"Almost nothing Pastorall": Michael Drayton and the Politics of Pastoral

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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, aesthetised 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: Drayton, pastoral, poetry, genre, politics.

I

The importance of generic issues to Renaissance critics and authors is evident not only by the complexity that characterised concepts of genre during that period, but also by the debates over the classification of different "kinds". Scaliger, one of the most prominent genre theorists of the time, points to the highly complex and flexible uses of literary forms during the Renaissance when he groups, within a few major classes, hundreds of historical genres and subgenres, both poetic and rhetorical. In this article I wish to focus on the pastoral work of the Renaissance poet Michael Drayton, who wrote in almost all the different kinds of poetic forms known in his

time (pastoral, elegiac, heroic, satirical). Drayton's poetry often reveals a desire to reformulate existing genres, utilizing a device of generic mixture which Fowler identifies as a means by which 'transformation of genre may be achieved.'[1]

The approach to Renaissance generic forms has been greatly influenced by contemporary studies and theories of genre. This shows notably in Rosalie Colie's emphasis on generic inclusionism and experimentation in Renaissance theory and practice and the elevation of new or sub-literary forms into the canon.[2] The approach is particularly applicable to Drayton, who often 'elevates' forms that are normally considered 'low' on the hierarchical scale of genres. For instance, he attaches great significance to the terms 'Legend,' 'Ballad' and 'Pastoral' by defining these forms in his prefaces or by combining them with other forms in order to invest them with added importance. As Claudio Guillén suggests, a pre-existent form can never simply be taken over by a writer or transferred to a new work: 'A genre becomes an invitation to the matching of matter and form.'[3] This matching of matter and form in Drayton's work may be illustrated by his use of and his manipulation of genre in the pastoral poems, where one can trace the progress from a modified Spenserianism in *The Shepheards Garland* to a highly innovative 'political aesthetisation' in the later pastorals.

In *The Country and the City* Raymond Williams attacks the 'modern meaning of pastoral,' categorically dismissing the Renaissance adaptation of the form: 'What happened in the aristocratic transformation was the reduction of these primary activities to forms, whether the 'vaile' of allegory or the fancy dress of court games.'[4] Williams, however, seems to oversimplify the ideological complexity of a large variety of Renaissance pastoral texts, a fact recognized by Annabel Patterson in her book *Pastoral*

and Ideology.[5] The eclogue was the genre inherited and imitated by Renaissance pastoral poets and for George Puttenham the poet devised the pastoral not to represent a true rustic manner, but 'under the vail of homely persons and in rude speeches to insinuate and glaunce at greater matters.'[6] This connection between genre and ideology is often overt in Renaissance texts. Annabel Patterson and Louis Adrian Montrose have drawn attention to the fact that Elizabethan pastoral provided a space for the negotiation of many larger social, cultural and ideological concerns. The 'Plaintive,' 'Recreative' and 'Moral' eclogues in Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender,* for instance, reflect the personal ambitions and the public role of the poet, but also the constraints of a social order within which he has to operate and which is often a source of frustration. In the Preface to Gabriel Harvey, the purpose of writing these eclogues is elucidated:

> Now as touching the generall dryft and purpose of his Eclogues, I mind not to say much, him selfe labouring to conceale it. Onely this appeareth, that his unstayed yougth had long wandred in the common Labyrinth of Love, in which time to mitigate and allay the heate of his passion, or els to warne (as he sayth) the young shepheards his equalls and companions of his unfortunate folly, he compiled these Aeglogues…[7]

These love relationships symbolise more serious matters, and the ideological concerns in *The Shepheardes Calender* are suggested through Colin's 'Misadventure in Love.'

In the Preface to the 1606 *Pastorals,* Drayton shows his awareness of the tradition of pastoral and its chief exponents. He pays tribute to Virgil but also refers to Theocritus and to Sanazzaro's '*admirable Latin* Piscatories,' finally acknowledging Spenser as '*the prime* Pastoralist *of* England.' He is clearly aware of

the Spenserian model for serious and multifarious versions of pastoral when he points out that :

> Pastorals, as they are a Species of Poesie, signifie fained Dialogues,… The subject of Pastorals, as the language of it ought to be poor, silly, and of the coursest Woofe in appearance. Neverthelesse, the most High, and most Noble Matters of the World may bee shaddowed in them, and for certaine sometimes are: but he who hath almost nothing Pastorall in his Pastorals, but the name (which is my Case) deales more plainly, because detracto velamine, he speakes of most weightie things … My Pastorals bold upon a new straine, must speak for themselves… [8]

Clearly Drayton has in mind the complex mediations of the pastoral genre and the inherent paradox of this apparently simple form. Pastoral was a form or mode specially designed for the removed and the aesthetised, but which was used to refer to worldly and complex matters. Conversations between shepherds often mask an intrinsically political purpose. Power relationships could be metaphorised as pastoral relationships and as Montrose points out, royal pastoral for instance, was developed into 'a remarkably flexible cultural instrument for the mediation of power relations between Queen and subjects.'[9] At the same time Drayton, particularly in his later pastorals, 'dissociates his own practice from the allegorical emphasis he lists earlier as being central to the form.'[10] What is worth noting is not how closely Drayton followed his models, but the degree of deviation from traditional pastoral that characterises his work. He professes to embark on a new course, and it is this 'new strain' that I wish to trace.

While Drayton did go on to experiment with historical poetry and a host of other genres, he never lost interest in the pastoral form. For thirty-seven years (1593 - 1630) he wrote and revised his pastoral

poetry, which ranged from his early poetic venture *The Shepheards Garland* to his final work, The *Muses Elizium.* In his discussion of 'pastoral negotiations' in Jacobean England, Curtis Perry argues that the dramatic contrast between Elizabeth's public style and that of James led to major changes in the system of courtly modes and fashions. In the specific case of pastoral, this process of adaptation was shaped not only by the death of Elizabeth but also 'by a specific appropriation of pastoral to the rhetoric of Jacobean power.'[11]

The revisionary thrust of Drayton's eclogues and the progressively remote aesthetised nature of his later pastorals reflect disjunctions between the Jacobean vision of a pastoral community and inherited Elizabethan ideologies and practices. Drayton's persistent and explorative use of pastoral, or at least variations of it, is indicative of an underlying serious motive in his poetic programme.

