Didacticism in the historical poetry of Michael Drayton.

Linda Anne Salathe

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DIDACTICISM IN THE HISTORICAL POETRY
OF MICHAEL DRAYTON

by

Linda Anne Domina Salathé

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Professor in Charge

Chairman of English Department
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Abstract

One third of the entire body of Michael Drayton's poetry was composed in the historical genre. This genre provided him with the opportunity to express his deep patriotism and his concept of a divine destiny for England. The didactic theme of Drayton's poetry was concerned with the welfare of the English nation rather than individual morality. He espoused whatever promoted the welfare of the nation and rejected that which detracted from it. Drayton's didactic impulse developed in relation to his concern with contemporary political and social developments in England. Drayton's historical poems are considered in relation to the Renaissance literary traditions of the mirror genre: didacticism, tragedy, and history.

Drayton's early historical legends contained only the moral didacticism conventional to the mirror genre. As the Court became increasingly corrupt and powerful during the latter years of the reign of Elizabeth I, Drayton introduced his political didacticism in such poems as The Barrons Wars, Englands Heroicall Epistles, and the revised legends. In these poems he was critical of both the Court and the monarchy.
In his later years, Drayton's disillusionment with the contemporary governing society was pervasive. The corrupt Stuart Court offered no hope for the great destiny which Drayton had conceived for England. He turned away from the real world and his last historical poems contain no suggestion of this hoped-for destiny. This omission supports the conclusion that Drayton's political didacticism was an expression of his own state of mind and went far beyond the literary didactic conventions of historical poetry.
The poetry of Michael Drayton, more than that of any of his contemporaries, reflects the poetic history of the Renaissance. He wrote successfully in virtually every genre known to the period: pastorals, sonnets, mythological poetry, plays, odes, satires, and historical poetry. All of these varied works display his competence as a poet and the best of them are among the highest achievements of a great poetic era.

Drayton was very much an Elizabethan, even after that period had passed. He was exceedingly sensitive to both literary and social influences, although he was rarely an innovator. In the preface to his edition of Drayton's works, William Hebel writes, "In his [Drayton's] poetry are reflected the many forces which contributed to the greatness of the Elizabethan age."¹

One of the forces which dominated both the Elizabethan era and Drayton's poetry was a patriotism that focused on the glories of England's past. Of the approximately thirty major poetical works in the Drayton canon, eleven, or nearly half, are historical poems and Poly-Olbion, although basically topographical, also deals

with England's past. History was a major theme of Drayton's poetic expression and one which was especially suited to both his muse and his own personality. Buxton has written, "Above all else, he [Drayton] was an Englishman, proud of his country's past and seeking to establish that past in the most ancient traditions of Europe."²

Drayton's preoccupation with history derived from his own psyche and also reflected the time in which he lived. He was born in 1563 in the village of Hartshill in Warwickshire, the son of a tanner. Little is known of his early life, but by the age of ten he was a page in the household of the Gooderes of Polesworth near Hartshill. He was indebted to Henry Goodere for his early education. From his tutor he acquired a high regard for poetry and at this early age he already expressed a desire to become a poet.³ In a time in which poets were as a rule from the well-born classes, Drayton was extremely fortunate that Sir Henry Goodere recognized and encouraged the potential for poetic achievement in a tanner's son.

Henry Goodere was a man of some consequence both in


³ Bernard Newdigate, Michael Drayton and his Circle, Oxford, 1941, pp. 1-17.
his native Warwickshire and at court. He was in the service of his country throughout his lifetime both politically and militarily. He was with Sir Philip Sidney in Arnheim at the time of Sidney's death. Perhaps influenced by Sidney's example, Goodere attempted to write verses and also supported the art of poetry as a patron. Thus Drayton was closely associated with a man who was both politically active and deeply interested in poetry. Drayton served Goodere devotedly during his lifetime and both fought beside him in the Low Countries and aided him in political affairs. Goodere was very much a man of the Elizabethan establishment. As a result of his gratitude to Goodere and his assimilation of Goodere's values, Drayton's own stable and conservative mind formed a concept of his nation and political principles which would last throughout his lifetime. This concept was very much a part of both the impulse and expression of Drayton's historical poetry.

Drayton's historical poetry was not merely a celebration of England's past. Richard Hardin has written that, "Drayton is always concerned to project England's history

\(^4\) Newdigate, pp. 25-32.

\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 35-36.
into her present."\(^6\) Drayton's didactic impulse developed concurrently with his own personal concern with the state of his country. His early attempts at historical poetry developed mainly out of the literary conventions of the period, but the projection of historical events to the present became an increasingly intense theme in the historical poetry of his middle years. In these later poems, Drayton attempted to be a prophet, teaching England through his poems about the past. In the last years of his life, his fervent love for England caused him to continue to write about her despite his own bitter disillusionment at the unheeding response of her people to his message and the waning of the popularity of historical poetry.

When Drayton began writing historical poetry, this genre was very popular. He seems to have written his first historical poems in response to the success of such poems by other poets such as Daniel and Churchyard.\(^7\) The success of Elizabethan historical poetry reflected the mood of peace and security in England during the reign of her formidable Queen. After the defeat of the


Spanish Armada in 1588, the English people assumed a new self confidence and pride in their nation. This caused them to imbue earlier national events with renewed glory. Poems about the past, such as Daniel's *Civil Wars* and Warner's *Albion's England* reinforced the new patriotism and were widely published and read.

The new national pride had its roots in the establishment of the Tudor reign. During the years of Henry VII's rule, England was reunited after the painful division of the Wars of the Roses. Henry VII's reign seemed to fulfill the ancient prophecy of Cadwallader, the last of the Celtic kings of Britain, that national greatness would return only when a Celtic king regained the British Crown. Henry Tudor, who was of Welsh stock, claimed to be from the lineage of the ancient Celtic kings. His marriage to the daughter of Edward IV united the houses of York and Lancaster and brought an end to the Wars of the Roses. During the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, despite the hiatus during the more repressive reigns of Edward VI and Mary, much historical poetry continued to be produced.


9 Ibid., p. 15.

10 Ibid., p. 13.

11 Loc. cit.
Drayton, an Elizabethan to the core, shared this patriotism. It was an emotion congenial to his temperament and upbringing. Beyond this conventional patriotism, Drayton's love of his country was deepened by his fervent response to the physical beauty of England. The hills, forests and especially the rivers of England are described and extolled in many of his poems, such as this passage from his *Englands Heroicall Epistles*:

> I find no cause, nor judge I reason why,  
> My Countrie should give place to Lumbardy;  
> As goodly flow'rs on Thamesis doe grow,  
> As beautifie the Bankes of wanton Po;  
> As many Nymphs as haunt rich Arnus strand,  
> By silver Severne tripping hand in hand:12

The composition of historical poetry was well suited to Drayton, enabling him to portray the countryside he loved, as well as giving expression to his fervent patriotism.

There already existed a well-established tradition of historical poetry by the time Drayton began writing in this genre. This tradition combined three main influences: history, didacticism, and tragedy. English history was first recorded in chronicles such as those of Edward Halle in the 1540's. Because of the popularity of historical material during the Tudor period, more and more was produced and it began to take different forms. Fictitious histories and legendary accounts, as well as

historical records, proliferated. Writers rediscovered the Medieval mirror as a form for historical writing and it became a popular medium. The term "mirror" had its origin in the Middle Ages as the English equivalent of the Latin "Speculum". It usually was applied to religious works but gradually came to mean "any written work which pointed out a moral". Thus the Sixteenth Century mirror retained a strong didactic purpose as well as an historical one. Medieval mirrors, such as Boccacio's *De Casibus Virorum*, contained, besides their moral or religious impulse, the element of tragedy which Willard Farnham has defined as, "a special artistic and critical approach to the mystery of man's suffering on earth". This fusion of history, oral purpose and tragedy was produced in 1363 by Boccaccio in *De Casibus*. This Latin treatise exerted a powerful influence on the mirror genre and subsequently on English narrative poetry in general. The purpose of the *De Casibus* was to "describe the most memorable and crushing blows dealt by Fate to the illustrious


14 Ibid., p. 3.


16 Zocca, pp. 4-5.
personages of mythology and history". \textsuperscript{17}

Tudor rulers encouraged historical writing as a means for reinforcing the Tudor claim to the English throne. \textsuperscript{18} In addition to the Tudor dynastic interest in fostering historical writing, the contemporary belief that the events of the past were relevant to the problems of the present and a cyclic theory of history were the bases behind the importance of the study of history in the Renaissance. Lily B. Campbell sums up these beliefs: "the lessons of history can be applied to the problems of the present not only because man remains the same, but also because God remains the same..." \textsuperscript{19}

In 1494, Lydgate's English translation of the De Casibus from the French version by Laurent de Premierfait, was brought into print. This volume, The Fall of Princes, marked a transitional stage in the development of the moral element of the mirror. To the Medieval writers, earthly misfortune was due to the vicissitudes of Fortune. \textsuperscript{20} This was the outlook expressed by Boccaccio in the De Casibus. By the late fifteenth century, however,

\textsuperscript{17} Zocca, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{18} Lily Bess Campbell, Tudor Conceptions of History and Tragedy in "A Mirror for Magistrates", Berkeley, 1936, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Nearing, p. 10.
misfortune was attributed to the sins of the individual or state as well as to Fortuna and served as an earthly retribution for wrong doing. In Lydgate's Fall, this Renaissance idea was grafted onto Boccaccio's tragic impulse in the De Casibus. This trend was extended in subsequent editions of the Fall, along with an increasingly didactic element.21 This approach to the mirror tale was extended to English history in A Mirror for Magistrates in the middle of the century. The Mirror was one of the most popular works of the Renaissance period.22 It established the conventions for historical poetry in Renaissance England which included the cyclic theory of history, the elements of the Medieval mirror tales and the Renaissance concept of tragic impulse.

Didacticism was an important theme in the poetry of the Middle Ages and in much of that in the Renaissance. It had its roots in classical poetic theory, especially as set forth in the Ars Poetica of Horace. This Roman poet was known to scholars in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance his prestige and influence increased.23

21 Farnham, p. 280.

22 Campbell, p. 11.

His _Ars Poetica_ was translated into English by Drant in 1567 and had a wide influence on English writers of the Renaissance and post Renaissance periods. In this treatise, Horace stated rules for the composition of poetry. Perhaps the most influential statement in the treatise regarding the didactic purpose of poetry was the following:

He alone obtains the votes and the (favorable) judgement of the people, who writes a poem in a useful and pleasant fashion and who can both profit and delight.

Solus suffragia et iudicium populi tulit, 
qui utile et dulce poema scripsit et qui 
prodest et delectare potest.\(^2\)

The "instructional moral tone (of this idea) was congenial to the Middle Ages. The Renaissance, faced by the task of justifying literature, fell upon them".\(^2^5\) Thus we can see that the influence of Horace was a continuing one in English literature through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. During the Middle Ages, the didactic theme pervaded much of the literature. The collections of Saints' Legends such as the _Legende Aurea_ and exempla were very popular. In his _Canterbury Tales_, Chaucer included several moral tales such as the "Second Nun's

\(^{24}\) Bernard Weinman, _A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance_, Chicago, 1951, p. 76.

\(^{25}\) Griffith, pp. 93-94.
Tale" and "Melibeus". In 1595, Sir Philip Sidney, whom Drayton highly revered, analysed the purpose of Renaissance historical poetry in his Defense of Poesy:

The best of the historian is subject to the poet, for whatsoever action, or faction, whatsoever counsell, policy, or warre strategy the Historian is bound to recite, that may the Poet (if he list) with his imagination make his own beautifying it both for further teaching and more delighting, as it pleaseth him: having all, from Dante his heaven to his hell, under the authoritie of his penne...26

This convention of dulce et utile was particularly appealing to the serious-minded Drayton.

