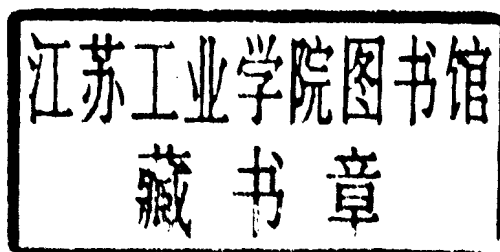# POETRY

CRITICISM

Poetry
Criticism

*Excerpts from Criticism of the Works
of the Most Significant and Widely
Studied Poets of World Literature*

Volume 98

Michelle Lee
Project Editor

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Linkin, Harriet Kramer. "The Language of Speakers in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience.*" *Romanticism Past and Present* 10, no. 2 (summer 1986): 5-24. Reprinted in *Poetry Criticism.* Vol. 63, edited by Michelle Lee, 79-88. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005.

Glen, Heather. "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience.*" In *Interpreting Blake,* edited by Michael Phillips, 32-69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. Reprinted in *Poetry Criticism.* Vol. 63, edited by Michelle Lee, 34-51. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005.

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Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments ix

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board xi

Michael Drayton
1563-1631

English poet and playwright.

INTRODUCTION

An accomplished Elizabethan poet, Drayton is known for his innovations and achievements in a variety of genres, including the sonnet, ode, pastoral, epistle, elegy, and epic. His writing career of almost forty years spanned the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I, and his work reflected not only changing literary tastes over the years, but also the social and political changes that accompanied them.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Few details of Drayton's life are known. He was born in early 1563 in Hartshill, Warwickshire. Although modern critics have occasionally attempted to fashion a genteel background for him based on some of his writings, in fact, Drayton's beginnings were quite humble. At one time, scholars believed that as a youth Drayton had served as a page to Sir Henry Goodyer based on a reference to such service in "Of Poets and Poesie" (1627); however, that relationship has since been called into question. It is now believed that Drayton was employed by Sir Henry's younger brother Thomas as a servant, not as a page. Sometime in the late 1580s or early 1590s, Drayton made his way to London intending to establish himself as a poet. He published his first book of poetry in 1591, and continued writing and publishing up until 1630. Drayton died in London on December 2, 1631, and is buried in Westminster Abbey.

MAJOR WORKS

Drayton's first published work, *The Harmonie of the Church,* appeared in 1591; it consists of spiritual verses and includes a version of the *Song of Solomon.* It was followed in 1593 by *Idea. The Shepheards Garland,* which consists of nine pastoral eclogues clearly imitative of Edmund Spenser's 1579 poem, *Shepheardes Calender,* but was considered inferior by most critics. In 1593 and 1594 respectively, Drayton published the historical poems *Peirs Gaveston, Earle of Cornwall* and *Matilda,* drawing on Holinshed's *Chronicles* for source material. Two more of Drayton's "Idea" poems were

published next: the sonnet collection, *Ideas Mirrour* (1594), and the erotic narratives, *Endimion and Phoebe. Ideas Latmus* (1595).

One of Drayton's most successful works, *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597), consists of twenty-four pairs of fictional letters exchanged by a variety of famous lovers throughout English history, such as Owen Tudor and Queen Katherine, and the Earl of Surrey and Lady Geraldine. Drayton revised and enlarged the volume in 1598, 1599, and 1600. In 1606, he produced *Poems Lyrick and Pastorall,* a book of odes in imitation of Horace; the collection included "To the Virginian Voyage," and "The Ballad of Agincourt," both celebrating British Imperialism. Drayton's most ambitious project, *Poly-Olbion* (1612), was intended to chart the geography and topography of all of Britian. It consists of some 15,000 alexandrines, or iambic hexameter couplets, and combines elements of history, folklore, and geography. *The Second Part; or, A Continuance of Poly-Olbion* was published in 1622. Five years later, Drayton produced an epic, *The Battaile of Agincourt,* and a collection of fairy poems, *Nimphidia,* his most popular work and one which owed a great deal to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Drayton's final publication was *The Muses Elizium,* which appeared in 1630 and represented, according to some scholars, an escapist return to the pastoral form.

In addition to his poetry, Drayton also collaborated with various contemporaries—among them Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle, Robert Wilson, and Anthony Munday—on several plays, most produced between 1598 and 1602. Of the twenty-one plays associated with Drayton, only one is extant: *Life of Sir John Old-Castle.* The rest were never printed.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Until recently, Drayton was classified as a Spenserian and often dismissed as one "who followed [his] master down the worn blind paths of pastoral and allegory to an inevitable dead end," as Paula Johnson puts it. She acknowledges that Drayton's early pastorals are poor imitations of Spencer's poetry, but believes that his later works—the *Heroicall Epistles, Poly-Olbion, The Muses Elizium,* among others—are "more mature and more interesting." Much recent scholarship concentrates on these later works. Stella P. Revard has studied the