II

Idea The Shepheards Garland (1593)

It is a curious fact then, that in 1593, when formal full–fledged eclogues have become somewhat old-fashioned, Drayton should opt to write *Idea the Shepheards Garland* 'fashioned in nine eclogues.' Drayton's act of consciously opting to write in a form that was out of vogue is indicative of what might be termed a 'radical conservatism' of poetic practice, using pastoral as its medium. This in turn acquires a clear political dimension in James's reign. As one progresses from *Idea the Shepheards Garland* and its revised versions to Drayton's late pastoral works like *The Quest of Cynthia* and *The Muses Elizium*, it becomes increasingly clear that Drayton is placing an apparently 'pure' vein of art-pastoral at the service of a complex political purpose.

Idea The Shepheards Garland is closely modelled on Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*, but Drayton's chief interest is not merely

in 'following the conventions and in paying tribute' to the Queen, Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke.[12]

The fact that Drayton's purpose is clearly different is evident from the fundamentally moral and didactic nature of the work. The didactic note, like the allusive, is much stronger in Continental pastoral than in English. Drayton practises it, as is evident in this work, but deviates from it more and more, gradually moving towards a kind of non-didactic lyric poetry in the later pastorals, which however carries its own strong ethical and political charge.[13] Like The *Shepheardes Calender, Idea the Shepheards Garland* deals with the hopes and despairs of a lovesick shepherd, Rowland. The sense of moral deviation associated with youth and love is particularly strong in the opening eclogue where Rowland weeps 'repentent teares' and makes 'pledges of contrition' for past follies.[14] In the third Eclogue, Drayton presents a panegyric to Beta. While Spenser's Eliza is a shepherd's queen set against the English countryside, Beta is viewed against a London backdrop and elaborately distanced from the community of shepherds. Dressed in royal purple, she not only rules over a 'large empyre' that stretches from east to west, but is also worshipped by courtly 'shepherds':

> Wee'l straw the shore with pearle where Beta walks alone,
>
> And we wil pave her princely Bower with richest Indian stone…[15]

The instruments used in the songs to celebrate her are not merely the humble pipe and tabor, but also the cornet, the orpharyon and the more sophisticated trumpet, which is specifically royal. This deviation from pastoral idiom itself invites the reader to view Beta in courtly terms. Yet if Beta is consciously distanced from the country swains in this work, Philip and Mary Sidney are brought to the centre of pastoral life. This marks an early instance of the idolizing of Philip Sidney, which was to develop major political implications in

James's time. The death of Elphin (Sidney) is lamented in the fourth Eclogue where this 'Spel–charming Prophet' is seen feeding his flocks in '*fayre Elizia.*'[16] The placing of Sidney in Elizia (a pun on Elizium) connects to and anticipates the political nature of a later pastoral *The Muses Elizium* (1630). Even in the earlier revised *Pastorals* (1606), memories of Sidney and references to Elizabeth's reign carry a strong political charge.

The eighth Eclogue, modelled on Spenser's 'August', has two contrasting parts. In the first section Drayton draws on the theme of the Golden Age which was traditional enough in pastoral. In *The Shepheardes Calender* Spenser's allusion to the Golden Age contains a strong moral note in an ecclesiastical context, while Drayton's is in the secular context of love. For Drayton, the Golden Age is a time when "simple love" existed with "simple vertue" and "kindnes with kindnes was againe repay'd".[17]

The second part of the eighth Eclogue contains the poem of Dowsabell and incorporates a pastoral lyric within the framework of an eclogue. This inclusion of a lyric is indicative of the critical new direction that Drayton's pastorals would take after 1606. The innocence and simplicity of Dowsabell and the spontaneous, genuine quality of her love is in sharp contrast to the elaborate praise of Beta whose '*Altars smoke, with yeerly sacrifice.*'[18] The social barriers between sovereign and subject, erected so consciously in the third Eclogue, are erased here when Dowsabell, daughter of a knight, kneels before her shepherd lover. The poem of Dowsabell anticipates Drayton's progressive deviation from the didactic and allusive vein that was so strong in continental and classical pastoral. Although the overall didactic note is clear in *The Shepheards Garland*, the lyric quality of Dowsabell is further developed in the Daffodil Song in the 1606 *Pastorals, The Quest of Cynthia, The Shepherd's Sirena* and

finally *The Muses Elizium*.

***Pastorals* (1606, 1619)**

Drayton radically revised *The Shepheards Garland*, publishing a new version of his *Pastorals* in 1606. Two distinct strains seem to converge in the revised version. On the one hand political overtones and an indictment of court life become more pronounced. On the other hand, compared to the earlier version, Drayton seems to be moving towards a more lyrical notion of pastoral. However, these two strains are linked by the moral and political implications of the apparently apolitical 'pure' pastoral.

England's Helicon, the largest and best-known collection of Elizabethan pastoral lyrics, was published in 1600. In his *Poemes Lyrick and Pastoral* (1606), Drayton acknowledges the popular lyric by introducing new songs in the Second, Eighth, and Ninth Eclogues of the revised *Pastorals*. The two songs in the Seventh Eclogue by Borril and Batte reflect an attitude towards love that is very different from Rowland's sense of guilt and despair in The *Shepheards Garland*. If love was a source of suffering to Rowland, here it is viewed as unique and not comparable to any other experience.[19] The most significant change in the revised *Pastorals* was the inclusion of a completely new Ninth Eclogue. Parts of this as well as other 'new' pastoral pieces like 'Rowlands Madrigall,' never reprinted in a volume, had appeared in the 1600 edition of *Englands Helicon*. Describing the celebration of a sheep shearing festival, the Ninth Eclogue incorporates a distinctive picturesque quality in its idealized description of the Cotswold feast:

> New Whig, with Water from the cleerest streame,
> Greene Plummes, and Wildings, Cherries chiefe of Feast,
> Fresh Cheese, and Dowsets, Curds and clowted Creame,
> Spic'd Syllibubs, and Sider of the best:

And to the same downe solemnely they sit,
In the fresh shaddow of their Summer Bowres,
With sundrie sweets them every way to fit,
The Neighb'ring Vale dispoyled of her Flowres.[20]

This kind of idealised description within the framework of an eclogue is not only an entirely new innovation on Drayton's part, but it transfers the entire setting to the more sharply defined imaginative realm of "art pastoral". As in *The Shepheardes Calender*, the English rural setting and selective details of actual rustic life are specifically evoked, only to be idealised and transformed as they never are in Spenser's work.

