of the literary scholar.

Both the historico-philological and revisionist perspectives are now considered helpful for a tentative reconstruction of Drayton's life, as appears from Anne Lake Prescott's 2008 update of Drayton's *DNB* entry. The standard, basic reference works on Drayton are still Hebel's edition and Newdigate's volume, which will both be used in this chapter. Elton's 1905 edition will also be considered because of the detailed information it gives on the composition of Drayton's works, while Whitfield's journal article is indispensable for a discussion of his life-long Warwickshire

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<sup>17</sup>Christopher Whitfield, "Clifford Chambers: The Muses Quiet Port," *Notes and Queries* 12 (1965): 362-75.

<sup>18</sup>Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited*, 1-2.

<sup>19</sup>Hadfield, "Michael Drayton's Brilliant Career," 145.

acquaintances. Brink's and Hadfield's works provide a useful *caveat* concerning Drayton's actual intentions, and take into account his careful self-presentation.

## 1.2 *Drayton's Life*

Drayton's family belonged to the Warwickshire middle class, the relatives on his father's side being farmers, butchers, tanners, and shoemakers. He may have attended the Atherstone or the Coventry schools, but eventually did not follow his family's traditional occupations.

According to the information provided by Drayton himself in his elegy *To Henry Reynolds*, in 1573 he entered the service of Sir Henry Goodere of Polesworth, in Arden, as "a proper goodly page, / Much like a Pigmy, scarce ten yeares of age." (HR 26-7). In 1597 he wrote to the son of Sir Henry that he owed the better part of his education to the Gooderes' "happy and generous family (EHE 2). At Polesworth Drayton was raised together with Sir Henry Goodere's daughters Frances (1571-1606) and Anne (1570-?), had access to the classics, along with English, French, and Italian literature, and to old chronicles, and was a member of the Polesworth coterie (N 20-3). From 1575 to 1585 he was in the service of Thomas Goodere, Sir Henry's brother, and then returned to Polesworth.<sup>20</sup>

The dedication to Lady Jane Devereux in *The Harmony of the Church* (1591) suggests that Drayton was in London around 1591, possibly in the company of Sir Henry Goodere.<sup>21</sup> He may have been supported by the Russell or Sidney family for a while, although scanty evidence exists for the period spanning from 1591 to 1595 (E 14). In these years he composed three other works: *Idea*, *The Shepherds Garland* and *Piers Gaveston* (1593),

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<sup>20</sup>Whitfield, "Clifford Chambers," 366.

<sup>21</sup>R.F. Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973), 10.

and the sonnet sequence *Ideas Mirroure* (1594).

Between 1594 and 1597 he possibly spent most of his time in London, composing and dedicating to the Countess of Bedford the complaint *Matilda* (1594), the pastoral *Endimion and Phæbe*, *Ideas Latmus* (1595), the poem *Mortimeriados* (1596), the complaint *Robert, Duke of Normandy* (1596), and a pair of letters in *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597).

In the years 1597-1602 Drayton worked for Philip Henslowe, writing plays for the company acting at the Rose Theatre, in Southwark, and later at the Fortune, in Shoreditch (N 101). Of the thirty-three plays associated with his name, twenty-four can certainly be attributed to him, entirely or in part, thanks to Henslowe's diary entries. However, only one of them, *Sir John Oldcastle*, is extant.<sup>22</sup>

Though having enjoyed the protection of Sir Walter Aston since 1602, in 1607-8 Drayton resumed playwrighting, working for the Children of the King's Revels at the Whitefriars playhouse. He was both the manager and a sharer in this company; he also appeared before the King's Bench several times with other colleagues, because of money never paid to them. The Whitefriars was closed in 1608. In 1609 the company of the Children of the Queen's Revels took possession of it, but there are no records revealing whether Drayton ever participated in the new theatrical enterprise (N 112-16, 123).

The following four years were devoted to the composition of the first part of *Poly-Olbion*. After Prince Henry's death in 1612 he began to lead a quieter life, concentrating on his production and fostering his cultural relations. The years 1612-18 were spent composing the second part of *Poly-Olbion* and revising his poetical works for the folio edition issued in 1619. In 1616, as a pleasant parenthesis, he is reported as having participated in a "merry meeting" with Jonson and Shakespeare, possibly organised to celebrate the publication of Jonson's folio; Shakespeare drank too much

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<sup>22</sup>Lemuel Whitaker, "Michael Drayton as a Dramatist," *PMLA* 18 (1903): 379.

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and caught a cold, which, it was believed, led to his death in the same year.<sup>23</sup>

Little is known about Drayton's last decade. He lived in Fleet Street, spent the summer at the Rainsfords' mansion of Clifford Chambers,<sup>24</sup> and was inspired to compose several new works, which appeared in two folio editions in 1627 and 1630. He died at his London house on December 23, 1631, a few months after his return from his last summer stay at Clifford Chambers. He left no last will and testament, and his wealth at his death amounted roughly to 25 pounds. He was so much appreciated, it has been reported, that

the Gentlemen of the Four Innes of Court and others of note about the Town, attended his body to Westminster, reaching in order by two and two, from his Lodging almost to Strand-bridge.<sup>25</sup>

He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and honoured by the Countess of Dorset with a marble monument whose inscription has been attributed either to Jonson or to Francis Quarles (E 145).

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<sup>23</sup>Whitfield, "Clifford Chambers," 374. From Whitfield's thorough documentation it appears that Drayton was or may have been acquainted with several Warwickshire individuals or families related, in turn, to William Shakespeare. In 1571 Sir Henry Goodere acted as a Commissioner of Recusancy, making a list of recusants containing the name John Shakespeare, possibly William's father. While at Clifford Chambers, Drayton was treated once for "a tertian" by the physician John Hall, Shakespeare's son-in-law, the Rainsford family doctor from 1607 onwards. In the same area there lived the Combe family, to which Shakespeare bequeathed his sword. Thomas Greene, Shakespeare's cousin, was a close acquaintance of the Rainsfords, and may have written commendatory verse for Drayton's *The Barons Wars*. Sir Henry Rainsford's and Shakespeare's solicitor was Francis Collins. Apart from John Ward's account of a Drayton-Shakespeare-Jonson legendary meeting at Stratford, there survive no documents proving any personal acquaintance between Drayton and Shakespeare. *Ibid.*, 363, 366, 372.

<sup>24</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 90; Whitfield, "Clifford Chambers," 366.

<sup>25</sup>This information, reported by the antiquary William Fulman (1632-1688), can now be read in the Bodleian Corpus Christi College MSS, Fulman Collection, B2, 15. Quoted in N 219.

The fictionalised myths that characterised Drayton's life seem to have begun with his death. While in his *Church History of Britain* (1655) Fuller asserted that Chaucer lay in the south aisle of Westminster, in the company of Spenser and Drayton, four years later Peter Heylyn disagreed in his *Examen Historicum*, stating that, because he had been to the funeral, he knew that Drayton lay under the North wall, whereas his bust only was placed in the south aisle of the cathedral (N 219-20). Later in the same year, in *The Appeal of Injured Innocence*, Fuller disagreed once more, and concluded by criticising the creation of legends surrounding Drayton's poetic persona: "Have Stones learnt to Lye, and abuse posterity? Must there needs be a Fiction in the Epitaph of a Poet?" (N 220).

### 1.3 *The Quest for Patronage*

Drayton entered the literary world as a professional poet during the years which saw the end of Elizabeth's reign and the accession of James. Literary patronage was undergoing a cultural and political crisis. To maintain control over the provinces, the Queen had gradually weakened the financial possibilities of aristocratic coterie, narrowing royal patronage channels to just the Earl of Essex (after Leicester's death in 1588) and Sir Robert Cecil.<sup>26</sup> These few favourites, whom Elizabeth considered less threatening than the rest of the nobility because of their obvious royal prestige, filtered the petitions addressed to the monarch.<sup>27</sup> Though managing to strengthen their influence on the provinces, the royal patrons found it harder and harder to satisfy the requests of the increasing number of clients, some of whom they indirectly and riskily helped even without

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<sup>26</sup>A.F. Marotti, "John Donne and the Rewards of Patronage," in G. Fitch Lytle and S. Orgel, eds., *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 210; Linda Levy Peck, "Patronage and Government Policy: The Jacobean Dilemma," in *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>27</sup>Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Routledge, 1993), 49.

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any personal knowledge. Despite the Tudors' original intention, that the patronage system had to involve local political elites in state activities so as to maintain links between the central government and the localities, with King James's accession centralised royal control over patronage began to slacken, leading to a steady increase in the number of favourites, belonging to rival cultural factions set at Court and less and less connected with or interested in the provinces.<sup>28</sup>

This evolution of patronage and the gradual diffusion and legitimation of printed works increased the social and cultural mobility of poets, belonging more and more often to increasingly differentiated social and cultural backgrounds.<sup>29</sup> The links between patron and poet were looser, and neither imposed any univocal dependence on their relation: patrons willingly admitted to their coteries new poets suiting their literary tastes, while poets were free to search for new patrons for their activity.<sup>30</sup> The same patron was just as likely to be asked for support by middle-class professional men of letters, like Drayton or Samuel Daniel, Inns-of-Court men like John Donne, using writing as a means to further social advancement, or professional poets like Ben Jonson, already affirmed both in coteries and print, but ultimately aspiring to Court.

From the variety of backgrounds and purposes there proceeded a variety of addresses to patrons, conveyed through occasional manuscript poetry satisfying particular personal tastes,<sup>31</sup> but also, more and more often, through printed verse designed for a wider readership than that of the sole coteries. If manuscript verse exchange implied a rather informal relationship with patrons and was considered a unique sign of preference and celebration, printed verse marked a division between the patron-

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<sup>28</sup>Peck, "Patronage and Government Policy," 44-5, 31.

<sup>29</sup>Patricia Thomson, "The Literature of Patronage, 1580-1630," *Essays in Criticism* 2 (1952): 267, 269.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 270-1.

<sup>31</sup>Jan Van Dorsten, "Literary Patrons in Elizabethan England: The Early Phase," in Fitch Lytle, Orgel, eds., *Patronage in the Renaissance*, 192.

poet social and cultural spheres, with works being not so much the opportunity for informal dialogue and (sometimes) negotiation, but rather fixed, formal products and gifts to be accepted and read at the same level as the rest of the public.<sup>32</sup>

These numerous approaches mirrored also the several attitudes displayed by poets towards their patrons. A poet like Donne, for instance, for whom writing was a means of social promotion and not at all a profession urged by poetic vocation, considered himself "a social non-entity" if deprived of the "prestige and identity conferred by place":<sup>33</sup> Donne's works were often affected by this perpetual social uncertainty, causing in him an anxiety of success.<sup>34</sup> Professionals like Drayton and Jonson, with a strong sense of identity and dignity originating also in their lower social class, were not so emotionally entrapped by the dynamics of patronage.<sup>35</sup> But, while Jonson's firm though ironic use of the profession of poetry helped him to overcome the ebbs and flows of his career, Drayton's rigid and committed poetic vocation, as well as his high opinion of the poet's office, made his patronage management more complicated.

In the early 1590s, in *The Shepherds Calendar*, Drayton addressed his first dedication ever to Robert Dudley, son of the late Earl of Leicester, who had allowed Sir Henry Goodere to become a knight in 1586 (N 30). This address bore a programmatic intent: Dudley's father had been the most important patron of the mid Elizabethan reign, supporting Edmund Spenser, among others.<sup>36</sup> Drayton also inserted poetic tributes to the Sidney family, acquainted with the Gooderes: he addressed an elegy to the deceased Sir Philip Sidney, to whom Spenser had dedicated *The Shepherdes Calender* (1579), followed by a poem in praise of his sister

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<sup>32</sup>Hadfield, "Michael Drayton's Brilliant Career," 146.

<sup>33</sup>Marotti, "John Donne," 208, 229.

<sup>34</sup>Thomson, "The Literature of Patronage," 282.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 284.

<sup>36</sup>Van Dorsten, "Literary Patrons," 200.

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Mary Sidney.<sup>37</sup> He thus wished to stress the ideal connection of his poetic activity with that of Sidney and Spenser, initially seen as emblems of the Elizabethan tradition of public poetry, and later on, during James's reign, as examples of "proud poetic and political independence."<sup>38</sup> Throughout his life Drayton's will to highlight how "his assumed role as a privileged poet who could make key moral, social and political judgements," and influence social issues, would never change his views of patronage; for it he was not willing to play "the social games that were expected of him to win favour at court with the nation's elite."<sup>39</sup> Despite his general contempt for the ways in which coteries tended to mediate between poets and power, and the results of his patronage management, Drayton usually knew which were the right people he should apply to. After the Leicester address, he dedicated *Ideas Mirrour* (1594) to Anthony Cooke of the manor of Hartshill, grandchild of the late Sir Anthony Cooke, the grandfather of Robert Cecil and Francis Bacon (N 12); until the year of his death, he was a frequent and welcome summer visitor at the Rainsfords' coterie.<sup>40</sup>

In 1595, thanks to Sir Henry Goodere, Drayton officially became a member of the coterie of Lucy, Countess of Bedford, with whom he had been acquainted since 1594.<sup>41</sup> To her he dedicated a total of five works, composed in the years 1594-7. Around 1597, something happened which may have altered his good relation to the Countess. In general, what

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<sup>37</sup>In *Ideas Mirrour* (1594), Amour 51, Mary Sidney's name appears again in the anagram "Meridianis." Jean Robertson, "Drayton and the Countess of Pembroke," *Review of English Studies* 16 (1965): 49.

<sup>38</sup>David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 175, 177.

<sup>39</sup>Hadfield, "Michael Drayton's Brilliant Career," 127.

<sup>40</sup>On July 14, 1631, a few months before his death, Drayton addressed a letter to William Drummond of Hawthornden stating that he had been staying at "a Knight's house in Gloucestershire, to which Place I Yearly use to come, in the Summer Time, to recreate my self, and to spend Two or Three Months in the Country." Drummond, *Works*, 154. Quoted in N 50; Whitfield, "Clifford Chambers," 365.

<sup>41</sup>See Lesley Lawson, *Out of the Shadows: Lucy, Countess of Bedford* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2008).

perhaps made it impossible for Lucy to continue to accept Drayton's tributes was the growing self-awareness of his poetic role, as well as the increasing political commitment of his poetry, founded on the use and manipulation of history, a rhetorical tool rather difficult to handle at a time when the English monarchy was ruled by an aged Queen without a legitimate heir. Indeed, in 1599, Elizabeth would issue a decree against the writing of histories, among other kinds of books, in order to control this very kind of public discussion of the present founded on analogies with the past. *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, in particular, was the last work patronised by the Countess.<sup>42</sup> Drayton's dedication to her, blending celebratory and admonitory addresses, and the epistles in general, consolidating verse history and didactic poetry posing analogies with the present,<sup>43</sup> may have disturbed the sensitivity of a patroness promoting and preferring occasional poetry in praise of herself and her family.<sup>44</sup> In general, Drayton's growing self-awareness as a poet, and his consequent, increasingly unmediated approach to power,<sup>45</sup> may have turned him into a *persona non grata* in the eyes of a patroness who had not yet achieved a safe official status. *Englands Heroicall Epistles* also

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<sup>42</sup>The Bedford addresses were maintained until the 1619 folio, when Drayton was able to reorganise most of his dedications. This, however, has been motivated not so much as a piece of evidence of Drayton's continuing relations with them, but as something imposed by the printer: indeed, "in order to remove the various addresses, the printer in most instances would have had to undergo considerable trouble and expense; and, further, he would have lost from his books some renowned names, unless the author could have obtained other persons as sponsors." Dick Taylor, Jr., "Drayton and the Countess of Bedford," *Studies in Philology* 49 (1952): 214.

<sup>43</sup>Bart Van Es, "Michael Drayton, Literary History and Historian in Verse," *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008): 255-69.

<sup>44</sup>B.K. Lewalski, "Lucy, Countess of Bedford: Images of a Jacobean Courtier and Patroness," in K. Sharpe and S. Zwicker, eds., *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 61.

<sup>45</sup>From then on, Drayton's attitude towards power can hardly be said to match any aspects of the courtly rhetorical semiotics analysed in Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), chap. 2, 3.

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provides clear evidence of Drayton's attempts to win the interest of new patrons: the structure of this work proved to be a powerful means of patronage management, since each pair of letters could be, and was indeed, dedicated to different actual and potential patrons from several social classes and backgrounds.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, a related cause was certainly Drayton's changing political ideas. Like the Countess, her mother Lady Anne Harington and her husband, the most renowned dedicatees in the 1597 edition of *Englands Heroicall Epistles* belonged to the Essex faction: William Parker, Fourth Baron Mounteagle, Lord Henry Howard, Henry Goodere of Polesworth, nephew to Sir Henry Goodere, and Frances, wife to Henry Goodere. The Earl of Bedford had been a long-time friend of Essex's, and shared his sympathies for King James VI of Scotland. Owing to his veneration for the Sidney family, to which the Countess was related,<sup>47</sup> Drayton may have initially supported Essex as the ideal continuer of Sir Philip's political ideas and patronage.<sup>48</sup> Yet, in 1597 he began his collaboration with Henslowe and the Lord Admiral's theatrical company, notably anti-Jacobean and patronised by the Earl of Nottingham, one of Essex's rivals and a supporter of Edward Seymour, Lord Beauchamp, the Suffolk claimant to the throne.<sup>49</sup> In the

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<sup>46</sup>This was the case again in the following years, when, during the revision of later editions, Drayton also updated his dedications. The dedication to Henry Lucas was added in 1598, that to James Huish in 1599; from 1602 onwards a pair of epistles was dedicated to Sir Walter Aston; from 1605 onwards Lord Howard was replaced by Sir John Swinerton, Knight, Alderman of London (N 72-86).

<sup>47</sup>Sir James Harington, Lucy's grandfather, had married Lucy Sidney, Sir Philip's aunt. Florence Humphreys Morgan, "A Biography of Lucy, Countess of Bedford: The Last Great Literary Patroness" (PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 1956), 11.

<sup>48</sup>Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (New York: Thames, 1986), 224; M.G. Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family* (London: Routledge, 1988), 85.

<sup>49</sup>Morgan, "A Biography of Lucy, Countess of Bedford," 56-60. Drayton concluded his 1597 edition of *Englands Heroicall Epistles* with letters between Mary Queen of France and Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, and Lady Jane Gray and Guildford Dudley, ancestors of Viscount Beauchamp, James's rival to the throne of England. Hadfield, "Michael Drayton's Brilliant Career," 123-4.

years 1597-8, he also began to write *Poly-Olbion*,<sup>50</sup> a county-by-county description of the topography and history of Great Britain, intended to celebrate the very Tudor political asset the Earl of Essex, and the Bedfords with him, had been questioning.

In 1601, after his involvement in the Essex rebellion, the Earl of Bedford was fined 10,000 pounds and confined to one of his mansions. The Bedfords lost their prestige at Court until immediately after Elizabeth's death: then, with her mother, the Countess travelled to Scotland to pay homage to the future King James and Queen Anne, and was appointed, like other former Essexians, a member of the Queen's Household.<sup>51</sup> In 1604-5 she introduced at Court her *protégés* Jonson, Daniel, and John Florio. Drayton was not among them, of course, and in the 1606 edition of his *Eclogs* (a renaming of *The Shepherds Garland*) he added a bitter attack on Selena, commonly recognised as the Countess of Bedford, who has abandoned her shepherd Rowland (the poet's alter-ego)<sup>52</sup> in favour of a "bestly clowne" named Cerberon (EG 8:85-108). The identity of Cerberon has long been discussed, and is still uncertain: it may stand for a courtier or rival poet.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Parker Duchemin, "'Barbarous Ignorance and Base Detraction': The Struggles of Michael Drayton," *Albion* 14 (1982): 124-5.

<sup>51</sup>Lewalski, "Lucy, Countess of Bedford," 53, 61, 63; Peck, *Court Patronage*, 68.

<sup>52</sup>Evidence that this was Drayton's pastoral name can be found, for instance, in Richard Barnfield's *Affectionate Shepheard* (1594), where the author alluded to Drayton calling him "gentle Rowland, my professed friend." N 88.

<sup>53</sup>For further details on this critical diatribe see Raymond Jenkins, "Drayton's Relation to the School of Donne as Revealed in the *Shepherds Sirena*," *PMLA* 38 (1923): 557-87; J.W. Hebel, "Drayton's Sirena," *PMLA* 39 (1924): 814-36; R.W. Short, "Ben Jonson in Drayton's Poems," *Renaissance English Studies* 16 (1940): 149-58; P. Simpson and K. Tillotson, "Ben Jonson in Drayton's Poems," *Renaissance English Studies* 16 (1940): 303-6; N 59-69.

It has been demonstrated that before 1600 the Countess's literary acquaintances were very few – she did not meet Jonson before 1599-1600, Donne before 1602, and Daniel before 1603 – because the increasing household expenses and debts contracted to advance within the Elizabethan Court did not allow her to foster literary patronage on a large scale. Morgan, "A Biography of Lucy, Countess of Bedford," 48, 218; N 66. In 1595 the Earl of Bedford had had to borrow from his aunt, the Countess of Warwick, 20,000 pounds for the second time in three years. M.M. Byard, "The Trade of Courtiership: The Countess

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After this negative experience with the Countess of Bedford, Drayton may have realised that literary coteries were not sufficiently brave to finance and protect the "public nature," "transparent moral purpose," and "acknowledgment of literary tradition" which, he believed, were to be the most relevant features of poetry in general.<sup>54</sup> This was perhaps the cause of his life-long contempt for coteries and the private poetry they promoted. Yet, despite the enormous success in terms of readership of his *Heroicall Epistles*, reprinted almost once a year up to 1605, he was aware that the reward of an influent patron meant more than mere financial support, as it only could bring forth, above all, "public, authoritative recognition" of the poet's status.<sup>55</sup> This may have been the reason why, with Elizabeth's death approaching, Drayton attempted to resize his anti-Jacobean bias, hoping for royal support from the new King. In 1599 he is said to have visited James in Scotland, obtaining, like the poet Giles Fletcher, promises of favour which, as King of England, he would never keep.<sup>56</sup> Certainly James did not appreciate the political commitment and poetical self-awareness of the Spenserian tradition,<sup>57</sup> present, among others, in a sonnet that Drayton published in print and addressed to him in 1600:

Not thy grave Counsells, nor thy Subjects love,  
Nor all that famous Scottish royaltie,  
Or what thy soveraigne greatnes may approve,

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of Bedford and the Bedford Memorials, 1585-1607," *History Today* 29 (1979): 22-3. The identification of John Florio as Drayton's rival is to be preferred, from a historical point of view, as he notably came to be highly appreciated by the Countess just around the time when Drayton published *Englands Heroicall Epistles* and switched to playwrighting.

<sup>54</sup>Van Es, "Michael Drayton," 268.

<sup>55</sup>R.C. Evans, *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), 25.

<sup>56</sup>Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 175; N 124-5.

<sup>57</sup>In 1586 James was deeply offended by Spenser's references to his mother Mary Stuart in Book V of the *Faerie Queene*, and asked Queen Elizabeth to take severe measures against this. See Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne and Their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 1-17.

When thine owne glory from thy selfe doth spring,  
As though thou did'st, all meaner praises scorne:  
Of Kings a Poet, and the Poets King,  
They Princes, but thou Prophets do'st adorne,  
Whilst others by their Empires are renown'd,  
Thou do'st enrich thy Scotland with renowne,  
And Kings can but with Diadems be crown'd,  
But with thy Laurell, thou doo'st crowne thy Crowne;  
That they whose pens, (even) life to Kings doe give,  
In thee a King, shall seeke them selves to live.  
(ID 62)

Jonson, James's court poet, well knew and celebrated that the King generally perceived his royal activity as "directly parallel to the poet's activity," and the state as "the prince's work of art," which poets should not interfere with.<sup>58</sup> By considering James's status as a poet over that of monarch, Drayton clearly betrayed his Spenserian influence: if poetry (and poets) are the source of power bestowing authority on the King himself,<sup>59</sup> writing becomes not so much a way of representing authority, but a kind of authority in itself, manageable through print and, from James's point of view, calling for royal control.<sup>60</sup>

Early in the year 1603, Drayton joined most of his contemporary colleagues in praising officially the upcoming monarch, hoping for a less strict court patronage than it had been under Elizabeth. He was indeed one of the first poets to celebrate the accession of James VI on the English throne: on March 24, 1603 he issued a poem entitled *To the Majestie of King James*, considered a "social miscalculation,"<sup>61</sup> as it was deemed the only poem of the day in praise of James omitting all references to the

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<sup>58</sup>Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, 56.

<sup>59</sup>Christopher Warley, "'The English Straine': Absolutism, Class, and Drayton's Ideas, 1594-1619," in C. Perry, ed., *Material Culture and Cultural Materialisms in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 190-2.

<sup>60</sup>Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, xi-xii.

<sup>61</sup>Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited*, 14.

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late Queen.<sup>62</sup> Drayton was reproved by Henry Chettle in his *Englands Mourning Garment*, entered in the Stationers' Register on April 25, 1603, for not mourning Elizabeth in his poem, a rebuke Chettle addressed, however, also to other renowned writers like Samuel Daniel, George Chapman, Ben Jonson, William Shakespeare, Thomas Dekker, and John Marston.<sup>63</sup>

Yet, James's dislike for Drayton's appeals may have also been caused by the poet's generally unmediated approach to power: what surfaces in the King's treatment of other writers is that, while he appreciated intellectual honesty up to a certain degree, as would happen with Jonson,<sup>64</sup> he definitely abhorred anyone presuming to "dogmatize" in his Court.<sup>65</sup> The negative implications generated by Drayton's dogmatising attitude are even more evident in another example of his growing use not so much of an artful as of an actual contempt towards the court environment, which he seemed to consider simply as a larger, more powerful coterie. In his second attempt to ingratiate his works to King James, Drayton advised the future King to get rid of court flatterers ("those silken, laced, and perfumed hinds, / That have rich bodies, but poore wretched minds.... / The foole, the Pand'r, and the Parasite"), and rely, instead, on poets-*vates* like himself, because "that Muse thy glory sings / (What ere detraction snarle) was made for Kings" (N 126-7). As a consequence of his attitude, Drayton's estrangement from the Bedford coterie may have sounded like a *caveat* to the King. Social mistakes were indeed long remembered and irretrievable at a Court where patronage was tendentially decentralised and mostly managed by royal advisers and

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<sup>62</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 5:53. In his *Elegy to Mr. George Sandys* (1627), Drayton alluded to this earlier fact by writing: "It was my hap before all other men / To suffer shipwrack by my forward pen: / When King James entered; at which joyfull time / I taught his title to this Ile in rime" (GS 20).

<sup>63</sup>Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited*, 15.

<sup>64</sup>Rhodes Dunlap, "Honest Ben and Royal James," *Iowa State Journal of Research* 57 (1982): 143-51.

<sup>65</sup>Lawson, *Out of the Shadows*, 117. For the same reason James dismissed the preacher John Burges in the 1610s. *Ibid.*, 115-17.

household members.<sup>66</sup> Because of his evident affiliation with the anti-Jacobean faction, Drayton missed his opportunity at Court as a member of the King's Household, of course, but also of the Queen's Household, where his problems with the Countess of Bedford proved to be too great an impediment.<sup>67</sup>

In 1602, however, Drayton would obtain and keep for over fifteen years the support of Sir Walter Aston, a poet himself and one of the most discriminating patrons of the time.<sup>68</sup> The poet was appointed Esquire when Aston was made a Knight of the Bath at James's coronation.<sup>69</sup> With the help of Aston, now Groom of the Bedchamber of King James, and the

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<sup>66</sup>Linda Levy Peck, "'For a King not to be Bountiful Were a Fault': Perspectives on Court Patronage in Early Stuart England," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986): 59.

This kind of "collective memory" was recorded, for instance, in Donne's letters. Because of his marriage to Anne More, Donne was discharged by his present patron, to whom he pleaded for readmittance, stating that "to seek preferment here with any but your Lordship were a madnes. Every great man to whom I shall address any such suite, wyll silently dispute the case, and say, would my Lord Keeper so disgraciously have....sent him away, if he had not donne some other great fault, of which we hear not." What Donne defines as "prejudicial suspicion" affected also King James's opinion on him about ten years later, when Donne's suits were rejected because of his past "disorderlie proceedings." Quoted in Marotti, "John Donne," 218.

<sup>67</sup>Though formerly belonging to the anti-Jacobean faction, in the early seventeenth century Sir Robert Cecil suddenly joined James's advocates and obtained the King's favour. Drayton's disappointment over this betrayal led him to satirise Cecil in *The Owle* (1604). His attitude towards King James and Cecil was another possible reason why the Countess did not introduce him at Court. Morgan, "A Biography of Lucy, Countess of Bedford," 60.

<sup>68</sup>Dennis Kay, "Poems by Sir Walter Aston, and a Date for the Donne/Goodyer Verse Epistle *Alternis Vicibus*," *The Review of English Studies* 37 (1986): 206.

<sup>69</sup>Since esquires were entitled to bear arms, Drayton's choice of a coat of arms may be associated with Aston's ceremony. Drayton's arms – *Azure guttée d'eau a Pegasus salient argent* – recall those of the Inner Temple, *Azure a Pegasus salient argent*, which Drayton chose on purpose because of his strong ties with the Inn during his life (N 150). Drayton's relations with the Inner Temple remain uncertain, there being no extant documents recording his admission. Evidence generally suggests that he was acquainted with many people enrolled in it: John Selden, Henry Vaughan, John Hayward, William Browne, John and Francis Beaumont, Edmund Bolton, William Burton, Christopher Brooke, John Savage, Sir David Murray. Around the 1630s Drayton was living in Fleet Street, close to the Inner Temple. Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 91-2.

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Scottish courtiers Sir William Alexander and Sir David Murray, Drayton's poetry was presented to Prince Henry. Since the early seventeenth century the Prince had been creating his own household in explicit opposition to his father's, and, in the early 1610s, Drayton was granted, like other anti-Jacobean poets and dramatists, an annuity of 10 pounds (N 160).<sup>70</sup>

The mediation that Aston and Prince Henry's circle enacted between Drayton's poetry and the Jacobean Court helped the poet live through a quiet decade, allowing him to devote his time to the composition of *Poly-Olbion*, and, thanks to it, get acquainted with antiquarians like John Selden and Philemon Holland.<sup>71</sup> Aston's and Prince Henry's support protected *Poly-Olbion* – whose first part was printed in 1612 – from James's interferences, but could not prevent its commercial failure in terms of readership nor the defeat of its direct approach to hot political issues like the union of Great Britain. Prince Henry's death on November 6, 1612 highly disappointed Drayton's expectations for the near future, although Prince Charles continued to grant him the 10-pound annuity, while Aston's 1619 departure to Spain as James's new ambassador and England's involvement in the Palatinate war marked a definite turning point in his career and poetics. In 1619, having lost his best patron, Drayton wrote a letter to William Drummond, requesting his help and intercession for the printing of the second part of *Poly-Olbion*, without any relevant result except the beginning of a decade-long correspondence with a writer sharing his own views and tastes in literature and politics.

Owing perhaps to the lack of patronage, between 1620 and 1624 Drayton refrained from criticising King James as openly as he had done in the past.<sup>72</sup> In the same years some of his friends, former members of Prince

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<sup>70</sup>Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance*, 125.

<sup>71</sup>Isaac Gourvitch, "A Note on Drayton and Philemon Holland," *Modern Language Review* 25 (1930): 332-6; Kathleen Constable, "Drayton and the Holland Family," *Modern Language Review* 26 (1931): 174-6.

<sup>72</sup>In 1606 Drayton had added to his revision of *The Shepherds Garland* several attacks on King James, laughed at by Sir Philip Sidney (EL 8:85-88, 98-100) and scorned as Olcon for

Henry's circle, were even examined or threatened, after expressing critical opinions on James's rule: George Wither, for the political satire included in *Wither's Motto*; Selden, for opposing the King's wishes at Parliament. Drayton's acquaintances were generally harsh critics of the King's policy: John Reynolds, who wrote commendatory verses to Drayton's *Battaile of Agincourt*, spent two years in prison because of political statements present in two of his works; George Sandys criticised James's management of the Virginia Company; Henry Goodere and Walter Aston, for never receiving any compensation for their service to the King.<sup>73</sup>

In 1624 Drayton found his new and last patron in Sir Edward Sackville, Fourth Earl of Dorset, a friend of Jonson, Donne, and Robert Herrick.

## 1.4 *The Making of the Drayton Canon*

A pivotal moment in Drayton's career was certainly the publication of the first folio edition of his works, *Poems by Michael Drayton Esquyer. Collected into one Volume with sondry Peeces inserted never before Imprinted*, in 1619. The intense revisions and rewritings that characterised most of Drayton's texts and paratextual matter throughout his career find a reason in this folio, a carefully fashioned selection of his works<sup>74</sup>

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attracting all the poets (EL 8:91-102); in the 1619 edition of *Robert, Duke of Normandy*, the power of Kings is called "Tyrannie" by Fame (R 342-3); in the XVII Song of *Poly-Olbion*, the list of English monarchs from the Norman Conquest to the present stops immediately after Queen Elizabeth (PO XVII.353); Olcon is mentioned again as an envious detractor of true poetry in *The Shepheards Sirena*, published in 1627, but possibly composed in the 1610s. N 133-5.

<sup>73</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 88-90.

<sup>74</sup>The works contained in the 1619 folio are the following: *The Barons Wars, Englands Heroicall Epistles, Idea, Odes, Legends, The Owle, Pastorals, The Man in the Moon*. Drayton, *Works*, 5:288. According to Whitaker, the fact that Drayton's plays were not included in the 1619 folio edition of his works is evidence not so much of the supposedly degrading nature of playwrighting as compared to other kinds of writing, but of Drayton's high-quality standards, as an author who spent half his life revising and rewriting most of his

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providing authoritative texts, grouping the works according to their genre, introducing each group through a theoretical presentation of the genre itself, and updating and uniforming the paratextual matter in order to highlight the author's affiliation with one prestigious patron, Sir Walter Aston. This folio followed along the tradition of King James's and Jonson's *Workes*, published in 1616. Because "canon formation" was also "social formation,"<sup>75</sup> to issue a folio of selected works meant for both Jonson and Drayton to equalise the King's and their own authority over writing. But, unlike Jonson, Drayton based canon formation not only on the authorial figure but also on genre.<sup>76</sup> If Drayton's portrait on the folio frontispiece was the first visual self-representation of laureateship by an English poet,<sup>77</sup> the edition itself aimed to associate Drayton's poetic *persona* with the versatility illustrated by his authorial mastery over major literary genres summarising his entire production.

Drayton's first printed poetic work was entitled *The Harmony of the Church* (1591; reprinted in 1610). This collection of paraphrases of biblical songs and hymns was seized and destroyed by the public order, for reasons yet unknown (E 25).<sup>78</sup> The cultural influence and interests of Sir Henry Goodere – described by Sir Philip Sidney as "my good cousin and friend" (N 41) – and his own unrequited love for Anne Goodere inspired Drayton to write a sonnet sequence, *Ideas Mirrour*

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works. Whitaker, "Michael Drayton as a Dramatist," 400-6.

<sup>75</sup>Trevor Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon: From the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University, 1998), 119.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>77</sup>Hadfield, "Michael Drayton's Brilliant Career," 121. Hadfield makes clear that Robert Vaughan's engraving of Jonson as poet laureate "dates from the 1640 edition of his poems and may actually owe something to Drayton's portrait." Ibid., 122. There is however a previous portrait of Drayton "laureate," made in 1599 by an unknown artist (Fig. 4.2).

<sup>78</sup>On this issue see R.B. McKerrow, "The Supposed Calling-in of Drayton's *Harmony of the Church*, 1591," in J.P. Immroth, ed., *Ronald Brunlees McKerrow: a selection of his essays* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1974), 39-44.

(1594), whose composition can be dated back to the years 1590-1 (N 44). This fifty-two-sonnet collection, clearly inspired by Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and the Petrarchan mode, presented the poet in the role of the chivalrous and devoted lover addressing Idea (a reference to Anne Goodere), his beautiful, virtuous, and indifferent mistress. Drayton would reprint *Ideas Mirrour* five times during his life, in 1599, 1600, 1602, 1605, and 1619, with the title *Idea*. These later editions testify to the poet's "definite and intended departure" from several of the rhetorical conventions dominating the 1594 edition, through a gradual pruning of the more heavily Petrarchan sonnets, a simplification of syntax, a prosodic reorganisation, and a variation of themes.<sup>79</sup> In the 1599 edition Drayton's poetic self-awareness was in full bloom, as appears from his introductory sonnet to the reader:

Into these Loves, who but for Passion looks,  
At this first sight, here let him lay them by.  
And seek else-where, in turning other Books,  
Which better may his labour satisfy.  
No far-fetch'd Sigh shall ever wound my Brest,  
Love from mine Eye and a Tear shall never wring.  
Nor in Ah-mee's my whining Sonnets drest,  
(A Libertine) fantastickly I sing:  
My Verse is the true image of my Mind,  
Ever in motion, still desiring change;  
And as thus to Variety inclin'd,  
So in all Humours sportively I range:  
My Muse is rightly of the English strain,  
That cannot long one Fashion entertain.  
(ID 310)

His career and poetic efforts were already tending towards change and variety, which would eventually lead him to master, if not excel, in most

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<sup>79</sup>J.A. Berthelot, *Michael Drayton* (New York: Twayne, 1967), 19, 27, 28-40.

## 1. Michael Drayton as Man of Letters

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of the poetic forms of his day.<sup>80</sup>

In 1593 he wrote the pastoral *Idea, The Shepherds Garland* (reprinted as *Eclogs in Poemes Lyrick and Pastorall* (1606), and again in 1619) and the complaint *Peirs Gaveston* (reprinted in 1596 and 1619). The former was influenced by another of his life-long literary models, Edmund Spenser. From his *Shepherd's Calendar* Drayton borrowed three features: the inner division, though not based on the twelve months; the pastoral lament of Rowland the shepherd for his unrequited love for Idea; and the frequent use of archaisms. But, far from administering Spenser's venomous attacks, in *Idea, The Shepherds Garland* Drayton quietly observed society, sometimes making general comments on it, and generally "localising" his pastoral characters within a recognisable English background.<sup>81</sup> Drayton's decision to publish this "humble" pastoral at the beginning of his career was an ambitious move: it was a statement of professional poetic self-consciousness, following the same Virgilian pattern taken by Spenser and envisaging the composition of a masterwork [*Poly-Olbion*] bringing forth nation-wide reputation.<sup>82</sup> *Peirs Gaveston*, dedicated to the Warwickshire country gentleman Henry Cavendish, was Drayton's first complaint, in the tradition of *The Mirror for Magistrates* and contemporary dramatic histories. *Gaveston's* ghost tells the story of Edward II and his illicit loves causing his own ruin and that of his reign. This work marked the beginning of Drayton's evolving tendency to use English history and its meaning both in order to provide parallels between past and present aimed at a better understanding of contemporary political and moral behaviour, and in order to investigate the issues that determined the

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 148, 150.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 45-6, 52.

<sup>82</sup>Joan Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets* (London: Arnold, 1967), 25; Duchemin, "Barbarous Ignorance'," 120. This hypothesis was first proposed by Richard Helgerson in his paper "The Elizabethan Laureate: Self-Presentation and the Literary System," *English Literary History* 46 (1979): 193-220.

current state of England/Britain.<sup>83</sup> The same didactic purpose can be retraced in *Matilda*,<sup>84</sup> a complaint published in 1594, and reprinted in 1596 and 1619. Matilda's ghost tells the story of her life and death by poison, a destiny preferred to the loss of chastity and dishonour she would have had to endure as King John's lover.

In 1595 Drayton composed *Endimion and Phœbe, Ideas Latmus*, inspired by the fashion of William Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, the latter officially published in 1598 but already circulating in manuscript.<sup>85</sup> *Endimion and Phœbe* told the story of the goddess Phœbe's wooing of the shepherd Endymion. After Phœbe's kiss Endymion is led first to the Muses' Mount Latmus, where he becomes a poet by divine inspiration and is taught to love natural beauty; then, after discovering Phœbe's divinity, he is taken to heaven, where he is taught to love the Platonic ideal of beauty. In this "philosophical epyllion," sexual love becomes a means to achieve a communion with the beauty and truth of Nature, leading to spiritual perfection;<sup>86</sup> a union which, starting from *Idea, The Shepherds Garland*, would never cease to pervade Drayton's poetry.

Beside reprinting previous works, in 1596 Drayton issued the poem *Mortimeriados* and the complaint *Robert, Duke of Normandy* (reprinted in 1607 and 1619). Inspired by Daniel's *Civil Wars* (1595), he composed another poetic analysis of Edward II's rule, apparently one of his favourite episodes in English history. This time his interest focussed not so much on Edward's illicit love as on the rise and fall of his rival, Roger Mortimer. In *Mortimeriados* Gaveston has already been hanged and Edward II has found another favourite, Hugh Despenser. The English barons, headed

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<sup>83</sup>Hadfield, "Michael Drayton's Brilliant Career," 139.

<sup>84</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 54.

<sup>85</sup>For further discussion on these influences see J.W. Hebel, "Drayton and Shakespeare," *Modern Language Notes* 41 (1926): 248-50.

<sup>86</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 17, 11.

## 1. Michael Drayton as Man of Letters

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by Mortimer, rebel against Edward II, in order to oblige him to dismiss Despenser, but are eventually defeated. Mortimer is thrown into the Tower, from which he manages to escape and flee to France. Queen Isabel reaches Mortimer in France and becomes his lover, helping him to have Edward II abdicate. Mortimer becomes the tutor of Edward II's son, now King Edward III, who eventually has him killed.<sup>87</sup> In *Mortimeriados* the figures of Edward II and Mortimer became, as in Marlowe's *Edward II*, a "study in contrasts" addressed to the England of both past and present, dangerously threatened by civil war, as the time of succession approached. Drayton's poetic histories were based on the belief that the rise and fall of a nation depended on Providence, operating through great men, and that historical patterns, bound to be recursive, could be used to meditate upon past as well as present situations.<sup>88</sup> *Robert, Duke of Normandy* followed the medieval vision-poem tradition,<sup>89</sup> with Fame and Fortune telling the story of Robert, in front of the silent ghost of the protagonist. The son of William the Conqueror, Robert rebels against his father, conquers Normandy, and is disinherited in favour of his brother William Rufus. Robert forces Rufus to obey his commands, but, while he is fighting in the Crusades, Rufus is killed and replaced by Henry I. Robert faces Henry in the battlefield, but is eventually caught and blinded.<sup>90</sup>

In 1597 *Englands Heroicall Epistles* was published, a work which consolidated and increased his reputation as a poet. This collection of pairs of fictional verse letters, sent to each other by couples of actual historical characters, was initially made up of eighteen letters, increased to twenty-four in the 1599 edition. Mainly modelled after Ovid's *Heroides*, and focusing on love, these letters do not tell full stories, but single out and elaborate on parts of renowned historical events, representing the

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<sup>87</sup>Berthelot, *Michael Drayton*, 82.

<sup>88</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 37, 35, 34.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>90</sup>Berthelot, *Michael Drayton*, 77-8.

emotional peak in the lives and loves of the protagonists.<sup>91</sup> *Englands Heroicall Epistles* is organised in chronological order and divided into three thematic groups, illustrating as many nuances of famous love affairs. The first group describes attempted seduction by royal figures and their subsequent tragic fate – Rosamund and Henry II, Edward the Black Prince and Alice Countess of Salisbury, King John and Matilda, Edward IV and Mistress Shore; the second group describes love affairs between a queen and a nobleman – Queen Isabel and Mortimer, Queen Katharine and Owen Tudor, Queen Margaret of Anjou and William de-la-Poole (Suffolk), Mary of France and Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk; the third group narrates the mutual consolations of lovers – Queen Isabel and Richard II, Duke Humphrey and Elinor Cobham, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and Lady Geraldine, Lady Jane Grey and Gilford Dudley.<sup>92</sup>

Between 1597 and 1602 Drayton worked as a playwright for the public theatre with Anthony Munday, Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle, John Webster, and Thomas Middleton, among others. Only one play – *William Longsword* – is attested as being entirely Drayton's own work. Notably, *Sir John Oldcastle* bore on the frontispiece "William Shakespeare" as the author's name (E 89). Drayton's sudden estrangement from the Countess of Bedford in 1597, as well as his simultaneous switch to dramatic writing, has led many scholars to suspect an ongoing financial decline, for which the theatre may have offered a solution (E 87, N 107). It has also been suggested that perhaps this was never a period of financial problems for Drayton, since, thanks to the publication and reprints of his famous *Englands Heroicall Epistles* and to playwrighting, he was likely to have been enjoying a "splendid reputation" and a "fair income." Between 1597 and 1602 he revised and reprinted his sonnet sequence three times (1599, 1600, 1602), and his *English Heroicall Epistles* four times (1598, 1599, 1600, 1602),

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>92</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 48.

## 1. Michael Drayton as Man of Letters

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beside earning an average of 6 pounds per play (N 101-4). He may have begun to write for the theatre not so much because of financial problems or the slackening of patronage, but because theatre had become a fashionable medium for poets and, most of all, because he was so prompted by his character's inclination to experiment with all sorts of genres.<sup>93</sup>

From the early seventeenth century onwards, he often expressed a bitter attitude towards James I in his poetic works. His satire *The Owle* (1604) was received as a "roman à clef, by which news-hungry Englishmen might read gossip about the great, couched in obscure language."<sup>94</sup> Through a fable-like gathering of birds in the tradition of Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowles*, he presented birds mirroring human types and highlighting the evils at Court, in the countryside, and in the city,<sup>95</sup> and attacked other poets preferred to him at Court. The Owl – the bird of wisdom – complains to the sovereign Eagle of the "pityous plight" in which he has been reduced because of the "Birds of prey," or the great men at James's Court (O 313, 316; N 130-1), suggesting a restoration of feudal monarchical order, when kings ruled directly without the intervention of officers.<sup>96</sup> The same feeling surfaces in *The Man in the Moon* (1606) – a rewriting of *Endimion and Phœbe*. In it the shepherd Rowland is asked to tell the story of how the goddess Phœbe disguised herself to protect Endymion from her divine beauty, and how Endymion ascended to the celestial spheres. There he is shown and instructed about the secrets of the universe and the human condition, while the poet profits from this point of view to describe human vices.<sup>97</sup> The *Odes* provided further ground for illustrating and criticising James's policy. *To the Virginian Voyage* elaborated on contemporary sources, like Richard Hakluyt's *Principall*

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<sup>93</sup>Whitaker, "Michael Drayton as a Dramatist," 381, 389, 397.

<sup>94</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 78.

<sup>95</sup>Berthelot, *Michael Drayton*, 121-2.

<sup>96</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 80.

<sup>97</sup>Berthelot, *Michael Drayton*, 55, 58.

## 1.4 The Making of the Drayton Canon

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*Navigations*,<sup>98</sup> and described the colony of Virginia, an earthly paradise mirroring England's past golden age, yet untouched by the deforestation brought about by developing local manufactures.<sup>99</sup> Drayton versified another of his favourite historical themes in the ode *Ballad of Agincourt*, which ended as follows:

Upon Saint CRISPIN's day  
Fought was this noble fray,  
Which fame did not delay,  
To England to carry;  
O, when shall *English* men  
With such acts fill a pen,  
Or *England* breed again  
Such a King HARRY?  
(OD 18:113-20)

The implied contrast between Henry V and James I naturally favoured the former, the latter being in fact criticised essentially because he was a pacifist and a Scot.<sup>100</sup>

In 1607 Drayton published a poem entitled *The Legend of Great Cromwell*, following the lead of his previously published "legends" *Pierce Gaveston* and *Matilda*. Thomas Cromwell's ghost tells the story of his own rise and fall, elaborating on the medieval theme of the *rota fortunae*.<sup>101</sup> But contemporary issues – essentially related to Drayton's increasing contempt for James's management of the court – also haunted the telling of Cromwell's story: the question of the Jacobean man of new fortunes who, after beginning his career as a merchant, is permitted to rise socially, "at the whim of an extravagant monarch in a corrupt, ambition-ridden

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<sup>98</sup>See J.Q. Adams, "Michael Drayton's 'To the Virginian Voyage'," *Modern Language Notes* 33 (1918): 405-8.

<sup>99</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 4-5. For further discussion on this ode see also M.D. West, "Drayton's 'To the Virginian Voyage': From Heroic Pastoral to Mock-Heroic," *Renaissance Quarterly* 24 (1971): 501-6.

<sup>100</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 8.

<sup>101</sup>Berthelot, *Michael Drayton*, 79.

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court.”<sup>102</sup> Trade was a rather suspicious starting point for a royal officer, according to a poet mistrusting the advantages provided by the city and upholding the values of the country.<sup>103</sup>

In the following five years he worked on the first part of his chorotopographical poem *Poly-Olbion*, a work he had devised as early as the mid 1590s, and which monopolised his efforts until 1622, when the second part was issued and a third perhaps begun, but never completed. *Poly-Olbion* describes the topography and local history of Great Britain: the poet’s Muse, like a British *genius loci*, undertakes a journey throughout the counties of England and Wales, in order to celebrate their heroes, legends, history and natural wonders.<sup>104</sup> Each one of the thirty Songs into which the poem is divided is prefaced by a map depicting the geographical portion to be sung, and is concluded, in Part I only, by the antiquarian “illustrations” devised by the antiquarian John Selden and explaining the historical references in the poem.

In 1627 Drayton issued a collection entitled *The Battaile of Agincourt*, including also *The Miseries of Queene Margarite*, *Nimphidia*, *The Quest for Cynthia*, *The Shepherds Sirena*, *The Moon-Calfe*, and *Elegies upon Sundry Occasions*, mostly composed in the previous years. *The Battaile of Agincourt* was an elaboration on the theme that had inspired his ode *Ballad of Agincourt*, with a commendatory poem by Jonson. This time the poem narrates the whole battle, not just the events on St Crispin’s day: the King’s greatness is tightly connected with that of his people, and Henry V is portrayed an “agent of the national will.”<sup>105</sup> The same historical period is again the background of *The Miseries of Queene Margarite*, an expansion of the tragic love story narrated in the letters of Queen Margaret and Charles Brandon, Earl of Suffolk in *Englands Heroicall Epistles*. *Nimphidia*, a

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<sup>102</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 55.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 55-6.

<sup>104</sup>Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited*, 84.

<sup>105</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 67-8.

mock-heroic pastoral tale, tells the story – rather similar to Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* – of King Oberon’s madness caused by Queen Mab’s infatuation for Pigwiggen. The setting is the fairy world of English country woods, whose idealised inhabitants suffer nevertheless realistic passions and emotions.<sup>106</sup> Another pastoral work, presenting a third version of the Endymion and Phœbe story, was *The Quest for Cynthia*. Again a shepherd is looking for the nymph Cynthia, but this is not so much the occasion for the rebuke of social vices and weaknesses, as for the search for a quiet place of rest, or “the Muses’ quiet port,”<sup>107</sup> enhancing poetic inspiration.<sup>108</sup> *The Shepherds Sirena*, a pastoral with a very weak plot, staged the shepherd Dorilus reading a letter from Sirena, stating that her love for him is strong but dangerous. These characters have been identified, respectively, as the Earl of Dorset and his wife Mary Curzon, and the poem is deemed a veiled discussion of the circumstance that may have led to the duel the Earl faced and survived against Bruce, Second Lord Kinloss at Bergen-op-Zoom in 1613 (N 212-13). In *The Moon-Calfe* the poet witnesses the birth of two monstrous creatures, generated by the World: a male and a female Moon-Calfe, the former following the “extravagance, luxury, and licence of the court,” and the latter being devoted to “fashions and complete lack of morals.”<sup>109</sup> The twelve *Elegies upon Sundry Occasions* are devoted to different topics. The most relevant one is perhaps *On Poets and Poesy*, addressed to Henry Reynolds, in which Drayton asserts the relevance of the medium of print and provides a list of his inspiring poets, all published in print by 1619.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Berthelot, *Michael Drayton*, 61-3.

<sup>107</sup>Drayton had thus defined the Clifford Chambers mansion in *Poly-Olbion* (XIV.162).

<sup>108</sup>Berthelot, *Michael Drayton*, 59-60.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>110</sup>Hadfield, “Michael Drayton’s Brilliant Career,” 135. The poets mentioned in the elegy are: Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, Henry Surrey, Thomas Wyatt, George Gascoigne, Thomas Churchyard, Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney, William Warner, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe, William Shakespeare, Samuel Daniel, Ben Jonson, George Chapman, Joshua Silvester, George Sandys.

## 1. Michael Drayton as Man of Letters

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In 1630 he published a revised version of the Moses story entitled *Moses His Birth and Miracles*, accompanied by two other religious stories in verse, *Noah's Flood* and *David and Goliah*, and a pastoral poem called *The Muses Elizium*. This interest in religion seems to have characterised both the initial and late years of his career, and suggests a careful study of the Bible, though it is rather difficult to attach his religious reference to any particular Christian creed (N 215-16). In these later works religious themes are used to meditate also on contemporary England, and tell stories about divine protection for a righteous minority and the punishment of an unjust society,<sup>111</sup> plagued by the same vices that afflicted the Jacobean kingdom. Both in the Moses and the Noah poems Drayton recounted the regeneration of humanity through the abandoning of the old world plagued by sin for a new promised land;<sup>112</sup> the same land previously symbolised by Virginia, as opposed to the Old World, where man's rightful conduct mirrored the harmony of the natural world.<sup>113</sup> *The Muses Elizium* conveyed in pastoral form some themes already present in *Poly-Olbion*,<sup>114</sup> such as the fake happiness of contemporary Britain, an "unhappy and unnatural land," forcing poets to take refuge in the only place where they can survive: the "self-contained" world of art.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*, 118.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>114</sup>Hardin suggests that parts of *The Muses Elizium* may be based on passages erased during the revision of *Poly-Olbion*. See R.F. Hardin, "The Composition of *Poly-Olbion* and *The Muses Elizium*," *Anglia* 86 (1968): 160-2.

<sup>115</sup>Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited*, 126.

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## Chapter 2

# The Making of *Poly-Olbion*

### 2.1 *Title and Structure*

The title *Poly-Olbion* arguably attempted to summarise, from the point of view both of form and content, an entire tradition of cultural and historical thought. From a structural point of view, it arguably reflected titles like Solinus's and William of Malmesbury's *Polyhistor*, and Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*.<sup>1</sup> The word Albion, however, hinted, through etymological and geographical references, at the legend identifying Britain with one of the Fortunate Isles – a blessed, abundant, and clement place isolated from the rest of the world. Selden connected Albion with the Greek word ὀλβίος (happy, fortunate) – allegedly a rather well-known pun in Drayton's time<sup>2</sup> – stating that, to this particular etymology, "the Author in his title and

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<sup>1</sup>Solinus's work, originally dating back to the third century, was translated into English by Arthur Golding as *The Excellent and Pleasant Work Collectanea rerum memorabilium of Caius Julius Solinus* (1587; rpt. Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1955). Another *Polyhistor* was composed in the twelfth century by William of Malmesbury. See *Polyhistor: A Critical Edition*, ed. H. Testroet Oulette (Binghamton: Centre for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982). Ranulf Higden's fourteenth-century work *Polychronicon* was translated into English in the fifteenth century by John Trevisa. Ranulf Higden, *Polychronycon* (London: Peter Treveris, 1527). Quoted in J.W. Bennett, "England Among the Fortunate Isles," *Studies in Philology* 53 (1956): 114-17.

<sup>2</sup>A.C. Southern, "Drayton's *Polyolbion*," *Times Literary Supplement*, January 7, 1932, 12.

## 2. *The Making of Poly-Olbion*

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this verse alludes" (16).<sup>3</sup> The title phrase has variously been translated either as "very happy,"<sup>4</sup> emphasising the Greek etymology of Olbion, or as "manifold Albion," privileging the suggested multifariousness of Britain and treating the vowel shift as a pun.<sup>5</sup>

The poetic text of *Poly-Olbion* – amounting to almost 15,000 lines – is divided into thirty Songs (eighteen in Part I, twelve in Part II), prefaced by as many maps illustrating, through the voice of landscape features portrayed as nymphs and dryads, the county or counties described in verse. This poetic journey is undertaken by Britain's Muse, the "Genius of the place" (I.8), whose function is both to inspire the poet and, through her winged "surveying" of the nation, to guide him in his depiction (I.13, Argument). Her *itinerarium* begins from the Channel Islands, then moving to Cornwall (Song I), Dorset, the Isle of Wight, Hampshire (Song II), Wiltshire, and Somerset (Song III); thereafter entering Wales, going through the Isle of Lundy, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire, Radnorshire, and Montgomeryshire (Songs III to VI), and returning to England, through Herefordshire, Worcestershire (Song VII),

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<sup>3</sup>Shortly after, however, Selden clearly states his scepticism concerning the derivation of the name Albion from actual mythological genealogies (e.g., Albina, daughter of the King of Syria; or King Albion, connected with the root ὀλβιος, son of Neptune; or from an alleged Celtic King named Olibius), to which he opposes etymological ones, clarifying that the name Britain was certainly used before "Albion," while the latter's derivation was more likely related to the adjective "albus" (white), because of the white cliffs visible from the sea (24-5).

<sup>4</sup>Richard Hooper, "Introduction," in Michael Drayton, *The Complete Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. R. Hooper, 3 vols. (London: John Russell Smith, 1876), 1:10. This interpretation was repropounded in the early 1930s, and a source was found in a passage of Dionysius Periegetes's *Description of the World*, translated into Latin by Thomas Twayne in 1572. John Lodge, "Drayton's *Polyolbion*," *Times Literary Supplement*, December 24, 1931, 1041. A couple of years later, A.C. Southern ascribed Drayton's quotation to a passage in *The Treatise Concerning the Defence of the Honour of Marie Queene of Scotland* (1569), discussing the union of England and Scotland and stating that the entire realm should be called not so much Albion, but rather "Olbion," that is "fortunate, happy, and blessed." Quoted in Southern, "Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," 12.

<sup>5</sup>Alice d'Haussy, *Poly-Olbion, ou l'Angleterre vue par un élisabéthain* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1972), 22-3.

and Shropshire (Song VIII); crossing the border to Wales again, visiting Merionetshire, Carnarvonshire, Anglesey (Song IX), Denbighshire, and Flintshire (Song X); thereafter returning to England, to Cheshire (Song XI), Shropshire, Staffordshire (Song XII), Warwickshire (Song XIII), Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire (Song XIV), Buckinghamshire, Berkshire (Song XV), Hertfordshire (Song XVI), London, and Surrey (Songs XVI-XVII), terminating in Kent (Song XVIII). The second part begins in Essex (Song XIX), and continues into Suffolk and Norfolk (Song XX), Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire (Song XXI), Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire (Song XXII), Northamptonshire (Song XXIII), Rutlandshire (Song XXIV), Lincolnshire (Song XXV), Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire (Song XXVI), Lancashire, Liverpool, the Isle of Man (Song XXVII), Yorkshire, Richmondshire (Song XXVIII), Northumberland (Song XXIX), Westmorland, and Cumberland (Song XXX).

Drayton's descriptions focus on the most noteworthy rivers, forests, vales, and mountains of England and Wales, whose nymphs or dryads relate to the Muse the historical events they have witnessed and the legends surrounding their territory. Appended to Songs I-XVIII are Selden's "Illustrations," a complex and learned apparatus intended to clarify and complement the historico-antiquarian background of Drayton's digressions. For the most relevant *loci* mentioned by the poet, Selden provides thorough annotations and scholarly comparisons of different hypotheses concerning the accuracy of the verse, and relying especially on Latin, Greek, and Hebrew sources, as well as on etymological derivations and explanations.

*Poly-Olbion* was clearly intended to be an expensive, lavish volume, as testified by the numerous illustrations: an engraved title-page (Fig. 2.2), a portrait of the dedicatee, Prince Henry (Fig. 2.1), and thirty folded maps. The engraved title-page and portrait are accompanied by explanatory poems in iambic pentameter, whereas the maps are followed

## 2. *The Making of Poly-Olbion*

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by an "Argument," or a short poem in iambic tetrameter. The front matter includes also a dedication to Prince Henry (iii\*); two prefaces (one by Drayton and one by Selden) (v\*-vi\*; viii\*-xiv\*); a letter addressed by Drayton to his "Cambro-Britain" friends (vii\*); a list of the *errata* present in the poem and in the "Illustrations" (xiv\*-xv\*); and an index of the main passages discussed by Selden (581-9).



Figure 2.1: William Hole. Engraving. Published 1612.

*Poly-Olbion, Prince Henry.*



Figure 2.2: William Hole. *Poly-Olbion*, frontispiece. Engraving. Published 1612.

## 2.2 *Composition*

The earliest, scanty reference to *Poly-Olbion* as work in progress is commonly traced in Amour 24, in Drayton's *Ideas Mirrour* (1594), which has been described as a "miniature *Poly-Olbion* in sonnet form":<sup>6</sup>

Our floods-Queene Thames, for shyps and Swans is crowned,  
And stately Seuerne for her shores is praised,  
The christall Trent for Foords and fishe renowned  
And Auons fame to Albyons Cliues is raysed.  
Carlegion Chester vaunts her holy Dee,  
Yorke many wonders of her Ouse can tell,  
The Peake her Doue, whose bancks so fertill bee,  
And Kent will say her Medway doth excell.  
Cotswould commends her Isis and her Tame,  
Our Northern borders boast of Tweeds faire flood;  
Our Western parts extoll theyr Wilys fame,  
And old Legea brags of Danish blood:  
Ardens sweet Ankor, let thy glory be  
That fayre Idea shee doth liue by thee.  
(IM 24)

Inspired by Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Camden's *Britannia*, and possibly Sir Philip Sidney's poem entitled *Seven Wonders of England*, comparing England's marvels to the poet's feelings for his mistress,<sup>7</sup> this sonnet offers, for the first time in Drayton's works, a river catalogue, or a typical device of topographical poetry. The same rivers appear in *Poly-Olbion*, though in a different order, in many cases endowed with the same stock features (e.g., Trent's fish).<sup>8</sup> Personification is also an essential device in the sonnet, introducing the theme of a geographical place telling

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<sup>6</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 5:viii.

<sup>7</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 5:16; V.E. Hull, "The English and Welsh Topographical Sources of Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* with Special Reference to Camden's *Britannia* and Saxton's *Atlas*" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1926), 18.

<sup>8</sup>See PO XII.550.

its own story and celebrating its own environment. The topographical symbolism culminates in the final couplet, where Ankor's glory is said to be "fayre Idea" – Anne Goodere – living on its banks. Yet, the other rivers betray the final symmetry associating the river and the reason why it is praised: sometimes, as in the case of the Thames, the Severn, the Trent, and the Lea, the poet mentions why each one of those rivers is exalted, without revealing the celebrating voice. In the second and third quatrains, however, it is two towns, two mountains, one region, and two wider geographical areas that praise the respective rivers, for unknown reasons, except for Dove's "fertill" banks. In *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton will silence the voice of counties and geographical areas, represented in the maps, in order to let rivers, forests, mountains and valleys, personified as dryads and nymphs, tell their story. In both cases, the general effect rests on an implicit contrast and comparison among the various wonders of England and Wales, which, taken together, come to constitute the variety of Great Britain.

As suggested by his reference to an unnamed greater work in *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597),<sup>9</sup> Drayton seemingly decided to begin *Poly-Olbion* while still under the patronage of the Countess of Bedford, as suggested by Francis Meres's comment, in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598), that Drayton had been writing a poem entitled *Poly-Olbion*, "Geographicall and Hydro-graphicall of all the forests, woods, mountaines, fountaines, riuers, lakes, flouds, bathes, and springs that be in England."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Parker Duchemin, "'Barbarous Ignorance and Base Detraction': The Struggles of Michael Drayton," *Studies in Philology Albion* 14 (1982): 119. These references appear in the dedications to the Countess of Bedford, Henry Goodere, and Francis Goodere: "until some more acceptable service may be witnes of my love towards your honour" (EHE 5); "Thus untill such time as I may in some more larger measure make knowne my love to the happy and generous family of the Gooderes" (EHE 10); "which [the epistle] I pray you accept till time shall enable me to leave you some greater monument of my love" (EHE 12). See Drayton, *Works*, 5:112, 129, 134.

<sup>10</sup>Francis Meres, "Poetrie; Poets; and A Comparatiue discourse of our English Poets, with the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets," in *Palladis Tamia: Wits Treasury* (1598; rpt. New

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The composition of *Poly-Olbion* apparently slowed down during Drayton's playwrighting years, until 1602, when Walter Aston's patronage and acquaintances allowed him to return to his poem. Indeed, in 1603, Henry Chettle mentioned *Poly-Olbion*, once again as work in progress, in his *Englands Mourning Garment*:

Shepherd remember our *Elizabeth*,  
And sing her Rape, done by that *Tarquin*, Death,  
No lesse doe thou (sweete singer *Coridon*)  
The Theame exceedeth *Edwards Isabell*  
Forget her not in *Poly-Albion*;  
Make some amends, I know thou lou'dst her well.  
Thinke twas a fault to haue thy Verses seene  
Praising the King, ere they had mourn'd the Queen.<sup>11</sup>

R.F. Hardin and Alice D'Haussy suggest that in these years the design of *Poly-Olbion* may have evolved from purely topographical, as shown by Meres's passage, to chorographical matter (including local history), as hinted by Chettle.<sup>12</sup>

After 1603 Drayton carried on his search for topographical and historical material with the help of works like Camden's *Britannia* (1586), and private libraries like John Stow's.<sup>13</sup> Until about 1607, however, he may have spent little time in the actual composition, as suggested by many parallels between *Poly-Olbion*, the 1607 edition of *Britannia*, and Philemon Holland's translation of the latter, published in 1610.<sup>14</sup>

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York: Garland, 1973), 281. The reference to Meres has become a commonplace source for Drayton scholars.

<sup>11</sup>Henry Chettle, *Englands Mourning Garment* (London: [n.p.], 1603), D3.

<sup>12</sup>Hardin found later evidence of this shift in a statement written by Jonson to Drummond in 1618: "That Michael Draytons Polyalbion (if he had performed what he promised to writte the deads of all ye Worthies) had been excellent." R.F. Hardin, "The Composition of *Poly-Olbion* and *The Muses Elizium*," *Anglia* 86 (1968): 161. D'Haussy, *Poly-Olbion*, 16.

<sup>13</sup>Duchemin, "'Barbarous Ignorance,'" 120-1.