poetical design of *Poly-Olbion,* which she reports is "usually approached as a curiosity" and evaluated only "in terms of its use of antiquarian materials." Barbara C. Ewell, too, maintains that the work needs to be studied "as poetry: not a compendium of British history and geography, but a viable artistic whole." Parker Duchemin questions Drayton's choice of meter for such a lengthy poem: "Most people understandably balk at the notion of an encounter with 15,000 alexandrines." According to Duchemin, Drayton by this point "had made distinguished contributions to the development of the heroic couplet; he had experimented with blank verse in the theater, and with every conceivable measure and stanza pattern elsewhere." But apparently, according to the critic, the poet didn't foresee that readers—both in his own time and yet today—would find such huge numbers of iambic hexameter couplets a barrier to their appreciation of the work. Raphael Lyne contends, however, that "many readers recognize the importance of *Poly-Olbion* as the greatest work of English chorography, as a poetic flowering of the antiquarian impulse, and as an articulation of the drive towards unity in Britain in the early years of the reign of James I."

Katherine D. Carter explores Drayton's use of the heroic epistle genre and his incorporation of two rhetorical devices, the encomium and the blazon, to praise the historical subjects he treats in *Englands Heroicall Epistles.* According to Carter, Drayton "uses both the forms skillfully, even at times brilliantly, to construct heroic epistles that show at once the power of history and of passion, and the personalities caught up in these forces." Ewell also praises the volume, noting that "the epistolary form of *Englands Heroicall Epistles,* and the discipline associated with its multiple voices, wrought a revolution in Drayton's approach to poetry," which had previously produced verse that was overly didactic and artificially ornamental.

The Muses Elizium, Drayton's last published work, represented "the poet's literary exit" according to Thomas Cogswell, who has explored the anti-establishment works Drayton published earlier in his career, particularly during the reign of James I. By 1630, when he published *The Muses Elizium,* the poet had apparently made peace with the court, then headed by Charles I, and he gave up his diatribes against what he perceived as the previous monarch's abandonment of the sound policies of Elizabeth's reign.

Drayton was preoccupied throughout his career with examining the nature of poetry and the proper societal role of the poet. Geoffrey G. Hiller reports that unlike other Elizabethans, Drayton believed that the ancient bards and Druids were the perfect models for all future poets. "Not only was he the first poet to treat them in any way imaginatively, investing them with personal significance as ideals, but it was also to be more than a

hundred years . . . before other poets were to realize as fully as Drayton did their potential as poet-archetypes." John E. Curran, Jr. also focuses on Drayton's treatment of bards and Druids, contending that for the poet they "represented the preservation of ancient British culture from prehistoric times through to his own age" but at the same time they also "represented the poet's anguished sense that this culture had not been preserved at all."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Poetry

The Harmonie of the Church. Containing the Spirituall Songes and Holy Hymnes, of Godly Men, Patriarkes and Prophetes: All, Sweetly Sounding, to the Praise and Glory of the Highest 1591

Idea. The Shepheards Garland, Fashioned in Nine Eglogs. Rowlands Sacrifice to the Nine Muses 1593

Peirs Gaveston, Earle of Cornwall. His Life, Death, and Fortune 1593

Ideas Mirrour. Amours in Quatorzains 1594; also published as *Idea* [revised and enlarged editions] 1599, 1600, 1602, 1605, 1619

Matilda 1594

Endimion and Phoebe. Ideas Latmus 1595; *The Man in the Moone* [revised edition] 1606

Mortimeriados. The Lamentable Civell Warres of Edward the Second and the Barrons 1596; also published as *The Barrons Wars in the Raigne of Edward the Second* [revised edition] 1602

Englands Heroicall Epistles 1597; revised and enlarged editions, 1598, 1599, 1600

To the Majestie of King James 1603

The Owle 1604

Poems 1605

Odes 1606

Poems Lyrick and Pastorall 1606

Poly-Olbion; or, a Chorographicall Description of Tracts, Rivers, Mountaines, Forrests, and Other Parts of This Renowned Isle of Great Britaine, with Intermixture of the Most Remarkable Stories, Antiquities, Wonders, Rarityes, Pleasures, and Commodities of the Same: Digested in a Poem 1612

Poems 1619

The Second Part; or, A Continuance of Poly-Olbion from the Eighteenth Song. Containing All the Tracts, Rivers, Mountaines, and Forrests: Intermixed with the Most Remarkable Stories, Antiquities, Wonders, Rarities, Pleasures, and Commodities of the East, and Northerne Parts of this Isle, Lying betwixt the Two Famous Rivers of Thames, and Tweed 1622

The Battaile of Agincourt 1627

Elegies upon Sundry Occasions 1627

The Moone-Calfe 1627
Nimphidia, the Court of Fayrie 1627
The Shepheards Sirena 1627
*The Muses Elizium, Lately Discovered, by a New Way
  over Parnassus. The Passages Therein, Being the
  Subject of Ten Sundry Nymphalls* 1630
Poems of Michael Drayton. 2 vols. 1953

Other Major Works

*The First Part of the True and Honorable Historie, of
  the Life of Sir John Old-Castle, the Good Lord Cob-
  ham* [with Richard Hathway, Anthony Munday, and
  Robert Wilson] (play) 1599

CRITICISM

Katherine D. Carter (essay date August 1975)

SOURCE: Carter, Katherine D. "Drayton's Craftsman-
ship: The Encomium and the Blazon in *Englands Hero-
icall Epistles*." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 38, no. 4
(August 1975): 297-314.