The setting of the eclogue is also transformed because of the two lyrics that are incorporated. The song by Motto and Perkin vividly describes a pastoral setting where the flocks refuse to feed and flowers bloom in winter, all in deference to Sylvia, the Shepherd Queen. [21] Similarly, the Daffodil Song, which emphasises its "slight occasion", captures the light spontaneous quality associated with a specific English vein of pastoral lyrics:

Shee's in a Frocke of Lincolne greene,
Which colour likes her sight,
And never hath her beautie seene,
But through a vale of white.[22]

Thus in the 1606 *Pastorals*, lyrics and inset songs are incorporated within the framework of the eclogue. This merger affects the structure and setting of the individual eclogue and the eclogue cycle as a whole. The individual eclogues in *The Shepheards Garland* consist largely of six lined stanzas, but in the 1606 revision the stanzas are shortened to four lines in almost all the eclogues, in order to allow the shepherds to break into song periodically. The allusive didactic eclogue is reoriented by the inclusion of these inset lyrics,

which, with their echoing refrains, seem to create an independent pastoral world with a special vein or atmosphere. Colin Fairweather distinguishes between 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' pastoral, suggesting that in the former, 'the urban sphere is conspicuous by its absence' while in the latter there is an 'awareness of the town/country divide….[23] Fairweather's first category of 'inclusive' pastoral seems to correspond to the remote and imaginative realms of Drayton's late pastorals; the definition of 'exclusive' pastoral is better suited to Drayton's more didactic early pastorals. Convenient though this distinction may be, it is necessary to point out that this kind of differentiation is not always possible because, as in Drayton's case, apparently pure art-pastoral itself has an important political function to perform and becomes a comment on the urban sphere.

Drayton's movement towards a more lyrical pastoral form in the 1606 version is accompanied by a deep concern with political issues. These constantly surface in the course of the eclogues. The Ninth Eclogue may present an idealised setting, but the 'ancient Statutes of the Field' (l .37) which determine who should be the Shepherd King, as well as the sense of community among the shepherds, place the eclogue in a context that is consciously distanced from the Jacobean court: it is a setting that is so distinct from the court milieu that there is no danger of overlapping interests:

> In Cotes such simples, simply in request,
> Wherewith proud Courts in greatnesse scorne to mell,
> For Countrey toyes become the Countrey best,
> And please poore Shepheards, and become them well.[24]

If the praise of Beta in the Third Eclogue reflected the complex power relationships between Elizabeth and her courtiers, Rowland's relationship with his subjects serves as a kind of reference point that is in sharp contrast to James's absolutist notion of kingship. In his speech to the first English Parliament in 1603, James refers to the

analogies of power: 'I am the Husband, and the whole Isle is my lawful Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body; I am the Shepherd, and it is my Flocke.'[25] By contrast, Drayton's sovereign in the Cotswolds has no special privileges. Although he has obedient subjects he is bound like the rest to sing his roundelay, which is described by the Chorus as a 'Poore Shepheards Song.'[26]

The revised *Pastorals* reflect Drayton's uneasy relationship with the Jacobean court. The use of pastoral as a critical tool against court life is evident in the lament for Elphin (Sixth Eclogue), where Elphin is seen 'Laughing even Kings and their delights to scorne.'[27] Similarly in the Fifth Eclogue, Rowland is seen as the spokesman for straightforward honesty and virtue when he refuses to commit himself to 'Low Caps and Court'sies to a painted Wall,' or to 'heaping rotten sticks on needless fires.'[28] One of the generic expectations of pastoral—an expectation reinforced by classical, continental, and Elizabethan precedent – is that it is a form used to comment obliquely on dangerous political material. For instance, one offshoot of the general element of court satire in pastoral is the theme of lack of patronage and neglect of talent. This is expressed in Spenser's 'October' eclogue where Cuddie laments that although his Muse had 'spent her spared store,' it 'little good hath got, and much lesse gayne.'[29] The interesting though fairly common combination of satire and praise of court is found in Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*. Drayton's political commentary becomes more explicit in the revised *Pastorals* as he moves towards a concentrated criticism of James I and his government. If Rowland's despair in *The Shepheards Garland* is the outcome of his own folly, in the 1606 *Pastorals* much of Rowland's frustration in the First Eclogue stems from the injustice of the patronage system:

> My hopes are fruitlesse, and my faith is vaine,
> And but meere shewes, disposed me to mocke,

Such are exalted basely that can faine,
And none regards just ROWLAND *of the Rocke*.
To those fat Pastures, which Flockes healthfull keepe,
Malice denyes me entrance with my Sheepe.[30]

This links up with Drayton's more direct political concerns and critique in other works, particularly the elegies and satires, and ultimately to the general patronage of favourites, which is a recurrent theme in his historical poems dealing with the reign of Edward II. The satirical strain and strong political note that permeate Drayton's later works are also exemplified in his late pastoral writings.

