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## Review Essay: Jean R. Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited*

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other women may have helped to reinforce it." Berry takes issue with these views, emphasizing the far-reaching impact upon Elizabeth's subjects of having a female monarch mystically united with a state and church that had been gendered female. Making striking and thoughtful use of feminist theorists such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Marina Warner, Berry also offers a number of compelling readings of specific texts. Her readings of the dramas of John Lyly are likely to inspire renewed interest in this neglected playwright. She convincingly points out the strangely sexual imagery in Raleigh's *Ocean to Scinthia*, and in a very brief number of pages shows how Spenser's verse reflects shifting attitudes toward gender and power, shifts that she demonstrates were related to Spenser's larger cultural context. Perhaps the most problematical aspect of modern analysis of Elizabeth's courtly cult is the assumption that it was static. Philippa Berry's study corrects this tendency to regard the courtly cult as one great unchanging fabric by astutely identifying changing fashions in the images associated with Elizabeth.

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Jean R. Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited*, Twayne Publishers, 1990, xiv, 167 pp., ill., biblio., index, \$29.95.

In the spirit of the best volumes in Twayne's English Author Series, Jean R. Brink's study of Michael Drayton balances an accurate, current biographical survey of the author's work with a reassessment of its critical and historical importance. In the case of Drayton, this balanced approach calls for a major overhaul of deeply entrenched assumptions, for Drayton criticism carries with it generations of cultural prejudices that have influenced our understanding of the man and his work. Brink offers a revisionist reading framed largely in terms of Drayton's tenuous place in the Tudor and Stuart patronage system.

The early chapters of *Michael Drayton Revisited* chronicle Drayton's life and literary apprenticeship up to 1597 and complete most of the levelling in the demythologizing process begun earlier. Brink scrutinizes against the documentary evidence the sepia-tinted image often painted of Drayton's life in Sir Henry Goodere's household as well as accounts of his lifelong devotion to Anne Goodere. Brink shows us a Drayton who lacked both social connections and social skills and who struggled for patronage in a system he resented and felt vitiated the poetic tastes and moral fiber of James's and Charles's courts. Brink refers to Drayton's use of dedications and prefatory material and to his habits

of revising his work to interpret the poet's life within the clientage system. Given Drayton's long and chequered career, Brink's study provides a richer and more nuanced portrait than we have had to date of Drayton's deteriorating relations with Lucy Harington, later Countess of Bedford; of his exclusion from court circles; and of his vocal disapproval of coterie poetry and even of James I himself.

Brink's historicized reappraisal of Drayton's work also adds significantly to our understanding of Drayton's experiments in, and critical comments on, literary form and genre. We have long recognized Drayton as among the most self-conscious of writers. Brink goes a step further, studying his works, including dedications, prefatory remarks, and revisions, for their critical content, and shows him to be an astute commentator on the state of the *bonae litterae* in his generation.

Brink comments on each of Drayton's major volumes or works in ways that set them in new historical contexts. Because of the narrow scope of the series format, Brink's surveys are sometimes quite cursory, but they all open up fresh approaches to the work. The most interesting and informative are the studies of *Ideas Mirrour* and *England's Heroicall Epistles*. In each case, Brink provides an original and informative assessment of the work as a whole, including its genre, design, and evolution. More disappointing is the examination of *Poly-Olbion*, which uses current argot to dress up what is essentially the standard image of Drayton the patriot yet neglects some solid though less fashionable recent work. But more important than the studies of individual works are Brink's discussions of the folios of 1619, 1627, and 1630, which open up promising new critical avenues into Drayton's awareness of the potential of printing for the establishment of his legacy.

Brink's Drayton, an irascible, socially unsubtle individual, is more realistic and rounded than the portrait of benign mediocrity we have lived with, but it is the same man. Brink's study does not overstate Drayton's poetic achievement, but it does renew critical interest in the author. Naturally, Brink's approach has its limitations. Some of the old myths persist in slightly different and often more extreme forms, which is not to say they are inaccurate, just that they need to be recognized for what they are: part of the old Drayton, the arch-conservative Elizabethan alienated from James's court. Drayton is also cast, interestingly, as an unrepentant Petrarchan in a way that implies that Petrarchism is to be associated with "Elizabethanism," which, of course, it should not be. Finally, Brink's insistence on the theme of patronage, although it helps contextualize the poet, seems to imply that poetry was written for the sole purpose of winning a patron; as a critical focus, patronage may not prove to be a durable vehicle for interpretation.

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