[*In the following essay, Carter discusses Drayton's
pioneering use of an obscure poetic genre, the heroic
epistle, which he employed to convey passion between
lovers within specific historical contexts.*]

In *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1619), Michael Dray-
ton made use of a poetic genre, the heroic epistle, which
was virtually unknown in English before that time—a
genre that could encompass a presentation of history
and of passion. The poem is a chronological series of
some twenty-four paired epistles exchanged by various
renowned lovers from English history and ranges in
time from the reign of Henry II to the brief reign of
Gilford Dudley.[1] It includes epistles by such famous
and infamous lovers as Owen Tudor and Queen
Katherine, Edward IV and Mistress Shore, the earl of
Surrey and the Lady Geraldine. Caught by Drayton at a
moment of crisis and insight, these lovers send letters
to one another that reveal not only their passions, but
the momentous historical events raging outside their
walls.

To present both the *bella* and the *nocturna bella* that
make up his heroical epistles, Drayton frequently used
two commonplace rhetorical formulas for praise, the
encomium and the blazon. Examination of these devices
in *Englands Heroicall Epistles* throws light on Dray-
ton's competence as a poetic craftsman. He uses both

the forms skillfully, even at times brilliantly, to construct
heroic epistles that show at once the power of history
and of passion, and the personalities caught up in these
forces.

The third epistle of *Englands Heroicall Epistles,* "Ri-
chard the second to Queen Isabel,"** illustrates how
closely Drayton works within the encomium tradition.
The rhetorical documents that describe the encomium
typically suggest that in developing a praise, the orator
or poet may draw on certain topics or "places."[2] These
topics include circumstances before the subject's birth
(his realm, his shire, his house, his ancestors, and his
parents), circumstances during his life, and circum-
stances after his death. The circumstances during a
man's life were usually described as the early education
and nurture, gifts of fortune (power, riches, friends),
gifts of body (beauty, prowess, strength), and, most
important, gifts of mind (especially those virtues that
are illustrated by the subject's worthy deeds or *gesta*).
In Richard's epistle Drayton creates a concise, yet
complete encomium of Edward the Black Prince by
drawing on a number of these topics. To praise Edward,
Drayton first makes brief but favorable mention of
Edward's ancestry and parentage as that "Golden Tree"
of which Edward was the "top Branch." The poet then
praises, in combination, Edward's early promise and a
gift of nature, his beauty: "Nature in him her utmost
power did see; / Who from the Bud still blossomed so
faire, / As all might judge what Fruit it meant to beare"
(ll. 78-80). Drayton goes on to praise the worthy deeds
or *gesta* that Edward achieved in his manhood, and
rounds out the encomium with a brief mention of the
loss that the world has sustained with Edward's passing
(a circumstance "after his death"):

> He that from France brought John his Prisoner
>   home,
> As those great Caesars did their Spoyles to Rome,
> Whose Name obtained by his fatall Hand,
> Was ever fearefull to that conquer'd Land;
> His Fame encreasing, purchas'd in those Warres,
> Can scarcely now be bounded with the Starres;
> With him is Valour from the base World fled,
>
> . . . . .
>
> Who for his Vertue, and his Conquests sake,
> Posteritie a Demy-god shall make.

<div align="right">(ll. 87-93, 95-96)</div>

Drayton's development of the topic *gesta* merits special
attention, because it reflects the traditional conclusions
about the importance of this topic. As the rhetoricians
often advise, Drayton makes the noble deeds of his
subject the "chief grounde" of the praise—he spends
ten of the twenty-four lines on this topic.[3] Further, Dray-
ton observes the decorum of an encomium by cultivat-
ing the high style. The particular tools of the epideictic
orator for achieving the high style were comparison and

amplification.[4] Drayton compares Edward to paragons of the past ("As those great Caesars did their Spoyles to Rome") and draws on various figures of amplification (allegory, synecdoche, hyperbole) to heighten the importance of Edward's achievements. Finally, the passage suggests that the reward of Edward's worthy *gesta* is Fame ("His Fame encreasing, purchas'd in those Warres"), and that Edward's gifts of mind ("Valour," "Vertue") are illustrated and manifested by his deeds.