The Late Pastorals

In his book *The Oaten Flute*, Renato Poggioli views pastoral as primarily exclusive—an expression of man's desire for pleasure, unhampered by the realities and frustrations of the daily world.[31] Poggioli's description of the pastoral world seems particularly well suited to Drayton's late pastoral poetry – *The Shepheards Sirena* (1627), *The Quest of Cynthia* (1627), and *The Muses Elizium* (1630). In these works, Drayton seems to be moving towards a more lyrical and remote kind of pastoral. At the same time, the direct incorporation of political themes and concerns is indicated by the presence of satirical sequences in the poems. Yet these coexisting idyllic and satiric passages are not merely contrastive, with the former acquiring a wishful, escapist function, and the latter a political one. What is interesting and perhaps unique in these last pastorals is that the apparently remote aesthetised 'art pastoral' itself has a positive political function to perform.

The Battaile of Agincourt volume (1627) contains a heterogeneous collection of poems. At the end of the volume are collected Drayton's elegies, *Nimphidia*, *The Moone-Calfe* and two of his late pastorals, *The Shepheards Sirena* and *The Quest of Cynthia*.

The Battaile of Agincourt has been called a pro-war poem celebrating Buckingham's expedition to France,[32] but it need not specifically be so, for the militarist spirit of the poem meshes with the implicit militarism of anti-Spanish politics. The remaining group of poems, despite their generic differences, is united by their critical and anti-establishment stance. It seems likely that several of these poems were written in the early 1620s but could not be published earlier in case Drayton met the same fate as George Wither. Of these, *The Shepheards Sirena* and *The Quest of Cynthia* reflect how Drayton turns idyllic, self-contained pastoral enclosures to clear political purposes.

The Shepheards Sirena begins with a picture of the sad Dorilus, whose pleasures are 'in exile' because he is separated from Sirena by the 'bleake winters boystrous blasts' and the 'wilde waters.'[33] As the poem progresses, a community of shepherds – Tom, Rock, Rollo, Gill and Ralph, joins him. Tracing parallels between the different poems, Kathleen Tillotson has suggested that this work (though published in 1627) was written at approximately the same time as Browne's *The Shepheards Pipe* and Wither's *The Shepherds Hunting*.[34] Indeed the shepherd friends of Dorilus do recall the Spenserian poetic community and their 1614 eclogues. However, at the end of the poem there is a remarkably bitter and satirical passage where Dorilus asks for their help in getting rid of some 'rougish swineherds' sent by 'Olcon':

> Angry Olcon sets them on,
> And against us part doth take
> Ever since he was out-gone,
> Offring rymes with us to make.[35]

These 'beastly clownes' have vowed to bring their swine and 'wroote up all our downes' and are armed with 'holly whips' and

'tough hazell goades.[36] Critics have identified the swineherds as the 'Tribe of Ben' or the school of Donne, and it is possible that Drayton was alluding to the politically-charged rivalry at the tavern clubs between the Spenserians and those poets who found favour in court circles.[37] However, the opposition between the shepherds and the swineherds is presented here in terms of the classic 'pastoral hierarchy.' The other shepherds warn Dorilus that if the swineherds are victorious, then 'your bagpypes you may burne,'[38] for the shepherd-poet will have no role to play once courtly values permeate the countryside. Drayton voices the same concern in his commendatory poem in Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*:

> Those, to the Muses, once so sacred, downs,
> As no rude foot might there presume to stand:
> (Now made the way of the unworthiest clowns)
> Digg'd and plough'd up with each unhallowed hand)
> If possible thou canst redeem those places,
> Where, by the brim of many a silver spring,
> The learned maidens and delightful graces
> Often have sat to hear our shepherds sing.[39]

The implied political allegory and satire at the end of *The Shepheards Sirena* allies the work with that of Browne and Wither, but Drayton integrates his political purpose with the vein of "art pastoral" much more organically than the younger poets. The work contains a long lyric with a refrain, framed within a narrative. The metrical gaiety and echoing refrain of the shepherds' song to Dorilus contribute to its joyous spontaneous quality and recalls the atmosphere evoked in pastoral lyrics:

> On thy banke,
> In a rancke,
> Let thy swanns sing her,

And with their musicke,
along let them bring her.[40]

Besides living in idyllic surroundings 'Neare to the silver Trent' (Hebel, III, p.159; l.165) where flowers blossom in 'Verdant Meades' (Hebel, III, p.161; l.233,), Sirena herself is invested with miraculous powers: the sun honours her, the stars gaze at her, and the raging tempests are calmed when she speaks.[41] This deliberate creation of an idyllic world has important political implications. The remote, aesthetised world of Sirena, where the realities of court life cannot intrude, carries its own political charge. Rather than openly criticize the court, Drayton opts to create a world that is so far removed from the court and all it embodies, that the movement away itself becomes a political statement. Moreover, the relationship between Sirena, the fairest 'in all our Brittany,' and the different objects of nature, reflects the relationship between monarch and subject. The real British monarch may not have offered patronage to Drayton and members of the 'poetic opposition,' but in this imaginative retreat the Muses and the Graces 'crown' Sirena by 'Twisting an Anadem' round her head,[42] and it is their function and their duty 'to renowne her.' Similarly, the rivers Dove and Darwen are instructed to 'pay your duties' to her (Hebel, III, p.163; ll.298-301), and shepherds kiss her footprint (Hebel, III, p.155; ll.9-12,). The reciprocal relationship between monarch and poet, by which the poet celebrates the monarch and expects benefits in return, is transferred here to an ideal and aesthetised plane and articulated through the relationship between Sirena and her "subjects" in nature. Even the fish in the rivers strive to entangle themselves in her fishing hook "when she doth angle", and leaping on to the land, scatter her path with shining scales, which act as a mirror in which she can see her own reflection.[43]