Drayton is generally considered the most important historical poet of the English Renaissance.27 He was influenced in the composition of historical poetry by the background of conventions in the genre and by the other historical poets of his time. Samuel Daniel was the only one of these poets who could rival Drayton's historical work. Daniel was actually the earlier of the two poets and Drayton often imitated him in his first poems. Daniel's approach to history was more philosophical than Drayton's; he was more didactic and "especially preoccupied with the nature of poetry and history".28 Later in

28 Hardin, p. 32.
his career, Daniel ceased to write history in verse because he apparently felt that the kind of history he wished to write was better suited to prose. Drayton, on the other hand, was always more concerned with poetic expression. Even in his middle years, when he was most concerned with getting his message across, the poetry was always his first consideration.

Drayton was well aware of the conventions of historical poetry. As an Englishman he shared the outlook of his time and his historical poetry was, for the most part, written in the mainstream of Renaissance conventions.

The poetry of Drayton's early years reveals little didactic impulse. During this period of his career, Drayton was an assiduous imitator of his successful contemporaries. The Petrarchan style of poetry was very popular in England during the 1580's and it was in this style, in imitation of such contemporary poets as Sidney and Daniel, that Drayton composed his early poems. Petrarchism was part of the general literary tradition of the Renaissance. Petrarch's works had long been known, admired, and assimilated in English literature. Chaucer referred to

29 Loc. cit.

"Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete",\textsuperscript{31} in his \textit{Canterbury Tales}. Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, were early leaders in translating Petrarch and bringing the Petrarchan style to English poetry during the 1540's. In the 1580's, Sidney and Spenser continued the influence by writing sonnet sequences in the Petrarchan manner. These sonnets were widely imitated and in 1594 Michael Drayton published a sonnet sequence, \textit{Ideas Mirrour}.

Petrarchism originated with the poetry of Francesco Petrarca, the fourteenth century Italian poet. His \textit{Canzoniere}, a collection of lyric poems in Italian consisting of three hundred and seventeen sonnets, twenty-nine canzoni, nine sestines, seven ballate, and four madrigals,\textsuperscript{32} was extremely influential on Renaissance poetry. His sonnets, in particular, became the models for sonneteers everywhere and the source of the Petrarchan conventions. The sonnets are characterized by a concern with an amatory theme which portrays the tension between physical and spiritual love. The lover-poet in Petrarch's poetry is a suffering lover because the beloved lady is always unattainable.


The poetry is written in elaborate conceits such as that revolving around the lady's glove in Sonnet 166:

```
Lovely hand that lightly holds my heart,
That needs but close to press my life away;
Hand in which nature and heaven's self display,
In their own honor, all their craft and art;
Nails, of the rarest pearls the counterpart;
Delicate, slender fingers, which today
Naked I've been permitted to survey
(They're not too soft to set my wounds a-smart);
O white and dainty and beloved glove
In which the ivory and rose has lain,
Never was any spoil so sweet as this!
I'll steal as well the veil that hides my love.
No, I'll not steal. Here is your glove again.
How quick the old woe follows a little bliss.33
```

Petrarch also described his love in oxymoronic or paradoxical terms, ("I fear, I hope: I burn yet shake with chill"),34 apostrophes, and catalogues of his lady's beauties. He was particularly concerned with the description of her eyes. He often used mythological allusion, elaborate similes, and invocations to sleep. Petrarch's poetry was smooth and graceful despite the elaborate richness of the style. His frequent descriptions of rivers represent a characteristic which Drayton, in particular, continued.

Drayton incorporated such Petrarchan characteristics in his early historical poetry. The influences can be

34 Ibid., p. 64.
seen in *Matilda* in the heroine's attempted seduction by King John:

> From thy sweet lookes such streames of lightning glide,/As through the eyes do wound the very hart,/Killing, and curing, as they are applide,/Hurting, and healing, like Achilles Dart:/Which to the world do heavenly things impart./And thou alone, the spirit of all delight,/Which like the sun, joy'st all things with thy sight.\(^ {35}\)

In his early works, Drayton appears to have been more concerned with style than didactic message. He was learning his craft and the style in which he was writing often overwhelmed any moral content in the poems. This was particularly true of his early historical legends. Not only were these poems composed in the full-blown Petrarchan style, but even more significant to the thwarting of any attempt toward didacticism, Drayton combined the mirror tradition with an Ovidian amatory interest in his early historical poetry. The elaborate stylistic result of this combination overpowered the moral theme in the poems which was, for the most part, undeveloped. This hybrid form was not Drayton's own invention, but was borrowed from Samuel Daniel.\(^ {36}\) Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond*, published in 1592, began the trend toward

\(^ {35}\) *Works*, vol. I, p. 224, ll. 351-357.

\(^ {36}\) *Works*, vol. V, p. 23.
this synthesis of mirror history and Ovidian love poetry and was especially influential on Drayton. From the Ovidian love complaint, Drayton derived the strong love interest which he portrayed between the King and Gaveston in Peirs Gaveston, King John for Matilda in Matilda, and Mortimer and Isabelle in Mortimeriados. This element of tragic and romantic love was obviously well suited to the Petrarchan style and these two factors combined subordinated the didactic or moral element of the mirror tradition.

Peirs Gaveston, the first of Drayton's legends, was published in 1593. It deals with the conflict between Edward II and his barons in the years 1300-1312. Prince Edward's preference of the young Peirs Gaveston incurred the wrath of his father, the King, and caused the favorite to be exiled to France. He was recalled upon the death of the old King. The young Edward II resumed his friendship and advanced Gaveston to the Lord Protectorship of the Realm. The barons sided against him and, with the help of Queen Isabelle, Gaveston was again banished. During an attempt to return to England, he was executed at Blacklow in 1312.

In Drayton's treatment of the Gaveston story, the love element seems to have received the most prominent emphasis. The relationship between Edward and Gaveston is described in amatory terms and the richness of the description and
the lavish imagery combine to overwhelm the mirror elements.

With this fayre baytel fisht for Edwards love, / My daintie youth so pleas'd his princely eye: / Here sprang the league which time could not remove, / So deeply grafted in our Infancie, / That frend, nor foe, nor life, nor death could sunder / So seldome seene, and to the world a wonder. 37

Drayton did incorporate conventional mirror elements in the poem. Peirs Gaveston begins with the appearance of Gaveston's ghost which relates the events leading to his misfortune. Drayton attempted to retain the didactic mirror influence by attributing Gaveston's downfall to great pride. Gaveston's ghost states in ll.709-720 that:

Loe thus ambition creepes into my breast, 
Pleasing my thoughts with this emperious humor, 
And with this divell being once possest, 
Mine eares are fild with such a buzzing rumor, 
As onely pride my glorie doth awaite, 
My sences sooth'd with everie selfe-conceite.

Selfe-love, prides thirst, unsatisfied desier, 
A flood that never yet had any boundes, 
Times pestilence, thou state-consuming fier, 
A mischiefe which all common weales confoundes, 
O Plague of plagues, how many kingdomes rue thee, 
O happie Empiers that yet never knew thee! 38

It is obvious from the sequence of events in the poem, however, that the actual cause of Gaveston's fall was not his pride but the jealousy of the barons and their fears regarding his influence over the King.

38 Works, vol I, p. 178, ll. 709-720.
The traditional mirror concept of Fortuna is also represented in *Peirs Gaveston*. However, this element seems almost artificially included. In the beginning of the poem, Gaveston's ghost says:

Blind Fortune, chance, world's mutability,  
Advancing peasants, and debasing Kings,  
Od hap, good luck, or star-bred destinie:  
Which stil doest fawne, and flatter me so oft.39

In *Peirs Gaveston*, Fortune is meaningless and fickle.

*Peirs Gaveston* is also evidence of Drayton's careful scholarship. Tillotson points out that, "*Peirs Gaveston* is unusual among Elizabethan historical poems as a product of independent and exhaustive research."40 Drayton was well acquainted with the historical accounts of the period and, according to his note to the reader,41 used chronicles written during the reigns of Edward II, as well as material from Stow. Tillotson also suggests his use of the fifteenth century chronicle of Thomas of Walsingham, Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, Copgrove and Holinshed.42

*Peirs Gaveston* was Drayton's first historical poem and


the most complicated work he had attempted up to that time. As Richard Hardin has pointed out, the historical framework presented the problem of "a long narrative poem in which he had to manage character, incident, and setting, in addition to the themes of love and history".\textsuperscript{43} The love-complaint synthesis was consistent with Drayton's stylistic development in the early 1590's and reflects his foremost concern with craftsmanship and the Petrarchan mode. Didacticism was at this point in Drayton's development, merely a convention associated with the mirror tradition and congenial to his nature.

Drayton continued in the love-complaint tradition in his second historical legend, \textit{Matilda}, produced in 1594. His sources, the \textit{Chronicles of Dunmow} by de Bromfield and Stow's translation of de Bromfield, offered only the barest suggestions of Matilda's story.\textsuperscript{44} Drayton developed both the story and the characters to suit his artistic purpose: the creation of an English Lucrece. This ideal of chastity had its roots in Spenser's celebration of the virtue in his third book of \textit{The Faerie Queene}. Moreover, the subject had definite patriotic implications both for

\textsuperscript{43} Hardin, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Works}, vol. V, p. 32.
Spenser and Drayton with regard to their maiden Queen. In lines 61-63 of Matilda, Drayton both invokes Elizabeth as a source of inspiration and cites Spenser's example:

Though not like Collin in thy Britomart,
Yet loves as much, although he wants his arte.
O my dread Soveraigne, rare and princely Mayd,

As in Peirs Gaveston, the poem is told by the ghost of Matilda in the convention of the mirror tale. She tells how the praise of her beauty reached the ears of the King and of his subsequent attempts to seduce her. She resisted his persuasions and with her father left the court, hoping thus to escape his further notice. The King, angered by her refusal, brought her father, Fitzwalter, to disgrace, burned the Fitzwalter castle, and exiled him to France. Matilda attempted to hide from the King, but he learned where she was and recommenced his suit. Finally he sent an emissary to the convent where she was hidden. When she continued her refusal the emissary forced her to take poison and she died, still maintaining her chastity.

As in the earlier legend, the amatory element takes precedence over the mirror element, despite Drayton's


seriousness and strong sense of moral rectitude. Tillotson said that, "It is as a love poem, not as a drama nor as a 'mirror' of chastity that Matilda strikes us." Despite the inclusion of mirror conventions such as the ghostly narrator and the repentance of the King, the balance is tipped in favor of the Ovidian influence. King John is not portrayed as a ravisher, but rather as a wooer; his eloquent persuasions are cut from the same material as Ideas Mirrour, Drayton's first sonnet sequence.

Shyne thou, like Cynthia under mine estate,  
Thy tresses dekt with Ariadnes Crowne,  
In pompe redubbling costly Junos rate,  
And cloud the world in sable with a frowne:  
Advance thy friends, and throw the mighty downe.  
Be thou admir'd through all this famous Ile,  
Thy name enrol'd with never-dated stile.  