Although again and again the encomium topics are the grounds for the poetic invention of significant passages in the epistles,[5] yet in understanding Drayton's craftsmanship it is important to recognize how the poet integrates the formula into the composition of the individual epistle and how the encomium helps him realize his controlling purposes in the poem. Examination of Drayton's handling of the encomium and the encomium topics clarifies some of his major compositional habits and accomplishments in *Englands Heroicall Epistles*. I find that Drayton uses the encomium to present information that, most often, he does not develop or allude to in the rest of the individual epistle. Richard, for example, nowhere again mentions the deeds of Edward the Black Prince, although the argument of the epistle as a whole would allow him to contrast Edward's deeds with his own again as evidence of the depth of his own fall. In the epistles, that is, Drayton develops the encomium as a self-contained unit or block into which he corrals information that he does not develop elsewhere in the poem. This compositional strategy is characteristic of Drayton's habits throughout the epistles, for the poet typically constructs the epistles by blocks or units of information. In addition to the encomium, for example, other blocks are a description of the speaker's emotion on sending or receiving an epistle, the praise of the beloved, the argument for love, and the report of the "Occurrents of the Time, or State."[6]

Compositionally, then, the epistles are not seamless, woven garments in which many threads run the entire length of the individual piece. They do not have, for example, the integrative threads of imagery that so cogently bind the best of Donne's or Shakespeare's lyrics. Yet even though Drayton constructs the epistles by blocks or units, his treatment of the various encomia reveals that he is a craftsman who recognizes the need for mortar between these blocks. In many of the epistles, including those of William de-la-Poole, Henry Howard, Lady Geraldine, Lady Jane Gray, and Gilford Dudley, the poet's skillful use of syntactical figures joins the encomium to the epistles' main arguments.[7] From among many, one example will illustrate Drayton's careful attention to the compositional integrity of the poem. The final letters of *Englands Heroicall Epistles* are those of Jane Gray and Gilford Dudley. Reflecting popular accounts of this unfortunate lady, Drayton portrays her virtue in her own epistle, especially her

fortitude in death—"To thy faire brest take my resolved Mind / Arm'd against blacke Despaire, and all her kind" (ll. 121-122)—and makes Lady Jane's virtue the main theme of Dudley's epistle. Then when Dudley introduces a brief encomium of his own ancestors and kin at one point, the poet integrates the encomium into the main theme of the poem by means of an *occupatio* and a periodic sentence. Thus in the closing lines of the encomium Dudley returns to his main theme, Lady Jane's virtues:

> I boast not of Northumberlands great Name,
> (Nor of Ket conquer'd, adding to our Fame)
> When he to Norfolke with his Armies sped,
> And thence in Chaynes the Rebels captive led,
> And brought safe Peace returning to our Dores,
> Yet spred his Glory on the Easterne Shores;
> Nor of my Brothers, from whose naturall Grace
> Vertue may spring, to beautifie our Race;
> Nor of Grayes Match, my Children borne by thee,
> Of the great Bloud undoubtedly to bee:
> But of thy Vertue onely doe I boast,
> That wherein I, may justly glory most.

> (ll. 43-54)

Drayton's handling of the encomia also reveals some of his strategies for drawing the pairs of epistles together. Since *Englands Heroicall Epistles* has often been praised for having letters that genuinely answer each other instead of merely crossing in the mail, it is interesting to observe the poetic choices that lead to this effect. With reference to the encomium, we find that Drayton usually includes an encomium in each epistle of a pair, suggesting thereby that both writers are concerned with the same subjects and that the second writer has listened to the first. In the epistles of Surrey and Geraldine, the effect is one of almost echoing. His encomium (topics—house, *gesta* of ancestors) is patterned by a periodic sentence:

> If Howards bloud thou hold'st as but too vile,
> Or not esteem'st of Norfolk's Princely Stile,
> If Scotlands Coate no marke of Fame can lend,
> That Lyon plac'd in our bright Silver bend,
> Which as a Trophy beautifies our Shield,
> Since Scottish Bloud discolour'd Folden field;
> When the Proud Cheviot our brave Ensigne bare,
> As a Rich Jewell in a Ladyes Haire,
> And did faire Bramstons neighbouring Vallies choke
> With Clouds of Canons, fire-disgorged Smoke,
> Or Surreys Earledome insufficient be,
> And not a Dower so well contenting thee;
> Yet am I one of great Apollo's Heires,
> The sacred Muses challenge me for theirs.

> (ll. 93-106)

Geraldine's encomium (topics—house, shire, early nurture) is patterned by an *occupatio* and a periodic sentence.

> My House from Florence I doe not pretend,
> Nor from those Geralds clayme I to descend:

Nor hold those Honours insufficient are,
That I receive from Desmond, or Kildare:
Nor adde I greater worth unto my Bloud,
Then Irish Milke to give me Infant-food;
Nor better Ayre will ever boast to breathe,
Then that of Lemster, Munster, or of Meath;
    Nor crave I other forraine farre Allies,
Then Windsor's, or Fitz-Gerald's Families:
It is enough to leave unto my Heires,
If they but please t' acknowledge me for theirs.