<sup>14</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 4:viii. See also Isaac Gourvitch, "A Note on Drayton and Philemon Holland," *Modern Language Review* 25 (1930): 332-6; K.M. Constable, "Drayton and the

## 2.3 *Publication*

The first part of *Poly-Olbion* was entered in the Stationers' Register on February 7, 1612. Around this time, for unknown reasons, Drayton asked his friend John Selden to provide "illustrations" for the historical and antiquarian allusions present in the poem, as Selden himself explained in his preface, entitled "From the Author of the *Illustrations*":

In performance of this charge (undertaken at request of my kinde friend the Author) Brevity of *Time* (which was but little more then since the Poem first went to the Presse) and that daily discontinued, both by my other most different *Studies* seriously attended, and interrupting *Busines*, as enough can witness, might excuse great faults, especially of *Omission*. (xii\*)

Selden suggests that some of the notes may have been written while *Poly-Olbion* was being printed. In his "illustrations" to Song IX, he also hints at typographical reasons for the insertion of a lengthy catalogue: "least (by reason of the Composition in Print) some pages should have been idle" (198).

Selden's preface bears the date May 9, 1612, and *Poly-Olbion*, Part I, was printed between that date and the late 1612.<sup>15</sup> In his preface "To the Generall Reader," Drayton provided personal and political reasons for the delay and incompleteness of the published poem:

And to any that shall demand wherfore having promised this Poeme of the generall Iland so many yeeres, I now publish only this part of it; I plainly answeare, that many times I had

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Holland Family," *Modern Language Review* 26 (1931): 174-6.

<sup>15</sup>It seems, however, that Selden had been working on it since 1611. Hull, "The English and Welsh Topographical Sources of Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," 44.

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determined with my selfe, to have left it off, and have neglected my papers sometimes two yeeres together, finding the times since his Majesties happy coming in, to fall so heavily upon my distressed fortunes, after my zealous soule had laboured so long in that, which with the general happinesse of the kingdom, seem'd not then impossible somewhat also to have advanced me. But I instantly saw all my long nourisht hopes even buried alive before my face: so uncertaine (in this world) be the ends of our cleerest endeavors. (vi\*)

Although the first part was a commercial failure, printers being unable to sell out their copies – a problem envisaged in the preface by the author himself (v\*)<sup>16</sup> – Drayton continued to work on the second part in the years 1612-18, a time in his life for which little evidence is extant. In 1619 the second part of the poem was finished, but no English printers were willing to accept it. Drayton had indeed bitterly parted from the publishers of Part I (Lownes, Browne, Helme, and Busbie) for commercial reasons.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, and following the advice of Sir William Alexander (N 177), he wrote a letter to the Scottish poet William Drummond, where he discussed the first part of *Poly-Olbion*, confessed his problems with the publication of the second part, and announced his intention to conclude the work with a topographical description of Scotland. Drummond's interest in history and legends led him to read and praise Drayton's poetic efforts; he forwarded Drayton's letter to his publisher Andrew Hart, who died in December 1621.<sup>18</sup>

Drayton's struggle for the composition and publication of *Poly-Olbion* may have

paradoxically....clarified and deepened his concept of the role

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<sup>16</sup>It is however impossible, due to lack of evidence, to determine to what extent *Poly-Olbion* went unsold, and whether the number of sold copies was absolutely low or just lower than Drayton and his publishers expected.

<sup>17</sup>Duchemin, "'Barbarous Ignorance,'" 134.

<sup>18</sup>D'Haussy, *Poly-Olbion*, 21.

of the poet in society. It strengthened his own convictions about what constituted real poetry, and it forced him closer to friends who shared his belief. Most importantly, it made him contemptuous of literary fashions, so that he was able to write more freely in a manner which suited his own idiosyncrasies.<sup>19</sup>

His negative expectations regarding the commercial success of the second part were made explicit in the preface entitled "To Any That Will Read It," entered in the Stationers' Register on March 6, 1622. His friends' strong support and encouragement opposed the general "barbarous Ignorance and base Detraction" dictating the commercial activity of printers, who overlooked poems like his because they "went not so fast away in the Sale, as some of their beastly and abominable Trash, (a shame both to our Language and Nation)" (391).

Concerned more with topography than history, and lacking Selden's antiquarian notes, Part II was dedicated to Prince Charles, and was prefaced by three commendatory poems composed, respectively, by William Browne, George Wither, and John Reynolds. In the dedication to Prince Charles, Drayton promised an early publication of the third part (390), which however was never completed: in two letters exchanged between William Drummond and William Alexander shortly after Drayton's death, they both regretted that the third part of *Poly-Olbion* had never been finished, and expressed their intention to publish in Scotland any extant fragments that might possibly be (but never were) found among Drayton's papers (N 188).

## 2.4 Sources

Drayton's grand scheme for an omnicomprehensive poem aiming to illustrate the mythopoiesis and aetiology of Britain was possibly inspired,

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<sup>19</sup>Duchemin, "'Barbarous Ignorance'," 137.

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first of all, by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, assimilated through the intermediation of Spenser's native muse.<sup>20</sup> His style, a sort of "Ovidian mood" can be retraced in his use of an "extraordinary variety of material and setting," "repetitiveness," "digressions," and "multiple narrators" (the nymphs and dryads); yet, several Ovidian themes also recur, such as the coexistence of human beings and mythical and mythological figures, with particular attention to amorous stories, as well as the disrupting presence of change, rendered, in *Poly-Olbion*, as a continuous *metamorphosis* – in time and space – of the land of Britain.<sup>21</sup>

Within this framework, the internal design of *Poly-Olbion* can be essentially ascribed to two vast literary traditions: topographical and historical. Direct sources, however, have been found to be relatively few.

### 2.4.1 *Topography*

Whereas, in his dedication to Prince Henry, Drayton stated that his poem was "genuine, and first in this kinde" (iii\*), he developed the rhetorical and thematic framework of *Poly-Olbion* on the basis of previous topographical works making use of traditional techniques and themes.<sup>22</sup> These sources can be divided into two main types: river poetry, or a subgenre of topographical writing; and topo-chorographical works in prose and verse, blending descriptive and antiquarian matter.

*Poly-Olbion* certainly partakes of the stock features and rethorical

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<sup>20</sup>Raphael Lyne, "Drayton's Chorographical Ovid," in P. Hardie, et al., eds., *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 85. Drayton himself was sometimes associated with Ovid or considered as his worthy successor: in a letter by William Alexander, prefaced to the 1600 edition of *Englands Heroicall Epistles*; in William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (1616), where he is defined as "our second Ovid." Quoted in *Ibid.*, 93, n.25.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 88-9, 96.

<sup>22</sup>W.H. Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," *Studies in Philology* 65 (1968): 783.

clothing of river poetry (i.e., personification and the marriage of rivers), which first developed in England in the mid sixteenth century: this literary form exploited the protean nature of rivers as national symbols partaking both of a historical and timeless dimension, and thus suitable for reuniting and reconciling the real and mythological past.<sup>23</sup> Direct references of *Poly-Olbion* to other river poems can hardly be detected, owing to their using highly stylised techniques. The essential works that Drayton may have used, at the very least as indirect sources, are, from the classical tradition, Ausonius's *Mosella* and the fourth book of Virgil's *Georgics*;<sup>24</sup> from the English tradition, John Leland's *Cygneae Cantio* (1545); Spenser's *Epithalamium Thamesis* (ca 1580, now lost); Camden's *De Connubio Tamae et Isis* (before 1586, partly included in *Britannia*); William Vallans's *Two Swannes* (1590); Spenser's episode on the marriage of the Thames and the Medway in his *Faerie Queene*, IV.xi (1596);<sup>25</sup> E.W.'s *Thameseidos* (1600) on the same topic.<sup>26</sup>

As for the actual matter and details, Drayton relied on the tradition established by John Leland's *Genethliacon* (1543), a topographical and historical poem surveying the whole kingdom, and dedicated to the birth of Edward VI.<sup>27</sup> The main source of *Poly-Olbion* was, however, Camden's *Britannia*.<sup>28</sup> Camden's work, originally published in 1586, was little modified in the 1590 reprint, but considerably enlarged for the 1600

<sup>23</sup>W.H. Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature: The River and the Myth of Geography* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1986), 123, 140.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, chap. 2.

<sup>25</sup>Clear parallels with Spenser's lines have been found in Song XXVI. See Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (Harlow: Pearson, 2001), IV.xi.8-53; V.C. Hull, "The English and Welsh Topographical Sources," 740, 19.

<sup>26</sup>Hilda Taylor, "Topographical Poetry in England during the Renaissance" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1926), 109, 135-6.

<sup>27</sup>Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," 794.

<sup>28</sup>Hull, "The English and Welsh Topographical Sources," 31. In the conclusive section of his analytical dissertation, Hull states that it would often be impossible to recognise Drayton's source, had he not faithfully used Camden's text as the basis of further poetic invention. *Ibid.*, 735-6.

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and 1607 editions. It has been convincingly demonstrated that most of Drayton's topographical information on the counties of England and Wales was drawn from the 1600 and 1607 editions.<sup>29</sup> The several details that cannot be attributed to either imply, however, that he must have consulted another source as well, which has been traced in Holland's enlarged English translation of the *Britannia* (1610). Lexical and syntactic parallels point to Drayton's thorough use of the translation, rather than Camden's Latin original, even before its publication: because Holland had been working on his translation since 1603, Drayton may have had the opportunity to see it in manuscript,<sup>30</sup> perhaps via Abraham Holland, Philemon's son and a disciple and friend of Drayton's.<sup>31</sup>

For the topography of Wales, Drayton acknowledged his use of Humphrey Floyd's description of Cambria (or Humphrey Llwyd's *De Mona Druidum Insula*), as well as the help of Welshman John Williams, whose conversations fed his interest in the geography and history of Wales (vii\*). He was also influenced by Thomas Churchyard's *The Worthiness of Wales* (1587), a work in prose and poetry on "the matter of Wales," topographical, historical and antiquarian.<sup>32</sup>

Other topographical sources provided limited material to particular Songs. Among them, the most relevant are Richard Carew's *Survey of Cornwall* for Song I; William Harrison's *Description of Britain* for Song III; Giraldus Cambrensis' *Itinerarium Cambriae* for Songs V and VI; Humphrey Llwyd's *Breuiary of Britayne* (Sir John Price's translation of *De Mona Druidum Insula*); Abraham Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, David

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<sup>29</sup>The main difference between the two lies in a general reshaping of the work: from a rather continental perspective, influenced by European antiquarianism, its methods and research matter, to a narrower focus on the Roman and Anglo-Saxon origins of Great Britain, privileging the heraldry and genealogy of land-based families. F.J. Levy, "The Making of Camden's *Britannia*," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance* 26 (1964): 70-97.

<sup>30</sup>Gourvitch, "A Note on Drayton and Philemon Holland," 332-3.

<sup>31</sup>Constable, "Drayton and the Holland Family," 175.

<sup>32</sup>Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," 791.

Powel's *Historie of Cambria*,<sup>33</sup> Price's *Historiae Brytannicae Defensio* for Song X; Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* for Song XIX.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.4.2 History

The first part of *Poly-Olbion*, where the history of Great Britain plays a larger role, presents a strain between the two different kinds of sources that are expressly acknowledged – vernacular and British, used by Drayton; Latin and classical, used by Selden. This contrast surfaces even in the layout, since Drayton's verse and Selden's "illustrations" are sharply separated.

Drayton's historical and legendary facts were mostly derived, at several removes, from Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Other works may have provided similar matter, beginning with Camden's *Britannia* and Holland's translation, but also Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*.<sup>35</sup> As for the history of pre-Saxon times, Drayton declared to have relied especially on the oral tradition of Druids and Bards, whose main records he could find, however, mainly in Julius Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* and Gildas's *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*.<sup>36</sup>

In his preface, Selden provides a complete survey of his sources, as a demonstration of his genuine antiquarian method. He acknowledges his use of the most important Greek and Roman historians, as well as of Geoffrey *ap* Arthur, Matthew of Westminster (viii\*), Gildas, Taliessin,

<sup>33</sup>See R.R. Cawley, "Drayton's Use of Welsh History," *Studies in Philology* 22 (1925): 234-55.

<sup>34</sup>See R.R. Cawley, "Drayton and the Voyagers," *PMLA* 38 (1923): 530-56.

<sup>35</sup>Isaac Gourvitch, "Drayton's Debt to Geoffrey of Monmouth," *The Review of English Studies* 4 (1928): 395, 403.

<sup>36</sup>J.E. Curran, Jr., "The History Never Written: Bards, Druids, and the Problem of Antiquarianism in *Poly-Olbion*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998): 499.

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Nennius (ix\*), Bede, William of Malmesbury (x\*), Giraldus Cambrensis and Camden (xii\*). He also takes into account literary authors like Ariosto, Spenser, and Rabelais, though questioning their credibility, as well as that of "creative" chroniclers like Higden, Stow, and Holinshed (viii\*, xiii\*).

Common to all Drayton's topographical and historical sources is their Britishness. If *Poly-Olbion* was meant to be the *summa* of Great Britain, and Drayton its poet-vates, it was first necessary to determine the national context in which the poem was to operate.<sup>37</sup> As will be further discussed, Drayton decided to outline this hegemony through a bidimensional canonisation. First of all, he designed a top-down hierarchy of sources, those at the top providing also the overall structure of *Poly-Olbion* (Camden's *Britannia* and Saxton's *Atlas*), those at the bottom mostly providing suggestions for individual passages. He also excluded non-British sources dealing with England or Wales. Secondly, he provided a horizontal view of this hierarchy, by interspersing the authors' names in the text: he thus created a catalogue of British sources, whose extension attempted to harmonise their differences in genre and time, and shape a uniform corpus representative of the British "consensual identity," and the "homogeneity of its culture of origin."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Hadfield speaks of Britain's being brought back to an "English hegemony," in order to anglicise the "imagined space." In the passage above, discussing *Poly-Olbion* in particular, the adjective "English" has been substituted with "British," as it refers, in Drayton's case, to the entire kingdom. See Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity. Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 11.

<sup>38</sup>Trevor Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon: From the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century* (Montreal: McGill's-Queen University, 1998), 24.

## 2.5 Editions

Since its earliest appearance on the book market, *Poly-Olbion* has been printed thirteen times. A survey of the date, layout, and background of the several editions may help provide an overview of the dynamics, success, and shortcomings of *Poly-Olbion* as both text and object.

Six phases in the printing history of *Poly-Olbion* can be identified: the original issues; the large complete editions of Drayton's works; selections within collections of texts by various authors; single-volume editions; the advent of philological research; and what may be called the anastatic moment.

*Poly-Olbion* was originally published in four different issues: three for the first part, and one for the second. The first issue of Part I (STC 7226) came out in 1612, without the printed titlepage, the table of contents, the "Henricvs Princeps" writing on Henry's portrait, and with unnumbered map plates. It was printed between May 9 and the late 1612, and sold, by Lownes, Browne, Helme, and Busbie.<sup>39</sup> The 1612 issue cannot be regarded as a separate edition, and is rather considered a version of the 1613 issue.<sup>40</sup> The second issue of Part I (STC 7227) was published in 1613, complete with the titlepage, and with numbered maps.<sup>41</sup> The publishers Lownes, Browne, Helme, and Busbie were recorded to be still trying to sell out copies of it in 1624.<sup>42</sup> The third issue of Part I (STC 7228) came out in 1622. The publishers of the second part – Marriott, Grismand, and Dewe – did not acquire the rights for the first one, but may have taken over unsold,

<sup>39</sup>*Poly-Olbion* (London: Printed by H. Lownes for M. Lownes, I. Browne, I. Helme, I. Busbie, 1612).

<sup>40</sup>Hull, "The English and Welsh Topographical Sources," 43-4; Drayton, *Works*, 5:297-9.

<sup>41</sup>*Poly-Olbion: or A Chorographical Description of Tracts, Riuers, Mountaines, Forests, and other Parts of this renowned Isle of Great Britaine, With intermixture of the most Remarquable Stories, Antiquities, Wonders, Rarities, Pleasures, and Commodities of the same: Digested in a Poem BY MICHAEL DRAYTON, Esq.* (London: Printed by H. Lownes for M. Lownes, I. Browne, I. Helme, I. Busbie, 1613).

<sup>42</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 5:300-2.

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unbound copies of the same, to which they added a new titlepage.<sup>43</sup> The publishers' data on the 1613 engraved frontispiece were not changed. As the titlepage suggests, the third issue of Part I was to be bound together with the newly published Part II, to constitute a volume destined to those who had not yet acquired Part I.<sup>44</sup> The first issue of Part II (STC 7229-7230) was entered in the Stationers' Register on March 6, 1621.<sup>45</sup> The edition included the front matter. The copies bearing this particular titlepage were to be sold separately, to people who already owned Part I. Copies of Part II were also issued without "By MICHAEL DRAYTON" on the titlepage, and were to be bound with Part I. Evidence is extant that this issue remained on sale until 1658.<sup>46</sup> A variant volume, made up of the 1622 issues of Parts I-II, and not included in *STC*, is extant in one folio copy only, and does not show Drayton's name on the titlepage. However, it differs from previous editions for a particular line overprinted on the original titlepage – "THE FAERIE LAND" – and a decorative border including the printers' ornaments. These additions may have had an advertising purpose. The quality and design of the ornaments have been attributed to the Oxford printer John Lichfield, and dated around 1630. Whether this was a separate edition, improved to be sold out, or a customised copy ordered by its owner, it is impossible to say.<sup>47</sup>

After the 1620s, no seventeenth-century editions of *Poly-Olbion* were published, nor any complete editions of Drayton's works, or collections

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<sup>43</sup>*Poly-Olbion* (London: Printed by H. Lownes for M. Lownes, I. Browne, I. Helme, I. Busbie, for I. Marriott, I. Grismand, T. Dewe, 1622).

<sup>44</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 5:301-2.

<sup>45</sup>*THE SECOND PART, OR A CONTINVANCE OF POLY-OLBION FROM THE EIGHTEENTH SONG. Containing all the Tracts, Riuers, Mountaines, and Forrests: Intermixed with the most remarkable Stories, Antiquities, Wonders, Rarities, Pleasures, and Commodities of the East, and Northerne parts of the Isle, lying betwixt the two famous Riuers of THAMES, and TWEED. By MICHAEL DRAYTON, Esq.* (London: Printed by A. Mathewes for I. Marriott, I. Grismand, T. Dewe, 1622).

<sup>46</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 5:301-3.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:303-4; Bent Juel-Jensen, "An Oxford Variant of Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," *The Library* 16 (1961): 53-4.

including *Poly-Olbion*.<sup>48</sup> The first complete edition of Drayton's works was published in 1748: it also included *Poly-Olbion*, and inaugurated the tradition, which was to last until the late nineteenth century, of reproducing the poem without the paratextual matter – i.e., without the engraved frontispiece, the original titlepage, Prince Henry's portrait, the introductory poems referring to them, and, of course, the maps – so that the actual text was presented out of its original visual context. The spelling was modernised throughout, and completeness was deemed essential. The second eighteenth-century edition included the first attempt to outline Drayton's life. This historical contextualisation of the author and his works through a scanty editorial apparatus aiming to provide a global authorial view, rather than thorough textual annotations, served to construct a canonical, "authentic, authorized figure" of Drayton the poet, also for advertising purposes: indeed, publishers would not have "enshrined any author as an authorial presence unless doing so improved the value of the book."<sup>49</sup> The titlepage of the first complete edition, made by Charles Coffey,<sup>50</sup> reads: "THE WORKS OF MICHAEL DRAYTON, Esq; A Celebrated POET in the Reigns of Queen ELIZABETH, King JAMES I.

<sup>48</sup>See *POEMS: By Michaell Draiton Esquire* (London: Printed for N. Ling, 1605); *Poems: By Michael Drayton Esquire. Newly Corrected by the Author* (London: Printed for J. Smethwicke, 1608); *POEMS: BY MICHAEL DRAYTON ESQVIRE. Newly Corrected by the Author* (London: Printed for J. Smethwicke, 1610); *POEMS: BY MICHAEL DRAYTON ESQVIRE. Newly Corrected by the Author* (London: Printed by W. Stansby for J. Smethwicke, 1613); *POEMS: BY MICHAEL DRAYTON ESQVIRE. Newly Corrected by the AVTHOR* (London: Printed by W. Stansby for J. Smethwicke, [n.d.]); *POEMS: By Michael Drayton Esquire....* (London: Printed by W. Stansby for J. Smethwicke, 1619); *POEMS: By Michael Drayton Esquire....* (London: Printed by W. Stansby for J. Smethwicke, 1620); *POEMS: By MICHAEL DRAYTON Esquyer. Newly Corrected and Augmented* (London: Printed by W. Stansby for J. Smethwicke, 1630); *POEMS: By MICHAEL DRAYTON Esquyer. Collected into one Volume....Newly Corrected* (London: Printed for J. Smethwicke, 1637).

<sup>49</sup>Michael Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 26, 29.

<sup>50</sup>*Poly-Olbion*, in *The Works of Michael Drayton, Esq.*, ed. C. Coffey, 4 vols. (London: Printed for W. Reeve, 1753), 2:233-386.

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and CHARLES I." *Poly-Olbion* was included as the tenth work, complete with the "Annotations of the learned *Selden*." The text was disposed in two columns per page, large enough so that Drayton's long Alexandrine lines could fit in without too many undesired run-on-lines, and Selden's notes were reproduced as in the original edition, with their surrounding marginalia. An advertisement published in 1751 stated that, while *Poly-Olbion* alone was often sold for two guineas (around £2), Coffey's edition, including several other works, was on sale for £1 9s.<sup>51</sup> Engravings by N. Parr illustrated several works, including *Poly-Olbion*. In the same year an appendix was published, including works that had formerly been omitted.<sup>52</sup> This edition was reprinted in 1753 as a four-volume octavo: the text was presented in single columns per page, suitable for the Alexandrines, while Selden's marginal notes to his "Illustrations" were rendered as footnotes. A new edition of it was issued in the same year, with an essay on Drayton's life and works.<sup>53</sup>

From the end of the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, *Poly-Olbion* was published only within selections of works by various authors: the spelling was modernised and the works were usually accompanied by short lives of the poets, and sometimes by short critical commentaries. As appears from their titles, these collections attempted to reunite texts by canonical poets of the past, by making their works authoritative in order to authenticate British literature and culture, particularly around the time of the French Revolution and Napoleon's campaigns.<sup>54</sup> In 1793, *Poly-Olbion* and several of Drayton's works were included in an octavo collection, edited by Robert Anderson, and entitled *The Works of the*

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<sup>51</sup>A newspaper cutting attached to the first page of one of the British Library copies (1505/166), and arguably referring to it, describes its binding as "early calf, newly and soundly rebacked," and its original cost (possibly at an auction) of £3 3s.

<sup>52</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 5:293-4.

<sup>53</sup>*Poly-Olbion*, in *The Works of Michael Drayton, Esq.*, ed. Coffey, 2:641-824 (Songs I-VIII); 3:825-1231 (Songs IX-XXX).

<sup>54</sup>Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements*, 26.

*British Poets* (E 185-6).<sup>55</sup> The table of contents of the Drayton volume begins with *Poly-Olbion*, although the poem is presented after over two hundred pages, as if the editor had wished to begin with the most representative work. The text was disposed in two columns hardly wide enough to contain the Alexandrines, and Selden's marginal notes were reproduced as footnotes. No graphic elements were printed. In 1810, another collection was published, edited by Alexander Chalmers, and similar to the 1795 one, entitled *The Works of the English Poets*.<sup>56</sup> The fourth volume included *Poly-Olbion* and several of Drayton's other works, dedications written by and addressed to him, and a short life (E 186). The text was divided into two columns, in which the long Alexandrines did not typically fit in, and Selden's marginal notes were printed as footnotes. In his octavo collection entitled *Select Works of the British Poets from Chaucer to Johnson: With Biographical Sketches* (1831), Robert Southey included also Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, whose text was printed in a very small font, disposed into two large columns, but lacked Selden's illustrations altogether (E 194).<sup>57</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, *Poly-Olbion* seems to have aroused sufficient interest as to be printed in single-volume editions. Richard Hooper's 1876 enterprise of a new octavo edition of Drayton's complete works was begun but never completed. The three published volumes included a reprint of the 1622 edition of *Poly-Olbion*, with modernised spelling. The *Poly-Olbion* section was prefaced by Hole's portrait of Drayton and Hooper's introduction, and provided with short editorial

<sup>55</sup>*Poly-Olbion*, in R. Anderson, ed., *The Works of the British Poets. With Prefaces, Biographical And Critical, Volume Third: Containing Drayton, Carew, and Suckling*. (Edinburgh: Mundell, 1793), 3:234-540. The Drayton section bore a separate titlepage: "The Poetical Works of Michael Drayton, Esq....To which is prefixed The Life Of The Author." While the general titlepage is dated 1795, the Drayton section is dated 1793. J.L. Harner, *Samuel Daniel and Michael Drayton: A Reference Guide* (Boston: Hall, 1980), 151.

<sup>56</sup>*Poly-Olbion*, in A. Chalmers, ed., *The Works of the English Poets*, 21 vols. (London: Johnson, et al., 1810), 4:vii-20, 166-392.

<sup>57</sup>*Poly-Olbion*, in R. Southey, ed., *Select Works of the British Poets* (London: Longman, et al., 1831), 602-85.

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annotations, but the thirty maps were not reproduced (E 187, 194). Hooper added a dedication to Edward, Prince of Wales, ideally mirroring Drayton's addresses to Henry and Charles. In the years 1889-90, the Spenser Society issued the first in-folio anastatic reprint of *Poly-Olbion*, with the subtitle "a Chorographically Description of Great Britain. By Michael Drayton." The copytext was that of the 1622 edition, complete, for the first time in over a century, with the original paratextual matter.<sup>58</sup>

The only scholarly edition to date, aiming to reproduce the original spelling and layout of *Poly-Olbion* (front matter, verse, illustrations), was printed in 1933, as the fourth volume of Hebel's complete edition of Drayton's works. It was the result of a conflation of the text and paratextual matter in Part I (1613, 1622) and Part II (1622), and was provided with thorough annotation and bibliographical information, contained in the fifth volume, trying to retrace its sources and clarify philological issues. It is now considered the most reliable text by *Poly-Olbion* scholars.

After Hebel's edition, which was extremely expensive, a couple of printing houses decided to publish anastatic reprints of the nineteenth-century single-volume editions. In 1970, Burt Franklin issued a reprint of the 1890 edition,<sup>59</sup> while, in 2005, Elibron Classics published a quarto anastatic reprint of the 1876 edition, in three volumes.<sup>60</sup>

As this survey has shown, *Poly-Olbion* remained rather difficult to sell throughout the seventeenth century, with one printer around 1630 possibly trying to make it commercially more attractive by adding to the titlepage the phrase "The Faerie Land." A possible explanation may be connected with the folio size, the deluxe nature of the work, and its

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<sup>58</sup>*The Poly-Olbion: A Chorographical Description of Great Britain*, 3 vols. (Manchester: Spenser Society, 1889-90).

<sup>59</sup>*Poly-Olbion* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970).

<sup>60</sup>*Poly-Olbion*, in *The Complete Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. R. Hooper ([n.p.]: Elibron Classics, 2005).

high price, rather than with the changing tastes of Drayton's readership.<sup>61</sup> Although there seems to be only one extant record of the original price at which *Poly-Olbion* was sold – 6s for an unbound copy of the first issue of Part I<sup>62</sup> – a general estimate can nevertheless be attempted.

Indeed, after the ordinance on book prices issued by the Stationers' Company in 1598, the average price per sheet was lowered around 0.45/0.55*d*, which remained fairly constant until the early 1630s. Books with pictures and illustrations were, however, not considered in the ordinance: because of the extra work and expenses necessary to print them, the price of such books was about 75 to 100 per cent higher than that of standard books with the same number of sheets. Furthermore, literary works by famous authors were charged more, according to the money buyers would be willing to pay for them.<sup>63</sup> Thanks to these rough parameters, an attempt can be made to define, if not the original retail price of *Poly-Olbion*, at least its order of magnitude, as an unbound volume. Part I included 183 leaves (or 90 sheets) plus 18 folded maps: had it been a standard Drayton work (1*d* per sheet), its minimum price might have amounted roughly to 90*d*, or 7*s.6d*; yet, as an illustrated folio, it may have been sold for at least twice as much, around 15*s*. Part II was made up of 89 leaves (hence 44 sheets) plus 12 maps, for a total amount of 44*d*, or 3.5*s*, doubled to 7*s*, at the very least, because of the engravings. The complete edition (130 sheets) should therefore have been sold for at least

<sup>61</sup>Similarly, the size and price of the almost contemporary English edition of Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* certainly "restricted its readership to a great extent." Rhonda Lemke Sanford, *Maps and Memory in Early Modern England: A Sense of Place* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 151, n.4.

<sup>62</sup>Bent Juel-Jensen, "'Poly-Olbion', 'Poemes lyrick and pastorall', 'Poemes' 1619, 'The Owle', and a few other Books by Michael Drayton," *The Library* 8 (1953): 161.

<sup>63</sup>For instance, evidence shows that Drayton's poem *To King James* (1603), published when the poet was already well-known, was sold at 1*d* per sheet, a rather high price as compared to the average of 0.75 to 1*d* common for volumes by authors like Shakespeare (0.80*d* per sheet), Daniel (1.25*d*), and Spenser (1.10*d*). See F.R. Johnson, "Notes on English Retail Book-Prices, 1550-1640," *The Library* 5 (1950): 90-1.

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20s, or £1.

What may have allowed the printers to lower the price per sheet to 0.80*d*, and sell Part I alone for 6s (and, presumably, Part II for 3s or so), was the fact that, like other precious, complex volumes, *Poly-Olbion* was the result of the collaboration of four publishers for Part I (Lownes, Browne, Helme, Busbie) and three for Part II (Marriott, Grismand, Dewe), designed to share the high expenses of its printing.<sup>64</sup> If Parts I-II were sold together for 9s, unbound, the price may still have been rather high for a single poem,<sup>65</sup> particularly because, unlike other Drayton works, it was available solely in fine and large paper format (about 295 x 200 mm),<sup>66</sup> providing no cheaper editions for the general public.

Besides, whereas until 1610 most chorographical works were by English authors, around 1620 there can be noticed a steady increase in the number of chorographical books written by foreign authors as a result of an influence from Italy; so, while local history (or chorography) gradually became more "cosmopolitan" and "continental," descriptive geography became more "insular."<sup>67</sup> This is why it may also be suggested that, as

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<sup>64</sup>"Whatever expedients the trade adopted, publication was frequently attended with risks. Often these were unavoidable and had to be faced, so that at times a number of booksellers would combine to share the costs of production and each sell as much of the edition as he could in his own shop. The alliance of two members in this way was so common as not to need demonstration, but the production of some large volumes made it prudent for a greater number than this to join together and underwrite an edition." H.S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers 1603 to 1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 224. A few years later, the almost contemporary Shakespeare folio (roughly 450 sheets) was sold, unbound, for 16s or 17s, that is, 0.80*d* per sheet, again thanks to the collaboration of four booksellers. For further details on John Busby's activity, see G.D. Johnson, "John Busby and the Stationers' Trade, 1590-1612," *The Library* 7 (1985): 1-15.

<sup>65</sup>For instance, the folio edition of Drayton's complete poems, published in 1619 and consisting roughly of 120 sheets, was sold for 5s 6*d*, almost half the *Poly-Olbion* price. Juel-Jensen, "'Poly-Olbion'," 161.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>67</sup>L.B. Cormack, *Charting an Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 192. According to Angus Vine, the commercial failure of *Poly-Olbion* was due not only to the expensive typographical and illustrative choices (particularly, the presence of Arabic and Hebrew words in Selden's "illustrations"), but also to the fact that only two years

a blending of both local history and descriptive geography, *Poly-Olbion* may have been quickly out-fashioned first of all by a definite splitting of the "topo-chorographical" (394) matter into descriptive geography (topography) and chorography (local history), generated by new methods and approaches.

*Poly-Olbion* was, however, reprinted (and possibly sold) more successfully in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively three and four times. Indeed, an advertisement for the 1748 edition suggests that, almost 140 years after its first appearance on bookstalls, *Poly-Olbion* was still rather expensive, selling alone for one third more than Drayton's complete works.<sup>68</sup> The same edition was reprinted five years later, in octavo, for 6d.<sup>69</sup> Yet, eighty years later Richard Hooper wrote in the introduction to his edition of *Poly-Olbion*, that "Drayton's works in their original editions are scarce and expensive, and the only pretended complete edition (that of the middle of the last century), besides its inaccuracy and uninviting form, is now only to be purchased at a great price," while large collections like Chalmers's were deemed too "voluminous" to be commonly held in everyone's library.<sup>70</sup> A solution to the cumbersome folio size common

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before Holland's translation of the *Britannia* had been published, making available to less educated readers the same matter Camden had published in Latin, and which Drayton would publish in poetry shortly after. Angus Vine, "Michael Drayton and Early Modern Antiquarianism" (PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 2004), 245-6. Although Vine's dissertation relies on the thesis according to which poetry and history were not perceived as different (and contrasting) genres between the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, it is nevertheless difficult to think that Drayton's readers would have purchased Holland's translation rather than *Poly-Olbion*, and that the public in general would have had the same reading expectations from both such works.

<sup>68</sup>A comment by Isaac D'Israeli's seems to confirm this hypothesis: "Of the '*Poly-olbion*,' the edition called the second, of 1622, has fetched an excessive price; while the first, considered incomplete, may be procured at a very moderate price." Isaac D'Israeli, "Drayton," in *Amenities of Literature*, 2 vols., in *The Complete Works of Benjamin Disraeli*, ed. B. D'Israeli, 7 vols. (London: Routledge et al., 1859) 7:218-23, 221.

<sup>69</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 5:295.

<sup>70</sup>Hooper, "Introduction," 1:xiii-xiv. From several auction sales notices published in *The Times* from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, there can be seen, first of all, that both *Poly-Olbion* and Chalmers's collection were usually labelled as valuable,

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to half the above-listed *Poly-Olbion* reprints, has recently been proposed, with the three-volume paperback, by Elibron editions, and printed in 2005.

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notable or rare books. Secondly, a price span for seventeenth-century *Poly-Olbion* editions can be gathered, generally inspired by book catalogues such as Bernard Quaritch's: from little more than £10 for a two-volumes-in-one "imperfected copy" ("The Hartree Library," July 17, 1890, 11, col. F), to £44.10s ("Sales of Rare Books," July 31, 1902, 10, col. D), with an average price, for copies in good condition, of around £18 ("Sale of Lord Crawford's Library," June 18, 1887, 8, col. D; "Sales of Valuable Books - Messrs. Puttick," December 8, 1903, 5, col. F).

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## Chapter 3

# Drayton and *Poly-Olbion* Criticism

### 3.1 *Critical Problems*

In this chapter an analysis of the reception of *Poly-Olbion* will be proposed, starting from the years before Drayton's death, up to the twentieth century. The publication of the first part of *Poly-Olbion* was, as has been said, a commercial failure that interrupted the success Drayton had been enjoying since the late sixteenth century:<sup>1</sup> being rather expensive for a single work, the volume was certainly printed in fewer copies, eventually reaching a limited readership, in social class and number. Indeed, one of the problems that have puzzled Drayton scholars is determining how much, and by whom, *Poly-Olbion* was read. Though it was read certainly much less than Drayton had wished, it has been read more than may be commonly believed: mostly by an educated and discriminative elite, and particularly in the past two centuries, as noted in Hebel's introduction:

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<sup>1</sup>Russell Noyes, "The Influence and Reputation of Michael Drayton" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1932), 25. This descriptive chapter is indebted to the material provided by Noyes both in his dissertation and in the article presenting the overall results of his inquiry. Russell Noyes, "Drayton's Literary Vogue Since 1631," *Indiana University Studies* 22 (1935): 3-23. Noyes's work – whose original sources will be presented between brackets, when different – will be integrated by sources suggested by Hebel, D'Haussy, Harner, and Brink.

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Such proof that *Poly-Olbion* is still read made the task of an editor pleasant; but at other times the poem has proved popular enough to cause slight inconvenience. When, seated at a desk in the North Library piled high with all the British Museum copies of *Poly-Olbion*, I have been courteously asked by the attendants if this or that copy could be spared for the use of other readers, I have wished that the legend that *Poly-Olbion* is little read might be true. (5)

The difficulties which, more often than not, *Poly-Olbion* has posed to its readers have tended to recur in these four centuries, with few variations, and fall into two categories: its encyclopedic dimension, both of form and content; and its prosody.

#### 3.1.1 *Encyclopedism*

The encyclopedism of *Poly-Olbion* – as well as the implicit epic (or socially inclined) dimension of what Drayton himself defined his "*Herculean toyle*" (XXX.342) – aimed to prove that its author would well fulfil the poet-*vates*'s role by composing a *summa* of Great Britain.

In educational poems of this kind, which Northrop Frye calls "thematic" – privileging, that is, *dianoia* (thought, theme) over plot and characters – the figure of the poet as a "spokesman of his society" is indeed itself a poetic theme.<sup>2</sup> As a figure "sufficiently learned or inspired," the poet feels entrusted with a "total body of vision....tending to incorporate itself in a single encyclopedic form," kept together by a strong "centripetal perspective" focused, in our case, on the nation.<sup>3</sup> Drayton's comprehensive and all-inclusive intentions are certainly manifest in the

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<sup>2</sup>Northrop Frye, *An Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 52, 54-5. Frye applies the same adjective to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, one of Drayton's possible sources for *Poly-Olbion*.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 55-6.

monumental personification of a monolithic and homogeneous Britannia towering on the engraved titlepage (Fig. 2.2).

At the same time, however, this "creative treatment of extensive erudition"<sup>4</sup> contains the failure of its own encyclopedic aim: right from the beginning, the reader cannot but notice how this monolithic Britain is being invalidated by the Greek prefix "poly-" present in the title: the word emphasises the impossibility of immortalising a heterogeneous Britain, better described, instead, through lists of particularisms.<sup>5</sup> The increasingly "polyphonic" nature of *Poly-Olbion* contrasts with the epic formulation of the poem; the centrifugal strain derived from its "anatomic" character may be ultimately referable to the tradition of Menippean satire.<sup>6</sup>

Like other nearly contemporary works commonly associated with Menippean satire (e.g., Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*),<sup>7</sup> *Poly-Olbion* attempts to deal with "a precarious universe of broken or fragile national, cultural, religious, political, or generally intellectual values," and is characterised by great variety in form (text and image; poetry and prose, in the first part) and content (different genres and modes, fonts,<sup>8</sup> and languages,<sup>9</sup> including

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<sup>4</sup>Frye sees in this definition "the organizing principle fo the great Menippean satire before Swift." *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>5</sup>Christopher Grose, "Theatrum Libri: Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and the Failure of Encyclopedic Form," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 81. Though concerned namely with Burton's work, Grose's hypothesis can be valuable also for *Poly-Olbion*, as it suggests that the contemporary success of the *Anatomy* was due to Burton's overcoming of the encyclopedic form.

<sup>6</sup>Privately discussed with Professor Jill Kraye, the Warburg Institute.

<sup>7</sup>For a systematic survey of instances of Menippean satire up to the late seventeenth century see E.P. Kirk, *Menippean Satire: An Annotated Catalogue of Text and Criticism* (New York: Garland, 1980).

<sup>8</sup>Beside the typographic variations in Drayton's text, spanning from italics to gothic to smaller marginalia by the poet himself, Selden's illustrations provide a whole range of different alphabets, including the Hebrew, Arabic, and Greek ones.

<sup>9</sup>The use of different languages in poetic and prose works – a tradition dating back to John Skelton and the early sixteenth century – was employed, among others, by Abraham Fraunce in his *Arcadian Rhetorike* (1588). For further discussion on what has been defined

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Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Old English, and Welsh).<sup>10</sup> Although the poem was meant to be sustained by its original epic ambition, it was gradually taken hold of by a disruptive authorial bitterness, which arguably began to emerge after Drayton's disappointment with James I, after 1603. This feeling is sometimes endorsed by one of the numerous voices of the British landscape, sometimes pervades the whole dialogic process, and is sometimes expressed by the wandering Muse, therefore providing a unified view of Britannia's manifold aspects, invalidated, however, by the nation's inevitable heterogeneity.<sup>11</sup> Even the layout of the poem, originally designed to provide a systematically monumental *summa* of Britannia, ends up disintegrating the latter's textual coherence also in Drayton's intentions.<sup>12</sup> This fragmentation has posed an essential problem concerning the way in which the reader should or could approach *Poly-Olbion*: reading through each Song in its entirety, checking Selden's annotations at the end (Part I); reading through each Song checking Selden's annotations when occurring (Part I); reading through all the Songs in their entirety (Parts I, II), or through Selden's notes (Part I).<sup>13</sup> Another possibility is that the "general readers" may have opted, first of

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"polyglottia," see Alessandra Petrina, "Polyglottia and the Vindication of English Poetry: Abraham Fraunce's *The Arcadian Rhetorike*," *Neophilologus* 83 (1999): 317-29.

<sup>10</sup>Howard D. Weinbrot, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 5-6, 7. According to Weinbrot, beside the mixture of prose and poetry, the main features of Menippean satire are "copiousness, various mixtures of genres, languages, plots, periods, and places....finite and recurring topics: concern with dangerous, harmful, spreading views whether personal or public." *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>11</sup>W. Scott Blanchard, *Scholars' Bedlam: Menippean Satire in the Renaissance* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1995), 28.

<sup>12</sup>Clare McEachern suggests that Drayton may have purposely incorporated into his poem the failure of a unified epic vision of Britannia. Clare McEachern, *The Poetics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 138-91. Although McEachern writes that *Poly-Olbion's* original encouragement to envisage Britannia as unified and harmonious degenerates into a disruptive vision, she then suggests that its ultimate purpose is a reconciliation of the polarities of localism. *Ibid.*, 165, 173.

<sup>13</sup>This scheme was suggested by Weinbrot, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered*, 253-4.

all, for the reading of the Song dedicated to their own native county or to the places they were most interested in for personal reasons; and, indeed, Drayton's structure allows for it because of the overall self-contained nature of each Song.

### 3.1.2 *Prosody*

Though long considered unsuitable for the English language, and seen as creating, in *Poly-Olbion*, what is perceived to be a tiresome prosody, the Alexandrine verse or hexameter enjoyed nevertheless temporary fame in England in the second half of the sixteenth century, and seems to have been the meter that most interested Elizabethan poets, both in theoretical discussion and practical imitation.<sup>14</sup> Until the late 1590s it had been mostly used for Latin-to-English translations (e.g., Richard Stanyhurst's four books of the *Aeneid* (1582)), but also in poems by Sidney, Spenser, and Harvey, as part of the experimentation with quantitative poetry in English verse (particularly in the 1590s) inspired, among others, by the Ramist continental debate.<sup>15</sup> The main problem with the English hexameter was the uncertainty as to the quantity of English syllables and, unlike in Latin, the scarcity of polysyllabic words, so that one foot had to be constructed by tying together several of the much more common monosyllables.<sup>16</sup> Until the early seventeenth century, the ictus-stress issue had been variously faced, and most poets would simply make stressed syllables count as short, and unstressed ones count as long, even when in ictus position, thus creating an opposition between quantity and stress, as well as the

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<sup>14</sup>Derek Attridge, *Well-Weighed Syllables: Elizabethan Verse in Classical Metres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 31.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 133. For a survey of English poems and translations written in hexameters from the 1570s to the 1610s, see *Ibid.*, 129-35.

<sup>16</sup>G.L. Hendrickson, "Elizabethan Quantitative Hexameters," *Philological Quarterly* 28 (1949): 249.

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often distorted pronunciation of words.<sup>17</sup> In his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), however, George Puttenham proposed to derive the quantity of English words from the phonetic features of the language, thus taking into account word stress; similarly, in 1602, Thomas Campion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* proposed to write quantitative verse by adopting the "traditional accentual rhythms of the English language": in order to do this, one should dismiss the imitation of dactyls, composing the greatest part of Latin hexameters, and rely, instead, on iambic- or trochaic-based meters "creating equivalents of, rather than transposing, classical meters."<sup>18</sup>

This is the theory Drayton seems to have followed in *Poly-Olbion*: most of his lines were constituted by monosyllabic words (with a monosyllable-polysyllable ratio roughly of 8:1 per line). He made wide spread use of the iambic rhythm, so much so that over 90 per cent of the *Poly-Olbion* lines began with non-meaningful (unstressed) words – like prepositions, relative pronouns, articles – with only one every 40 lines beginning with a meaningful (stressed) word, hence with a trochaic foot. Arguably influenced by his playwright's experience, Drayton founded *Poly-Olbion* on the foot perceived as the most suitable to the English ear, set in hexameter as typical of epic poems. Had Drayton perceived the inadequacy of his prosodic choice in *Poly-Olbion*, he would have certainly revised the poem, following, as it were, his standard procedure; yet, being aware of the pros and cons of its usage, he tried to shape it according to the topic – catalogues, topography, descriptions of historical events, etc. – by varying, as far as possible, its end-stops, internal rhythm, and strength.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, in the following discussion, it will also appear how, since its

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<sup>17</sup>Attridge, *Well-Weighed Syllables*, 137.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 219, 225.

<sup>19</sup>Parker Duchemin, "Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* and the Alexandrine Couplet," *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980): 151, 154, 158-160.

very publication, *Poly-Olbion* has often tended to become rather forcedly a metaphor for a vague, nostalgic, and indefinite concept of Old England; it can be seen that both dismissing and appreciative comments frequently aimed to criticise or approve not so much the *Poly-Olbion* work itself, but rather what the authors or age of that comments thought it stood for.

The reception of *Poly-Olbion* will be subdivided into the following phases:<sup>20</sup>

- **1598-1650:** Though *Poly-Olbion* was deemed to be a commercial failure in terms of sales, and Drayton's rhetorical experimentations were rather criticised,<sup>21</sup> the poem's political message was generally kept alive by the members of Drayton's print community, particularly after the mid 1620s, when King James's handling of the Continental war began to generate disappointment even among his former upholders. Shortly after Drayton's death, *Poly-Olbion* became the most representative work of his career and ideals, as well as one of the literary bulwarks invoked by the defenders of the British tradition versus the new neoclassical influences from the Continent.
- **1650-1793:** In this period, the literary appreciation of *Poly-Olbion* diminished steadily, as well as its readership, after the new topo-

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<sup>20</sup>Noyes adopted a slightly different periodisation, being concerned with the reception of Drayton's works in general, not of *Poly-Olbion* in particular. He defined the years 1631-1748 as a "period of obscurity," ending with the publication of the first edition of Drayton's complete works; the years 1748-1855 were named "period of earlier modern criticism," when Drayton's works were gradually rediscovered and analysed; the years 1855-1932 (when Noyes was writing) were characterised by an increasingly philological approach to Drayton's works. Noyes, "The Reputation of Michael Drayton," *passim*.

<sup>21</sup>In the early seventeenth century, Drayton increasingly experimented with new meters – e.g., the compact verse of his odes and the hexameters – which was related, of course, to his versatility with literary genres. For further analysis on this point with regard to Drayton's entire career, see Leah Jonas, *The Divine Science: The Aesthetic of Some Representative Seventeenth-Century English Poets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 47-80.

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graphical trend inaugurated by Sir John Denham, following the recommended refinement of English verse. *Poly-Olbion* – particularly Selden’s notes – continued to be consulted solely for its encyclopedic material by historians and antiquarians interested in the curiosities of the British past. The age of satire and classical translations caused a partial oblivion of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, until the mid eighteenth century, when the Shakespeare revival brought forth a re-discovery of his cultural background and context and a gradual rehabilitation of some of his contemporaries, like Drayton. Besides, the new interest in the authentic, “primitive” poetry of ancient Bards and Druids enhanced the readers’ interests for poetico-chorographical themes quite like those present in *Poly-Olbion*.

- **1793-1876:** After the printing of the 1793 edition, *Poly-Olbion* continued to be read, particularly through the lyrical passages published within numerous literary anthologies designed for the general public, as well as through the four editions printed in the course of about seventy years. Although its topographical dimension might encourage a new kind of readership, interested, through the legacy of picturesque literature as reinterpreted by William Wordsworth’s and S.T. Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*, its versification strongly contrasted with the newly-proposed poetic diction. Besides, its prolixity and detailed faithfulness to the British land were remote from the principle of mental selection that had been ruling over English aesthetics since the late eighteenth century, while classicising features like personifications were becoming remote for the general taste. At the same time, the historical dimension of the verse and Selden’s antiquarian notes were often dismissed as nothing more than curiosities or seventeenth-century lore, as History was becoming an institutionalised discipline founded on rigorous method.

- **1876-1970:** In this phase, increasingly historical and philological criticism went hand in hand with a new post-Romantic sensibility for landscape, pervaded with patriotic realism, which unified authorial and critical opinions up to the end of the Second World War. *Poly-Olbion* was seen as representing a Great Britain (often referred to as "England") that was rapidly being destroyed by upcoming technical progress, a nation of landscapes and historical remains testifying to its true essence and identity. In the 1930s and 40s, instead, the poem began to be seen rather politically as an old portrait reminding Great Britain of its former Elizabethan prestige over all other nations. After the 1960s, the instances of metaphorical re-readings of *Poly-Olbion* often recurring in previous times came to a stop, being supplanted by more rigorous scholarly criticism.
- **1970-2000s:** The past forty years have been dedicated to a thorough analysis of *Poly-Olbion's* multi-layered structure, expanded and modified according to the flow of critical currents. An increasing understanding of the poem's structure and cultural context has led to greater appreciation for the poem itself, as a relevant piece of literature testifying to the intellectual crisis of the anti-Jacobean *intelligentsia* in the 1610s and 20s.

### 3.2 1598-1650

The first comment on *Poly-Olbion* appeared in Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia* (1598):

As Ioan. Honterus in Latine verse writ 3. Bookes of Cosmography wt Geographical tables,<sup>22</sup> Michael Drayton is now pen-

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<sup>22</sup>Johannes Honter or Honterus (1498-1549), a Romanian humanist, and author of a geographical manual in Latin verse, *Rudimenta Cosmographica*. Provided with thirteen

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ning, in English verse, a Poem called *Poly-Olbion*, Geographi-  
call and Hydrographical of all the forests, woods, mountaines,  
fountaines, riuers, lakes, flouds, bathes, and springs that be in  
England.<sup>23</sup>

This is just one of Meres's numerous references to Drayton. In the same work, the poet was praised for his English verse "mightily enriched, and gorgeously inuested in rare ornaments and resplendent abilitments," for "the purity and pretiousnesse of his stile and phrase," for which he was named "*Golden-mouth'd*," as well as for his "vertuous disposition, honest conuersation, and wel gouerned cariage."<sup>24</sup> He was also compared to, and equalled with, other English poets; to Greek and Latin classics like Homer and Virgil for his eloquence; to Lucan for his treatment of history in *Mortimeriados*; to the "*Tragoediographi*" Accius, Attilius and Militus for his "legends" and complaints; to lyrical poets like Pindarus and Horace for his excellent lyrical poetry; to the Greek and Latin tragic and elegiac poets for his equal ability.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* was the only mentioned work in progress, among numerous previously published works, which suggests that Meres may have been acquainted with Drayton himself, either through the playwright Anthony Munday or through Nicholas Ling,<sup>26</sup> who first printed *Palladis Tamia* as well as the 1598 edition of Drayton's *Englands Heroicall Epistles*. Meres's comparison of *Poly-Olbion* to Honterus's manual may suggest, beside the obvious similarity of content (geography in verse accompanied by maps), that

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maps illustrating the several parts of the world, *Rudimenta* was originally published in Kracow in 1530, and reprinted nearly forty times, until 1602, in many European cities, Zurich and Antwerp, among them. Gedeon Borsa, "Die Ausgaben der 'Cosmographia' von Johannes Honter," in D.E. Rhodes, ed., *Essays in Honour of Victor Scholderer* (Mainz: Karl Pressler, 1970), 90-105.

<sup>23</sup>Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury* (1598; rpt. New York: Garland, 1973), 281.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 280-1.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 280-1, 283-4.

<sup>26</sup>See Celeste Turner Wright, "Anthony Mundy and the Bodenham Miscellanies," *Philological Quarterly* 40 (1961): 449-61.

Drayton had already conceived *Poly-Olbion* as a work endowed with encyclopedic completeness, after Camden's tradition.<sup>27</sup>

There are no other extant comments on *Poly-Olbion* dating back to the years before the publication of the first part, but the opinions of two contemporary poets – William Drummond and Ben Jonson – are extant. The comment Drummond made in 1614, when his correspondence with Drayton had not yet begun, reads as follows:

*Drayton's Poly-Olbion*, is one of the smoothest Poems I have seen in *English*, Poetical and well prosecuted; there are some Pieces in him, I dare compare with the best Transmarine Poems. The 7th song pleaseth me much. The 12th is excellent. The 13th also: The *Discourse of Hunting*, passeth with any Poet. And The 18th, which is his Last in this Edition 1614 [*sic*]. I find in him, which is in most part of my Compatriots, too great an Admiration of their Country; on the History of which, whilst they muse, as wondering, they forget sometimes to be good Poets.<sup>28</sup>

Drummond had been an admirer of Drayton's since the mid 1590s,<sup>29</sup> yet, as far as *Poly-Olbion* is concerned, he expressed his appreciation only for particular Songs, apparently those in which Drayton's lyricism was most felt. According to Drummond, these gems were said to be constrained by Drayton's strong patriotic commitment to history, which had perverted

<sup>27</sup>The same point has been independently noted by Angus Vine, "Michael Drayton and Early Modern Antiquarianism" (PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 2004), 25-6.

<sup>28</sup>William Drummond of Hawthornden, *The Works of William Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. J. Sage and T. Ruddiman (Edinburgh: Watson, 1711), 226-7.

<sup>29</sup>Drummond possessed a 1594 edition of *Ideas Mirrour*, a 1595 edition of *Endimion and Phoebe*, a 1606 edition of *Poemes lyrick and pastorall*, a 1607 edition of the *Legend of Great Cromwell*, a 1608 edition of Drayton's works; in 1612, he purchased *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, *The Barons Wars*, and the complete *Legends*; in 1613, he acquired the first part of *Poly-Olbion*, as well as a copy of *The Owl*. R.H. MacDonald, ed., *The Library of William Drummond of Hawthornden* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 191, 230.

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the otherwise smooth nature of his poetic efforts:<sup>30</sup> this may have been a reference to Drayton's decision, motivated namely by his encyclopedic intentions, to include heavily detailed lists, accounts, and catalogues, as well as Selden's apparatus, thus blending together, disrespectful to the precincts of Aristotle's theory of genre, mimetic and non-mimetic matter.<sup>31</sup>

Jonson's first comment appears in one of his conversations with Drummond, in the years 1618-19: his thought is reported, "that Michael Drayton's *Polyalbion* (if he had performed what he promised to write, the deeds of all the worthies) had been excellent: His long verses pleased him not."<sup>32</sup> Unlike Drummond, Jonson considered problematic both the manner and matter of *Poly-Olbion*. First, to his classicist's education, Drayton's Alexandrines were excessively long for the English language, and, perhaps, too simplistic as compared to actual Latin hexameters. Second, Drayton should have continued his experiments in history-inverse, which Jonson seems to have appreciated, rather than further complicate the poem through the introduction of topographical matter. In the end, Drummond and Jonson preferred just one of the main genres constituting *Poly-Olbion*.

Around the 1620s, however, both Drummond and Jonson commented rather favourably on *Poly-Olbion*, after becoming acquainted, or so it seems, with Drayton. Apparently uninterested in the *dispositio* and

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<sup>30</sup>Vine, "Michael Drayton and Early Modern Antiquarianism," 28.

<sup>31</sup>W.S. Howell, *Poetics, Rhetoric, and Logic: Studies in the Basic Disciplines of Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 51. According to Howell, "the process by which literature becomes mimetic is related to the process by which it awakens pity or fear or laughter, while the process by which it remains nonmimetic is related to its power to achieve rational credibility, emotional acceptance, and moral authority." *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>32</sup>R.F. Patterson, ed., *Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden* (London: Blackie and Son, 1923), 3. We know that Jonson possessed the 1619 edition of Drayton's *Poems*, to which he added his signature and motto "tanquam explorator." Richard Hooper, "Alexander Gill, Milton's Tutor, and Drayton's 'Polyolbion,'" *Notes and Queries* 11 (1873): 381. The copy is at the Library of Brasenose College, Oxford. He also owned a copy of both parts of *Poly-Olbion*, which was bequeathed to Lincoln's Inn in September 1960 by John Lindon, Q.C. of Malvern. Drayton, *Works*, 5:302.

*inventio* of *Poly-Olbion*, both poets were here definitely concerned with its ideological strength – a change possibly related to their gradual convergence to similar political ideas. In 1619, Drummond wrote to Drayton: "Long since, your amorous (and truly Heroical) Epistles, did ravish me; and lately your most happy *Albion*, put me in a new Trance."<sup>33</sup> In another letter, looking forward to the second part of *Poly-Olbion*, Drummond clarified his position:

I long to see the rest of your POLYALBION come forth (which is the onely Epicke Poeme England (in my judgment) hath to be proud of): To be the Author of which, I had rather haue the praise, than (as Aquinas said of one of the Fathers' Commentaries) to haue the Signorie of Paris. These our Times now, are so giuen to envenomed satyres and spitfull jeasts, that they only taste what is ranke, and smelling, and hoarse.<sup>34</sup>

Drummond revalued the patriotic, historical and epic quality of *Poly-Olbion*, which only five years before was said to limit its poetic nature.<sup>35</sup> A decade later, in 1627, Jonson wrote a commendatory poem, entitled *A Vision on the Muses of His Friend, Michael Drayton*, for Drayton's *Battaile of Agincourt*, praising all of his works, including *Poly-Olbion*:

....thou hast made thy way  
And flight about the isle, well near, by this  
In thy admired Periegesis,  
Or uniuersall circumduction  
Of all that reade thy POLY-OLBION;  
That read it! that are rauished; such was I,  
With euery song, I sweare, and so would die....<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Drummond, *Works*, 233.

<sup>34</sup>Quoted in N 183.

<sup>35</sup>For further discussion of Drummond's political ideas see John Kerrigan, "William Drummond of Hawthornden and the British Problem," in *On Shakespeare and Early Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 152-80.

<sup>36</sup>Ben Jonson, *A Vision on the Muses of His Friend, Michael Drayton*, in *The Works of Ben*

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As Drummond complained for the decadence of contemporary literary taste, in a line much resembling Drayton's bitter assertions in the preface to Part I, Jonson aimed perhaps to be more overtly political: he emphasised also the topographical and centrifugal aspect of *Poly-Olbion*, praising an anti-Stuart poem in the commendatory poem to another anti-Stuart poem, at a time in which, particularly in the late years of James's rule and after Charles's accession,<sup>37</sup> he had lost faith in their policy, and generally "felt unwelcome in some of the circles that had nurtured him earlier."<sup>38</sup> Jonson's is nevertheless a strange poem, an epitome of the way in which his acquaintanceship with Drayton remained always halfway between friendship and rivalry. His lines are hereby "saturated with a sense of tension, resentment set against affection"; even in the seeming celebration of Drayton's works ill-concealed envy pervades the entire poem, leading to a "self-serving" rather than "selfless" praise.<sup>39</sup>

A less known reference is a poem by John Bladen of Hemsworth, written, possibly in the 1620s, on the verso of the second leaf of the map preceding Song XIII, in the *Poly-Olbion* copy now preserved at St John's College, Cambridge. It is entitled "An Elogye upon ye Author in this 13th Song," and was discovered by Geoffrey Tillotson during his research for the Hebel edition. Tillotson thought it worth publishing it as a piece of evidence that *Poly-Olbion* had not been completely scorned during Drayton's lifetime.<sup>40</sup> Despite the lack of any literary value, it is noteworthy that Bladen – in Tillotson's words, "a poet more up to date than Drayton in

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*Jonson*, ed. F. Cunningham, 3 vols. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1910), 3:291-3, lines 48-54.

<sup>37</sup>In these years, Norbrook notes, "Jonson can be found imitating some of the Spenserians' political rhetoric." David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 199.

<sup>38</sup>Leah S. Marcus, "Jonson and the Court," in R. Harp and S. Stewart, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40.

<sup>39</sup>Sara Van Den Berg, "True Relation: The Life and Career of Ben Jonson," in *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>40</sup>Geoffrey Tillotson, "Contemporary Praise of *Polyolbion*," *The Review of English Studies* 62 (1940): 182.

the poetic fashion"<sup>41</sup> – should have decided to write down on his copy his appreciation of Drayton's poem in general, and the lyrical value of Song XIII in particular, which Drummond too had praised. The Cambridge copy appears to have been given to Bladen by Sir Francis Wortley (1591-1652),<sup>42</sup> who, after graduating at Oxford in 1609, was knighted in 1610, and became, in the late 1610s or early 20s, a gentleman of the privy chamber of King James.<sup>43</sup> A poet himself, Wortley may have passed on to Bladen, seemingly a would-be poet himself, his admiration for Drayton's poem, and may have been acquainted with some of Drayton's friends, like Walter Aston and William Alexander, who were at the Jacobean court in those years. Bladen's lines are, as far as we know, the only pre-1650 comment whose author may not have been directly connected with Drayton's print community.

In the 1630s and 40s, comments written by *literati* prevailed, who had been formerly acquainted with Drayton and belonged to his Spenserian print community. Interested in the anti-Stuart message of *Poly-Olbion*, these poets celebrated its patriotic substratum, rejecting, at the same time, the continental literary fashions imported by the Caroline court. In his *Mythomystes* (1630), a literary survey inspired by Neo-Platonic doctrines, and concerned, as the subtitle reads, with the "nature and value of true poesy" posing ancient over modern poets, Henry Reynolds stated that good scholars, and good poets, were not so much those educated in Latin and Greek letters, as those who could see the truth lying beneath the surface of things ("quia vera vides").<sup>44</sup> True poets, Reynolds wrote, could

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<sup>41</sup>Idem.

<sup>42</sup>See the St John's College Library website for images of the poem: [http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/library/special\\_collections/early\\_books/pix/provenance/bladen/bladen.htm](http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/library/special_collections/early_books/pix/provenance/bladen/bladen.htm) (accessed August 30, 2008).

<sup>43</sup>I.W. McLellan, "Wortley, Sir Francis (1591-1652)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29996> (accessed August 30, 2008).

<sup>44</sup>Henry Reynolds, *Mythomystes*, ed. A.F. Kinney (1630; rpt. Menston: Scolar Press, 1972), 12.

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contemplate through their divine *furor* the "Beauty of Supernaturall and Intellectuall Thinges," kept the knowledge and wisdom derived by their privileged condition away from the "rape and spoile of euery illiterate reader," and were fully acquainted with the "mysterie" and "hidden properties" of Nature.<sup>45</sup> Among the modern poets who, according to Reynolds, could emulate the ancients was Drayton: after celebrating the works of Chaucer, Sidney, Spenser, and Daniel, he stated that "Wee haue among vs a late-writ *Polyolbion*, also and an *Agincourte*, wherein I will only blame their honest Authours ill fate, in not hauing laid him out some happier Clime, to haue giuen honour and life to, in some happier language."<sup>46</sup> Reynolds attributed the commercial failure of the poem to the fact that Britain and its readers were not yet ready to receive such a poem. Indeed, as he wrote in his introduction, whereas what then commonly passed off as poesy was no more than "a superficial meere outside of Sence," without the commitment of reason, many good poets, like Drayton, had been taking "so much paines in these times" to defend true poesy, as it was not, as was often thought, an "occupation of so little consequence."<sup>47</sup> What mattered to Reynolds were not so much the "accidents" of poetry, that is, the classical "floures...of Rhetorick," but rather its true essence.<sup>48</sup> In this context, the mistimeliness of *Poly-Olbion* was thus to blame, rather than Drayton's lack of poetic skills. The anachronistic nature of *Poly-Olbion* – or the fact that it should have been published at a different time to be fully appreciated by the common reader – was a justification often exploited by its supporters, beginning with Drayton himself (v\*). In Reynolds's case, however, it was not so much, or not only, a matter of timeliness, but rather of place and language, which pointed the finger, though indirectly, against the degenerating taste of

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 15, 27, 44.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., A3r.

<sup>48</sup>Idem.

Stuart England. The link between these two versions – contemporary Albion’s indifference to true poesy, hence to Drayton and *Poly-Olbion* – identifying time and place, can be found in Reynolds’s acrostic poem, prefacing and praising the second part of *Poly-Olbion*, whose final lines read: “Thou [Albion] *his rich Subject*, he [Drayton] *thy Fame pursuing*. / O *hadst thou lov’d him, as hee thee hath done*, / No Land such Honor, (to all times) *had wonne*” (396).

In his satire entitled *The Great Assizes Holden in Parnassus* (1645), whose setting was inspired by Traiano Boccalini’s Lucianesque work *Ragguagli di Parnaso* and its French imitations,<sup>49</sup> George Wither defended the poetic value of *Poly-Olbion* against its detractors, at Apollo’s court:

But this despitefull *Spye* a cavill rais’d  
 ‘Gainst *Michael Drayton*, whom he much disprais’d  
 For that great *Poly-Olbion* which he writ,  
 This he tearm’d a rude Embrion of wit,  
 A peice of low esteeme, together layd  
 Without propicious *Pallas*, or the ayde  
 Of the nine Muses, who did much disdain  
 The homely features of his *Naiad’s* vaine.<sup>50</sup>

Like Reynolds, Wither belonged to the Spenserian group, had provided commendatory verse to the second part (394-5), and had gone into trouble because of his political ideas during James’s reign. By exploiting the theme of the critical debate held in front of Apollo, Wither manipulated a rather new and fashionable vehicle for the celebration of neoclassical principles, in order to defend his own colleagues from the “malicious gazettes of the day.”<sup>51</sup> According to these, Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* Muse was too modest and domestic ever to be admitted to Parnassus; *Poly-Olbion*,

<sup>49</sup>E.D. Spingarn, ed., *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908), 1:xxiii.

<sup>50</sup>George Wither, *The Great Assizes Holden in Parnassus* (London: Richard Cotes for Edward Husbards, 1645), lines 853-60.

<sup>51</sup>Spingarn, ed., *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, 1:xxiv.

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it was suggested, was therefore criticised, and Drayton's merit ignored, on the basis of a rhetorical "cavill," downplaying the actual value of the poem. Similarly shaped, Samuel Sheppard's almost contemporary *Times Displayed in Six Sestyads* (1646) presented a list of the best English poets, including Drayton and his works: "But thou dear soul whose lines when I behold / I do astonisht stand, of whom Fame says / By after times, thy songs shal be extold...."<sup>52</sup> The term "songs" was clearly meant to celebrate *Poly-Olbion*, which would undoubtedly enjoy perpetual fame: this claim, pronounced by Apollo, complained for the fact that many despicable poets had been wearing an undeserved laurel, and presented, instead, real poetic models. Wither's and Sheppard's poems can thus be considered a re-elaboration of the so-called Elizabethan roll-calls of poets,<sup>53</sup> attempting to define a truly English canon of poetry, which, until the late 1640s and early 50s, included also Drayton and his *Poly-Olbion*.