The figure of Sirena herself represents various things: she is the muse who inspires the songs the shepherds sing; she has been identified as Mary Curzon, wife of Sir Edward Sackville;[44] more recently Michelle O'Callaghan has suggested that Sirena's plight may represent that of King James's daughter Princess Elizabeth, particularly given the motifs of exile, winter, and separation across water. In November 1620, Frederick V's army was defeated by the Habsburgs outside Prague. With the Spanish occupation of the Palatinate, Frederick and Elizabeth were forced to flee to The Hague where they lived in exile as a European war escalated. O'Callaghan argues that the poem was possibly written in the early 1620s at around the same time as the elegies, and thus refers to the Bohemian crisis.[45] Whether the poem was written in 1614 and published later or actually written in the 1620s, what is important is that it was incorporated in a volume published in 1627 at a time of intense political tension. The 1620s was a period when the Spanish occupation of the Palatinate and James's attempts to negotiate a marriage between Prince Charles and the Spanish Infanta dominated English politics and provoked widespread anti-Spanish sentiment. Consequently, the political critique that Browne, Wither and Brooke had been developing at the time of the 'addled Parliament' (1614) was revived and given a fresh impetus during this period of crisis. In *Faire-Virtue* (1622), Wither introduces the opposition between court and country: he does not have "rings, bracelets, jewels" to woo a courtly beauty and

> No place of office or command I keep,
> But this my little flock of homely sheep.[46]

By contrast, Drayton moves away from the vanities and affectations of court life to celebrate a remote yet ideologically charged pastoral world where Sirena resides, and from where all disruptive elements like 'roguish swineherds' have to be removed.

The idea of flight prevails in *The Quest of Cynthia*, the title of which suggests a thematic link with *Endimion and Phoebe* and *The Man in the Moone*, where the shepherd Endymion falls in love with the moon goddess. Here pastoral becomes symbolic of a quest for innocence. Cynthia is invested with magical powers: hemlock is transformed into roses by her touch, winter turns to spring in her presence, and her well has water that can restore 'lost Mayden heads.'[47] The idyllic description of her summer bower incorporates the paradisal motif that is found in *Poly-Olbion* as well as in Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, and this is followed by a satiric passage where the poet leaves behind the 'hatefull world' with its vile ways in favour of Cynthia's realm:

> Here from the hatefull world wee'll live,
> A den of mere dispight:
> To Ideots onely that doth give,
> Which be her sole delight.
> To people the infernall pit,
> That more and more doth strive,
> Where onely villany is wit
> And Divels onely thrive.
> But vileness us shall never awe:
> But here our sports shall be:
> Such as the golden world first sawe,
> Most innocent and free.[48]

The solace he experiences in her bower is in sharp contrast to the other world he has rejected where 'painted Fooles' are caught with 'silken shows.'[49]

In this poem, the notion of a quest carries a strong political charge. Cynthia, representing innocence and purity, is not easily found:

several tantalizing clues are provided to lead the shepherd on his quest. He sees her name carved upon the bark of a tree and catches a glimpse of the imprint of her foot, but coming from the vile world, cannot find his way into her home. The consecrated secret shades of her bower represent an imaginative world that exists independently and in defiance of the outside world. Initially Cynthia does not welcome the shepherd into her bower, for he is seen as an alien intruder who cannot be accommodated in her remote, pristine realm:

> Into these secret shades (quoth she)
> How dar'st thou be so bold
> To enter, consecrate to me,
> Or touch this hallowed mold.[50]

He is finally accepted when he points out that it is he who has built altars to her name and taught the shepherds to sing ditties in praise of Cynthia.

Thus *The Shepheards Sirena* and *The Quest of Cynthia* bring together themes and images that reflect Drayton's progressive alienation from the court and from an audience who refused to recognize his public role. The political concerns voiced in *Poly-Olbion* are reinforced here in a different way. Although satirical passages coexist with idyllic pastoral descriptions, those idyllic descriptions are by no means "apolitical". Rosenmeyer suggests that one source of pastoral melancholy is "the awareness on the part of the herdsmen, that the bower in which they perform their songs and conduct their dialogues does not really exist".[51] Although Drayton is conscious that his pastoral worlds are threatened by erasure, the realms that Cynthia and Sirena inhabit are both a refuge from and a citadel against political events.

The condemnation of Caroline court culture is executed in a remarkably different way in Drayton's last pastoral poem, *The*

Muses Elizium. The pun on the word "Elizium" connects it with the golden Elizabethan age that was past and gone: consequently a direct comparison is invited between the present age and the vanished Elizabethan ideals. "Elizabethan nostalgia" was a major political phenomenon of the Jacobean and Caroline age: the memory of the late Queen was frequently revived in order to contrast her with her successors, whose pacific policies were often incompatible with the versions of glory and chivalry attributed to Elizabeth's policy. In order to understand the political and ideological functions of the nostalgic images of Elizabeth and to see the subversive potential Elizabeth's memory might have carried, it is necessary to locate where and among which groups these images were cultivated.

During James's reign, a group among whom the memory of Queen Elizabeth carried a strong political thrust was the one attached to Prince Henry's court. Henry, projected as the heir to England's military glory, surrounded himself with an aggressively Protestant circle at St. James's Palace. As noted earlier, many members of the 'poetic opposition' who were sidelined by James received Henry's patronage. Another group who kept alive memories of Elizabeth consisted of the citizens of London, whose plays, pamphlets and sermons created a distinct image of the deceased Queen. Among these were Christopher Lever's *Queen Elizabeth's teares* published in 1607 (STC 15540) and William Leigh's 1612 sermons *Queene Elizabeth, Paraleld in her Princely Vertues, with David, Joshua and Hezekia* (STC 15426). Drayton's increasingly oppositional politics led him to generate his own version of Elizabethan nostalgia, first under the patronage of Prince Henry, and then even more interestingly during Charles I's reign, under the patronage of a qualified Royalist, Edward Sackville, the Earl of Dorset.