Drayton was unable to fully integrate the two opposing components of mirror tale and Ovidian love poetry in his early legends. Hardin had expressed the opinion that the reconciliation of the two elements was "insuperable". The relative weakness of the mirror strain, and therefore of the didactic element, seems to have resulted from Drayton's enthusiastic development of the Petrarchan and

49 Hardin, p. 15.
Ovidian elements.

Drayton was apparently strongly motivated to write about the historical accounts of the reign of Edward II. In 1596 he again turned to this period in English history in an attempt to write an epic poem, Mortimeriados. Here Drayton continued the events of Edward II's reign after the death of Gaveston. The barons again found their positions jeopardized by Edward's new favorites, the Despensers. The barons, led by Roger Mortimer and his uncle, the Earl of March, tried to force the King to dismiss the Despensers from Court. The Mortimers were defeated by the King's forces, however, and imprisoned. With the aid of Queen Isabelle, Roger Mortimer escaped and fled to France. The Queen also traveled to France and began a political and romantic alliance with Mortimer. With his aid and that of her son, Edward, Duke of Aquitaine, the Queen organized an expedition to England where her forces seized the country and forced the King to abdicate. Edward III was crowned King with Isabelle and Mortimer governing for him. Because Mortimer's ambitions grew too strong, the young King eventually seized him and had him executed, leaving Isabelle to lament Mortimer's death.

The language of Mortimeriados, like Peirs Gaveston and Matilda, is still Petrarchan, since Drayton continued to work with the combination of mirror tradition and love.
poetry. In addition, however, Drayton included a third literary strain in his *Mortimeriados* by adding epic devices borrowed from such classical poets as Virgil.\(^{50}\)

One such device is exemplified in the epic simile in lines 386-392:

```
Even as a bustling tempests rouzing blasts,
Upon a Forrest of old-branched Oakes,
Downe upon heapes their climing bodies casts,
And with his furie teyrs their mossy loaks,
The neighbour groves resounding with the stroaks,
With such a clamor and confused woe,
To get the Bridge these desperate Armies goe.\(^{51}\)
```

As with some of the mirror conventions in his early legends, such epic devices often seem rather loosely connected to the narration. They do, however, add a sense of dignity and elevation to the poem. Drayton may have been somewhat dissatisfied with the tone of his earlier legends and so chose this method to enhance and deepen his historical poetry. He did not diminish the amatory element in *Mortimeriados*, however. The poem is a romance of passion in which Drayton portrayed historical events through the emotional relationships of the characters. He developed the love affair between Isabelle and Mortimer with as much enthusiasm as he treated the battle scenes.

\(^{50}\) Nearing, p. 98.

Still with his eares his soveraigne Goddesse hears,/And with his eyes shee graciously doth see,/Still in her breast his secret thoughts she bears,/Nor can her tongue pronounce an I, but wee,/Thus two in one, and one in two they bee:/And as his soule possesseth head and hart,/Shee's all in all, and all in every part.\(^{52}\)

The mirror strain is mainly evident in the basic topic, that is, the falls of both King Edward II and Roger Mortimer. Despite the titular emphasis on Mortimer, as the poem develops much sympathy is directed to the misfortunes of the weak King. In the case of both men there is a moral cause at the root of their downfall. The King is described in the first stanza as "Edward the second, but the first of shame,/Scourge of the crowne, eclipse of Englands fame."\(^{53}\) Drayton portrayed the King as a weak man, led by the Despensers, "Whose friendship Edward onely doth embrace;/By whose allurements he is fondly led,/To leave his Queene, and flie his lawful bed."\(^{54}\) Mortimer, on the other hand, falls because of his ambition and greed. "Ambition with the Eagle loves to build".\(^{55}\)


\(^{53}\) Ibid., p. 309, ll. 6-7.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 310, ll. 33-35.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 372, ll. 2220.
In *Mortimeriados*, Drayton first concerned himself with a theme which was nearly to obsess him in the years to come, the "relation between national destiny and the personal human spirit".\(^{56}\) Although there is no stress placed on the convention of misfortune stemming from moral weakness, nor any overt didacticism in the poem, Drayton did establish this theme through the implication that the welfare of the nation was dependent upon the moral integrity of those who lead that nation.

On November 21, 1596, Drayton's third legend, *Robert, Duke of Normandy*, was entered in the Stationer's Register. It was published later in that year with revised versions of *Peirs Gaveston* and *Matilda*.\(^{57}\) This poem marks a turning point in Drayton's early development; it is closer to the mirror tradition than its predecessors and the Ovidian and Petrarchan elements of the earlier legends and *Mortimeriados* are greatly diminished. This change was perhaps suggested by Drayton's addition of epic devices to dignify *Mortimeriados*. The language of *Robert of Normandy* is much less ornate than that of the earlier poems and the emphasis is on action rather than on description. It is interesting to compare two passages

56 Hardin, p. 39.

describing similar situations in Mortimeriad and Robert, respectively. In both poems Mortimer and Robert are prisoners.

To London now a wofull prisoner led,
London where he had tryumph'd with the Queene,
He followeth now, whom many followed,
And scarce a man, who many men had beene,
Seeing with greefe who had in pompe beene seene:
Those eyes which oft have at his greatnes gazed,
Now at his fall must stand as all amazed.58

To England now a prisoner they him bring,
Now is he hers, which claim'd her for his owne,
A Captive, where he should have been a King,
His dungeon made wher shold have been his throne,
Now buried there, wheras he shold have growne.
In one poore tower mew'd up, within one place,
Whose Empires bounds the Ocean shold embrace.59

The latter poem is simpler, more terse. Its imagery is more vivid and clear.

Robert of Normandy has a strong Medieval influence which indicates the influence of the earlier mirror stories and also Chaucer.60 The poem begins with a dream vision in which the blind Duke appears, led by the allegorical figures of Fame and Fortune. A debate ensues between these two in which they tell Robert's story and what they have done for him. Fame is the victor and


59 Ibid., p. 279. 11. 736-742.

60 Ibid., vol. V, p. 38.
maintains that despite his sufferings, Robert's glory will be everlasting.

Robert of Normandy exhibits a concern with characterization new to Drayton's work. The roots of Robert's misfortune are portrayed as lying within his own character rather than as being caused by immoral actions or mere fortune. This more sophisticated approach encompasses both fortune and moral weakness as causes for misfortune and goes beyond them to the very essence of Robert's personality. In order to accomplish this, Drayton departed from his historical sources to make Robert a more sympathetic hero.\(^{61}\) Though he did not present a thoroughly developed character in Robert, he suggested for the first time a more complex cause for tragedy.\(^{62}\)

Despite such mirror influences as the ghost and emphasis on Fortuna, the potential didactic theme of Robert is undeveloped. Drayton neither condemns the world as in the mirror stories, nor expands on Robert's actions but, as Farnham has expressed it, "makes much of the recompense which worldly fame may offer for unjust calamity".\(^{63}\)


\(^{62}\) Nearing, p. 27.

\(^{63}\) Farnham, p. 328.
The multiple factors contributing to Robert's misfortune may contribute to the relative lack of didacticism in the poem, but it also comes from Drayton's lack of concern with developing any coherent didactic message in the poetry of his early years. The forces were gathering, however, which would produce circumstances motivating Drayton to make such a development in the poetry of his middle years.

The 1596 edition of Robert of Normandy also included new versions of Peirs Gaveston and Matilda; Drayton had revised these poems to make them more consistent with the new developments of his craft which had produced Robert. He also changed the spelling of 'Peirs' to 'Piers'. In both of these revisions, Drayton eliminated the mythological conceits and much of the Petrarchan amatory description. The additions he made to the poems were similar in style to Robert. Drayton also added prose arguments to these poems to conform with the one he had written for Robert.

In the revised Piers Gaveston, Drayton strengthened the moral tone not only by the reduction of the amatory elements but also by shifting the blame for the immoral liaison to Gaveston.

Gaveston, as he grew in yeers, became most licentious, and by his inticements, drew this toward young Prince, (following this his youthfull Minion) into hate with the Noblemen, and disgrace with the King his Father:65

This shift produced two significant results: placing the blame on Gaveston was less derogatory to the concept of the monarch and, secondly, it accented the mirror convention of downfall owing to moral weakness. This latter theme is made stronger in Drayton's later revision of the poem, but other than its value as an exemplum, it shows little evidence of a concerted effort toward didacticism.

In the revised Matilda, Drayton also made changes which strengthened the moral tone of the poem. The reduction of the amatory quality of the poem, which had obscured the King's lust, exposed the evil nature of the King's actions. Moreover, Drayton further ennobled Matilda by causing her to take by herself the poison which the King's emissary brought. In the revised Matilda, the contrast between the evil of the King and the innocence of Matilda is heightened both through language and action. Drayton makes no attempt to instruct through the poem, however.

In 1596 Drayton had concluded Mortimeriados with the

device of a letter from Mortimer to Queen Isabelle. This may have given him the idea of writing a series of amatory poetical letters between famous personages of English history. Based on the idea of Ovid's *Heroides*, *Englands Heroicall Epistles* appeared in 1597, and proved to be one of Drayton's most successful works. The first edition contained nine sets of poetical letters; three more sets were added in the 1598 and 1599 editions. In *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, Drayton again combined the amatory poem with history as he had in his earlier poems. Ovid's poems were written as single letters expressing unrequited love based on ancient myth, whereas Drayton's poems were composed in pairs of letters exchanged by lovers famous in English history. These poems reflect the historical drama which was so popular at that time. Tillotson has written, "These poems were imagined by Drayton as dramatic. They represent his transition from the monodrama of the 'Legend' to actual drama." She also points out that in addition to the chronicles, Drayton also made use of several contemporary plays such as *Edward II, Henry VI*.

66 Nearing, p. 98.

67 Buxton, p. 76.

In *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, Drayton achieved for the first time a balance between the amatory and mirror strains. From Ovid he took the idea of the amatory letter, but the *Epistles* poems deal with the political events surrounding the lovers rather than with their private passions alone. This use of the love theme gave Drayton the opportunity to describe history through the emotional reactions of lovers involved in the crucial events without getting entangled in the action of the events. Drayton's use of the mirror tradition contributed the moral concept of the falls of the characters portrayed in the *Epistles*, due to Fortuna and sin. The *Epistles*, although varying in style to suit the supposed writer, were on the whole less elaborately written than the earlier historical poetry. By toning down the style and placing more emphasis on the mirror element, Drayton achieved the balance of the *Epistles*. This balance in the *Epistles* permitted Drayton to develop a true didactic impulse for the first time. It was not the moral dilemma of individuals portrayed in his 'Legends' that stimulated didacticism in Drayton, but rather the welfare of his beloved England. These poems reveal a concerted and organized attempt to instruct

through his poetry beyond the conventional level. The message in the *Epistles* is that pride and illicit love corrupt the heroic, active life which furthers the cause of England. On the opposite side, virtue, especially in love, advances the public welfare.

Harlin sees the general plan of the *Epistles* as, "to show divine Providence guiding England through a troublesome past into a glorious present under Elizabeth." Some of the letters seem to be particularly aimed at promoting Tudor greatness. The exchange of letters between Katherine and Owen Tudor, for example, foreshadows the greatness of England under the Tudors and also links England's almost legendary past to the reality of the present. In the epistle from Owen Tudor to Katherine, Drayton establishes the predestination of their alliance:

> Then cast no future doubts, nor fear no hate,  
> When it so long hath been fortold by fate,  
> And by the all-disposing doom of Heav'n,  
> Before our births, we to one bed were giv'n.  

and lays the basis of the Tudor claim to the throne. Drayton has chosen his pairs of lovers, then, to enhance his didactic message. The letters of Jane Grey and

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70 Harlin, p. 48.

Guilford Dudley are a culmination of the theme of the poems; Jane's letter justifies the subjugation of the Roman Catholic Church and Elizabeth's ascension to the throne as the will of Heaven.