(ll. 69-80)

The similar grammatical pattern provides a subtle echo. Geraldine has heard, understood, and even pondered Surrey's letter. When she sits down to write, his words still sound in her ear.

Drayton achieves equally interesting effects in the epistles of Queen Isabel and Mortimer, Queen Katherine and Owen Tudor. In these epistles, the epideictic topics suggested by the first writers (Isabel and Katherine) are expanded and elaborated into fulsome panegyrics by the recipients.

As Isabel, an exile in France, attempts to inspire Mortimer to action on her behalf, she conjures him "By that great Name of famous Mortimer, / By ancient Wigmores honourable Crest, / The Tombes where all thy famous Grandsires rest" (ll. 132-134). Here, through the topics of house and ancestors, Isabel touches on one of the earliest and proudest deeds of the Mortimer family—the establishment of Wigmore Priory by Hugh Mortimer.[8] Mortimer, taking up these references to the honor of his ancestors, brings the history down to the noble deeds in peace and war of his grandfather Roger Mortimer, sixth baron of Wigmore. He recalls the tournament that his grandfather held at Kenilworth— "My Grandsire was the first, since Arthurs raigne, / That the Round-Table rectified againe: / To whose great Court at Kenelworth did come, / The peerelesse Knighthood of all Christendome" (ll. 53-56)—and the aid that his grandfather brought to Edward I (Longshanks) in the king's wars against the Scots—"Never durst Scot set foot on English Ground, / Nor on his Backe did English beare a Wound, / Whilst Wigmore flourish'd in our Princely Hopes, / And whilst our Ensignes march'd with Edwards Troopes" (ll. 59-62). Having praised his own house and parents and the noble deeds of his ancestors, Mortimer goes on to predict the battles that he himself will lead against Isabel's husband, the ineffectual Edward II. And this prediction becomes a record of Mortimer's own anticipated *gesta*. Amplifying the account with swelling epithets and personification, Mortimer promises to "turne sterne-visag'd Furie backe, / To seeke his Spoyle, who sought our utter Sacke; / And come to beard him in our Native Ile, / Ere he march forth to follow our Exile" (ll. 87-90). Mortimer thus replies to Isabel's brief praise with a fulsome encomium of himself.

Similarly Owen Tudor, who promises not to stand on "tiptoes in superlatives," gives an encomium of himself that significantly expands the references that Katherine makes to his ancestors. As Katherine praises Tudor's ancestors, she cites the marriage of King John's daughter to Leolin ap Iorwith, and the marriage of a cousin of Edward Longshanks to Lhewellin ap Gryfith (l. 79). Not only are these events of recent history, but they show, to the honor of the Welsh, that they are noble enough to marry into English royalty ("Shewing the greatnesse of your Bloud thereby, / Your Race and Royall Consanguinitie" (ll. 81-82). Addressing himself to these topics, Tudor claims that the nobility of his blood runs all the way back to Cadwallader the Great (the seventh-century ruler whom Drayton believes to be "the last King of the Britaines, descended of the Noble and ancient Race of the Trojans"),[9] and includes such illustrious Welsh as Eneon, the South Wales king ("he was a notable and worthie Gentleman, who in his life did many noble Acts"),[10] Theodor, the son of Eneon, from whom the Tudors derive their name, Gwenellian, the daughter of a prince of South Wales, and finally Leolin (Lewhelin) the Great, prince of North Wales.

Tudor goes on to praise the *gesta* of his ancestors and begins, moreover, where Katherine leaves off, with the expedition of Henry II into Wales. Katherine had noted that the Welsh "once expuls'd the English out of Wales" (l. 98). Tudor expands this reference by recalling the famous battle at Croggen Castle, in which the Welsh stood united against the forces of Henry II.[11] Not stopping with this victory, Tudor also recalls the Welsh valor against the Norse invaders: "Our valiant Swords our Right did still maintaine, / Against that cruell, proud, usurping Dane" (ll. 95-96)[12] and uses the Welsh victories against the Norse as an occasion to rebuke those who could question the nobility of his blood. Others, Tudor exclaims, "have lost their Countrey, and their Name," but the Welsh "since great Brutus first arriv'd, have stood, / The onely remnant of the Trojan Blood" (ll. 107-108). To create this fulsome encomium, Tudor has claimed for his own (as he claimed Cadwallader) some of the most glorious deeds of the Welsh people— deeds that are not historically related to his particular family. And Tudor's expansive encomium, like that of Mortimer, is a direct and specific response to the brief praise in the preceding letter.

