

**“Almost nothing Pastoral”: Michael Drayton and the Politics of Pastoral
Sukanya Dasgupta**

Abstract

This article highlights two aspects of Michael Drayton's poetic career. First, though Drayton was certainly influenced by Spenser, his poetry ultimately moves in a different direction. Secondly, Drayton's political attitude is reflected in his generic experiments and manipulations. Drayton's reshaping of genres itself becomes a political statement, and he envisages for himself a distinct and indeed unique poetic-political programme. In his pastoral poetry there is a distinct movement away from the didacticism of the early pastorals towards a more lyrical, aestheticised and remote world in the late pastorals, which however, carries its own political charge. I hope to demonstrate that although Drayton can appear to be highly orthodox and traditional, this conservatism itself can be viewed as a poetic-political strategy and his refashioning of older genres and the creation of new ones are all geared to yield a politically relevant message.

Key words: Michael Drayton, Edmund Spenser, pastoral, genre, political.