Yet Heav'n forbid, that Maries Wombe should bring/Englands faire Scepter to a forraine King;/But she to faire Elizabeth shall leave it,/Which broken, hurt, and wounded shall receive it:/And on her Temples having plac'd the Crowne,/Root out the dregges Idolatry hath sowne.

The letters between Queen Mary and Charles Brandon treat not only the past, but suggest what Drayton may have thought best for England in the future. The marriage of Queen Mary and Charles Brandon produced a line of possible succession to the English throne. Mary, the daughter of Henry VII was widowed by the death of the French King, Louis XII, and subsequently married Brandon, the Duke of Suffolk. They had two daughters, one of whom was Lady Jane Grey and the other, Catherine, who married the Earl of Hertford. Catherine had one son, Edward Seymour, who might thus have been considered a possible candidate for Elizabeth's crown. Edward's great grandfather, Brandon, however, was already married when he took Mary as his wife


\[73\] Hardin, p. 51.
and, therefore, his whole line was considered illegitimate. It is significant that Drayton did not mention this well-known fact in his poem. His omission suggests that Drayton might have wished to suggest Edward Seymour as Elizabeth's successor. Ultimately, of course, Elizabeth chose not to ignore the illegitimacy of the Seymours and her choice of succession fell on James I.

Within the poem itself, Drayton took care to establish the nobility of Brandon through his valor at the Tilt and by stressing his lineage, less noble only than Mary's. He also took pains to describe Brandon's family's loyalty to the Tudors.

'Tis but in vaine, of my Descent to boast;  
When Heav'ns Lampe shines, all other Lights be lost;

Else might by Bloud find issue from his force,  
Who beat the Tyrant Richard from his Horse  
On Bosworth Plaine, whom Richmond chose to wield  
His glorious Ensigne in that conqu'ring Field;  
And with his Sword, in his deare Sov'raignes fight,  
To his last breath stood fast in Henries Right.  

In Englands Heroicall Epistles, Drayton first exhibited an interest in actively promoting, through his


poetry, the welfare of his country, as he saw it, through the use of examples of behavior in the past which either enhanced or opposed this end. From the moral didacticism of the mirror histories, he derived the expression of a political or patriotic didacticism. His response to the political and social changes in the next few years would increase his motivation to write this kind of poetry in his middle years. His work, especially his historical poetry, became increasingly more didactic in the years ahead.

The didactic element in Drayton's historical poetry developed as Drayton's own concept of England's national destiny took shape. The factors which contributed to this concept were threefold. In the first place Drayton shared the patriotism of his age as was noted earlier in this paper. Toward the end of Elizabeth's reign, the strong English drive for expansion and colonization had become a reality. To Drayton, the concept of an English Empire meant hope "for a regeneration of the ancient English spirit in the New World".76 As he grew older and saw the bright hopes of the earlier patriotic concept of the divine plan of Providence as he had conceived it in his Epistles, fail under the corruption and indifference of

76 Hardin, p. 125.
the present time, Drayton looked to the New World for the fulfillment of the English Destiny. Under the reign of James, however, even this dream for the future was doomed because of the King's failure to support expansion. In his ode "To The Virginian Voyage", written before 1606, Drayton expressed the contrast between the New World and the old,

You brave Heroique minds,  
Worthy your Countries name,  
That Honour still pursue,  
Goe, and subdue,  
Whilst loyt'ring Hinds  
Lurke here at home, with shame.  

Drayton's disappointment with James's inability to further the destiny of England caused him to attempt to teach this destiny through his poetry. He attempted to hold up the glories of the past as a reminder of the potential of the future.

The first work in which this belief in England's destiny was presented in an organized way was Englands Heroicall Epistles. Shortly after this poem was published, events occurred which challenged Drayton's political philosophy. The wave of patriotism had begun to subside by the end of the century. There was a growing dissatisfaction with the old Queen's Court and fears concerning

succession gave rise to a mood of uncertainty and insecurity. There were also economical and political troubles. C. V. Wedgwood has pointed out that, "in the last years of Elizabeth's reign the discontents of King James's reign in Court, country and Parliament were already present". At the end of her reign, the Queen did not enjoy the whole-hearted loyalty of her people as she had in the past. She was sixty-seven at the turn of the century and was unable to inspire the younger generation of her subjects as she had their parents. Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, was a leader of forces opposing the old Queen. Once one of the Queen's greatest favorites, Essex had a series of disputes with her in the latter 1590's. His disobedience caused the Queen to become insecure and therefore repressive of any material which might suggest opposition to her rule. This insecurity caused her to have Sir John Hayward's history, King Henry IV, burned and Hayward tried and imprisoned for treason. Her concern with the history was based on several factors. In the first place, it was dedicated to Essex. Secondly, the historical material dealt with abdication and usurpation by a popular


hero. Because of Essex's disobedience and his popularity with the people, the Queen found this material offensive. She therefore took steps to have it suppressed in 1599.

In 1601, after protracted trouble between himself and Queen Elizabeth, Essex led a small band of rebels through London, hoping to gain support from the citizens for an uprising against the Queen. He was unsuccessful in this attempt and, despite her earlier favor toward him, Elizabeth had him tried for treason and executed later in the year.  

The events of 1599-1601 caused a period of suspicion and factionalism in London. Drayton was aware of this mood. He can be connected with at least one of Essex's followers, the Earl of Bedford, husband of Drayton's early Patroness, Lucy, Countess of Bedford. Bernard Newdigate has written, "There are passages in the Heroicall Epistles of Richard II and his Queen...which suggest that, although Drayton condemned the rising of the Earl of Essex, he was not without sympathy for some of those involved in his fall." Bedfor, himself, had deserted Essex midway through the rebellion.

80 Strachey, pp. 239-268.

81 Newdigate, pp. 62-63.
The letters between Richard II and Isabel in *Englands Heroicall Epistles* were concerned with the same period of history as Hayward's work and, in his second edition of the poems in 1599, Drayton took great pains to delete or modify any passages which might have offended the Queen.

Even in the 1597 edition, Drayton did not include any description of Richard's actual deposition. The Elizabethan tendency to consider history as cyclic caused them to regard past events as the prototypes of present situations. Therefore, the presentation in print of historical events which might suggest current problems could cause much trouble for the author. This was why Drayton deleted in 1600, the following lines in the letter from Isabel to Richard which refer to Richard's failure in Ireland:

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Thou went'st victorious, crown'd in triumph
borne,/But cam'st subdu'd, uncrown'd and
laugh'd to scorne
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In 1598, Elizabeth had put Essex in command of the English troops in Ireland to defeat Tyrone. The lines in Isabel's epistle which refer to Richard's defeat in Ireland could be interpreted as suggesting current defeat for the English under Essex. Drayton also omitted lines 78-83, in which Richard regrets his childlessness because Elizabeth's lack of heirs, long a concern, was a very touchy

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issue as the Queen became older.

Altogether, Drayton removed forty lines from the epistle of Richard II to Isabel; this letter is now one of the shortest in the collection.

The 1598 and 1599 editions of *Englands Heroicall Epistles* were, for the most part, reissues of the 1597 edition with the exceptions of five epistles added in 1598, one additional epistle in 1599, and the aforementioned extensive revision of the epistles between Richard II and Isabel. The new epistles added in 1598 and 1599 are consistent both in style and content with the earlier ones. The minor changes made in certain others were mainly stylistic, "a pruning of diffuse, rhetorical and repetitive passages" characteristic of Drayton's middle period.

From approximately 1597 to 1602, Drayton was writing plays in London for the Admiral's Company. Most of what he wrote is no longer extant, but from the accounts in the *Diary*, kept by Philip Henslowe (owner of the Rose and


84 Loc. cit.

85 Newdigate, p. 101.
Fortune Theaters where the Company acted), nearly all his dramatic composition was done in collaboration. Such writing must have brought Drayton right into the heart of the vital, productive and innovative literary circles of London. This period was not only one of great literary activity, but also of political unrest. As previously mentioned, there was much intrigue in Court and insecurity in the realm about the succession. Historical plays were the most common plays produced, perhaps in response to the political unrest of this time. The majority of the plays with which Drayton was associated were historical, thus Drayton's previous interest in historical poetry was continued in his dramatic compositions. The one surviving play with Drayton's name on it is Sir John Oldcastle, Part I. It is not known, however, which passages were contributed by Drayton and so it is difficult to trace the development of his craft in the play. From his association with the London literary circle, he may have acquired both the literary impetus toward didacticism and also his personal impulse.

86 Loc. cit.

87 Wedgwood, p. 7.

88 Newdigate, pp. 101-104.
Drayton's career as a dramatist was most likely the result of financial need. Upon the death of Henry Goodere in 1595, Drayton had been "bequeathed" by Goodere to the patronage of the Countess of Bedford, the daughter of a noble family also of Warwickshire. She had been married to Edward Russell, the Duke of Bedford, in 1594 when she began a long and glittering career as a Courtier and literary patroness not only of Drayton, but also of Daniel, Donne and Jonson. At first Drayton's high expectations of her patronage seem to have been justified, as he wrote glowing dedications to her in all of his poems from 1594 until 1597. Sometime after this time, however, their relationship seems to have deteriorated, for nothing new was dedicated to her after England's Heroicall Epistles in 1597. Drayton's Poemes Lyrick and Pastorall of 1606 contained a bitter passage, apparently directed at the Countess of Bedford, in which Drayton scorns her for her lack of faithfulness to him.

So once Selena seemed to reguard,
That faithfull Rowland her so highly praysed,
And did his travell for a while reward,
As his estate she purpos'd to have raysed,
But soone she fled him and the swaine defyes,
Ill is he sted that on such faith relies.90

89 Newdigate, pp. 56-70.

Perhaps Drayton's serious, didactic poetry was not to her taste. In any event, she was an influential literary figure and Drayton may have blamed her for his lack of patronage at Court. During the troubled years at the turn of the century, Drayton, antagonistic to the Court and concerned about the succession, was caught up in the literary and political atmosphere of London. This unsettled atmosphere remained in the first years of the new century and continued to affect Drayton's writing. The effect can be seen in his revision of *Mortimeriados*, published in 1603 as *The Barrons Wars*. Drayton's revision reflects an entirely new purpose for the poem. In *The Barrons Wars*, Drayton attempted to write an epic of civil dissension. Drayton's principal purpose was a didactic one: to illustrate for his contemporaries in the troubled present the evils of factionalism and civil war. This new focus on a didactic purpose derived partially from his own more mature poetic ability and also from his deep concern with the political events of 1599-1601, especially the Essex uprising. *The Barrons Wars* was intended as an example of the evils of such factionalism. Drayton's revision was also motivated by his own aesthetic dissatisfaction with his earlier poem. In his preface to *The Barrons Wars*, he said, "The cause of this
my second greater labour was the insufficient and careless handling of the first..."91 Now that Drayton had outgrown the Ovidian influence, he felt that the style of Mortimeriados was not suited to the dignity of the subject, especially in the light of his new purposes in 1602. By this time, Drayton was writing a tighter, more dramatic and less ornate kind of poetry. This change in his style is most clearly illustrated in his shorter poems. Amour 6 of the 1594 sonnet sequence, Ideas Mirrour, is characteristic of Drayton's early style.

In one whole world is but one Phoenix found,
A Phoenix thou, this Phoenix then alone,
By thy rare plume thy kinde is easly knowne,
With heavenly colours dide, with natures wonder round92

In the 1599 revision of the sonnets, Drayton revised this poem, making it more coherent, compressed, and regular.