### 3.3 1650-1793

Around the mid seventeenth century, *Poly-Olbion* began to be mostly seen and used as a sort of encyclopedia or reference work for all things British.<sup>54</sup> In the journal *Mercurius Pacificus* (1648), for instance, we find an anticipation of what, in a few years, would become a rather common use of Drayton's poem. *Poly-Olbion* was included in the list of historical works dealing with "our home-bred Seditious in blood," or the past civil wars of Britain: to Holinshed, Speed, Camden, Lanquet, and the *Polychronicon*, *Poly-Olbion* was added, having apparently acquired the

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<sup>52</sup>Samuel Sheppard, *The Times Displayed in Six Sestyads*, 6 vols. (London: Printed and sold by J.P., 1646), 5:vi. For further discussion on Sheppard's poem, see H.E. Rollins, "Samuel Sheppard and His Praise of Poets," *Studies in Philology* 24 (1927): 509-55.

<sup>53</sup>Spingarn, ed., *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, 1:xxiv.

<sup>54</sup>Noyes, "The Influence and Reputation of Michael Drayton," 31.

status of official source for historico-antiquarian information.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in his *Compleat Angler* (1653), Izaak Walton drew from "honest Michael Draiton" the description of the salmon's leap in the river Tavy (VI.39-56).<sup>56</sup>

The reception of *Poly-Olbion* in the mid seventeenth century provides the earliest instance of how the poem's complex organisation of structure and content may have been the cause of both its topical failure and long-run success. While the growing neoclassical influence advocated and encouraged the use of specific rhetorical principles, as well as the Aristotelian classification of literary genres, and the creation of the Royal Society promoted the enhancement of English scientific prose, the Restoration brought forth a renewed and reactionary interest in the historico-antiquarian foundations of national poetry. Drayton's memory was thus "kept alive by the antiquarians who began that traditional association of the poet with the *Polyolbion*," while historians began the practice of "culling from the pages of this work quotations and illustrations with which to embellish their own labors."<sup>57</sup> The antiquary Anthony Wood owned the 1612 edition of *Poly-Olbion*, acquired second-hand in April

<sup>55</sup>Anonymous, *Mercurius Pacificus* (London: Printed for T. Maxen for R. Marriot, 1648), 5.

<sup>56</sup>Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler*, ed. J. Bevan (Brighton: Harvester, 1988), 276. Walton may still be considered a member of Drayton's print community, since he was possibly acquainted with the poet, as appears from his endearing references to him, i.e., "old friend." Walton, *The Compleat Angler*, 29, 276. See also J.R. Cooper, *The Art of The Compleat Angler* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1968), 17, 21.

<sup>57</sup>Noyes, "Drayton's Literary Vogue," 5.

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1669,<sup>58</sup> which he used as a reliable source of antiquarian lore.<sup>59</sup> In 1675, the anonymous author of *An Episcopal Almanack* used two topical references from *Poly-Olbion* as historico-philological evidence. In a list of the Archbishops of Canterbury, he wrote: "*Deus dedit* or *Deodat*, of whom thus Mr. Drayton in his *Polyolbion*. / As one (even) sent from God the souls of men to save, / The Title unto him *Deodat* they gave...."; in the same list we later read: "*Thomas Becket*, of whom thus the forementioned Mr. Drayton in his *Polyolbion*, St. *Thomas Becket* then, which Rome so much did hery / As to his Christned name it added *Canterbury*...."<sup>60</sup> In his *Natural History of Wiltshire* (c. 1697), instead, John Aubrey quoted several passages from *Poly-Olbion*, one of which read:

Their [i.e., the shepherds'] habit, I believe....is that of the Roman or Arcadian shepherds; as they are delineated in Mr. Mich. Drayton's *Poly-olbion*; sc. a long white cloake with a very deep cape, which comes halfway down their backs, made of the looks [i.e., locks] of the sheep.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>The description of Wood's copy is the following: "2304. Drayton, Michael. Selden John, ed. *Poly-Olbion*. London: [H. Lownes] f. M. Lownes, J. Browne, J. Helme, J. Busbie, [1612]. Fol. Pp. [13], 303 (plus maps) (wanting portrait). Calf with 3 fillets, an extra line with 3 fillets and stamp decoration (6) in corners. Tp, 'Antonii Bosco' and signatures of former owners, Caroli Hickmot (LT 2.105), and an earlier owner, lined out. P. [13] (A4), AW wrote the name of the editor, 'John Selden' and made a mark at reference to an Oxford author, John Malverne. Pp.14-22, 49-54, 66-73, 83, 85, extensive underscoring at OE and ME (Arthurian) lore, may not be in AW's hand, and p. 49, a note, 'meaning Stone-henge', not in AW's hand. Acquired 15 Apr 1669, 7s, LT 2-153. Wood 403. STC 7226." N.K. Kiessling, ed., *The Library of Anthony Wood* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 2002), 215).

<sup>59</sup>In his collection, Robert Chambers concluded his discussion of *Poly-Olbion* by stating that "the information contained in this work is in general so accurate, that it is quoted as an authority by [Thomas] Hearne and [Anthony] Wood." Robert Chambers, ed., *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, 2 vols. (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1853), 1:99.

<sup>60</sup>Anonymous, *An Episcopal Almanack* (London: [n.p.], 1675), sig. A3v, A4.

<sup>61</sup>John Aubrey, *The Natural History of Wiltshire*, ed. J. Britton (London: [s.n.], [c. 1697] 1847), 108-9, in *Project Gutenberg*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/nhwil10.txt> (accessed August 7, 2008).

Apart from the informative nature of Selden's notes, *Poly-Olbion* was little read. Drayton's lesson had been re-elaborated by Sir John Denham, who, with his poem *Cooper's Hill* (1642), created what would remain the standard model for topographical poetry until the early nineteenth century, presenting a condensed selection of the themes narrated in the most famous *Poly-Olbion* songs, in a more refined language, and more restrained anthropomorphisations, structural references to sixteenth-century allegory, and the presence of the rural retreat motif.<sup>62</sup> The *Poly-Olbion* style had therefore become rather old-fashioned, so that, as Edward Phillips said, the literary value of *Poly-Olbion*, as well as of Drayton's works in general, was generally overlooked. In his *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675), Phillips wrote:

*Michael Drayton, contemporary of Spenser and Sir Philip Sidney, and for fame and renown in poetry, not much inferior in his time to either: however he seems somewhat antiquated in the esteem of the more curious of these times, especially in his Poly-Olbion; the old-fashioned kind of verse whereof, seem somewhat to diminish that respect which was formerly paid to the subject as being both pleasant and elaborate; and thereupon thought worthy to be commented upon by that once-walking library of our nation Selden.*<sup>63</sup>

Although in his times Drayton was deemed "not much inferior" to Spenser and Sidney, to late seventeenth-century taste he sounded, particularly in *Poly-Olbion*, "somewhat antiquated." In Phillips's times, the problem with *Poly-Olbion*, as with Spenser's works, seems to have been connected with its "old-fashioned kind of verse" – referring not so much to its prosody, carried out by the heroic couplet, but rather to the language itself – overshadowing the former prestige of the poem's subject, which

<sup>62</sup>R.A. Aubin, *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England* (Millwood: Kraus, 1980), 35.

<sup>63</sup>Edward Phillips, *Theatrum Poetarum*, ed. E. Brydges (Geneva: [n.p.], 1824), xxvi.

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Selden thought worthwhile commenting on. The basic principle in *Theatrum Poetarum*, that nothing could compete with "the smooth style of our present Language, taken to be of late so much refined,"<sup>64</sup> should not be taken at face value. Indeed, Phillips tried to mediate between the neoclassical continental and the English tradition, so as to add new value to the latter for its "Poetic *Energie*," despite the "roughest, most unpolish't, and antiquated Language" used by Spenser, with his "Rustie, obsolete words" and "rough-hewn, clowtery Verses," and by Shakespeare, with his "unfiled expressions" and "rambling and indigested Fancys."<sup>65</sup> Phillips seems to have been critical of the contemporary "received opinion," as he was trying to demonstrate that, unlike what was required by contemporary fashions, "Antiquated style be no sufficient reason why the Poets of former Ages should be rejected."<sup>66</sup> From the overall context of the quotation, it becomes clear that Phillips was addressing the "curious palats in Poetry" of his age, and introducing them to authors like Drummond, whose works he had edited, and Drayton, generally disregarded for their antiquated style.<sup>67</sup>

In a letter sent to his son in June 1681, Sir Thomas Browne wrote:

There was a prettie booke writt 1612 by Michael Drayton, a learned poet, in smooth verse called *Polyolbion*; and Mr. Selden writt a learned comment upon it, though without his name. It describeth many rivers and hills, of England and Wales with figures of nymphs or shephards at them and in the 2d. page a sea nymph sings these verses upon the Isles upon the French coast in the British sea [Song I].<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Edward Phillips, "Preface to *Theatrum Poetarum*," in Spingarn, ed., *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, 2:263.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:271.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:264.

<sup>67</sup>E.N.S. Thompson, "Milton's Part in *Theatrum Poetarum*," *Modern Language Notes* 36 (1921): 20.

<sup>68</sup>Thomas Browne, *The Works*, ed. G. Keynes, 4 vols. (London: Faber, 1964), 4:194-5 [*Sir Thomas Browne's Works*, ed. S. Wilkin, 4 vols. (London: Pickering, 1836), 1:315].

Browne was interested in the learned dimension of Drayton's work, for which he credited both the poet and Selden. Unlike in previous comments, the verse was defined as "smooth," and the tone sounded sincerely appreciative.

In spite of Phillips's and Browne's opinions, which arguably diverged from contemporary taste, in the second half of the seventeenth century *Poly-Olbion* as a poetic work was commonly considered old-fashioned, and little read and consulted but as a source of antiquarian curiosities. Indeed, Browne seems to have been the last seventeenth-century reader to bestow any genuine interest in *Poly-Olbion*, since the remaining references, all dating back to the 1680s, simply reproduced former quotations already used by previous authors. In his *England's Worthies* (1684), William Winstanley – the author of the first, though brief and rather inaccurate biography of Drayton – quoted first the already-mentioned Thomas Beckett lines, and then Phillips's comment, *verbatim*.<sup>69</sup>

The slackening of literary interest in *Poly-Olbion*, as well as in Drayton's works in general, in the years 1690s-1700s, is confirmed by the changes in John Dunton's *Young Students Library*, particularly in the prefatory survey of learning, written by the Athenian Society, dealing also with poetry. While "Draiton" figured among the recommended authors in the first edition, published in 1692, his name, together with Donne's, was dropped in the reprint entitled *A Supplement to the Athenian Oracle*, in 1710.<sup>70</sup> This alteration certainly reflected a changing attitude, as far as Drayton's poetry was concerned, affecting also the reception of *Poly-Olbion*.

From the 1690s until the mid eighteenth century, the position of Drayton's works within the English canon appeared uncertain, and the

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<sup>69</sup>William Winstanley, "The Life of Michael Drayton," in *Englands Worthies: The Lives of the Most Eminent Persons from Constantine the Great to This Present Time* (London: Blagrave, 1684), 340-1.

<sup>70</sup>W.G. Day, "The Athenian Society: Poets' Reputations 1692-1710," *Notes and Queries* 216 (1971): 329.

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reception of *Poly-Olbion*, as well as of all his other works, reached its nadir around the turn of the century. As for Chaucer and Spenser, Drayton's canonisation, generally based on the aesthetic paradigms adopted by the critic or author, rather than on the value of his writings, implied a delicate compromise "between classicist principles and nationalist sentiment."<sup>71</sup> Although, before the 1740s, only one direct reference to *Poly-Olbion* is extant, its literary influence on works from the 1710s and 20s shows that the poem continued to be read, albeit only by an intellectual elite of "curious palats," following the tendency originating in the previous century.<sup>72</sup>

In the early 1720s, John Dart thus wrote in his work *Westmonasterium*:

Adjoining to *Mr. Butler's* is a Table Monument of Blue Marble, erected to *Mr. Drayton*, with an Inscription in Letters of Gold, but now faded....This Gentleman was no indifferent Poet in his Time, and his Compositions have some Beauties in them which might become the best of our modern Writers. He was a Man much vers'd in our *English History*, as well as the Antiquities of our Country. The first appears by his *Epistles and Legends*; and the latter by his *Polyalbion*: which the learned *Selden* thought worthy his Comment.<sup>73</sup>

In this passage, Dart was describing what would later be styled the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, attempting to attune to contemporary taste the petrified canonisation of English literature. Possibly indebted to the Phillips passage, as typical of the age his lines on *Poly-Olbion* praised particularly Drayton's scholarly knowledge in British history and antiquities, while Selden's commentary was seen as increasing the value of both poem and poet.

Another reference, elaborating on Dart's, can be found in a letter sent

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<sup>71</sup>Trevor Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon: From the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century* (Montreal: McGill's-Queen University, 1998), 139, 143.

<sup>72</sup>Noyes, "The Influence and Reputation of Michael Drayton," 33.

<sup>73</sup>John Dart, *Westmonasterium*, 2 vols. (London: T. Bowles, J. Bowles, 1723), 2:80.

by Alexander Pope to William Warburton in 1742, which is often produced as a strong piece of evidence of the discredit poured on *Poly-Olbion* by one of the greatest poets of the time:

A Project has arisen in my head to make you [Warburton] in some measure the new Editor to this new Edit[ion] of The Dunc[iad]. if you have no scruple of owning some of the *Graver Notes*....I mean it is a kind of Prelude or Advertisment to the publick of your Commentarys on the Essays on Man, and on Criticisme....I have a particular reason to make you Interest your self in Me and My Writings. It will cause both them and me to make the better figure to Posterity. a very mediocre Poet, one Drayton, is yet taken some notice of, because Selden writ a....few Notes on one of his Poems.<sup>74</sup>

First of all, over one century after his death, Drayton's reputation was said to be connected with his least successful work. Yet, the value of *Poly-Olbion* was here circumscribed to Selden's learned commentary, whose greatness was, in turn, diminished.<sup>75</sup> This is the standard interpretation of the passage, which, however, overlooks the importance of the previous few lines, to which it is essentially related: Pope was humbly asking Warburton to write a partial commentary and "some of the graver notes" for an edition of his long poem *The Dunciad*, so that his readers might learn of his forthcoming commentaries to *Essay on Man* and *Essay on Criticism*. Similarly, Drayton had asked the learned Selden to write, in

<sup>74</sup>Alexander Pope, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. G. Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 4:427-8 [*The Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. W. Elwin and W.J. Courthope, 10 vols. (London: Murray, 1871-89), 9:225].

<sup>75</sup>We should hereby note, however, that the common eighteenth-century belief according to which Selden's reputation had contributed to increase the value of *Poly-Olbion* was essentially anachronistic. In the years 1611-12, while writing the *Poly-Olbion* "Illustrations," Selden had not yet become so well-known; indeed, he began to work as a barrister in June 1612, and his scholarly reputation reached a considerable level around the late 1610s, with the work *The Historie of Tithes* (1618). See Paul Christianson, "Selden, John (1584-1654)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk:80/view/article/25052> (accessed December 2, 2008).

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Pope's words, "very few notes" for *Poly-Olbion*, which were actually known to be a rather long and complex apparatus, thanks to which the poem had continued to be read, after all. Clearly, this passage was wholly based on understatement: Pope's lines aimed first of all to downplay the amount of work to be done by Warburton on his *Dunciad*; but, by relating his enterprise to Selden's, he was also suggesting its importance for the poem and its author "to make the better figure to posterity." In the light of the rhetorical technique of the passage, the lines on *Poly-Olbion* should perhaps be interpreted as a sign not so much of Drayton's utter disgrace, as of the way in which his long poem was still being read, particularly by Pope, who, as will be shown, employed parts of it as literary sources.<sup>76</sup>

It is worth mentioning how Pope's comment raised a sort of collateral dispute over Drayton's merits, and Pope's, later on in the century. Warburton seems to have had in mind those words in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare (1747), where, talking about the importance of commentaries for the sake of national poetry, he wrote:

This hath still been the Sentiment of Nature and true Wisdom. Hence, the greatest men of Antiquity never thought themselves better employed than in cultivating their own country idiom. So *Lycurgus* did honour to *Sparta*, in giving the first complete edition of *Homer*: and *Cicero*, to *Rome*, in correcting the works of *Lucretius*. Nor do we want examples of the same good sense in modern Times, even amidst the cruel inroads that Art and Fashion have made upon Nature and the simplicity of Wisdom. *Menage*, the greatest name in *France* for all kinds of philologic Learning, prided himself in writing critical Notes on their lyric

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<sup>76</sup>Besides, the project Pope had expounded in his letter to Warburton would eventually turn his *Dunciad* into a sort of Menippean satire rather similar, in structure, to *Poly-Olbion*. The final text, complete with Warburton's prose annotations, was indeed much criticised, as its "subtextual flora" complicated the reader's ability to read it as a "coherent document," making it chaotic and pedantic. H.D. Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 252-3.

Poet, *Malherbe*: And our great Selden, when he thought it might reflect credit on his country, did not disdain even to comment a very ordinary poem by one *Michael Drayton*.<sup>77</sup>

Warburton compared his own efforts to other notable examples of scholars, like Cicero, who had provided annotations to important works for the sake of "their own country idiom." Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* was here discredited, as was confirmed shortly after by two statements clearly meant to criticise Warburton. The first one is contained in Charles Coffey's introduction to his complete edition of Drayton's works, published just one year after Warburton's preface. Coffey described *Poly-Olbion* as

one of the most learned and laborious, as well as one of the most ingenious, entertaining and accurate pieces that is to be found in our language, and therefore the great *Selden* did not disdain to let his commentaries accompany the Songs of his Friend, which as they are exceedingly Judicious, and contain an infinite Variety of curious and recondite Learning, so they gave such a Weight and Authority to this Piece, as have supported it in the Esteem of all good Judges above a Century.<sup>78</sup>

Coffey's use of Warburton's words, inserted (and subverted) as a consequential action to the excellence of *Poly-Olbion*, were clearly intended to resize the critic's dismissal of the poem. Selden's contribution is said to have certainly increased the fame of *Poly-Olbion* by adding "Weight and Authority" to it; still it was perceived as a corollary to the actual value inherent in Drayton's poetic work. The second reference to Warburton is a short essay entitled "Michael Drayton Defended," published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1786. The author began by expressing his astonishment at the fact that the Alexandrine had become "so antiquated"

<sup>77</sup>William Warburton, "Preface," in William Shakespeare, *The Works of Shakespear*, ed. A. Pope and W. Warburton, 8 vols. (London: Printed for J. and P. Knapton, et al., 1747), xxiv-xxv.

<sup>78</sup>Charles Coffey, "Introduction," in Coffey, ed., *The Works of Michael Drayton, Esq.* (London: R. Dodsley, et al., 1748), vii.

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to the English ear in just one century and a half, providing several lines from *Poly-Olbion* in order to illustrate the smoothness of Drayton's verse. He then defended Drayton's "prolixity," by seeing in it the "fault of the age," not of the single poet, and said he considered Drayton's verse no less smooth than Shakespeare's or Jonson's. Though he may not have been the best poet of his age, Drayton, he concluded, did not deserve Warburton's bitter lines, which he saw as merely self-aggrandising in nature:

This compliment to himself [Warburton], for condescending to write notes on Shakespeare. Warburton copied from Pope, who sacrificed Drayton to gratify the vanity of this flattering editor....[quotes from Pope's letter]<sup>79</sup>

By noting the different context of Pope's and Warburton's lines, the author confirmed Pope's rather pompous irony, aiming more to flatter Warburton as Selden, rather than to diminish himself as Drayton.

This interpretation is confirmed by two other texts from the early 1790s. In his *Complete Angler* (1792), Hawkins stated that the phrase "one Drayton" used by Warburton was a "a mode of expression very common with great men, when they meant to consign the memory of others over to oblivion and contempt."<sup>80</sup> F.G. Waldron, author of the Drayton section in *The Biographical Mirrour* (1795), went back even further, retracing the origin of Warburton's expression in the episode of "the *Swedish* ambassador, who complained....that 'a treaty had been sent to be translated by *one* Mr. Milton, a *blind man*," whereas, says Waldron, "a note on Warburton's *Preface* transfers his supposed imitation of the Swedish ambassador to the meanly-arrogant Pope; who sneakingly copied, or rather silyly stole from, the poets he unjustly abused, instances of which are notorious, respecting him...."<sup>81</sup> Therefore, by transforming Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* into

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<sup>79</sup>T.H.W., "Michael Drayton Defended," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 56 (1786): 1059-60.

<sup>80</sup>Quoted in F.G. Waldron, "Drayton," in *The Biographical Mirrour* (London: Harding, 1795), 106.

<sup>81</sup>Waldron, "Drayton," 106-7.

a metaphor, Pope had downplayed its poetic value not so much out of actual contempt, but in order to flatter Warburton and achieve his aim.

Pope's words may as well have been the original source of Oliver Goldsmith's indirect vengeance of Drayton, and attack against Pope, in his *Citizen of the World* (1762), in the conversation between an English guide and a Chinese Philosopher visiting Westminster Abbey for the first time:

....there, says the [English] gentleman, pointing with his finger, that is the poets corner; there you see the monuments of Shakespear, and Milton, and Prior, and Drayton. Drayton, I replied, I never heard of him before, but I have been told of one Pope, is he there? It is time enough, replied my guide, these hundred years, he is not long dead. People have not done hating him yet.<sup>82</sup>

In the context of this diatribe, Goldsmith's lines turn out to have been less interested in Drayton's reputation, unlike what is commonly believed, than in Pope's sweeping critical generalisations, therefore being more un-Popean than Draytonian.<sup>83</sup> After almost sixty years of its publication, Warburton's statement was still being grudged: in a short note entitled "Warburton and Drayton," and referring to the notorious "one Michael Drayton," an anonymous author commented that "it did not become even the hierophant of England [Pope] to allude obscurely to the author of 'Polyolbion'...."<sup>84</sup> Drayton, he continued, had "all the quaintness of Spenser," and Warburton's age, as well as the present one, should "pon-

<sup>82</sup>Oliver Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World*, in *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. A. Friedman, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 2:59 [*Letters from a Citizen of the World* (Bungay: Childs, 1820), 62].

<sup>83</sup>Indeed, at the Chinese philosopher's wondering why a man spending his life "entertaining and instructing his fellow creatures" should be so hated, the Englishman answers: "Yes....they hate him for that very reason. There are sets of men called answerers of books, who take upon them to watch the republic of letters, and distribute reputation by the sheet...." *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>84</sup>Anonymous, "Warburton and Drayton," *The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* 3 (1806): 64.

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der" more on the poetic works of "English bards, who wrote curiously, but most pleasantly, when England was young in letters."<sup>85</sup>

In the late 1740s and early 50s, after two not particularly successful reprints in the years 1748 and 1753, the overall appreciation for the poetic and antiquarian features of *Poly-Olbion* seems to have increased, especially after the growing concern with the authenticity of original poetic genius and invention, and with a national and genuine poetic tradition rooted in British antiquity. Although *Poly-Olbion* was possibly read more often "for the History than the poetry in it,"<sup>86</sup> James Kirkpatrick began his *Sea-Piece* (1747) with the following invocation, expressing admiration for the poetic quality of *Poly-Olbion*:

Drayton, sweet ancient Bard, his *Albion* sung,  
With their own praise her echoing Vallies rung;  
His bounding Muse o'er ev'ry Mountain rode,  
And ev'ry River warbled where he flow'd.<sup>87</sup>

The role of Bards and their poesy were arousing more and more the interest of eighteenth-century readers: such "primitive" poets had come to be considered naturally inclined to poetry, which sprang from "the uncontrollable force of imagination" dictated by Nature,<sup>88</sup> and were believed to possess an "original genius" not yet constrained by the artificiality of literary rules.<sup>89</sup> *Poly-Olbion* – especially Selden's notes on ancient Bards and Druids – seems to have been one of the standard literary sources on the topic, together with John Fletcher's *Bonduca* (1608),

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>86</sup>William Oldys, *Biographia Britannica*, 6 vols. (London: Printed for W. Innys, et al., [1747-66] 1750), 3:1748.

<sup>87</sup>James Kirkpatrick, *The Sea-Piece* (London: Printed for M. Cooper and R. Dodsley, [1749] 1747), 2:1-4.

<sup>88</sup>Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon*, 191.

<sup>89</sup>Marilyn Gaull, *English Romanticism: The Human Context* (New York: Norton, 1988), 258.

and Milton's *Lycidas* (1637), with his Latin poem to Manso (1638).<sup>90</sup> Indeed, in a letter to Horace Walpole sent in 1781, William Mason mentioned *Poly-Olbion*, which, he thought, might be of interest to an antiquarian like Walpole: "I have a sort of veneration for the old Laureate [Drayton], though rather for Selden's sake then [*sic*] his own; because I remember that the lawyer's notes on his *Poliolbion* helped me to much record erudition concerning Druidism, when I was writing *Caractacus*."<sup>91</sup> Walpole's answer, sent a few days later, was very critical of Drayton's work:

I must thank you for your *Primierà* about the picture of Drayton, though I do not chuse to purchase it; I have no room to stick a single head; I am poor too, and I am grown so old that every acquisition seems much dearer to me from the little time I have to enjoy it. Shall I own farther, I do not think all Drayton ever wrote worth five guineas [the price actually asked by the seller]; Dr Johnson perhaps may have installed him in Milton's throne, and the age may have sworn fealty to him; but I am a Tory and adhere to the right line, and will not abjure those I learnt to revere in my nursery, nor will kneel to stocks and stones that the mob are taught to idolise.

I am too, though a Goth, so modern a Goth that I hate the black letter, and I love Chaucer better in Dryden and Baskerville, than in his own language and dress, still my antiquarianity [a word coined by Mason, as told in his above-mentioned letter] is much obliged to your pimping for it, but the anility-half predominates and will not pay for such a spark as Drayton, who is neither young nor vigorous.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup>J.M.S. Tompkins, "'In Yonder Grave a Druid Lies,'" *The Review of English Studies* 22 (1946): 3; R.S. Crane, "An Early Eighteenth-Century Enthusiast for Primitive Poetry: John Husbands," *Modern Language Notes* 37 (1922): 30.

<sup>91</sup>H. Walpole and W. Mason, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with William Mason*, in W.S. Lewis, ed., *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 48 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 29:164 (From Mason, November 9, 1781). For the way in which *Caractacus* was influenced by *Poly-Olbion* see section 6.2.

<sup>92</sup>Walpole, Mason, *Horace Walpole's Correspondance with William Mason*, 29:165 (To

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The oddest feature of this passage is certainly Walpole's seeming profession of Toryism. However, if we consider that the above-mentioned Samuel Johnson was a staunch Tory, and that Mason and Walpole were at loggerheads with him particularly at that time,<sup>93</sup> it becomes clear how Walpole's statement may have concealed an ironic mockery of sorts. If we are to believe Walpole's words, that Johnson liked *Poly-Olbion*, and the age followed his statements in matters of taste, it may be gathered that, at least by name, *Poly-Olbion* was well-known at the time. If we also consider that one of the reasons for Walpole's and Mason's aversion to Johnson was the latter's refusal of contemporary un-Popean literary fashions, exemplified by his dislike for Thomas Gray's poems, as well as his opposed political tendency, Walpole's words will rather sound as a sort of free indirect speech uttered by a "politically motivated" Johnson.<sup>94</sup> Walpole's criticism of Johnson's old-fashioned and austere tastes seems to have affected also the following paragraph: being (unlike Johnson) so "modern a Goth," he disliked the black letter and antiquated style of old poets like Drayton,<sup>95</sup> as opposed to the "young" and "vigorous" literary talents of the Age, abhorred, as it were, by Johnson. Indeed, though being one of the key figures of the English Gothic revival, Walpole's appreciation of the style was mostly connected with architecture; despite the common neoclassic practice of the association of the arts, Walpole exploited in architecture the anti-classicist meaning of "Gothic," intended as asymmetrical, yet maintained its second one, as derogatory qualifier of "outmoded and outrageous tastes," when referring to the non-architectural production of

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Mason, November 13, 1781).

<sup>93</sup>Jules Smith, "Mason, William (1725-1797)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18293> (accessed October 24, 2008).

<sup>94</sup>Stephen Clarke, "Indifference and Abuse: The Antipathy of Mason, Gray, Walpole and Samuel Johnson," *The New Rambler* 6 (2002/3): 14, 24.

<sup>95</sup>It should be recalled, however, that the spelling was modernised throughout in all eighteenth-century *Poly-Olbion* editions.

the Middle Ages.<sup>96</sup>

Finally (and rather ironically) an implied praise of *Poly-Olbion's* interest in Bards and Druids can be read in Joseph Warton's *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1782). Unlike the ancients, Warton said, who never lost a chance to mention the natural features, tales and traditions characterising their own locality, the English people had been "strangely neglectful" in celebrating, for instance, the Severn, the Thames, or the Malvern region, always recurring to "trite repetitions of classical images, as well as classical names."<sup>97</sup> Warton then outlined a poetic tradition of national landscape description, "sensible," as it were, "of the force of such imagery," beginning with Spenser and influencing even Milton via Drayton.<sup>98</sup>

Apart from utter detractors like Robert Harrison, for whom *Poly-Olbion* was "but a farrago of fables dressed up and seasoned with the most poignant sauce and spieces of Poetry,"<sup>99</sup> the century closed on a polarised view, oscillating between an appreciation of the poem for its learned historical dimension (namely, Selden's "illustrations"), and an appreciation of its poetic qualities, despite the antiquated rhythm produced by the Alexandrine, and its general prolixity. A balanced position seems to have been that adopted by Waldron, according to whom "Drayton should, undoubtedly, be inserted, chronologically, between Spenser and Shakespeare; both of whom he, in some instances, excels."<sup>100</sup> These instances, however, do not seem to have included *Poly-Olbion*, which, "though highly meritorious," was not to be mentioned side by side with

<sup>96</sup>On the various meanings of "Gothic" in the eighteenth century and on Walpole's ambiguous use of the term, see Lawrence Lipking, *The Ordering of the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 146-50.

<sup>97</sup>Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 2 vols. (London: [n.p.], 1782), 1:374.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>99</sup>Robert Harrison, "A Letter (1786)," in J. Nichols, ed., *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, 9 vols. (London: Nichols and Bentley, 1816), 8:330.

<sup>100</sup>Waldron, "Michael Drayton," 102.

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"such works as Spenser's *Pastorals* and *The Faerie Queene*, or Shakespeare's *Othello*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Macbeth*."<sup>101</sup> Waldron invoked for Drayton something in between the "perhaps-exaggerated praise" and "certainly unmerited contempt" – a balanced approach he himself tried to adopt in his discussion of *Poly-Olbion*, privileging, however, the notionistic matter:

The curious and important geographical description, with which this singular and noble poem abounds, will furnish much information to every antiquary who has a regard for his country; his great display of knowledge and observation in both political and natural history, cannot fail to please, if not instruct, every researcher into those departments of science; and the general strain of benevolence, which pervades his works, endears him to readers of every class....<sup>102</sup>

Again, *Poly-Olbion* – reprinted just a couple of years before, in 1793 – and Drayton with it, was mostly praised for its antiquarian and historical erudition, as well as for its "instructive" purpose, whereas other poems (especially *Nymphidia*) were used as examples of Drayton's fine poetry.

#### 3.4 1793-1876

After the turn of the century, in the wake of the 1793 edition, *Poly-Olbion* consolidated its position as the most representative of Drayton's works – it was reprinted entirely more frequently than in any other previous century – as well as the one for which he was most remembered and criticised, particularly for the meter and the non-selective blending of poetic and non-poetic material.<sup>103</sup> Interestingly, in these years the most appreciative

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 107, 103.

<sup>103</sup>Noyes, "The Influence and Reputation of Michael Drayton," 54.

critics turned out to be poets themselves: unlike contemporary literary critics, they seemed to be more lenient to what their poetic principles considered the shortcomings of form and content in *Poly-Olbion*; indeed, in the early nineteenth century, most poets could count at least one long poem in their entire production, and were aware, in Coleridge's words, that "a long poem will not be all poetry."<sup>104</sup> Indeed, the most notable justification invoked to downplay the formal faults of *Poly-Olbion* was often Drayton's intense patriotism: as Robert Southey aptly summarised, Drayton's "greatest work will be preserved by its subject."<sup>105</sup> Similarly, in a letter sent to Southey, Walter Savage Landor celebrated Drayton's idealised love for his own country:

The two first books I ever bought were at the stall of an old woman at Rugby. They happened to be Baker's *Chronicle* and Drayton's *Polyolbion*....I have read neither since, and I never shall possess either again. It is melancholy to think with how much more fondness and pride the writers of those days contemplated whatever was belonging to "Old" England. People now, in praising any scene or event, snarl all the while and attack their neighbours for not praising. They feel a consciousness that the foundations of our greatness are impaired, and have occasioned a thousand little cracks and crevices to let in the cold air upon our comforts. Ah, Nassau and Oliver! – "Quis vobis tertius haeres?"<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Quoted in Joan Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 3. For further discussion on the long poem in the Romantic period, see A.C. Bradley, "The Long Poem in the Age of Wordsworth," in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 177-208.

<sup>105</sup>Quoted in Edmund Blunden, "The Happy Island," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 17, 1922, 525.

<sup>106</sup>Walter Savage Landor, "Letter to Robert Southey" (1811). Quoted in John Forster, *Landor: A Biography* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1869), 13-14.

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Drayton's self-assured celebration of Old England<sup>107</sup> betrayed his awareness of the firm foundations of its power, a certainty the British Empire seemed to have lost in the early 1810s. By invoking the names of the Orange-Nassau House and of Oliver Cromwell, who undid Old England, and by asking who their third heir would be, Landor may have been envisaging the sort of revolution that had recently subverted the American colonies as well as France.<sup>108</sup>

Drayton's choice of the Alexandrine continued to be generally abhorred and blamed for the difficulty it posed to most contemporary readers. In his comment to Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum*, Egerton Brydges agreed with the author on the antiquated nature of the meter and the tiring frequency of personifications;<sup>109</sup> two years later, John Aikin, too, stated that the Alexandrine increased the tediousness inherent in the poem's prosaic topic.<sup>110</sup>

In an attempt to justify his inclusion of *Poly-Olbion* in the collection entitled *Specimens of the Early English Poets* (1801), George Ellis wrote:

His "Polyolbion" is certainly a wonderful work, exhibiting, at once, the learning of an historian, an antiquary, a naturalist, and a geographer, and embellished by the imagination of the poet. But, perhaps, a topographical description of England, is not much improved by such embellishment. Those who can best appreciate the merit of its accuracy will seldom search for information in a poem; and of the lovers of poetry, some are disgusted with the subject, and others with the Alexandrine

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<sup>107</sup>Around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the term "Great Britain" seems to have been substituted by "England," as a way of referring to the entire kingdom. See the OED charts for the terms "(Great) Britain" and "England."

<sup>108</sup>For Landor's political interest see Geoffrey Carnall, "Landor, Walter Savage (1775-1864)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk:80/view/article/15980> (accessed November 2, 2008).

<sup>109</sup>Phillips, *Theatrum Poetarum*, 264.

<sup>110</sup>John Aikin, ed., *General Biography, or lives....*, 10 vols. (London: Johnson, et al., 1802), 10:452 [(London: Stockdale, et al., 1815), 10].

meter, which Drayton unfortunately adopted.<sup>111</sup>

*Poly-Olbion* is typically praised for its learned, multi-layered content, as well as for its poetic qualities. What is most striking in this passage is the stress Ellis places on the non-poetic nature of the topic chosen for *Poly-Olbion*: it seems that either its readers will be interested in pure bits of information, and they will not be looking for them in a poem, or they will be interested in the poetry, thus they will not be looking for it in a learned poem, written in Alexandrines. The encyclopedic nature of *Poly-Olbion*, "digested," as the title-page reads, by the poet, seems to have been totally at odds with the sensitivity of the century witnessing the development of History as a separate discipline, with its own methods and topics,<sup>112</sup> and unwilling to approach scientific matter through the veil of rhetoric.

Just a few years later, however, Charles Lamb wrote the following enthusiastic lines:

I wish it could be ascertained, which there is some grounds for believing, that Michael Drayton was the author of this piece [*The Merry Wives of Edmonton*]. It would add a worthy appendage to the renown of that Panegyrist of my native Earth; who has gone over her soil, in his Polyolbion, with the fidelity of a herald, and the painful love of a son; who has not left a rivulet, so narrow that it may be stept over, without honourable mention; and has animated hills and streams with life and passion beyond the dream of old mythology.<sup>113</sup>

Lamb exalted Drayton's poetic effort, especially for the liveliness he saw in the personification device used in landscape descriptions, and definitely considered *Poly-Olbion* a poetic act of love towards Britain.

<sup>111</sup>George Ellis, ed., *Specimens of the Early English Poets*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, et al., 1811), 2:337.

<sup>112</sup>Gaull, *English Romanticism*, 283.

<sup>113</sup>Charles Lamb, "Characters of Dramatic Writers (1808)," in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 8 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903), 1:45.

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Though frequently discussed and anthologised, *Poly-Olbion* continued to be the most criticised among Drayton's works: while, according to Ezekiel Sanford, the poem contained "many poetic passages, and much curious detail," and "its merits as a whole can scarcely make us regret, that he did not complete his design extending the poem to Scotland,"<sup>114</sup> William Hazlitt was less categoric:

Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* is a work of great length and of unabated freshness and vigour in itself, though the monotony of the subject tires the reader. He describes each place with the accuracy of a topographer, and the enthusiasm of a poet, as if his Muse were the very *genius loci*....His mind is a rich marly soil that produces an abundant harvest, and repays the husbandman's toil, but few flaunting flowers, the garden's pride, grow in it, nor any poisonous weeds....<sup>115</sup>

The plan of the *Poly-Olbion*....is original, but not very happy. The description of places are often striking and curious, but become tedious by uniformity. There is some fancy in the poem but little general interest.<sup>116</sup>

Accuracy had become a burden, rather than a merit, and was regarded as the main cause of the tedious uniformity of the poem. Based on "intent and response rather than form, on passion and imagination rather than meter or rhyme," Hazlitt's comment focused on the literary power of the *Poly-Olbion* descriptions, rather than on the problem of form, being less interested in classical rhetorical principles than in the "genuine strength" inherent in a literary work.<sup>117</sup>

It is therefore evident that not all critics accepted to dismiss *Poly-*

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<sup>114</sup>Ezekiel Sanford, ed., *The Works of the British Poets*, 24 vols. (Phildalephia: [n.p.], 1819), 2:325.

<sup>115</sup>William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (London: Warren, [1820] 1821), 250-1.

<sup>116</sup>William Hazlitt, *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. Prestand Howe, et al., 21 vols. (London: Dent, 1930), 9:237.

<sup>117</sup>Gaull, *English Romanticism*, 23.

*Olbion* entirely, acknowledging the presence of what, a decade later, S.T. Coleridge would define as "instances of sublimity in Drayton,"<sup>118</sup> that is, several sections or single Songs generally considered excellent examples of poesy. Throughout the century, the best passages of *Poly-Olbion* were frequently included in collections and anthologies, particularly Songs XIII and XV, and in general Songs from the first part (I, VI, XVI).<sup>119</sup> Despite the necessary brevity of the sections, most of these collections devoted several lines to *Poly-Olbion*, providing both a brief description and critical

<sup>118</sup>S.T. Coleridge, *Table Talk*, ed. C. Woodring, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. K. Coburn and B. Winer, 23 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 14.2.147 (September 11, 1831). Coleridge then provides an example of Drayton's "sublimity": "When deploring the cutting down of some of our old forests, he says, in a language which reminds the reader of *Lear*, written subsequently, and also of several of Mr. Wordsworth's poems: – our trees so hack'd above the ground, / That where their lofty tops the neighbouring countries crown'd, / Their Trunks (like aged folks) now bare and naked stand, / As for revenge to heaven each held a wither'd hand. That is very fine." PO VII.293-5.

<sup>119</sup>See Noyes, "The Influence and Reputation of Michael Drayton," 186-93: Thomas Campbell, ed., *Specimens of the British Poets*, 7 vols. (London: Murray, 1819), 3:46-52 [XIII.41-161]; William Hazlitt, ed., *Select Poets of Great Britain* (London: Tegg, 1825), 69-76 [XV.1-322; XXVI [XXVIII].1-538]; S.C. Hall, ed., *The Book of Gems* (London: Printed by R. Clay, 1836), 97-8 [VI, in part]; Robert Bell, ed., *Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Great Britain: English Poets* (London: Printed for Longman, Orme, et al., 1839), 1:31-2 [II, XI]; R. Thomason and W. Tite, eds., *A Garland for the New Royal Exchange* (London: Imprinted by J.D. White, 1845), 40-3 [this passage is oddly presented as an "Addition to Song XVI," apparently missing in the original version]; Robert Chambers, ed., *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, 2 vols. (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1853), 1:99-102 [XIII]; C.D. Cleveland, ed., *A Compendium of English Literature* (Philadelphia: Biddle, [1847] 1860), 169-70 [XIII, in part]; G. Gilfillan, ed., *Specimens....of the Less-Known British Poets*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Nichol, Nisbet and Robertson, 1860), 1:229-30 [XIII]; J. Cundall, ed., *The Poets of the Elizabethan Age* (London: Sampson, 1862), 45-7 [XIII.41-86]; J.T. Fields and E.P. Whipple, eds., *The Family Library of British Poetry* (Boston: Houghton, 1881), 69-70 [XIII.41-92]; T.H. Ward, ed., *The English Poets*, 4 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1883), 1:535-6 [XV.147-99]; H. Morley, ed., *Sketches of Longer Works in English Verse and Prose* (London: Cassell, 1881), 168-72 [I.1-42; XIII.1-426 (plus small reproduction of the Surrey-Sussex map)]; Thomas Arnold, ed., *English Poetry and Prose* (London: Longmans, et al., 1882), 117-18 [XIII.1-38]; R.M. Leonard, ed., *The Dog in British Poetry* (London: Nutt, 1893), 113-14 [XXIII.330-56]; W.E. Henley, ed., *A London Garland* (London: Macmillan, 1895), 17-18 [XVII.81-104]; W. Whitten, ed., *London in Song* (London: Richards, 1898), 179 [XVII.81-104]. The last two anthologies appear to be related in so far as they share an imperfect reference to the *Poly-Olbion* passage, miscounting Song XVII for XV.

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judgement, before the actual text, a structure first exploited by Thomas Campbell and maintained throughout the century. Indeed, Campbell thus commented on *Poly-Olbion*:

In his Poly-olbion, or description of Great Britain, he has treated the subject with such topographical and minute detail as to chain his poetry to the map; and he has unfortunately chosen a form of verse which, though agreeable when interspersed with other measures, is fatiguing in long continuance by himself: still it is impossible to read the poem without admiring the richness of his local associations, and the beauty and variety of the fabulous allusions which he scatters around him. Such, indeed is the profusion of romantic recollections in the Poly-olbion, that a poet of taste and selection might there find subjects of happy description, to which the author who suggested them had not the power of doing justice....<sup>120</sup>

Despite the prosodic issue, *Poly-Olbion* was worth including in a collection for its interest in the locality and "fabulous allusions": these features would have been fully considered "romantic recollections," had not Drayton been incapable of enhancing their role by selecting the best ones, instead of providing long, detailed catalogues. Though used as a referent to the poetic description of geographical places, by the 1820s the adjective "topographical" had indeed acquired new value: it strove to avoid relapsing into the visual selection inherent in the adjective "picturesque," its substitute during the last third of the eighteenth century; yet, it could not ignore the concept of selective mental recollection spread by picturesque literature.<sup>121</sup>

Similarly, though accepting the excellence of some lyrical passages, C.D. Cleveland argued that, "after all, it is a poem that will always be consulted rather for the information it conveys, than for the pleasure

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<sup>120</sup>Campbell, ed., *Specimens of the British Poets*, 166-7.

<sup>121</sup>Francesca Orestano, *Paesaggio e finzione: William Gilpin, il Pittoreesco, la visibilità nella letteratura inglese* (Milan: Unicopli, 2000), 219.

it produces."<sup>122</sup> Chambers wrote, instead, that, because of Drayton's poetic genius, "we do not readily tire in perusing this vast mass of information."<sup>123</sup> In general, statements like Chambers's may have been designed to promote the works included in the collection of English classic texts.<sup>124</sup> A very practical and categoric statement was provided by George Gilfillan in the introductory part of his anthology on the "less-known British Poets" (1860): although the matter explored in *Poly-Olbion* was definitely "too vast" and the versification "too heavy," Gilfillan concluded by saying that Drayton generally "suits a Selection such as ours, since his parts are better than his whole."<sup>125</sup> Cheaper than standard editions, such anthological volumes definitely played a relevant role in the shaping of the nineteenth-century common reader's literary taste;<sup>126</sup> yet, though preventing the total oblivion of *Poly-Olbion*, by presenting it as fragmented "sketches" of Great Britain they may have even more discouraged a thorough reading of it.

Another kind of promotion was provided by reviews in periodicals, newspapers, and magazines. These comments aimed to contribute to the creation and redirection of public taste by following literary standards, although they tended to focus on the author's "infirmities, stylistic as well as moral," rather than on his works.<sup>127</sup> Yet, again, thanks to them, the fame of *Poly-Olbion* never totally faded, though its difficult reading may have dissuaded the common reader. Indeed, a short article published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1827) proposed a survey of the positive and

<sup>122</sup>Cleveland, ed., *Compendium of English Literature*, 169-70.

<sup>123</sup>Chambers, ed., *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, 99.

<sup>124</sup>An instance of this concerns Coffey's prefatory essay to the 1748 edition of Drayton's works: "This essay, which is laudatory throughout, sounds in many respects like publisher's propaganda. In one place it reads: 'We should not have dwelt so long upon the Pieces....if it had not been to excite the Reader's Curiosity for his own Profit'." Noyes, "Drayton's Literary Vogue," 11.

<sup>125</sup>Gilfillan, ed., *Specimens...of the less-known British Poets*, 1:230.

<sup>126</sup>Gaull, *English Romanticism*, 12-13.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, 16, 18.

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negative features in *Poly-Olbion*, which can help highlight what early nineteenth-century critics saw in the poem. Interestingly enough, the author typically began by accusing Drayton's work of excessive accuracy and prolixity, generally more suitable to prose, and continued: "Yet, great and elaborate as is the work; and correct and interesting as are its details, it has never, and from its very nature can never, become popular, or be read with pleasure as a *poem*. There is nothing more opposed to the genius of poetry, than a minuteness and continuity of detail";<sup>128</sup> in order to be considered poetry, it should instead be "free and wandering," and deal with general matters.<sup>129</sup> Another cause of the poem's monotony is found in the tediousness of the Alexandrine. However, as appears from "detached pieces....of the highest beauty and poetic feeling," *Poly-Olbion* also testified to Drayton's superiority as a poet "in the strictest sense": first, unlike the Metaphysical poets, he did not rely entirely on "cold metaphorical subtleties"; second, he set his poems in natural landscapes, away from the fogs of the city, delighting in the minute details of country life. In the end, "this overflowing of ancient lore, this fidelity of detail, has rendered the *Poly-Olbion* one of the most interesting monuments in our language to the literary and general antiquary, and to him it will always

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<sup>128</sup>A similar approach, discriminating between literary and non-literary matter surfaces in a letter addressed by Lamb to Coleridge, regarding Walton's *Compleat Angler*: this work presented a bipartite structure rather resembling that in *Poly-Olbion*, as a prose work passing off as literary and later absorbed in the canon, yet containing long technical parts on the angler's art. Lamb thus wrote to Coleridge: "The Parts which treat merely of Directions for the Sport, I have contrived so to distinguish and enclose within particular Marks....that they may be passed over, and nothing but the entertaining Parts of the Book present themselves for those, to whom those other might appear dull and unpleasant; at the same Time that it will answer double Use, that such who want more immediately to peruse the abovesaid Directions....may find them more readily by these Marks...." Lamb seems to have been one of those considering technical parts to be "dull and unpleasant," and advised that his friend should omit the reading of the scientific parts. Quoted in Cooper, *The Art of the Compleat Angler*, 6.

<sup>129</sup>Eu. Hood, "Untitled Letter on *Poly-Olbion*," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 97 (1827): 302-3.

be a store of pleasure and delight."<sup>130</sup> Despite its notable lyrical passages, towards the mid of the century *Poly-Olbion* arguably continued to be of interest mostly to an elitarian, educated readership.

In general, critics seemed to oscillate between a disenchanting resizing of the overall literary value of the work, according to the traditional ideas of literary decorum, and a genuine appreciation of the lyrical passages in *Poly-Olbion*, inherent in the new sensibility to the aesthetic pleasure conveyed by a work of art, and the reader's response based on individual experience.<sup>131</sup> In a *Descriptive Catalogue* of his own library, John Holmes borrowed from several comments and wrote a brief presentation to his copy of *Poly-Olbion*, which had, indeed, "the peculiarity of being written in uniform *Alexandrines*, the effect of which is far from agreeable to a modern ear, and seems to aggravate the natural tediousness of the work"; yet, in spite of its "naïve fantastic Chorography," the work was said to contain several passages of "high poetic beauty."<sup>132</sup>

One of the few comments aiming to provide an objective critical view of *Poly-Olbion* was Henry Hallam's (1839):<sup>133</sup>

Drayton's Polyolbion....contains a topographical description of England, illustrated with a prodigality of historical and legendary erudition. Such a poem is essentially designed to instruct, and speaks to the understanding more than to the fancy. The powers displayed in it are, however, of a high cast....The style of Drayton is sustained, with extraordinary ability, on an equable line, from which he seldom much deviates, neither brilliant nor prosaic; few or no passages could be marked as impressive, but few are languid or mean. The language is clear, strong, various, and sufficiently figurative; the stories and

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 303.

<sup>131</sup>M.A.R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 428.

<sup>132</sup>*A Descriptive Catalogue in the Library of John Holmes, F.S.A., with Notices of Authors and Printers*, 4 vols. (Norwich: Printed by Matchett, Stevenson, and Matchett, 1834), 105.

<sup>133</sup>Noyes, "The Influence and Reputation of Michael Drayton," 58.

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fiction interspersed, as well as the general spirit and liveliness, relieve the heaviness incident to topographical description. There is probably no poem of this kind in any other language, comparable together in extent and excellence to the *Polyolbion*; nor can anyone read a portion of it without admiration for its learned and highly gifted author. Yet perhaps no English poem, known as well by name, is so little known beyond its name; for while its immense length deters the common reader, it affords, as has just been hinted, no great harvest for selection.<sup>134</sup>

Hallam attempted first of all to read into Drayton's original intention – the instruction of the reader – in order to explain the amount of learning present in a work by a poet well skilled in the writing of excellent lyrical pieces. The average quality of the work was deemed high, and Drayton's poetic ability helped to enliven what otherwise would have been, owing to the essential prosaic characteristics of the content, an even duller topographical description. No mention was made of the Alexandrine, whereas the greatest difficulty turns out to have been the poem's length, tending to scare the "common reader" away. Outside of Britain, especially in France, *Poly-Olbion* was deemed unique for dimension and quality;<sup>135</sup> at a British level, though not commonly read, it remained nevertheless well known.

Isaac D'Israeli pinned his comment on *Poly-Olbion* on Drayton's love for his mother country:

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<sup>134</sup>Henry Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, 4 vols. (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1839), 3:286-7.

<sup>135</sup>As noted by Noyes, from the mid nineteenth century, the knowledge of *Poly-Olbion* began to spread also on the Continent, where it was considered Drayton's most important and best-known work. In 1866 Hyppolite Taine quoted several lines from Song XIII in his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*. A few years later, in 1870, Pierre Larousse wrote in his *Grand Dictionnaire* that *Poly-Olbion* was Drayton's best-known work. Edmond Lareau considered *Poly-Olbion* Drayton's principal work in 1884. See Hippolyte Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (Paris: Hachette, 1866), 301; Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire*, 17 vols. (Paris: [n.p.], 1870), n.pag.; Edmond Lareau, *Histoire abrégée de la littérature* (Montréal: Lovell, 1884), 403.

The POLY-OLBION of DRAYTON is a stupendous work....The patriotic bard fell a victim to its infelicious but glorious conception; and posterity may discover a grandeur in this labour of love, which was unfelt by its contemporaries....The grand theme of this poet was his fatherland!<sup>136</sup>

Though the overall intention is admirable, Drayton found the wrong means to celebrate Great Britain. First of all, topography and history are not among "the most ductile" materials for the creation of poetry.<sup>137</sup> One main problem with Drayton's long journey is certainly its tedious "conveyance," or the "protracted and monotonous Alexandrines," as compared to the usual decasyllabic verse.<sup>138</sup> Another issue briefly explored by D'Israeli is the extent to which poetry and history may be blended together: a poem may end up being just a "rhymed gazette," or it may become an example of "that monster called 'the Romance of History,' a nonsensical contradiction in terms, for neither can be both," or it may mix together, in the "seductive and dangerous association" of the "historical romance," real characters and fictitious stories.<sup>139</sup> Yet, Drayton himself seems not to have clearly perceived these boundaries: as he blended together history, poetry, and even geography, he can be considered "the inventor of a class of poems peculiar to our country," called loco-descriptive, very popular and fashionable during D'Israeli's youth.<sup>140</sup> The comment ends with a sad note, regarding the failure of the patriotic intent of *Poly-Olbion*: "Drayton had vainly imagined that the nobles and gentlemen of England would have felt a filial interest in the tale of their fathers, commemorated in these poetic annals, and an honourable pride in their domains here so graphically pictured."<sup>141</sup>

<sup>136</sup>Isaac D'Israeli, "Drayton," in *Amenities of Literature, Consisting of Sketches and Characters of English Literature*, 3 vols. (London: Moxon, 1841), 3:185.

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>138</sup>*Idem.*

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>140</sup>*Idem.*

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, 188.

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One of the most renowned opinions of *Poly-Olbion* is certainly that by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge defended Drayton from Headley's judgement in his *Life of Drayton*, according to which, despite his great poetic skills, his works did not stand comparison with other poets' because he wrote no masques, used few personifications of the passions, and his allegorical vein was nothing like Spenser's.<sup>142</sup> Before exploring Drayton's dramatic career, Coleridge began by asking: "What is the Polyolbion but an allegory? and as for personifications, I should think the Passions were as capable of it as the Counties." Coleridge arguably appreciated the poetic dimension of *Poly-Olbion*, including its literary devices: by stating that the personified counties were but allegories, he saw beyond the simple loco-descriptive features, possibly grasping the symbolic and political value of the *discordia concors* inherent in Drayton's landscape.

An anonymous article in the *Retrospective Review* (1854) attempted to give an overall survey of the first part of *Poly-Olbion*, by providing a paragraph on previous similar works, some short passages, and a survey of the content. The first sentence set up a generally appreciative tone:

THE *Polyolbion* is decidedly the poem by which the name of Michael Drayton is best known, for it contains certain attractions of a durable nature which are not contained in most of his other writings; yet few indeed are there at the present day who have read Drayton's *Polyolbion*. Drayton is, indeed, one of those writers who, estimated beyond his merits in his own time, and afterwards enjoying a reputation rather in consequence of the subjects on which he wrote than of the excellence of his verse, has since sunk in public estimation so much as to be nearly forgotten, except by antiquaries and bibliographers.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup>Quoted in S.T. Coleridge, "Notes on British Poets," in *Essays and Marginalia*, ed. H. Coleridge, 2 vols. (London: Moxon, 1851), 2:3.

<sup>143</sup>Anonymous, "Drayton's *Polyolbion*," *Retrospective Review* 2 (1854): 105.

Though little read, *Poly-Olbion* remains the work for which Drayton is most renowned. In general, Drayton tended to write on such subjects as were not considered fit for poetry, which was the main cause of his oblivion. In *Poly-Olbion*, however, the author noticed "certain attractions of a durable nature": among these were its "amount of erudition" and "a series of poetic maps....as singular in their construction as the poem itself."<sup>144</sup> As far as has been ascertained, this is the first direct reference to the role of the maps in *Poly-Olbion*: whereas they had only been hinted at beforehand, as in D'Israeli expression "graphically pictured," and Coleridge's reference to the allegories of the Counties, this review asserted that maps were not so much an ornament as an actual part of the work, even endowed with a "poetic" nature, where personifications were "made to tell their own stories."<sup>145</sup> Despite this original insight, the author confirmed previous criticism on the poetic form of *Poly-Olbion*: firstly, "the minute accuracy which ought to be characteristic of topographical literature....was inconsistent with the spirit of poetry"; secondly, the Alexandrine was "exceedingly heavy and tiresome to the reader," and required "no small share of patience to surmount."<sup>146</sup>

There followed some rather short, though highly discriminating, comments. In a lecture on British poets, Henry Reed defined *Poly-Olbion* the "most extraordinary production, in some respects, that ever issued from poetic imagination."<sup>147</sup> In his essay entitled *Minor Elizabethan Poets*, E.P. Whipple decreed that *Poly-Olbion* was "unreadable," and that "the defect of his [Drayton's] mind was not the lack of materials, but the lack of taste to select, and imagination to fuse them."<sup>148</sup> The poem's degree of accuracy was certainly more suitable for antiquarians, and, as already stated by

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<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 106-7.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>147</sup>Henry Reed, *Lectures on the British Poets* (London: [n.p.], 1857), 240-1.

<sup>148</sup>E.P. Whipple, "Minor Elizabethan Poets," *Atlantic Monthly* 22 (1868): 28.

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Campbell, its "fatal defect" was that Drayton "chained his poetry to the map."<sup>149</sup> Another contemporary critic, James R. Lowell, accused *Poly-Olbion* of being "nothing less than a versified gazetteer of England and Wales."<sup>150</sup>

In the introduction to his edition of *Poly-Olbion* (1876), Richard Hooper relied heavily on previous criticism by D'Israeli, and expressly stated his intention to follow his advice and edit Drayton's complete works.<sup>151</sup> Some of the reasons why Drayton's poems had been neglected, said Hooper, was "their great extent, and that had he written less he would have been better known; and again as many of his poems are historical, they are likely to be of less interest to the general reader"; besides, their old-fashioned style required "attention and study" on behalf of the reader.<sup>152</sup> Hooper also stated that most people, "unwilling to betray their ignorance," tended to use Drayton's name, much like Spenser's and Milton's, without even knowing his works.<sup>153</sup> At any rate, the opening poem of the forthcoming complete edition had to be *Poly-Olbion*, as "the greatest, and best-known" among his works.<sup>154</sup>

This edition was heavily criticised by A.B. Grosart, shortly after the publication of the first three volumes: though appreciating Hooper's editorial intentions and efforts, Grosart complained against such fatal faults as the modernisation of orthography, the lack of adequate editorial annotations of place names and obsolete terms, the utter disrespect for the original layout. This last issue is noteworthy, as it elaborated on the new nineteenth-century attention to the graphic dimension of *Poly-Olbion*:

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<sup>149</sup>Idem.

<sup>150</sup>J.R. Lowell, *The Complete Writings of James Russell Lowell*, 16 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), 4:237 [*The Prose Works of James R. Lowell* (London: Macmillan, 1894), 4:280].

<sup>151</sup>Richard Hooper, "Introduction," in *The Complete Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. R. Hooper, 3 vols. (London: John Russell Smith, 1876), 1:x.

<sup>152</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:x-xi.

<sup>153</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:xiii.

<sup>154</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:xiv.

Then, how is it that the full-length protrait of Henry, Prince of Wales, and the (no fewer than) eighteen maps are suppressed? Associated as the young Prince was with Drayton, as Mr. Hooper felicitously recalls in his dedication of the present edition to the present Prince of Wales, it seems a pity to rob us of the singularly characteristic old portrait. To deprive us of the maps is downright robbery. Historically, and in relation to the poem, they are as indispensable as an atlas in following a Livingstone or a Stanley. It is incomprehensible to us that no mention of their existence should be made in the Introduction, as it is unpardonable that the photolithographer of the portait was not employed to reproduce Henry's portait and the maps.<sup>155</sup>

The relation of the *Poly-Olbion* text to its maps seems to have turned from a burden, as in Campbell's words, to an essential feature. Far from being purely ornamental, the poem's original layout was here perceived, perhaps due also to a growing philological sensibility, as "indispensable," since it added to what could be known of the author's original intent.

### 3.5 1876-1970

Though characterised by enormous changes in society and culture, this century seems to have been nevertheless unified by a common feeling towards the British landscape, developed out of the romantic overcoming and assimilation of picturesque ideals, interwoven with a new imperialistic veneration for the British Isles as the mother country, whose nationalist tendency increased especially in the years of the World Wars and their aftermath.

In the 1880s and early 90s critical value judgements on *Poly-Olbion*

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<sup>155</sup>A.B. Grosart, "Hooper's (Rev. R.), Complete Works of Michael Drayton (Book Review)," *The Academy* 9 (1876): 164.

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began somewhat to be combined with a more philological interest towards its composition, its *raison d'être*, and so on. At the same time, a new sensibility towards the British landscape seen not so much as an object of aesthetic appreciation and moral refinement, but also as the "physicality" of Great Britain's nationhood, began to develop. This influenced also the reception of topographical works like *Poly-Olbion*, perhaps also under the influence of Matthew Arnold's humanist critical current, which saw in literature a "refuge from, or remedy for, the ills of modern civilization."<sup>156</sup> For instance, A.H. Bullen, author of the Drayton entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (1888), was a great *Poly-Olbion aficionado*. This surfaces in his sympathetic comment – "a saunter down a Surrey lane when the nuts are ripening is the one thing pleasanter than a ramble through the *Poly-Olbion*" – and in his defence of the Alexandrine, "the *Polyolbion* carries the reader through hundreds of pages in the swing and sweep of the bounding verse....The long rolling verse has something of the springiness of heather; we cover the ground insensibly, and find a growing delight in the labour."<sup>157</sup> Anticipating the early twentieth-century appreciation of Drayton's interest in nature, Bullen's pleasure with landscape descriptions certainly agreed with that in Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895): there can be found two references to *Poly-Olbion*, used for their matter and "archaic diction"<sup>158</sup> – the first one to the town of Shaftesbury (Shaston) and the second one to the river Stour, both

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<sup>156</sup>Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 561.

<sup>157</sup>A.H. Bullen, *Selections from the Poems of Michael Drayton* (Privately printed: Chilsworth, 1883), xx.

<sup>158</sup>Barbara Hardy, "Literary Allusion: Hardy and Other Poets," in *Thomas Hardy Reappraised: Essays in Honour of Michael Millgate*, ed. K. Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 71, 61. As Barbara Hardy explains: "Hardy often treats sources as repositories to be rifled rather than texts to be respected....their power depends not on manner but matter, subject not style." *Ibid.*, 71. On Hardy's citations see also Marlene Springer, *Hardy's Use of Allusion* (London: Macmillan, 1983), and Annie Escuret, "La citation / morceau dans *Tess des d'Urbevilles* ou la mort sans eau," in *L'ente et la chimère*, ed. L. Le Bouille (Caen: Centre de Publications de l'Université de Caen, 1986), 105-20.

mentioned in Song II – whose lyrical power bestowed additional strength onto Hardy’s prose.<sup>159</sup>

The criticism of Oliver Elton may be said to have bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,<sup>160</sup> as his volume on Drayton, originally published in 1895 without much circulation, was reprinted in 1905, becoming the first monograph on the poet. Elton was generally appreciative and rigorous regarding Drayton, and arguably partook also of Bullen’s critical and natural enjoyment, as shown by his comment on the *Poly-Olbion* verse as having “a kind of heavy dignity, like a Lord Mayor’s coach” (E 119).

However, in the 1910s, a novelist, E.M. Forster, chose to devote a whole passage to *Poly-Olbion*, and to Song VII in particular, in his novel *Howards End* (1910). On taking a motor-drive with Mr Henry Wilcox, Margaret Schlegel realises how the evolution of means of transport prevents travellers from enjoying the landscape:

A motor-drive, a form of felicity detested by Margaret, awaited her...But it was not an impressive drive. Perhaps the weather was to blame, being gray and banked high with weary clouds. Perhaps Hertfordshire is scarcely intended for motorists. Did not a gentleman once motor so quickly through Westmorland that he missed it? And if Westmorland can be missed it will fare with a country whose delicate structure particularly needs the attentive eye. Hertfordshire is England at its quietest, with little emphasis of river and hill; it is England meditative. If Drayton were with us again to write a new edition of his incomparable poem, he would sing the nymphs of Hertfordshire as

<sup>159</sup>Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (London: Macmillan, 1956), 237, 273.

<sup>160</sup>The twentieth century began with a curious debate in *Notes and Queries*, concerning the actual number of lines that make up *Poly-Olbion*, which, about sixty years before, Hallam had estimated roughly to 30,000. J.T. Curry presented the result of his calculations, based on the average number of lines per Song, which is 17,000, and apologised for not counting them all owing to lack of time. A steady reply was sent by J.F. Fry, who, having counted the lines one by one in Hooper’s edition, gave a total amount of 14,718. J.T. Curry, “Drayton’s ‘Poly-Olbion’,” *Notes and Queries* 108 (1903): 102-3; J.F. Fry, “Drayton’s ‘Poly-Olbion’,” *Notes and Queries* 108 (1903): 214.

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indeterminate of feature, with hair obfuscated by the London smoke. Their eyes would be sad, and averted from their fate towards the northern flats, their leader not Isis or Sabrina, but the slowly flowing Lea. No glory of raiment would be theirs, no urgency of dance; but they would be real nymphs.<sup>161</sup>

Forster's is perhaps one of the most interesting instances of a new interpretation of *Poly-Olbion*, blending the Arnoldian humanistic tradition with the natural escapism of the contemporary Georgian poets.<sup>162</sup> Drayton's work is here seen as a representation of England and Wales before the "motor tyranny," or the "supreme symbol of the detested 'new civilization',"<sup>163</sup> in which nymphs are represented as survivors of progress, forced to reconcile or come to terms, as Margaret eventually will, with "the prosaic side" of the world.<sup>164</sup> At the same time, the famous epigraph of the novel – "Only connect...." – proposes a new reconciling vision of opposites – "the prose and the passion, the seen and the unseen, the practical mind and the intellectual, the outer life and the inner."<sup>165</sup> – affecting also the perception of the national landscape, and enabling, perhaps, the kind of connection for the lack of which the understanding of *Poly-Olbion* had suffered beforehand. This interpretation is suggested by several passages, which contribute to explain and enlarge Forster's view of landscape. In a conversation at the club, involving, among others, Margaret and Mrs Wilcox, the topic discussed is whether or not Germans lack taste. Being half-German, Margaret suggests that, unlike the English, the Germans "take poetry seriously," because they are always looking for beauty; she then adds:

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<sup>161</sup>E.M. Forster, *Howards End*, ed. O. Stallybrass (London: Arnold, [1910] 1973), 194-5.