Drayton's care in fitting the encomium into the argument and theme of the individual epistle and his skill in using it as a means of drawing the pairs of epistles together are typical of the craftsmanship of *Englands Heroicall Epistles* as a whole. But beyond these considerations of the compositional skill that Drayton exercises, I find further that his use of the encomium helps him make *Englands Heroicall Epistles* something

more than a mere series of letters between lovers; the device is one of the ways in which he makes the poem heroical and historical.

In the Preface Drayton had explained his use of the descriptive term "heroicall": "though *Heroicall* be properly understood of Demi-gods, as of Hercules and Aeneas . . . yet it is also transferred to them, who for the greatnesse of Mind come neere to Gods."[13] That is, *Englands Heroicall Epistles* is not "heroicall" because it observes certain conventions of plot, structure, or ornamentation (cf. Drayton's experiments with the "epic" in *The Barons Warres*[14]), but because it presents renowned characters, many of whom "have a great and mightie Spirit, farre above the Earthly weaknesse of Men" (**"To the Reader,"** p. 130).

Since the encomium has traditionally served to convert the neutral details of history or biography into panegyric, it will clearly be useful in a poem that seeks to glorify and magnify the lives and deeds of its characters. More specifically, for Drayton the encomium acts first as a magnet that attracts, from the wealth of detail in the comprehensive chronicles, just those bits of historical fact that lend themselves to a glorious presentation of a character. And in the epistle the completed, though necessarily brief encomium concentrates the light of glory that the poet may focus on a character. In the poet's researches in the chronicles of Holinshed and Stow, for example, he found mention of the victorious return of Edward the Black Prince with his prisoner John the king of France. By means of the encomium, Drayton converts this detail from the rather restrained account of the chronicles[15] into the glorious "He that from France brought John his Prisoner home, / As those great Caesars did their Spoyles to Rome, / Whose Name obtained by his fatall Hand, / Was ever fearefull to that conquer'd land" (ll. 87-90). In all of the other epistles where it appears, the encomium similarly contributes to, and sometimes even creates, the glory, the greatness of mind—in short, Drayton's version of the "heroicall."

Not only is *Englands Heroicall Epistles* a "heroicall" poem, it is also a poem rich in the narration of history, or what Drayton calls the "Occurents of the Time, or State." In this narration within the epistles, the encomium serves Drayton well in several ways. First the encomium topics, especially *gesta,* give the poet a slot in which to include some of the many details that he so carefully garnered from his historical sources. Under the topic *gesta,* for example, Owen Tudor has the opportunity to bring into his epistle many important events from Welsh history:

> Nor that terme Croggen, Nick-name of disgrace,
> Us'd as a by word now in ev'ry place,
> Shall blot our Bloud, or wrong a Welshmans Name,
> Which was at first begot with Englands shame.

Our valiant Swords our Right did still maintaine,
Against that cruell, proud, usurping Dane,
Buckling besides in many dang'rous Fights,
With Norwayes, Swethens, and with Muscovites;
And kept our Native Language now thus long,
And to this day yet never chang'd our Tongue:

　　　. . . . .

Nor ever could the Saxons Swords provoke
Our Britaine Necks to beare their servile Yoke.

<div align="right">(ll. 91-100, 103-104)</div>

At the same time that the encomium is a convenient slot in which to include the narration of history, it also imposes a limitation on that very narration. As a narrative device, the encomium does not commit the poet to telling the whole story. It does not, like the epic, oblige him to relate the causes and councils of events, nor does it, like the *Mirror* structure, involve him in tracing out moral causality. Rather, when narrating history within the encomium, he need only report the few glorious highlights in a man's life. Richard's encomium of Edward, for example, only reports his triumphal return from France; it does not explore all those "dismall Battles" that, according to Drayton, earned the Prince the epithet "Blacke" ("Annotations," p. 181). Similarly, from all the rich history of the Howard family, Drayton records only the glorious battle at Flodden Field (1513) in Surrey's encomium (**"Henry Howard,"** ll. 93-106). And since the encomium allows the poet to narrate history (and even suggests a principle of organization—according to the epideictic topics), without at the same time forcing him to digress too far, this rhetorical formula is especially suited to the restricted epistle form which allows, at best, only patches of narration interspersed with what two lovers have to say to one another.

The encomium, then, was an astute choice because it helped the poet both in heightening and in narration. Yet *Englands Heroicall Epistles* is not only a heroical-historical or narrative poem, it is also a dramatic poem, since it presents first-person monologues by the various characters in the historical pageant. In the poem, the encomium is only occasionally a vehicle for characterization of these various speakers. In the epistles of Roger Mortimer and Owen Tudor, for example, the fulsome panegyric that each gives of himself appropriately reflects the proud spirit of each of these men. In contrast to the historical accounts of Mortimer, for example,[16] Drayton believes Mortimer had a "high and turbulent Spirit" ("Annotations," p. 173) and portrays some of Mortimer's fire by means of the encomium. But, by and large, Drayton does not use the encomium to individualize his speakers or to differentiate between them. Rather, it is through the blazon that Drayton most often achieves careful character differentiation and characterization.

