Volume 10 (2022)
ISSN 2612-6966

OJH

Open Journal of Humanities

Open Journal of Humanities
Electronic Scientific Journal in Open Access
ISSN 2612-6966

Homepage
www.doaj.org/toc/2612-6966

Publisher
Universitas Studiorum S.r.l. - Casa Editrice Scientifica - Mantova (MN), Italy
www.universitas-studiorum.it

Open Journal of Humanities (OJH) is a peer-reviewed electronic Scientific Journal, which is devoted to the field of Humanities. OJH is published three times a year, and is distributed online with a full Gold Open Access policy, without any embargo period, through a Creative Commons License (CC-by 4.0), according to scientific best practices.
Peer-reviewing process for OJH is operated on a "double blind" basis, for each proposed article; it is conducted by at least two external referees, and is monitored by members of OJH's Scientific Committee and by the Publisher's Editor. Both the reviewers and author identities are concealed from the reviewers, and vice versa, throughout the review process. Received articles are made anonymous by our Editors, before Peer-reviewing process begins. Selection is based only on intellectual and scientific value and content, with no regards to authors' identity, origins, political or religious orientations. Proposed papers must be unpublished and fully original, and OJH Editorial Board will condemn and report any plagiarism or semi-plagiarism case. Every single Author accepts his own full responsability for the originality and paternity of the published text.
Accepted topics of OJH include the whole field of Humanities, and namely: Anthropology, Archaeology, Arts (Visual Arts, Architecture), Classics, Philology, Philosophy, Law and Politics, Linguistics, Literature, Sociology, Economics. Corrispondent scientific classification in Italy covers the following fields (cf. D.M. 855/2015): Area 10 "Scienze dell'antichità, filologico-letterarie e storico-artistiche"; Area 11 "Scienze storiche, filosofiche, pedagogiche, psicologiche"; Area 12 "Scienze giuridiche"; Area 13 "Scienze econo-miche e statistiche"; Area 14 "Scienze politiche e sociali".

Open Journal of Humanities, 10 (2022)
ISSN 2612-6966

Drayton's Poetical Image of Warwickshire

Cristina Vallaro
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Abstract
This article is about Michael Drayton's long poem *Poly-Olbion* and his poetical description of Warwickshire. As part of a well-rooted tradition of topographical texts in England, such as those by Leland, Saxton, Harrison, Camden and Speed, Drayton's long poem suggests a new approach to the mapping of his country. Along with the geographical aspect, Drayton's text focuses not only on the topographical information about his country, but also and above all on its artistic beauties and rich history, from the first inhabitants to the early 17th century. Drayton's personal and emotional approach is particularly evident in the description of Warwickshire, the county he was from, which is thus introduced to the reader as the peaceful and glorious heart of England. John Selden's maps complete the work and help with the identification of England with a human body and, as the title page shows, with Queen Elizabeth I.

Keywords: Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, topographical texts, William Harrison and William Camden, John Speed, Elizabeth I as England herself.

Introduction

> As *Ioan Honterus* in Latine verse writ three Bookes of Cosmography with Geographical tables: so *Michael Drayton* is now in penning in English verse a Poem called *Polu-Olbion* Geographical and Hydrographicall of all the forests, woods, mountaines, fountaines, rivers, lakes, flouds, bathes and springs that be in *England*.[1]

Francis Meres, the author of the quotation above, seems to know Drayton well and the passage, published in *Palladis Tamia* in 1598, seems authentic. However, at that time the

1. Meres 1636: 282. The first printed edition of Mere's work was published in 1598.

Poly-Olbion was just a work in progress and would be published more than ten years later. As these pages will explain, Drayton's delay was almost certainly due to the difficulties he was experiencing and, above all, to James Stuart's ascent to the English throne in 1603. The aim of this essay is to show how Drayton wrote his long poem with the intention of conveying his love for England, and Warwickshire in particular, to his readers at a time of great change for the country. Drayton's idea of writing a text extolling England's natural beauties and riches drew support from the fact that other similar works had proved to be successful among his contemporaries.