<sup>162</sup>Grundy was the first to draw a comparison between the spirit and general characteristics of the Spenserians and those of the Georgian poets. See Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets*, 7-8.

<sup>163</sup>Forster, *Howards End*, xi.

<sup>164</sup>F.C. Crews, "E.M. Forster: The Limitations of Mythology," *Comparative Literature* 12 (1960): 109.

<sup>165</sup>Forster, *Howards End*, x.

My blood boils – well, I’m half German, so put it down to patriotism – when I listen to the tasteful contempt of the average islander for things Teutonic, whether they’re Böcklin or my veterinary surgeon. ‘Oh, Böcklin,’ they say; ‘he strains after beauty, he peoples Nature with gods too consciously.’ Of course Böcklin strains, because he wants something – beauty and all other intangible gifts that are floating about the world. So his landscapes don’t come off....<sup>166</sup>

Though made by a German artist, Böcklin’s paintings – peopled with “voluptuous and sensuous” mythological beings<sup>167</sup> – share some of the main features of *Poly-Olbion*, above all, that for which the poem had been heavily criticised: the excessive and tiresome use of nature personified, through mythological deities. Abhorred by the English, this device is here presented as a way of connecting landscape to the intangible beauty inherent in the world, the seen and the unseen. The same “panic” perception of landscape is later achieved by Margaret herself in the lawns of *Howards End*, with the country house functioning as a catalyser for these often invoked connections:

Her evening was pleasant. The sense of flux which had haunted her all the year disappeared for a time. She forgot the luggage and the motor-cars, and the hurrying men who know so much and connect so little. She recaptured the sense of space, which is the basis of all earthly beauty, and, starting from *Howards End*, she attempted to realize England. She failed – visions do not come when we try, though they may come through trying. But an unexpected love of the island awoke in her, connecting on this side with the joys of the flesh, on that with the inconceivable.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>167</sup>For further discussion see Anne Varty, “E. M. Forster, Arnold Böcklin, and Pan,” *The Review of English Studies* 39 (1988): 517.

<sup>168</sup>Forster, *Howards End*, 202.

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As possessing the sense of space is essential to grasp "all earthly beauty," which the German soul naturally tends to, Margaret's sudden understanding of her own position within her country, beginning from the locality, paves the way for at least an attempt to "realize England." Her love for the land, born out of her love for Howards End, enables her to connect the physical to the spiritual side of her being there.

This deep veneration for the British landscape, which allows its faithful observer and explorer to "realize England," is a sentiment rooted in the late nineteenth century, and was enhanced, in the 1930s, by the numerous changes taking place at a national level. This feeling was definitely exemplified by Harold Hannyngton Child's statement:

At the present moment the great work [*Poly-Olbion*] is more apt to be in favour than ever before, just because the changes in England are so swift and so many as to sharpen our antiquarian interest and to set us looking back to almost any ancient account of the places we know and love. And, therefore, we take a pious delight, as it were, in getting out of our swift and new motor-cars....<sup>169</sup>

Child's words were certainly reminiscent of Forster's, and highlighted a general concern for the rapid technologisation of Britain, which had been affecting the country's traditional "physicality." The same appreciation for the ancient outlook of the British landscape found its utmost expression in the 1933 edition of *Poly-Olbion*: Hebel himself was indeed a devoted reader of Drayton's poem, so much so that, as he wrote in his introduction, he thought that "the best way to enjoy *Poly-Olbion* is to make the poem a companion on a tour in England or Wales. Then even the pages which versify the map become alive with interest."<sup>170</sup>

In the 1930s and 40s, as literature and criticism in general were

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<sup>169</sup>Harold Hannyngton Child, "Michael Drayton," *Times Literary Supplement*, December 17, 1931, 1022.

<sup>170</sup>J.W. Hebel, "Introduction," in *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. Hebel, 4:vi-vii.

inclined to abandon "formalism and humanism" in favour of "a more socially conscious mode,"<sup>171</sup> Drayton's Spenserian patriotism fostered in his readers a sentiment of nationalistic pride against foreign invaders. In October 1941, for instance, following the German bombing of Britain, an anonymous author published an article on *Poly-Olbion*, entitled *An Englishman's Home*. This was a great celebration of *Poly-Olbion*: there were good reasons why the poem should then "win large numbers of new admirers in Britain that [was] fighting for its life for the second time in less than thirty years."<sup>172</sup> The main feature of *Poly-Olbion* is said to be its "deep restfulness," as it showed "a Great Britain sure of herself, of her long, honourable history, and – if she will but keep herself unspotted by vice and greed and oppression – sure of her heroic future."<sup>173</sup> The hope advocated in *Poly-Olbion*, by a poet feeling "pure love towards his country," was then greatly needed, in a Britain "battered and defiled by barbarians," as "a comfort and a stay."<sup>174</sup> Only twelve years later, however, Richard Murphy defined *Poly-Olbion* as "indigestible," perceiving in it an irreconcilable tension, caused by its "overworked symbolism," between Drayton's natural inclination to naturalism and the "heroic sonority" his poetic ambition and style required of him.<sup>175</sup> Indeed, the fact that *Poly-Olbion* was naturally grounded in the topicality of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart ages, always defeated most attempts at autotelic New Critical analysis, generally limited, in its case, to the use of rhetorical devices.

The first critical work not related to the Hebel edition, P.G. Buchloh's *Michael Drayton: Barde und Historiker, Politiker und Prophet* (1964) was published in German. Concerned with Drayton's treatment of the "early

<sup>171</sup>Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 563.

<sup>172</sup>Anonymous, "An Englishman's Home," *Times Literary Supplement*, October 4, 1941, 465.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., 465.

<sup>174</sup>Idem.

<sup>175</sup>Richard Murphy, "Drayton's Discovery of England," *Times Literary Supplement*, May 8, 1953, 303.

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history" (*Frühgeschichte*) of Great Britain in his works, Buchloh devoted a large part of his volume to the analysis and interpretation of the poet's bardic, historical and political treatment of Britain's early history through a strong philological approach.<sup>176</sup>

In his collection entitled *The Poet and the Landscape* (1962), the Scotsman Andrew Young, himself a landscape poet enamoured of the British landscape, devoted a highly appreciative essay to *Poly-Olbion*, referring to the humanistic tradition of the late nineteenth century. Hinting at Lowell's famous comment, he began by stating that *Poly-Olbion* was "little less, though a great deal more, than a gazetteer of Britain."<sup>177</sup> A poem is naturally less systematic than a gazetteer's work, which, Young believed, "may be suitable for England, for the land itself is unsystematic": indeed, "no other country in Europe shows as great a geologic variety in as small a compass," since "scenic changes can be sudden and surprising," and "the spectator may be unable to choose between two charming views as Ovid between his two mistresses...."<sup>178</sup> Like Forster, Young partook of Drayton's profound understanding of the English and Welsh countryside, nor did he blame the poet for his mythological asset, because "Drayton would not have been interested in casuistry, his main interest being mythology; he might have said with Tibullus '*rura cano rurisque deos*'."<sup>179</sup> As a poet, Young could understand Drayton's choice, since "the mythology is of the poet's own making, natural objects personified," and agreed that the figure of Albion be the most suitable personification of Britain, being, in fact, its Genius.<sup>180</sup>

Young was also the last literary author ever to comment extensively

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<sup>176</sup>P.G. Buchloh, *Michael Drayton, Barde und Historiker, Politiker und Prophet* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1964).

<sup>177</sup>Andrew Young, *The Poet and the Landscape* (London: Hart-Davis, 1962), 38.

<sup>178</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>179</sup>*Idem.*

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

on *Poly-Olbion*.<sup>181</sup> The second half of the twentieth century witnessed, however, the publication of several important critical works, of a scholarly kind. An example of this is offered by W.H. Moore's article *Sources of Drayton's Conception of Poly-Olbion* (1968), which elaborated on the critical work that had been carried out respectively by R.R. Cawley (on the sources of exploration accounts and Welsh history), V.H. Hull (in an unpublished dissertation on the influence of Camden's *Britannia* and Saxton's *Atlas* on *Poly-Olbion*), and Isaac Gourvitch (on the influence exercised by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Philemon Holland) in the 1920s, and established, with the help of a rather structuralist method, Drayton's possible literary and historico-antiquarian sources.<sup>182</sup> In the 1960s, Joan Grundy's seminal book on the Spenserian Poets paved the way for a better understanding of Drayton's literary and cultural background, his Spenserian influence, both in terms of politics and literature, and his relationship with a politically cohesive print community.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>181</sup>In her novel *The Virgin in the Garden* (1978), A.S. Byatt mentioned *Poly-Olbion* three times, though very cursorily. On page 139, a portrait of Elizabeth I, in which "her garment is the map of England [and Scotland]," is said to have been inspired, with regards to this detail, by the *Poly-Olbion* frontispiece. A possible reference may be a 1598 anonymous engraving of Hibernia as Europe, where the country's female anthropomorphisation seems to be "wearing" the map of Europe like a dress. There seem to be, however, no extant portraits of Elizabeth wearing a map of England and Scotland dated after 1612, when the *Poly-Olbion* frontispiece was first published. A.S. Byatt, *The Virgin in the Garden* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1978), 139, 315, 330.

<sup>182</sup>W.H. Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," *Studies in Philology* 65 (1968): 783-803; R.R. Cawley, "Drayton's Use of Welsh History," *Studies in Philology* 22 (1925): 234-55; Isaac Gourvitch, "The Welsh Element in the *Poly-Olbion*: Drayton's Sources," *The Review of English Studies* 4 (1928): 69-77; Isaac Gourvitch, "Drayton's Debt to Geoffrey of Monmouth," *The Review of English Studies* 4 (1928): 394-403; Isaac Gourvitch, "A Note on Drayton and Philemon Holland," *Modern Language Review* 25 (1930): 332-6.

<sup>183</sup>Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets*, *passim*.

### 3.6 1970-2000s

The humanist allusion of *Poly-Olbion*, as last exemplified by Andrew Young, seems to have lost its appeal between the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, and was replaced by wide-scope studies aiming to reconstruct the evolution of Drayton's career, works, and style.

J.A. Berthelot's *Michael Drayton* (1967) covered Drayton's entire production, "digesting" it, as it were, for the average educated reader: it relied much on textual analysis, sometimes presenting also intertextual comparisons. In 1972, Alice d'Haussy's *Poly-Olbion ou l'Angleterre vue par un élisabéthain*, published in French, the first (and only) monograph on *Poly-Olbion*. Considerable as it was for its focused scope and intended analysis of the most important topics in the poem – from the composition to the historical sources and treatment of history, from the influence of travel writing and topographical works to the human and economic geography of Britain. In spite of its scanty bibliography,<sup>184</sup> d'Haussy's valuing has the merit particularly of having attempted to divide *Poly-Olbion* into its constituents and provide a balanced discussion of them all, paying particular attention to Drayton's sources in general. The book was nevertheless built upon what is now a rather disputable plank: Drayton's utter Elizabethanism. It also tended to pose more essential questions than attempted to inquire. This was possibly due to d'Haussy's intention to interest, once again, the average reader, which implied the exclusion of other material.<sup>185</sup> Over ten years later, Richard Hardin re-elaborated on his relationship to his Age, which he defined as "the passing of Elizabethan England," by focussing particularly on Drayton's historical poems and attempting to outline their role within the cultural context of the late

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<sup>184</sup>Interestingly, d'Haussy omitted from her bibliography the two very recent volumes by Berthelot and Grundy.

<sup>185</sup>"Cet ouvrage...est composée d'éléments extraits d'une thèse de doctorat...mais que nous avons jugé inutile de publier, car son volume nous a paru propre à décourager le lecteur." D'Haussy, *Poly-Olbion*, i.

Elizabethan and early Jacobean period.<sup>186</sup>

Since the 1980s and 90s, several aspects making up the literary complexity of *Poly-Olbion* have been disentangled and individually dealt with: namely, its textual and visual representation of national geography, through landscape descriptions and cartography. This led to the formation of new critical currents aiming to contrast the structuralist pattern of binary oppositions through an analysis of the "textual" nature of all phenomena, seen, as it were, as "interpretative narratives."<sup>187</sup>

Landscape studies – especially the ones written before the rise of New Historicism or not directly inspired by it – certainly enhanced the understanding of the physical connection between national geography and literature, in order to legitimise the literary value of *Poly-Olbion*, in spite of its abundant use of historical and antiquarian matter. As opposed to previous studies mainly concerned with the historico-antiquarian features and sources, S.P. Revard's 1977 essay on the "design of Nature" in *Poly-Olbion* stressed the central poetic role of the topological landscape inhabited by its own anthropomorphised features: its constantly balanced *discordia concors* is seen as a model of "peaceful hierarchy," apt to represent in poetry the timeless concept of Britannia.<sup>188</sup> After highlighting once again the essentially literary nature of *Poly-Olbion*, B.C. Ewell analysed, in her 1978 essay, the importance of anthropomorphisations as rhetorical devices suitable for reproducing and abstracting the national (physical and political) geography of Britain into the language of literature.<sup>189</sup> In his book *From Landscape to Literature: The River and the Myth of Geography*, W.H. Herendeen (1986) discussed, through a sort of structuralist pattern,

<sup>186</sup>R.F. Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973).

<sup>187</sup>Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 566.

<sup>188</sup>S.P. Revard, "The Design of Nature in Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 17 (1977): 105-17.

<sup>189</sup>B.C. Ewell, "Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*: England's Body Immortalized," *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978): 297-315.

### 3. *Drayton and Poly-Olbion Criticism*

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the rhetorical aspects of *Poly-Olbion* (including its maps) within the context of the classical and Renaissance stock features of river poetry.<sup>190</sup> In his 1999 essay entitled *Drayton's Chorographical Ovid*, Raphael Lyne considered the influence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – a work concerned with change in time and space – on *Poly-Olbion*, in terms of narrative techniques, material, setting, and recurring themes, pervading Drayton's representation of the British landscape.<sup>191</sup>

The study of the textual dimension of early modern cartography, promoted by P.D.A. Harvey and J.B. Harley in the early 1980s, and fostered by New Historicism, has been applied also to *Poly-Olbion*, in order to reaffirm its relevance in the shaping of British nationhood and integrate the function and role of maps within the poetic dimension of Drayton's poem. Richard Helgerson's seminal article "The Land Speaks" (1986), as well as his volume *Forms of Nationhood* (1992), first attempted to analyse the geographic textuality of early modern works as connected with the representation of nationhood. By following the New Historicist view, he postulated a network of interrelations involving antiquarianism and map-making, which had begun to develop in England around the first third of the sixteenth century, promoting the gradual commodification of Britain and enhancing the people's decreasing attachment to the sovereign's figure in favour of an increasing understanding and celebration of the physicality of their own land.<sup>192</sup> Helgerson's approach was followed by Bernhard Klein, with particular stress on the role of maps and of the "cartographic gaze" as a unifying device in Drayton's landscape

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<sup>190</sup>W.H. Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature: The River and the Myth of Geography* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1986).

<sup>191</sup>Raphael Lyne, "Drayton's Chorographical Ovid," in P. Hardie, et al., eds., *Ovidian Transformations. Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and Its Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 85-102.

<sup>192</sup>Richard Helgerson, "The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography, and Subversion in Renaissance England," *Representations* 16 (1986): 50-85; Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992).

narrative.<sup>193</sup> It has recently been re-elaborated, on the basis of the studies on the formation of nationhood, by Clare McEachern and Andrew Hadfield in what could be considered a revisionist manner. Both authors refuted the historically transcendent value of Drayton's depiction of Britain: McEachern described *Poly-Olbion* as an "aggressively local poem," representing a "fragile and mutable" land, affected by political past and present struggles;<sup>194</sup> Hadfield, instead, assimilated the fear of change permeating *Poly-Olbion* with the Spenserian concept of "Mutabilitie," related, in turn, to the "transformation of Englishness into Britishness," and the fragmentation of national identity.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup>Bernhard Klein, "Imaginary Journeys: Spenser, Drayton, and the Poetics of National Space," in A. Gordon and B. Klein, eds., *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 204-23.

<sup>194</sup>Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 139.

<sup>195</sup>Andrew Hadfield, "Spenser, Drayton, and the Question of Britain," *The Review of English Studies* 51 (2000): 582-3. In his latest book, Peter Ackroyd has quoted several times from *Poly-Olbion*'s descriptions of nymphs and rivers, using the poetry – apparently for the first time since the seventeenth century – as a source of topographical material. See Peter Ackroyd, *Thames, Sacred River* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), 10, 28, 44-5, 142, 334, 348.





## **PART II**







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## Chapter 4

# Topography, Landskip, Landscape

## 4.1 *The Rhetoric of Topography*

### 4.1.1 *The Role of Ekphrasis*

Defined by George Wither as "topo-chrono-graphicall" (394), *Poly-Olbion* is a loco-descriptive poem, whose general focus is the verbal representation of Britain as a whole obtained through juxtaposed depictions of its several parts.

The *Poly-Olbion* discourse is therefore a *logos periegematikos* both in its extended meaning of "descriptive discourse" or *descriptio*, as a rhetorical figure, and in its more immediate meaning connected with the geographical term *periegesis*, or the description of a place conducted by "leading and showing one around."<sup>1</sup> The cumulative description of Britain as a real place (*topographia*) is mediated by the poet's Muse as the "Genius of the place (this most renowned Ile)" (I.8), and delivered by personifications of landscape features (*prosopopaea*); they narrate particularly important events (*pragmatographia*), mostly battles or famous historical events, or

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<sup>1</sup>Ingunn Lunde, "Rhetorical *Enargeia* and Linguistic Pragmatics," *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 5 (2004): 53-4; Giovanni Ravenna, "Per l'identità di *ekphrasis*," *Incontri triestini di filologia classica* 4 (2004-2005): 22.

#### 4. Topography, Landskip, Landscape

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times (*chronographia*) set in a particular locality.<sup>2</sup> Thence, the overall descriptive nature of *Poly-Olbion* may be considered the rhetorical blow-up of a figure of thought defined as *ekphrasis* in ancient rhetorical manuals, but called simply *descriptio* in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> Among the most quoted examples of *topographia* are some of Virgil's descriptions of Italy in the *Aeneid*:<sup>4</sup> such loco-descriptive passages had, in time, been isolated to become separate topographical poems in their own right; they usually revolved around the *locus amoenus* topos,<sup>5</sup> and contributed to the formation of an ekphrastic genre based on the faithful representation of a place, mentioned by name, and its geographical

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<sup>2</sup>Incidentally, these four types of subject-matter formed a "coherent set in the ancient rhetorical system," coming to represent four of the six parts of narration: the agent, the act, time and place. Ruth Webb, "Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre," *Word & Image* 15 (1999): 12. This subdivision of *ekphrasis* according to subject-matter appears also in sixteenth-century English rhetorical manuals. See Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London: Imprinted by H. Jackson, 1577), 134-43; George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589; rpt. Teddington: Echo Library, 2007), 174-5.

<sup>3</sup>Indeed, the term *ekphrasis* seems never to have been used in classical Latin treatises on rhetoric. Ravenna, "Per l'identità di *ekphrasis*," 23. Its first occurrence dates back to a Greek treatise, composed around the first century AD, in a sense not necessarily connected with pictorialism, whereas the term *descriptio* is not attested before the first century BC. See Graham Zanker, "Enargeia in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry," *Rheinisches Museum* 124 (1981): 305. For a detailed survey of the evolution of the concept of *ekphrasis* through its definitions see Mario Klarer, *Ekphrasis: Bildbeschreibung als Repraesentationstheorie bei Spenser, Sidney, Lily, und Shakespeare* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001), chap. 1. For an analysis of the ancient meaning of *ekphrasis* as opposed to the modern one, see Webb, "Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern," *passim*.

<sup>4</sup>See, for instance: "est locus Italiae medio sub montibus altis, / nobilis et fama multis memoratus in oris, / Ampsancti valles: densis hunc frondibus atrum / urget utrimque latus nemoris, medioque fragosus / dat sonitum saxi et torto vertice torres...." Quoted in Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*, ed. D. Orton and R. Dean Anderson, trans. M.T. Bliss and A. Jansen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 365-6.

<sup>5</sup>Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (London: Elek, 1973), 21. For the development of the *locus amoenus* topos, see E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 184ff.

features.<sup>6</sup> This conventional encoding of a genre through a “*locorum dilucida et significans descriptio*,”<sup>7</sup> derived from Late Antiquity, combines in *Poly-Olbion* with a new chorographical attention to the national land, stimulated by the re-discovery of Ptolemy’s approach in his *Geographia*.<sup>8</sup> What Drayton was following was the chorographical approach, as explained by Ptolemy – conflating chorography and topography<sup>9</sup> – or the creation of recognisable depictions of the features of specific parts of the world, by rendering harbours, countries, towns, rivers; to this was opposed the geographical approach, concerned with numbers and mathematical abstraction, and the global knowledge of the inhabited world.<sup>10</sup> Chorography should therefore convey only partial knowledge of the earth, by describing a single part, not the whole, and by focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of descriptive material.<sup>11</sup>

In order to get acquainted with the chorography of Britain, Drayton used several topographical prose works, which would provide him with a structural *theatrum*<sup>12</sup> of the several parts he intended to versify – Camden’s

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<sup>6</sup>The representation of a fictional place was instead defined *topothesia*. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*, 365.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Pearsall, Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons*, 48.

<sup>8</sup>N.J.W. Thrower, *Maps and Civilizations: Cartography and Culture in Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 58-9. Ptolemy’s *Geographia* was first translated from Greek into Latin at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and printed in several editions in Italy and Germany from the end of that century. Other maps which, by the end of the fifteenth century, had contributed to a better knowledge of the British Isles were the portolan charts drawn by English seamen overtime. P.D.A. Harvey, *Maps in Tudor England* (London: British Library / Public Record Office, 1993), 7-9.

<sup>9</sup>See Tom Conley, “Early Modern Literature and Cartography: An Overview,” in D. Woodward, ed., *The History of Cartography, Volume III: Cartography in the Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 1:404.

<sup>10</sup>Lucia Nuti, “Mapping Places: Chorography and Vision in the Renaissance,” in D. Cosgrove, ed., *Mappings* (London: Reaktion, 1999), 90.

<sup>11</sup>Idem.

<sup>12</sup>As Tom Conley writes: “The success of the Ortelian atlas [1570] owed much to the modular construction also seen in literature, but under the new title the reader or spectator was invited to behold a cosmographic whole and a variety of local representations. The world was tabulated and registered in line with technologies of memory and as a display of the nature of geography in general. The new atlas was

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*Britannia*,<sup>13</sup> county-based surveys like William Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*, etc.<sup>14</sup> – but also with a method. Indeed, what differentiates Drayton's approach to that of other more or less contemporary poets like Spenser is that, while they relied on the classical rhetorical tradition and used topography as a figure of speech,<sup>15</sup> Drayton endowed it with the double status of subject-matter *and* figure of speech in the poem.

In order to link the narrative depiction of Britain as a whole to that of its several parts, Drayton devised the indirect deliverance of the poetic discourse from the landscape features to the Muse. This narrative filter prevents the crystallisation of the poem's temporality, by making the latter twofold: while the Muse takes by the hand Drayton's imagined readers and accompanies them around Britain within the temporality of their action of reading – the temporality *of* the text – landscape personifications provide the temporality *in* the text, or the diachrony of

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an organizational form for a spatial arrangement of discourse, often in consort with cartographic models whereby books under the title *Theatrum* or *Theatre* referred to Ortelius." Conley, "Early Modern Literature and Cartography," 408.

<sup>13</sup>Though organised topographically, Camden's *Britannia* followed the political subdivisions of ancient Britain as described in classical authors like Tacitus, Ptolemy and Strabo; emphasis was therefore laid on Roman, not contemporary, Britain. William Rockett, "Historical Topography and British History in Camden's *Britannia*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 14 (1990): 77-8.

<sup>14</sup>A thorough survey of all Drayton's possible prose topographical sources in *Poly-Olbion* will not be rehearsed here. Much work has been done on this subject, highlighting the similarities and differences between Drayton's poem and its possible sources. For a list, see Chapter 2. For a detailed analysis, see V.E. Hull, "The English and Welsh Topographical Sources of Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* with special reference to Camden's *Britannia* and Saxton's *Atlas*" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1926); Hilda Taylor, "Topographical Poetry in England During the Renaissance" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1926); W.H. Moore, "The Fusion of History and Poetry in the *Poly-Olbion*" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1963); W.H. Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," *Studies in Philology* 65 (1968): 783-803; Alice d'Haussy, *Poly-Olbion, ou l'Angleterre vue par un élisabéthain* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1972), esp. 109ff; H.P. Duchemin, "Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*: A Critical and Historical Study" (PhD dissertation, Birkbeck College, University of London, 1975), chap. 5.

<sup>15</sup>H.S. Turner, "Literature and Mapping in Early Modern England, 1520-1688," in Woodward, ed., *The History of Cartography*, 1:413.

the space that is being explored. The detailed nature of the *Poly-Olbion descriptio* should not be considered, as has been the case particularly since the mid nineteenth century, static and descriptive (as opposed to dynamic and narrative), because this theoretical differentiation was unimportant, or even non-existent, in Drayton's times. Indeed, *ekphrasis* (or *descriptio*) was understood and applied as the evocation of a scene often developing in time. Its impact on the listeners/readers depended on the sound choice of details corresponding to the audience's acquired knowledge and expectations, and was connected with the mental images already stored in their memory. Far from constituting narrative pauses, these passages served to intensify the narrative, by introducing such details as would draw the audience's attention both by means of images and emotions.<sup>16</sup>

In the case of *Poly-Olbion*, the question of audience response is especially thorny. Drayton's expectations from his "generall reader" are difficult to descry, since both his own and Selden's preface appeal to a multifarious audience: interested in the history and antiquities of the land of Britain (391); "gentlewomen" in search of pleasant, didactic narratives (xiii\*); average readers in need of clarifying *marginalia*, and, what is more, English translations even of simple Latin passages (e.g., 213); or learned people interested in an antiquarian *apparatus* with footnotes, possibly leading to further private study. What can be hypothesised is that Drayton's readers – literate and able to afford such a lavish folio volume – may have had at the very least a rough knowledge of the topography of England and Wales;<sup>17</sup> in any case, the reader's failings would be assisted by Hole's maps. The rivers themselves served basically – as explained by Ptolemy and the chorographical tradition – as reference points for the actual description. For instance, in the middle of a historical survey on the Heptarchy and its evolution, the matter is determined mostly in spatial

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<sup>16</sup>Webb, "Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern," 14.

<sup>17</sup>For the extent to which maps were widespread in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, see section 4.1.3.

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terms: "And from the Banks of *Tames* to *Humber* which containe / So many goodly shires of *Mersey*, *Mercia* hight) [*sic*] / Their mightier Empire, there, the middle English plight" (XVI.187-9). In this case, as in many others, the river is functional to, and is meant to embody, the perception of the flowing of history.<sup>18</sup>

Topography was thus more than an excuse for drawing the reader's attention to "all the Delicacies, Delights, and Rarities of this renowned Isle, interwoven with the Histories of the Britaines, Saxons, Normans, and the later English" (391); according to a tradition much followed by Latin authors like Virgil and Horace, it helped build the verbalisation of symbolic meanings, and shaped the point of view from which readers were to determine the relationship between the poetic world and their own;<sup>19</sup> it helped shape, that is to say, an interpretation of the descriptive matter based on familiar, spatial interrelationships.<sup>20</sup>

The readers' mental representations of Britain – whether visual or non-visual in form – constitute the common ground allowing Drayton to establish a poetic relationship with his audience. The stories and legends he collects are in fact organised according to this visual and mental topographical diagram serving a twofold purpose. It is needed to orient the readers within a wide array of historico-antiquarian references, which, if told in scattered or chronological order, might as well have resulted into a simple verse chronicle.<sup>21</sup> But it also orients the poet himself: the

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<sup>18</sup>W.H. Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature: The River and the Myth of Geography* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1986), 9.

<sup>19</sup>Eleanor Winsor Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space: Literary and Artistic Representations of Landscape in Republican and Augustan Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 23.

<sup>20</sup>E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 122-5.

<sup>21</sup>Just a few years before the publication of *Poly-Olbion*, Part I, the English preface to Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1606) connected topography and history in a similar way, by stating that "notable events could be better understood by situating them topographically." Sir Thomas Elyot, too, had acknowledged this practice in his *Governor* (1531). Turner, "Literature and Mapping," 422.

transformation of physical places – necessary in order to visualise them, and required by the *ars memoriae* – into *loci* or patterns of mnemonic information will help him create a mental topography (or map) for his poetic matter.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, Drayton imposes on his readers a unified point of view (the Muse's), filtering the several political and intellectual *loci*, as well as the physical and mental *loca*, of Britain, through a visual amplification controlled by his authoritative and authorial role.<sup>23</sup> This organisational function of the *logos periegetikos* can be traced back to the legacy of classical rhetoric. According to Quintilian, for instance, the experience of travel itself was a useful tool for providing the locations of a memory system.<sup>24</sup> Taking this into account, the question whether Drayton may actually have seen all the places mentioned in *Poly-Olbion* – the answer to which has always been intuitively negative, apart from his native Warwickshire in Song XIII, and a few places around London – becomes a biographical curiosity. Indeed, because the ability to think of the representation of a spatially-extended image entails the ability to elaborate on a given one, the *ars memoriae* is also related to descriptive vividness: the listeners or readers will transcode the description they hear or read into a view they can contemplate from a fixed standpoint, and which they can travel across through the use of imagination.<sup>25</sup>

One of Drayton's main concerns, throughout the thousands of lines that make up *Poly-Olbion*, was maintaining an acceptable descriptive

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<sup>22</sup>Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space*, 75. The same organisational pattern is retraced in numerous examples drawn from Latin literature (e.g., Virgil's *Georgics* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), most of which were supposedly inspirational to Drayton. See also Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966), 1-26.

<sup>23</sup>Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space*, 79, 410.

<sup>24</sup>"...iuvare memoria signatis animo sedibus, idque credere suo quisque experimentum postest"; "...it is an assistance to the memory if localities are sharply impressed upon the mind, a view the truth of which everyone may realise by practical experiment." Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. T.E. Page, et al., trans. H.E. Butler, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard: University Press, 1966), 3:XI.ii.17ff. All quotations will be taken from this edition. See also Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space*, 78.

<sup>25</sup>Idem.

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assortment in form and content, capable of keeping the readers' attention but also of illustrating the multifarious nature of the matter – the rich physical, historical, and cultural variety of Britain – as he himself requests the Muse to grant:

Thou *Genius* of the place (this most renowned Ile)....  
Goe thou before me still thy circling shores about,  
And in this wandring Maze helpe to conduct me out:  
Direct my course so right, as with thy hand to showe,  
Which way thy Forrests range, which way thy Rivers flowe;  
Wise *Genius*, by thy helpe that so I may descry,  
How thy faire Mountaines stand, and how thy Vallyes, lie;  
From those cleere pearlie Cleeves which see the Mornings  
pride,  
And check the surlie Impes of *Neptune* when they chide....  
(I.8, 11-18)

The poet craves for inspiration to describe the British landscape with vividness, or the power of *descriptio*, by virtue of which the listeners/readers are brought before their eyes the subject that is being represented verbally.<sup>26</sup> This vividness – which Greek manuals called *enargeia*, and Latin manuals variously named *demonstratio*, *evidentia*, *sub oculis subiectio*<sup>27</sup> – was what differentiated poetic descriptions, among others, from mere reports.<sup>28</sup> The latter were characterised simply by *perspicuitas* or "clarity"; vividness was considered, instead, a virtue of pictorial descriptions,<sup>29</sup> and belonged to *ornatus*.<sup>30</sup>

In Henry Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence* (1577) – as well as in several

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<sup>26</sup>Webb, "Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern," 13; Zanker, "Enargeia in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry," 298.

<sup>27</sup>Zanker, "Enargeia in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry," 298, 307.

<sup>28</sup>Claus Cluver, "Quotation, Enargeia, and the Functions of Ekphrasis," in V. Robillard and E. Jongeneel, eds., *Pictures into Words: Theoretical and Descriptive Approaches to Ekphrasis* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1998), 37.

<sup>29</sup>Zanker, "Enargeia in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry," 298.

<sup>30</sup>Ravenna, "Per l'identità di ekphrasis," 24.

others manuals of rhetoric almost contemporary to Drayton<sup>31</sup> – *descriptio* is subsumed under the figures of amplification,<sup>32</sup> and defined as follows:

a generall name of many and sundry kindes of descriptions, and a description is when the Orator by a diligent gatherin [*sic*] together of circumstances, and by a fit and naturall application of them, doth expresse and set forth a thing so plainly and lively, that it seemeth rather painted in tables, then declared with words, and the mind of the hearer therby so drawen to an earnest and stedfast contemplation of the thing described, that he rather thinketh he seeth it then heareth it.<sup>33</sup>

Owing, perhaps, to his interest in painting and art theory (he is also the author of the *Art of Drawing with the Pen*, published in 1606), Peacham states that the vividness of good rhetorical *enargeia* should turn a written description into something the audience will perceive so clearly as if it had been shown in visual form (“tables,” in the sense of paintings). Only if properly gathered, selected, and organised can the parts of a rhetorical description achieve excellent *enargeia*.

George Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), calls it with the Greek name *hypotyposis*,<sup>34</sup> which he translates as “the counterfeit representation,” and defines as a rhetorical device allowing the orator or

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<sup>31</sup>These manuals are considered as exemplary of contemporary English style manuals. As Peter Mack suggests, though singularly little successful, these manuals by Peacham and Puttenham (particularly the latter’s third book), together with Thomas Wilson’s *Rule of Reason* (1551) and Angel Day’s *The English Secretary* (1586), were printed over twenty times; they can indeed be considered as “versions of a single archetext: the renaissance English style manual.” They share common classical sources for the treatment of figures and tropes – *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (particularly Book IV), Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* (particularly Books VIII and IX) – as well as humanistic treatises like Erasmus’s *De Copia*. Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 76-7, 84-5.

<sup>32</sup>By amplification or *copia* it is meant the use of a rhetorical technique in order to make “something seem more important in order to elicit a stronger response from an audience.” *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>33</sup>Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, 134-5.

<sup>34</sup>As noted by Ravenna, in classical rhetoric manuals “description” was rendered from Greek through several different terms: *hypotyposis*, *diatyposis*, *sub oculis subiectio*,

poet to "describe and set fourth many things, in such sort as it should appeare they were truly before our eyes though they were not present, which doth require cunning; for nothing can be kindly counterfait or represented in his absence, but by great discretion in the doer."<sup>35</sup> Although Puttenham seems to have relied on the more general transcoding of verbal perception into visual stimuli, without connecting it directly to the art of painting, common to both definitions is the essential capacity to describe "so plainly and lively" and with such "cunning" that the listeners or readers may perceive in front of their eyes the absent object that is being described. Again, this trait can be summarised as vividness; if perfectly used, it constitutes, according to classical rhetoric manuals, the purpose and end of a *descriptio*.<sup>36</sup> The ultimate source for Peacham's and Puttenham's description seems to have been Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, where *hypotyposis* appears in a discussion on *sub oculis subiectio*.<sup>37</sup> Here is the passage from Quintilian:

With regard to the figure which Cicero calls *ocular demonstration*, this comes into play when we do not restrict ourselves to mentioning that something was done, but proceed to show how it was done, and do so not merely on broad general lines, but in full detail. In the last book I classified this figure under the head of *vivid illustration*, while Celsus actually terms it by this name. Others give the name of ὑποτυπώσεις to any representation of facts which is made in such vivid language that they appeal to the eye rather than the ear.<sup>38</sup>

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*illustratio*, and others. The Greek term was usually accompanied, in such handbooks, by its Latin rendering, which was more or less experimental depending on whether it had been conceived as a borrowing, a periphrasis, or a loan translation. Ravenna, "Per l'identità di *ephrasis*," 23.

<sup>35</sup>Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, 174.

<sup>36</sup>Ravenna, "Per l'identità di *ekphrasis*," 21.

<sup>37</sup>Zanker, "Enargeia in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry," 303

<sup>38</sup>"Illa uero, ut ait Cicero, sub oculis subiectio tum fieri solet, cum res non gesta indicatur, sed ut sit gesta ostenditur, nec uniuersa sed per partes: quem locum proximo libro subiectimus euidētiaē, et Celsus hoc nomen isti figurae dedit. Ab aliis ὑποτυπώσεις

In the *sub oculis subiectio* figure things are told not so much as they were carried out, but as they appear visually, and not as a whole, but in parts or detail; it is also defined as *hypotyposis* when things are expressed verbally in such a way that they may be more easily grasped with the eyes than with the ears.

According to manuals of rhetoric, descriptive vividness therefore seems to rest in a limbo between the auditive and the visual. But, whereas the visual can convey life-like imitation by means of "things" (or the subject-matter of the composition), poetry must do it by means of "words," through which it must achieve the clarity of a visual rendition without the possibility and help, as it were, of actual visualisation.<sup>39</sup> In *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton seems to have explored both the verbal and visual techniques of *enargeia*, thus singing Britain both by means of "words" and of "things" – that is to say, through verbal amplification and the accumulation of details, and through the visualisation of the subject-matter with the help of textual and non-textual tools.

Drayton's use of accumulation is more common and evident, and it is based on detailed descriptions, often in the form of catalogues. Such accuracy was meant to activate the readers' imagination and interpretative

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dicitur proposita quaedam forma rerum ita expressa verbis, ut cerni potius videantur quam audiri...." Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 3:IX.ii.40.

<sup>39</sup>This logical (and rather pioneering) explanation of the relationship between rhetoric and the visual arts can be found in Rudolph Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica* (1479). Peter Mack, "Agricola's Use of the Comparison between Writing and the Visual Arts," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992): 171, 173. Agricola's text is provided in English: "for example, the painter who shows how an object can be depicted as swollen or concave by the way the lines are drawn, or who shows which colours return light, which shade, or how objects can be shown in a flat surface as either standing out or receding into the distance. He is teaching by means of things. These same effects can be achieved through language, so that they are not shown, but rather transmitted through words. So Plutarch spoke perceptively when he said that a poem is a speaking picture and a picture a silent poem, meaning that both teach, and what they teach is often the same: but one states what the other shows." *Ibid.*, 173.

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skills within the spatial relations ordering nature,<sup>40</sup> by providing specific taxonomies of objects the readers may recognise and then visualise, by comparing them to the stock of images in their own memory. Yet, Drayton's encyclopedic bias often tends to overwhelm the reader through endless lists: for instance, the birds' catalogue in XIII.41-86 and XXV.51-138, too long to reproduce in full.<sup>41</sup>

To *Philomell* the next, the Linet we prefer;  
And by that warbling bird, the Wood-Larke place we then,  
The Red-sparrow, the Nope, the Red-breast, and the Wren,  
The Yellow-pate.... (XIII.73-5)

Such catalogues are clearly formulaic in structure, and can be brought back to the tradition of "versified lexicography" pertaining to the *topos* of the richness of the *locus amoenus*.<sup>42</sup> It has been suggested that another important catalogue, in XXVI.211-74, was certainly devised following the kinds of fish present in Ausonius's Latin river poem *Mosella*,<sup>43</sup> which Drayton may have used simply as a lexicographic source. However, it is difficult to say, by considering *Poly-Olbion* alone – and excluding specific cases like the dialectal versions of common animal or plant names – whether Drayton's "itemized" landscape<sup>44</sup> was devised on grounds of the poet's own experience, or was, instead, an instance of "localisation," carried out on the basis of a classical *topos*, as well as of lists of landscape

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<sup>40</sup>Chris Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape: Towards a New Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 275-6.

<sup>41</sup>A similar catalogue of herbs is provided in XIII.195-234. For an analysis of this catalogue see T.P. Harrison, "Drayton's Herbals," *University of Texas Studies in English* 23 (1943): 15-25.

<sup>42</sup>Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 184, 197.

<sup>43</sup>W.H. Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," 800-2. Ausonius may have drawn fish names from common late antiquity lexicography, but also from Pliny, Ovid, and Statius. M.E. Consoli, "Intertestualità ed originalità nella *Mosella* di Ausonio," *Rivista di cultura classica e medievale* 1 (1995): 133. These are sources which Drayton, if ever in need of suggestions, may have had easily accessed.

<sup>44</sup>James Turner, *The Politics of Landscape: Rural Scenery and Society in English Poetry, 1630-1660* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 17, 15.

features coming from other sources. Through a cursory examination of similar instances in his previous works, it appears that Drayton may have opted for a more objective observation of nature beginning around the late 1610s. For instance, the same bird names appearing in the catalogue in Song XIII are also present in his poem *The Owle* (1604); but their function there is that of referents to specific human types; they are therefore symbolic.<sup>45</sup> The catalogue in Song XIII is still tied to the medieval catalogue in form, but free of traditional epithets typical of particular birds; though certainly stylised, the content is purely Drayton's.<sup>46</sup> The only clear, unexplained regionalisms are "nope" (for "bullfinch," used in Staffordshire)<sup>47</sup> and "yellow-pate" for the more common "yellow hammer"; the others are common-enough bird names, sometimes derived from their Latin counterpart ("linet" for *Linaria*), sometimes typically English. Interestingly, "woosell" (58) and "merle" (62) are synonyms, both corresponding to *Turdus merula* or the blackbird, but the former term is certainly regional; similarly, "goldfinch" (77) a very common non-regional name, may as well have been a regional variant for "yellow hammer" (OED 1.c), whereas, despite the very conventional epithets, "tydie" may possibly refer to the great tit.<sup>48</sup> "Hecco" (80), of Anglo-Saxon origin, was typical of central and northern counties; it may be a north-central variant of "wood larke," or the green woodpecker.<sup>49</sup> As for the catalogue in Song XXV, mainly concerned with water-birds in Lincolnshire, it seems

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<sup>45</sup>T.P. Harrison, *They Tell of Birds* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1956), 111. In 1604 Drayton had used many of the same bird names in his poem *The Owle*: philomel, red-breast, linnet, merle, hecco, throstle, ouzel (or woosell), nightingale, goldfinch, jay, wren. It seems plausible to suspect that in *Poly-Olbion* Drayton erased the birds that might be more easily brought back to satirical associations: i.e., the owl, the eagle, the robin.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 116-17.

<sup>47</sup>Charles Swainson, *The Folk Lore and Provincial Names of British Birds* (Whitefish: Kessinger, 2004), 66.

<sup>48</sup>Charlotte MacDonald, "Drayton's 'Tidy' and Chaucer's 'Tidif'," *The Review of English Studies* 21 (1945): 133.

<sup>49</sup>Swainson, *The Folk Lore and Provincial Names of British Birds*, 99.

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to rely also on specific ornithological books,<sup>50</sup> beside drawing inspiration from works by Du Bartas and Camden for a few of them.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, Drayton did use the so-called "ancient lore" (derived from literary or popular sources alike), but he may have also added his own vivid and direct experience of birds, which may have come to him through his early life in the countryside.<sup>52</sup>

Drayton's exploitation of vividness through a fit organisation of the subject-matter is characterised, instead, by a rejection of detailed terms in favour of more general words, which, through their poetic disposition, can provide what is perceived like a compositional effect. This seems to be the general idea lying behind some of Drayton's topographical descriptions in *Poly-Olbion*:

Thou powerfull God of flames [Apollo] (in verse divinely  
great)  
Touch my invention so with thy true genuine heate,  
That high and noble things I slightly may not tell,  
Nor light and idle toyes my lines may vainly swell;  
But as my subject serves, so hie or lowe to straine,  
And to the varying earth so sute my varying vaine,  
That Nature in my worke thou maist thy power avow;  
That as thou first found'st Art, and didst her rules allow;  
So I, to thine owne selfe that gladlie neere would bee,  
May herein doe the best, in imitating thee:  
As thou hast here a hill, a vale there, there a flood,  
A mead here, there a heath, and now and then a wood,  
These things so in my Song I naturally may showe;  
Now, as the Mountaine hie; then, as the Valley lowe:  
Heere, fruitfull as the Mead, there as the Heath be bare;  
Then, as the gloomie wood, I may be rough, though rare.  
(II.3-18)

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<sup>50</sup>For instance, William Turner, *Avium praecipuarum* (London, 1544); Konrad von Gesner, *Historia Animalium* (Zurich, 1551-8). See Harrison, *They Tell of Birds*, 118-19.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>52</sup>MacDonald, "Drayton's 'Tidy'," 129.

Though frequent in epic poetry, Drayton's invocation to Apollo in Song II – following, oddly enough, the invocation to the *genius loci* in Song I – is not simply connected with poetic inspiration, for which, after all, Drayton had already asked British Bards (I.31-41). It may indeed have been inspired by the tradition associating Apollo with the overall description of the earth: as Greek and Roman mythology had it, from his chariot, the god could ride over the globe and cover it all, unlike any man, in a glance.<sup>53</sup> By Drayton's times, Apollo's synoptic power had come to be related also to the overall knowledge of the globe, made increasingly possible through navigation, therefore by portolan charts, and cartography in general (Fig. 4.1).<sup>54</sup> One of the most renowned instances of this association appears in some prefatory lines to Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*: Ortelius, the editor and cartographer, has been granted to encircle the earth on Apollo's chariot, and has thus been able to trace synoptically both known and unknown regions of the earth.<sup>55</sup>

In the light of this Apollinean reference, Drayton's intent to "imitate" the whole of Britain "naturally" – following, that is, the land's variety with a suitable "varying vaine" – may possess more of a visual than a rhetorical connotation. The visualisation of topography is indeed an essential feature in *Poly-Olbion*, both in the form of its maps and in the frequent and peculiar interest of the poet for a great vividness of landscape

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<sup>53</sup>D.E. Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 191-2. The original text, by Adolphus Mekerchus (Adolf van Meetkercke), is: "Ortelius, quem quadrijugo super aera curru / Phoebus Apollo vehi secum dedit, unde iacentes / Lustraret terres circumfusumque [*sic*] profundum. / Hine olli Phoebum, qui conspicit omnia, prorsus / Ignotas, alio penitens penitusque sub Orbis / Axe sita monstrasse plagas, solisque reiectas / Indigenis, Orbemque nupum gentesque, virosque / Detexisse ferunt, mundisque arcana remoti." Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570; rpt. Antwerp, 1580); see Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye*, 294. This idea had become commonplace at the time, but, because one of the sources of *Poly-Olbion* was *De Mona Druidum Insula* by Humphrey Llwyd, contained in all post-1579 editions of Ortelius's atlas, Drayton may as well have come across these specific lines.

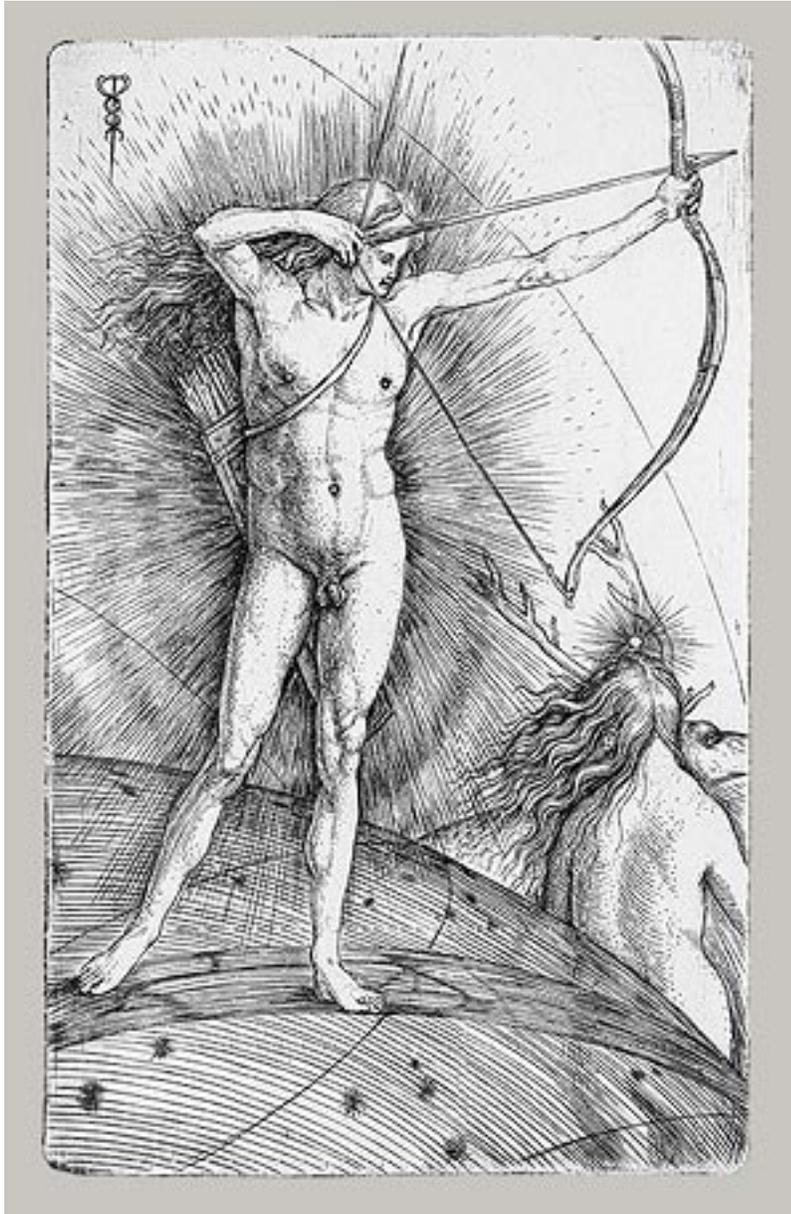


Figure 4.1: Jacopo de' Barbari. *Apollo and Diana*. Engraving. c. 1500-1505.

description. Such vividness, the outcome of what Drayton calls “variety” – generated by the use of words that will stand for parts of the compositional subject-matter – may be said to correspond, in poetry, to the highlights and shadows of paintings, used to render the visual impact of landscape.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, variety is here not so much a unifying principle,<sup>57</sup> but the *subject* of a unified, carefully composed description conveyed through the poet’s synoptic eye.

#### 4.1.2 *Landskip Pictorialism*

*Topographia* as such does not necessarily entail the representation of a trait of land through a compositional (structured) visual field.<sup>58</sup> What may foster this peculiar approach to the description of a place is the influence of art theories of landscape painting, which reached England between the late 1590s and the early seventeenth century: they influenced literature which, in turn, contributed to the diffusion of the concept of landscape painting among the educated strata of English society.<sup>59</sup> To suggest the underlying influence of the recent genre of landscape painting in *Poly-Olbion* means to highlight not so much the ekphrastic nature (in the twentieth-century sense of the poetic depiction of a work of art, seen as a source) of Drayton’s poetic vividness.<sup>60</sup> It is meant to emphasise the poet’s pictorial perception of landscape: that is to say, based on the selection and categorisation of particular elements, conceived in visual form, which are identified by means of the encoding of landscape features

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<sup>56</sup>See E.H. Gombrich, *The Heritage of Apelles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 5-18.

<sup>57</sup>Duchemin, “Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*,” 2.

<sup>58</sup>Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape*, 9.

<sup>59</sup>H.V.S. Ogden and M.S. Ogden, *English Taste in Landscape in the Seventeenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1955), 25.

<sup>60</sup>Webb, “*Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern*,” *passim*.

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acquired through the visual arts, their practice and theory.<sup>61</sup> The selected elements are then described by the poet so as to remain faithful to the kind of *mimesis* a painter would have to follow: poetic rhetoric will not exceed the imitation of nature by overstepping the latter's boundaries of verisimilitude; it will try and imitate it through descriptions that must be both possible and true,<sup>62</sup> so that not only the subject-matter itself is admired, but also the skill of the imitating artist:<sup>63</sup>

Conduct me through these Brooks, and with a fastned clue,  
Direct mee in my course, to take a perfect view  
Of all the wandring Streames, in whose entransying gyres,  
Wise Nature oft herselfe her workmanship admires  
(So manifold they are, with such Meanders wound,  
As may with wonder seeme invention to confound).... (V.88-92)

Such pictorial vividness therefore becomes a medium to improve the verbal rendering of *topographia*, by making, as stated before, "words" work as "things."

Drayton seems to have become interested in landscape and its pictorial theory as early as 1603, when the term "landskip" appeared for the first time in his *Mortimeriados*.<sup>64</sup> This passage was maintained, but also elaborated on, in the 1619 re-edition of the poem as *The Barons Wars*, and described five Greek mythological stories painted in the chamber of Queen Isabella, containing natural elements defined as "landscape."<sup>65</sup> In Canto VI, Mortimer's chamber is described as being decorated with works by

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<sup>61</sup>Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape*, 23.

<sup>62</sup>Franciscus Junius, *The Painting of the Ancients*, trans. F. Junius, 3 vols. (London: Printed by R. Hodgkinsonne, 1638), 1:iv.6. See also Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World: Samuel Van Hoogstraten's Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age*, trans. B. Jackson and L. Richards (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), chap. 3, 4.

<sup>63</sup>Mack, "Agricola's Use of the Comparison Between Writing and the Visual Arts," 174.

<sup>64</sup>Duchemin, "Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," 463-4.

<sup>65</sup>Ogden was the first to claim that Drayton's description, though possibly inspired by literary sources, showed nevertheless an "interest in landscape painting." Ogden, *English Taste in Landscape*, 25. For a survey of the theory of the development of landscape

"skilfull Painters" (MO 238); in *The Barons Wars*, the actual paintings in the Queen's chamber are described:

....the painted Flowers within the Roome  
Were sweet, as if they naturally had growne;  
The Light gave Colours, which upon them fell,  
And to the Colours the Perfume gave smell.

When on those sundry Pictures they devise,  
And from one Peece they to another runne,  
Commend that Face, that Arme, that Hand, those Eyes,  
Shew how that Bird, how well that Flowre was done,  
How this part shadow'd, how that did rise,  
This Top was clouded, how that Trayle was spunne,  
That Land-skip, Mixture, and Delineatings,  
And in that Art, a thousand curious Things.  
(BW 469-80)

Drayton hereby invents and describes non-existent paintings, seemingly displaying a concern for pictorial naturalism, its spatial perspective, and localising details.<sup>66</sup> He seems uninterested in lexicographic amplification; common nouns – e.g., "face," "arm," "flower" – are used refer to abstract categories and parts of the subject-matter. What matters in these lines is vividness, achieved both through the synaesthetic rendering of the single parts, with colours, generated by light, giving "smell" to the painted flowers, and through the spatial disposition of the nouns and their interrelationships with each other in the compositional context of the work of art. Drayton's description of the clouded top, however, as well as of the lights and shadows in the paintings, seem to suggest at least a rough knowledge, on his behalf, of the pictorial practice of contemporary landscape painting (namely, Dutch). In all paintings the issue of light –

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as a genre in its own right, see E.H. Gombrich, "Renaissance Artistic Theory and the Development of Landscape Painting," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1966), 107-21.

<sup>66</sup>Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape*, 25.

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in the form of *chiaroscuro*, as well as the opposition of strong and weak colours – was crucial in the devising of good compositional unity, where a sense of three-dimensional space would be achieved, through which the gazer's eye could somewhat "roam"; but in landscape paintings one of the main ways of reaching this depth was by means of clouds: the sunrays breaking through them would therefore provide "natural" lighting effects anchoring in space the various elements in the landscape:<sup>67</sup> "How this part shadow'd, how that did rise, / This Top was clouded...."

Indeed, technical terms related to the practice of painting are also used, like "land-skip" and "trayle."<sup>68</sup> The word "landskip" had first appeared in English, after the Dutch *landschap*, as late as 1598, in Richard Haydocke's *Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintings, Carvinge and Building* (1598), a translation of Lomazzo's *Trattato dell'arte de la pittura* (1584).<sup>69</sup> Its meaning was wide and covered what would later become separate types: according to OED, it signified (1.a) "a picture representing natural inland scenery, as distinguished from a sea picture, a portrait, etc.," (3) "inland natural scenery, or its representation in painting," (4.a) "a view, prospect of something," or (4.b) "a distant prospect: a vista" – generally grouping together, that is, natural prospects and topographical representations. In general, however, it implied first of all an awareness of the compositional nature of landscape, depending on a structured visual field, a circumstantial description, and optical effects,<sup>70</sup> mostly

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<sup>67</sup>See Paul Taylor, "The Concept of *Houding* in Dutch Art Theory," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992): 212, 214-15, 220, 230.

<sup>68</sup>This term is hereby considered technical, since it referred to "a trailing ornament (carved, moulded, or embroidered) in the form of a wreath or spray of leaves or tendrils; a wreathed or foliated ornament" (OED 2.a); it was related, that is, to the jargon of the visual arts.

<sup>69</sup>The anonymous *Arte of Limning* (1573), the first extant treatise on painting in English, contains no reference to landscape; Haydocke's translation, instead, omitted altogether the sixth book of the Italian edition, which focused on landscape. John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979), 10.

<sup>70</sup>Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape*, 25, 9.

rendered through spatial perspective. Spatialisation in poetry here blends topography and perspective.<sup>71</sup>

In *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton uses the word "landskip" twice. The first time it occurs in a description of the nymph of the river Rother flowing across the Weald:

And on her [the nymph's] loynes a frock, with many a swelling  
pleate,  
Embost with well-spread Horse, large Sheepe, and full-fed  
Neate,  
Some wallowing in the grasse, there lie a while to batten;  
Some sent away to kill; some either brought to fatten;  
With Villages amongst, oft powthred heere and there;  
And (that the same more like to \*Landskip should appeare)  
With Lakes and lesser Foards, to mitigate the heate....  
(XVIII.31-7)

The star marking the word "Landskip" refers back to the page margin, where Drayton perceived the necessity to define it as "the naturall expressing of the surface of a Country in Painting" (364), paying particular attention to its subject-matter.<sup>72</sup> In the early 1610s, when Drayton was writing the last song of Part I, "landskip" must have been an uncommon term. In his definition, Drayton seems to echo, even lexically, Henry Peacham's *Art of Drawing with the Pen* (1606), containing the first thorough discussion of the practice of landscape painting in English: there "landskip" is described as the "expressing of the land by hills, woodes, Castles, seas, valleys, ruines, hanging rocks, Citties, Townes, etc., as farre as may bee shewed within our Horizon."<sup>73</sup> In general, although this *Poly-Olbion* passage has

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<sup>71</sup>Indeed, the English words perspective/prospective seem to have both been used as translations of the Italian *prospettiva*, and, in Drayton's times, were considered synonyms of "landskip." James Turner, "Landscape and the 'Art Prospective' in England, 1584-1660," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (1979): 290, 292.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>73</sup>Henry Peacham, *The Art of Drawing with the Pen* (London: Printed by R. Braddock, 1606), 28.

been dismissed as designed in "old-fashioned terms, as a pageant figure in decorated robes"<sup>74</sup> – the picture is indeed part of a nymph's mantle – the spatial sketch defined by place adverbs ("there," "heere and there"), and the use of common words as parts of the compositional subject-matter, suggest instead that this is an instance of the very spatial rendering and awareness possibly influenced by the art of landscape painting.<sup>75</sup> Again, general common nouns are used, which, it may be hypothesised, may be linked to the visual-rhetorical theory proposed by Peacham in his section on the drawing of "landskip": the farther an object, the more difficult it is to tell its main features, because particulars are confounded and annihilated by distance; so, the farther from the observer a thing is, the more it will be better defined by its universal category, rather than one of its types.<sup>76</sup> And that seems precisely the role Drayton's common nouns must play in his landscape descriptions. Besides, the single parts of the poetic landscape seem indeed arranged in order to provide a three-dimensional view the reader can gaze at and explore visually; it will feel as if the described landscape were "accessible with one's feet."<sup>77</sup> It is worthwhile recalling the similar, "three-dimensional" way in which, in the late nineteenth century, A.H. Bullen described his reaction to the reading of *Poly-Olbion*:

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<sup>74</sup>Turner, *The Politics of Landscape*, 17. In his book, Turner is concerned particularly with what, in his opinion, was the fully mature period of landscape representation in English poetry, or the years spanning from 1630 to 1660, and touches on *Poly-Olbion* very cursorily.

<sup>75</sup>See Peacham, *The Art of Drawing*, 29-31.

<sup>76</sup>"....and you must be very dainty in lessening your bodies by their distance and have a regard, the farther your Landsskip [*sic*] goeth to those *universalia* which as *Aristotle* saith (in respect of theyre particulars concealed from our senses) are *notiora*: as in discerning a building 10 or 12 miles off, I cannot tell whether it bee Church, Castle, gentlemans house, or the like: So that in drawing of it I must expresse no particular signe as belle, portculleis etc., but shew as weakly and as faintly as mine eie judgeth of it, because all those particulars are taken away by the greatnesse of the distance." *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>77</sup>This phrase – in the original Dutch "als of het met de voeten toegankelijk ware" – is taken from Willem Goeree, *Inleyding tot de Praktyk der Algemeene Schilderkonst* (Amsterdam, 1670). See Taylor, "The Concept of *Houding* in Dutch Art Theory," 212-13.

a saunter down a Surrey lane when the nuts are ripening is the one thing pleasanter than a ramble through the *Poly-Olbion*....the *Polyolbion* carries the reader through hundreds of pages in the swing and sweep of the bounding verse....The long rolling verse has something of the springiness of heather; we cover the ground insensibly, and find a growing delight in the labour.<sup>78</sup>

Drayton may have been experimenting with a new pictorial vividness, which, like those landscape paintings where an excellent compositional effect is achieved, would make the readers/observers feel as if they could almost take a walk in the landscape described.<sup>79</sup>

The second reference to "landskip," in Part II, is to be found in the following description:

The toying *Fisher* here is tewing of his Net:  
The *Fowler* is imployd his lymed twigs to set.  
One underneath his Horse, to get a shoot doth stalke;  
Another over Dykes upon his Stilts dot walke:  
There other with their Spades, the Peats are squaring out,  
And others from their Carres, are busily about,  
To draw out Sedge and Reed, for Thatch and Stover fit,  
That whosoever would a Landskip rightly hit,  
Beholding but my Fennes, shall with more shapes be stor'd,  
Then *Germany*, or *France*, or *Thuscan* can afford....  
(XXV.140-8)

Again, Drayton's descriptive intention seems to be aiming to the creation of a "landskip," complete with perspectival markers like place adverbs, as well as unified in composition. But these lines are also reminiscent of the engraved workers populating Hole's maps, and, like these, might have been ultimately influenced by Dutch and Flemish landscape depictions

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<sup>78</sup>A.H. Bullen, *Selections from the Poems of Michael Drayton* (Privately printed: Chilsworth, 1883), xx.

<sup>79</sup>Taylor, "The Concept of *Houding* in Dutch Art Theory," 213.

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of village scenes – country settings with figures, of a narrative nature.<sup>80</sup> Landscape paintings in the Dutch and Flemish styles generally presented a movement towards a national appropriation and appreciation of the land which somewhat resembled Drayton's own in *Poly-Olbion* – "Beholding but my Fennes, shall with more shapes be stor'd, / Then *Germany*, or *France*, or *Thuscan* can afford." Indeed, nature was conceived as a complete compositional whole, the precise details of which would not invalidate its exemplarity; time was portrayed in its flowing through the present by means of depictions of workers and characters undertaking some kind of action adding to the narrativity of the painting; the local was celebrated without rhetoric; and space was perceived as an uninterrupted whole.<sup>81</sup> Several Dutch painters (and engravers) had been living in England since the times of Elizabeth: namely, Lucas de Heere, Marcus Gheraerts the Elder, and Joris Hoefnagels. Hoefnagels was the author, among others, of a bird's-eye view of Bermondsey with the Tower of London (dated around the beginning of the seventeenth century), a milestone in the development of topographical landscape painting in England,<sup>82</sup> the most common views concerning, understandably, the river Thames and the surrounding seats of power.

It is impossible to say whether Drayton had first-hand knowledge of this kind of landscape painting, though it seems very likely. If so, it may have come to him through Peacham,<sup>83</sup> who, after 1607, was a member of Prince Henry's circle.<sup>84</sup> Another possibility is that Drayton

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<sup>80</sup>Odgen, *English Taste for Landscape*, 34, 42. For Hole's maps, see the next section.

<sup>81</sup>P.C. Sutton, ed., *Masters of 17th-Century Dutch Landscape Painting* (London: Herbert Press, 1987), xv. See also M.W. Friedlander, *Landscape - Portrait - Still Life*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Oxford: Cassirer, 1949), 88.

<sup>82</sup>Juliette Roding and Eric Jan Sluijter, "Dutch and Flemish artists in Britain 1550-1750," *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 13 (2003): 14.

<sup>83</sup>"Stradane" and "Goltzius," for instance, are mentioned in Peacham, *Art of Drawing*, 26.

<sup>84</sup>John Horden, "Peacham, Henry (b. 1578, d. in or after 1644)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk:80/view/>

himself may have been acquainted with painters educated in the Dutch school: this hypothesis may be supported by the earliest extant portrait of Drayton wearing a laurel, dated 1599 (Fig. 4.2);<sup>85</sup> the author is unknown, but the overall style seems inspired by the Dutch portrait tradition.<sup>86</sup> Drayton may have also had access to Prince Henry's collection of paintings. To him a so-called Dutch gift was sent in 1610, comprising, as the Prince himself had asked, paintings by the best masters of the Low Countries: among these were the depiction of a storm at sea by Porcellis, a sea battle painted by Vroom – clearly trying to meet Henry's passion for the sea – but several others were sent, which have never been identified, and may have included Dutch landscape depictions.<sup>87</sup>

### 4.1.3 *The Maps*

The vividness achieved by using words as parts of the compositional subject-matter must ultimately be anchored to the readers' fantasy, and the images stored in it; only the comparison between these and the actual poetic depiction or imitation of nature can lead to a true comprehension of the poet's descriptive effort.<sup>88</sup> In the case of *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton could not possibly know whether its actual readers would possess the

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article/21667 (accessed December 29, 2008).

<sup>85</sup>See Roy Strong, *Tudor and Stuart Portraiture*, 2 vols. (London: H.M.S.O., 1969), 1:72; Tanya Cooper, *Searching for Shakespeare* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2006), 178.

<sup>86</sup>Privately discussed with Dr Paul Taylor, the Warburg Institute.

<sup>87</sup>J.G. Van Gelder, "Notes on the Royal Collection: IV. The 'Dutch Gift' of 1610 to Henry, Prince of 'Whalis', and Some Other Presents," *The Burlington Magazine* 105 (1963): 541-5.