Like the encomium, the blazon is a formula for praise, and indeed the device parallels the category of epideic-

tic rhetoric, "gifts of body." But while the encomium is amply defined and discussed by rhetorical theorists, the blazon, with its roots in poetry, is not. Yet perhaps because in many ways the blazon is a much simpler formula than the encomium, it does not demand elaborate theoretical description. We may discover its components readily in poetic practice rather than in rhetorical theory.

In the standard sixteenth-century development of the blazon, the poet praises his subject (usually female) by itemizing her several "parts"—lips, cheeks, eyes—and by amplifying the praise of each "part" with a hyperbolic comparison with some commonly accepted "beautie"—rubies, doves, stars, and so forth. This strategy of praise, probably originating in oriental love poetry (where it may be used to praise a man or a woman)[17] comes into European love poetry as early as the Middle Ages and is used by Petrarch (Canzoni 71-73) and his imitators. The formula becomes quite fashionable following the publication of Marot's *Blason du beau tetin* (1535),[18] and the fashion was probably given added impetus by vernacular translations of *The Song of Songs*. In sixteenth-century English poetry the blazon is a familiar fixture of the sonnet (we remember Shakespeare's satiric blazon, Sonnet 130).[19] The device also appears in narrative poetry (Churchyard blazons the beauty of Shore's wife in *The Mirror for Magistrates*) and the erotic epyllion (Marlowe blazons the beauties of both Hero and Leander), and is even molded into a roundelay, "Damaetas' Madrigall in Praise of His Daphnis" (*Englands Helicon*).[20]

Curiously, for a poet so adept and assiduous in following poetic fashions, Drayton does not use the blazon in his early sonnet sequence, *Ideas Mirrour* (1594). Rather, he first uses this device (although to little good effect) in his early legends *Peirs Gaveston* (1593-1594) and *Matilda* (1593) and in the erotic epyllion *Endymion and Phoebe* (1595). In the later *Englands Heroicall Epistles* the poet uses the blazon repeatedly[21] and, moreover, finds the device not only consistent with his compositional habits in the poem, but finds in it a means to meet one of the major requirements of the dramatic monologue form.

The blazon, like the encomium, is another building block or self-contained unit. The blazon, moreover, presents fewer problems of integration into the main argument of the individual epistle than does the encomium, because the epistles are, after all, between lovers. Any speaker may reasonably break into a spontaneous praise of the beloved; the motivating emotion may always be assumed.

Yet in writing a series of dramatic monologues, Drayton faces the problem of suiting his epistle, in some way, to the speaker.[22] And there is an acute necessity for some variation in language from epistle to epistle, since Drayton has gathered together a group of writers that includes, among others, lascivious kings, virtuous queens, wise governors, coquettish mistresses, chaste noblewomen, and ambitious noblemen. Although Drayton is not successful in accommodating every detail of tone, meter, or imagery to his speakers, certainly in his development of the blazon he consistently varies the formula from speaker to speaker, and varies it in such a way as to make the blazon appropriate to the speaker—his character and historical circumstances. A flexible sense of decorum, that is, allows Drayton to see that although all the speakers are lovers, the regal Queen Katherine or the honorable Queen Mary cannot sound like the aging, yet passionate Henry nor the lascivious King John. Nor, for that matter, should the blazons delivered by the men all sound alike. And the variety that Drayton was able to introduce, even while giving the speakers the same means of praise, raises *Englands Heroicall Epistles* artistically above its models in the *Heroides* or *The Mirror for Magistrates,* where the language, like the grief, was all of one pitch.[23]

The accommodating variations in structure and content that Drayton may implement come into sharp focus when we consider the standard development of the blazon. In the praise that Edward the Black Prince offers of Alice, countess of Salisbury (the seventh epistle), for example, Drayton most nearly approaches the conventional blazon format. He lists several "parts" of the beloved and praises each of these by a hyperbolic comparison with some commonly accepted beauty. Further, the amplifications of all "parts" are given about equal weight:

> Thine Eyes, with mine that wage continuall Warres,
> Borrow their brightnesse of the twinckling Starres:
> Thy Lips, from mine that in thy Maske be pent,
> Have flich'd the Blushing from the Orient:
> Thy Cheeke, for which mine all this Penance proves,
> Steales the pure whitenesse both from Swans and Doves.
>
> (ll. 131-136)

To say that this blazon is quite conventional in form and content is not to disparage its effectiveness in context, for it comes as the quite logical culmination of Edward's argument: he has claimed that although her castle is designed to protect her from enemies, she is not so much a victim as a thief (i.e., she has stolen his heart and fled to her castle). Nonetheless, there is little in this blazon that could not be voiced by any passionate male lover.