Works of this kind were in fact not new – they dated back to John Leland, Henry VIII's chaplain and librarian, who wrote the first tourist guide of England, intended to be an inventory of the country's antiquities which the author surveyed in a six-year journey through the kingdom from 1535 to 1543.[2] As Leland clearly states in his address to the King, the *Itineray* was commissioned by Henry himself with the serious intent of enhancing the importance of some forgotten or simply neglected corner of his kingdom. When Henry commanded Leland to write this survey in 1535, England was going through a very difficult and dangerous period of her history. Thomas More had been beheaded in the Tower, there was a schism between England and Rome, the king had recently married Anne Boleyn and their new-born baby daughter was lying in her cradle. Henry desperately needed something which could bestow on him the glory he had been seeking since his ascension to the throne, and thought he could find it in the kingdom itself:

2. Leland 1907: XXXVII-XXXVIII.

England's outstanding beauties would speak on his behalf and consequently enhance his stature as the lord of those lands. Thus, in Leland's hands, England's topography became the way to extol the country's glorious past and, by doing so, to celebrate its present.

Anyway, cartography and geographical descriptions of England multiplied in the second half of the 16th century when, under Queen Elizabeth, the foundations of the colonial empire were laid. Fuelled by travellers' reports, diaries and drawings, curiosity about the New World and its unexplored landscape awakened a deeper and stronger need to learn about England and her landscape. This time the need was felt not only by the Queen herself but also by travellers and tourists, merchants and foreigners, who happened to be in England. With the ascent of Elizabeth to the throne the country had known peace, the arts had begun to flourish once more – England became a welcoming place to be visited and appreciated. As D.K. Smith argues in his book on English cartography, if in the 1520s "only a small fraction of the population had ever seen a map, [...] within fifty years all this had changed",[3] because by 1579 England was at the forefront of geographical exploration and documentation in Europe. In just half a century, travels in the New World and a new mapping of the Earth led to a new conception of what a map was. In 1559 William Cunningham's *Cosmographical Glasse* "introduced the broader concerns of cosmography to an English audience"[4] while "Digges' *Boke Named Tectonicon* in 1556 and his *Pantometria* in 1571, and Worsop's *A Discovery of Sun-*

3. Smith 2016: 41.
4. Ivi: 49.

dry Errours and Faults Daily Committed by Landemeaters published in 1582 laid a new emphasis on the importance of geometry and the need for more precise measurement and calculation".[5]

Drayton's Models: Saxton's *Atlas*, Harrison's *Description* Camden's *Britannia* and Speed's *Theatre*

1579 was also the year when Saxton's *Atlas* was published, paving the way for this new approach to cartography and the knowledge of England as a topographical reality. Saxton's *Atlas of England and Wales* was an epoch-making achievement but, despite this, the "work was marked at almost every stage by improvisation and inconsistency as to the way in which the information was presented".[6] Indeed, scholars seem to agree that the maps of the text "were almost certainly compiled in large part from existing manuscript maps and, probably, written surveys".[7] Local experts helped Saxton throughout his survey, which was meant to aid the queen and her council in their administration of the country. Each map portrayed a county and "although the maps seem to have been available singly, the intention appears always to have been to create an atlas".[8] In this respect, Saxton revealed how his model had been Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarium*, first published in 1570.[9]

5. Ivi: 49.
6. Barber 2007: 1623.
7. Ivi: 1623.
8. Ivi: 1624.
9. Ivi: 1623.

Fig. 1. Saxton's *Atlas* (1579), title page.

Saxton's *Atlas* is well known also for its frontispiece (Fig. 1),[10] offering an elaborate portrait of Elizabeth enthroned under a canopy of state with extensive gold decoration. Being a typical Elizabethan work, Saxton's survey had to express gratitude to his queen who had been a patron of his work and had supported him throughout the survey. Elizabeth thus became a kind of image of England because she helped readers of the *Atlas* to associate her with the land

10. Christopher Saxton's *Atlas*, 1579. The image comes from the 1590 edition of the text.

she ruled.[11] This fact is relevant in relation to a practice in vogue in the Renaissance and consisting in identifying the monarch with his own country.[12] Saxton's frontispiece may be taken as a first clear step in this process of Elizabeth I's association with England, culminating in Drayton's frontispiece of *Poly-Olbion*.