<sup>88</sup>Junius, *The Painting of the Ancients*, 1:v.1. Junius takes this idea from Philostratus's *Eikones* (c. second century AD), and includes in his category of "work of art" both poems and paintings: "such as doe contemplate the workes of the Art of painting, saith Apollonius, [Note: Apud Philost. lib. II. cap. 10.] have great need of the imaginative facultie; for no body can with any good reason praise a painted horse or bull, unlesse hee doe conceive that same creature in his mind, whose similitude the Picture doth expresse." Idem.



Figure 4.2: Unknown artist. *Michael Drayton*. Oil on panel. 1599. London, National Portrait Gallery.

necessary stock of images of Britain's topography needed to comprehend his depiction of the land. As a consequence, in order to make sure that his topographical descriptions would be understood and appreciated, Drayton may have decided to preface each Song by a map of the counties to be described, providing both an overall idea of the region under scrutiny, as well as a fashionable kind of visual ornament suitable for a folio volume.

It is even a platitude to argue today that the role of maps in *Poly-Olbion* is therefore essential to the full comprehension of the poem; actually, the maps were first commented upon – and negatively – only in the year 1819: according to Thomas Campbell, the poem's "fatal defect" was that Drayton had "chained his poetry" to the maps.<sup>89</sup> The first actual reference to the important role of maps in *Poly-Olbion* can be found in a short anonymous essay published in the *Retrospective Review* in 1854, which stated that, among the "certain attractions of durable nature" of *Poly-Olbion*, there is "a series of poetic maps, which are as singular in their construction as the poem itself."<sup>90</sup> While they had only been hinted at beforehand – as in D'Israeli's observation, that in *Poly-Olbion* British domains are "so graphically pictured," and Coleridge's reference to Drayton's allegories of the Counties<sup>91</sup> – the maps were, the review asserted, an actual part of the work, even endowed with a "poetic" nature.<sup>92</sup> In a review of the 1876 edition of *Poly-Olbion*, A.B. Grosart criticised Hooper's choice not to reprint the maps:

to deprive us of the maps is downright robbery. Historically, and in relation to the poem, they are as indispensable as an

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<sup>89</sup>Thomas Campbell, ed., *Specimens of the British Poets*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Baird, [1819] 1853), 166-7.

<sup>90</sup>Anonymous, "Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," *Retrospective Review* 2 (1854): 105.

<sup>91</sup>Isaac D'Israeli, "Drayton," in *Amenities of Literature*, 2 vols. (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1842), 1:188; S.T. Coleridge, "Notes on British Poets," in *Essays and Marginalia*, ed. H. Coleridge, 2 vols. (London: Moxon, 1851), 2:3.

<sup>92</sup>Anonymous, "Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," 106-7.

atlas in following a Livingstone or a Stanley. It is incomprehensible to us that no mention of their existence should be made in the Introduction....<sup>93</sup>

However, *Poly-Olbion* was not reprinted with maps until 1933, when J.W. Hebel published the fourth volume of his edition of Drayton's works, including the complete original layout of both parts, though reduced in size to suit the quarto format. Hebel's decision to respect the original front matter designed by Drayton, despite the additional costs, marked a new awareness of the role played by maps in *Poly-Olbion*, an aspect that was briefly discussed for the first time in a review published anonymously in the *Times Literary Supplement* in August 1933.<sup>94</sup> Only in recent years have Hole's maps begun to be fully analysed as part of Drayton's work, particularly after J.B. Harley's discussion of the politicisation of cartography, and Richard Helgerson's 1986 article entitled "The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography, and Subversion in Renaissance England," supporting the idea that the development of cartography helped shape a consciousness of national power.<sup>95</sup>

The *Poly-Olbion* maps have been described as "the queerest and most fantastic series of English country maps,"<sup>96</sup> and have been seldom analysed, if not as a historical curiosities, due to their peculiar connotations. Yet, after the development of new cartographic theories in the last twenty years, Hole's maps have come to be studied in the light of their twofold nature. They can be read as texts, or more precisely, as non-objective "thick texts," displaying, that is to say, many layers of meaning and social

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<sup>93</sup>A.B. Grosart, "Complete Works of Michael Drayton (Book Review)," *The Academy* 9 (1876): 164.

<sup>94</sup>Anonymous, "Drayton's England," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 31, 1933, 573.

<sup>95</sup>J.B. Harley, "Meaning and Ambiguity in Tudor Cartography," in S. Tyacke, ed., *English Map-Making, 1500-1650* (London: British Library, 1983), 22-45; Richard Helgerson, "The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography, and Subversion in Renaissance England," in *Representing the English Renaissance*, ed. S. Greenblatt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 328.

<sup>96</sup>R.V. Toovey, *Maps and Map-Makers* (London: Batsford, 1978), 70.

effects.<sup>97</sup> But, from the standpoint of cultural materialism, they can also be read as cultural artifacts,<sup>98</sup> testifying to the commodification of certain social dynamics.

In Drayton's words, these maps were to function as an "especiall help...lively delineating to thee [the readers], every Mountaine, Forrest, River, and Valley, expressing in they sundry postures; their loves, delights, and naturall situations" (vi\*). There appears again the term "lively," which, as has been shown, had a strong rhetorical connotation related to *enargeia*, or a visual, pictorial mode of description. Indeed, such pictorialism was believed to be inherent in the very *raison d'être* of chorographical maps, as theorised by Ptolemy himself in his *Geographia*. In the opening sentence, he presented the discipline as follows: "Ἡ γεωγραφία μίμησις ἐστὶ διαγραφῆς τοῦ κατειλημμένου τῆς γῆς μέρους ὅλου," translated into Latin as "Geographia imitatio est picturae totius partis terrae cognitae."<sup>99</sup> This concern with pictorialism was related to a mode of representation similar to, and connected with, the vividness of rhetorical *descriptio*, with maps being seen as a blending of text and image. As a sixteenth-century chorographer admitted, if we take topography or chorography in a figural sense and subsume them under the category of *descriptio*, "no one can be a good chorographer who is not a good painter."<sup>100</sup> Indeed, both landscape painters and map-makers were con-

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<sup>97</sup>J.B. Harley, "Historical Geography and the Cartographic Illusion," *Journal of Historical Geography* 15 (1989): 80, 84.

<sup>98</sup>Jess Edwards, "How to Read an Early Modern Map: Between the Particular and the General, the Material and the Abstract, Words and Mathematics," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9 (2003): par. 18. <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/09-1/edwamaps.html>

<sup>99</sup>See Svetlana Alpers, "The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art," in D. Woodward, ed., *Art and Cartography: Six Historical Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 67. The first rendering of this expression into English was Agrippa's phrase "a certaine imitation of painting." Nuti, "Mapping Places," 90.

<sup>100</sup>See Conley, "Early Modern Literature and Cartography," 404. Alpers points out that in *The Art of Painting* by Jan Vermeer, the painter added the word *descriptio* on the upper border of a map represented in the picture, as a reference to the map itself. Alpers, "The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art," 69. This observation has been heavily criticised by

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cerned with the synoptic depiction of a portion of the earth on a plane surface: the single features should be included within a comprehensive compositional view, and should be related to one another in a coherent way.<sup>101</sup>

What ties together chorography, landscape, and maps is the pictorial approach to the subject within a unified compositional view. And, indeed, in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, maps were considered particular representations of "landskip" (OED 4.f).<sup>102</sup> Hole's maps can certainly be ascribed, following P.D.A. Harvey's taxonomy, to the "picture-map" tradition, containing both artistic and cartographic elements, and usually outlined through a bird's-eye view of the land.<sup>103</sup> Hole's England and Wales were not designed according to a unified scale or perspective: any attempt to juxtapose the single maps in order to reconstruct the two countries in their entirety will not succeed. For instance, some of the maps overlap awkwardly with one another (e.g., those relating to Worcestershire in Songs VII and XIV);<sup>104</sup> the Severn estuary is much bigger than the surrounding features, as much as the Thames trait is in the London area, owing also to the huge anthropomorphisations and ornaments added to them; the eastern county maps (especially those of Huntingdonshire and

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E.M. de Jongh, "Review of *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* by Svetlana Alpers," *Simiolus* 14 (1984): 57-8.

<sup>101</sup>Ronald Rees, "Historical Links Between Cartography and Art," *Geographical Review* 70 (1980): 60.

<sup>102</sup>Turner, "Landscape and the 'Art Prospective' in England, 1584-1660," 293.

<sup>103</sup>However, as Catherine Delano-Smith notes, it seems that maps and pictures were not considered "interchangeable": "The map was not seen as a casual alternative or substitute for a picture. This becomes clearer when it is seen how one form could be transformed into the other. Pictures could, and did, become maps and maps could become more 'pictorial', meaning deliberately imaginative rather than geographically accurate, conveying the idea of 'place' rather than attempting to imitate its spatial configuration. In this way the different nature and function of the two forms of graphic communication, picture and map, was emphasized." Catherine Delano-Smith, "Maps as Art and Science: Maps in Sixteenth-Century Bibles," *Imago Mundi* 42 (1990): 69.

<sup>104</sup>The map in Song VII has a typo: "Worester" instead of "Worcester," which is spelt correctly in map XIV. This may be taken as a symptom of rushed printing.

Cambridgeshire), where the sea does not appear, are wider, as compared to those of central England ones. The only areas in which some kind of proportion between the parts is maintained seem to be the western coast of Wales and northern England. Although the overall topography is generally correct, stronger attention is paid to the flow of rivers and their mouths, rather than to the detailed coastal progress. As compared to Saxton's delineations, for instance, Hole's maps are much rougher and less precise, and, we may say, tend to simplify geographical boundaries in favour of a more detailed and marked delineation of the English and Welsh rivers.

It may be useful to attempt an overall graphic analysis of the maps, based on Catherine Delano-Smith's seminal taxonomy of map signs,<sup>105</sup> in order to retrace Hole's possible sources, without relying too much or too directly on the Saxton and Camden volumes.<sup>106</sup> First of all, it should be noted that the style of the maps is not consistent, and that these variations – which will be called a) and b) – seem to be split between the maps in Part I and those in Part II, though some of the maps in Part I – e.g., Map II (Fig. 4.3) – partake of both. Style a) – best exemplified by Map I (Fig. 4.4) – shows: shorter and lighter straight lines used to fill in the spaces of land and sea; non-shaded coasts, rendered through straight lines of one colour; rivers represented as blank or with very few curved lines between two thicker lines; "mole-hill"-shaped hills; trees depicted very life-like, with long trunks, in large numbers. Style b) – best exemplified by Map XIX (Fig. 4.5) – features: longer, more defined lines for the firm land; curved lines for the sea, alternating coloured and blank areas; lightly-shaded coastal lines; rivers filled in with numerous thin lines; "mole-hill"-shaped

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<sup>105</sup>Catherine Delano-Smith, "Signs on Printed Topographical Maps, c. 1470 - c. 1640," in Woodward, ed., *The History of Cartography, Volume III*, 1:528-85.

<sup>106</sup>Cf., for instance, "those 'stripped-down' Saxton maps in Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*." Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature*, 275. It should be reminded that Hole helped with the engraving of maps for the 1607 edition of the *Britannia*. Toovey, *Maps and Map-Makers*, 68.

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Figure 4.3: William Hole. *Poly-Olbion*, Map II. Engraving. Published 1612.

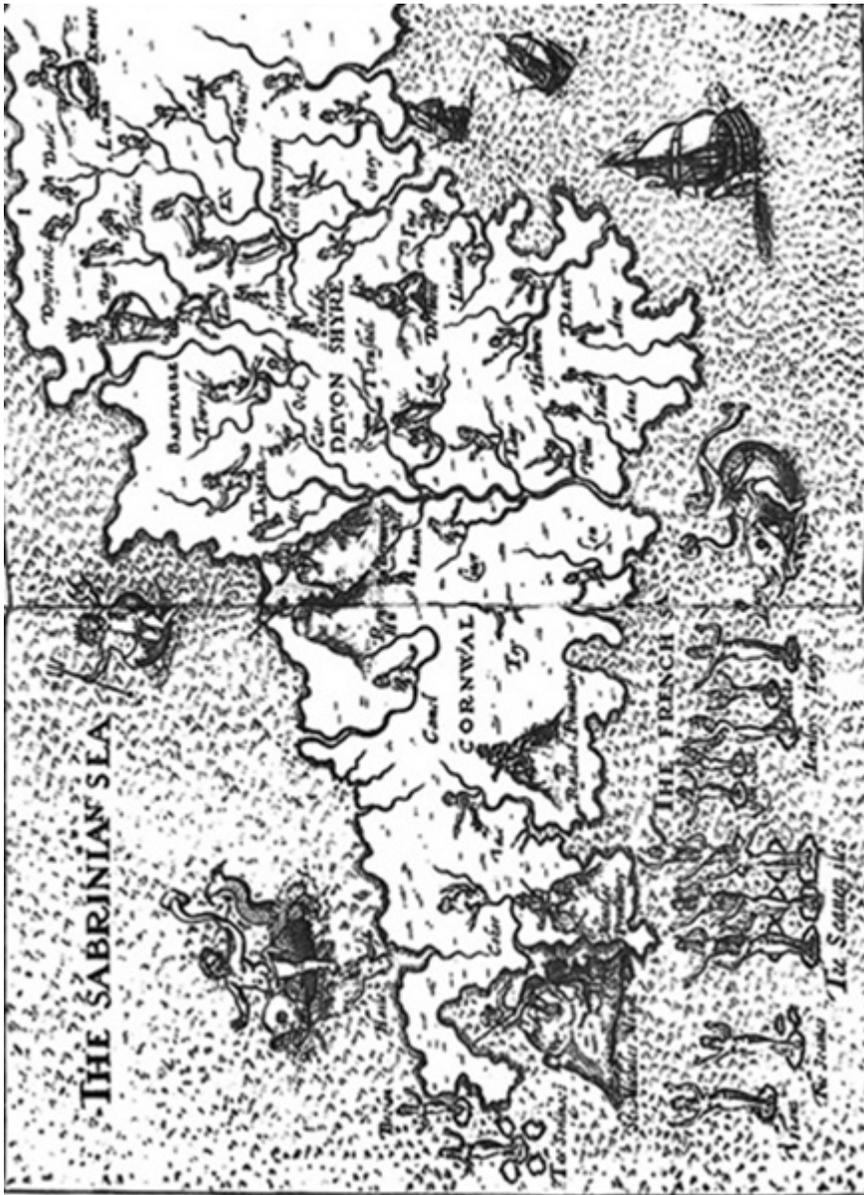


Figure 4.4: William Hole. *Poly-Olbion, Map I*. Engraving. Published 1612.

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Figure 4.5: William Hole. *Poly-Olbion*, Map XIX. Engraving. Published 1622.

hills, depicted as less defined promontories – e.g., Map XV (Fig. 4.6); life-like trees with long trunks, not very numerous; lakes, marshes and estuaries rendered by dotted white areas. These variations may of course be attributed to the work of different engravers; and the quality of the differences between the two styles may also indicate the use of diversified models. In the light of the taxonomy employed, the Saxton source seems less obvious. Indeed, the a) style seems to be slightly influenced by the Smith maps (e.g., the hills in Map XV), published in 1602-3,<sup>107</sup> but generally seems to follow the Mercator/Ortelius models from the 1570s (trees) and 1580s (coastal lines).<sup>108</sup> The b) style shows clear influences from the Norden and Speed maps dating 1610-11 (especially the sea and coast design), whereas the rivers seem closer to Saxton's model.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the graphic signs in Hole's maps were generally inspired by former efforts, whereas the topographical outline may have been taken from any fairly accurate map of England and Wales designed after the 1570s; it needed not be detailed since the *Poly-Olbion* maps display no political boundaries whatsoever, apart from those determined by the coastal line – dividing, that is, Britain from the rest of the world through the sea – and by the rivers themselves.<sup>110</sup>

As compared to other more or less contemporary instances, Hole's maps are certainly more pictorial in the vividness of their representation of landscape features: one of the most evident traces can be found in the way highlights and shadows are used in the depiction of hills and slopes, as well as the fact that the inland is generally peopled by anthropomorphisations of rivers and forests,<sup>111</sup> identified through

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<sup>107</sup>Peter Barber, "England II: Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps, 1550-1625," in D. Buisseret, ed., *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool for Government in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 64.

<sup>108</sup>Cf. Delano-Smith, "Signs on Printed Topographical Maps," 542-3.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, 542 ff.

<sup>110</sup>Peter Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), 35.

<sup>111</sup>A differentiation has been drawn between the anthropomorphisations in the maps and the personifications in the poem, according to J.J. Paxson's theory. Indeed, while

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Figure 4.6: William Hole. *Poly-Olbion*, Map XV. Engraving. Published 1622.

their local names, and by stylised figures carrying out everyday country occupations. The latter suggest a resemblance with the contemporary Dutch school of cartography, whose maps were richly coloured, like Hole's, and filled with details regarding attire, working activities, and customs of the localities that were represented.<sup>112</sup> This attention to decoration was perfectly in tune with the general purpose of *Poly-Olbion*: the maps' mimetic quality was part of the cartographic *lingua franca* that was being developed at the time, as a way of conveying the same meaning to different kinds of audiences.<sup>113</sup>

Drayton may have added the maps as part of his rhetorical *topographia*, in order, that is, to transform Britain into a physical commodity and an aesthetic object, to be visualised, explored, and memorised at leisure. Around the late sixteenth century, maps had started to become ornamental motifs suggesting both territorial pride and aesthetic appreciation: precious maps were collected and displayed as paintings, and the most renowned Saxton plates were also used as pictorial subjects for tapestries; and, in general, maps were easily found in bibles, secular books, plays, poetry, portraits, and even playing cards.<sup>114</sup>

The selection at the basis of cartographic representation – based on "omission, simplification, classification, the creation of hierarchies, and 'symbolization'"<sup>115</sup> – is, first of all, in the eye of the mapmaker, who, in our

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anthropomorphism is the "figural translation of any non-human quantity into a character that has human *form*," personification is the "translation of non-human quantity into a sentient human capable of thought and language, possessing *voice* and *face*." J.J. Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 42.

<sup>112</sup>Rees, "Historical Links Between Cartography and Art," 63-4.

<sup>113</sup>Harley, "Meaning and Ambiguity," 35.

<sup>114</sup>Victor Morgan, "Lasting Image of the Elizabethan Era," *The Geographical Magazine* 52 (1980): 405-6; Rhonda Lemke Sanford, *Maps and Memory in Early Modern England: A Sense of Place* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 142; C. Delano-Smith and R.J.P. Kain, *English Maps: A History* (London: British Library, 1999), 49. Cf. A.M. Hind, "An Elizabethan Pack of Geographical Playing Cards," *British Museum Quarterly* 13 (1938-9): 2-4.

<sup>115</sup>J.B. Harley, "Deconstructing the Map," in T. Barnes and J. Duncan, eds., *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text, and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London and New

case, may have been supervised by Drayton himself. The evident emphasis on rivers, hills, and sporadic historical cities, without marked political boundaries, but clearly showing the names of the various counties or regions, is reminiscent of sixteenth-century Bible maps representing either the earthly paradise or biblical locations (Fig. 4.4),<sup>116</sup> in order to provide the readers with a mental itinerary throughout the places mentioned in the text.<sup>117</sup> This may also provide further symbolic meanings for Hole's cartographic emphasis on the flow of the rivers. Indeed, rivers were believed to play an essential role in the connection between the *locus* of paradise and the earth where humankind lived; they actually provided the link themselves.<sup>118</sup> And, even in King James's "heavenly Albion," the Thames had come to be iconographically and symbolically associated with the rivers of paradise:<sup>119</sup> it reunited most English rivers, after dividing Britain into its parts, and conveyed them to the sea (the traditional river Oceanus encompassing the world), thus restoring the original order.<sup>120</sup> In the final *Poly-Olbion* Song, Drayton makes explicit reference to this heavenly connection of rivers, when describing the Eden, a brook in Westmorland, "whose name doth bear the sound / Of Gods first Garden-plot, th'imparadized ground, / Wherein he placed Man, from whence by sin he fell" (XXX.69-71); and with the vision of *the* Eden the poem ends, delineating a scene in which all its tributaries reach the brook, "Faire *Eden* to behold, who meeting by and by, / Downe from these Western Sands into the Sea doe fall..." (XXX.338-40); the sea, of course, is Drayton's final stop, where all the rivers must go to.

The kind of medieval cartography incorporating both a temporal and

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York: Routledge, 1992), 243.

<sup>116</sup>Cf. Delano-Smith, "Maps as Art and Science," 70-1, 74.

<sup>117</sup>Alessandro Scafi, *Il paradiso in terra: Mappa del giardino dell'Eden* (Milano: Mondadori, 2007), 68.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>119</sup>Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana, 1995), 279.

<sup>120</sup>Cf. Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature*, 94.



Figure 4.7: Abraham Ortelius. *Geographia Sacra*. Engraving. Antwerp, 1590.

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a spatial dimension, unconcerned with precise topographical measurements, showed sacred or classical locations as "places/events," representing the "hot spots" where manifold layers of history had accumulated upon geographical space.<sup>121</sup> In this kind of maps – as pictorial and mostly as bare as Hole's in *Poly-Olbion*<sup>122</sup> – geography and history (in our case, British history) were seen as a spatial-temporal *unicum*, so that each location, whether natural or artificial, referred to a historical event,<sup>123</sup> and constituted a narrative *locus*, by the same token. For instance, Map III represents Salisbury Plain as a nymph seating on the ground, an anticipation of the later lines introducing the events related to that locality:

....she, of all the *Plaines of Britaine*, that doth beare,  
The name to be the first (renowned everie where)  
Hath worthily obtained that *Stonendge* there should stand:  
Shee, first of *Plaines*; and that, first Wonder of the Land....  
(III.41-4)

Sources for such "place/event" cartographic representations – which clearly pertain, in form and structure, to a different kind of map as compared, for instance, to Saxton's – can be found, as has been suggested, in maps prefacing Bibles (particularly in Protestant countries after the mid sixteenth century), but also in biblical atlases like Ortelius's *Geographia Sacra* (1601).<sup>124</sup> What such maps meant to illustrate was the way in which the "geographical continuity of the place" could provide a link between the "historical discontinuity" of past and present, or the changing nature of earthly things.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Scafi, *Il paradiso in terra*, 71.

<sup>122</sup>Biblical or religious maps in general were often decorated with figures or stories taken from the Bible. Delano-Smith, "Maps as Art and Science," 66.

<sup>123</sup>Scafi, *Il paradiso in terra*, 105.

<sup>124</sup>Cf. *Ibid.*, Fig. 16b. Drayton's interest in biblical topics is well-known, especially at the early and late stages of his career: *The Harmony of the Church* (1591), *Moses His Birth and Miracles*, *Noah's Flood*, *David and Goliah*, all published in 1630.

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*, 242.

What differentiates the *Poly-Olbion* maps from other contemporary instances, however, is the rare presence of human geography: for instance, important monuments and roads.<sup>126</sup> Apart from the most renowned cities, represented as nymphs wearing a castle on their head, with their name written beneath, in these maps, human geography seems to be non-existent, and the countryside areas stretching from one landscape feature to another are simply left blank or filled in with more or less thick lines. In any map the absence of any feature may be a sign of exclusion for practical reasons and/or for ideological purposes,<sup>127</sup> especially in the case of Britain, not at all an unknown land. The lack of human geography in *Poly-Olbion* was certainly due to Drayton's general lack of interest in the celebration of specific places connected with particular people; it was however substituted by what could be defined humanised geography.

The *Poly-Olbion* anthropomorphisation provides the only hint at the obvious issue of human geography, or the relationship between land and its inhabitants. Beside having peculiar and individual roles as symbols of each locality, the anthropomorphisation of the most relevant landscape features is also subsumed under a general plan in which the human body is used as a "governing image."<sup>128</sup> Indeed, in his *Geographia*, Ptolemy himself had compared the drawing of a map to an artist's depiction of a human face, each part of which was seen as a facial detail.<sup>129</sup> In one sense, this conceit can be found also in Drayton's Sonnet 44 in his *Idea*:

Whilst thus my Pen strives to eternize thee,  
Age rules my Lines with Wrinkles in my Face,

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<sup>126</sup>The only road mentioned is Watling Street, "the first great way of England" (Map XVI).

<sup>127</sup>J.H. Andrews, "Map and Language / A Metaphor Extended," *Cartographica* 27 (1990): 15.

<sup>128</sup>B.C. Ewell, "Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*: England's Body Immortalized," *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978): 299.

<sup>129</sup>See Conley, "Early Modern Literature and Cartography," 404.

4. *Topography, Landskip, Landscape*

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Where, in the Map of all my Miserie,  
Is model'd out the World of my Disgrace.... (ID 44:1-4)

A similar metaphor is also found in *Matilda*:

Looke on these browes, the perfect Map of care,  
The truest mirrouer of my miserie,  
In wrinkled lines where sorrowes written are.... (M 379-81)

This rhetorical device is often used in *Poly-Olbion*, where landscape features are described through the use of body terminology – e.g., the Isle of Walney has a “crooked back.... / arm'd with many a rugged scarre” (XVII.326) – through which earth is compared to human anatomy.<sup>130</sup>

But also the connection present in the analogy between the human body and the country as a whole, the human microcosm and the geographical macrocosm<sup>131</sup> can explain why *Poly-Olbion* is introduced by an engraved frontispiece depicting Britain as a young lady (Fig. 2.2), and prefaced by the following poem:

THROUGH a *Triumphant Arch*, see *Albion* plas't,  
In *Happy* site, in *Neptunes* armes embras't,  
In *Power* and *Plenty*, on hir *Cleevy* Throne  
Circl'd with *Natures Ghirlands*, being alone  
Stil'd th'*Oceans* Island. On the *Columnes* beene  
(As *Trophies* raiz'd) what *Princes* Time hath seene  
Ambitious of her. In hir yonger years,  
Vast *Earth-bred Giants* woo'd her: but, who bears  
In *Golden field* the *Lion passant* red,  
*Aeneas* Nephew (*Brute*) them conquered.  
Next, *Laureat Caesar*, as a *Philtre*, brings,  
On's *shield*, his *Grandame Venus*: Him his *Kings*  
Withstood. At length, the *Roman*, by long sute,  
Gain'd her (most Part) from th'ancient race of *Brute*.

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<sup>130</sup>Ewell, “Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*,” 300.

<sup>131</sup>Harley, “Meaning and Ambiguity,” 35.

Divors't from Him, the *Saxon sable Horse*,  
Borne by sterne *Hengist*, wins her: but through force  
Garding the *Norman Leopards bath'd in Gules*,  
She chang'd hir Love to Him, whose Line yet rules. (ii\*)

Hole's engraving functions, as typical of such frontispieces, as a "meta-textual synthesis" of the work itself, and a threshold to the text, guarded by the anthropomorphisation of the most relevant topics.<sup>132</sup>

The classical architecture surrounding the anthropomorphisation of Albion looks back to the imperial *trionfi*, while the maritime background celebrates the Tudor myth of naval supremacy,<sup>133</sup> implying that imperial and maritime power will be tied together in a powerful union by the adventurous Stuart heir, Henry Prince of Wales. The four figures standing by the sides represent national history as conceived in terms of a *translatio imperii*.<sup>134</sup> Brutus and Julius Caesar at the top, Hengist and William the Conqueror at the bottom, whose iconographic features are thoroughly explained in the surrounding antiquarian notes by Selden. Drayton's choice of these characters underlines, however, the substantial reliance of *Poly-Olbion* on both legend and history as equal constituents of Albion.<sup>135</sup>

The figure of Albion, inspired, like those of its conquerors, by representations found on Roman coins,<sup>136</sup> is first of all a symbol of "Power and

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<sup>132</sup>Michael Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 25. W.J. Ong includes the *Poly-Olbion* engraved frontispiece in his list of "allegorical tableaux," characterised by a "non-naturalistic element in the spatial presentation"; as he explains, "in the typical allegorical tableau, the governing principles may be considered to be more or less naturalistic pictorial representations on the one hand, and on the other some kind of organization in space which is not naturalistic but artificial, schematic, or diagrammatic." W.J. Ong, "From Allegory to Diagram in the Renaissance Mind: A Study in the Significance of the Allegorical Tableau," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 17 (1959): 425.

<sup>133</sup>P.S.P. Weibly, "'To Any That Will Read It': Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* as Monument, Emblem, Myth" (PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1982), 74.

<sup>134</sup>M. Corbett and R. Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece: The Emblematic Title-Page in England, 1550-1660* (Boston: Routledge, 1979), 153-61.

<sup>135</sup>Weibly, "'To Any That Will Read It,'" 83.

<sup>136</sup>Corbett, Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, 155.

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*Plenty*," deriving from its overseas supremacy and fertility, respectively represented by the ships in the background and her cornucopia and naked left breast. This bodily image of Albion enlivened is presented as the controlling device.<sup>137</sup> Albion's face may resemble that of Queen Elizabeth in the Rainbow portrait,<sup>138</sup> the overall shaping of her figure can be directly related to two notable predecessors, bulwarks of the iconography of the Tudor Queen: the frontispiece of Saxton's *Atlas* (Fig. 4.8), and the Ditchley portrait (Fig. 4.9). However, another source may be retraced in Jodocus Hondius's frontispiece to his *Typus Angliae*, published in 1590 in London, and reprinted in 1600 in Cologne (Fig. 4.10). The engraved frontispiece shows a map of Britain and Ireland surmounted by a portrait of Queen Elizabeth flanked by two plaques; on the sides are the figures of an English nobleman and his wife, and a Londoner and his wife; between them are still nature composition symbolising War, Art, Industry, and Husbandry.<sup>139</sup> As Drayton's Albion displays mountains and rivers on her dress, both its models blend the Elizabeth image with the geography of her kingdom, though in different ways: Saxton's Elizabeth is seated on the throne and marks the threshold between authority and the following atlas of England and Wales; the Ditchley Queen is standing over England.<sup>140</sup> Dressed in its own map, associating the geographical outline to her body, Drayton's Albion incarnates Britain, her hips reminding of Wales and East Anglia and her head and shoulders of Scotland. Hers may be described as a "geo-body," or the representation of the familiar shape of a territory as an "alternative symbol of political authority," separated from the sovereign's

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<sup>137</sup>Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), 236.

<sup>138</sup>Weibly, "'To Any That Will Read It,'" 88.

<sup>139</sup>R.W. Shirley, *Early Printed Maps of the British Isles, 1477-1650* (London: The Holland Press, 1980), 69-70, 91-2.

<sup>140</sup>Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 112.



Figure 4.8: Unknown artist. *Saxton Atlas*, frontispiece. Engraving. c. 1579.



Figure 4.9: Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger.  
*The Ditchley Portrait*. 1592.  
London, National Portrait Gallery.

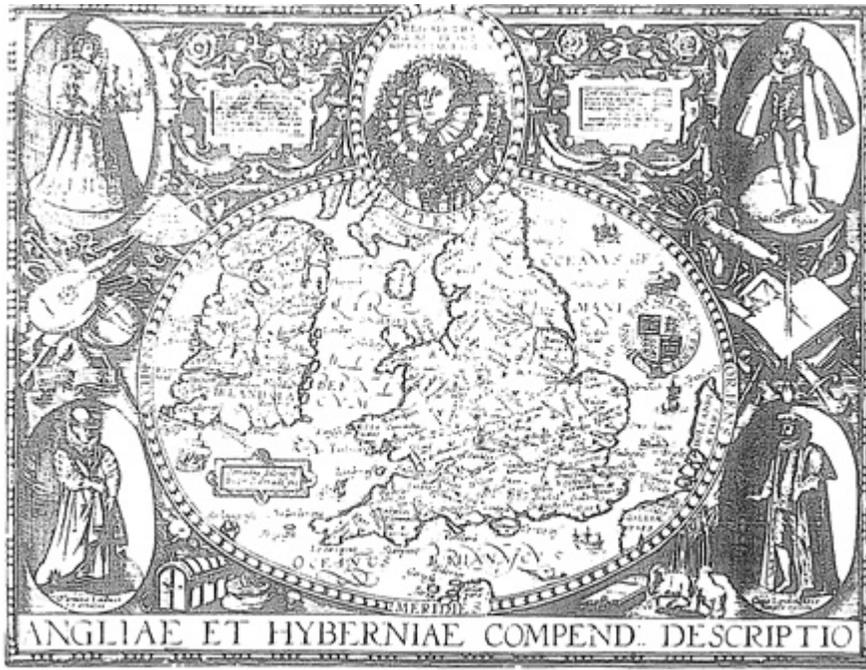


Figure 4.10: Jodocus Hondius. *Angliae et Hyberniae Compendium Descriptio*. Engraving. Published London, 1590; rpt. Cologne, 1600. London, British Library.

person, and rooted in physical reality.<sup>141</sup> As a figural entity of the Body Politic, Britannia is endowed with "pseudo-deific" and "geomorphic" features, representing how the monarch's second body exists at the same time as the "ideally everlasting geopolitical entity he reigns over."<sup>142</sup> The femininity of Britain is made explicit by suggesting, through the amorous lexicon of the accompanying poem, the vulnerability of her body to the rape of the four male conquerors gazing at her from the sides.<sup>143</sup> Against

<sup>141</sup>Michael Biggs, "Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41 (1999): 390.

<sup>142</sup>Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification*, 44.

<sup>143</sup>Sanford, *Maps and Memory in Early Modern England*, 45, 55.

them she poses herself as a source of identity and continuity.<sup>144</sup>

Interestingly, despite its iconographic relation to royal portraits, the *Poly-Olbion* frontispiece displays the sceptre of power in the hands of the nation itself. This standpoint places it a step further than its clearly celebratory Elizabethan models. Indeed, it seems closer to the frontispiece of the 1607 edition of Camden's *Britannia* (Fig. 4.11), displaying a cartographic image of Britain as a whole, with Neptune and Ceres on the sides: the signs of power are clearly absent, while the actual territory of Britain is confidently presented as a geographical nation in its own right. The *Poly-Olbion* frontispiece partakes of this territorial pride through the partial marginalisation of Britain's conquerors.<sup>145</sup> They nevertheless stand on the founding pillars of the British nation,<sup>146</sup> and are implicitly contrasted with the central position of a deified Albion.<sup>147</sup>

## 4.2 *Landscape*

The *Poly-Olbion* maps present a "depurated" view of Britain, portrayed as a "place/event," or the blending of its local histories and local chorographies aiming to provide a view of the union of British history and topography. These maps present localities free from decay, change, metamorphosis, be it geographical or historical – a view of Britain that is also present in the poem, but which, however, is not sufficient to immortalise an inevitably ever-changing and multifarious nation.

The *Poly-Olbion* landscape – both graphic and textual – is indeed the complex product of several views of Nature inherent in classical and

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<sup>144</sup>Helgerson, "The Land Speaks," 340.

<sup>145</sup>Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, 118, 120.

<sup>146</sup>Tristan Marshall, "Michael Drayton and the Writing of Jacobean Britain," *The Seventeenth Century* 15 (2000): 142.

<sup>147</sup>Ewell, "Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," 299.

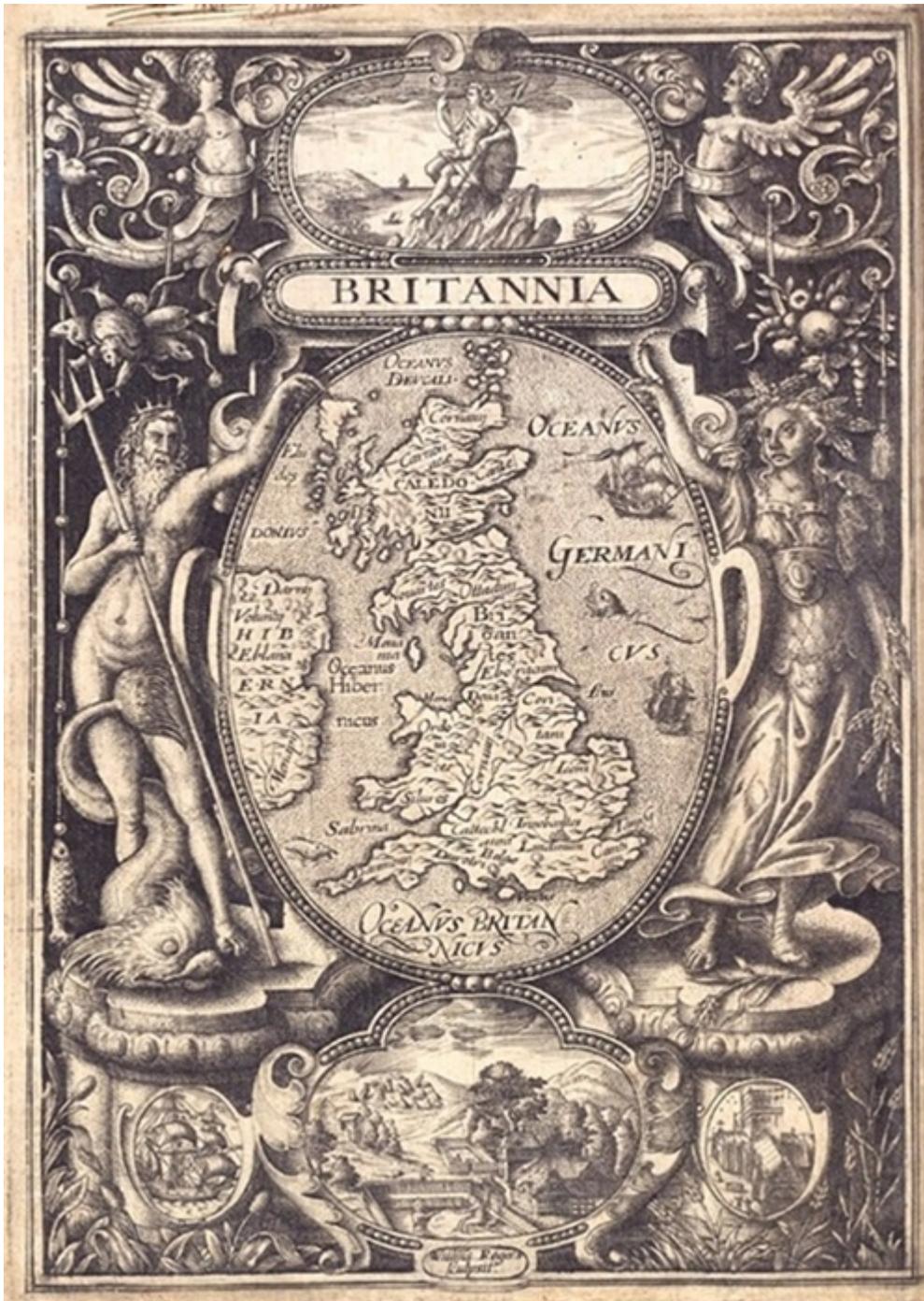


Figure 4.11: William Hole. *Britannia, frontispiece*. Engraving. 1607.

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Christian literary *topoi*: the myth of the Golden Age, which went back to ancient Greek sources, and culminated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and its reception in the Renaissance; the Garden of Eden or the earthly paradise, and the consequent view of the nation seen as a *hortus conclusus*, which, in Drayton's poem acquires pastoral overtones; the myth of the Fortunate or Happy Isles.

The title *Poly-Olbion*, whose etymology is however debatable,<sup>148</sup> supposedly hinted at the legend identifying Britain as one of the Fortunate Isles, the fertile abode of the blessed, located in the western ocean, which had often been mistaken and conflated with paradise itself.<sup>149</sup> Together with the Garden of Hesperides, the Fortunate Isles were one of various forms of paradise envisaged by pre-Christian antiquity. They continued to be represented in medieval cartography, where the localisation of paradise was also shown, as a way of portraying the development of the various elements of human history in the process of Christianisation.<sup>150</sup> Britain had long been seen as a remote land, divided from the continent by the Ocean,<sup>151</sup> and situated, according to Horace, "in ultimos orbis";<sup>152</sup> Virgil had defined its inhabitants, as it were, "penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos."<sup>153</sup> As, according to Solinus, Ulysses had reached Calydon

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<sup>148</sup>See Chapter 2, section 1.

<sup>149</sup>Scafi, *Il paradiso in terra*, 36.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 86. The fact that in his *Etymologiae* Isidore of Seville had warned that paradise could be confused with the Fortunate Isles may imply the possibility that the earthly paradise could be located on an island. H.R. Patch, *The Other World: According to Description in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 145.

<sup>151</sup>This reconstruction of Britain as one of the Fortunate Isles is indebted to J.W. Bennett, "Britain Among the Fortunate Isles," *Studies in Philology* 53 (1956), 114-40.

<sup>152</sup>Carmen I.xxxv.29-30. See Ibid., 114.

<sup>153</sup>Eclogue I.66. The Virgilian quotation is recalled by Selden in his commentary to Song XVIII, together with another one by Claudian: "Diducta Britannia Mundo" (385). Selden also mentions an etymology relating to the word Britain, suggested by the antiquarian Twine, according to whom "Brith," like "Guith," signified "a separation in Welsh, whence the Isle of Wight was so call'd" (385).

(Scotland),<sup>154</sup> and in Homer's *Odyssey* the northern isles he had visited had been represented as a sort of paradise (namely, Ogygia),<sup>155</sup> in classical antiquity Britain had come to be associated, because of its geographical location, with mythical lands like Thule, the Fortunate Isles, the Hesperides:

Ye happie Ilands set within the British Seas,  
 With shrill and jocund shouts, th'unmeasured deepes awake,  
 And let the Gods of Sea their secret Bowres forsake,  
 Whilst our industrious Muse great *Britaine* forth shall bring,  
 Crown'd with those glorious wreathes that beautifie the Spring....  
 (I.62-6)

In *Poly-Olbion*, Britain is depicted as a happy island, comparable to the "real" Happy Islands themselves: it is an earthly paradise capable of competing and winning over the "secret Bowres" of the Gods of the sea; it is also a *locus amoenus* of eternal spring and thoughtless happiness.

The myth of the Golden Age and the representation of an earthly paradise in the pastoral vogue are closely related. The belief that some perfect dimension in human history had existed in a past no longer retrievable (the classical Golden Age) was founded on the view of a paradisaal age set in remote times, which particular kinds of change (mainly social) had annihilated. The typical list of the Golden Age blessings included the following ones: no need for written law to maintain justice; pinetrees not yet cut down in order to build ships, because nobody crossed the seas; towns needed no fortifications; war was unknown; crops grew spontaneously with no need for men to plough the soil, because they could live on acorns and honey; fields were not divided by boundaries; and gold and iron were not yet being exploited for the sake of economic

<sup>154</sup>"...in quo recessu Ulixem Calidoniae adpulsum manifestat ara Graecis litteris scripta [votum]" (lines 3-4). Quoted in William Golding's translation (chap. xxxii, xxxiv) in Bennett, "Britain Among the Fortunate Isles," 117.

<sup>155</sup>1:v.78ff. See *Ibid.*, 117-18.

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development.<sup>156</sup> The mutation of the ways in which men related to the land and to themselves had brought about inevitable change and decay from the Age of Gold to the Age of Iron.<sup>157</sup> The Golden Age lasted as long as Saturn remained on the isles; as Selden comments, after Jupiter deposed his father Saturn, he imprisoned him perpetually "in eternall night about the utmost ends of the earth: which well fits the more Northern climate of these islands"; he also writes that, "of them (dispersed in the *Deucalidonian* Sea) in one most tempered, of gentle ayre, and fragrant with sweetest odours, lying towards the Northwest, it is reported, that *Saturne* lies bound in iron chaines" (16). As Drayton himself explains, "*Amphitrite* clips this Iland Fortunate," because Saturn is imprisoned in "the cold *Deucalidon*," or Scotland (I.26-30).

As somewhat opposed to the remotely "temporal" dimension of the Golden Age, the later concept of *locus amoenus*, or a place characterised by perpetual spring, twittering birds, rivers flowing, the blowing of a soft breeze, fertile soil, flowers, and gardens<sup>158</sup> – the same features believed to be present also in the earthly paradise – presented a crystallised "spatial" view of paradise, as a place located *on* earth, but not *belonging* to it.<sup>159</sup>

What is of interest in *Poly-Olbion* is the way Drayton managed to conflate these several themes, especially with the help of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Latin poetic tradition. Indeed, signs of change are omnipresent, yet carefully amalgamated within the rhetoric of the "ideal landscape" *topos*.<sup>160</sup> These changes are historical, of course, as *Poly-Olbion* deals with the *translatio imperii* of Britain, but also geographical

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<sup>156</sup>James Hutton, *Themes of Peace in Renaissance Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 183-4.

<sup>157</sup>See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. T. Page, et al., trans. F.J. Miller, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 1:i.89ff. All quotations will be taken from this edition.

<sup>158</sup>Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 197ff.

<sup>159</sup>Scafi, *Il paradiso in terra*, 130.

<sup>160</sup>N. Bugge Hansen, *That Pleasant Place: The Representation of Ideal Landscape in English Literature from the 14th to the 17th Century* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1973), 114.

and topographical – changes affecting what once was (and in the maps still is) the paradise on earth of Britain; mutations that follow the phases of the succession of Human Ages described by many Latin poets. So, whereas in the maps British landscape is held together in the form of a timeless compendium of history and geography, in the poem Time is ever-present, and landscape personifications narrate “Strange things, that in [their] daies times course had brought to pass” (I.97). Drayton therefore presents a Britain apparently partaking both of the pleasant characteristics of the *locus amoenus* or earthly paradise (filtered through the Virgilian pastoral mode), as well as of the social and human benefits of the Golden Age, now blessed and mostly plagued, indeed, by the rapid degeneration of its amenities and of society.

The most interesting instances of this can be found in Drayton’s view of climate and deforestation.

### *Climate*

The first lines of *Poly-Olbion* introduce the reader to a *locus amoenus* characterised by a mild climate:

Of ALBION glorious Ile the Wonders whilst I write,  
The sundry varying soyles, the pleasures infinite,  
(Where heate kills not the cold, nor cold expells the heat,  
The calmes too mildly small, nor winds too roughly great,  
Nor night doth hinder day, nor day the night doth wrong,  
The Summer not too short, the Winter not too long)....  
(I.1-6)

Albion is presented through the typical *topos* of the garden description, that is, through a “negative formula” according to which there is no excess of climatic opposites.<sup>161</sup> However, this is a rhetorical technique which

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<sup>161</sup>In the definition made famous by Isidore of Seville: “non ibi frigus, non aestus; sed perpetua aeris temperies.” This formulation became a reference point for later

explains "what the site and nature of the good life are *not*."<sup>162</sup>

Even Camden had given a similar description of the British climate, clearly based on classical sources, which is worth quoting in full:

Now, they that have more curiously compared the spaces of heaven above, together with the tracts of earth beneath, place Britaine under the 8. Climate, and include it within the 18. and 26. Parallel. They thinke also the longest day there to be 18 Aequinoticallyl houres and an halfe. But the Cape of Cornwall, respecting the convexitie of the earth, they describe to be situate 16 degrees and 50 scruples from the furthest point West: the longitude likewise of the Fore-land of Kent to be 21 degrees; as for the latitude, in the southcoast they measure it by 50 degrees, and that of Catnesse Northward, by 59 and 40 scruples over. So that, according to this site, Britaine is seated, as well for aire as soile, in a right fruitfull and most milde place, the aire so kinde and temperate that not only the Summers be not excessive hote, by reason of continuall gentle windes that abate their heat (which as they refresh the fruits of the earth, so they yeeld a most holsome and pleasing contentment both to man and beast), but the Winters also are passing milde. For, the raine falling often with still showers (to say nothing of the aire it selfe somewhat thicke and grosse) dissolveth the rigour of the cold so; and withall the sea which compasseth it with moderate warmth doth comfort the land in such wise as that the cold with us is much more remisse than in some parts of France and Italie. Where upon it is that Minutius Foelix, proving that God by His providence hath a speciall regard of the severall parts of the world as well as of the whole, saith *That Britaine, though it want otherwhiles the aspect of the Sunne, yet refreshed it is with the warmth of the sea flowing round about it*. Neither need you to marvell at his speech concerning the warmth of the sea. *The seas, quoth Cicero, stirred to and fro with the winds, do so wax*

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encyclopaedists like Vincent de Bauvais, Ranulph Higden, Brunetto Latini, and Bartolomeo Anglico. Quoted in Scafi, *Il paradiso in terra*, 343, n.21.

<sup>162</sup>A. Bartlett Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 84.

*warme that a man may easily perceive within that world of waters there is inclosed a certein heat.* To the temperateness also of this Iland Cescenius Geticulus, a very ancient Poet, seemeth to have respect, when he versified thus of Britaine,

*The Ram unkindly smites not there, in Spring, the aire with horn,  
Nor Twins the horned Bull of Crete untimely go beform,  
Where Driver, hight Arctophylax, doth his drie waine up-turn.*

Caesar likewise writeth thus, *The places in Britaine be more temperate (by reason that the weather is not so colde) than in France.* Sembably Cornelius Tacitus, *No extremetie there is of colde;* and he addeth moreover, and saith, *The soile, setting aside the Olive, the Vine, and the rest, which are proper to warmer countries, taketh all kinde of graine, and beareth it in abundance: it ripeneth slowly, but commeth up quickly: the cause of both is one and the same, to wit, the over-much moisture of ground and aire.* For the aire, Strabo writeth, is subject rather to showres of rain than to snow. Howbeit, the ground enriched so with all sorts of corne, that Orpheus hath reported it to be the very seat of Ladie Ceres...<sup>163</sup>

There is a difference, however, between Drayton's and Camden's approach, although both may lead us to the same observations. While Camden relies solely on ancient sources, the mild climate of Drayton's Albion turns out to be the description of a "false paradise" (I.192-9), which looks like an earthly heaven but is not at all:<sup>164</sup> in Drayton's words, it is like a "second paradise," "if any like the first were ever on the ground" (XIV.169-70). Indeed, in the course of the poem, it becomes clear that the blame for decadence of this paradise lies not in the place itself but in "wretched time" (XIII.379); it also lies in the fact that the British people cannot realise the paradisaical features of their land. As the Vale of Red-Horse, Warwickshire, explains, "as all noble things, so mee" they neglect

<sup>163</sup>William Camden, *Britannia*, ed. D.F. Sutton, trans. P. Holland (London, 1607) par. 3.

<sup>164</sup>Bartlett Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise*, 85.

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(XIII.381), despite the fact that she is "the *Eden*" of them all (XIII.384). Only thanks to the Muse's song can the Vale's "delicacies" get the true respect they deserve, against the "small account" in which they have been held by "vile and barbarous men" (XIII.375-6).

So, are Britain's heavenly features – while extant, though neglected by its vile inhabitants – really decaying? The issue is often tackled, but remains, however, ambivalent throughout the poem. While, as we have seen, the Vale of Red Horse boasts of its "plentious bosome strow'd / With all abundant sweets" (XIII.396-7), which are not appreciated, the fate of Gloucester is different, and poses yet another possibility:

For *Gloster* in times past her selfe did highly prize,  
When in her pride of strength she nourisht goodly Vines,  
And oft her cares repest with her delicious Wines.  
But, now th'All-cheering Sun the colder soyle deceaves,  
And us (heere tow'rds the Pole) still falling South-ward leaves:  
So that the sullen earth th'effect thereof doth prove;  
According to their Books, who hold that he doth move  
From his first Zeniths poynt; the cause we feele his want.  
But of her Vines depriv'd, now *Gloster* learnes to plant  
The Peare-tree every where.... (XIV.175-83)

Interestingly, the change from a heavenly condition, where grapes can grow and ripen all year long, is attributed to the Sun moving southward and leaving Albion with a colder climate. As Selden comments a few pages later, after citing several of the same classical sources quoted by Camden in favour of Britain's mild climate:

....now the Isle enjoys not frequencie of this benefit [vineyards], as in old time, whether it be through the soiles old age....or by reason of the earths change of place....or that some part of singular influence....is alter'd by that slow course....of the eight Sphere....or by reason of industry wanting in the Husbandman...." (300).

Whilst the last statement sounds rather tongue-in-cheek, the previous ones provide a relevant insight into a "geohistorical" process<sup>165</sup> which had just then begun to take place – the Little Ice Age, spanning roughly from 1550 to 1700 – so that contemporary antiquarians like Selden and Drayton, acquainted with classical sources, could not but notice an evident change in climate as compared to ancient descriptions. Indeed, particularly between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the changing climate caused a "permanent retraction of the limits of vine cultivation," so that in Britain several medieval vineyard sites north of 53rd latitude, which had been mentioned by medieval chroniclers like William of Malmesbury, were converted into sites for the cultivation of produce capable of bearing with colder weather (e.g., cider apples, pears, hops).<sup>166</sup> The vineyard argument is also present in the following lines on Wales:

The most renowned *Wales*, thou famous ancient place....  
 Since Nature thee denies that purple-cluster'd Vine,  
 Which others Temples chafes with fragrant sparkling Wine....  
 (IV.107, 109-10)

Here again, Nature hinders the cultivation of vines; so it is reckoned that the problem lies in climatic alterations. However, a few lines later, Drayton invokes a "bowl of *Meath*" (mead or apple cider) there produced, because suitable to colder weather, which will make the poet's "working spirit....raise" (IV.112).<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Tempo di festa, tempo di carestia: Storia del clima dall'anno mille* (Torino: Einaudi, 1982), 22.

<sup>166</sup>H.H. Lamb, "Britain's Changing Climate," *The Geographical Journal* 133 (1967): 453, 455.

<sup>167</sup>This is a reference to the drink Bards used to get poetic inspiration. See Chapter 5.

*Deforestation*

One of Drayton's greatest concern throughout his career seems to have been the deforestation of England's woodlands. His worry surfaces most of all in *Poly-Olbion*, but its meaning in this work can be better understood by comparing deforestation in *Poly-Olbion* to its use in other Drayton works concerned with paradisaical environments: *Ode to the Virginian Voyage* (1606), and *The Muses Elizium* (1630).

In the *Ode to the Virginian Voyage*, composed around the same time as the first part of *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton provides interesting clues to his view of the condition, function, and resources of the English landscape, as contrasted to that of Virginia. This poem is certainly optimistic in its representation of the New World,<sup>168</sup> a sentiment that must have been inspired by the maritime interests of Prince Henry's circle, to which Sir Walter Aston, Drayton's patron, belonged. The poem begins with an address to the adventurous Englishmen who are to set forth to Virginia:

You braue Heroique minds,  
Worthy your Countries Name;  
That Honour still pursue,  
Goe, and subdue,  
Whilst loyt'ring Hinds  
Lurke here at home, with shame. (OD 10:1-6)

At first sight, the verb "subdue" suggests an action of conquest operated on land and men.<sup>169</sup> Yet, what these "braue Heroique minds" will find in the New World needs not be feared nor subdued. Virginia is said to be indeed:

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<sup>168</sup>David McInnis, "The Golden Man and the Golden Age: The Relationship of English Poets and the New World Reconsidered," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 13 (2007): par. 10. <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/13-1/mcingold.htm>

<sup>169</sup>M.D. West, "Drayton's 'To the Virginian Voyage': From Heroic Pastoral to Mock-Heroic," *Renaissance Quarterly* 24 (1971): 502

Earth's onely Paradise  
Where Nature hath in store  
Fowle, Venison, and Fish,  
And the Fruitfull'st Soyle,  
Without your Toyle,  
Three Haruests more,  
All greater then your Wish.  
And the ambitious Vine  
Crownes with his purple Masse,  
The cedar reaching hie  
To kisse the Sky  
The Cypresse, Pine  
And vse-full Sassafras.  
To whome, the golden Age  
Still Natures lawes doth giue,  
No other Cares that tend,  
But Them to defend  
From Winters rage,  
That long there doth not liue. (OD 10:24-42)

As in the *Poly-Olbion* maps, Drayton erases the presence of native inhabitants and depicts the land as still untouched. It is a "pre-lapsarian Eden," where Nature freely offers all its resources to man, without any need for agricultural labour;<sup>170</sup> it is a land unconstrained by the pressure of agrarian process.<sup>171</sup> This is exactly what differentiates the voyagers' native land from Virginia. The colony is seen as an "ameliorated version" of Britain: Virginia is still enjoying the Golden Age, and is filled with paradisaical bliss, in opposition to the current hardships of Britain from which it will provide relief.<sup>172</sup> What is of interest here are precisely the

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<sup>170</sup>Joan Rees, "Hogs, Gulls, and Englishmen: Drayton and the Virginian Voyages," *Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983): 25; Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), 32; McInnis, "The Golden Man and the Golden Age," par. 11.

<sup>171</sup>Williams, *The Country and the City*, 18; Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The Representation of Agrarian England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 263.

<sup>172</sup>McInnis, "The Golden Man and the Golden Age," par. 8.

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present hardships of Britain, implied through this contrastive view of the American colony: if in the golden world of Virginia the environment is naturally rich and fruitful, harvests are abundant, and trees high and numerous, the iron-age condition of the voyagers' homeland necessitates man's hard "toyle" to grow plants and trees, in an environment whose resources are not going to be endlessly available.

Thus, the basic difference between the golden world of Virginia and the iron world of Britain is said to be the presence of man's labour. Drayton's reference to Virginian trees – particularly the cedar and pine – cannot but hint at the frequent use for which timber had increasingly been employed in Britain since the late sixteenth century: the building of ships.<sup>173</sup> Drayton may have recalled a frequent *topos* in Renaissance literature: the very construction of Argo, the first ship, was seen as having marked the end of the Golden Age. A possible source may have been the characterisation of the Iron Age in Book I of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

Men now spread sails to the winds, to the sailor as yet scarce  
knew them; and keels of pine which long had stood upon  
high mountain-sides, now leaped insolently over unknown  
waves.<sup>174</sup>

Here, the development of navigation is seen as one of the evils of the Iron Age, as the moment when men's growing needs first urged them to abandon their homeland in order to exploit unknown worlds.<sup>175</sup> So, the

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<sup>173</sup>The same can be said about gold ("And cheerefully at Sea, / Successe you still intice, / To get the Pearle and Gold," OD 10:19-21), since the exploitation of minerals, and mining in general, was considered an evil of the Iron Age.

<sup>174</sup>"vela dabant ventis nec adhuc bene noverat illos / navita, quaequae prius steterat in montibus altis, / fluctibus ignotis exsultavere carinae...." Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1:i.132-4.

<sup>175</sup>West, "Drayton's 'To the Virginian Voyage'," 504. Some of the most renowned classical sources were: Catullus's *Carmen* 64.1-11; Horace's *Carmen Saecolare* (I.iii.10-12); Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (VI.720-1); Seneca's *Medea* (318-20); Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica* (I.1-4). All authors drew from the original account of the construction of Argo, Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautica*. See Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1932), 30-5. In Song XIX

paradox in the *Ode* is that the Virginian golden paradise is to be conquered by men who, through their very presence and needs, will inevitably cause its end.

Drayton's *Ode* is certainly a contribution to early seventeenth-century colonial propaganda, but also a serious warning against the negative consequences inherent in economic progress and in what can be defined as the shift from a rural to a mercantile economy. Late sixteenth-century colonial propagandists acknowledged that expansion was the only way in which the political identity of Britain could be preserved.<sup>176</sup> However, during the first decade of the seventeenth century, Drayton had come to believe that, since the future existence of Britain was essentially rooted in the availability of its natural resources, expansion might be a solution to prevent their annihilation, which would mark the end of its insular identity.

Indeed, in order to prevent the excessive consumption of the environment, whose cyclical georgic progress cannot provide endless fruits, Drayton addresses the most adventurous among the Englishmen, whose restless nature is not at ease with the idle occupations of the gentry, accused of wasting their time by the strong upholders of sea enterprises, like Hakluyt, so that, if brave enough to undertake a long sea voyage, they may move to an unpeopled colony, where resources are still untouched and fully productive.<sup>177</sup>

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of *Poly-Olbion*, British voyagers are assimilated to the Argonauts (169-71).

<sup>176</sup>Andrew Hadfield, "Spenser, Drayton, and the Question of Britain," *The Review of English Studies* 51 (2000): 583.

<sup>177</sup>Among the reasons suggested by Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, in support of the colonisation of Virginia, were: exporting exceeding population, referred to as "the ranked multitude," and supplying England with minerals. See Christopher Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 162. It is difficult to tell whether through this poem Drayton was aiming more to please Prince Henry's enthusiasm for sea expeditions, just one year before the founding of Jamestown in Virginia, or whether he was actually a supporter himself. The latter seems to be more likely the case only insofar as the departure of surplus population would ease the pressure on Britain's natural resources. However, the lack of zeal with which Drayton

But what was the actual condition of British forests at the beginning of the seventeenth century? As late as the mid sixteenth century, English economy was based on agriculture and cattle grazing. The process of disafforestation, used to create arable land, had been going on since Roman and Anglo-Saxon times, so that only about twenty per cent of the country was wooded when the Domesday Book was styled.<sup>178</sup> In the late Tudor era, demographic growth and colder climate led to the increasing exploitation of natural resources, especially woodlands.<sup>179</sup>

First of all, timber was needed for the building of houses and ships, as well as for fuel. Since Norman times, woodlands had been used as a self-renewing resource: trees were enclosed from grazing animals, grown, pollarded, and selectively cut down, and new ones were continually planted, in order to replace those that had been felled. Yet, these actions were mostly undertaken at a local level. While during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries trees had managed to spread again, the needs of the growing population gradually increased their felling, so much so that in the sixteenth century Parliament issued several decrees regulating the exploitation of woodlands by expanding the use of those local habits: these laws allowed for the protective enclosure of young trees, forbade the conversion of coppice and underwood areas into pasture or tillage, commanded the preservation of a specific number of timber trees per acre, and prohibited their use in the iron industry. Although the woodland areas had visibly decreased in these years, contemporaries tended to exaggerate the problem, since the shortage of timber was never more than a local concern.<sup>180</sup> However, in December 1607, James I ordered a survey

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would discuss the topic of sea voyages in later works, like *Poly-Olbion*, seems to suggest he was never truly concerned with them.

<sup>178</sup>Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 193.

<sup>179</sup>H.C. Darby, "The Changing English Landscape," *The Geographical Journal* 117 (1951): 379-80.

<sup>180</sup>Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 193, 198.

of the royal woodlands, because timber was "a major source of income when well managed and controlled."<sup>181</sup>

The Midlands were indeed one of the areas where deforestation was most evident. There, trees had been continuously felled for centuries, and the agricultural landscape resulting from this process offered no room for the planting of new wooded areas.<sup>182</sup> For this reason, Drayton may have been particularly touched by the exploitation and decreasing number of woodlands, especially around his hometown in Warwickshire, close to the Forest of Arden. He largely expressed his concerns regarding the fate of British woodlands in *Poly-Olbion*. Deforestation is a frequent topic in *Poly-Olbion*, lamented by Forests personified as dryads. In order to discuss it, Drayton seems to have elaborated on the hints present in *Ode to the Virginian Voyage*, as appears from the words spoken by Gillingham Forest, Dorsetshire, in Song II:

....How happie floods are yee,  
 From our predestin'd plagues that priuiledged bee;  
 Which onelie with the fish which in your banks doe breed,  
 And dailie there increase, mans gurmandize can feed?  
 But had this wretched Age such vses to imploy  
 Your waters, as the woods we latelie did enioy,  
 Your chanel they would leaue as barren by their spoile,  
 As they of all our trees haue lastlie left our soile.  
 Insatiable Time thus all things doth deuour:  
 What euer saw the sunne, that is not in Times power?  
 Yee fleeting Streames last long, out-liuing manie a day:  
 But, on more stedfast things Time makes the strongest pray.  
 (II.137-48)

Gillingham Forest reminds the Stour of the privileged condition of rivers: indeed, they can satisfy human needs by providing fish, which constantly breeds and multiplies in their waters. Unlike the land and trees of forests,

<sup>181</sup>Barber, "England II," 81.

<sup>182</sup>W.G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (London: Longman, 1984), 150.

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in fact, the resources provided by the rivers are continuously self-renewing within a short time; yet, if ever man decided to exploit rivers in the same way as forests – that is, by destroying the very element on which they prosper, in this case, water – they would become just as “barren.” The decay of woodlands is eventually attributed to “Insatiable Time,” a *topos* repeated also further on, in Song XXII:

Waybridge a neighbouring Nymph, the onely remnant left  
Of all that Forrest kind, by Times injurious theft  
Of all that tract destroy'd, with wood which did abound,  
And former times had seene the goodliest Forrest ground,  
This Island ever had: but she so left alone,  
The ruine of her kind, and no man to bemoane. (XXII.1603-8)

These passages are thematically indebted to Edmund Spenser's Mutability cantos (particularly VII.vii), where, owing to the destruction of its woodlands, Ireland is said to have turned from the best to the worst of the British Isles, and only one nymph is left to tell its story to a posterity “ignorant of the area's former glory.”<sup>183</sup> The action of Time is the poetic cause of the mutability of “unparadisal” Britain, where everything must be subject to change, as is inherent in the nature of the Age of Iron.<sup>184</sup>

Like his characterisation of the British Iron Age, Drayton's stress on ever-present change seems to be ultimately indebted, as was remarked before, to Book I of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>185</sup> Even the actual economic causes of deforestation he mentions and blames – that is, agriculture, mining, manufactures, and enclosure – betray their Ovidian origin: indeed, in the *Metamorphoses*, it is said that the Iron Age, the worst of all eras, is characterised by extensive enclosure and exploitation of the land, both

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<sup>183</sup>Hadfield, “Spenser, Drayton, and the Question of Britain,” 598.

<sup>184</sup>Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 21.

<sup>185</sup>Raphael Lyne, “Drayton's Chorographical Ovid,” in P. Hardie et al., eds., *Ovidian Transformations. Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and Its Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 89.

through agriculture and mining:

And the ground, which had hitherto been a common possession like the sunlight and the air, the careful surveyor marked out with long-drawn boundary-line. Not only did men demand of the bounteous fields the crops and sustenance they owed, but they delved as well into the very bowels of the earth; and the wealth which the creator had hidden away and buried deep amidst the very Stygian shades, was brought to light, wealth that pricks men onto crime. And now baneful iron had come, and gold more baneful than iron; war came....Men lived on plunder.<sup>186</sup>

To the damages caused by agricultural development Drayton devotes the following lines:

....the Sheare and Coulter teare  
The full corne-bearing gleabe, where sometimes forrests were;  
And those but Caitifes are, which most do seeke our spoyle,  
Who having sold our woods, doe lastly sell our soyle;  
Tis vertue to give place to these ungodly times,  
When as the fostred ill proceeds from other crimes;  
Gainst Lunaticks, and fooles, what wise folke spend their force;  
For folly headlong falls, when it hath had the course:  
And when God gives men up, to wayes abhor'd and vile,  
Of understanding hee deprives them quite, the while  
They into error runne, confounded in their sinne.  
(XIX.45-55)

Because of the agricultural revolution that took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as of demographic growth, large portions

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<sup>186</sup>"communemque prius ceu lumina solis et auras / cautus humum longo signavit limite mensor. / nec tantum segetes alimentaue debita dives / poscebatur humus, sed itum est in viscera terrae, / quasque recondiderat Stygiisque admoverat umbris, / effodiuntur opes, inritamenta malorum. / iamque nocens ferrum ferroque nocentius aurum / prodierat: prodit bellum....Vivitur ex rapto." Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1:i.135-44.