In contrast to Edward's blazon, the one that Mary, the dowager queen of France, gives of Charles Brandon (her love before she married the aged French king) is carefully accommodated to the speaker and to her

historical circumstances. Her blazon of Brandon begins by contrasting him with various contemporary Frenchmen.

> Alanson, a fine timb'red Man, and tall,
> Yet wants the shape thou art adorn'd withall;
> Vandome good Carriage, and a pleasing Eye,
> Yet hath not Suffolk's Princely Majestie;
> Couragious Burbon, a sweet Manly Face,
> Yet in his Lookes lacks Brandons Courtly Grace.

(ll. 167-172)

This blazon of Brandon's generalized physical features yields to a blazon of his valor:

> Proud Longavile suppos'd to have no Peere,
> A Man scarse made was thought, whilst thou wast
> here.
> County Saint-Paul, our best at Armes in France,
> Would yeeld himselfe a Squire, to beare thy Lance.
> Galleas and Bounarme, matchlesse for their might,
> Under thy towring Blade have couch'd in fight.

(ll. 173-178)

Although this praise is developed by a list of the beloved's features with a comparison to amplify the value of each, Drayton departs from the conventional blazon in several interesting ways. Most obviously, Mary does not choose to praise Brandon's cheeks, lips, skin, and dwell on the temptation that these parts offer to her sensual appetite. Indeed, there is little of the sensual in Mary's blazon, even though the device traditionally allows for or even encourages voluptuousness. Moreover, there is a pressure in it to praise not so much specific physical characteristics as qualities that grow out of Brandon's character. That is, the "good Carriage" and the "pleasing Eye" of Vandome become Brandon's "Princely Majestie"; the "sweet Manly Face" of Burbon becomes Brandon's "Courtly Grace."[24] This pressure toward accomplishments is released when the blazon yields completely to a blazon of Brandon's valor in the closing lines.

Yet the most striking departure from the conventional blazon in this passage is in the terms of comparison. Rather than search out the natural beauties of heaven and earth for ornament, Mary cites renowned, contemporary Frenchmen. The decision to use historical figures in the amplification is a felicitous one, for it allows Drayton to accomplish several ends at once. First, the mention of specific historical men is more subdued, more restrained than the mention of stars, jewels, and so forth, and hence makes the blazon appropriate to the dowager queen. The choice, further, allows Drayton to make the blazon so historically specific that it could be spoken only by a particular person at a particular time. And finally, the references to the historical Vandome, Burbon, et al. support Drayton's general purposes in *Englands Heroicall Epistles,* because, like the enco-

mium, these references allow the poet to increase the total historical information of the poem and allow him to include yet more glorious deeds. Drayton was not always able to accomplish all of this with one rhetorical choice (indeed, his ornaments are often one-dimensional); but he achieves it again in the blazons offered by Geraldine (ll. 81-96) and Katherine (ll. 121-132).

Not only does Drayton accommodate his blazons generally to the character or station of his speaker, but he is also able to use the blazon as a precise instrument for characterization of the speakers, most interestingly so in the epistles of King John and Edward IV. When the lascivious King John writes to the chaste Matilda in an attempt to win her love, he devotes a significant portion of his epistle to a long blazon of this unfortunate lady that is remarkable for the number of features John chooses to enumerate. He lists her "Globe-like rowling Eye," her "lovely Cheeke," her "Brow," "dimpled Chinne," "Lip," "Haire," "Eyeball blacke as Jet," and "Teeth." The very length of this list of the lady's features emphasizes the tendency toward fragmentation inherent in the cataloging device, and does so to a greater extent than any other blazon in *Englands Heroicall Epistles.* John underscores this fragmentation when he confidently remarks, "Oft in thy Face, one Favor from the rest / I singled forth, that pleas'd my Fancie best" (ll. 23-24). Further, although John amplifies his praise with comparisons, the real argument of the blazon is that each of Matilda's features is in competition with the others for his attention:

> Whilst I behold thy Globe-like rowling Eye,
> Thy lovely Cheeke (me thinkes) stands smiling by,
> And tells me, those are Shadowes and Supposes,
> But bids me thither come, and gather Roses;
> Looking on that, thy Brow doth call to mee,
> To come to it, if Wonders I will see.

(ll. 29-34)

The effect of this fragmentation and of setting the parts in competition with each other is not so much to create an *effictio* or description of Matilda as it is to portray John's attitude toward her beauties, and ultimately toward her. In so doing Drayton shows us what kind of man John is. From John's perspective, the structure and content of the blazon suggest, Matilda is not a whole person with a will of her own, but is a series of parts that only exist for his delight. These parts compete, courtesanlike, for his attention. Lest it be objected that we are taking too seriously a strategy that could be playful, I would call attention to the severity of the Matilda that Drayton creates in the next epistle.[25] She is simply not the woman to have coquettish parts that playfully call to the eye of the master. John's blazon, then, shows that he is insensitive to Matilda's will and integrity. And, most significant, this cynical willfulness