'Mongst all the Creatures in this spacious
Round,/Of the birds kind, the Phoenix is alone,/Which best by you, of living Things, is knowne;/None like to that, none like to you is found93

His new style was more suited to his historical and didactic purposes. Drayton's changes in the Edward II-Mortimer


story were basically fourfold. He was strongly influenced in the execution of *The Barrons Wars* by Daniel's historical poem *The Civile Wars*. This influence was most likely the cause of the most obvious and painstaking revision of the poem, its conversion into the ottava rima of *The Civile Wars*. In the preface, Drayton explained his reasons for the change, "this sort of Stanza hath in it, Majestie, Perfection, and Solidity..." Each stanza was increased by one line. Thus the reproach to London in *Mortimeriados*:

\[\text{Thy chanells serve for inke, for paper stones,} / \text{And on the ground, write murthers, incests, rapes,} / \text{And for thy pens, a heape of dead-mens bones,} / \text{Thy letters, ugly formes, and monstrous shapes;} / \text{And when the earths great hollow concave gapes,} / \text{Then sinke them downe, least shee we live upon}/ \text{Doe leave our use, and flye subjection.}\]

is changed in *The Barrons Wars* to:

\[\text{Her Chanels serv'd for Inke, her Paper, Stones,} / \text{Whereon to write her Murther, Incest, Rape;} / \text{And for her penn's, a heape of dead Mens Bones,} / \text{To make each Letter in some monstrous shape;} / \text{And for her Accents, sad departing Grones;} / \text{And that to Time no desp'rate act should scape,} / \text{If she with Pride againe should be o'er-gone,} / \text{To take that Booke, and sadly looke}\]

95 *Works*, vol. II, p. 4.
The second aspect of Drayton's revision was the addition of historical material. This also reflects the influence of *The Civil Wars*. Tillotson has written, "The *Barrons Wars* might be summed up as an attempt to write a poem more like Daniel's. That is, a poem more historical..."  

Altogether, he added several hundred lines to *The Barrons Wars*. His sources for the poem remained the same as for *Mortimeriados*, but Drayton made much more use of them in the later poem. Canto IV, for example, is almost four times as long as the comparable passage in *Mortimeriados* because of the addition of new historical material.  

Much of this material not alluded to in *Mortimeriados* is not necessary to an understanding of the action, but, along with the elimination of the romantic elements, alters the tone of the poem considerably.

The third area of Drayton's revision was the alteration of the characterization. His portrayal of the major characters in *The Barrons Wars* is much grimmer. This more serious character development combined with the de-emphasis of the romantic element created a much more

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99 Hardin, p. 41.
serious mood to the poem which is conducive to Drayton's didactic purpose of portraying the evils of civil factionalism and dissent. The King is stronger in The Barrons Wars; Drayton made him seem so to strengthen the concept of the sanctity of the monarch. He significantly minimized Edward's faults so that he could alter the events and thus make Edward the victim of a power struggle among the nobility, rather than portray him as the weak, immoral King of Mortimeriados whose vagaries the nobility could no longer tolerate. This power struggle was much more like the situation in Drayton's own time than the situation in Mortimeriados had been. Richard Hardin has written, "The Barons' Wars repeatedly calls attention to the standard pattern followed by political intrigue and abuse, whether past or present." Drayton took particular aim at the politicians at Court. He described these men in Canto IV as:

Promoting whom they please, not whom they should;/When as their Fall shewes how they foulely er'd,/Procur'd by those, whom fondly they prefer'd./For when that Men of Merit goe ungrac'd,/And by her Fauthor, Ignorance held in,/And Parasites in good Mens Roomes are plac'd,/Onely to sooth the Highest in their sinne,/From those whose skill and knowledge is debas'd,/There many strange

100 Hardin, p. 43.
Enormities begin;/For great Wits forged
into factious Tooles,/Prove great Men
(oft) to be the greatest Fooles.101

Drayton's bitter attitude toward the courtiers was a
common one at this time. "The inefficiency and intrigues
of such men [courtiers] hastened the breakdown of the
monarchy"102 in Elizabeth's time and continued to do so
in the reigns of the Stuart Kings.

Drayton may have had the Essex group in mind when
he wrote the stanzas in Canto IV quoted above. Essex had
been liberal in his distribution of honors and knight-
hoods, particularly during his campaign in Ireland.103
He had been guilty of promoting whom he pleased. Even
more significantly, Essex's fall was commonly thought
to have been brought about at least in part by his former
friend and protege, Francis Bacon.104 The phrase which
refers to misfortune as being "procur'd by those, whom
fondly they prefer'd" could hardly have applied to
Edward II as his fall was brought about by Mortimer whom
he had certainly not preferred.

102 Wedgwood, p. 8.
103 Strachey, p. 209.
104 Ibid., p. 256.

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In order to make the poem a suitable medium to convey his new political and moral didacticism, Drayton drastically reduced the romantic element, incorporated more historical facts, and altered the metrics to the more dignified ottava rima. He also extended the epic influence of Mortimeriados. What had begun as an experiment in form in that poem, became a pervasive mood in The Barrons Wars. Drayton again found in Daniel's Civile Wars the inspiration for this influence, as well as in Daniel's model, Lucan's De Bello Civile. Drayton achieved the epic quality mainly by heightening the seriousness of the material through his rhetoric. The new rhetorical construction was modeled on Lucan's epic. Through rhetorical devices such as the invocation in Canto I, stanza 65, ll. 513, "O all-preparing Providence Divine!", the allegory of mischief in Canto II, stanzas 4-10, which recalls Virgil's Aeneid, and heroic catalogues such as in Canto II, stanza 23, ll. 176-184:

Upon his Surcote, valiant Nevil bore  
A Silver Saltoyre, upon Martiall Red;  
A Ladies Sleeve, high-spirited Hastings wore;  
Ferrer his Taberd, with rich Verry spred,  
Well knowne in many a Warlike Match before;  
A Raven sat on Corbets armed Head;

105 Works, vol. V, p. 64.

106 A. LaBranche, "Drayton's 'Barrons Wars' and the Rhetoric of Historical Poetry", JEGP, 62 ('63), pp. 82-95.
Drayton elevated his language to suit his theme. He annotated *The Barrons Wars* in order to emphasize his new rhetorical construction. In Canto I, for instance, he first presented the 'Argument', then stanza four is labeled the 'Invocation', and stanza five, the 'Narration'. Canto I, stanza 39 is noted as "A Similie of the first rising of the Barons."

The poem lacks the amplitude and firm control of the true epic, but Drayton did succeed in his attempt to ennoble *Mortimeriados* in *The Barrons Wars*. He apparently admired Daniel's handling of *The Civile Wars*, and felt that the epic influence would make his poem more suitable to his didactic purpose.

The Barrons Wars was still related to the mirror legend, but in this poem Drayton infused the tragical complaint with the scope and rhetoric of the epic.\textsuperscript{108} The Barrons Wars is an epic expression of the tragical presentation of British history which was derived from the mirror legend. It was further elaborated by the addition of didactic material which derived from Drayton's own reactions to the political intrigues of his time and the Elizabethan cyclic concept of history.

In 1605, Drayton published the first collected edition of his poetry. This edition contained "The Barrons Wars", "Englands Heroicall Epistles", "Idea", and the three legends. Of these works, only the legends saw major revision; "The Barrons Wars" remained unchanged and the "Epistles" and "Idea" were revised only slightly. The "fairly careless" printing of this volume is attributed by Dick Taylor to Drayton's only "moderate interest" in its publication. He suggests that, at this time, Drayton was mainly concerned with the new revision of the legends.\textsuperscript{109}

Drayton's 1605 revision of the legends was of a similar nature in all three poems. It represents a continua-

\textsuperscript{108} Farnham, p. 329.

tion in the same direction as the revision of "Piers Gaveston" and "Matilda" carried out in the 1596 publication of Robert of Normandie. As in 1596, Drayton further deleted amatory material and continued to strengthen the moral elements of the poems.

"Piers Gaveston" was essentially rewritten in 1605; two thirds of the poem was cut out. This deletion of passages that were mainly decorative or romantic gave the poem much greater compression. One result of this pruning was a heightened emphasis on Gaveston. The new, stronger moral stance is more illustrative of Drayton's didactic impulse. Gaveston emerges as a more corrupt figure and the Barons are made to seem more righteous.

The 1605 revision of "Matilda" was very similar to that of "Piers Gaveston". Again Drayton cut the poem to almost half its former length. In addition to removing the remaining decorative and romantic elements from the poem, Drayton also practically eliminated the role of Fitzwalter, Matilda's father, which he had expanded in his 1596 revision. He also changed the manner of Matilda's death from suicide to murder by the King's emissary. Thus the description of Matilda's death was changed from:

Taking the poyson from his deadly hand,
Unto the King caroust my latest draught;
Goe wretch (quoth I) now let him understand,
Hee hath obtayn'd what hee so long hath
sought;
Though with my blood, my fame I deerlie
bought.
And though my youth hee basely have betrayd,
Yet witnes Heaven, I liv'd and dyed a Mayd.111

in 1596 to:

Who finding Me inviolably bent,
And for my Answere only did abide;
Having a Poyson murd'ring by the scent,
If to the Organ of that sense apply'd,
Which for the same, when fittest time He
spy'd,
Into my nostrils forcibly did strayne,
Which in an instant wrought my deadly bane.112

in 1605. The result of these changes is to focus the poem on the character of Matilda and to heighten the moral contrast between her innocence and the King's corruption. In this poem, Drayton again portrayed a corrupt monarch, although he did not draw any political consequences from this corruption.

In "Robert of Normandie", Drayton continued to revise in the same manner as he had the other legends. "Robert" was shortened by more than one third, despite the fact that it was the least decorated of the three legends. Drayton reduced the narratives of Fame and Fortune and, in general,

focused more directly on the Duke. He also put more emphasis on events. This resulted in placing even greater stress on the fickle and evil nature of Fortune. It is in this respect still the most mirror-like and least didactic of the legends.

There were three years between the publication of The Barrons Wars in 1603 and Drayton's next historical poem, the ode, "The Ballad of Agincourt", published in his Poemes Lyrick and Pastorall of 1606. During this time, the old Queen had died and King James of Scotland had succeeded to England's Crown. The political situation had not improved under the new King, despite much early optimism. Drayton himself had contributed to that mood in his "To The Majesty of King James", written in the Spring of 1603 on the occasion of James's accession. Unfortunately for Drayton's hopes of royal favor, he had omitted any mention of the dead Queen. As Tillotson has pointed out, "his silence on the subject, in a poem issued while she was still unburied, must have seemed not merely an outrageous error of taste, but a serious false step for one seeking royal favour".\textsuperscript{113} It is not clear why Drayton committed this omission, but apparently he suffered for it and again found no more hope of patronage

\textsuperscript{113} Works, vol. V, p. 53.
from James's Court than he had from Elizabeth's.

The odes which Drayton produced in *Poemes Lyrick and Pastorall* represent a new genre in English literature. John Soothern had introduced the ode in 1584, but his poems were little more than adaptations of Ronsard's. Drayton gave credit to Soothern in his "To Himself and his Harpe", but as he had in *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, it was Drayton who established this new genre in the language. Also, as in the *Epistles*, he based this new genre on classical precedent. The *Odes of Horace* were his inspiration and, in his preface 'To the Reader', Drayton explained the origin of the ode citing especially those of Pindar, Anacreon and Horace. He also leaned on the French lyricists for form and metrics, particularly Ronsard who was his model for both stanzaic form and rhyme scheme.