Despite being a great novelty as well as a milestone in England's cartographical history, Saxton's *Atlas* was to be soon replaced by more precise and detailed works of the same kind. Harrison's and Camden's were two cases in point, as it was thanks to them that the description of the country would reach its peak. William Harrison published his *Description of England* in 1586. The third part of a much longer and more complex work, it "intended no less than a total portrait of Elizabethan England, of the land and of the people".[13] The book, which provided the introductory section of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, dealt

11. In the same year, another work, this time a canvas, was to associate the English queen with her kingdom. Dated 1579, George Gower's *The Sieve Portrait*, was meant to teach the French Duke of Alençon, turned down after a long and unsuccessful diplomatic courting, that Elizabeth was already married to her country and didn't need a husband. The queen is standing before a globe where a resplendent England is surrounded by boats going westwards: Elizabeth's destiny was in the foundation of the empire and not in marriage. For information of the painting, see Strong 2003: 95-100.

12. The idea of royalty and the way medieval and Renaissance monarchs were depicted can be found in Kantorowicz 1937.

13. Harrison 1968: XV. The first edition was made up of three books and was published in 1577, the title being *An Historical Description of the Island of Britain*. Ten years later, in the second edition, Harrison decided to change the structure of his work and reserved that title for the first book only, while the second and the third became known as *The Description of England*.

with Elizabethan society and focused on various aspects of everyday life: travelling, food, clothing and so on. It was strictly scientific, with its rather boring enumerations and long passages on life in towns and villages as well as descriptions of rivers, mountains and hills.

Far anticipating Drayton's work and aims, Harrison's *Description* is both a detailed portrait of his country and an ingenuous eulogy of England. But if, as Edelen points out, praise of England as a beautiful place to live in can be found in many texts, some dating as far back as ancient times when the country was said to enjoy God's blessing, Harrison's *Description* goes a step further. England is not only blessed by the Almighty; in addition it "is clearly the divine favourite; no other nation can match her resources".[14] Nothing can be compared to England and to her beauty, wealth and variety of food, animals, flora and so on. There is no reason to doubt that such national pride helped to define national identity, quite a common procedure in 16th-century Europe. Just like Drayton, also Harrison identified with Elizabeth's protestant England – a budding power in the hands of a single woman. As Edelen explains, "William Harrison's Descriptions are, above all, a deliberate survey of a nation on the threshold of a golden age, a spirited portrait of the mid-Elizabethan land and society, drawn with honesty and skill sufficient to validate Harrison's claim to have had 'an especial eye unto the truth of things".[15]

1586 also saw the first publication of William Camden's *Britannia*,[16] a chorographical description in Latin of England

14. Ivi: XXV.

15. Ivi: XXXV.

16. Camden 1610: title page. The image reported in these pages comes from this edition.

which proved very successful: "Three further printings had been called for by 1590 as well as two impressions in Germany. To satisfy demand a fourth, enlarged, edition came out in London in 1594. [...] An English translation by Philemon Holland appeared in 1610. A major new edition prepared by Edmund Gibson came out in 1695".[17] The 550-page octavo of the first edition was born "as an attempt to elucidate Roman names in the island",[18] as the title itself suggests. Camden was absolutely sure that his book was not a history, but a chorography, which means a geographical and historical description of his land.

Unlike Drayton and his contemporaries who had felt involved in the description of their land, Camden's approach is impersonal: he is a 'scientist' and his work borrows from models that had appeared on the Continent from the Middle Ages onwards. Notwithstanding the title and the image of the frontispiece, "*Britannia* is indeed chiefly about England and Wales and although it begins with a very substantial overview – nearly two hundred pages long – of the country's past from the earliest times to the Norman period, its chief centre of interest is the Roman occupation".[19]

Camden's ambitious plan is illustrated in the frontispiece, where the reader is welcomed by a combination of allegorical elements. Camden's interest in Roman Britain is evident in the image at the top of the title page of the 1610 edition (Fig. 2), where Britannia is portrayed sitting on a rock holding a spear in her left hand and a sceptre in her right – an image reminiscent of the way Britain was portrayed on Roman coins.[20]

17. Richardson 2004: 113.
18. Levy 1964: 71.
19. Richardson 2004: 115.
20. Morrison 2015: 1-19.

Britannia is placed at the centre of the page, with Neptune on her right and Ceres on her left, both images emphasizing the fertility of the British land and its surrounding sea. Under the feet of the two Roman gods, two more images suggest "that the strength of the British people is founded on the power of its navy and the fervour and sanctity of its religious institutions".[21] Taken together, these images present the long history of the Roman settlement in England and point to the importance of Britain's entire history.