The Muses Elizium, published in 1630, was Drayton's last pastoral work. The 'golden world' that Elizium represents has been recognized and commented upon, but the timeless quality of Elizium 'where delights never fade' should not make one overlook the strong political implications of the work. In this poem Elizabethan nostalgia is ironically couched in a poetically imaginative vein; this was a strategy increasingly cultivated at the Caroline court. In Book 3 of *Britannia's Pastorals*, for instance, the fairy court described is full of vivid imaginative details, but the account contains many anti-Spanish references and functions as a mock-heroic representation of James's negotiated peace with Spain. On the margin of the fairy banquet sits the 'learned Spenser' tuning his quill, whose presence recalls Elizabeth, the Fairy Queen: her memory is in sharp contrast with the fairy King, Oberon, who commends 'hawks and sport.'[52]

There is a strong classical element in *The Muses Elizium*, particularly in 'The Description of Elizium' where the Golden Age abides. Here there are no changes of climate and flowers and fruits blossom permanently:

> There in perpetuall Summers shade,
> *Apolloes* Prophets sit
> Among the flowers that never fade,
> But flourish like their wit.[53]

Drayton blends classical and Christian elements together by introducing '*Apolloes* Prophets' into a world that resembles Paradise. This is a 'Poets Paradice;' but in contrast to the strongly 'Brittanic' and patriotic *Poly-Olbion*, Elizium evokes an atmosphere with a strong classical flavour. Although *Poly-Olbion* does have a classical strand, it is not particularly pronounced. In *The Muses Elizium* Flora and the three Graces enjoy the beauty of

Elizium, and in the Ninth Nimphall the nymphs build an altar to Apollo. It is an altar made of precious gems, but the power of each stone is emphasised: the ruby revives the spirit, the sapphire curbs weariness, the emerald resists poison. Elsewhere Phoebus is constantly invoked to 'Give life and growth to our Elizian bayes.[54] Clearly this is an imaginative retreat, far removed and detached from the real world. In this last pastoral, the emphasis on the creation of a classical world seems to highlight a sense of remoteness and imaginative isolation, which carries an oppositional and political charge. The world described here does not resemble Britain at all. In fact Drayton takes great pains to emphasise the geographical as well as the moral and ethical distance between Elizium and Felicia. He escapes into a remote and imaginative realm that is distanced from the court, but that escape itself becomes a political statement and a condemnation of the court culture of his time.

The title page of the work suggests a generic variation of the pastoral by asserting that *The Muses Elizium* has been discovered 'By a New Way over Parnassus.' Indeed, traditional bucolic elements are modified to such an extent that Drayton is effectively redefining the pastoral form. Eclogues are replaced by "Nimphalls," a term already used in *Poly-Olbion* to denote a feast attended by nymphs (Song XX). At the same time, the poem encapsulates certain fundamental characteristics of the pastoral convention. Pastoral always implies a contrast between a self-contained idyllic enclosure and another world outside it from which it has distanced itself. Drayton turns this to clear political purposes by creating an imaginative and circumscribed pastoral space where nymphs and swains sing of each other's beauty, and even Venus is banished from Elizium for her 'anticke prankes.'[55] Thus there is no scope for any 'misadventure in love' such as Colin experiences in *The Shepheardes Calender*.

Contrasted with this festive idealised world where 'happy soules' indulge in 'harmlesse mirth'[56] is Felicia, a land ironically named 'happy.' Yet Felicia portrays an unhappy island where the golden age can no longer survive. As the poem progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that *The Muses Elizium* echoes the environmental concerns voiced in *Poly-Olbion*. The pictures of Felicia before its destruction are very similar to the descriptions of England in *Poly-Olbion*. Felicia was a place where oaks, elms and beeches flourished, where the woods sheltered the deer and the birds, and where nimble-footed fawns and sportive nymphs played.[57] It is a land that has been 'disrobed' of her woods and forests – a denudation, which, as in *Poly-Olbion*, becomes symptomatic of avarice and commercial greed. In the Fourth Nimphall, Chloris, an Elizian nymph, is allowed to journey to Felicia briefly, but returns horrified at the beastly manners and monstrous shapes of the Felicians. At the end of the last nimphall, an old satyr, a fugitive from Felicia, is allowed to settle in Elizium. There is a suggestive conflation of the terms "satire" and "satyr" here. The plainness and direct honesty of this fugitive has won him favour among the Muses in Elizium and he is, appropriately enough, the spokesman who provides the satirical descriptions of Felicia. The satyr points out how in the last age the 'beastly brood' of men have disregarded their past history and have no respect for poetry :

> This beastly brood by no means may abide,
> The name of their brave ancestors to heare,
> By whom their sordid slavery is descry'd
> So unlike them as though not theirs they were.
> Nor yet they sense, nor understanding have,
> Of those brave Muses that their country song,
> But with false lips ignobly do deprave
> The right and honour that to them belong.[58]

Although the satyr's speeches have received substantial critical attention as embodying an explicitly political and satirical element, other passages in the poem also voice Drayton's political concerns. In the Sixth Nimphall a debate ensues between a forester, a fisherman and a shepherd regarding the worth of their respective vocations. All three characters are pastoral figures. The forester and fisherman evaluate their lives and professions in courtly terms: Silvius sits 'in state' like a 'king,' and the woods are like 'halls and galleries' of a prince's palace; Halcius the fisherman, while on his boat, points out that 'like a prince my selfe in state I steer.'[59] Melanthus is also described as a king whose 'subjects' are his flocks, but what Melanthus emphasises is a sense of community. In a passage that recalls Eclogue IX of the 1606 *Pastorals*, Melanthus describes how he and his fellow swains sit together and partake of cheese, clotted cream, cider and custard.[60] As in the *Pastorals*, this anti-courtly stance, where flattery, deference and elaborate praise have no place, distinguishes the shepherd's life. Here the king and the shepherd are allied or identified at the shepherd's level. Drayton reverts to the mock-demotic pastoral vein in which Elizabeth was often celebrated—classically in Spenser's April eclogue, and in Drayton's own praise of Beta, which, however, was much more formal. This reversion becomes a form of Elizabethan nostalgia. Although Elizium cannot accommodate any discord and thus all the three men are rewarded, it is not before the nymphs declare that the shepherd's argument is far superior to the rest.