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of woodland were turned into arable land.<sup>187</sup> As one of the "wise folke" aware of the long-term consequences of deforestation, Drayton defines those who cannot understand them as "Lunaticks," "fools," and "Caitifes," or sinners against their land, and believes that their attitude should be equalled to a crime against nature.

Developing manufactures are also said to have caused deforestation, especially the iron-smelting industry. Thus, indeed, does Clent Hill address Feckenham Forest, Worcestershire:

Fond Nymph, thy twisted curles, on which were all my care,  
Thou lett'st the Furnace waste; that miserably bare  
I hope to see thee left, which so doost mee despise;  
Whose beauties many a morne haue blest my longing eyes:  
And, till the wearie Sunne sunk downe vnto the West,  
Thou still my obiect wast, thou once my onely best.  
The time shall quickly come, thy Groues and pleasant Springs,  
Where to the mirthfull Merle the warbling Mavis sings,  
The painfull laborers hand shall stock the roots, to burne;  
The branch and body spent, yet could not serue his turne.  
Which when, most wilfull Nymph, thy chaunce shal be to see,  
Too late thou shalt repent thy small regard of mee.  
(XIV.49-60)

Sooner or later, the Forest's trees will be uprooted and thrown into an iron-smelting furnace, as fuel, for "What should the Builder serve, supplies the Forgers turne" (XVII.406). Iron-smelting itself appears to be a symptom of the degenerated Iron Age: as inherent in the work's Ovidian background, mining and all the activities related to it dishonour and profane the land, because they boldly violate the secrets of nature; they aim to subtract to the earth precious material which, in the Golden Age, would have remained concealed underground.<sup>188</sup>

Yet, scholars have now acknowledged that, if at first the iron-smelting

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<sup>187</sup>Hoskins, *Local History in England*, 138.

<sup>188</sup>Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age*, 23.

industry had led to increasing deforestation for fuel, it later began to promote the preservation of woodlands, through coppice cultivation to be turned into charcoal only,<sup>189</sup> in order to carry out something like a sustainable consumption of timber. The passage blaming the industrial development may have therefore been inserted for further reasons; the same Ovidian reasons that inspired the references to enclosure.

Indeed, in Song XIII, the Forest of Arden thus laments its own destruction:

For, when the world found out the fitnessse of my soyle,  
The gripple wretch began immediatly to spoyle  
My tall and goodly woods, and did my grounds inclose:  
By which, in little time my bounds I came to lose.  
When Britaine first her fields with Villages had fild,  
Her people wexing still, and wanting where to build,  
They oft dislodg'd the Hart, and set their houses, where  
He in the Broome and Brakes had long time made his leyre.  
....and euery day maintaine  
The sundry kinds of beasts vpon our copious wast's,  
That men for profit breed, as well as those of chase.  
(XIII.21-8, 36-8)

Afflicted with excessive settling and grazing, the Forest of Arden has become "the ravaged site of Britain's economic transformation."<sup>190</sup> This particular view was definitely rooted in Drayton's Spenserian bias and "rural ethics," not concerned with the interests of property, and by a perception of enclosure as the very manifestation of the destruction of a traditional socio-economic order in the English countryside.<sup>191</sup> In the early seventeenth century, forests stood as boundaries between common law and feudal law, remaining "symbolically outside" the growing capitalist

<sup>189</sup>Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 193.

<sup>190</sup>Richard Wilson, "'Like the Old Robin Hood': *As You Like It* and the Enclosure Riots," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43 (1992): 15.

<sup>191</sup>McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, 278-9.

order, as "a concrete sign of communal justice and resistance," and a "battleground between the regulated and market economies": while enclosure upholders presented them as wastes in need of exploitation, their opponents defended their status, perceiving enclosure as a limitation of prerogative enacted by powerful landlords.<sup>192</sup>

Drayton summarises his concerns through a powerful metaphor. In Song VII, Wyre Forest, Worcestershire, desperately laments the consequences of deforestation:

You Driades, that are said with Oakes to liue and die,  
Wherefore in our distresse doe you our dwellings flie;  
Vpon this monstrous Age and not reuenge our wrong?  
For cutting downe an Oake that iustlie did belong  
To one of Ceres Nymphes, in Thessaly that grew  
In the Dodonean Groue (O Nymphes!) you could pursue  
The sonne of Perops then, and did the Goddesses stirre  
That villanie to wreake the Tyrant did to her:  
Who, with a dreadfull frowne did blast the growing Graine:  
And hauing from him rest what should his life maintaine,  
Shee vnto Scythia sent, for Hunger, him to gnawe,  
And thrust her downe his throat, into his stanchlesse mawe:  
Who, when nor Sea nor Land for him sufficient were,  
With his deuouring teeth his wretched flesh did teare.  
This did you for one Tree: but of whole Forrests they  
That in these impious times haue been the vile decay  
(Whom I may iustlie call their Countries deadly foes)  
Gainst them you moue no Power, their spoyle vnpunisht goes.  
How manie griued soules in future time shall starue,  
For that which they haue rapt their beastlie lust to serue!  
(VII.271-90)

The Forest addresses its dryads, and complains of their helplessness against Britain's "deadly foes," who have been destroying its woodlands. She then appeals (though rather imprecisely) to myth, recalling the story

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<sup>192</sup>Wilson, "'Like the Old Robin Hood,'" 2.

of Erysichton, son of Triopas (not of Perops), who cut down one of Ceres' sacred oak-trees in the Deoian (not Dodonean) forest, and was condemned to perpetual hunger; unsatisfied even after having devoured anything he could lay his hands on, he ended up eating his own flesh, and eventually died.<sup>193</sup> Such terrible cannibalism, generated by perpetual hunger for gain, is what, Drayton believes, Britain has been perpetuating through deforestation. Its wood-nymphs are powerless: seventeenth-century Britain is not the timeless golden world of myth, but the Iron Age of "vile decay." The poet seems most concerned with the future of a posterity deprived of woodlands, who "shall starve" because its ancestors have annihilated the nation's natural resources for the sake of their "beastlie lust." The same worry is expressed in another three passages: those who promote or perpetrate the destruction of forests, only to preserve their "luxurie and pride," are "senseless of the good of their posterities" (III.155, 152). In Song XVII, the forests of the Weald narrate their own destruction:

These Forrests as I say, the daughters of the Weald  
(That in their heauie breasts, had long their greefs conceal'd)  
Foreseeing, their decay each howre so fast came on,  
Vnder the axes stroak, forch many a grieuous grone,  
When as the anuiles weight, and hammers dreadfull sound,  
Euen rent the hollow Woods, and shook the queachy ground.  
(XVII.380-4)

The scene is apocalyptic and violent, chaotic and inexorable. These passages certainly recall the feelings pervading one of Aesop's fables, entitled *The Trees and the Axe*. In it, a man asks the trees in a forest for a branch to build the handle of his axe; they willingly give it to him, and with that axe the man fells most of them. Although too late, they eventually repent of and moan for their weakness. In the end, before being cut down, one of the trees exclaims aloud that they have been the cause

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<sup>193</sup>Drayton, *Works*, 5:235.

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of their own destruction.<sup>194</sup> The moral concerns how people are undone by their own folly: in *Poly-Olbion*, that folly is "private gaine" (XVII.407), which has replaced "publicke good." By yielding all their rights on forests, the British people will eventually come to annihilate their own posterity as well as Britain itself.

Drayton's Spenserian aversion to the transition from a rural to a mercantile social order concerns not only the ways of exploiting natural resources, but also the preservation of the cultural identity of glorious Albion. A forest thus complains:

Wee, sometime that the state of famous Britaine were,  
For whom she was renown'd in Kingdoms farre and neere,  
Are ransackt.... (VII.291-3)

When still enjoying their splendour, woodlands embodied the power of Britain, both on a national and international level. Indeed, forests used to be the traditional abode of important figures of the British world: Bards and Druids and the fairy world. Bards and Druids lived in "darksome Groves" (II.36), the symbol of their power, so much so that, on their reaching the Isle of Anglesey, the Romans had had to cut down all their sacred oak-tree woods in order to defeat them (X.208).<sup>195</sup> These figures play an essential role in *Poly-Olbion*, as emblems of their people and keepers of traditional culture and history, which they must hand down to future generations. Charmed by this poetic archetype, Drayton envisaged for himself a similar role as a public poet for Britain, as the defender of British history and cultural heritage, endowed with similar deep insights

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<sup>194</sup>See, for instance, Aesop, *Securis et Lignator*, in Candidus Pantaleon, *Centum et Quinquaginta Fabulae* (Frankfurt, 1604).

<sup>195</sup>See John Leland, *Syllabus*, in *Genethliacon* (London, 1543), F4r, F3v. Cathy Shrank, "John Leland and 'the Bowels of Antiquity'," in *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530-1580*, ed. C. Shrank, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 83. For the poetic archetype of the Bard see Chapter 5.

into man and nature.<sup>196</sup> Drayton's traditional fairy world is blended with the classical pastoral figures of sylvans and satyrs ("Where many a goodlie Oake had carefullie been nurst / The Sylvans in their songs their mirthfull meeting tell; / And Satyres, that in slades and gloomy dimbles dwell, / Runne whooting to the hills to clappe their ruder hands," II.188-91); through these fairy figures Drayton attempted, like other Stuart poets, to "represent a changing culture in traditional terms" and to "mythologize contested beliefs and social practices."<sup>197</sup> Because of deforestation, these creatures are forced to leave their woods:

So that the trembling Nymphs, opprest through gastly feare,  
Ran madding to the Downes, with loose dishev'ld hayre.  
The Syluans that about the neighbouring woods did dwell,  
Both in the tufty Brith and in the mossy Fell,  
Forsook their gloomy Bowres, and wandred farre abroad,  
Expeld their quiet feats, and place of their abode....  
(XVII.385-90)

Drayton's woodland creatures seem to be more than mere topographical conventions. Indeed, English fairylore was traditionally bound up with what may now be defined a pre-capitalist social order; thus, as England shifted from a land-based mode of production to an urban and increasingly mercantile economy, fairylore became a useful way of "mystifying" the deep ongoing socio-economic changes.<sup>198</sup> In being overwhelmed by the violent changes brought about by developing agriculture and industry, Drayton's fleeing fairies, sylvans, and satyrs also come to personify the annihilation of Britain's pre-Stuart order, while those who are still resisting these transformations show how painfully the British land is striving to

<sup>196</sup>G.G. Hiller, "'Sacred Bards' and 'Wise Druids': Drayton and his Archetype of the Poet," *English Literary History* 51 (1984): 7.

<sup>197</sup>Marjorie Swann, "The Politics of Fairylore in Early Modern English Literature," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 470.

<sup>198</sup>*Ibid.*, 450.

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continue to exist, in spite of the irrational, self-wounding behaviour of its inhabitants. In Song XXVI, Drayton decrees their defeat:

The Satyrs and the Fawnes, by Dian set to keepe,  
Rough Hilles, and Forest holts, were sadly seen to weepe,  
When thy High-palmed Harts the sport of Bowes and Hounds,  
By gripple Borderes hands, were banished thy ground.  
The Draides that were wont about thy Lawnes to rove,  
To trip from Wood to Wood, and scud from Grove to Grove....  
And with the harmlesse Elves....  
Exil'd their sweet abroad, to poore bare Commons fled,  
They with the Okes that liv'd, now with the Oakes are dead.  
(XXVI.111-16, 119, 121-2)

In *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton seems to have invoked, though in vain, what has been defined a kind of nationhood out of reach for "mans devouring hand."<sup>199</sup>

In order better to understand Drayton's view on deforestation and change, it may be helpful to analyse what the poet thought about the same issue almost twenty years later, at the end of his career. The *Muses Elizium*, published in 1630 (one year before his death, aged sixty-eight), Drayton seemingly resumed his argument from the above-mentioned lines, expressing the same sadness that pervades *Poly-Olbion*, accompanied, this time, by a conscious helplessness. The "Muses Elizium" is defined as "a Paradiſe on earth," "farre from vulgar ſight," where "no waſte is made by time" (ME 1-2, 38); it is a golden pastoral world, a timeless retreat from the decayed English present.<sup>200</sup> It stands in sharp contrast with the ironically-named land of Felicia, the poetic counterpart of seventeenth-century Britain, which represents and includes all that is absent in the Elizium.<sup>201</sup> The *Muses Elizium* is subdivided into ten "nymphalls," each

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<sup>199</sup>McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, 260.

<sup>200</sup>W.A. Oram, "The Muses Elizium: A Late Golden World," *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978): 11.

<sup>201</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

one telling a different episode involving fairies, shepherds, and, of course, the muses. The most interesting one, as far as deforestation is concerned, is certainly the tenth. In it, an old satyr decides to flee from the land of Felicia, and takes refuge in the Muses Elizium; at first, the muses and fairies are frightened by his appearance, but then they realise that his misery and inquire for its reason. The satyr thus replies:

With wild Silvanus and his woody crue,  
In Forrests I, at liberty and free,  
Liu'd in such pleasure as the world ne'r knew,  
Nor any rightly can conceiue but we.  
This iocond life we many a day enioy'd,  
Till this last age, those beastly men forth brought,  
That all those great and goodly Woods destroy'd.  
Whose growth their Grandsyres, with such sufferance sought,  
That faire Felicia which was but of late,  
Earth's Paradiice, that neuer had her Peere,  
Stands now in that most lamentable state,  
That not a Siluan will inhabit there....  
(ME 57-68)

The land of Felicia (or Great Britain) used to be "Earth's Paradise" until the beginning of "this last age" and of extensive deforestation. Indeed, "beastly men" have been destroying the same woods their ancestors strove to let grow. As in *Poly-Olbion*, woodlands are seen as timeless bulwarks of the history and past glory of Britain, connecting different generations and symbolising, like their traditional inhabitants, the old land-based order.<sup>202</sup> Now Felicia is "in that most lamentable state / That not a Siluan will inhabit there," with woodland creatures, like the satyr, being forced to abandon it:

The sportiue Nimphes, with shouts and laughter shooke  
The Hills and Valleyes in their wanton play,

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<sup>202</sup>Ibid., 23.

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Waking the Ecchoes, their last words that tooke,  
Till at the last, they lowder were then they.  
The lofty hie Wood, and the lower spring,  
Sheltring the Deare, in many a suddaine shower;  
Where Quires of Birds, oft wonted were to sing,  
The flaming Furnace wholly doth deuoure;  
Once faire Felicia, but now quite defac'd,  
Those Braueries gone wherein she did abound,  
With dainty Groues, when she was highly grac'd  
With goodly Oake, Ashe, Elme, and Beeches croun'd:  
But that from heauen their iudgement blinded is,  
In humane Reason it could neuer be,  
But that they might haue cleerly seene by this,  
Those plagues their next posterity shall see....  
(ME 77-92)

The symbol of contemporary economic development – the feeding of iron-smelting furnaces – is given as the main cause of a deforestation that has come to bear almost solely a metaphorical value. Felicia has been "defac't"<sup>203</sup> by a human attitude that can only be explained by a divine act: God must have decided to blind the judgement of man, since human reason could never have devised actions whose negative effects would be afflicting posterity. Again, besides their native environment and natural resources, Drayton laments, the British are destroying the glorious remnants of their past, as well as their own culture, and, consequently, the identity of their own land:

This cruell kinde thus Viper-like deuoure  
That fruitfull soyle which them too fully fed;  
The earth doth curse the Age, and euery houre  
Againe, that it these viprous monsters bred.  
I seeing the plagues that shortly are to come

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<sup>203</sup>In *Poly-Olbion*, the land of Britain had been "deformed" by the hand of history and the *translatio imperii*: "The Roman, next the Pict, the Saxon, then the Dane, / All landing in this Ile, each like a horrid raine / Deforming her..." (VI.336-8).

Vpon this people cleerely them forsooke:  
And thus am light into Elizium,  
To whose strait search I wholly me betooke.  
(ME 117-24)

The land itself bemoans to have bred, against all natural laws, such a "cruell kinde" of "viprous monsters." After foreseeing the plagues that are soon to afflict the inhabitants of Felicia, the satyr – which, as is commonly acknowledged, is to be considered Drayton's poetic counterpart – has decided to abandon the land and reach the "Muses Elizium." The only solution Drayton seems to have found in order to survive mankind is staying away from it, and, like Ovid's Astraea abandoning human beings to the evils of the Iron Age, he is happy to leave the "doomed Felicians" to their bleak fate.<sup>204</sup>

Eventually, the inhabitants of the Elizium pity the satyr's fate and welcome him to their land:

Of fooles and madmen leaue thou then the care,  
That haue no vnderstanding of their state:  
For whom high heauen doth so iust plagues prepare,  
That they to pittie shall conuert thy hate.  
And to Elizium be thou welcome then,  
Vntill those base Felicians thou shalt heare,  
By that vile nation captiued againe,  
That many a glorious age their captiues were.  
(ME 141-8)

The Golden Age of pastoral prevails over the Iron Age of Britain: the satyr will witness from the distance the future suffering of the inhabitants of Felicia, and his hate for them will turn into pity, when, weakened by these crimes, their land is enslaved by some baser nation. Tired of being the unheeded guardian of Britain's identity, Drayton finds comfort in the imaginary world of poesy, where the land is untouched and respected,

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<sup>204</sup>Hiller, "'Sacred Bards' and 'Wise Druids,'" 13.

and the absence of any political and literary ambition is tantamount to an attempt to protect himself from the disappointments generated in him by the folly of the British people.<sup>205</sup>

Stuart Britain, Drayton had seemingly come to believe, at the end of his career and life, was no country for old poets.

#### 4.2.1 *Personifications*

Drayton's *prosopopoeia* of landscape features, which has already been met and discussed, was arguably inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and its use in poetry and art, which provided a classical instance of the representation of the world in human form.<sup>206</sup> However, Drayton's idea of anthropomorphic landscape was related not so much to the Vitruvian idea of the human body as a "paradigm of proportions and symmetry," but rather to "visible manifestations of anthropomorphic symbolism and attribution of human features to Nature."<sup>207</sup> Whereas Hole's maps display human figures standing for rivers (all female, except for the Tame and the Thames), hills (male), and forests (female), Drayton's lines give life to their behaviour and provide them with a voice: like shepherds in the pastoral tradition, they engage in mutual wooing and marriages (confluence), tell-tale challenges focusing on the local history as seen from a topographical point of view, highlighting, that is, the differences or similarities, problems or benefits of their geographical location, as compared to that of their adversary. There remains, however, some kind of difficulty in the distinction between tropological characters from the real thing they represent,<sup>208</sup> as typical of personifications based on the tradition

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<sup>205</sup>Oram, "The Muses Elizium: A Late Golden World," 18.

<sup>206</sup>Anna Bentkowska, "Anthropomorphic Landscapes in 16th- and 17th-Century Western Art," *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 61 (1997): 86.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>208</sup>Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification*, 56.

of classical antiquity.<sup>209</sup>

### *Rivers*

Drayton's recourse to the genre of river poetry was in tune with late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century poetic taste.<sup>210</sup> Indeed, the sources of *Poly-Olbion* seem to have included most of the works constituting the backbone of English river poetry, combining literary *topoi* and choro-topographical themes.<sup>211</sup>

The historical and cultural importance of rivers was first immortalised in English literature, in the early sixteenth century, by the antiquarian John Leland, to whom we owe the first river poem (though written in Latin), *Cygnea Cantio* (1545). It provided the rhetorical basis for subsequent English river poetry, presenting a swan's progress along a river and a celebration of the river itself and the places through which it passed. Leland's example established the basic link between river poetry, topography, local history and antiquarianism – areas pertaining to his expertise. Indeed, in 1533, King Henry VIII had ordered Leland to explore churches, monasteries, and all the places where records and documents relating to English antiquity could be found. The result of Leland's six years of travelling in England and Wales was a five-volume work entitled *Itinerary*, describing the ancient monuments and the topography of the kingdom. As stated at the beginning of his *Itinerary*, Leland was careful not to overlook "any rivers, confluences of rivers, marshes, fens, lakes

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<sup>209</sup>See T.B.L. Webster, "Personification as a Mode of Greek Thought," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 17 (1954): 10, 16.

<sup>210</sup>Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature*, 225. This section is indebted to Herendeen's seminal study on river poetry.

<sup>211</sup>See Hilda Taylor, "Topographical Poetry in England During the Renaissance," 109, 135-6.

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or meres.”<sup>212</sup> Rivers were, first of all, relevant for the English economy, as they helped to connect the several counties, since the systematic maintenance of the road system built by the Romans had ceased after their departure.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the use of topography as a structural framework to versify local and national history was taken up by poets who sometimes were themselves antiquarians. Streams acquired a pre-eminent role as narrative devices, and they were also used, as it were, as subject matter for poems – the Thames, understandably, being the most popular river in this regard. After Leland’s times, Spenser wrote the first river poem, *Epithalamium Thamesis* (ca. 1580; now lost), which provided another canonical feature: the marriage of rivers. Camden followed shortly after, with *De Connubio Tamis et Isis* (ante 1586), then included in his topo-chorographical Latin work, *Britannia* (1586). This blending of geography and chorography was sustained, in literature, by a strong Ovidian background: the *Metamorphoses* provided rhetorical suggestions on ways of “localising” literary episodes in the land of England – a device used in particular by Spenser, who in his turn inspired William Vallans’s *Two Swannes* (1590) and E.W.’s *Thameseidos* (1600).

Indeed, Drayton made use of this Ovidian background in *Poly-Olbion* as a way of providing some kind of narrative justification, through the device of the pastoral *tenzone* and love chase: this allowed for the dialogic disposition of topo-chorographical matter through challenges between river gods and nymphs, which, as female beings, may have represented the source, rather than the river itself.<sup>213</sup> Originally, river gods were believed to protect special sacred and/or critical places like the confluence

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<sup>212</sup>John Leland, *Itinerary*, ed. T. Hearne, 9 vols. (Oxford: Printed for the Theatre, 1750), xxix.

<sup>213</sup>Drayton may as well have opted for female personifications in order to create the battle-of-the-sexes context necessary to the pastoral mode. Privately discussed with Professor Elizabeth McGrath, the Warburg Institute.

of two rivers or artificial bridges.<sup>214</sup> But they were also believed to be – particularly in the form of nymphs – healers, guides to travellers, caretakers of youth, and a source of knowledge. This very classical tradition, tinsel though it may seem, surfaces in the festive convention that, when the monarch reached a river town during a progress, he was to be greeted by a pageant representing the nymph of the place, or *genius loci*.<sup>215</sup>

Following the native tradition, British rivers had also acquired a personified identity as the protectors of specific localities and their un-Roman traditions and cults, and constituted an adequate symbol for the blending of antiquity and modernity.<sup>216</sup> In his work *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* – composed around the sixth century AD and first printed by the historian Polydore Vergil in 1525 – the British Gildas first interpreted rivers as local symbols, and often used and “localised” the classical theme of the river description (present, for instance, in Ausonius’ *Mosella*) so as to represent the violent interaction of Roman and British cultures. He also showed that British rivers, like all rivers, could be related to profane and sacred history, and, he thought, they could well be typologically connected with Old Testament rivers: for instance, while describing a miracle administered by St Alban, Gildas compares his opening an “unknown route across the channel of the great river Thames” to the biblical, “untrodden way made dry for the Israelites.”<sup>217</sup> Rivers were

<sup>214</sup>Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River*, 43. See Anita Seppilli, *Sacralità dell’acqua e sacrilegio dei ponti* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1977), chap. 1, 6.

<sup>215</sup>Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River*, 83.

<sup>216</sup>Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature*, 109, 106.

<sup>217</sup>For instance, talking about St Alban’s miracles, Gildas writes: “Alban....protected a confessor from his persecutors when he was on the point of arrest. Hiding him in his house and then changing clothes with him, he gladly exposed himself to danger and pursuit in the other’s habit. Between the time of his holy confession and the taking of his blood, and in the presence of wicked men who displayed the Roman standards to the most horrid effect, the pleasure that God took in him showed itself: by a miracle he was marked out by wonderful signs. Thanks to his fervent prayer, he opened up an unknown route across the channel of the great river Thames ñ a route resembling an untrodden

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therefore seen also as landmarks where past and present became one; to paraphrase a famous twentieth-century description of the Thames, they were considered "liquid history."<sup>218</sup>

As a result of this mixed tradition, British rivers had also come to be seen as geographical and cultural borders:

In *Britanne* here we find, our *Severne*, and our *Tweed*  
The tripartited *Ile* doe generally divide,  
To *England, Scotland, Wales*, as each other doth keep her side.  
*Trent* cuts the Land in two, so equally, as tho  
Nature it pointed-out, to our great *Brute* to show  
How to his mightie Sonnes the Iland he might share.  
(XV.256-61)

It is precisely this last function of rivers that Drayton uses as a pretext for the creation of pastoral challenges, as in the case of the river Dert:

...ther's not the proudest flood,  
That falls between the *Mount* and *Exmore*, shall make good  
Her royaltie with mine, with me nor can compare:  
I challenge any one, to answere me that dare....  
(I.305-8)

Cleere *Dert* delivering thus the famous *Brutes* arrive,  
Inflam'd with her report, the stragling rivelets strive  
So highlie her to raise, that *Ting* (whose banks were blest  
By her beloved Nymph deere *Leman*) which addrest  
To sing the *Danish* spoyles committed on her shore....  
(I.507-12)

The prototype of the river contest may reside in the myth of the Apollo-Marsyas challenge, which has been interpreted, among others, as the

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way made dry for the Israelites...." Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Documents*, ed. J. Morris, trans. M. Winterbottom (London: Phillimore, 1978), 19-20.

<sup>218</sup>The original phrase is attributed to John Burns. See *Little Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 215.

"clash of two rivers cults."<sup>219</sup> In *Poly-Olbion*, however, it is turned, via the pastoral mode, into the clash of two localities and their respective cultures, as in the verbal fight between the Severn and the Wye:

Could *England* not suffice, but that the stragling *Wye*,  
Which in the hart of *Wales* was some-time said to lye,  
Now onely for her bound proud *England* did prefer.  
That *Severne*, when she sees the wrong thus offred her,  
Though by injurious Time deprived of that place,  
Which anciently she held: yet loth that her disgrace  
Should on the *Britans* light, the Hills and Rivers neere  
Austerely she calls, commaunding them to heare....  
(VIII.13-20)

The Severn, considered at the time as the actual border between England and Wales, is seen as the "queen of western Britain": she governs and controls the tributaries of both nations and is bound to resolve their factional disputes.<sup>220</sup> It therefore holds a special place in Drayton's landscape hierarchy, for its symbolic value involving the coeval unity and division of localisms. Out of metaphor, the Severn was also a means of communication necessary to the development of western England, being the only British river that could be navigated without serious impediments.<sup>221</sup>

Another eminently symbolic river is obviously the Thames, which, unlike most of the others, is represented through a male personification. Old Father Thames was a divinity whose origin is unknown, highly reminiscent of the tutelary gods of the rivers Nile and Tiber; nevertheless, it had also been defined "fairest of fair Nereides," and thus feminised.<sup>222</sup> In

<sup>219</sup>Ibid., 41-2.

<sup>220</sup>Philip Schwyzer, "A Map of Greater Cambria," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4.2 (1998), par. 9. <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/04-2/schwamap.htm> (accessed June 10, 2009).

<sup>221</sup>T.S. Willan, "The River Navigation and Trade of the Severn Valley, 1600-1750," *The Economic History Review* 8 (1937): 68.

<sup>222</sup>John Dickenson, *Arisbas, Euphues amidst his slumbers* (London, 1594). Quoted in Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River*, 24, 83.

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the case of Drayton, after the pastoral model, the Tame (male) marries the Isis (female):<sup>223</sup> this arrangement may have been inspired by an analogy with Spenser's marriage of the Thames and Medway in his *Faerie Queene*, elaborating on Camden's version according to which Isis was the groom and Tame the bride.<sup>224</sup> In *Poly-Olbion* we are told that "the Brydall of our *Tame* and Princely *Isis* past: / And *Tamesis* their sonne, begot, and waxing fast" (XVI.1-2). Drayton may have decided to make use of the Father Thames symbology, because it is his task to sing the catalogue of English Kings (XVII.329). On his way to the "Court of great *Oceanus*" (XVII.14), the Thames falls in love with the Mole nymph. Thus, in order to follow the Thames's course,

*Mole* digs her selfe a Path, by working day and night,  
(According to her name, to shew her nature right)  
And underneath the Earth, for three miles space doth creep:  
Till gotten out of sight, quite from her mothers keep,  
Her foreintended course the wanton Nymph doth run;  
As longing to imbrace old *Tame* and *Isis* son.  
(XVII.59-64)

Drayton presents a typical love scene à la Pyramus and Thisbe, playing on the actual feature of the Mole, which flows underground for part of its length.<sup>225</sup> The Ovidian inspiration is evident, and possibly related to the following passage in his *Amores*: "what love is, rivers themselves

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<sup>223</sup>What Drayton calls Isis is the trait of the Thames in the Oxford area, and was possibly a poetic rendition of the name Ouse. Several other rivers bear the same name, of Celtic origin: they are found in Sussex, Yorkshire, and East Anglia (the Great Ouse and the Little Ouse).

<sup>224</sup>C.G. Osgood, "Spenser's English Rivers," *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 23 (1920): 72.

<sup>225</sup>The etymology of the river Mole's name was first related, by Camden, to the namesake animal. William Camden, *Britannia* (London, 1586), 296. This connection inspired Spenser's lines in his *Faerie Queene*: "And Mole, that like a nousling mole doth make / His way still under ground till *Thamis* he overtake" (IV.xi.32-3). Though marked by a specific topographical sign both in Camden's and Speed's maps of Surrey, the Mole's underground flowing in the Dorking area is not signalled in Hole's *Poly-Olbion* map.

have felt."<sup>226</sup> However, Ovidian references were often rather ambivalent, because Ovid was variously considered by early modern English readers: either as a "subversive erotic poet" or as a "political exile, whose ubiquitous aetiological myths could serve a whole range of ideological purposes."<sup>227</sup> In spite of the Mole's efforts, the Thames must marry the Medway, but is bound always to remember her love:

When *Tames* now understood, what paines the *Mole* did take,  
 How farre the loving Nymph adventur'd for his sake;  
 Although with *Medway* matcht, yet never could remove  
 The often quickning sparks of his more ancient love.  
 So that it comes to passe, when by great Natures guide  
 The *Ocean* doth returne, and thrusteth-in the Tide;  
 Up tow'rds the place, where first his much-lov'd *Mole* was seen,  
 He ever since doth flow, beyond delightful *Sheene*. (XVII.65-72)

This is one of the most lyrical parts in the poem, presenting star-crossed (and geography-crossed) love between two river personifications, who are nevertheless bound eternally to follow the paths dictated by love. Indeed, the Thames cannot reject his destiny: he must marry the Medway in order to fulfil, through a geographical union, the "hexaemeral myth" inherent in his return to the Court of Oceanus,<sup>228</sup> laden with all of the differences and

<sup>226</sup>"...flumina senserunt ipsa quid esset amor." Ovid, *Amores*, in *Heroides and Amores*, ed. G.P. Goold, trans. G. Showerman, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 1:III.vi.24.

<sup>227</sup>Hadfield, "Spenser, Drayton, and the Question of Britain," 596.

<sup>228</sup>The sea encompassing Britain is not an important interlocutor in Drayton's landscape dialogues. Only in Song XIX (Essex and Suffolk) are his tritons sent to remind the readers of the greatness of Harwich harbour, on the estuary of the Orwell and Stour rivers (XIX.145-8, 396); it is also said that, "since the *Britans* hence their first Discoveries made, / And that into the east they first were taught to trade. / Besides of all the Roads, and Havens of the East, / This Harbor where they meet is reckoned for the best" (IX.157-60). There follows a list of several British sea voyagers. The catalogue lacks the enthusiastic view in the *Ode to the Virginian Voyage*. It is very formulatic and based on the accumulation of exotic, place names located in the East and the West of the globe. These bits of information are taken directly from Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* (1598-1600), barely elaborated upon, and sometimes mistaken or confused. Even the beginning

similarities of the localisms of his tributaries.<sup>229</sup>

As Britain's Bard, Drayton was well aware of the effort he had carried out in singing the whole of his own nation, as appears from the last line of the poem: "My *England* doe conclude, for which I undertooke, / This strange *Herculean* toyle, to this my thirtieth Booke" (XXX.341-2). Beside emphasising how painstaking the task had been, the reference to Hercules linked Drayton to the two main meanings the hero's figure had come to acquire in the Renaissance. First of all, in emblem books Hercules Gallicus had become Hercules Musagetes (the Muses' leader), an epithet typical of Apollo: dressed in animal skins, holding a lyre instead of a club, Hercules had come to represent the "civilizing force of eloquence," in such a way that it was difficult to distinguish him from Orpheus, son of Calliope.<sup>230</sup> At the same time, however, the figure of Hercules was related to rivers, in so far as, according, among others, to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, he had tamed the river Achelous through the building of dams;<sup>231</sup> he had also formed the Peneus river by taming Mount Ossa and Mount Olympus, thus creating the Vale of Tempe, or the most renowned *locus amoenus*.<sup>232</sup> After all, in his *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton had carried out both tasks: he had attempted, in his role of *vates*, to civilise the British people by opening their eyes on their national past, and in so doing he had tamed the English and Welsh rivers in order to fit them into an extremely complex poetic scheme; he had managed, that is, to pin down, in the present, the "liquid history"

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of British sea voyages and conquests starting from King Arthur should not be taken at face value, as it is present also in Hakluyt, and was not specifically devised by Drayton in order to highlight British history. R.R. Cawley, "Drayton and the Voyagers," *PMLA* 38 (1923): 530-56; Rees, "Hogs, Gulls, and Englishmen," 27-8.

<sup>229</sup>Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature*, 247.

<sup>230</sup>Sean Keilen, *Vulgar Eloquence: On the Renaissance Invention of English Literature* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006), 21-2.

<sup>231</sup>Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2:IX.4ff.

<sup>232</sup>Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature*, 37-8.

they represented in its unfolding through the Ages.<sup>233</sup>

### *Mountains and Vales*

Although the rivers may be considered *the* protagonists of *Poly-Olbion*, relevant to Drayton's poetic purposes are also British mountains and vales.<sup>234</sup>

Unlike rivers, which were always considered positive symbols, hills and vales had always occupied an ambivalent position both in classical antiquity and in Christian culture. Whereas in Greek (then Roman) and Hebrew culture, mountains were considered sacred and sublime, places where man could be closer to the gods or to God (e.g., Mount Olympus and Mount Sinai), Christian culture turned both mountains and vales into natural symbols and "visual reminders" of human sin and God's wrath: the concept of "high," whether natural or social, was generally suspect, whereas what was "low" was deemed more worthy, so much so that both Isaiah and Luke recalled the warning saying that "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."<sup>235</sup>

Drayton's view of mountains is certainly ambivalent: sometimes they are proud and arrogant, sometimes they are glorious heroes. Malvern Hill, for instance, described as "king of Hills" (VIII.53), delivers a monologue full of pride:

*Olympus, fayr'st of Hills, that Heaven art said to bee,  
I not envie thy state, nor lesse myself doe make;  
Nor to possesse thy name, mine owne would I forsake:*

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<sup>233</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>234</sup>Very few British promontories can actually be called mountains (1000 feet or more above base), and should rather be considered hills. Still, in this section the term "mountain" will be generally used, in order to highlight their opposition to vales.

<sup>235</sup>Marjorie Hope Nicholson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), 71, 41, 43.

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Nor would I, as thou doost, ambitiouslie aspire  
To thrust my forked top into th'ethereal fire.  
For, didst thou taste the sweets that on my face doth breathe,  
Above thou wouldst not seek what I enjoy beneath:  
Besides, the sundry soyles I every where survay,  
Make me, if better not, thy equal everie way. (VII.62-70)

Like a monarch gazing upon his dominions, Malvern Hill compares himself to Mount Olympus and its traditional status, suggesting that England can and does have an equal if not better mountain. The lesser height of Malvern – called, as it were, hill – is positively justified, according to the Christian tradition, as a sign of its lack of ambition to touch the sphere of fire, which Olympus itself has. Malvern is satisfied with the “sweets” it has within his reach, and thinks his surroundings, if not better, than those of Mount Olympus. This comparison to the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations is a frequent theme in *Poly-Olbion*, involving also Drayton’s view of history; it is part of an invoked *translatio culturae* trying to answer the question: can Britain offer a new home to the Mediterranean culture and mythology that shaped European civilisation?<sup>236</sup> Drayton’s answer is positive, of course; at the same time he is attempting to find, beginning with landscape features, native counterparts to the Greek and Roman reference points, in order to give Britain its own cultural identity.

But Malvern continues:

....This stoutlie I maintaine  
Gainst Forrests, Valleys, Fields, Groves, Rivers, Pasture, Plaine,  
And all their flatter kind (so much that doe relie  
Upon their feedings, flocks, and their fertilitie)  
The Mountain is the King: and he it is alone  
Above the other soyles that Nature doth in-throne.  
For Mountaines be like Men of brave heroique mind,  
With eyes erect to heaven, of whence themselves they find;  
Whereas the lowlie Vale, as earthlie, like it selfe, Doth never

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<sup>236</sup>Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature*, 161.

further looke then how to purchase pelfe.  
(VII.83-9)

These lines play on several *topoi* related to mountains. Mountain is King first of all because it is closer to heaven, higher from the ground, therefore, unlike vales, farther from earthly concerns. The term "flatter" is certainly a *sylllepsis* uniting the physical flatness of vales and rivers, etc., as compared to mountains; but, as personified features, these are also seen as courtiers trying to pursue their own aims – and one could not but think of the legions of "flatterers" at King James's court, anathema to the anti-Jacobean faction. The Christian interpretation of "high" and "low" is here used to criticise the "baseness" of vales. This passage, however, is mainly a celebration of the necessary natural role played by mountains:

If Meade, or lower Slade, grieve at the roome we take,  
Knowe that the snowe or raine, descending oft, doth make  
The fruitfull Valley fat, with what from us doth glide,  
Who with our Winters waste maintaine their Sommers pride.  
(VII.99-102)

Mountains are essential to the fertility of vales, which implies that, despite the celebrated hierarchy, each and every landscape feature has its own role in the Book of Nature, and none of them can do without the others, as a good monarch makes his realm better, but cannot do without his subjects.

In case of hostility or rebellion among landscape features, the mountain acts as a peacemaker – which the river Weever, for instance, in Song XI, is not able to do – and brings peace between the English and Welsh rivers.<sup>237</sup> In Song IX, the nymphs complain for the fact that the hills overshadow their lake; only the intervention of Mount Snowdon can restore the original natural order:

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<sup>237</sup>Cf. "Heere, *Weever*, as a Flood affecting godly peace, / His place of speech resignes; and to the Muse refers / The hearing of the Cause, to stickle all these stirs" (PO XI.426-8).

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But, whilst the Nymphs report these wonders of their Lake,  
Their further cause of speech the mightie *Snowdon* brake;  
Least, if their watry kind should suffred be too long,  
The licence that they tooke, might doe the Mountaines wrong.  
(IX.141-4)

The nymphs have no "licence," are not allowed, to rebel against the higher levels of the landscape hierarchy. However, the water of their lake is, as we have seen, provided by those very hills. Their revolt is, thus, absurd, because "in nature differences in degree are mutually beneficial."<sup>238</sup>

In general, Drayton seems to appreciate mountains.<sup>239</sup> However, the Christian suspicion towards the "high" and "low" states does nevertheless surface:

I doubt not but some Vale enough for us hath said,  
To answer them that most with basenesse us upbray'd;  
Those high presumptuous Hills, which bend their utmost  
might,  
Us onely to deject, in their inveterate spight:  
But I would have them thinke, that I (which am the Queene  
Of all the *British* Vales, and so have ever beene  
Since *Gomers* Giant-brood inhabited this Ile,  
And that of all the rest, my selfe may so enstile)  
Against the highest Hill dare put my selfe for place,  
That ever threatened Heaven with the austerest face.  
(XIV.79-88)

The Vale of Evesham rebels against the surrounding mountains; as it were, mountains are here criticised because of the *hubris* entailed by their height.

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<sup>238</sup>S.P. Revard, "The Design of Nature in Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 17 (1977): 109.

<sup>239</sup>Hope Nicholson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 54.

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## Chapter 5

# The Poet and the Antiquarian

### 5.1 *Historical Poetry and Historiography*

The first part of *Poly-Olbion* shows the interlacing of Drayton's frequent versification of historical feats with Selden's antiquarian commentaries. Both are concerned with "storie," a wide-ranging term including narratives spanning from fictional tales to what would now be called history, or the relation of past events in a logical and causal way.<sup>1</sup> This semantic coincidence is the symptom not so much of lexical confusion, but of three interrelated issues that will help determine which kind of "storie" is being told: content – what is being told and which sources are being used; method – which sources can be considered reliable and on what grounds; and interpretation – the boundary between "feigned tale" and "history," or the way in which the determination of causality between events, and its explanation by means of narrative discourse, may lead either to the distortion or to the reconstruction of facts.

Both content and form are, in turn, dependent on the accessibility of sources, therefore of the past. In one of his early works, *Duello*, published just two years before *Poly-Olbion*, Selden provided the differentiation

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<sup>1</sup>Anne Lake Prescott, "Drayton's Muse and Selden's 'Story'," *Studies in Philology* 87 (1990): 308, 317.

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between "time historick" and what "the philologers call mythick."<sup>2</sup> The distinction between the two lies in the sources that can be gathered for their study. Whereas "time historick" can be assessed through monumental history or material remains, written records, and their philological study, "mythick" time can only rely upon tradition, by which is meant oral stories and/or written narratives whose origin is lost in time immemorial.<sup>3</sup>

The gap between "time historick" and time "mythick" – between what can be physically ascertained through objects or written records and what has resulted from traditional poetic discourse – is what historical poetry aimed to bridge; it reflected a general uneasiness at facing a largely unascertainable past, which however had to be known.<sup>4</sup> Behind the concept of historical poetry there lay, nevertheless, an essential dichotomy, rooted in the degree of interdependence of history and rhetoric. Aristotle's theory of poetry had led to the re-habilitation of poetry versus history, by encouraging poets to rely on verisimilitude: they should write about facts that are universal yet life-like, which would make them perfect didactic tools, as compared to historical facts tied to topical events. History was, indeed, seen as a branch of rhetoric, and its didactic power deemed less effective than that of poetry. What late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century antiquarians and historiographers were trying to prove, instead, was that, whereas poetry was indeed a function of the imagination, history was a function of memory, and did not need to

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<sup>2</sup>D.R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 211. By "philologers," "philological," and "philology," it was meant, according to OED, something "relating to the historical study of a language or languages" – the first entry to this meaning dates around the early 1620s. The older definition of philology, recorded as early as the 1520s, deals with "love of learning and literature; the branch of knowledge that deals with the historical, linguistic, interpretative, and critical aspects of literature; literary or classical scholarship" (1).

<sup>3</sup>Andrew Escobedo, "The Tudor Search for Arthur and the Poetics of Historical Loss," *Exemplaria* 14 (2002): 133; Woolf, *The Idea of History*, 212.

<sup>4</sup>A.B. Ferguson, *Utter Antiquity: Perceptions of Prehistory in Renaissance England* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 120, 132.

be tied to rhetorical principles in the first place, but to the philological assessment of facts. At the same time, however, history was not a uniform concept: indeed, at the turn of the century, the study of antiquities and the gathering of facts, based on the comparative study of sources, was still mostly considered a separate task from the creation of a historical narrative in its own right, based on the historian's interpretation of facts, and providing causal links, as well as a coherent discourse aiming to connect single facts.<sup>5</sup> The most serious methodological problems arose for the study of epochs for which "memory," intended as extant records, was not sufficient to reconstruct the past, and historians could only rely on their own interpretation of facts for the formulation of causal hypotheses. Again, interpretation implied the use of narrative in historical discourse, and narratives are dependent on rhetorical principles.<sup>6</sup>

To what extent interpretational narratives, as well as narratives whose fundamental facts had not been safely ascertained through a comparative method, should become a tool for the assessment and presentation of the past is precisely what is at stake in the first part of *Poly-Olbion*, where this dichotomy is visually performed by the verse/prose, poetry/history layout of the eighteenth Songs.

### 5.1.1 *The Use of Sources*

Drayton's historico-chorographical sources have been thoroughly investigated through textual comparisons,<sup>7</sup> and therefore need not being re-

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<sup>5</sup>Woolf, *The Idea of History*, 213.

<sup>6</sup>Ferguson, *Utter Antiquity*, 122, 129.

<sup>7</sup>See W.H. Moore, "The Fusion of History and Poetry in the *Poly-Olbion*" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1963); W.H. Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," *Studies in Philology* 65 (1968): 783-803; W.K. Hall, "From Chronicle to Chorography: Truth, Narrative, and the Antiquarian Enterprise in Renaissance England" (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1995); Angus Vine, "Michael Drayton and Early Modern Antiquarianism" (PhD dissertation, Cambridge

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assessed. What is essential, though, is the discrepancy between the sources he actually used and those he credited, which, though very few, betray the poet's preferences.

The sources Drayton mentions most readily are British ones. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), one of Drayton's principal sources for British history,<sup>8</sup> is credited twice as "That *Geffray of Monmouth*" who "first, our *Brutus* did devise" (X.244) and, a few lines later, as "Our *Geffray*" (X.254). The foremost source for Welsh history seems to have been Humphrey Llwyd's *Historie of Cambria*.<sup>9</sup> Llwyd is credited as "my much loved (the learned) Humfrey Floyd" (vii\*) in Drayton's prefatory letter to his friends, the "Cambro-Britans." Both Monmouth and Llwyd summarised the most important events of British history, starting off with a foundational myth and ending with present times.

The reality about Britain's ancient past was that nothing was known of what had happened before Caesar's arrival, whereas what happened after the Romans settled there had been preserved precisely thanks to them. Since the mid sixteenth century some antiquarians (including Selden) had begun to explore the possibility that British history might not have been successfully transmitted to the present from the times of Brutus's arrival in Britain (itself an "event" reported with scepticism).<sup>10</sup> This, however, entailed the acknowledgement of a wide period of time that was generally unknown and mostly unascertainable, because deprived of any records. In order to bridge this gap, Drayton resorted to Bards and Druids as recorders and preservers of the British past:

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University, 2004).

<sup>8</sup>Isaac Gourvitch, "Drayton's Debt to Geoffrey of Monmouth," *The Review of English Studies* 4 (1928): 394-403.

<sup>9</sup>Isaac Gourvitch, "The Welsh Element in the *Poly-Olbion*: Drayton's Sources," *The Review of English Studies* 4 (1928): 70; R.R. Cawley, "Drayton's Use of Welsh History," *PMLA* 38 (1923): 235.

<sup>10</sup>J.E. Curran, Jr, "The History Never Written: Bards, Druids, and the Problem of Antiquarianism in *Poly-Olbion*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998): 498-9.

Yee sacred Bards, that to your Harps melodious strings  
Sung th'ancient Heroes deeds (the monuments of Kings)  
And in your dreadful verse ingrav'd the prophecies,  
The aged worlds descents, and Genealogies;  
If, as those *Druides* taught, which kept the British rites,  
And dwelt in darksome Groves, there counsailing with spirites....  
(I.31-6)

Right at the beginning of the poem, Drayton credits his main source: the oral tradition of knowledge secured by Druids, "native Priests" (VI.220), and handed down in song from generation to generation by Bards, "which so diuinely sung" (X.239).

Drayton's most obvious choice for the necessary information on Bards and Druids was Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, according to which Druidism had begun in Britain before expanding to Gaul.<sup>11</sup> But Drayton also consulted sixteenth-century sources like Leland's *Genethliacon*, Sir John Price's *Historiae Britannicae Defensio* (1573), Llwyd's *Historie of Cambria*, and Churchyard's *Worthiness of Wales*.<sup>12</sup> These antiquarians discussed the issue of British oral tradition as a source for history – rooted, that is to say, in Wales – by turning into historical sources the records attributed to the three most important Bards then known: Taliessin, Merlinus Ambrosius, and Merlinus Sylvester.<sup>13</sup> According to Price, for instance, the Druids

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<sup>11</sup>Julius Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum*, ed. W. Hering (Leipzig: Teubner, 1987), 1:VI.xiii.11: "[the Druids'] disciplina in Britannia reperta atque inde in Galliam translata esse existimatur." See Stuart Piggott, *The Druids* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), 100.

<sup>12</sup>Cawley, "Drayton's Use of Welsh History," 234-55.

<sup>13</sup>The two Merlins were a product of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*, based on Welsh sources, which was meant to be a revision of the Merlin he had mentioned in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*. However, Geoffrey's Merlin was so different from the original one as to generate the parallel tradition of another Merlin, who lived at a different time. Giraldus Cambrensis first made the distinction between the two: Merlin Ambrosius, born of an incubus, had lived in Vortigern's times, and was mentioned in the *Historia*; Merlin Caledonius or Sylvester, a Scottish bard, had lived during the reign of King Arthur, and was present in the *Vita Merlini*. Curran, "The History Never Written," 503.

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were to be considered something like "trained historians," and the fact that their knowledge had been transposed into the written word only much later was irrelevant, and did not make their content less reliable.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Bards – among whom Drayton picked Taliessin as a model (IV.115) – were in charge of consigning that content to posterity through oral songs ("....some *Bards* there were, that in their sacred rage / Recorded the Descents, and acts of everie Age," IV.171-2).<sup>15</sup>

However, it must be taken into account that old Welsh sources seemed to contain "privileged information," because they were accessible only to scholars possessing good knowledge of the language in which they were written or handed down:<sup>16</sup> the so-called British language.<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth was among those who had indeed consulted some of those sources, and Drayton himself joined the group of scholars sharing the knowledge of old Welsh:

From *Taliessen* wise....  
....and such immortall men  
As this now-waning world shall hardly heare agen  
In our own genuine tongue, that natives were of *Wales*  
Our *Geoffrey* had his *Brute*.  
(X.249-54)

It is impossible to determine whether Drayton actually knew old Welsh well enough to read works written first-hand in that language.<sup>18</sup> He certainly saw its knowledge as a determining factor in the understanding

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<sup>14</sup>Ferguson, *Utter Antiquity*, 96-7.

<sup>15</sup>For Drayton's use of Price's *Historiae Britannicae Defensio* as a source, see W.H. Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," *Studies in Philology* 65 (1968): 789.

<sup>16</sup>Curran, "The History Never Written," 502.

<sup>17</sup>Nowadays called Celtic Briton.

<sup>18</sup>Drayton may have known the Welsh poem *Arymes Prydein*, which possibly inspired his connection of the river Parrot with prophecy in PO III.374-83. A.L. Owen, *The Famous Druids: A Survey of Three Centuries of English Literature on Druids* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 47-8.

of the British past; like Price, he thought that the literary solidification of oral tradition was a kind of evidence that scholars unable to understand the British language had ignored and continued to ignore.<sup>19</sup>

The most renowned instance of the historian who interprets ancient British culture without any knowledge of the language is also the author of the only non-native source that is credited, Julius Caesar:

To understand our state, no marvaile then though wee  
Should so to *Caesar* seeke, in his reports to see  
Unskilfull of our tongue but by Interpreter,  
Hee nothing had of ours which our great Bards did sing,  
Except some few poore words....  
(VI.317-22)

So barbarous nor were wee as manie have us made,  
And *Caesars* envious pen would all the world perswade....  
(X.297-8)

Caesar's account had been used by Camden, together with Gildas's *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*.<sup>20</sup> It is limited to the Druids' role and duties: they are said to administer the law, educate the young, decide on disputes, be exempted from war; they do not commit their teachings to writing in order to avoid their wider circulation, and also because they rely on mnemonic training.<sup>21</sup> The role of the Bards is not mentioned, and the Druids' secret knowledge is very cursorily said to regard the nature of things, the motion of the stars, and the power of the immortal gods.<sup>22</sup> However, the relevance and reliability of Caesar's report is downplayed and criticised by Drayton: being unable to speak the British tongue, Caesar delivered to the written page only "a few poor words" out of the actual bardic songs, which he understood only in translation. His "envious pen"

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<sup>19</sup>Ferguson, *Utter Antiquity*, 97.

<sup>20</sup>Curran, "The History Never Written," 499.

<sup>21</sup>Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum*, 4:xiii-xiv.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:xiv.6.

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is ironically set against the "barbarous" oral culture represented by Bards; but the written word is said to have prevailed over the spoken word, by persuading the whole world of the truth of its narrative.

These passages seem to suggest an opposition between written and oral records. While Caesar provided the world with a written account of early British history, the Druids, as Drayton's marginalia say, "would not commit their mysteries to wryting" (X.207), but rather to bardic songs:

And that whereon our Foe his greatest hold doth take,  
Against the handled Cause and most doth seeme to make,  
Is, that we shewe no Booke our *Brutus* to approve;  
But that our idle *Bards*, as their fond age did move,  
Sang what their fancies pleas'd. Thus do I answer these;  
That th'ancient *British* Priests, the fearlesse *Druides*,  
That ministred the lawes, and were so trulie wise....  
To letters never would their mysteries commit,  
For which the breasts of men they deem'd to be more fit.  
Which question lesse should seeme from judgement to proceed.  
For, when of Ages past wee looke in bookes to read,  
Wee retchlesly discharge our memory of those,  
So when injurious Time, such Monuments doth lose  
(As what so great a Work, by Time that is not wrackt?)  
Wee utterly forgoe that memorable act:  
but when we lay it up within the minds of men,  
They leave it their next Age; that, leaves it hers agen:  
So strongly which (me thinks) doth for Tradition make,  
As if you from the world it altogether take,  
You utterly subverte Antiquitie thereby.  
For though Time well may prove that often she doth lie,  
Posteritie by her yet many things hath known,  
That ere men learn'd to write, could no way have been shown:  
For, if the spirit of God, did not our faith assure  
The Scriptures be from heaven, like heaven, divinely pure,  
Of *Moses* mightie works, I reverently may say

(I speake with godlie feare) Tradition put away,  
In power of humane wit easely doth not lie  
To prove before the Flood the Genealogie.  
Nor anything there is that kindlier doth agree  
With our descent from *Troy* (if things compar'd may be)...  
(X.259-65, 267-90)

The biggest problem connected with using Bards as sources for the past is, Drayton claims, their original oral medium. However, he subverts the case made against oral reports – their being subject to uncontrolled alterations invalidating their reliability – by stating that, on the contrary, “injurious Time” has no power over matter consigned to the “minds of men.” What Drayton is stating is not so much the higher reliability of oral records – though that may seem the purpose of his argument – or the mere opposition between the written and the unwritten.<sup>23</sup> It is, instead, the essential role played by what he calls “Tradition,” or the continuous intergenerational exchange of the most important facts of the nation’s past by means of poetic verse. Unlike other sixteenth-century antiquarians before him,<sup>24</sup> Drayton was not trying to defend the content of bardic songs in terms of unknown original sources, nor was he trying to deal with the problematic issue of written records or physical monuments as conveyors of England’s past by appealing to a non-extant, therefore unascertainable, authority.<sup>25</sup> Drayton’s intentions seem to be aimed to an assessment not so much of the relative importance of oral over written formulation, but of the essential function played by poetic verse in the presentation of historical truth. Tradition as such – the sum of numerous “minds of men” to whom the narrative of the past has been assigned – can overcome the

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<sup>23</sup>Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 182.

<sup>24</sup>In his *Assertio inelytissimi Arturii regis Britanniae* (1544), Leland tried to defend Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia* in terms of its non-extant (whether lost or non-existent) Welsh source, or the mysterious book Monmouth said he had transcribed. Escobedo, “The Tudor Search for Arthur,” 138.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 140-1.

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helplessness of the single mind, of the single pen, in the transmission of knowledge from one age to the next,<sup>26</sup> as knowing that the Scriptures were divinely inspired constitutes the argument for their reliability.

The thorny part of Drayton's argument lies in the way in which Bards would hand down their poetic stories:

Heer then I cannot chuse but bitterly exclaim  
Against those fooles that all Antiquitie defame,  
Because they have found out, some credulous Ages layd  
Slight fictions with the truth, whilst truth on rumor stayd; And  
that one forward Time (perceiving the neglect  
A former of her had) to purchase her respect,  
With toyes then trimd her up, the drowsie world t'allure,  
And lent her what it thought might appetite procure  
To man, whose mind doth still varietie pursue;  
And therefore to those things whose grounds were verie true,  
Though naked yet and bare (not having to content  
The weyward curious eare) gave fictive ornament;  
And fitter thought, the truth they should in question call,  
Then coldlie sparing that, the truth should goe and all.  
And surelie I suppose, that which this froward time  
Doth scandalize her with to be her heynous crime,  
That hath her most preserv'd: for, still where wit hath found  
A thing most cleerlie true, it made that, fictions ground:  
Which shee suppos'd might give sure colour to them both:  
From which, as from a roote, this wondred error grow'th  
At which our Criticks gird, whose judgements are so strict  
And he the bravest man who most can contradict  
That which decrepit Age (which forced is to leane  
Upon Tradition) tells; esteeming it so meane,  
As they it quite reject, and for some trifling thing  
(Which Time hath pind to Truth) they all away will fling.  
...Therefore (in my conceit) most rightlie serv'd are they  
That to the *Roman* trust (on his report that stay)

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<sup>26</sup>For Drayton's view of the poet's role see the next section.

our truth from him to learne, as ignorant of ours  
As we were then of his; except t'were of his powers....  
(VI.275-300, 305-8)

The problem with the reliability of tradition as a source, says Drayton, is that it is entirely dismissed by antiquarians and historians because of the "fictive ornaments" inserted by Bards to make truth more palatable to the listeners, whose minds are better engaged through the use of rhetorical variety. In order to achieve such descriptive vividness as might hold the attention of the audience, Bards had to intersperse true facts with "slight fictions," which, according to Drayton, "Time hath pind to Truth"; and indeed, true facts managed to survive in time in the oral tradition precisely because of those very slight fictions that made the narrative worthwhile listening to in subsequent ages. The myth of *nuda veritas* was therefore preserved by suggesting that the light clothing served to vouchsafe and preserve the "naked" content of truth. Drayton's dismissal of what historical "Criticks" thought ends once again with a bitter remark on Caesar: why should Caesar's information on early British culture be deemed more true than that conveyed by the oral tradition handed down for generations by early British Bards themselves? Caesar was as ignorant of British "truth" as the British were of his; what made the difference is that his account survived to tell his version of the story because he was the conqueror ("except 'twere of his powers"). Drayton here grasps the essence of a debate on the writing of history that is still ongoing at present, and which is concerned with how much truth and how much fiction should be and are actually present in historical discourse, as well as with the role of historical narrative.

As far as Selden's use of sources is concerned, he makes his opinion clear right from the preface:

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The Author [i.e., Drayton], in Passages of *first Inhabitants, Name, State, and Monarchique succession* in this Isle, followes *Geffrey ap Arthur, Polychronicon, Matthew of Westminster*, and such more. Of their Traditions, for that one so much controverted, and by *Cambro-Britons* still maintayned, touching the *Trojan Brute*, I have (but as an *Advocat* for the *Muse*) argued; disclaiming in it, if alledg'd for my own *Opinion*. (viii\*)

Selden dismisses Drayton's historical sources – namely chronicles written before the sixteenth century, which were still followed by Welsh antiquarians – representing tradition born out of collective narratives;<sup>27</sup> particularly the story of the Trojan ethnogenesis of Britain. He also states that, unlike Drayton, he is not an "Advocate for the Muse," and that the function of his commentary is to clarify the poet's allusions which suppose "a full knowing Reader" (viii\*). His aim is precisely to separate the wheat from the chaff, that is to say, truth from "fictive ornaments": "in winding steps of Personating Fictions (as some times) so infolds, that suddaine conceipt cannot abstract a Forme of the clothed Truth, I have, as I might, *Illustrated*" (viii\*). As opposed to Drayton's view, truth, whose nakedness is concealed in tradition, is here considered untrue, and not even witty poetic conceits can expose her.

Besides, as Selden explains, the absence of extant accounts before Caesar's – no Greek nor Latin historians had ever mentioned the isle before (ix\*-x\*) – must force him to "trust none" about information on the times preceding Caesar, and "with Others adhere to *Conjecture*" (x\*). He then mentions the most frequent sources he will rely on:

In Ancient matter since, I relie on *Tacitus* and *Dio* especially, *Vopiscus, Capitolin, Spartian* (for so much as they have, and the rest of the *Augustan Story*), afterwards *Gildas, Nennius* (but little is left of them, and that of the last very imperfect) *Bede, Asserio*,

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<sup>27</sup>Woolf, *The Idea of History*, 212.

*Ethelwerd....William of Malmesbury, Marian, Florence of Worcester....and the numerous rest of our Monkish and succeeding Chronographers....In all, I beleeve him most which freest from Affection and Hate (causes of corruption) might best know, and hath, with most likely assertion, delivered his report. (x\*)*

Although only a few classical sources are credited here, Selden uses many more throughout his commentary, though with little conviction: despite his wide knowledge of classical literature, he would rely on it not so much for its content, but for the humanistic habit of recurring to it for reference; indeed, like other historians and antiquarians of his time, he was becoming increasingly aware of the gap between single facts and any kind of historical narrative formulation, therefore interpretation.<sup>28</sup> On commenting on Drayton's anti-Roman tirade in Song VI, Selden tries to provide a balanced view of ancient sources on the British past. His initial statement about Caesar suggests that Selden himself was one of the "many...that dare beleeve nothing of our storie, or antiquities of more ancient times: but only *Julius Caesar*, and other about or since him" (124), which counters Drayton's view. However, Selden cannot ignore the problematic authority of Caesar: on the one hand, he says, we know that Caesar's "ignorance of this Isle was great, time forbidding him language or conversation with the *British*" (124); on the other hand, the sole two lines on Britain before Caesar come from a poetic work – Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* – which is soon dismissed, together with a few lines in Catullus, Virgil, and Horace, as "nothing that discovers any monument of this Island proper to its inhabitants" (124-5).

Once again, the problem of the sources revolves around the gap of records on early British history, especially about the Trojan ethnogenesis of Britain. Selden is aware of the issue, but cannot offer any solution which would lead along the path of a better philological reconstruction of that

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<sup>28</sup>D. Sandler Berkowitz, *John Selden's Formative Years: Politics and Society in Early Seventeenth-Century England* (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988), 69.

hypothetical past:

why may not we as well think that many stories & relations, anciently written here, have been by the *Picts, Scots, Romans, Danes, Saxons & Normans*, devoured up from posterity, which perhaps, had they bin left to us, would have ended this controversie? Shall we doubt of what *Livy, Polybius, Halicarnassus, Plutarch, Strabo*, and many others have had out of *Fabius, Antias, Chereas, Solynus, Ephorus, Theopompus, Cato, Quadrigarius*, with infinit other, now lost, writers, because we see not the selfe Authors?....So that the losse in this, and all kinds, to the Common-wealth of letters, hath beene so greivous and irreparable, that wee may well imagine, how error of conceit in some, envie in others, and hostile invasion hath bereft us of many monuments most precious in all sorts of literature, if we now enjoy'd their instructing use. (214-15)

Selden is here posing the question of the reliability of records. His point is not completely clear and betrays the conflictual attitude of seventeenth-century antiquarians. There is certainly a huge lack of information regarding the British past, but why should not classical sources be trusted, if their authors did have access to some of the lost written records? His humanistic bias is here evident, although he concludes by admitting that even in written records "error of conceit," "envie" or "hostile invasion" may have deprived posterity of many testimonies.

Although Selden's point mainly rests on a bipolar view of sources – extant or non-extant – he cannot ignore the fact that extant does not mean reliable, and that reliability cannot entail narrative coherence. Indeed, Selden is often contradictory when dealing with the problem of interpretation as opposed to the simple collection of facts. Original authorities are certainly reliable; but even non-contemporary historians or "derivative authorities" may be praised for the good judgement they

display in the interpretation and assessment of original records.<sup>29</sup> To Selden, a humanist by training,<sup>30</sup> classical historians were worth reading, because they possessed interpretational skills that made their accounts still valuable in the seventeenth century. Though rejecting the "errors of conceit," Selden nevertheless accepted a great amount of "received hypotheses" handed down by such historians,<sup>31</sup> not so much because they were written sources, but because their status as classics was sufficient to make them reliable.

But what did he think about Drayton's "Cambro-British" tradition as a way to overcome the British historical gap? Commenting on Song XIII he drops the following ironic annotation: "Sufficient justification of making a Poem, may be from tradition, which the Author [Drayton] here uses" (287). Selden makes it very clear that the Muse's interest lies not in the actual truthfulness of the poetic narrative, but in the "Variety of your Mother Tongue" (x\*). As for Bards and Druids – especially Taliessin – Selden refers to Price's *Defensio* and Camden's *Britannia*.<sup>32</sup> But although he mentions Taliessin's books as one of the testimonies available before Caesar (ix\*), he does not use it as a source. Tradition is therefore dismissed as being no more than a poetic device, referring to the ways and content of imaginative re-elaborations of real events. However, from a philological

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<sup>29</sup>Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13 (1950): 286.

<sup>30</sup>Selden attended the Prebendal Free School, Chichester, where he was noted by the Master and taught Latin and Greek. He was then admitted to Hart Hall, Oxford, possibly around aged 14, but left in 1602, without taking a degree; though no direct evidence is available, Selden may have studied, like other undergraduates, Latin, Greek, and Aristotle's philosophy. After moving to London, he decided to pursue his interest in English law, and was enrolled at one of the Inns of Chancery, a preparatory phase before admission to the Inns of Court; he became a member of the Inner Temple in 1604. G.J. Toomer, *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1:1-8.

<sup>31</sup>Donald Ostrowski, "The Historian and the Virtual Past," *The Historian* 51 (1989): 209.

<sup>32</sup>P.G. Buchloh, *Michael Drayton: Barde und Historiker, Politiker und Prophet* (Neumunster: Wachholtz, 1964), 76.