Drayton's only ode dealing with historical material is his "Ballad of Agincourt" which celebrates one of England's greatest military victories against the French at Agincourt in 1415. "Agincourt" was based on historical material from Holinshed's *Chronicle* and Drayton chose


to write it in the old fashioned form as a ballad, "for that I labour to meet truely therein with the old English Garbe."\textsuperscript{118} "Agincourt" is a most successful combination of form and idea and one that is characteristic of a poet who was so proud of his country's historical and literary past. The poem is heroic in tone, with a martial rhythm. Hardin saw it as a "Medieval English war ballad"\textsuperscript{119} and perhaps that is as Drayton intended it.

As in his other historical poetry of this period, Drayton was not only concerned with the celebration of the past, but also with the projection of the past into the present. The final four lines of the poem indicate his intention of contrasting this glorious, aggressive historical event with the present day pacifism and status quo attitude of James I:

\begin{quote}
O when shall English Men
With such Acts fill a Pen,
Or England breed againe,
Such a King Harry?\textsuperscript{120}
\end{quote}

Drayton, like many other Englishmen, was disappointed in James's policies of amelioration and his lack of interest

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{118} Works, vol. II, p. 346.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Hardin, p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Works, vol. II, p. 378, ll. 117-120.
\end{itemize}
in colonial expansion.\textsuperscript{121} Drayton, and those like him among the country gentry, still clung to the patriotism of the sixteenth century and the concept of England's great destiny that accompanied it.

In the following year, 1607, Drayton published his fourth historical legend, \textit{The Legend of Great Cromwell}. It came eleven years after \textit{Robert of Normandie} which was entered in 1596. \textit{Cromwell} first appeared alone in a quarto edition and did not appear with Drayton's other three legends until the \textit{Poems} of 1619.\textsuperscript{122} In \textit{Cromwell}, Drayton dealt with material which was relatively modern; Cromwell was still a controversial figure\textsuperscript{123} in 1607, and Drayton's treatment of the story reflects both sides of the controversy.

The legend consists of the narration of Cromwell's story by his own ghost, in the mirror tradition. He tells of his humble birth and follows his rise to power, his service to Cardinal Wolsey and finally to the King. He relates his part in the dissolution of the monasteries and the honors he had received from Henry VIII. Two

\textsuperscript{121} Hardin, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{122} Nearing, p. 47.

\textsuperscript{123} Hardin, p. 55.
additional themes are woven into the narration, that of the turning wheel of fortune as illustrated by the Francis Friscobald story from Foxe’s account and the evils of the Roman Church as illustrated by the vision of Piers the Plowman.\textsuperscript{124} The Friscobald section consists of thirteen stanzas, 11. 521-632, which relate how Cromwell, when he was rich and powerful, aided Francis Friscobald. This Florentine merchant had aided and befriended Cromwell when he was in Italy. Friscobald had subsequently lost his fortune and traveled to England where Cromwell saw him by chance and restored him to prosperity. This tale first appeared in Bandello’s \textit{La Seconda Parte de le Novelle} (1554), but Drayton apparently also used the version in Foxe’s \textit{Acts and Monuments} (1563) and the 1602 play, \textit{Thomas Lord Cromwell}.\textsuperscript{125}

Later in the poem, Drayton includes the substance of the last episode in the "Vision of Do-best" from \textit{Piers Plowman}, Passus XX. \textit{Piers Plowman} is a long poem in Middle English, written in the fourteenth century. The episode which Drayton retells in 11. 785-872 of \textit{Cromwell}, tells the allegorical story of the overthrow of conscience by a friar. Drayton apparently mistakenly thought the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{124} Works, vol. V, p. 168.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid., pp. 169, 171.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
poem to be a Reformation poem, as in the 1581 edition which he most likely read, there was no author or date. Drayton presented this story as an example of the decadent state of Catholicism at that time, thereby attempting to justify Cromwell's role in the dissolution of the monasteries. The narration culminates in the disastrous marriage arranged by Cromwell between Henry VIII and Anne of Cleves. The King's rejection of this marriage determined Cromwell's end. Drayton's basic source for the historical material in Cromwell was "The history concernyng the lyfe, actes, and death of the famous and worthy Counsailour Lord Thomas Cromwell, Earle of Essex", in Foxe's Actes and Monuments.

In Cromwell, Drayton exhibits a much different style from that of his earlier legends. It has none of the amatory element of the earlier poems. Drayton was concerned with two basic purposes in Cromwell: the presentation of historical truth and the portrayal of the downfall of a man of new fortune who rose to power as the result of "an extravagant monarch in a corrupt, ambition-ridden Court". This latter purpose was the essence

127 Ibid., p. 167.
128 Hardin, p. 56.
of the didactic element in the poem. The pursuit of the first purpose was both a strength and a weakness in the poem. Drayton's interpretation of his source and perceptive understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the Reformation caused Cromwell to lack unity by reflecting the antithesis inherent in the situation. He was unable to follow his source and make a hero of Cromwell and, yet, he was also aware of the abuses promulgated by the Roman church. As Hardin has pointed out, Drayton saw "the irony by which a decadent institution, festering with worldliness, pride, deceit, and ambition should be toppled by a man who shared the same qualities".  

His adherence to historical accuracy and the consequential lack of unity in Cromwell's character are in conflict with his efforts as a poet to create an artistically consistent portrait. This unresolved quality gives Cromwell a Jacobean quality. Drayton's attempt to unify the events in Cromwell's history was typically Elizabethan, however. He attributed both the fall of the Church and Cromwell to mutability and the vicissitudes of fortune.

129 Hardin, p. 57.

This mirror element is an underlying theme in the poem.\textsuperscript{131}

In \textit{Cromwell}, as in his other mature historical works, Drayton has developed his didactic message. This didactic element centers around the exposure of the present corruption of government through the lessons of the past. In \textit{Cromwell}, Drayton portrays the evil which can result because of a corrupt ruler. Drayton was no longer in awe of monarchs. He saw in his own time what he felt was the decadence of his nation under the present ruler. He portrayed Cromwell as a Machiavelli who gloried in the power and fame of the English Court. It was this power, granted unmeritedly by a corrupt ruler, which Drayton deplored both in Cromwell's time and in his own.

For the next five years after the publication of \textit{Cromwell}, nothing new appeared from Drayton's pen until Part I of \textit{Poly-Olbion} in 1612. This poem will not be considered in the present paper, but it was Drayton's most cherished work. Although Drayton saw two more editions of his 1605 \textit{Poems} published, it was mainly the \textit{Poly-Olbion} which occupied his efforts during this five-year period. He was deeply disappointed in the less than enthusiastic reception of this poem,\textsuperscript{132} but doggedly

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Newdigate, p. 158.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
continued his work on it and completed Part II in 1622. He meant Poly-Olbion to be the "great achievement of his career".133

Despite a lack of patronage from James's Court, Drayton was no longer without support for his poetry. By the time of the 1602 publication of England's Heroicall Epistles, Drayton had found a friend and patron in Sir Walter Aston, a country Squire of Tixall Estate in Staffordshire.134 The epistles of Edward the Black Prince and Alice Countess of Salisbury had previously been without a dedication, but at this time Drayton added the following one:

To my worthy and honoured friend, Maister Walter Aston. Sir, though without suspicion of flatterie I might in more ample and freer tearmes, intymate my affection unto you, yet having so sensible a tast of your generous and noble disposition, which without this habit of ceremony can estimate my love: I will rather affect brevitie...135

In 1603, Drayton dedicated his Barrons Wars to Aston again in glowing terms of friendship. On the occasion of the coronation of King James, Aston was made a Knight of the Bath. He chose Drayton as one of his esquires for this

133 Loc. cit.

134 Newdigate, p. 148.

ceremony, confirming the friendship Drayton had described. From this time on, Drayton used the title of Michael Drayton, Esquire. All of Drayton's poems from 1602 to 1619, with the exception of *Poly-Olbion* Part I (1613), were dedicated to Aston. In 1619, Sir Walter was sent as Ambassador to Spain by King James and Drayton's close association with him seems to have ended at this time. While still at Court, however, Sir Walter had been a constant companion of Henry, Prince of Wales, the King's eldest son. It may have been through Aston's intercession that Drayton and his work had come to the attention of Prince Henry, although Drayton's patriotism and chivalrous outlook would have made him the kind of poet likely to appeal to this popular, militaristic young prince. Drayton received an annual pension from Prince Henry, as did several other poets in his circle, William Browne, George Wither, John Davies, and Christopher Brooke.

136 Newdigate, p. 150.
138 Hardin, p. 91.
139 Newdigate, p. 160.
In 1612 Drayton dedicated the first part of his Poly-Olbion to the prince in gratitude for his patronage. Since neither Drayton nor his friends received support from James's Court, it has been suggested by Hardin that Henry was establishing a "rival" court supporting a considerably different set of poets from those (such as Donne, Carew and Jonson) who found patronage from the King's Court.¹⁴¹

Before 1613 Drayton's poetry reflected a critical but essentially hopeful outlook. He was as openly critical of the King as he dared to be. In the "Ode to John Savage", for instance, he described the ideal man as one:

Whome the base tyrants will  
Soe much could never awe  
As him for good or ill  
From honesty to drawe.¹⁴²

Nevertheless, his overall philosophy seems to have been that "the body politic may be in a bad way, but it can mend itself if it will only return to the path of nature, which is the path of virtue".¹⁴³ By 1613, however, this optimism had faded to bitter melancholy. He had several good reasons for pessimism; in the first place, young Prince Henry died on November 12, 1612, extinguishing

¹⁴¹ Hardin, pp. 163-164, note 18.
¹⁴³ Hardin, p. 94.
the hopes of Drayton and others for a better ruler in England's future. Secondly, the scandal of the political murder of Sir Thomas Overbury by Lady Howard and the Duke of Somerset, the King's former favorite, was uncovered in 1613.\(^{144}\) This further confirmed the depth of corruption in the Court that Drayton had already suspected. A final blow to Drayton's hopes was the poor sales and cold reception which his *Poly-Olbion* received. This, perhaps, more than anything, struck the death blow to Drayton's hope for the future. "He lost confidence in the capacity of his age to imitate the past."\(^{145}\) The preface to *Poly-Olbion* Part II reveals his deep disappointment. "Instead of the comfort which my noble friends... proposed as my due, I have met with barbarous Ignorance, and base Detraction."\(^{146}\)

The 1619 Folio of *Poems* was the definitive text of all Drayton's major poems produced before 1608, with the exception of his religious poems. It contains no new major poems, but several shorter poems were added. Ten new sonnets were added to "Idea" which Tillotson has


\(^{145}\) Hardin, p. 65.

called "detached, anti-sentimental... They are the sonnets of a satirist." One of these new sonnets begins with an image which reflects Drayton's pessimistic view of contemporary life.

How many paltry, foolish, painted things, That now in Coaches trouble ev'ry Street,  

From the 1619 Folio, he also omitted for the first time the 1606 sonnet in praise of King James. This omission was likely a deliberate slight, reflecting Drayton's lack of esteem for the King.