Thomas Cogswell suggests that the world of Elizium represents the court of Charles I during the Personal Rule in 1629-30. Cogswell bases his argument on the assumption that although Drayton intensely disliked James, by the 1620s he had moved closer to the centre of power, particularly the court of Charles.[61]

Despite Cogswell's assertion that by the time he wrote *The Muses Elizium*, Drayton's attacks had shifted from the Crown to the people, this volte face on the part of Drayton is highly unlikely. All of Drayton's late writings, as well as his political and patronage links argue against this interpretation. His last works do not indicate any shift in his political position. As has been discussed earlier, *The Shepheards Sirena*, *The Quest of Cynthia* and *The Muses Elizium* all progressively point to a withdrawal into a poetic universe, an idyllic realm. An alignment with oppositionist politics led, in Drayton's case, to a nostalgic longing for Elizabeth's reign: this is used in a highly personalised and imaginative way as a political strategy. Given the fact that he had spent the better part of his career attempting to "decentre" the court, it is more plausible that the movement towards imaginative isolation was a way of making a unique political statement. It is not an escape into the Elizium of the Caroline court; the latter, as Felicia, is clearly contrasted with Elizium.

Cogswell further contends that it was possibly the association with the Sackvilles that caused Drayton's shift from one end of the political spectrum to the other. It is true that Edward Sackville was a qualified Royalist, and it has been cogently suggested by Geoffrey Hiller that *The Muses Elizium* may have had links with the court masque and been a form of dramatic entertainment for the Sackvilles at their estate Knole Park, in Kent.[62] However, having Sackville as his patron does not, once again, indicate a change in Drayton's political inclinations. In the course of his literary career, Drayton maintained contact with a wide range of patrons and associates drawn from various circles. Despite his alignment with Protestant politics, he had Catholic friends, and his alienation from the court did not prevent him from having associates who retained courtly links. One of Drayton's principal patrons, Walter Aston, had close

connections with the court throughout his life, and was appointed by King James as ambassador to Spain. Aston also converted to Catholicism later in life. Moreover, Drayton's political links in the 1620s with a group that included political radicals like Browne, Brooke, and Wither could hardly have resulted from sudden monarchical sympathies on his part.

In the 1620s Drayton wrote the elegies which reveal his network of friends and associates. Many of them were members of the gentry with strong "Country" connections. If *The Muses Elizium* has connections with the court masque, as Hiller suggests, it could also have other, more clearly "Country" and Puritan links. Although Elizium can scarcely be called "Puritan" in its basic spirit, it might be held to provide a rough parallel to the Puritan use of the court masque by Milton. Milton's appropriation and transformation of a royalist form like the masque to make it answerable to Puritan concerns has been extensively discussed.[63] He often revises conventional generic elements in the masque in order to make the form a literary vehicle for those with Puritan leanings. Drayton does something similar when he transforms conventional generic elements in *The Muses Elizium* to make this last pastoral an implicit vehicle for a political purpose.

While the poem's departure from the usual conventions of the pastoral eclogue has been acknowledged, the political purpose behind this departure has not been recognised.[64] By not developing any individual pastoral characters but by suggestively focusing on Elizium as an ideal place ('The Description of Elizium'), Drayton emphasises how it illustrates a realm that is, like the "Country," a locus of innocence and community. Here 'happy soules' away from the 'rude resort' can indulge in 'harmlesse mirth and sport,' for ambition, self-interest and even destructive love are absent in

Elizium.[65] The ideological connotations of the term "Country" suggests that it represents a culture that advocates a defence of liberties against tyranny and an absolutist concept of monarchy. The satyr in the Tenth Nimphall is assured of being "free" in the Elizian fields after he laments the loss of freedom and liberty in Felicia. Thus *The Muses Elizium* could have been written as a royal entertainment or court masque at Knole, but instead of allowing this form to act as a vehicle of royalist propaganda, Drayton makes it a vehicle of his politically oppositionist ideas.

At the end of his career, Drayton returns to the pastoral form, but this return involves a re-examination of the genre. Beginning with a set of didactic and moral eclogues in *Idea The Shepheards Garland*, he gradually moves towards an idyllic pastoral world in the 1606 Pastorals. At the same time, political concerns are voiced in these revisions. While idyllic and satirical passages coexist in *The Shepheards Sirena*, in *The Muses Elizium* there is a retreat into a poetic universe, which nevertheless has marked political dimensions. These works are all part of Drayton's pastoral canon, but remarkably different from each other in terms of content and generic orientation. What connects these poems together is not the pastoral form (which undergoes many experiments and modifications), but the underlying political and poetic purpose. The form is constantly manipulated, revised or even transformed to accommodate and demonstrate a political intention. It is this political element in an apparently neutral poetic practice that makes Drayton declare that there is 'almost nothing Pastorall' in his pastoral writings.[66]

The Russian formalist critic Victor Shklovsky points out that a work of art is 'created as a parallel and a contradiction' to some kind of model that existed before it. Thus 'a new form appears, not in order to express a new content, but in order to replace an old form

which has already lost its artistic value … Form creates content for itself.'[67] Although Shklovsky is dealing with the theory of prose, his notion of 'form creating content' is useful in analysing the works of Drayton. While Drayton attempts to follow the Spenserian progress (adapted from Virgil) from the pastoral to the epic, his experiments with different "kinds" of poetry, both conventional and unconventional, indicate his basic reliance on manipulation of genre as a poetic strategy. Thus what seems to be 'form creating content' ultimately results in 'content shaping form.' This reshaping of the form is itself a statement, often the most explicit political statement of the poems.

Endnotes :

[1] Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp.181-183.

[2] Rosalie Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre Theory in the Renaissance*, ed. Barbara Lewalski (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1973).

[3] Claudio Guillén, *Literature as System* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), p.111.

[4] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.21.

[5] Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery,* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1988).

[6] George Puttenham*, The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. G.D. Willcock and Alice Walker, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 298.

[7] *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. J.C. Smith and E. De Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1912; Repr. 1965), p.418; henceforth cited as 'Selincourt.'

[8] *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J.W.Hebel with Kathleen Tilottson and Bernard Newdigate (Oxford : Basil Blackwell for the Shakespeare Head Press, 1931-41, 5 vols.; corrected edition, Oxford: Basil Blackwell

and Mott,1961). Henceforth all references to Drayton's poems will be from this edition. Line numbers (where applicable) will be followed by 'Hebel ', volume and page number. Hebel, II, pp.517-518.