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standpoint, it cannot be considered history.<sup>33</sup> The problem with the bardic transmission of facts, Selden thinks, is that the oral tradition could only have been reliable had they been continuously assessed by their peers, as only happened originally.<sup>34</sup> Bardic accounts cannot be related to any particular historical method for assessing facts and interpretation; they are themselves uncontrolled poetic transpositions of the truth. They are, to Selden, comparable to second-hand sources, where facts and interpretation cannot be disentangled, and the fictions embedded in the poetic verse come to be seen as truth on the grounds of their immemorial use.<sup>35</sup> They are, finally, narratives, and so the facts they tell tend to be distorted by the prevalence of rhetoric over historical accuracy.

In the case of non-classical second-hand sources, Selden often finds it difficult to determine where fact ends and interpretation begins:

I justify all, by the selfe Authors cited, crediting no *Transcribers*, but when of Necessitie I must. My thirst compeld mee alwayes seeke the *Fountaines*, and, by that, if meanes grant it, judge the *Rivers* nature. Nor can any Conversant in Letters bee ignorant what error is oftimes fallen into, by trusting Authorities at second hand, and rash collecting (as it were) from visuall beam's refracted through another's eyes. (xii\*)

Interpretation is like refraction, when coming from any tract following the "fountaine" of information. Selden's "second-hand" distinction, however, seems to be more of a subjective than of an objective kind: it is the antiquarian's duty to determine whether a source be reliable or not, as well as the degree in which interpretation may blur facts. Selden's assessment is indeed based on the technique of source utilisation: that is to say, "where

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<sup>33</sup>Ferguson, *Utter Antiquity*, 103.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>35</sup>Prescott, "Drayton's Muse and Selden's 'Story'," 316.

there are no sources, there is no history."<sup>36</sup> Against the informational gaps where the antiquarian is deprived of sources, and therefore helpless, stand the ages for which many sources are available: in this case, Selden's apparatus has not only a functional reason – providing information – but also a rhetorical reason, because the visual presence of the archives consulted contributes to the "specific verisimilitude" of history.<sup>37</sup>

The essential difference between Drayton's and Selden's views seems to regard the function and importance they assign to interpretation, meaning the author's re-elaboration of facts into narrative discourse. On the one hand, Drayton composed historical poetry founded on the poetic tradition of the Bards, where "slight fictions" were inserted to ornate facts and render the matter more palatable. It was, however, a kind of "critical" narrative which, if read to learn about historical facts, would require the readers' active interpretation of what the poet had already digested for them.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, Selden wanted to detach himself from any kind of historical narrative, nor did he think the formulation of such narrative should be his own concern, as he himself stated just after providing the chronology of the Heptarchy and the English Kings:

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<sup>36</sup>Berkowitz, *John Selden's Formative Years*, 45.

<sup>37</sup>Philippe Carrard, "History as a Kind of Writing: On the Poetics of Historiography," *Historical Reflections* 15 (1988): 448. As Cawley notes, referring to Drayton's and Selden's use of Powel's *Historie of Cambria*: "If then the learned Selden had Powel's book open before him, he must have realized to what extent his friend, Drayton, was dependent upon it. And if so, why did he not acknowledge the fact? Very often an allusion to Powel and a quotation from *The Historie of Cambria* would have dispensed with tedious extracts from various sources....Was he guarding the fact so that his friend's knowledge would seem the greater as coming from general information rather than a single source? Or, further, did the erudite gentleman perceive the forestalling of many learned notes by reference to a single work which would frequently have given the only explanations necessary?" Cawley, "Drayton's Use of Welsh History," 246.

<sup>38</sup>G.M. MacLean, *Time's Witness: Historical Representation in English Poetry, 1603-1660* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 6.

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How in time they [the reigns of the Heptarchy] successively came under the *West-Saxon* rule, I must not tell you, unless I should untimely put on the person of an Historian. (246)

History, not this place, must informe the Reader of more particulars on the *Danes*. (272)

At this stage of his antiquarian studies, Selden was still keen on the distinction between antiquities and history – or the collection of facts and their causal connection through an historical narrative – and, by applying a strictly philological method to the study of historico-antiquarian sources, he aimed to construct an apparatus which would help the reader separate facts from “slight fictions,” by assessing their truthfulness or falsity.<sup>39</sup> What he certainly could not accept was the interpolation of authorial interpretation in order to bridge the gap between the “real” and “virtual” past, in case of insufficient sources.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.1.2 *Tradition and “Synchronisme”: The Methods*

Drayton saw in Bards the archetype of the British poet-*vates*, as spokesmen of the collective identity of their people:

O memorable Bards, of unmixt blood, which still  
Posteritie shall praise for your so wondrous skill,  
That in your noble Songs, the long Descents have kept,  
Of your great Heroes, else in *Lethe* that had slept,  
With theirs whose ignorant pride your labours have disdain'd;  
How much from time, and them, how bravelie have you  
gain'd!

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<sup>39</sup>Woolf, *The Idea of History*, 213.

<sup>40</sup>Ostrowski, “The Historian and the Virtual Past,” 206.

Musician, Herault, Bard, thrice maist thou be renown'd,  
And with three several wreathes immortallie be crown'd....  
(VI.259-66)

The similarity between the status of ancient and Celtic poets had already been used as a poetic archetype by Spenser. Their importance lay in their being a sort of collective memory of legends and myths, a function of poetry that was felt to be universal.<sup>41</sup> The assimilation of Bards to ancient poets allowed British poets like Drayton to find a national identity, as spokesmen of the past of their nation. Drayton invokes the inspiration of their spirit to immortalise his verse (I.41-2), and considers himself, we may say, part of "cotanto senno." The skills of Bards are indeed as excellent as those of ancient poets, as Drayton is eager to remark:

....the *Britain* is so naturallie infus'd  
With true Poetick rage, that in their [the Bards'] measures, Art  
Doth rather seem precise, then comlie; in each part  
Their Metre most exact, in Verse of th'hardest kind.  
And some to riming be so wondrously inclin'd,  
Those Numbers they will hit, out of their genuine vaine,  
Which many wise and learn'd can hardly ere attaine.  
(VI.253-8)

Bards were born poets; they did not have to work on learning how to sing their people's heroic feats. This poetic vein is "naturallie infus'd" in British poets, and of course, being their successor, Drayton too is endowed with these skills. One passage in particular demonstrates the extent to which he sees himself as a new Bard:

....I'le strike so high a string,  
Thy *Bards* shall stand amaz'd with wonder, whilst I sing;

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<sup>41</sup>Ferguson, *Utter Antiquity*, 103.

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That *Taliessen*, once which made the Rivers dance,  
And in his rapture raiz'd the Mountaines from their trance,  
Shall tremble at my Verse, rebounding from the skies;  
Which like an earth-quake shakes the Tomb wherein he lies.  
(IV.113-18)

Like Taliessin – a new Orpheus – Drayton asserts the power of his song over nature, giving it a voice through his lines.<sup>42</sup> Thus, *Poly-Olbion* is itself a demonstration of Drayton's bardic power in the singing of his people's past deeds and in the poet's ability to vivify nature.

Drayton sees no contradiction in the use of rhetorical vividness to speak about historical facts: to beautify them in order to capture the interest of his audience is to immortalise them in the minds of his people, thus making them universal through tradition.<sup>43</sup> Drayton claims poetic licence to embellish facts through narrative or dramatic devices (e.g., personification and direct speech) and make use of immemorial collective traditions, because, according to the Aristotelian view of poetry, the verisimilar stories a poet could extract from real facts were morally, philosophically, and emotionally superior to the teachings provided by history.<sup>44</sup>

But what was the verity on which Drayton based his poetic verisimilitude? As we have seen, he was indeed concerned with sources and with their quality, but most of all he was trying to sing a coherent narrative history of his own nation. In the preface to his first work – the translation of Psalms entitled *The Harmony of the Church* (1591) – Drayton declared to have translated those sacred songs in the best of ways, because it was not fiction he was dealing with, but truth:

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<sup>42</sup>G.G. Hiller, "'Sacred Bards' and 'Wise Druids': Drayton and His Archetype of the Poet," *English Literary History* 51 (1984): 10.

<sup>43</sup>E.S. Donno, "Old Mouse-Eaten Records: History in Sidney's *Apology*," in D. Kay, ed., *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 159.

<sup>44</sup>William Nelson, *Fact or Fiction: The Dilemma of the Renaissance Storyteller* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 41, 51.

My meaning is not with the varietie of verse to feede any vaine humour...I speak not of *Mars*, the god of Wars, nor of *Venus* the goddesse of love, but of the Lord of Hostes, that made heaven and earth: Not of Toyes in Mount *Ida*, but of triumphes in Mount *Sion*: Not of Vanitie, but of Veritie: not of Tales, but of Truethes. (HC Preface)

Drayton states his unwillingness to oppose mythological deities, seen as fictional characters, to sacred history, which is made up of truths. Of course, he cannot and will not oppose mythology and sacred history, because there simply is no such contrast: truth is divinely stated, and cannot be influenced by experience, rationality or opposition; it is something to be accepted as a whole and in its constitutive facts, because each of them is inscribed in the divine plan of history.<sup>45</sup> Both the facts of the Bible and those of national history are grounded in the same timeless tradition. As Drayton states, discussing the truthfulness of the Brutus tradition:

For, if the Spirit of God, did not our faith assure  
The Scriptures be from heaven, like heaven, divinely pure,  
Of *Moses* mightie works, I reverently may say  
(I speake with godlie feare) Tradition put away,  
In power of humane wit it easely not lie  
To prove before the Flood the Genealogie.  
Nor anything there is that kindlier doth agree  
With our descent from *Troy* (if things compar'd may be)...  
(X.283-90)

The human mind must rely on immemorial traditions when it comes to retracing the origins of the present. Drayton compares biblical genealogies before the Flood to the Trojan ethnogenesis of Britain: neither can be "assessed" on the basis of historical sources, but both are nevertheless

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<sup>45</sup>Buchloh, *Michael Drayton*, 285.

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present in oral and written works grounded on tradition. What the Bible and Drayton's tradition seem to share, from a structural point of view, is the narrative form.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, tradition as such relies on the fact that the listener/reader will accept its narrative as a determiner of truth,<sup>47</sup> and bibliographical analyses have demonstrated that, between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the wider readership was getting increasingly interested in narrative history,<sup>48</sup> as opposed to chronicles: in historical narratives, fiction would vivify the historical matter, while history would lend credibility to the fiction in the poem.<sup>49</sup>

Drayton's approach did not imply any lack of interest of sorts in the historical method. Indeed, already in his early historical poems, Drayton did not rely solely on the political or heroic character of his verse, but dealt with historical facts and their rhetorical amplification by following the advice of contemporary historiographers that each event should be analysed according to its causes, counsels, acts, and issues.<sup>50</sup> The problem of amplification and its use in historical poetry was tightly connected with its narrative character, and this is precisely why, according to historiographers and antiquarians, such poetry was virtually useless as history: was it more of a rhetorical ornament to make history more palatable or a way to deepen the investigation of the subject?<sup>51</sup> Unlike historians and antiquarians, who aimed to discover the real past through the correct use of sources, historical poets were taking one further step along the path of historiography: because access to the historical past

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<sup>46</sup>Ostrowski, "The Historian and the Virtual Past," 209.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 209.

<sup>48</sup>D.R. Woolf, "Genre into Artifact: The Decline of the English Chronicle in the Sixteenth Century," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 19 (1988): 347.

<sup>49</sup>Nelson, *Fact or Fiction*, 103.

<sup>50</sup>Anthony LaBranche, "Poetry, History, Oratory: The Renaissance Historical Poem," *Studies in English Literature* 9 (1969): 4.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 18.

was impossible, and what one could say about the virtual past – or the past reconstructed through records – was always limited to and filtered by what one could gather and interpret from the sources,<sup>52</sup> narrative and history could indeed be reconciled. Amplification in historical poetry allowed the poet precisely to intervene in the gap between the real and virtual past, by inserting fictional parts usually with a didactic or moral purpose, and by elaborating on the original fact; this helped the poet create a memorable image of the virtual past in the readers' mind,<sup>53</sup> which helped the latter remember precise events and connect them with positive or negative model images. The exemplarity of history could be stated through the use of amplification because, whereas in its entirety it was governed by the Providential design, each moment of it depended on the actions of individuals:<sup>54</sup> To elaborate on their human thoughts, reactions, and feelings without altering the global design was to make them educational examples within what the divine framework had decreed would happen.

Thus, in Drayton's view, tradition and narrative went hand in hand, and could indeed discuss history, because history itself was grounded in tradition when sources had gone lost, while narrative could render historical events memorable educational examples. Selden's attitude concerning historical sources was, as has been said, polarised: either they were extant and could be assessed, or they were not extant and could not be assessed. And all sources that were not first-hand – that is to say, compiled by an eye-witness – and impossible to trace back to a time that could only roughly be ascertained, were to be considered unreliable,

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<sup>52</sup>Ostrowski, "The Historian and the Virtual Past," 203.

<sup>53</sup>As Ostrowski explains through a plain example, "....the image we have in our minds is not the Battle of Hastings. We did not experience the Battle of Hastings, therefore we cannot have an image of the battle itself. We each individually have an image of something we might conjure up whenever we hear the phrase 'the Battle of Hastings'. But our images differ from each other and from the real battle itself." *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>54</sup>LaBranche, "Poetry, History, Oratory," 19.

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therefore useless for historical research, and ultimately non-extant.

Selden's concern in his "Illustrations" was first of all to emancipate history from Aristotle's categorisation of it as a branch of literature, hence of narrative discourse.<sup>55</sup> On commenting upon Drayton's lines on Saturn's imprisonment in an island of the Deucalidonian sea, Selden writes:

....as the common tale of *Daedalus* Labyrinth, *Jason* and his *Argonautiques*, and almost the whole Chaos of Mythique inventions. But neyther Geography (for I ghesse not where or what this Isle should be, unlesse that *des Macraeons* which *Pantagruell* discovered) not the matter-self permits it lesse Poeticall....a place whereof too large liberty was given to faine, because of the difficult possibility in finding the truth. (16)

Here Selden is certainly being ironic when referring to Pantagruel; at the same time he is not dismissing poetry altogether, because, when it is well done, it fulfils man's desire for variety (x\*).<sup>56</sup> What he states, however, is once again the unreliability of poetry in the formulation of historical discourse. The "Chaos of Mythique inventions" summarises his view of the uncontrolled fictionalisation of the past which tends to take place when history is filtered through poetic amplification. In this particular case – as well as in others, like Brutus's landing in Britain – poetic license takes over truthfulness when sources are lacking; this is precisely what Selden wants to avoid.

So much for poetry and mythical aetiology. A similar problem is detected in medieval chronicles, which were certainly made of collections of facts, but included chronologies spanning from the Creation to the compiler's present, mixing together biblical facts, fictional genealogies,

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<sup>55</sup>F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 46.

<sup>56</sup>Prescott, "Drayton's Muse and Selden's 'Story'," 321ff.

and historical events:<sup>57</sup>

...but so farre have the indigested reports of barren and Monkish inventions expatiated out of the lists of Truth, that from their intermixed and absurd fauxeties hath proceeded doubt; and, in some, even deniall of what was truth. (46-7)

The "fauxities" Selden refers to are mostly "intollerable Antichronismes" (viii\*), or the blending of (fictional) tradition – be it biblical or historical – with facts, so that truth becomes unrecognisable and often is annihilated for the sake of narrative rhetorical principles. In his preface he had warned readers:

Reprehension of them, whose Language and best learning is purchast from such volumes as *Rablais*....or Barbarous Glosses.... or which are furnisht in our old story, only out of the Common *Polychronicon*, *Caxton*, *Fabian*, *Stow*, *Grafton*, *Lanquet*, *Cooper*, *Holingshed*....*Polydore*, and the rest of our later Compilers.... (xiii\*)

Literature and chronicles are subsumed under the same category: fictional narratives. Chroniclers are defined "Compilers," or transcribers of second-hand sources with no historical method.

To these two main kinds of sources, Selden opposes his own method, epitomised by his latest work *Janus Anglorum*, which is "advertised" in the "Illustrations": the reader is advised to purchase it because the sources "are restored from senseles corruption, and are indeede more themselves then in any other whatsoever in print" (125-6). In order to become useful for historical reconstruction, sources must be "themselves," that is to say, they must be philologically assessed to determine their reliability, and then compared to historical chronologies – similarly made on the basis of philological assessments – so as to determine their historical truthfulness

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<sup>57</sup>W.R. Trimble, "Early Tudor Historiography, 1485-1548," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 11 (1950): 31.

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on the basis of contextual coherence and consistency.<sup>58</sup>

The basic principle Selden proposes he calls "Synchronisme" (viii\*), a word that had already been used by Camden in his *Britannia*: it entails the use of first-hand sources and the subsequent reconstruction of events with reference to a philologically-assessed chronology,<sup>59</sup> so that time, place, and circumstantial facts be coherent with one another.<sup>60</sup> Primary sources must be palaeographical and diplomatic,<sup>61</sup> and include archives, Chancery and Exchequer records, and registers from the bishoprics of Canterbury and Winchester, though always with an underlying suspicion of possible human interferences.<sup>62</sup> The kind of anachronisms Selden wants to avoid are mainly concerned with the overlapping of traditional narratives and historical facts:

My compared classical authors will justifie as much; nor scarce find I materiall opposition among them in any particulars; onely *Trogus*, epitomized by *Justine*, is therein, by confusion of time and actions, somewhat abused; which hath caus'd that error of those which take Historicall liberty (Poeticall is allowable) to affirme *Brennus* which sackt *Rome*, and him, that died at *Delphos*, the same. Examination of time makes it apparantly false; nor indeede doth the *British* Chronologie endure our *Brennus* to be eyther of them.... (155)

In this example, Selden dismisses Drayton's identification of two men named Brennus on grounds of chronological inconsistency, generated, among others, by some classical authors. An analysis based on "synchronisme" will reveal the impossibility for the two men to be the same person,

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<sup>58</sup>Fussner, *The Historical Revolution*, 287-90.

<sup>59</sup>Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarianism of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 99.

<sup>60</sup>Fussner, *The Historical Revolution*, 292.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>62</sup>Berkowitz, *John Selden's Formative Years*, 42-3.

although Selden justifies Drayton's statement as a poetic license. Though supporting his own methodology, Selden is not at all blind to the fact that what Drayton did has very little to do with what he himself is doing; he cannot but warn the reader of the boundaries separating the poet's and the antiquarian's work, and of what to expect from each.

But at some point, when sources are not sufficient or non-extant, Selden must rely on Drayton's poetic license for the reconstruction of the past. In Song IX, on providing a chronology of the British kings, he feels obliged to add the following marginalia:

I will not justifie the times of this *Arthur*, nor the rest, before *Cadwallader*; so discording are our Chronologers: nor had I time to examine, nor think that any man hath sufficient meanes to rectifie them. (198)

Selden has no means to provide philological evidence that the the chronologies of the kings before Cadwallader are correct, so he simply summarises the traditional view versified by Drayton. The chronologers disagree, that is to say, his sources cannot be collated and are not helpful in providing a coherent picture. Here Selden cannot do anything but warn the reader: his job is to collect, sift, and present the facts he has gathered from the sources, without providing any further interpretation; if the sources are non-extant or discordant, he can only present them and let the readers draw their own conclusions.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, the underlying debate between Drayton and Selden revolved around the function of narrative and its devices as truth determiners in historical discourse. Selden rejected any kind of embellishments for truth, and

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 46. Another principle often used by Selden is that of etymology as aetiology, especially to assess the verisimilitude of mythical genealogies. For a discussion of the use of etymology by Selden and other antiquarians, see Angus Vine, "Etymology, Names, and the Search for Origins: Deriving the Past in Early Modern England," *The Seventeenth Century* 21 (2006): 1-21.

did not believe in the historical usefulness of the images generated in the readers' minds by causal statements connecting historical facts; what Selden was interested in was the confirmation of the fact to which the statements referred, and the only way this could be done was through the assessment of extant sources.<sup>64</sup> What Drayton aimed to do, instead, was creating strong images in the readers' minds by dealing with the past as if reconstructing it from personal memories,<sup>65</sup> which, he thought, were inspired to him by the spiritual legacy of the British bardic tradition. Narrative discourse allowed Drayton to fill in the gaps between the real and virtual past, whereas Selden decided to stop after determining which past could be deemed real and which one virtual.

## 5.2 "Severall workes of two severall nations": The British-Saxon Debate

One of the most important themes in the first part of *Poly-Olbion* is the diatribe between supporters of the British and supporters of the Saxon origins of Britain. This argument was perfectly in tune with the contemporary debates generated by the discoveries made by antiquarians, historians, and philologists on the monumental and documentary past of the isle: the numerous peoples who had inhabited it, the several dynasties that had governed them, the alternations between them, and, finally, their influence on the formation of the culture and language of the nation. But while medieval histories and chronologies stuck to the Trojan origin of Britain, pointing to Brutus, the father of British civilisation, sixteenth-century antiquarians and historians began to cast doubts upon the truthfulness of these accounts, and emphasised, instead, the Saxon

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<sup>64</sup>Ostrowski, "The Historian and the Virtual Past," 212.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 203.

(and Germanic) background of English culture, surfacing, first of all, in the English language.

### 5.2.1 *The British Theory*

The so-called British theory was consciously exploited for the first time by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*: it provided an account of the British kings beginning with the Trojan Brutus, a descendant of Aeneas who allegedly landed in Britain in 1170 BC, and ending with the Welsh Cadwallader, the last ancient ruler,<sup>66</sup> including King Arthur's celebrated reign and conquests, and finalising the east-west *translatio imperii* from Greece to Britain.<sup>67</sup> The remaining populations which had invaded Britain and settled there in the course of the centuries were considered barbarous northern men, especially the Saxons, owing to Gildas's account on the conquest of Britain.<sup>68</sup> To the supporters of the British theory the name Britannia itself bore an etymological and aetiological trace of this descendancy.<sup>69</sup>

Although Geoffrey of Monmouth had originally encountered some kind of opposition, his version of the story continued to be accepted until the early sixteenth century,<sup>70</sup> when the Italian historian Polydore Vergil published in England his *Anglica Historia* (1534): applying a philological method, Vergil dismissed the descendancy from Brutus, owing to lack of classical sources, the same justification he adduced against the myth of King Arthur, because tradition was not itself a sufficiently reliable

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<sup>66</sup>T.D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), 5, 7.

<sup>67</sup>Huw Griffiths, "Translated Geographies: Edmund Spenser's 'The Ruines of Time'," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4.2 (1998): par. 9. <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/04-2/griftran.htm>.

<sup>68</sup>A.P. Maccioni, "Il *Poly-Olbion* di Michael Drayton tra il mito Tudor e il New Learning," *Studi dell'Istituto Linguistico* 7 (1984): 36-7, n.55.

<sup>69</sup>Kendrick, *British Antiquity*, 91.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 12-13.

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historical source.<sup>71</sup> Some of the most renowned contemporary British antiquarians, including Leland, Bale, and Price, harshly criticised Vergil: they retraced the existence of Arthur, for instance, back to Nennius, not Gildas,<sup>72</sup> and contested Vergil's use of classical sources only; many written British records could indeed be found, mentioning both Brutus and Arthur (e.g., Taliessin's works), demonstrating they were indeed aware of their Trojan ancestry.<sup>73</sup> First and foremost, Geoffrey of Monmouth never claimed to have invented the story, but claimed that he had indeed transcribed a "vetustissimus liber," originally written in Welsh, which was the product of an old tradition.<sup>74</sup> In spite of this firm opposition, by the end of the sixteenth century the opinion of history scholars on the so-called Galfridian legends was one of overall suspicion.<sup>75</sup>

Connected with the Galfridian legends was also a prophetic *leitmotiv* based on the bardic songs of the land of Wales, which had fossilised into political millenarian texts against the Anglo-Saxon neighbours,<sup>76</sup> foreseeing a reversal of power in favour of the British (Welsh) people.<sup>77</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth connected this prophetic boost, prepared by the greatness and valour of King Arthur, with a future British triumph which would lead to the restoration of the British line of Cadwallader, originating, as it were, with Brutus.<sup>78</sup> The realisation of this prophecy was seen in the accession of Henry VII Tudor: his grandfather Owen Tudor descended from an ancient Welsh family, whose relations could be

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<sup>71</sup>Maccioni, "Il *Poly-Olbion* di Michael Drayton," 40, n.65.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>73</sup>Kendrick, *British Antiquity*, 90.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>75</sup>Woolf, "Genre into Artifact," 326.

<sup>76</sup>H.C. Dobin, *Merlin's Disciples: Prophecy, Poetry, and Power in Renaissance England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 38-9.

<sup>77</sup>Nennius's *Historia Brittonum* (ninth century) narrates that in a vision Merlin saw two fighting dragons symbolising the struggle between Saxons and Britons, and the final victory of the latter. Sydney Anglo, "The 'British History' in Early Tudor Propaganda," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 4 (1961): 38-9.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 18.

traced back to the Welsh kings Llewellyn *ap* Griffith and Cadwallader, and, ultimately, to Brutus.<sup>79</sup> This prophecy seems to have been valued more by the Welsh than by the English: after the Bosworth victory of Henry Tudor – who then adopted Cadwallader's red dragon in his heraldic sign to emphasise his British descent<sup>80</sup> – Britain would once again be ruled by a king of Welsh origins,<sup>81</sup> and the Welsh would have once again a heroic leader as great as the legendary Owen Glen Dwr.<sup>82</sup> Except for symbolic references, neither Henry VII nor Henry VIII seem to have been particularly interested in the continuation of the British theory as an additional help to the legitimisation of their dynastic power.<sup>83</sup>

These prophecies gained momentum once again around the time of James I's accession. Several pamphlets and poems on Merlin's and Cadwallader's prophecies were published before 1610, in which James appeared as the successor of King Arthur – if not Arthur himself, returned from his long sleep in the isle of Avalon – and would reunite the empire as Arthur had done by means of conquest in his own times.<sup>84</sup> James too possessed a British pedigree through a double line of descent. On the one hand, he was related to Arthur through the Stuart line: after escaping from Scotland not to be killed by Macbeth, Fleance, Banquo's son, went to Wales, where he married the daughter of the king Griffiths *ap* Llewellyn;

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>80</sup>Idem.

<sup>81</sup>W.J. Hughes, *Wales and the Welsh in English Literature from Shakespeare to Scott* (Wrexham: Simpkin, et al., 1924), 11.

<sup>82</sup>Anglo, "The 'British History' in Early Tudor Propaganda," 20. In 1535, however, Wales was annexed by Henry VIII, and the Welsh were forced to abandon their language and customs in order to benefit from the political privileges conceded by the English monarchy. Hughes, *Wales and the Welsh*, 11.

<sup>83</sup>Anglo, "The 'British History' in Early Tudor Propaganda," *passim*: Anglo analysed numerous genealogical rolls providing royal pedigrees in the years of Henry VII and VIII, and concluded in favour of a general lack of references either to Brutus or Cadwallader. The fact that Vergil's criticism of the British theory was not met with strong opposition by Henry VIII seems to support this idea. Ibid., 35.

<sup>84</sup>R.F. Brinkley, *Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Cass, 1967), 8-9.

their son Walter returned to Scotland and became High Lord Stewart (then Stuart), as well as the ancestor to the Scottish dynasty.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, James I was a descendant of Margaret Tudor, daughter to Henry Tudor, with Cadwallader's lineage, who married the Scottish king James IV.<sup>86</sup>

In the early seventeenth century, however, the British-Saxon debate began to polarise into political factions; the dynastic genealogy had become no more than an excuse to discuss issues relating to royalist power and the role of Parliament.

### 5.2.2 *The Saxon Theory*

This theory was developed beginning from the mid sixteenth century, after the Anglican schism: it meant to found the new insular church onto the ancient Anglo-Saxon church as it was before the Norman Conquest, so as to emphasise and prove the native religious tradition of contemporary Britain.<sup>87</sup> The increasing study of the Anglo-Saxons, their language and culture, led to a higher awareness of the historical past of Britain, especially among antiquarians like Camden and his followers. The British theory began to be questioned: only the Welsh were actually interested in it, as the descendants of the ancient British; the English, instead, should forget about the Trojan ethnogenesis and realise that they were an eminently Germanic people deriving from the Saxons.<sup>88</sup>

The most important evidence of this descent could be found in the English vocabulary and in the Germanic roots of Anglo-Saxon words before the Norman Conquest. In the mid sixteenth century, Lawrence Nowell began to work on a *corpus* of Anglo-Saxon texts in order to create a

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>87</sup>Reginald Horsman, "Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain Before 1850," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37 (1976): 387.

<sup>88</sup>Parry, *The Trophies of Time*, 51.

dictionary of the language, which was to be titled *Vocabularium Saxonicum*; his unpublished notes were passed on to other antiquarians like Lambarde and Selden, only to be published around the mid seventeenth century.<sup>89</sup>

Another Anglo-Saxon scholar who began his work in the 1570s at Oxford, but only managed to publish it at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was Richard Verstegan. In his *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities* (1605),<sup>90</sup> beside being interested in the language itself and in the comparative analysis of English and Anglo-Saxon to other Germanic languages, he also provided a social history of the Anglo-Saxons, their origins and institutions. Taking the hint from Bede, Verstegan discussed the migrations of Germanic people to England,<sup>91</sup> with Tacitus's *Germania* as a reference point for the reconstruction of old Germanic culture.<sup>92</sup>

In order to detach themselves from the British ancestors, the Saxonists provided a different ethnogenesis for the English. As far as the times previous to Brutus' arrival, the British connected their descendancy – as was frequently the case all over Europe<sup>93</sup> – to biblical ancestors related to Noah. The British ethnogenesis after the Flood and before Brutus relied on what Geoffrey of Monmouth had said, as well as on a work by the so-called pseudo-Berosus, purportedly found and re-printed with a commentary by Annius of Viterbo, in 1498, which elaborated on the genealogies born out of Noah (*Genesis* 10-11) and the ethnic history of nations.<sup>94</sup> Japhet – one of Noah's three sons – was sent off to people

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<sup>89</sup>E.N. Adams, *Old English Scholarship in England from 1566 to 1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), 39-40.

<sup>90</sup>Richard Verstegan, *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (Antwerp: Bruney, 1605).

<sup>91</sup>S.A. Glass, "The Saxonists' Influence on Seventeenth-Century English Literature," in C.T. Berkout and M. McGatch, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship: The First Three Centuries* (Boston: Hall, 1982), 92.

<sup>92</sup>Horsman, "Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism," 389.

<sup>93</sup>See M.L. Rouse, "The Bible Pedegree of the Nations of the World," *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* 38 (1906): 123-53.

<sup>94</sup>Giovanni Nanni (whose pen-name was Annius) claimed to have found fragments by twelve ancient authors, including the Chaldean priest Berosus and the Egyptian Manetho, which he published with and without a commentary. R.E. Asher, *National*

## 5. *The Poet and the Antiquarian*

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Europe, and one of his sons, Samothés, fathered and governed over the Celtic populations, to whom he taught Phoenician letters, then taken up by the Greeks and handed down to the Gauls;<sup>95</sup> he then adopted Albion, son of Neptune,<sup>96</sup> who, in turn, fathered an evil race of gigantic men related to the Giants which Brutus found and destroyed after landing in England.<sup>97</sup> This theory was commonly accepted by sixteenth-century antiquarians, albeit with some variations. Indeed, the problem with Samothés was that he was not mentioned in the Bible, so a better *pater patriae* was often found in Gomer (*Genesis* 10:2,3). Through the kind of aetiological etymology derived from Plato's Cratylean method, according to which words contained their own origin,<sup>98</sup> Gomer and the Gomerii (his descendants), were seemingly related to the Cimmerii/Cimbri, or, as the sixteenth-century Welsh defined themselves, the Kumeri or Cymri.<sup>99</sup> What the Saxonists advocated was a separate genealogy from that of the British right after Gomer: Tuisco, one of his grandchildren and son to Gomer's Aschenaz,<sup>100</sup> was the father of the German people (whence the

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*Myths in Renaissance France: Francus, Samothés, and the Druids* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 45, 47. Annius was accused of forgery by several scholars, having mixed together authentic and fictional references indiscriminately, and his text came to be known as the pseudo-Berosus. Christopher Ligota, "Annius of Viterbo and Historical Method," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 45. The pseudo-Berosus text was incorporated in Richard Lynch's *An Historical Treatise of the Travels of Noah*, published in 1602. Buchloh, *Michael Drayton*, 177.

<sup>95</sup>Asher, *National Myths in Renaissance France*, 47: this claim was based on Caesar's observation that the Gauls used Greek letters.

<sup>96</sup>As Parry explains, "the pseudo-Berosus added helpfully to the descendants of Japhet, Shem, and Ham by supplying names which had been lost from the record of Genesis," but it also "drew in classical mythology to the Judaic scheme by declaring that the gods and heroes of the Greeks had been historical figures who were also numbered among the descendants of Noah." Parry, *The Trophies of Time*, 55.

<sup>97</sup>Kendrick, *British Antiquity*, 72.

<sup>98</sup>Vine, "Deriving the Past," 3.

<sup>99</sup>Parry, *The Trophies of Time*, 32: the comparison Parry uses is drawn from Camden's chapter on the name of Britain in his *Britannia*, col. xi.

<sup>100</sup>The interpolation of Aschenaz reflected the tendency to blend together Old Testament genealogies with the pseudo-Berosus reconstructions. Buchloh, *Michael Drayton*, 177.

names Teutsch or Deutsch), and an ancestor to the Saxons, therefore to the English.<sup>101</sup>

Whereas the Tudors never showed any particular interest in their Anglo-Saxon origins, James might have seen it as one further way to legitimise his lineage:<sup>102</sup> a descendancy from the English-Saxon kings would indeed have provided an even stronger justification to his accession, since it would have made him a "genuinely English" king.<sup>103</sup> However, what the crown deemed dangerous in the Saxonists' research line was their increasing interest in ancient Anglo-Saxon institutions: they considered them as the origin of a primitive kind of democracy then annihilated by the Normans, but gradually regained through laws like the Magna Carta, intended to limit the monarch's power.<sup>104</sup> Saxonist studies were often carried out by antiquarians who were also concerned with legal issues, like Selden, and their attempt to disentangle the past of Britain seemed too prone to justify the ever stronger political attacks of the parliamentary opposition.<sup>105</sup>

### 5.2.3 "The Britaines chaunt King Arthurs glory / The English sing their Saxons story"

Both Drayton and Selden were well acquainted with the British and Saxon theories, and both made use of the same descriptive tool: the genealogies of ancestors and kings. Drayton's genealogies were, however, of a descriptive nature: they were presented, rather uniformly, as part of the

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<sup>101</sup>Parry, *The Trophies of Time*, 54. The figure of Tuisco first appeared in Sebastain Munster's *Cosmographia Universalis* (1544), based on the pseudo-Berosus and on Annius's commentary. *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>102</sup>Glass, "The Saxonists' Influence," 92.

<sup>103</sup>Parry, *The Trophies of Time*, 53.

<sup>104</sup>Horsman, "Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism," 388.

<sup>105</sup>H.A. MacDougall, *Racial Myths in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1982), 55.

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tradition told by landscape personifications, or as part of already-fulfilled prophetic discourse. Selden's genealogies were more of a heuristic kind, based on etymology and tested against "synchronisme," aiming to reject or confirm Drayton's own on the basis of the presence and reliability of sources. Once again, then, the immemorial tradition lying at the basis of the historical and cultural continuity of Britain was being opposed to the recourse to sources, the assessment of their reliability, and the chrono-philological dismissal of national origins based on unascertainable testimonies.<sup>106</sup>

Drayton mentions the three prophecies connected with British supremacy, seeing them as part of a long-term design: the Eagle prophecy, generally concerned with the restoration of British power after a long decay; Cadwallader's angelic vision foretelling the return of a British monarchy with King Arthur (184); Merlin's prophecy predicting the return of a new British monarch, after the death of King Arthur, identified in Henry VII Tudor. The Eagle's prophecy is voiced by the river Stour as early as Song II:

....the *Eagles* prophecies;  
Of that so dreadfull plague, which all great *Britaine* swept,  
From that which highest flew, to that which lowest crept,  
Before the *Saxon* thence the *Britaine* should expell,  
And all that there-upon successively befell.  
How then the bloodie *Dane* subdu'd the *Saxon* race;  
And, next, the *Norman* tooke possession of the place:  
Those ages, once expir'd, the Fates to bring about,  
The *British* line restor'd; the *Norman* lineage out.  
(II.152-60)

In this prophecy, the circularity of the transmission of power from the British to the Saxons, Danes, Normans, and the British again seems to rely

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<sup>106</sup>Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 28-9, 83-5.

## 5.2 "Severall workes of two severall nations": The British-Saxon Debate

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on the succession of dynasties decreed by Fate.<sup>107</sup> In Song V, the Severn – the advocate of the Welsh and British supremacy<sup>108</sup> – re-tells Merlin's prophecies as an allusion to the Stuart accession.<sup>109</sup>

A branch sprung out of *Brute*, th'imperiall top shall get,  
Which grafted in the stock of great *Plantaginet*,  
The Stem shall strongly wax, as still the Trunk doth wither:  
That power which bare it thence, againe shall bring it thither  
By *Tudor*, with faire winds from little *Britaine* driven  
To whom the goodlie Bay of *Milford* shall be given;  
As thy wise Prophets, *Wales*, fore-told his wisht arrive,  
And how *Lewellins* Line in him should doubly thrive....  
Hee first unto himselfe in faire succession gain'd  
The *Stewards* nobler name; and afterward attain'd  
The royal *Scottish* wreath, upholding it in state.  
(V.49-56, 59-61)

The double British lineage of the Stuarts is here reconstructed, via the Tudor link and the marriage of Fleance to Llewellyn's daughter, as Selden clarifies in his commentary (107). It seems unlikely, though, that Drayton referred here to James I himself. Indeed, the poem is dedicated to Prince Henry, and also, in the catalogue of the English kings, Drayton notoriously stops right before James: after celebrating Elizabeth as the latest – an anti-Jacobean like Drayton may have even deemed her the last – English monarch ("that, all our Kings among, / Scarse any rul'd so well: but two, that raign'd so long" (XVII.351-2)), the poet closes the river Thames's speech with a "here suddainly he staid" (XVII.353).

In his "Illustrations," Selden notes that these two passages are related. But whereas he does not question the double lineage of the Stuarts, he has something to say on the Eagle prophecy foretelling the eventual

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<sup>107</sup>Maccioni, "Il *Poly-Olbion* di Michael Drayton," 52.

<sup>108</sup>Hughes, *Wales and the Welsh*, 23.

<sup>109</sup>Merlin's prophecy is re-lived by the Muse in connection with the river Conway (*PO* X.23-32, 33-6).

supremacy of the British, which he analyses through a philological and comparative method. First of all, speaking about its content, he explains that the prophecy had already been fulfilled with the accession of Henry VII. Turning then to its form, he states that the language in the manuscript where the prophecy is extant is clear enough and does not discuss "any such matter expresly," that is to say, its meaning has been overinterpreted. The text is similar Merlin's prophecies in the symbology used, with "the *white Dragon*, the *redde Dragon*, the *blacke Dragon* for the *Saxons*, *Britaines*, *Normanes*, and the *fertile tree*, supposed for *Brute*"; unlike Merlin's prophecy to Cadwallader, where an angel foretells the glory of the British dynasty, the words are here uttered by an eagle (44). As for Cadwallader's prophecy, Selden dismisses any divine correlation by noting that the angel's intervention can be considered a narrative device (184), and then proceeds to dismantle the statement made by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Giraldus Cambrensis, according to whom Cadwallader the British King and Cedwalla King of the West-Saxons were the same person, so that Cadwallader would have had both British and Saxon blood (185). Selden calls these "suppositions of the *British storie*," followed to celebrate the glory of a particular part of Britain, but also affirms he cannot but disagree with them (187).

Such "traditional" aetiology of power, founded on the acritical interpretation of texts relying on tradition, is precisely the kind of "*British vanity*" (63) Selden's method aims to oppose through philological explanation. The British-theory issue Selden wants to undermine the most was the story of "*Britaine founding Brute*" (I.310). He is one of those scholars who, as Drayton laments, now "doth slander" the Brutus story "for a dreame" (I.312). First and foremost, Selden questions Drayton's statement that Geoffrey of Monmouth was the first ever to narrate the Brutus story (X.244), by stating that "the name of *Brute* was long before him in *Welsh* (out of which his storie was partly translated) and *Latin* testimonies of the

*Britains*" (214). In his commentary to Song I, he explains that Geoffrey's translation of his Welsh source was done "with much liberty, and no exact faithfulness" (22); therefore, it could only be ascribed to the category of second-hand sources, filtered by a transcriber and more likely altered so much as to make it useless to historical research.<sup>110</sup> Because many sources on Brutus were lost, which, had they survived, "would have ended this controversie" (214), Selden employs the aetiological-etymological method to dismiss the derivation of "Britain" from Brutus's name: he agrees with Camden that "Britain" derives from the Welsh "brith-inis" ("*the coloured Isle*," 25), because its early inhabitants – as told by Caesar, Pliny, and Pomponius Mela – used to paint their bodies.<sup>111</sup>

This methodological battle is continued with the help of aetiological etymology as a tool to dig up the origins of the British and the Saxon people, and the royal prophecies and genealogies traditionally connected with the figure of the monarch are here left aside in favour of the national pedigree. As for the British, the Severn tells us:

....the native *Cambri* here  
(So of my *Cambria* call'd) those valiant *Cymbri* were....  
Of *Denmarke* who themselves did anciently possesse,  
And to that strained poynt, the utmost *Chersonnesse*,  
My Countries name bequeath'd; whence *Cambrica* it tooke:  
(VIII.101-7)

Drayton connects the *Cambri* to the *Cymbri* inhabiting the Jutland peninsula in Denmark (called *Cymbrica Chersonesus* by ancient authors, 157), whence the name *Kumraeg* for Wales. In his commentary to these lines, Selden explains that *Cymbrians*, *Cambrians*, *Cumrians*, and *Cimmerians*

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<sup>110</sup>This may be seen as one further instance of Selden's still ambiguous method: although Monmouth's *Historia* was not considered reliable, since it was founded on a non-extant Welsh source, Selden traced the Brutus episode back to this same old Welsh tradition he was generally trying to oppose.

<sup>111</sup>Vine, "Deriving the Past," 6.

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are all, according to Camden, derived from the tribe of Gomer, whose descendants peopled the north-western part of the world (123, 157). But Drayton also tells us that before Brutus's arrival, "Gomers Giant-brood inhabited the Ile" (XIV.85), a reference to the giants fathered by Albion. This means Drayton may have here been blending two different traditions: on the one hand, as John Bale purported, Samothès, son of Gomer and ancestor to the Celts, adopted Albion, who then gave birth to the giants Brutus defeated before settling in Britain; on the other hand, he follows Camden (and Selden) in deriving the name and origin of the Cymbri directly from Gomer.<sup>112</sup> So, whereas in the former theory (Samothès) the British are connected with the Celts, but not with the Germans, in the latter they are directly related to the same Cymmerian-Gomerian (and Germanic) legacy.<sup>113</sup> However, because Drayton never mentions Samothès throughout the poem,<sup>114</sup> it seems more likely that he may have connected the Giants to the Germanic breed sometimes said to have originated directly from Gomer himself, including Magog.<sup>115</sup> Unconcerned, like Camden, with the Albion-Brutus passage, Selden connects the Cymbri directly with Gomer and the north-western people (157).

The Saxon genealogy is summarised, instead, by the river Dee:

Of *Germanie* they sung the long and ancient fame,  
From whence their noble Sires the valiant *Saxons* came,  
Who sought by Sea and Land Adventures farre and neere;  
And seizing at the last upon the *Britaines* heere,  
Surpriz'd the spacious Ile, which still for their they hold:  
As in that Countries praise how in those times of old,

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<sup>112</sup>This statement relies on the soft mutation from *c* to *g* typical of Welsh when the preceding word ends in a vowel.

<sup>113</sup>Buchloh, *Michael Drayton*, 84-90. Another derivation of Cymbri was traced back to Camber, Brutus's third son, to whom Wales had been assigned and after whom it was then named. *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>114</sup>Kendrick, *British Antiquity*, 75.

<sup>115</sup>Magog, son of Gomer, was acknowledged as the father to Irish and Scottish Gaels or, as an alternative to Aschenaz, as the father to the Germans. Kidd, *British Identities*, 61.

*Tuisco, Gomers sonne, from unbuilt Babell brought,  
His people to that place, with most high knowledge fraught,  
And under wholsome Lawes establisht their aboad;  
Whom his Tudeski since have honour'd as a God....  
And as they boast themselves a Nation most unmixt,  
Their language as at first, their ancient customs fixt,  
The people of the world most hardie, wise and strong;  
So gloriously they show, that all the rest among  
The Saxons of her sorts the very noblest were:  
And of those crooked Skaines they us'd in warre to beare,  
Which in their thundring tongue, the Germans, Handseax name,  
They Saxons first were call'd....  
(IV.369-78, 381-8)*

Drayton explains that the Saxons derive from Tuisco, one of Gomer's sons, but the etymology of their name comes from the German *handseax*, as they were called in their original land.<sup>116</sup> To Selden this derivation from the weapon *Sagaris* is a "conceit," and he prefers, like Camden, the etymology leading back to *Sacans* or *Sagans* for *Sacai's sonnes* (with *Sacai* meaning "son of Isaac"), from which the name of other peoples were derived, like *Sacasena* in Armenia and *Sasones* in Scythia (91).<sup>117</sup> Selden also argues about Tuisco's relationship with Gomer: according to the pseudo-Berosus, Tuisco was a son of Noah's, who settled in what had become Germany; other commentators consider Tuisco as an attribute referring to Gomer himself, and meaning "the eldest son [of Noah]"; Drayton thinks Tuisco was Gomer's son, also called *Aschenaz* – whence the appellative *Aschenazim* used for Germans – which had turned into Tuisco as a corruption of *tie/die* plus *Aschen* (90).<sup>118</sup> As usual, Selden will not linger over interpretation, and only provides the several etymological

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<sup>116</sup>Verstegan, *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*, 18.

<sup>117</sup>The passage is *Sakai-Suna* to *Saksun*. Sharon Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 3 vols. (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1840), 1:87.

<sup>118</sup>Verstegan suggests, on the one hand, that Tuisco may have been Noah's son, while on the other hand, that he may have been Japhet's great-grandson, and a son to *Aschenaz*. Verstegan, *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*, 9.

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reconstructions for the word. But Drayton certainly knew about the *Sakai* derivation, common also to the Scythian *Sacasones*, since he has the river Severn exclaim, while praising the British:

My *Wales*, then hold thine owne, and let thy *Britains* stand  
Upon their right, to be the noblest of the Land.  
Thinke how much better tis, for thee, and those of thine,  
From Gods, and Heroes old to drawe your famous line,  
Then from the *Scythian* poore....  
(VIII.375-9)

The British genealogy, interspersed with classical gods and heroes, is more prestigious than the philologico-etymological genealogy of the Saxons, and their Scythian origins. In making Tuisco the father of the Saxon people, Drayton suggests their linguistic and cultural affinities with other Germanic people, and makes use of the pseudo-Berosus text (without Annianus's commentary) seemingly filtered by Verstegan's *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*.<sup>119</sup> In spite of the genealogical contrast, however, Drayton is claiming the same ultimate origin both for the British and the Saxons. Indeed, by erasing all references to Samothres – which would have implied a separate descent for the Gauls, therefore for the British and the Normans – Drayton is suggesting the underlying affiliation between the Celtic people (the British and the Normans) and the Germanic people (the Saxons and the Danes): if the British Cymbri are related to the Danish Cymbri, and if the ultimate origin of the Cymbrian people is in Scythia, then the British, the Normans, the Saxons and the Danes are, after all, just different instances of the same people.<sup>120</sup> As Drayton puts it, when referring to the Normans' taking over of the Saxons:

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<sup>119</sup>Buchloh, *Michael Drayton*, 180; Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," 790.

<sup>120</sup>See Kidd, *British Identities*, 63; Maccioni, "Il *Poly-Olbion* di Michael Drayton," 59: apart from the question of Caesar's reliability, not even the Romans were represented in a negative light, since they too were descendants of Japhet. This view has been called the "Scytho-Celtic paradigm." Kidd, *British Identities*, 31.

....as the Conquerors blood, did to the conquered runne:  
So kindlie being mixt, and up together growne,  
As severed, they were hers [Germany]; united, still her owne.  
(IV.410-12)

Though the idea that Britain was not a mixed nation may have been inspired by Verstegan,<sup>121</sup> Drayton took a step forward, as compared to him: instead of connecting together only the Danes, the Normans, and the Saxons, as Verstegan had done,<sup>122</sup> he played on the British genealogy and traced it back to Gomer, and thus tried, as it were, to square the circle.

In spite of the seeming parochialism of the landscape features, Drayton seems to have used the British and Saxon theories as a way to prove the deep unity of *British* culture. Unlike Camden, who had called his work *Britannia* – a choice betraying the frequent inconsistencies of the antiquarian's aim to investigate the identity of the English people<sup>123</sup> – Drayton opted for Albion/Olbion: the word should not be taken at face value as a straightforward connection to the British theory; instead, it may have been meant to convey, like *poly-*, the same idea of plurality making up the whole of Britannia, given that "Albion," pronounced "All-bee-one," was indeed used as a pun in early Stuart times, as referring to the union of England, Wales, and Scotland.<sup>124</sup> It is difficult to say whether Drayton's choice was determined more by a belief in biblical ethnic theology, purporting the ultimate unity of all people and races,<sup>125</sup> or by an eminently political concern. As for the latter, it can be observed that the *topoi* Drayton makes use of in his poem – especially the role of the British rivers as marking the division but also the continuity and union of the localities – were used by the supporters of the British Union at the

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<sup>121</sup>Moore, "Sources of Drayton's Conception of *Poly-Olbion*," 790.

<sup>122</sup>Kidd, *British Identities*, 77.

<sup>123</sup>Griffiths, "Translated Geographies," par. 1.

<sup>124</sup>Lake Prescott, "Drayton's Muse and Selden's 'Story'," 134-5.

<sup>125</sup>Kidd, *British Identities*, 11.

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beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>126</sup> At the same time, however, it is very difficult to understand the unity of Britannia, hints of which are interspersed among ferociously local speeches, and must be reconstructed by the readers, also thanks to Selden's commentary, without which the genealogies in particular would have been hard to summarise and interlace.

Paradoxically, Drayton's effort eventually comes to resemble Selden's method, though, of course, filtered by the poetic mind: indeed, he presented the various stories and legends pertaining to Britannia, as were currently known, in a very lively way, thanks to landscape anthropomorphisations; he gathered them as facts and nicely presented them to the readers; he voiced both local and national concerns; he defended both separation and union; even the title *Poly-Olbion* itself presented an oxymoric Britain of the manifold and the one.<sup>127</sup> Was the common origin of the British and the Saxons the right epitome for the overall uniformity of the people of Britannia, or were local differences, as a result of historical stratifications, more important? It seems that Drayton, like Selden, stepped back and implicitly told his readers: "Both Times, Raignes and Persons are so disturbed in the Stories, that being insufficient to rectifie the Contrarities, I leave you to the liberty of the common report" (290).

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<sup>126</sup>McEachern, *The Politics of Nationhood*, 157, 162-3.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, 191.

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## Chapter 6

# The Literary Influence of *Poly-Olbion*

In his 1942 review of the Hebel edition, C.J. Sisson wrote that Drayton had always been "a Poet's Poet."<sup>1</sup> Although this implied little recognition outside the literary and academic world, it also explains why, between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, Drayton's poem continued to be used as a direct source for later works and authors.

*Poly-Olbion* influenced first of all the contemporary current of the Spenserians: it provided, through the figure of the national *vates*, a means of emancipation for non-courtly poets, as well as an aetiological and mythopoetic framework for the celebration of Britain's past. The interest in chorography led to the amateurish composition of local poems, mainly concerned with specific places and their historico-antiquarian legacy. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the land-based model of *Poly-Olbion* came to mingle with the country-house genre, thus creating the so-called loco-descriptive genre,<sup>2</sup> and developed into an imperialistic theme exploited by

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<sup>1</sup>C.J. Sisson, "Drayton, M., *Works*, ed. by J. W. Hebel, K. Tillotson and B. Newdigate," *Modern Language Review* 37 (1942): 374.

<sup>2</sup>According to the OED, the adjectives "topographical" and "loco-descriptive" refer, respectively, to a "detailed description or delineation of the features of a locality" (1.b), and to a description of "local scenery." The latter began to be used around the nineteenth century. In this chapter the adjectives will be used as synonyms beginning from the mid seventeenth century, when the poets' interest switched from an antiquarian, topo-chorographical concern with regions, to an interest in their own locality, including its

the Royalists. In the eighteenth century, the rhetorical vividness of loco-descriptive verse was influenced by the visual arts and the developing picturesque vogue. *Poly-Olbion* inspired topographical descriptions based on specific localities, as a reaction to the selective view of the Picturesque – views based on the subjective formulation of the poets’ own recollections of their native land. After over a century of oblivion, *Poly-Olbion* was re-discovered as a means of depicting a British landscape no longer perceived mimetically, but rather as a collage of bits from the poets’ personal memories

## 6.1 *Writing the Land*

The Spenserian poets – an oppositional literary and cultural group including William Browne, George Wither, Christopher Brooke, John Davies of Hereford, and Giles and Phineas Fletcher<sup>3</sup> – were strongly influenced by and highly supportive of Drayton’s works, especially *Poly-Olbion*. Indeed, being about twenty years older than the other Spenserians, Drayton was to them a point of reference, because he had lived through most of the Elizabethan era, and was considered one of Spenser’s heirs (N 199). The first part of *Poly-Olbion* constituted a rhetorical model for Spenserian poems up to the 1620s.

The Spenserians constituted a culturally and geographically decentred alternative to the Jacobean court. They aimed to oppose its absolutist view

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landscape.

<sup>3</sup>Although, in this brief survey, they have been grouped together, according to general affinities, Browne, Wither, Brooke, Davies, and Drayton were less inclined to the kind of Protestant apocalyptic vision pervading the works of the Fletchers. For a systematic analysis of the Spenserians, see Joan Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets* (New York: Knopf, 1967), *passim*.

of monarchy, though never reaching a unified and coherent ideology.<sup>4</sup> They were inclined to foster a nostalgia not so much for the Elizabethan past, but for a past in which the Jacobean monarchical view did not dominate. Against James, they upheld Prince Henry, with promises of a future Protestant leadership and imperialism which reminded of Elizabeth's own. The status and role they ascribed themselves had developed out of Spenser's posthumous fame as a poet-*vates* and critic of his own time,<sup>5</sup> a role, he thought, poetry could well fulfil; but Spenser's voice remained unheard and was snubbed by royal patronage.

The intended readership of the Spenserians included refined men and women outside courtly circles,<sup>6</sup> living in the provinces now ignored by a cultural and political power increasingly based at Court, therefore in London and its whereabouts.<sup>7</sup> They constituted the so-called Country, a collective term connected with the concept of national community, and seen as an alternative to the courtly audience by public poets independent from and uninterested in royal patronage.<sup>8</sup>

The Spenserians advocated a blurring of traditional genres (particularly the pastoral), preferring "poly-phonic" and "poly-morphous" works able to represent the varied cultural and geographical reality of the nation outside of the Court and the London area.<sup>9</sup> Their interest in the writing of the national land and landscape, boosted by the sixteenth-century development of antiquarian and topographical prose works, retained a pastoral setting whose attributes followed the idealised standards of the genre, but whose geographical references were clearly recognizable as

<sup>4</sup>David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 198.

<sup>5</sup>Michelle O'Callaghan, *The "Shepherds' Nation": Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture, 1612-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>6</sup>Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets*, 5.

<sup>7</sup>Peck, "Patronage and Government Policy," in G. Fitch Lytle and S. Orgel, eds., *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 44-5, 31.

<sup>8</sup>O'Callaghan, *The "Shepherd's Nation"*, 41, 88.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 33, 87.

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British. Thus they managed to blend together the private, aristocratic dimension of pastoral works like Sidney's *Arcadia* with Spenser's civic and public presentation of national landscape,<sup>10</sup> generally more inclined, as demonstrated in the case of *Poly-Olbion*, to a poetic pictorialism keen on rendering the variety of nature through rhetorical vividness.<sup>11</sup> Before *Poly-Olbion*, Spenser's so-called myth of locality had exploited in verse the transformation of local geographical elements into anthropomorphised or personified subjects within a mythopoetic narrative,<sup>12</sup> ultimately inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The years 1612-16 were crucial for the Spenserians: after the death of Prince Henry, and King James's non-committal attitude towards the Protestant struggles on the Continent, even their moderate exponents, who had firmly clung to a hope for a change of policy, began to express their utter disillusionment with the sovereign. Book II of William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (1616) – one of the most evident instances of this crisis – was inspired by *Poly-Olbion*, and provided with commendatory verse by Drayton and Selden.<sup>13</sup> The similarity between the two works is structural in so far as, like *Poly-Olbion*, the poetic narrative of *Britannia's Pastorals* is organised topographically, with the help of a native wandering Muse-like figure proceeding through the southwestern part of Britain, but without any personifications of landscape features.<sup>14</sup> But heavy thematic,

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<sup>10</sup>Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London, New York: Putnam, 1927), 44.

<sup>11</sup>J.B. Bender, *Spenser and Literary Pictorialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 29-30.

<sup>12</sup>R.B. Gottfried, "Spenser and the Italian Myth of Locality," *Studies in Philology* 34 (1937): 108.

<sup>13</sup>William Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals* (1616; rpt. Menston: Scolar Press, 1969). Browne would later provide commendatory verse for the second part of *Poly-Olbion* (393).

<sup>14</sup>Gillian Wright, "Whose Pastorals? William Browne of Tavistock and the Singing of Britannia," in P. Schwyzer and S. Meanor, eds., *Archipelagic Identities: Literature and Identity in the Atlantic Archipelago, 1550-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 47; Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 143-5.

even lexical, similarities can also be found. For instance, Browne devotes some lines to Cambria, characterised by the same love and reverence Drayton felt for it:

It was an Iland (hugg'd in *Neptunes* armes,  
 As tendring it against all forraigne harmes,)  
 And *Mona* height: so amiably fayre,  
 So rich in soyle, so healthfull in her ayre,  
 So quick in her encrease, (each dewy night  
 Yeelding that ground as greene, as fresh of plight  
 As 't was the day before, whereon then fed  
 Of gallant Steeres, full many a thousand head.)  
 So deckt with Floods, so pleasant in her Groues,  
 So full of well-fleec'd Flockes and fatned Droues;  
 That the braue issue of the *Troian* line,  
 (Whose worths, like Diamonds, yet in darknesse shine,)  
 Whose deeds were sung by learned *Bards* as hye,  
 In raptures of immortal Poesie,  
 As any Nations, since the Grecian Lads  
 Were famous made by *Homers Iliads*.)  
 Those braue heroicke spirits, twixt one another  
 Prouerbiually call \**Mona Cambria's Mother*.  
 Yet *Cambria* is a land from whence haue come  
*Worthies* well worth the race of *Ilium*.  
 Whose true desert of praise could my Muse touch,  
 I should be proud that I had done so much.  
 And though of mighty *Brute* I cannot boast,  
 Yet doth our warlike strong *Deuonian* coast  
 Resound his worth, since on her waue-worn strand  
 Hee and his *Troians* first set foot on land,  
 Strooke Saile, and Anchor cast on \**Totnes* shore.<sup>15</sup>

This passage summarises the striking similarities between *Britannia's Pastorals* and *Poly-Olbion*. Browne's British topography is less precise than

<sup>15</sup>Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals*, 3-4.

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Drayton's, and not as keen on surveying the land up to its smallest details. It does, however, linger on the most symbolic parts of it; on places, that is to say, where local geography and history connect with their national counterparts, like the island of Mona, or Anglesey. It is significant that Browne should want to discuss this particular place in Wales, where the Druids came from, and use its original name; a decision which sounds programmatic and Draytonian, as the following passage shows:

That *Mona* strangely stird great *Snowdons* praise to heare,  
Although the stock of *Troy* to her was euer deare;  
Yet (from her proper worth) as shee before all other  
Was call'd (in former times) her Country *Cambria's* mother,  
Perswaded was thereby her praises to pursue,  
Or by neglect, to lose what to her selfe was due,  
A signe to *Neptune* sent, his boystrous rage to slake;  
Which suddainly becalm'd, thus of her selfe she spake;  
What one of all the Iles to *Cambria* doth belong  
(To *Britaine*, I might say, and yet not doe her wrong)  
Doth equall me in soyle, so good for grasse and graine?  
(*PO IX.386-97*)

The lexical parallels between Browne's and Drayton's verse are quite evident. Both mention the Welsh proverb "*Mon mam Cymbry*" ("Mona Cambria's mother"); it was also present and explained by Selden in his commentary to Song IX (190-1), which Browne may have used when adding, as in *Poly-Olbion*, explanatory *marginalia* marked by a star (in this case, reproducing the Welsh version in Gothic font). Whereas, however, Browne slows down to characterise Mona as an arcadian place, and describe her worthies, Drayton spends one line on that and turns, instead, to her historical importance, instead. Browne seems to have squeezed in also the theme of Bards, through their implicit connection with Druids – an association which is very frequent in *Poly-Olbion*. Drayton's line on Mona being part of Britain is paraphrased by Browne and rendered through a connection of Brutus with the continental land of Wales, and

with the Bards of Mona singing about Trojan feats. Browne's style is therefore clearly influenced by *Poly-Olbion*, and seems to have shared the same purposes: the exaltation of local topography and history, as well as of the Bards' poetic role.

By localising classical genres like river and pastoral poetry, Drayton contributed to the poetic canonisation of a British set of landscape views – e.g., the rivers Lea, Wye, Severn, Thames, etc. – which would become an essential part of the English literary tradition. Unlike in the parallel genre of the country-house poem – where the mansion, a refuge from the outside, was usually surrounded by a self-sacrificing, thriving private environment – Nature was here represented and celebrated as something pertaining to the nation in its entirety, separated its people, yet capable of determining their welfare. Its fundamental role for Britain lay not only in the abundance it might bring forth when rightly used by the British, but also in its being actively there, testifying, through the traces it bore of Time's passing, to the identity of British nationhood.

In this sense, the Spenserian tradition allowed for the continuation and re-elaboration of Drayton's topographical model. In the years of Charles I's reign, *Poly-Olbion* constituted a precedent for the poem *Taylor on Thame Isis* (1632), composed by John Taylor, the Water Poet. This was a report resulting from his navigation on the Thames, from Staines to Oxford, undertaken in 1631. The influence of *Poly-Olbion* is explicitly mentioned:

Though (for the most part) in the tracts I tread,  
Of learned Camden, Speed, and Hollinshead,  
And Drayton's painfull *Polyolbyon*,  
Whose fame shall live, despight oblivion,  
These are the guides I follow, with pretence  
T'abbreviate and extract their Quint-essence;  
Nor can it be to them disparagement,  
That I come after in the wayes they went,

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For they of former writers followes be,  
I follow them, and some may follow me....<sup>16</sup>

Unlike Drayton and the Spenserians, Taylor took a step further and endorsed the wandering role of the Muse, thus detaching himself completely from the pastoral tradition and the function of topography as discourse organiser; the basic structure of his poem was, indeed, the genre of river poetry itself, which had by then reached a proper literary status. The first part, structurally indebted to *Poly-Olbion*, describes the flowing of the Thames and its tributaries from a geographical standpoint,<sup>17</sup> setting the river personifications against the background of amorous discourse, a feature of river poetry *Poly-Olbion* had contributed to canonise. The second part is concerned, instead, with the economic relevance of river navigation, which Taylor knew first-hand.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Taylor had been sent with a team of watermen to explore that particular trait of the Thames, in order to investigate and improve on the more serious obstacles hindering the river's development as a means of transport for commercial purposes: at the time, in fact, the river Severn was the only great British river that could be navigated in its entirety without serious impediments.<sup>19</sup>

As Taylor himself later stated in *John Taylors Last Voyage* (1641), inspired by *Taylor on Thames Isis*:

Of rivers, many writers well have done  
Grave Camden, Draytons *Polyolbion*,  
And painfull Speede, doth in mappes declare  
Where all these brookes and waters were and are,  
But yet not any one have sought (but I)

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<sup>16</sup>John Taylor, *Taylor on Thame Isis* (London, 1632), A4r-v.

<sup>17</sup>*Travels Through Stuart Britain: The Adventures of John Taylor, the Water Poet* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 130-1.

<sup>18</sup>Bernard Capp, *The World of John Taylor, the Water Poet, 1578-1653* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 31.

<sup>19</sup>T.S. Willan, "The River Navigation and Trade of the Severn Valley, 1600-1750," *The Economic History Review* 8 (1937): 68.

To finde their wrongs, and shew some remedy.  
 I shew the mean neglect of navigation,  
 For few mens profit, publique lamentation.<sup>20</sup>

The adjective "painfull," earlier used for Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* and here referring to Speed's atlas *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (1610-11), is descriptive of the nature of both these works, which had provided, among others, the detailed locations and routes of all the British water streams. However, Taylor wants to set his investigation free from the limitations of the topo-chorographical genre – or the necessity to tell "where all these brookes and waters were and are" – in order to focus, instead, on the present situation of rivers and the actual use that is being made of them. He therefore wants to face realistically what Drayton had mostly represented through the rhetorical filter of mythology and mythopoesis: the impact, or lack of it, of economy on the British landscape.

The lines connecting the first and second part of the poem are still clearly inspired by Drayton's view of mutability and change, brought about by Time but also by man's disrespectful and greedy attitude towards his own land:

And for the good to *England* it [the Thames] hath done,  
 Shall it to spoyle and ruine be let runne?  
 Shall priuate persons for their gainfull use,  
 Ingrosse the water and the land abuse,  
 Shall that which God and nature giues us free,  
 For vse and profit in community,  
 Be barr'd from men, and damb'd vp as in *Thames*,  
 (A shameless auarice suprasing shames:)<sup>21</sup>

The second part, however, begins with an overwhelmingly detailed catalogue of the actual impediments to river navigations from Staines to Oxford:

<sup>20</sup>*Travels Through Stuart Britain*, 189, 184.

<sup>21</sup>Taylor, *Taylor on Thame Isis*, Bv. Cfr., for instance, PO XIII.21-8, 36-8; XIX.45-55.

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From *Oxford* two miles *Iffey* distant is,  
And there a new turne pike doth stand amisse,  
Another stands at *Stanford*, below that,  
Weeds, shelues, and shoales, all waterlesse and flat...  
At *Abington* the shoales are worse and worse,  
That *Swift ditch* seems to be the better course...<sup>22</sup>

Here the "Aquae-Musa," a pseudonym Taylor devised for himself, is committed to highlight the technical problems hindering navigation, not so much out of a general interest for the long-term welfare of the nation, but rather for the immediate concerns regarding the economic situation of the Thames valley community (as well as of his fellow watermen).