The historical poetry in the 1619 edition received relatively little revision. The text of the legends followed that of 1605, stanza by stanza, but Drayton's meticulous revision can be seen in the many small changes in virtually every line. For instance, in "Pierce Gaveston" (Drayton had again changed the spelling from "Piers" to "Pierce"), lines 43 and 44 were changed from:

And Muse, to thee I sadly then appeale, Since thou my life wilt needsly have me show,

in 1605 to:

And Muse, to thee I sadly then appeale, Since thou my life wilt needsly have me show,

\[
147 \text{ Works, vol. V, p. 139.}  
\]

\[
148 \text{ Works, vol. II, p. 313.}  
\]

\[
149 \text{ Works, vol. V, p. 163, ll. 43-44.}  
\]
Then Muse, lo, I obsequiously appeale
To thee, (my life since I intend to show).\(^{150}\)

in 1619. Many of these small changes tend to place even more moral censure upon Gaveston. At the same time, Drayton removed blame from the barons in several instances. Lines 531-533 were changed from:

And for revenge they boldly them ingage
When lastly for their libertie they stood:
And in this quarrell open Armes they take,\(^{151}\)

in 1605 to:

Themselves by Oath against Me they engage,
Who thus had all Authoritie with-stood,
And in the Quarrell up their Armes doe take,\(^{152}\)

in 1619. Drayton also added marginal glosses to "Pierce Gaveston" as he did to the other 1619 legends.

"Robert of Normandie" shows mainly stylistic changes in 1619. But one significant difference in the 1619 version was the addition of lines 342-343:

The power of Kings I utterly defy,
Nor am I aw'd by all their Tyrannie.\(^{153}\)

These lines indicate Drayton's disillusionment with the

\(^{150}\) Works, vol. II, p. 432, ll. 43-44.


\(^{153}\) Ibid., p. 392, ll. 342-343.
concept of monarchy. Drayton also added more historical material to the 1619 poem. The cumulative effect of the many minor alterations was to increase the sense of the folly and wickedness of Fortune.  

The "Epistles" received less revision than any of the other historical poems of 1619. Drayton had written them in his later style and was apparently satisfied with the changes made in 1605.

"The Barons Warres", like "Pierce Gaveston" and "Robert of Normandie" received a change in spelling from "The Barrons Wars". Most of the other revision of the poem is similarly minute. Tillotson has called the revision "almost absurdly meticulous". For instance, lines 82-83 were changed from:

And as a dumbe show in a swoune began,  
Where passion doth such sundry habits frame,  

in 1605, to:

Neere in a Swound, he his first Scene began,  
Where in his Passions did such Postures frame,

---

155 Ibid., p. 65.
156 Ibid., p. 86, ll. 82-83

70
In general, the revision followed the direction of the 1603 rewriting of the poem from *Mortimeriad*. Drayton further strengthened the emphasis on the evils of factionalism by removing all blame from Edward and all justification from the barons. The character of Isabel is left no sympathy in 1619. In the end she curses her son:

But for this Mischiefe to thy Mother done,
Take thou my Curse, so that it may out-live thee,
That as thy Deed doth dayly me torment,
So may my Curse thee, by my Testament.158

The edition of 1619 represents a culmination of Drayton's work up until that time. It is as if in this edition he wished to establish a poetic monument to the literature and nation he loved. He made it as perfect as possible, perhaps hoping it would remain untarnished by the ignoble age in which he lived.

The latter years of Drayton's life were both dynamic and productive. Despite the fact that he published nothing new except *Poly-Olbion* Part II between the 1619 *Poems* until 1627, Drayton was busy writing. Several of the works he composed during these years were repressed until after James's death in 1625. Since about 1603, Drayton had been part of a literary circle of poets

in London. These men held views of both literature and contemporary politics which were similar to Drayton's. They included George Chapman, Sir John and Francis Beaumont, Henry Reynolds, William Browne, and George Wither.  

Drayton and his friends were allied in outlook with the Country element of English politics. During the reign of James I, a rift developed in English society. Three groups emerged: the Country, the City, and the Court. The latter two groups were aligned against the Country. Perez Zagorin has written that at that time, the 1620's, the term "Country", "suggested persons of public spirit, unmoved by private interest, untainted by Court influence and corruption, representing the highest good of their local communities and the nation in whose interest they, and they only, acted". The old

159 Newdigate, p. 191.

160 Ibid.

161 Hardin, p. 28.


163 Zagorin, pp. 306-311.
Elizabethan patriotism lingered on in the philosophy of the Country supporters and their politics had a somewhat reactionary character. They deplored the new City and Court wits and the corruption they felt was represented by the new fashions in hair and clothes.\textsuperscript{164} James was not particularly tolerant of the Country element and reacted to its criticism of his affairs with repressive measures. He put stringent restrictions on printing in the early 1620's, which may explain why Drayton had to wait to publish several of the poems which finally appeared in the 1627 volume. Drayton's friend, George Wither, who had been imprisoned in 1613 for his Abuses Stript and Whipt, was charged with printing Wither's Motto in 1621 after being refused a license for its publication.\textsuperscript{165} Drayton's own uncle, Hugh Drayton, was arrested and flogged because he had "reviled the King in his drink"\textsuperscript{166} and, in 1624, Drayton's close friend, John Reynolds, was jailed for criticizing in print the King's lack of aid to fellow Protestants on the Continent.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{164} Hardin, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{165} Newdigate, p. 195.

\textsuperscript{166} Hardin, p. 89.

\textsuperscript{167} Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1619-1623, quoted by Hardin, p. 87.
Beyond the mood of general repression which is known to have existed at this time, Drayton seems to have been subjected to some personal silencing. This is suggested in his *Elegies* written around 1620 and published in the 1627 volume. In particular, the elegy "To Master George Sandys" indicates a direct repression on Drayton alone.

I feare, as I doe Stabbing; this word, State,/I dare not speake of the Palatinate,/Although some men make it their hourly theame,/And talke what's done in Austria, and in Beame,/I may not so; what Spinola intends,/Nor with his Dutch, which way Prince Maurice bends;/To other men, although these things be free,/Yet (George) they must be misteries to mee.\(^{168}\)

In addition, Drayton goes on to link his present enforced silence to his mistake of 1603 in omitting to pay his respects to the Queen in his poem "To the Majesty".

It was my hap before all other men
To suffer shipwrack by my forward pen:
When King James entred; at which joyfull time
I taught his title to this Ile in rime:\(^{169}\)

In any event, with the exception of the *Poly-Olbion* and the *Poems* of 1619, Drayton published no new material until 1627, two years after King James's death.

In 1627 Drayton published a volume of poetry entitled *The Battaile of Agincourt*. Six new poems were

\(^{168}\) *Works*, vol. III, p. 206, 11. 9-16.

contained in this volume besides the title poem: "The Miseries of Queen Margarite", "Nimphidia", "The Quest of Cynthia", "The Shepheards Sirena", "The Moone-Calf", and "Elegies". Of these seven poems, it is believed that at least two of them were originally composed during the years of repression before James's death. "Shepheards Sirena" and "The Moone-Calf" reflect the pessimism of Drayton's outlook during the early 1620's and were probably held back until Drayton felt free to bring them out in 1627. The two historical poems, "The Miseries of Queen Margarite" and "The Battaile of Agincourt" lack the bitterness of the poetry written earlier, but are also not characteristic of his last works. They could, therefore, be considered transitional poems. "Nimphidia" and "The Quest of Cynthia" resemble such of Drayton's last works as "The Muses Elizium", and so were probably written just before 1627.

"The Moone-Calf" was written as a satire on contemporary morals and is indicative of just how abhorrent the contemporary world was to Drayton. The first part seems to have been written at an earlier date than the rest and is very bitter and scathing. The satire of "The Moone-Calf" is directed mainly at the corrupt social behavior of the Court and City. Drayton seems to have been especially offended by the fashionable confusion of
masculine and feminine dress and the moral behavior this suggested.

Another foole, to fit him for the weather,
    Had arm'd his heeles with Cork, his head
    with feather;
    And in more strange and sundry colours clad,
    Than in the Raine-bowe ever can be had:170

Again in lines 740-744 he despairs over this confusion.

    It went beyond the wit of man to thinke,
    The sundry frenzies that he there might see,
    One man would to another married be:
    And for a Curate taking the Towne Bull,
    Would have him knit the knot:...171

The impetus for Drayton's satire originated at Court. James's relationship with his two favorites, Somerset and, by the 1620's, Buckingham, was common gossip.172 Drayton and others of the Country faction deplored the political power granted by the King to these unworthy royal minions.173

The effect of this decadent society on Drayton's concept of England's great destiny was profound. He felt that the golden promise of greatness for England which


171 Ibid., 740-744.


173 Hardin, p. 86.
had appeared so certain in the latter part of the six-
teenth century had been perverted and obstructed by King
James and his Court. The King's pacifism, which Drayton
had underlined in "The Ballad of Agincourt", and anti-
expansion policies were the complete antitheses of the
old patriotic dream of England's glory. The corrupt,
decadent Court, peopled with unworthy statesmen, must
have been a constant reminder of the failure of his
nation to fulfill the earlier promise of greatness. In
the historical poems of the 1627 volume, therefore,
Drayton's didactic purpose is quite different from that
of the historical poems of his middle years. His bitter-
ness and despair are reflected in the dryness and lack
of color of "The Miseries of Queen Margarite", an his-
torical epic about the Wars of the Roses (1455-1471).
It begins with the arrangement of the French marriage by
the powerful Earl of Suffolk against the will of Humphrey,
Duke of Gloucester, the Protector for young King Henry VI.
Suffolk is portrayed as being in love with the Princess
Margarite and seeking to gain more power at Court through
his alliance with her.

His rising Fortunes, should the greatest
prove,/If to his Queene, he could advance
his love.174

The two great factions of the Wars then align themselves, the Lancastrians surrounding the weak Henry VI: the Queen, Suffolk, Somerset, and Buckingham, and the Yorkist Lords who oppose the power of the Lancastrians in the King's council. Henry VI himself is incapable of governing. The bulk of the poem narrates the several battles which take place as the fortunes of both parties alternately rise and fall until finally the defeat at Tewkesbury ends with the deaths of Margarite's son and husband. Queen Margarite ultimately returns to Anjou, leaving Edward IV on the throne of England.

Newdigate has suggested the year 1625 as the composition date of the poem. It might have been written earlier, however, as Hardin has suggested that the story of Queen Margarite may have been a prototype for the evils engendered by a foreign, Catholic Queen. The poem would thus have reflected the opposition to the proposed marriage of Charles to the Spanish Infanta earlier in the 1620's, as well as his actual marriage to Henrietta Maria of France which was negotiated in 1624. Whatever the date of the poem, its didactic purpose is concerned with opposition to a foreign Queen. Drayton emphasized the preference of the martyred Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, for a Norman marriage for King Henry, as Normandy was an English possession at the time.
For Humfrey Duke of Gloster, stil'd the good, / Englands Protector sought a match to make, / With a faire Princesse, of as Royall blood, / The Daughter of the Earle of Arminake, / And his Crown'd Nephew...

The arrival of Princess Margarite is accompanied by evil portents:

For she was scarsely safely put a Shore, 
But that the skies (O wondrous to behold) 
Orespread with lightning, hideously doe rore, 
The furious winds with one another scold, 
Never such Tempests had bene seene before, 
With suddaine floods whole Villages were drownd, 
Steeples with earthquakes tumbled to the ground.

"Margarite", like the "Barons Warres", expresses Drayton's hatred of unworthy Courtiers who rise to power unmeritedly. This concept, that weak monarchs who do not rule themselves open the door to rival factions, power struggles, and even civil war, was of immediate relevance to the weak, vacillating James I, who was dominated by his favorite, "Steenie", George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham.

Drayton, no doubt, had Buckingham in mind when he wrote:

Hard was the thing that he could not persuade, 
In the King's favor he was so instated 
Without his Suffolk who could not subsist, 
So that he ruled all things as he list.