[9] Louis Adrian Montrose, '"Eliza, Queene of shepheardes," and the Pastoral of Power,' *ELR* 10.2 (1980) : 166.

[10] Rosemary G. Laing, *The Disintegration of Pastoral: Studies in Seventeenth Century Theory and Practice*, Unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1982, pp.34-36. Laing sees Drayton's pastorals as anticipating the genre of the country-house poem. (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.51. Pastorals,' *Studies in English Literature* 10 (1970): 33-48.

[11] Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture* : *James I and the Renegotiation of Elizabethan Literary Practice* .

[12] Richard Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England*. (Lawrence: Kansas University Press,1973), p.11. For a comparison between the structures of Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* and Drayton's *Idea The Shepheards Garland* based on Virgil's *Bucolics*, see Michael D. Bristol, 'Structural patterns in Two Elizabethan Pastorals,' *Studies in English Literature* 10 (1970): 33-48.

[13] See Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Renaissance Pastoral and its English Developments*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press,1989), pp.198-207.

[14] Hebel, I, p.48, ll.43-54.

[15] Hebel, I, p.58. Eclogue III, ll.103-104.

[16] Hebel, I, p.62; l.62; Hebel, I, p. 64; ll.138-139

[17] Hebel, I, p.86; ll. 77-80.

[18] Hebel, I, p 58; Eclogue III, l.115.

[19] Hebel, II, p.558; ll.197-200.

[20] Hebel, II, p.565; ll.45-52.

[21] Hebel, II, p.568; ll.153-160.

[22] Hebel II, p. 566; ll. 89-92.

[23] Colin Fairweather, 'Inclusive and Exclusive Pastoral: Towards an

Anatomy of Pastoral Modes,' *Studies in Philology*, 97.3 (2000): 279.

[24] Hebel, II, p.564; ll.25-28.

[25] *The Political Works of James I*, ed. C.H. McIlwain (Cambridge, Massachusetts:
Harvard University Press, 1918; Repr. New York, 1965, p.272.

[26] Hebel, II, p. 569-570; ll.173-200.

[27] Hebel, II p.549; l.99.

[28] Hebel, II, p.541; ll. 42-43.

[29] Selincourt, p.456.

[30] Hebel, II, p.520; ll.49-54.

[31] Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute. Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 1965), pp.1-16.

[32] See David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul,1984), p.222 and Bernard Newdigate, *Michael Drayton and his Circle*. (Oxford: repr. Basil Blackwell for the Shakespeare Head Press, 1961), p.210. Hardin (p.71) differs, arguing that the poem was probably written earlier.

[33] Hebel, III, p.155-156; ll.23, 17, 49.

[34] K. Tillotson, 'Drayton, Browne and Wither,' *TLS*, November 27, 1937.

[35] Hebel, III, p.165; ll.368-371.

[36] Hebel, III, p.165; ll.357-361.

[37] Raymond Jenkins, 'Drayton's relation to the School of Donne as revealed in The Shepheards Sirena,' *PMLA*

[38] (1923): 557-587; W. Hebel, 'Drayton's Sirena,' *PMLA* 39 (1924): 814-826.

[38] Hebel, III, p.165; l.365,

[39] William Browne, *The Poems of William Browne of Tavistock*. Ed. Gordon Goodwin, 2 vols. (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1894).Vol. 1, p.10.

[40] Hebel, III, p.159; ll.177-181.

[41] Hebel, III, p.162; ll.267-276.
[42] Hebel, III, p.159; ll.169-174.
[43] Hebel, III, p.162; ll. 250-260.
[44] Hebel, V, p.208.
[45] Michelle O 'Callaghan**,** *The shepheards nation: Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture 16121625*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 2000), p.208.
(New York: AMS Press, 1968). Vol 2, ll.217-226, p.18.
[46] George Wither, *The Poetry of George Wither*. Ed. Frank Sidgwick. 2 vols. (London: A.H. Bullen, 1902); repr.
[47] Hebel, III, p.149; ll. 65-68, 69-72, 85-86.
[48] Hebel, III, p.152; ll.173-184.
[49] Hebel, III, p.153; ll.215-216.
[50] Hebel, III, p.151; ll.141-144.
[51] Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet*. *Theocritus and the English Pastoral Lyric* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1969), p.229.
[52] Browne, ed.Goodwin, vol. II, ll.727-728, p.51; ll. 830-831, p.55.
[53] Hebel, III, p.250; ll.85-88.
[54] Hebel, III, p.280; Third Nimphall, ll.477-480.
[55] Hebel, III p.301; Seventh Nimphall, l.6.
[56] Hebel, III, p.251; 'The Description of Elizium,' ll.105-108.
[57] Hebel, III, p.323; Tenth Nimphall, ll.69-88.
[58] Hebel, III p.324; Tenth Nimphall, ll.109-116.
[59] Hebel, III, p. 295; ll.75, 94. Hebel, III, p.296; l.121.
[60] Hebel, III, p.299; ll.220-222. 207-209.
[61] Thomas Cogswell, 'The Path to Elizium Lately Discovered: Drayton and Early Stuart Culture,' *HLQ,* 54:3 (1991):
[62] Geoffrey Hiller, 'Drayton's Muses Elizium: A New Way Over Parnassus,' *RES*, New Series, 21.81 (1970).
[63] See MaryAnn C. McGuire, *Milton's Puritan Masque* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1983).

[64] William Oram, 'The Muses Elizium: A Late Golden World,' *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978). Oram argues that Drayton does not 'glaunce' at any matter 'higher than the delights of his art': p.20.

[65] Hebel, III, p. 251; ll.105-108.

[66] Hebel, II, p.517.

[67] Victor Shklovsky, "The connection between devices of syuzhet construction and general stylistic devices" (1919), in *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation,* eds. Stephen Bann and John Bowlt (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1973), pp.53-56.