With Taylor's poetic treatment, the British rivers lost their original cultural and historical importance as landscape landmarks and entered the world of practical concerns brought about by Britain's developing maritime commerce and the necessity to improve national transport in order to expand the market. Taylor's were also the last river poems ever to make use of *Poly-Olbion* as a model.

### 6.2 *Poetic Antiquarians*

The fact that Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* was perceived as having inaugurated a somewhat new tradition, presenting, beside a strong attention to local topography, also a mixture of poetic and antiquarian matter, surfaces in William Slatyer's *Palae-Albion* or *The History of Great Britaine* (1621).<sup>23</sup> This was a collection of odes narrating Britain's history – each poem appearing both in Latin and English, prefaced by an argument – from its origin

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., B2.

<sup>23</sup>Russell Noyes, "The Influence and Reputation of Michael Drayton" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1932), 103; Angus Vine, "Michael Drayton and Early Modern Antiquarianism" (PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 2004), 189.

to what was portrayed as the happy and peaceful reign of King James. Slatyer appended to his work a poem entitled *Poetarum facile Principi, ac Coriphaeo, Michaeli Drayton*, a direct celebration of *Poly-Olbion*:

Deare, Diuine Drayton, I admire  
 Thy Layes enspir'd with Delphian fire,  
 On whose plaine song, Seld one more blest,  
 For Graces Minion, Muses Guest:  
 Seld one more seene in old Folk-mote,  
 Deskants a most delicious note;  
 Doe not enuie me, though I sing  
 In rurall tunes, such highest things.  
 Your layes will liue, though mine doe dye,  
 Sung long erst, I confesse it, I  
 Thy Poly-Olbion did inuite,  
 My Palae-Albion, thus to write.  
 Thy Songs, mine Odes, thy Poesie,  
 My harsh tunes, notes rude Symphonie;  
 Thine, ancient Albions moderne Glories;  
 Mine, moderne Olbions ancient Stories....<sup>24</sup>

Slatyer had certainly been a careful reader of the first part of *Poly-Olbion*. Its influence is first of all evident in the engraved frontispiece,<sup>25</sup> displaying a classical architectural structure with the most important kings and conquerors of Britain portrayed as Albion's "military lovers." In the *Poly-Olbion* engraved frontispiece the representative conquerors of the British, the Romans, the Saxons, and the Normans are potrayed as gazing at a Britannia peacefully smiling at the centre, and are thus reduced to the same level, because what they shared was their interest in conquering the same land. In Slatyer's frontispiece, Britain is anthropomorphised as a young woman holding an olive branch (peace) and a cornucopia (abundance); she is standing beside the portrait of King James, specular

<sup>24</sup>William Slatyer, *The History of Great Britaine* (London: Stansby, 1621).

<sup>25</sup>Vine, "Michael Drayton and Early Modern Antiquarianism," 248-9.

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to William the Conqueror's; the King stands here for the climax of British history, because he was said to have replaced the arts of war with the arts of peace.<sup>26</sup> The relation between James's figure and that of William the Conqueror suggests an explicit parallel between his "conquest" of Britain and the Normans': by the early 1620s, indeed, the Saxon debate had switched from antiquarian discussion to political ones, and the Norman Conquest was seen as the crucial event that had caused the destruction of representative Saxon institutions and the imposition of the so-called Norman Yoke, or a set of feudal laws weakening external control over the monarch's actions.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, by linking James to the Normans, Slatyer left out the British and the Saxons, as well as the Romans. He thus detached the King both from the British lineage, and the Arthurian fight against the Saxons; from the Saxons themselves; and from Rome and its religious legacy.<sup>28</sup> Slatyer was therefore advocating for King James a political rather than an actual genealogy.

In the late 1630s, Drayton's and Selden's respective sections in *Poly-Olbion* were still perceived as a unified whole. *Poly-Olbion* continued to inspire, together with other British encyclopedic works like Camden's *Britannia*, numerous topographical and antiquarian works both in prose and verse, generally focussed on the author's locality, particularly when it had not been thoroughly described in the most important reference works of the kind.<sup>29</sup> William Morrell, for instance, wrote a didactic topographical poem entitled *New England* (1625), presenting a Muse-like figure as well as

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<sup>26</sup>G.M. MacLean, *Time's Witness: Historical Representation in English Poetry, 1603-1660* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 82.

<sup>27</sup>G.J. Toomer, *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1:98-9.

<sup>28</sup>Christopher Hill, "The Norman Yoke," in *Puritanism and Revolution* (London: Panther, 1968), 63.

<sup>29</sup>James Turner, "The Matter of Britain: Topographical Poetry in English, 1600-1660," *Notes and Queries* 25 (1978): 515; for a bibliography see *Ibid.*, 516-24.

the catalogue device. An anonymous poet versified the *Origin and Progress of the River Tawmeer* (1629), featuring nymphs and other mythological figures, and the final marriage of rivers.<sup>30</sup> Henry Jacob justified his composition of a poem entitled *Ookey Hole*, possibly written in the early 1630s, by the fact that it had been "but briefly touched by Mr. Cambden in his *Britannia* and by Mr. Selden in his Notes on Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*."<sup>31</sup> In his *Chorographical Description and Survey of the County of Devon*, Tristran Riston took up Drayton's Ovidian aetiology of the land and cartographic illustrations, in order to describe his native county,<sup>32</sup> an effort pursued also by Richard James's *Iter Lancastrense* (1636), a poetic tour of Lancashire.<sup>33</sup>

Some of John Milton's early poems, as well as his overall interest in antiquarian and geographical matters, may be brought back to the poetic topo-chorographical vogue ultimately deriving from *Poly-Olbion* and the Spenserian tradition in general.<sup>34</sup> Drayton seems to have mediated Milton's approach to Spenser:<sup>35</sup> Drayton's influence, as often happened with the Spenserians,<sup>36</sup> is mostly present in the form of thematic similarities. For instance, it seems to surface in Milton's *At a Vacation Exercise*, which he wrote at age nineteen, as an imitation of Drayton's river poetry:

Rivers arise; whether thou be the Son,  
Of utmost *Tweed*, or *Oose*, or gulphie *Dun*,  
Or *Trent*, who like some earth-born Giant spreads  
His thirty Armes along the indented Meads,

<sup>30</sup>R.A. Aubin, *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England* (New York: Kraus, 1966), 23-4.

<sup>31</sup>Henry Jacob, *Songs and Poems of Love and Drollery* (London, 1654), 66. See also Turner, "The Matter of Britain," 515; Vine, "Michael Drayton and Early Modern Antiquarianism," 251.

<sup>32</sup>Tristran Riston, *Chorographical Description and Survey of the County of Devon* (London, 1811), 237ff.

<sup>33</sup>Richard James, *Iter Lancastrense*, ed. T. Corser ([n.p.]: Chetham Society, 1845). See also Vine, "Michael Drayton and Early Modern Antiquarianism," 250, 253.

<sup>34</sup>Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets*, 205.

<sup>35</sup>S.R. Watson, "Moly in Drayton and Milton," *Notes and Queries* 176 (1939): 244.

<sup>36</sup>Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets*, 214.

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Or sullen *Mole* that runneth underneath,  
Or *Severn* swift, guilty of Maidens death,  
Or Rockie *Avon*, or of Sedgie *Lee*,  
Or Coaly *Tine*, or antient hallowed *Dee*,  
Or *Humber* loud that keeps the Scythians Name,  
Or *Medway* smooth, or Royal Towred *Thame*.<sup>37</sup>

This river catalogue includes all the most noteworthy rivers typical of the Draytonian "stock-in-trade." But instead of being related, as in Drayton's *Amour 24*, to the natural wonders of the surrounding places, the rivers are here coupled with antiquarian legends or events related to British history.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in his Latin poem to Mansus, Milton may have borrowed the theme and praise of Druids from *Poly-Olbion*:

(Gens Druides antiqua sacris operata deorum  
Heroum laudes imitandaque gesta canebant)  
Hinc quoties festo cingunt altaria cantu  
Delo in herbosa Graiae de more puellae  
Carminibus laetis memorant Corineida Loxo,  
Fatidicamque Upin, cum flavicoma Hecaerge  
Nuda Caledonio variatas pectora fuco.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, unlike Caesar's account,<sup>40</sup> Milton's poem blends the figure of Druids and Bards, as Drayton had done, by having them hand down the heroic feats of their people from generation to generation. Similarly, Milton may have found the reference to the "Caledonio fuco" – or the paint with which the British people used to ornate their bodies before rituals – certainly in Caesar, but also in Selden's *Poly-Olbion* commentary, where the Old Welsh word "brith-inis" ("the colour'd isle") is said to be the most

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<sup>37</sup>John Milton, "At a Vacation Exercise..." in *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. H. Darbishire, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955) 2:126-9: lines 92-100.

<sup>38</sup>Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets*, 206; Vine, "Michael Drayton and Early Modern Antiquarianism," 255-6.

<sup>39</sup>John Milton, "Mansus," in *The Poetical Works*, ed. H. Darbishire, 2:274-7, lines 42-8; see also Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets*, 206.

<sup>40</sup>Cfr. Chapter 5.

likely etymology for the name of Britain, owing to this peculiar ritual of the British (25).

*Poly-Olbion* possibly continued to be a source for Milton's works, both in prose and verse, even in later years. In his masque *Comus* (1634), for instance, Milton presented the river Severn, the ancient border between England and Wales, as a boundary marker for the physical and political division of Britain's nations, as well as the symbol of a serious crack in the concept of Englishness. It had been similarly portrayed in *Poly-Olbion* (Songs IV and V), where Sabrina (the river Severn's nymph) resolves the historico-cultural dispute between the Welsh and the English rivers – supporting the British and Saxon aetiology of Britain, respectively – by prophesising the return of the British bloodline through the Tudors and the union of the kingdoms under the Stuarts.<sup>41</sup>

Another instance of Milton's reliance on *Poly-Olbion* can be found in *Samson Agonistes* (1671), where verbal allusions refer to Drayton's version of the mythical fight between Corineus and Goemagog (*PO* I.428), and Samson's measuring of virtue by strength alone is indeed compared to Corineus's error in facing the giant Goemagog.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Philip Schwyzer, "Purity and Danger on the West Bank of the Severn: The Cultural Geography of *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* (1634)," *Representations* 60 (1997): 28-31. The plot and main features of Milton's Sabrina myth were possibly derived from Drayton's version, as suggested by J.B. Oruch, "Imitation and Invention in the Sabrina Myths of Drayton and Milton," *Anglia* 90 (1972): 60-70. The prophecy of Drayton's Severn was anaphoric in nature, therefore unfulfilled, since the Stuarts had been in power for almost ten years by then, and the union was still to come.

<sup>42</sup>B.A. Fox, "Verbal Allusions in Milton's *Samson Agonistes* to his *History of Britain* and to Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," *Notes and Queries* 53 (2006): 188. Milton may also have been generally influenced by the presence and role of maps in *Poly-Olbion*, as many of his works relied on detailed geographical information. *Comus* and *Lycidas*, in particular, mentioned the topography of the Severn region and of the areas where Druids lived and had been buried. Besides, *Lyidas* is called "the genius of the shore," who "shalt be good / To all that wander in that perilous flood." Although Milton certainly knew and used Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, he might as well have borrowed this geographical appreciation for the land of Britain from *Poly-Olbion*. G.W. Whiting, *Milton's Literary Milieu* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), chap. 5.

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The latest instance of *Poly-Olbion's* antiquarian influence can be found in William Mason's poem *Caractacus* (1759): in it, Mason clearly imitated, both in content and layout, Selden's commentary in *Poly-Olbion*, where *Caractacus* is mentioned in the "illustrations" to Song VIII (PO 159): Drayton's poem is expressly quoted from once, particularly for a poetic elaboration of a passage from Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (L.XVI.c.44), in PO IX.415-29.<sup>43</sup>

### 6.3 *The Royalist Appropriation*

The early 1640s witnessed a partial waning of *Poly-Olbion's* influence, at least as a direct source, for reasons connected both to changing politics and taste. The frequent forced seclusion of Royalist aristocrats within the boundaries of their country estates, caused by the Civil War, saw the development and major influence of the main features of the Cavalier style: the use of the georgic and bucolic modes, of an increasingly Horatianised mood celebrating the rural retreat theme, and the hope for a peaceful political situation in an England keen on defending the ancient rights of king and subjects.<sup>44</sup> Royalists began to exploit these classical modes within the framework of loco-descriptive poetry, creating topo-chorographical versified depictions of specific places – often private country-houses and estates – with a political-didactic purpose. Nature and the country were thence employed as purveyours of political ideas:<sup>45</sup> the landscape itself was to be intended as a synecdoche for the nation, summarising, in its own synchronic (topographical) and diachronic

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<sup>43</sup>William Mason, *Caractacus*, in *The Works of William Mason*, 4 vols. (London: Cadell and Davies, 1811), 2:198.

<sup>44</sup>E.R. Miner, *The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 84-9.

<sup>45</sup>Brendan O'Hehir, *Expans'd Hieroglyphicks: A Critical Edition of Sir John Denham's* *Coopers Hill* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 13-14.

(chorographical) dimensions, an ideal situation that should be applied to the entire country. Such poems also presented an allegorical landscape where, because of their historical past, particular places stood for specific virtues or vices (e.g., Windsor Castle for the contemplative life of the countryside, London for the lack of it).<sup>46</sup> Loco-descriptive poetry was seen as a means of depicting the same *discordia concors* that characterised, indeed, Drayton's landscape features in *Poly-Olbion*: however, in the former case, the essential opposition was within one and the same locality, blending the chorography and topography of Britain and the country-house estate into a model for land-based social order.

The most renowned instance of this genre is Sir John Denham's *Cooper's Hill*, a loco-descriptive poem in heroic couplets describing a place near Windsor. The influence of Denham's work on English poetry would continue from the mid seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>47</sup> The poem is extant in several versions that can be brought back to two essential models: the former was still much reliant on *Poly-Olbion* from a rhetorical point of view, especially for the use of anthropomorphisations and catalogue; in the latter, instead, Draytonian rhetoric was reduced, but Denham retained and re-elaborated on several *Poly-Olbion* themes, which would then become commonplace in eighteenth-century loco-descriptive poems. Most of them seem to have been derived from Song XIII; in particular, the various phases of the stag hunt: the primacy of the red deer (*PO* 109-11; *Cooper's Hill*, 236-9), the stag's retreat discovered by the hunters (*PO* 111-17; *Cooper's Hill*, 247-52); the stag continues to flee and relies on speed (*PO* 117-34; *Cooper's Hill*, 253-62); he is betrayed by its scent (*PO* 135-8; *Cooper's Hill*, 263-8); he strives to escape but is surrounded (*PO* 139-50; *Cooper's Hill*, 269-300); before being killed, he wounds several

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<sup>46</sup>M.-S. Røstvig, *The Happy Man. Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal, 1600-1700*, 2 vols. (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1962), 1:108.

<sup>47</sup>For a list of the poems influenced by *Cooper's Hill* see R.A. Aubin, "Materials for the Study of the Influence of *Cooper's Hill*," *English Literary History* 1 (1934): 197-204.

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hounds (*PO* 151-61; *Cooper's Hill*, 301-22).<sup>48</sup>

Only after seventy years, in which Denham's had become standard literary themes, does *Poly-Olbion* appear to have been used again as a direct source for literary works, in Alexander Pope's loco-descriptive poem *Windsor-Forest* (1713). This work provides a description of the Windsor estate, with particular attention to its woodlands. It is based on the political-didactic depiction of a moralised landscape inhabited by mythological figures and deities; but it also aims to represent a synecdoche of Britain through the history and legends of one of the oldest monarchical seats in the kingdom, that is to say, through an aetiological and mythopoetic rendition of local topography. Though strongly inspired by Denham,<sup>49</sup> Pope seems to have been well acquainted with at least the first part of *Poly-Olbion*, particularly Songs XIII, XV, and XVII. Indeed, whereas the inspiration for the description of the Thames region may have come from Songs XV and XVII, describing the upper and lower Thames, the source for Pope's topo-chorographical treatment of Windsor was provided by Drayton's description of the Forest of Arden, in Song XIII, as the Thames Songs only touched upon it very cursorily.<sup>50</sup> Pope also elaborated on Drayton's description of the Hermit gathering herbs in the Forest of Arden, and transferred it to Windsor Forest:<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Pat Rogers, *The Symbolic Design of Windsor-Forest* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 178. Other sources provided by Rogers include Virgil's description of the stag hunt in the *Aeneid*, as well as John Dryden's translation of the *Georgics*.

<sup>49</sup>Alexander Pope, "Windsor-Forest," in *Pastoral Poetry and an Essay on Criticism*, ed. E. Audra and A. Williams (London: Methuen, 1961), 173, lines 264-71. All quotations refer to this edition.

<sup>50</sup>Pat Rogers, "Drayton's Arden and *Windsor-Forest*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 17 (1981): 286. Rogers states that Pope's adjustment of his sources to Windsor may have involved his treatment of the *gesta* of the Norman Kings, inspired by the section on the New Forest, Hampshire, in Camden's *Britannia*. Pat Rogers, "Windsor-Forest, Britannia, and River Poetry," *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980): 283-99. There may be possible lexical borrowings, such as the word "rowzed" as referred to the chased deer, which can be found in Drayton (as "rouzing," *PO* XIII.119) and Pope (as "rowze," line 150), and the *rove/grove* rhyme in lines 167-8, also found in *PO* XIII.101-2.

<sup>51</sup>Rogers, *The Symbolic Design*, 178-82.

This man, that is alone a King in his desire,  
By no proud ignorant Lord is basely over-aw'd,  
Nor his false prayse affects, who grosly beeing claw'd,  
Stands like an itchy Moyle; nor of a pin he wayes  
What fooles, abused Kings, and humorous Ladies raise.  
His free and noble thought, nere envies the grace  
That often times is given unto a Baud most base,  
Nor stirres it him to thinke on the Impostour vile,  
Who seeming what hee's not, doth sensually beguile  
The sottish purblind world: but absolutely free,  
His happy time he spends the works of God to see,  
In those so sundry hearbs which there in plenty growe:  
Whose sundry strange effects he onley seeks to knowe....  
For Physick, some againe he inwardly applies.  
(PO XIII.184-96, 218)

Happy the man whom this bright Court approves,  
His Sov'reign favours, and his Country loves;  
Happy next him who to these Shades retires,  
Whom Nature charms, and whom the Muse inspires,  
Whose humbler Joys of home-felt Quiet please....  
He gathers Health from Herbs the Forest yields,  
And of their fragrant Physick spoil the Fields:  
With Chymic Art exalts the Min'ral Pow'rs,  
And draws the Aromatick Souls of Flow'rs.  
Now marks the Course of rolling Orbs on high;  
O'er figured Worlds now travels with his Eye.  
Of ancient Writ unlocks the learned Store,  
Consults the Dead, and lives past Ages o'er.  
Or wandring thoughtful in the silent Wood,  
Attends the Duties of the Wise and Good,  
T'observe a Mean, be to himself a Friend,  
To follow Nature, and regard its End.  
Or looks on Heav'n with more than mortal Eyes,  
Bids his free Soul expatiate the Skies,  
Amid her Kindred Stars familiar roam,  
Survey the Region, and confess her Home! (235-9, 241-57)

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What Drayton devised as a retreat from courtly life to the peace of the country, where man can be "a King in his desire" and enjoy the fullness of Nature far away from unfair compromises, Pope turns into a variation on the *beatus ille* theme, exalting the wise man who is approved by the Court, favoured by his sovereign, loved by his country, and lives in peace and quiet within the boundaries of his estate, which happens to be, in the case of Windsor, also a royal seat. Pope therefore proposes the assimilation of the monarchical order within the dimension and ethics of the country estate. He therefore resolves the *discordia concors* pervading the moralised landscape of Denham's poem, as well as that characterising the landscape features in *Poly-Olbion*, into a sort of variety continually present and neutralised within the kingdom, which Windsor Forest stands for, and poetically indulged in because of its pictorial value.

### 6.4 *Loco-Descriptive Verse and Landscape Painting*

During the first quarter of the eighteenth century, a new factor favoured *Poly-Olbion's* survival: the vogue of landscape pictures, boosted by the increasing number of paintings purchased in, or imported from,<sup>52</sup> the Continent.<sup>53</sup> This also influenced the rhetoric of the versified depiction of places, increasingly perceived as deeply related to the art of landscape painting: not only because of their common reliance on the principles

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<sup>52</sup>The law against importing paintings from abroad ceased to be applied around the 1680s, and others were made in the following forty years to make things even easier. By the mid eighteenth century the flow of Dutch pictures in England had reached huge proportions. Hugh Dunthorne, "Eighteenth-Century English Perceptions of the Landscape and Landscape Painting of the Netherlands," *Dutch Crossings* 31 (1987): 40-1.

<sup>53</sup>Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1925), 7, 57.

#### 6.4 *Loco-Descriptive Verse and Landscape Painting*

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of descriptive vividness, but also because of their common origin in the poet's or painter's ability to convey the re-elaboration of a real-life landscape scene into a piece of art.<sup>54</sup>

An instance of this blending is William Kent's *Landscape capriccio with Hampton Court, Esher, and River Scene with Triton*, drawn roughly in the 1720s or 30s: it represents on the left the Tudor palace of Hampton Court, behind which can be seen, at the centre, a neo-Palladian pavillion on a hill; on the right a river bank is shown, with a triton riding on his sea-chariot; in the foreground a couple is admiring the scene. On the left and bottom margins of the drawing Kent wrote down several lines, taken from *Poly-Olbion*:

Hampton  
Court  
he meets the soft and Gentle Mole  
Homes. Dale  
raised hills  
mole digs her  
self a path  
The ocean doth  
return  
Tames under  
-stood what  
pains the  
Mole  
did take  
(PO 26, 56, 59, 70, 65)

the ocean doth return,  
and thrusteth in the Tide  
up tow'rds the place, where his much lov'd Mole was seen.  
And ever since doth flow, beyond delightful Sheen.... (PO 70-2)

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<sup>54</sup>Manwaring, *Italian Landscape*, 19-21. See also C. Brown, ed., *Dutch Landscape: The Early Years* (London: The National Gallery, 1986), 31.

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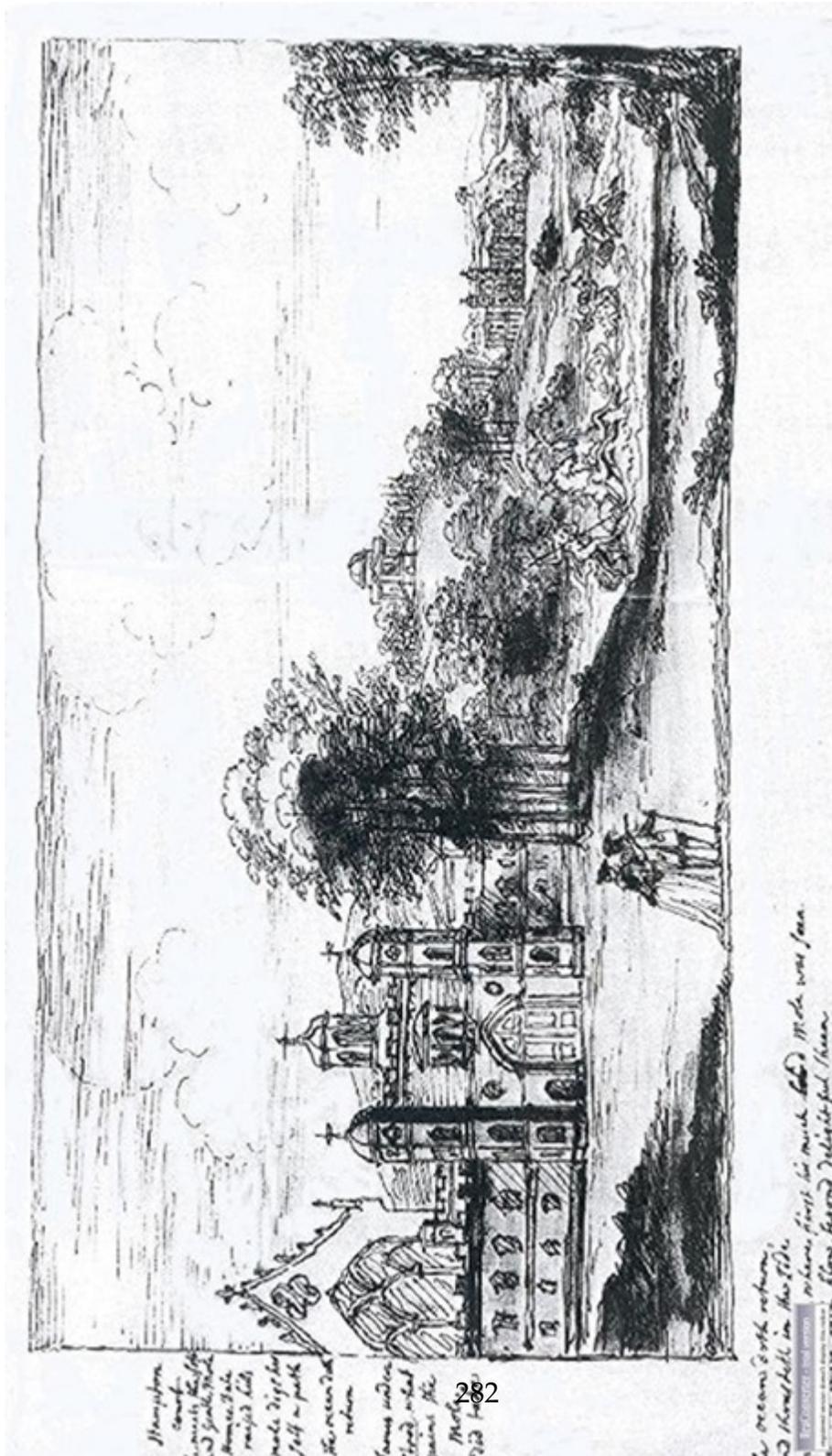


Figure 6.1: William Kent. *Landscape capriccio with Hampton Court, Esher, and River Scene with Triton*. Engraving. c. 1720s-30s.

It seems that Kent may have tried to recall some general features of Drayton's description, in Song XVII, of the Isis flowing into the Thames: indeed, the verse is not precise, providing bits scattered in the course of fifty lines. The presence of mythological figures in the painting recalls the contemporary classicist view of landscape depictions, as exemplified by Gérard de Lairesse's treatise *The Art of Painting* (1707), which illustrated ideas that were highly influential in Europe. In the section entitled *On Landscape*, Lairesse discussed the principal kinds of such paintings: in particular, for the river setting, he stated it should be adorned with "river-gods, naiades, or swimming water-nymphs, fishermen, swans and other such ornaments"<sup>55</sup> – a model Drayton's anthropomorphised landscape seems to have fitted very well.

Another peculiarity of Kent's *capriccio*, similar to Drayton's view of Britain, is the overlapping of the classical and native traditions, as exemplified by the Palladian and Gothic styles. This blending, typical of English landscape gardening in the first half of the eighteenth century, may have originated not only in aesthetic taste, but also in ideas on culture and politics: both the classical and gothic styles, indeed, reflected and belonged to the historical and cultural heritage of Britain, a land conquered by the Romans and the Saxons in succession.<sup>56</sup> Gothic was considered by Kent the native style of Britain,<sup>57</sup> which Drayton connected with the native traditions. Kent's view of the Gothic was indeed widespread in England, between the late seventeenth and the end of the eighteenth centuries, when the style was considered oppositional to classicism, whether because of its antithetic aesthetic principles, or in the

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<sup>55</sup>Gérard de Lairesse, *A Treatise on the Art of Painting*, ed. W.M. Craig, 2 vols. (London: Orme, 1817), 1:234. Privately discussed with Dr Paul Taylor, the Warburg Institute.

<sup>56</sup>John Dixon Hunt, *William Kent: Landscape Garden Designer* (London: Brewer, 1987), 56-8, fig. 142.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.

## 6. The Literary Influence of Poly-Olbion

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derogatory meaning of "barbarous" or "primitive."<sup>58</sup> The adjective "barbarous" appears also in *Poly-Olbion*, and in the same context: to qualify the judgement on native British culture stated by the most renowned instances of classical culture – in this case, Julius Caesar (*PO* X.297-8). Indeed, this was a period in which the depiction of pictorial landscape images in literature had become a popular subject of interest, a fashion that had also led to the back-formation of artificial landscapes based on literary descriptions.<sup>59</sup> Spenser's picturesque descriptions, for instance, became key references for eighteenth-century artists, and Kent himself was among those who illustrated one of Drayton's inspirational work, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.<sup>60</sup> However, while Kent's illustrations for Spenser's poem were clearly inspired by a general Gothic feeling, and showed medievalistic elements like knights and dragons, as well as wild natural scenes in the Salvator Rosa vogue,<sup>61</sup> Kent's *capriccio* on *Poly-Olbion* seems to be indebted to what was then a new picturesque feeling – with nature prevailing over human geography – still influenced by the mythological themes of the classicist vogue, as in the depiction of the *Poly-Olbion* landscape.<sup>62</sup>

Around the same years, Daniel Defoe offers a different perspective on classicising description. In Letter III of his *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724), while discussing the course of the Thames, Defoe

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<sup>58</sup>L.I. Lipking, *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1970), 148.

<sup>59</sup>W.I. Wilson, *William Kent: Architect, Designer, Painter, Gardener, 1685-1748* (London: Routledge, 1984), 207.

<sup>60</sup>Andrew Hadfield, "William Kent's Illustrations of *The Faerie Queene*," *Spenser Studies* 14 (2000): 3. Kent's illustrations were published, after his death in 1748, in Thomas Birch's edition of *The Faerie Queene*, in 1751. *Ibid.*, 1. For the reproductions of these engravings see *Ibid.*, 18-81.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>62</sup>Kent's picturesque hints may be detected in the proportion between nature, architectural buildings, and human figures: nature definitely prevails over human figures, used simply as a "visual bait" for the observer, while the architectural features are disposed on three levels, so as to guide the spectator's gaze and provide a perspective view of the scene. Francesca Orestano, *Paesaggio e finzione: William Gilpin, il Pittoresco, la visibilità nella letteratura inglese* (Milano: Unicopli, 2000), 22.

clarifies he wants to dismiss his antecedents:

I shall sing you no songs here of the river in the first person of a water nymph, a goddess, (and I know not what) according to the humour of the ancient poets. I shall talk nothing of the marriage of old Isis, the male river, with the beautiful Thame, the female river, a whimsy as simple as the subject was empty, but I shall speak of the river as occasion presents, as it really is made glorious by the splendor of its shores, gilded with noble palaces, strong fortifications, large hospitals, and pulchre buildings; with the greatest bridge, and the greatest city in the world, made famous by the opulence of its merchants, the increase and extensiveness of its commerce; but its invincible navies, and by the innumerable fleets of ships sailing upon, to and from all parts of the world.<sup>63</sup>

Defoe's is clearly a reference to the seventeenth-century river poetry tradition fostered by Drayton. Denham's and Pope's re-elaboration on Draytonian themes are skipped, in order to go back to the source of the tradition. Indeed, Defoe's passage includes the two main attributes of *Poly-Olbion*: the narrator's identification with a water nymph or goddess, and the marriage of the Tame and Isis – although, in Drayton's work, the Tame is male, and the Isis female.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, Defoe will not completely dismiss the celebration of the Thames: though keen on analysing the practical aspects of the river's fame, unlike John Taylor the Water Poet he does not linger on the stream itself, but makes it part of the wider framework of London's opulent power, of which the numerous ships and fleets from all over the world are a striking symbol. The maritime expansion of Britain had therefore reduced the importance

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<sup>63</sup>Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, ed. P.N. Furbank, et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 71. I am indebted for this suggestion to the paper "Defoe the Geographer," delivered by Dr Jess Edwards (Manchester Metropolitan University) at the *Land, Landscape and Environment, 1500-1750* conference, University of Reading, 14-16 July 2008.

<sup>64</sup>See Defoe, *A Tour*, 381, n.1.

Drayton and Taylor saw in the rivers: the Thames had become a place of royal display, the aquatic connection between a land-based and a sea-based British economy.

### 6.5 *The Subjectivisation of Landscape Description*

Several borrowings from Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* have been detected in two of Wordsworth's works most closely related to landscape: the *Prelude* and the *Lyrical Ballads*. Both were composed during a four-year period (1798-1802) when Wordsworth was immersed in the reading of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English poets.<sup>65</sup> Although one of Wordsworth's notes seems to suggest that he first became acquainted with medieval and Renaissance English poetry – including *Poly-Olbion* – through the copy of Anderson's *British Poets* he received from his brother in 1800,<sup>66</sup> he may have known Drayton's work even before that. Indeed, the 1799 version of his *Prelude* presents the line (then erased in the 1805 version) "Ye Genii of the springs,"<sup>67</sup> which is considered a borrowing from Drayton's "Ye Genii of these floods" (*PO* XXX.25).<sup>68</sup> According to Simons's analysis of Wordsworth's revisions of the *Prelude*, the poet may have read *Poly-Olbion* on returning to England from a German trip, in the winter of 1798-99; or he may have quoted from memory while he was working on the *Prelude*

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<sup>65</sup>J.R. Curtis, "William Wordsworth and English Poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Cornell Library Journal* 1 (1966): 29.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>67</sup>William Wordsworth, *The Prelude, 1798-1799*, in *The Cornell Wordsworth*, ed. S. Parrish (Ithaca: Cornell, 1993), line 186.

<sup>68</sup>C.E.J. Simons, "Wordsworth Borrowings from Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*," *Notes and Queries* 50 (2003): 291-2. Wordsworth may have read *Poly-Olbion* in Anderson's *British Poets* collection, as suggested by W.F. Prideaux, "'Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum!'," *Notes and Queries* 113 (1906): 116.

in Germany.<sup>69</sup>

In the *Lyrical Ballads* there appear some interesting allusions to *Poly-Olbion*. In the frontispiece to the two volumes of the 1800 edition, Wordsworth and Coleridge added the Latin epigraph "Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum." It has been interpreted as a private joke between the poets and the lawyer Sir James Mackintosh, and was arguably derived from Selden's preface to *Poly-Olbion: "Barbarous Glosses / Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum"* (PO xiii\*).<sup>70</sup> Another acknowledged borrowing from *Poly-Olbion* can be found in Wordsworth's *To Joanna*, included among the poems on the "Naming of Places." In his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge had already noted the resemblance: lines 54-65 in *To Joanna* should be considered, he thought, a "noble imitation (if not a coincidence)" of part of Song XXX in *Poly-Olbion*:<sup>71</sup>

The Rock, like something starting from a sleep,  
Took up the Lady's voice, and laughed again;  
That ancient Woman seated on Helm-crag  
Was ready with her cavern; Hammar-scar,  
And the tall Steep of Silver-how, sent forth  
A noise of laughter; southern Loughrigg heard,  
And Fairfield answered with a mountain tone;  
Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 292-3.

<sup>70</sup>W.T., "'Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum!'," *Notes and Queries* 113 (1906): 27; Prideaux, "'Quam Nihil ad Genium...'" 116. See also J.W. Binns, "The Title-Page Epigraph of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800," *The Library* 2 (1980): 222-3. The ultimate source of this line was a Latin verse epistle by the Dutch writer Jan Dousa the Elder (1545-1604): there he lamented his vanished literary inspiration, as his Muse had been frightened by the huge amount of "medieval legal commentaries on his desk." The line states that not even Papinianus would have liked his situation! Because Papinianus was a famous Roman jurist who died in the third century AD, and because Dousa's lines expressed the humanist jurist's distaste for the medieval glosses of Roman Law, Selden's reference to the "Barbarous Glosses," and to Dousa's lines, may mean that he, too, shared Dousa's opinion on medieval legal language. Ibid., 223-24.

<sup>71</sup>S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge VII*, ed. J. Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 2:104.

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Carried the Lady's voice,— old Skiddaw blew  
His speaking-trumpet;—back out of the clouds  
Of Glaramara southward came the voice;  
And Kirkstone tossed it from his misty head.<sup>72</sup>

Which *Copland* scarce had spoke, but quickly every hill,  
Upon her Verge that stands, the neighbouring Vallies fill;  
*Helvillon* from his height, it through the Mountaines threw,  
From whom as soone againe, the sound *Dunbalrase* drew,  
From whose stone-trophied head, it on to *Wendrosse* went,  
Which tow'rds the Sea againe, resounded it to *Dent*,  
That *Brodwater* therewith within her Banks astound,  
In sayling to the Sea, told it in *Egremound*,  
Whose Buildings, walks, and streets, with Ecchoes loud and  
long,  
Did mightily commend old *Copland* for her Song.  
(PO XXX.155-64)

The names used by Wordsworth are not the same, though they appear in other lines from the same *Poly-Olbion* song. However, the theme of the female voice echoing through the mountains and valleys is strikingly similar. Indeed, Drayton's *Copland* is clearly feminine, and is however herself part of the landscape; Wordsworth's lady's voice – Joanna's – is too repeated by the surrounding landscape, but, though not being physically part of it, it becomes part of the poet's blending of recollections.

These lines and their relationship to *Poly-Olbion* have generated a debate. On the one hand, it is said that Wordsworth's unacknowledged borrowing may have been used to create an illusion of poetic inspiration then undermined by its being an allusion;<sup>73</sup> it is however doubtful that many of his readers would have understood it as a reference to *Poly-Olbion*. On the other hand, Wordsworth may have been trying, perhaps

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<sup>72</sup>William Wordsworth, *To Joanna*, in *The Cornell Wordsworth*, lines 54-65.

<sup>73</sup>For an analysis of Wordsworth's unacknowledged borrowings see H.A. Zaid, "Wordsworth's 'obsolete idolatry': Doubling Texts and Facing Doubles in *To Joanna*," *Studies in Romanticism* 36 (1997): 201-26.

## 6.5 *The Subjectivisation of Landscape Description*

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obscurely, to follow Drayton's path of surveying the land of Britain with "the fidelity of a herald and the painful love of a son," as Charles Lamb had described it.<sup>74</sup> But Wordsworth was not contented with descriptive catalogues of place names; he also looked for an emotional association between a specific place and a particular mood or moment,<sup>75</sup> and, it may be added, for a subjectification, rather than the objectification, of Britain; for the shifting of attention from the subject observed to the observing subject.<sup>76</sup> He was indeed among the intellectuals who, at the turn of the century, had begun to show impatience at the picturesque generalisation of landscape details, relying on the artificial selection of natural features.<sup>77</sup> Particularly in the years up to the early nineteenth century, picturesque meant to him not so much any scene suitable to be portrayed as such, or arranged in order to look picturesque, but rather a local landscape connected with his own life: a place that would excite vivid memories, and which the poet was keen on observing in order to perceive the different sensations it could stir up on his creativity at different times.<sup>78</sup>

Another contemporary poet possibly influenced by *Poly-Olbion* was William Blake. His *Jerusalem* (1804) abounds with places names and geographical references; sometimes they are accumulated in long catalogues:

And the Forty Counties of England are thus devided in the  
Gates  
Of Reuben, Norfolk, Suffolk. Essex, Simeon Lincoln, York  
Lancashire  
Levi. Middlesex Kent Surrey. Judah Somerset Glouster Wilt-

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<sup>74</sup>Quoted in Jonathan Bate, "Wordsworth and the Naming of Places," *Essays in Criticism* 39 (1989): 210.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 210-11.

<sup>76</sup>Matthew Brennan, *Wordsworth, Turner, and Romantic Landscape: A Study of the Traditions of the Picturesque and the Sublime* (Columbia: Camden House, 1987), 55.

<sup>77</sup>Orestano, *Paesaggio e finzione*, 219.

<sup>78</sup>J.R. Watson, *Picturesque Landscape and English Romantic Poetry* (London: Hutchinson, 1970), 22.

6. *The Literary Influence of Poly-Olbion*

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shire,  
Dan. Cornwall Devon Dorset, Napthali, Warwick Leicester  
Worcester  
Gad. Oxford Bucks Harford. Asher, Sussex Hampshire Berk-  
shire  
Issachar. Northampton Rutland Nottgham. Zebulum Bedford  
Huntgn Camb....<sup>79</sup>

And these the names of Albions Twelve Sons. and of his Twelve  
Daughters  
With their Districts. Hand dwelt in Selsey and had Sussex and  
Surrey  
And Kent and Middlesex: all their Rivers and their Hills. of  
flocks and herds....  
...Rivers Mountains Cities Villages.  
All are Human and when you enter into their Bosoms you walk  
In Heavens and Earths....  
Hyle dwelt in Winchester comprehending hants Dorset Devon  
Cornwall.  
Their Villages Cities SeaPorts, their Corn fields and Gardens  
spacious  
Palaces, Rivers and Mountains....<sup>80</sup>

The same kind of catalogues are of course present in *Poly-Olbion*, as well  
as the same anthropomorphisation of specific places:

*Kent* first in our account, doth to it selfe apply,  
(Quoth he) this Blazon first, *Long Tayles and Libertie*.  
*Sussex* with *Surrey* say, *Then let us lead home Logs*.  
As *Hamshire* long for her, hath had the tearme of *Hogs*.  
So *Dorsetshire* of long, they *Dorsers* usd to call.  
*Cornwall* and *Devonshire* crie, *Weele wrastle for a Fall....*  
(*PO* XXIII.237-42)

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<sup>79</sup>William Blake, *Jerusalem*, in *Blake's Illuminated Books, Volume I*, ed. M.D. Paley and D. Bindman, 3 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 154-5: lines 43-8.

<sup>80</sup>Blake, *Jerusalem*, 247: lines 10-12, 15-17, 20-2; quoted in R.E. Pierce, "Blake and Seventeenth-Century Authors," *Modern Language Notes* 39 (1924): 151-2 (from a non-specified edition).

Blake possibly used *Poly-Olbion* as a source for names:<sup>81</sup> for instance, the name "Enion," first appearing in *The Four Zoas*, was taken from Drayton's line "With *Enion*, that her like cleere *Levant* brings by her" (PO VI.101). But Blake may have used *Poly-Olbion* also as an overall source of inspiration for such clusters of place names. Although, as in the case of *Poly-Olbion*'s catalogues, the large presence of proper names had been criticised for its disruption of the poem's narrative continuity, Blake nevertheless employed them widely and frequently. He was indeed charmed by geographical names, which he considered iconic words endowed with an incantatory effect, and capable of bringing forth the primitive power of the ritualised utterance of syllabic sounds.<sup>82</sup> Finally, from the *Poly-Olbion* model Blake may have derived the connection between place and event, linking the topography of the single locality to some kind of wider geography. In his case, however, the latter is of a religious kind: the fact that the geography of *Jerusalem* is centred on, and paralleled by, that of familiar places in the English and Welsh counties contributes, according to Blake's intention, to the poetic representation of a prelapsarian union, determined by the juxtaposition of national and sacred geography<sup>83</sup> – a connection Drayton himself had tried to make between the manifold ethnic and cultural origins of the people of Britain through a blending of national, legendary, and biblical genealogies.

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<sup>81</sup>Paul Miner, "William Blake: Two Notes on Sources," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 62 (1958): 207.

<sup>82</sup>V.A. de Luca, "Proper Names in the Structural Design of Blake's Myth-Making," *Blake Studies* 1 (1978): 8, 7.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

## 6.6 *The Poetic Re-Creation of Landscape*

The topo-chorography of *Poly-Olbion* seems not to have inspired further literary works until the mid twentieth century. Critical reservations on its structure and rhetoric went hand in hand with cultural changes that were affecting the British people's perception of their land and landscape. From the early nineteenth century until the 1940s, a general feeling prevailed, connected with the extensive environmental alterations brought forth by the Industrial Revolution, leading to the perception that the idea of England was tightly connected with the ongoing process of national despoliation.<sup>84</sup> The ever-increasing use of railways after the mid nineteenth century, as well as the spreading of the family summer holiday habit, had certainly made the countryside more accessible and enhanced an overall greater familiarity with the British countryside and rural life. In the common mind rural landscape and customs were often perceived and represented as timeless and immutable, and were being increasingly identified with the national past and native tradition, as opposed to the present mutability associated with the industrialised city.<sup>85</sup> The importance attached to national tradition and its lore, at first simply set against commercialism and environmental exploitation, became gradually connected with rural retreat and the leading of a country life.<sup>86</sup>

After the turn of the century, however, the exaltation of the countryside and its *mores*, as well as the experience of landscape itself, took up more of a private dimension,<sup>87</sup> tending to transform the Wordsworthian recollection of memories derived from the digestion of landscape into a kind of landscape derived from the digestion of memories. This is

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<sup>84</sup>Frances Spalding, "Changing Nature: British Landscape Painting, 1850-1950," in *Landscape in Britain, 1850-1950* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1983), 29.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 9-11.

<sup>86</sup>Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 36.

<sup>87</sup>Spalding, "Changing Nature," 28.

particularly true for *The New Poly-Olbion* (1967), by the Scottish poet Andrew Young. He has already been discussed in Chapter 3, for his critical analysis of the relationship between the poet and the landscape, and in this work he seems to have put into practice those theoretical principles. A literary experiment in poetic prose, this work is a collection of one- to two-page long passages on several parts of Britain – including Scotland, unlike in *Poly-Olbion*. It is prefaced by Young's account of his early days, his education, poetry writing, long walks to explore the land, and love for the countryside. The close association that personal memories and landscape bear to Young's poetic inspiration is summarised in his foreword, and compared to Drayton's:

*Poly-Olbion* means 'very happy', the reference being to Albion. Camden says that if the most Omnipotent had fashioned the world as a ring instead of as a globe, Britain would be its only gem; Drayton, the poet of *Poly-Olbion*, would have agreed. But it was from his native Warwickshire he received his inspiration: *Fayre Arden, thou my Tempe art alone, And thou, sweet Ankor, art my Helicon....*<sup>88</sup>

Like Drayton, Young was charmed by the surrounding landscape of his native land, and, perhaps like him, spent much time, as a child, "ambling along, through woods, over moors and beside streams," so that, he adds, "when my interest in poetry revived, it was natural I should try to write of what I saw and heard, nature poems."<sup>89</sup>

Some of the brief sketches of his personal topography of Britain include references to *Poly-Olbion*, which he must have known very well. For instance, the passage on Kingley Vale begins as follows:

Other aged yews are numinous, as the Crowhurst yew in Surrey and the Crowhurst yew in Sussex, and the Fortingall

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<sup>88</sup> Andrew Young, *The New Poly-Olbion* (London: Hart-Davis, 1967), 35.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

## 6. *The Literary Influence of Poly-Olbion*

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yew, in whose shade Pontius Pilate played as a boy, his father  
in command of the Roman camp. *Poly-Olbion* tells how the yew  
in which the priest hid the virgin's head became so famous as  
a shrine that the village, Horton, changed its name,  
*Halifax* since nam'd, which in the Northern tongue  
Is *Holy hair*.  
But the Kingley Vale yews! *numen inest*.<sup>90</sup>

Young seems to have been fascinated by Drayton's poem both for its interest in topography (and sometimes also in botany, another of Young's favourite pastimes) and for its mythopoetic description of places. Indeed, Young was certainly trying to elaborate on Drayton's natural aetiology, though on a smaller, cosier scale.<sup>91</sup> What differentiates Young from his model, however, is the personal frame through which the mentioned places are revived, and made up of the poet's experience in life and literature. Unlike in the Wordsworthian recollection, then, Young's places ensue from the poet's self, as he re-creates them in poetic prose: his mind is set on the poetic exploration of the dear landscape of his country – "a kind of visible history"<sup>92</sup> – based on, yet avoiding the commitment of, Drayton's "liquid history" of Albion.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>91</sup>R.D. Sell, *Trespassing Ghost: A Critical Study of Andrew Young* (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1978), 171.

<sup>92</sup>Young, *The New Poly-Olbion*, 15.

<sup>93</sup>This phrase is based on a statement by John Burns. See *Little Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 125.

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## Conclusion

Should Britain be seen as a unified whole, made up of several locations, or as a nation whose quarrelsome parochialisms could be brought to unity into a political entity only by artificial means, beyond the settlement of 1603? Admittedly, Drayton's authorial intentions on this point were rather obscured in traditional reading and interpretations of *Poly-Olbion*: indeed, the forms of political and historical compromise took too many things for granted or left them unsaid, and only recently have started to be debated with a sufficient degree of insight though not, as will be seen, of concord.

To begin with, the terms used in these perplexed decades – attempting to break free from the empire, yet still, on both sides of the Atlantic, culturally nostalgic – to define the kingdom about which Drayton was versifying are not easily agreed upon. According to what may be called “the American school of the 1970s,” *Poly-Olbion* presented a pastoral, timeless land, united through its rivers, and through its transformation into an anthropomorphised demi-goddess. Stella Revard (1977), for instance, stated that Drayton's paradisaical reference to the river Eden at the end of Song XXX brought to a “fitting conclusion” the pastoral world whose unity was symbolically represented by the rivers.<sup>94</sup> It is telling that Revard should refer to Drayton's rivers as symbols of “*England's* [rather

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<sup>94</sup>Stella Revard, “The Design of Nature in Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*,” *Studies in Philology* 17 (1977): 115.

than Britain's] unity."<sup>95</sup> In 1978, Barbara Ewell saw in the demi-goddess an "England whose glory and wealth [were] infinite and eternal," with Albion's body metamorphosing the "discontinuous realities of England" into an "ideal unity."<sup>96</sup> Again, it was "England" that was being used, together with "Albion." This rather imprecise lexicon seemingly followed that of earlier *Poly-Olbion* criticism, especially the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tradition which used "England" as a *pars pro toto* for Britain.<sup>97</sup> Although it constituted an essential part of the geography and history of the nation in *Poly-Olbion*, Wales simply did not occur as the name for a political entity in these two articles purporting the unity of Albion; at best, it was embedded in the word "England," which, as OED will tell, meant, in Drayton's times, the "southern part of Great Britain (excluding Wales)," and is seldom recorded in the early seventeenth century as referring to the entire island.<sup>98</sup>

The first contemporary critic ever to pin down this shifty concept was Richard Helgerson (1986). Although his purpose was to display the insignia of power, or the lack thereof, in Saxton's 1579 *Atlas* and its subsequent seventeenth-century editions, he could not avoid calling

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 117. These observations are concerned with the use of England as opposed to Britain only in *Poly-Olbion* criticism. See Clare McEachern, *The Poetics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 189.

<sup>96</sup>Barbara Ewell, "Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*: England's Body Immortalized," *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978): 299.

<sup>97</sup>See Chapter 3, section 5 ff. See also the title of D'Haussy's book, *Poly-Olbion ou l'Angleterre vue par un élizabéthain* (1972).

<sup>98</sup>See OED, 1. a: "The inhabitants of England (sometimes also Britain) regarded collectively. Also: England personified or regarded allusively, esp. as a political entity; (with modifying word) a section of the inhabitants of England (or Britain). Freq. with pl. concord." As far as OED can say, the only two instances from the sixteenth and seventeenth century refer to England as a collective political entity, but not in the sense of Britain. But see also the "etymology" section: "From the Old English period onwards the name England has been used to denote the southern part of the island of Great Britain, usually excluding Wales (although compare quot. 1658 below)"; but "In some of these examples (e.g. quots. a1398, a1400) the name is used more generally to refer to the whole of Britain. Such use is also found later, although it is now freq. objected to, especially by people in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland."

the subject-matter of his essay "Britain."<sup>99</sup> Because he based his theory on Saxton's maps, Helgerson had to ponder about the actual geography of "nationhood," as he called it; and that nationhood included Wales.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, still according to OED, Helgerson's choice was more correct. In the late sixteenth and in the course of the seventeenth century, "Britain" was seemingly used in historical and antiquarian texts as referring particularly to Wales;<sup>101</sup> but, after the classical influence (from the name "Britannia"), the term was also employed to address the whole island.

This change found a solution to the anachronistic use, made by twentieth-century *Poly-Olbion* critics, of England as an entity in which Wales was oxymoronically present-absent; yet, it did not provide any clues to answering the question of what "Britain" meant in *Poly-Olbion*, and if it was seen as unified or not. Two theories have been proposed by Clare McEachern (1996) and Andrew Hadfield (2004). Both are meant to challenge the commonplace timeless, pastoral views of *Poly-Olbion's* depictions of Britain in favour of a contextual analysis. McEachern devotes a whole chapter to *Poly-Olbion* in her volume *The Poetics of Nationhood*, according to which Drayton purportedly embedded into his Britain an epic unity, the failure of this unity, and a final attempt at a reconciliation of Britain's localisms.<sup>102</sup> "Britain," like "Albion," McEachern explains, was one of the possible names to be chosen for the debated Union of England (plus Wales) and Scotland.<sup>103</sup> "Britain" was often used in the poem as a "synecdoche of current British union" (England and Wales), also pointing at the possible union between Scotland

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<sup>99</sup>See Chapter 4, section 2, for the classical texts in which Britannia is mentioned.

<sup>100</sup>Richard Helgerson, "The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography, and Subversion in Renaissance England," *Representations* 16 (1986): 50-85.

<sup>101</sup>The etymology is traced in the Old Welsh *prydain*, a self-designation of its inhabitants.

<sup>102</sup>McEachern, *The Poetics of Nationhood*, 165, 173.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 140. For further discussion on the Union, see Bruce Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland, 1603-08* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1986); B.P. Levack, *The Formation of the British State: England, Scotland, and the Union, 1603-1707* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

and England, as a hopeful reminder, from England's point of view, of the easy political annexation and cultural assimilation of Wales.<sup>104</sup> McEachern cannot reach a definitive conclusion, nor can she opt for the unity of Britain, or the lack thereof, in *Poly-Olbion*. What she suggests is that Drayton generally insisted on the "prerogatives of Englishness."<sup>105</sup> Hadfield, in turn, is more concerned in comparing *Poly-Olbion* with Spenser's *Mutability Cantos*, particularly in the context of the kingdom's expansion in Ireland. His article is called "Spenser, Drayton, and the Question of Britain," a title whose keywords summarise the issues at stake. After switching the reader's attention to the topical question, "When was Wales?", and suggesting that the Welsh identity was marked precisely by its being incorporated into a wider political entity presided over by England, Hadfield proceeds by pointing out, in *Poly-Olbion*, the fear of the fragmentation of the English identity as a consequence of expansion; the symptoms of the transformation, that is, of Englishness into Britishness, in a poem characterised by "nervous anxiety and division."<sup>106</sup> Indeed, writings both in favour and against the Union often relied on toponomastic arguments. Francis Bacon, for instance, summarised the objections to the Union, among which he included: the importance, for the people living in a famous country, to preserve its name; and the fact that the contraction into "Brittaine" would "bring in oblivion" the names of England and Scotland, which would mean that England's political "precedence" over Scotland would be lost.<sup>107</sup>

Starting off from Hadfield's comment, and on the basis of what was said in the six chapters, this dissertation terminates by arguing that, in *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton found a solution other than the straightforward,

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<sup>104</sup>McEachern, *The Poetics of Nationhood*, 189-90.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, 191, 182.

<sup>106</sup>Andrew Hadfield, "Spenser, Drayton, and the Question of Britain," *The Review of English Studies* 51 (2000): 582-3, 599.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 593. Hadfield then points out that, according to Selden, this was not the case.

lexical one to overcome the question of Britain's unity or lack thereof: focusing the poem on the subdivision of the kingdom into three countries whose peoples derived from three ancient genealogies. Indeed, the first question that Drayton poses to the *Poly-Olbion* readers right from the front matter is: what is the name of our nation and what is it made of? It is, he shows, later also by means of maps, made up of England and Wales, whether in unified harmony or squabbling disunity; and also Scotland, had he decided, or been able, to continue with his "Herculean toyle" (XXX.342). The *Poly-Olbion* front matter, however, presents the reader with three names for the nation: "Albion," related to the anthropomorphisation; "Great Britain," in the subtitle and in the letter to the Cambro-Britains; and "Britain," in the dedicatory poem to Prince Henry. All three are here used to describe the whole island: "Albion" poetically; "Great Britain" geopolitically, taking into account the tripartite and compositional identity of the kingdom; and "Britain" etymologically, as related to a noble ancestry (Brutus) through the use of the genealogies of peoples, whether based on chrono-philological evidence or on mythological or fictional reconstructions.

There was a huge difference, then, between "Great Britain" and "England," in the context of the Union of England and Scotland. Drayton, however, possibly made it even more complex: indeed, from what we have of *Poly-Olbion*, that is, Parts I and II only, this issue is shifted to England and Wales; a Wales no longer seen as a silent province, but as a country proud of its origins, which had given birth, thanks to its ancestor Brutus, to the very name "Britain," also referring to the whole island. Drayton's intention to dig up the Welsh annexation issue, in the light of the union with Scotland, is supported by a lexical analysis of the occurrences of each place name. "Albion/Albions" is used twenty-one times, but one third of them refers to the namesake Giant, and not to the kingdom; "Great Britain/Great Britaine" appears, instead, seventeen times, and

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refers solely to the whole nation.<sup>108</sup> Thus, Drayton used "Albion" and "Great Britain" roughly as many times. Although he may have chosen Albion, which gave a unified idea of the island, for poetic purposes, it seems that he did not actually choose it *instead of* "Great Britain." Certainly less poetic than "Albion" – the title *Poly-Britain* would not have been as euphonic – "Great Britain" allowed for a multi-layered description of the kingdom: it implied, on an etymological basis, its descent from Brutus, and, above all, it highlighted, from a geopolitical view, the kingdom's undeniable composite nature, thence the importance of Wales (given also the temporary absence of Scotland in the poem) as an essential pillar of the history and culture of the nation.

In fact, "Britain/Britaine/Britaines" alone is used for a total of eighty-seven times,<sup>109</sup> with reference, however, only to Cambria-Wales.<sup>110</sup> The name Britain was here connected with the Brutus foundational myth and the traditional Galfridian legends.<sup>111</sup> It therefore tried to counteract the definition the antiquarian Henry Spelman had given of the union between two countries: the circumstance in which the former's existing name is swallowed by the latter, with Wales becoming, in this case, England.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>This analysis was carried out with the help of the online edition of Drayton's works at the University of Virginia Library: [http://xft.lib.virginia.edu/xft/viewdocId=chadwyck\\_ep/uvaGenText/tei/chep\\_1.1313.xml;brand=default;query=britain](http://xft.lib.virginia.edu/xft/viewdocId=chadwyck_ep/uvaGenText/tei/chep_1.1313.xml;brand=default;query=britain). Spelling variations have been taken into account, and are registered separately in the queries of the online text. "Albion/Albions": seventeen times in Part I, and four times in Part II; "Great Britain/Great Britaine": eleven times in Part I and six in Part II.

<sup>109</sup>It is used sixty-five times in Part I, and twenty-two times in Part II.

<sup>110</sup>See, for instance, "What one of all the Iles to *Cambria* doth belong / (To *Britaine*, I might say, and yet not doe her wrong)" (IX.395-6). However, this is not the case only in the dedicatory letter to Prince Henry.

<sup>111</sup>"Wales" is used fifty-eight times in Part I and ten in Part II, for a total of sixty-nine occurrences; "Cambria" is used nineteen times in the first part and six in the second, for a total amount of twenty-five times. Speaking about the Tudors and the unification of the Roses, Drayton states that "three seuer'd Realmes in one shall firmlie stand" (V.67); the British (or Welsh) should not however despair because, as suggested by the prophecy, "in little time that shall / (As you are all made one) be one vnto you all" (V. 77-8).

<sup>112</sup>Quoted in Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland*, 32.

Unlike in criticism from the 1970s, and unlike the "Anglocentric" views of the Welsh annexation, where the term England was already used to refer to the actual assimilation and then to the whole island, Drayton used "England" to refer only to England itself, for a total amount of ninety-six times.<sup>113</sup> Drayton made it very clear, from a lexical point of view, that Britain-Cambria/Wales and the British, and England and the English were, to him, two different things.

The linguistic struggle over the actual place names was only part of the theoretical discussions about the Union. Other kinds of reasons, always related to these names, were based on biblical and mythological beliefs providing their etymological (and historical) origins.<sup>114</sup> As far as *Poly-Olbion* is concerned, Selden was indeed sceptical about the term "Albion": in spite of all the mythological and genealogical reconstructions of the name,<sup>115</sup> it could not be denied, he said, that the name Britain was etymologically antecedent to "Albion," according to classical sources (24-5).<sup>116</sup> He also provided the respective source: "Albion" possibly derived from the white cliffs visible at a distance, Britain being related, as already suggested by Camden, to "brith-inis," or "the coloured isle" (24). In another passage, however, he stated that "Albion" had been "impos'd" upon one of Britain's several etymologies, from "Inis-gwyn" ("the white isle"), as a Latinised translation of the Old Welsh name. Selden here pointed at the conquest issue: whatever the correct etymology,<sup>117</sup> he made it clear that both "Albion" and "Britain" were names attached to the entire isle by foreign invaders in the course of time, thence artificial.<sup>118</sup> But if

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<sup>113</sup>Fifty-eight times in Part I and thirty-eight in Part II.

<sup>114</sup>Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland*, 32.

<sup>115</sup>See Chapter 2, section 1.

<sup>116</sup>Independently noted by Hadfield, "Spenser, Drayton, and the Question of Britain," 593.

<sup>117</sup>Drayton, too, makes this case for the Welsh: "Till with the tearme of *Welsh*, the *English* now embase / The nobler previous hit *Britains* next hit name" (IX.190-2).

<sup>118</sup>Also noted by Hadfield, "Spenser, Drayton, and the Question of Britain," 593.

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asked to choose, as an antiquarian he would opt for "Britain" or the more correct term from a chrono-philological point of view, after dismissing the legend of "Britaine-founding Brutus." His method, obviously, brought him to ignore the nobility and fame of the origins and reasons the unionists attributed to "Britain/Britannia": among others, the descendancy from Brutus (the Welsh origin of this legend was secondary, because it was by then part of England), the name used by the Romans, and Athelstan's definition of himself as *Rex Brianniae*.<sup>119</sup> Selden normally used "Britain" and "British" following Drayton's choice of the word, in order, that is, to define Wales and the Welsh. Only sometimes did he employ the word instead of "Great Britain," although very cautiously, as in this case:

*Britaines tripartit diuision by Brutes III. sonnes, Logrin, Camber and Albanact, whence all beyond Seuerne was stil'd Cambria, the now England Loegria, and Scotland Albania, is here shewed you: which I admit, but as the rest of that nature, vpon credit of our suspected Stories followed with sufficient iustification by the Muse; alluding here to that opinion which deduces the Scots and their name from the Scythians. (152)*

Selden begins by noting the original division of Britain into Cambria, England, and Scotland; he then continues by introducing what may sound like some sort of criticism against this legend, which however turns into a genealogical discussion. Here follows the poetic passage commented on by Selden:

How mightie was that man, and honoured still to bee,  
That gaue this Ile his name, and to his children three,  
Three Kingdoms in the same? which, time doth now denie,  
With his arriuall heere, and primer Monarchy.

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<sup>119</sup>Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland*, 35.

*Loegria*, though thou canst thy *Lochrine* easily lose,  
Yet *Cambria*, him, whom Fate her ancient Founder chose,  
In no wise will forgoe; nay, should *Albania* leaue  
Her *Albanact* for ayde, and to the *Scythian* cleaue.  
(VIII.28-36)

Like Selden, Drayton proceeds with extreme caution. The phrase "which time doth now denie" is ambiguous: it may refer to the antiquarian rejection of the Galfridian legends related to Brutus ("that man"), and the subsequent downplaying of the Welsh role in the culture of Great Britain; but it may also point to the Union debate, trying to cancel, as it were, the original tripartite division of the island. What matters is Drayton's use of genealogies and foundational myths – England can easily forget its Lochrine, and Scotland its Albanact, but Cambria cannot forget its original founder, Brutus, the origin of a present on which the poet seems unwilling openly to comment. As has been argued also in Chapter 5, the discussion of genealogies – whether from an etymological or fictional point of view – helped Drayton and Selden to refer veiledly to the issue of the kingdom's composite nature, without clearly taking sides. Indeed, by reconstructing in several ways the descent of the English, Welsh, and Scottish peoples, Drayton and Selden seem to have agreed with the unionist view, according to which the separation of the crowns, or the subdivision into different kingdoms, had always been the cause of Britain's many conquests in the course of history:<sup>120</sup> the lack of ancient ruins in Britain is indeed attributed to the numerous invasions which, "like a horrid raine," "deformed" the entire island.<sup>121</sup> At the same time, they both saw in the island's *translatio imperii*, which of course had not been painless, the very identity of the kingdom.

It seems that Drayton and Selden reached the same conclusion from

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 32, 34. See Chapter 5, section 2.3.

<sup>121</sup>"The *Roman*, next the *Pict*, the *Saxon*, then the *Dane*, / All landing in this Ile, each like a horrid raine / Deforming her [the island]" (IV.336-7).

two opposite positions: the correct name for the island was not England, Wales, or Scotland; it was Great Britain (sometimes, poetically, Albion). But in this acceptation of Great Britain, England, Wales (and Scotland) should not be "swallowed" by English prerogative, and reduced to silent provinces. Yet, through the connection between the separate countries and their respective peoples (British/Welsh for Britain/Wales; Saxons/English for England), Drayton and Selden both managed to avoid, as much as possible, the direct discussion of Great Britain as a unified political identity.

Although the first part of *Poly-Olbion* was published about ten years after the actual union debate, Drayton and Selden still seem to have been wary with regard to the (lexical and historical) question of Great Britain's unified or disjoined nature, by means of individual opinions determined not so much by their own views, as by their different methods. It is through the disunified form of the poem itself, encyclopaedic and menippean by the same token, that Drayton and Selden could carry on a dialogue in which the topographical verse was "illustrated" by the maps, and the historical verse was "illustrated" by the marginal glosses; where poetic inspiration was balanced on the one hand by cartography, on the other hand by antiquarian commentaries.

Indeed, Drayton's political ideas are a conundrum that it is a very hard task to attempt to solve. What can safely be asserted is that he was a firm supporter of the Prince of Wales, and, like Selden, a strong anti-Jacobean intellectual. Whether this meant he was against or in favour of the union of England (plus Wales) and Scotland cannot as safely be assessed. The text of the poem is admittedly protean, perhaps reflecting Drayton's uncertainties or swinging opinions, to which Selden's commentary was supposed to provide a balanced, scholarly counterpart. A "Welsh" thread, however, does stand out in the poem. Drayton wanted to highlight the role of the Principality within the kingdom: rather than being easily

tamed, as history had recorded, in *Poly-Olbion* Wales reacts to England's aggressiveness, aiming to preserve its geography and culture, which were, after all, an essential part of Great Britain's culture, and even of the English monarchical pedigree.



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