176 Ibid., p. 77, ll. 178-184.
177 Alan Smith, The Rule of James, p. 207.
Composed in the method of Cromwell, "Margarite" creates neither a portrait nor an understanding of Margarite's character, despite the fact that it is centered around her actions. This results from Drayton's interest in events rather than in characterization; the emphasis of the poem is on the evil consequences of a weak monarch dominated by a foreign queen and corrupt statesmen. The essential difference between the didacticism of "Margarite" and Drayton's earlier historical poetry, such as The Barons Warres or Englands Heroicall Epistles, is the omission of any hope of future glory for England. Like most of Drayton's earlier works, this later poem focuses on a single character, but Margarite is a symbol of disunity, a contributing cause of civil war rather than a contributor to England's future glory. There is no hero in "Margarite" and there is no hope expressed for the future. In "Margarite", Drayton was warning of disaster ahead in his own time; he had given up the attempt to guide England toward a fulfillment of the Tudor dream of greatness. The dedication to the 1627 volume expressed his low opinion of the present days contrasted with the glorious period of the past.

Who in these declining times, have yet in/your brave bosomes the sparkes of that
These lines provide an appropriate introduction to the title poem of the volume, "The Battaile of Agincourt". This poem was written in celebration of one of England's most glorious past victories in a foreign war. Nearing has called "The Battaile of Agincourt", "the finest historical work Drayton produced". It deals with the same material as the 1619 "Ballad of Agincourt", but it is a much longer and more developed composition. "The Battaile of Agincourt" is a historical epic in ottava rima, similar in structure to The Barons Warres. The patriotic ardor and vivid detail of the poem reveal the fervent nationalism of the Englishman, Drayton. The pride of foreign conquest is contrasted with the dry, bitter ugliness which occurs when this glorious military machine is turned upon itself in civil war as portrayed in "Margarite". These two poems stand as testaments to the glory of foreign war and the horror of civil war. In "The Battaile of Agincourt", the battle is described in the following manner:


180 Nearing, p. 179.
Upon the French what Englishman not falls,
(By the strong Bowmen beaten from their
Steeds)/With Battle-axes, Halberts, Bills,
and Maules,/Where, in the slaughter every
one exceedes,/Where every man, his fellow
forward calls,/And shows him where some
great-borne Frenchman bleeds,/Whilst Scalps
about like broken pot sherds fly,/And kill,
kill, kill, the conquering English cry.

Whereas in "Margarite" the battle at Blore-heath is des-
cribed in a much less glorious fashion:

The Sonne (as some report) the Father slue,
In opposition as they stoutly stood,
The nephew see the Uncle to pursue,
Bathing his sword in his owne naturall blood:
The Brother in his Brothers gore imbrue
His guilty hands, and at this deadly food:
Kinsman kills Kinsman, which together fall,
As hellish fury had possesst them all.

In "The Battaile of Agincourt", Drayton carefully
unified his material and honed it down to his central
purpose: the description of the battle at Agincourt.
This battle took place in 1415 when Henry V led his army
against the French to regain territory in France which
the English claimed. The first part of the poem deals
with the preparations in England for battle and the
events in France leading up to the great battle. Nearly
half of the poem is devoted to a description of the battle
itself.

182 Ibid., p. 92, ll. 753-760.
Drayton combined several main sources in the poem. Jenkins has suggested the chronicles of Speed as one of them and either Holinshed or Halle as another. Drayton remained historically factual in the poem. His fidelity to historical accuracy was a result of his intent to write heroic poetry; it caused him to include material which struck an elegiac note by now familiar in his later poetry. Even this noble battle is tainted by the irony of its instigation at the hands of the corrupt clergy.

He found a warre with France, must be the way/To dash this Bill, else threatening their decay

Drayton also described the death of innocents in the battle at Harfleur:

While the sad weeping Mother sits her downe,/To give her little new-born Babe the Pap:/A lucklesse quarry leveld at the Towne,/Kills the sweet Baby sleeping in her lap,/That with the fright shee falls into a swoone,/From which awak'ed, and mad with the mishap;/As up a Rampire shreeking she doth clim,/Comes a great Shot, and strikes her lim from lim.

and the poignancy of the massacre of the French prisoners.

183 Raymond Jenkins, "The Sources of Draytons 'Battle of Agincourt'", PMLA, xli, pp. 280-293.


185 Ibid., p. 29, ll. 793-800.
This was ordered by Henry at the close of the battle because he had not enough men both to guard the prisoners and to meet the final attack by the French.

That tender heart whose chance it was to have, / Some one, that day who did much valour showe, / Who might perhaps have had him for his Slave:/ But equall Lots had Fate pleas'd to bestowe:/ He who his prisoner willingly would save, / Lastly constrain'd to give the deadly blowe/ That sends him downe to everlasting sleepe:/ Turning his face, full bitterly doth weepe.186

Drayton developed the epic tone of "The Battaile of Agincourt" much more extensively than he had in any of his other epic poems. Ben Jonson, in his prefatory poem commented upon similarities with the Iliad:

There, thou art Homer! Pray thee, use the stile/Thou hast deserv'd:/And let me reade the while/Thy Catalogue of Ships, exceeding his,/Thy list of aydes, and force, for so it is:187

Drayton included such epic devices as the catalogue of ships, and omens, such as the storms which arose upon the arrival of Margarite. The definite singleness of action by which he confines the poem to the events concerning only the battle at Agincourt and his emphasis on Henry V as the hero are also characteristics of epic poetry.

Henry's oration before the battle and the many backward references to previous great battles, such as Crécy and Poitiers, are also derived from epic traditions. There are many epic similies such as that describing the French charge.

At the full moon look how th' unwieldy tide,/Shored by some tempest that from sea doth rise/At the full height, against the ragged side/of some rough cliff (of a gigantic size)/Foaming with rage impetuously doth ride;/The angry French (in no less furious wise)/Of men at arms upon their ready horse,/Assail the English to disperse their force. 188

The vision of the angel is an epic invention by Drayton. Raymond Jenkins has suggested that he was influenced by similar incidents in Orlando Furioso xiv and Jerusalem Delivered, I, ix. 189

When as that Angell to whom God assign'd,/The guiding of the English, gliding downe/The silent Campe doth with fresh courage crowne./His glittering wings he gloriously displayes,/Over the Hoste as every way it lyes,/With golden Dreames their travell, and repaies,/This Herault from the Rector of the skies,/In Vision warns them not to use delayes,/But to the Battell cheerfully to rise,/And be victorious, for that day at hand,/He would amongst them for the English stand. 190

189 Jenkins, pp. 280-293.
The relationship of "The Battaile of Agincourt" to the general didactic theme in Drayton's poetry is not immediately obvious. There is little overt didacticism in it despite its espousal of English nationalism. The contemporary political situation suggests certain possible didactic purposes. Newdigate has proposed that the poem "may have been inspired by the nation's enthusiasm for the cause [the relief of the Huguenots of La Rochelle in 1627] and that the poet wished to rekindle and rally to its support the chivalry of a decadent age".\textsuperscript{191} Hardin, however, has pointed out that the La Rochelle expedition was not likely to have stirred much enthusiasm as it followed closely the 1625 failure of the British against Spain at Cadiz. Secondly, it was commanded by Buckingham, who by then had been impeached. Finally, the news of Buckingham's expedition was not received by the public until late in the Winter of 1626-1627, which fact would have allowed only weeks for Drayton to compose the poem.\textsuperscript{192} It is consistent with Drayton's anti-court bias and his affiliation with the Country faction to assume that he opposed Buckingham and had little confidence in his ability to help La Rochelle.

\textsuperscript{192} Hardin, p. 71.
The very lack of overt didacticism in the poem may be most significant. During his final years from 1627-1631, Drayton increasingly retreated from the world. This turning away can be seen in the Song 13 of Poly-Olbion.

...and with a constant mind/Man's beastliness so loathes, that flying humane kind,/The black and darksome nights, the bright and gladsome days/Indifferent are to him, his hope on God that stales. 193

This theme re-echoes in "The Quest of Cynthia" in the 1627 volume. The past and its glories may have been another world into which Drayton could escape from the disappointments of the present. If this is the case, "The Battaile of Agincourt" probably has no didactic purpose, for Drayton had given up the hope of changing his world. He had lost faith in the capacity of his country, under the present ruling society, to achieve the promise of the past. In "The Battaile of Agincourt" he may have been merely holding up the disparity between England's former glory and her present failure as demonstrated by the loss at Cadiz.

From the beginning of his career, Drayton was concerned with poetizing his nation's history. His earliest historical poems, such as Peirs Gaveston and Matilda,

were written in response to the Elizabethan patriotic impulse. They also reflect Drayton's own deep seated love for his country. The historical genre gave Drayton the opportunity to express this patriotism and also to expound his concept of a God's plan for the future greatness for the English nation. In his early legends, Drayton had not yet developed this theme of England's destiny; it developed during his middle years in response to his disappointment in the national political situation during the latter years of the sixteenth century. As a city dweller and part of the politically aware London literary circle, he became increasingly conscious that the directions in which contemporary society was moving were in conflict with what he saw as the glorious national destiny of England, foreordained by Providence and predicted by the events of England's past. In *Englands Heroicall Epistles* he presented historical situations selected to illustrate the divinely ordained progress of history toward England's greatness.

During the early first decade of the new century, Drayton's poetry was outspoken in its criticism of corruption in the Court and government. The danger of factionalism and civil war caused by a weak monarch, surrounded by a corrupt and powerful Court, became the primary didactic theme of his poetry in these years.
Drayton gradually came to realize that the new King epitomized the most dangerous characteristics he had been warning against. His hopes for altering the course of his nation back toward what he envisioned as God's destiny for England underlay the extensive revision of his early poetry that he carried out in the first years of the seventeenth century. The stylistic purpose of the revision was to make his first poetic writing conform to the more mature style of his middle period, but he also attempted to strengthen the moral tone of the poems. During the Jacobean years he composed what he hoped would be his master work, the *Poly-Olbion*. He intended this topographical poem "to draw man back to the past, clearing away the mists of time...and showing him the greatness that has been his".\(^{194}\) Up until the publication of this poem and its subsequent rejection, Drayton's outlook was essentially hopeful that England would rediscover her destiny and continue to carry out the great plan he had envisioned, perhaps under the future reign of Prince Henry. After *Poly-Olbion*'s cold reception and the death of young Henry, Drayton's outlook became increasingly bleak. He published little in the repressive last years of James's reign, with the

\(^{194}\) Hardin, p. 62.
exception of the revised *Poems* of 1619 and Part II of *Poly-Olbion*, which he doggedly completed in 1622. In his last historical poems, the didactic nature of his poetry changed. He appears to have given up his dream of England's destiny and, shunning from the "iron age" in which he lived, turned to the pure celebration of the world of the past and the world of fantasy. His finest historical poem, *The Battaile of Agincourt*, reflects this retreat.

Throughout his career, Drayton was continually motivated by his love for England. His poetry reflects his consistent devotion to England and English poetry. His adherence to these values for over half a century of composition confirms his position as a poet of a fixed ideal in a world of transitory poetry, politics, and morality in which he "sought to enlighten an erring society in the ways of nature and the past".\(^{195}\)

\(^{195}\) Hardin; p. 136.
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Vita

Linda Anne Domina Salathé, the daughter of Robert A. and Anne M. Domina, was born on September 27, 1941, in Providence, Rhode Island. She attended public schools in Seekonk, Massachusetts, and was graduated in June of 1959 from Attleboro High School, Attleboro, Massachusetts. In September of 1959, she entered Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts. She received the Louise Barr MacKenzie Award for creative writing in 1962. Mrs. Salathé was awarded the A.B. degree by Wheaton College in June of 1963.