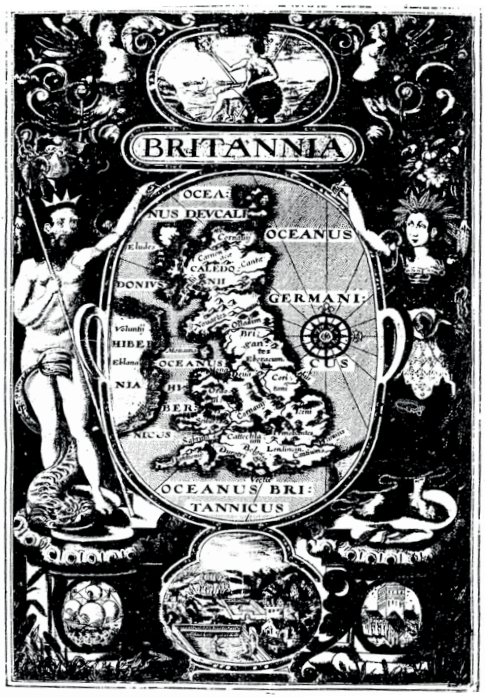

Fig. 2. Camden's *Britannia* (1610), title page.

21. Ivi: 4.

As with almost all Renaissance national histories, Camden's was a compendium of earlier documents by such authors as Caesar, Tacitus, Bede, William of Malmesbury and George Buchanan. His aim was to "compose a British topography, and in doing so he created a national framework for depicting the histories of Britain's provincial regions".[22]

One year after *Britannia*'s edition in 1610 came out, another similar work was published, John Speed's *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain*, issued *cum privilegio* in 1611. Addressed to King James I,[23] the book was meant to give a detailed overview of Britain as the best country in the world. Indeed, in his letter to the "Favourable reader",[24] Speed explains that his aim is to report what he has seen during his journey through every province of England and Wales, and to show how "Climate, Temperature, Plentie and Pleasures"[25] make England the very Eden of Europe.

Speed's imposing volume is a meticulous study of the history and geography of the British Isles extending from Roman times to King James' reign at the beginning of the 17th century. Geography comes first, starting with the English counties before moving to Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The very beginning of Speed's work helps the readers with important information about the image of his country and establishes the right way to approach the text:

> The State of every Kingdome well managed, by prudent government, seems to me to represent a Humane body, guided by the souveraignty

22. Ivi: 833.

23. Speed 1611: see the page with the dedication. The initial pages of the book are unnumbered.

24. Ivi: 2 after the contents.

25. Ivi: 2 after the contents.

> of the Reasonable Soule: the country and Land itself representing the one, the Actions and state affaires the other.[26]

As often with his contemporaries Drayton included, Speed also saw Britain as a human body whose "Members, Veines and Ioints",[27] which means "Shires, Rivers, Cities and Towns",[28] will be dissected and laid open. Each county is described by starting from its borders, to which the author adds cultural information about the origins of the county name and ancient inhabitants. Clearly enough, Speed's work employs a convincing mix of culture and topography to catch his reader's attention and make his country even more attractive.

Thus, when the first part of Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* was published in 1612 it was no isolated work, but rather part of a trend which was well received by its readers. It clearly shows that Drayton had found inspiration in others' works and proved how his main points of reference had been John Leland and William Camden. The former provided the basis for his research and poetizing, the latter the general organization of the text with the addition of few adaptations for his own,[29] including features intended as special aids for readers: for example, John Selden's notes and William Hole's maps preceding the songs.

Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*: Song 13 and Warwickshire

With the aim of portraying the multi-faced and various country he belonged to, Drayton had planned his work on an extravagant scale, as the engraved title page, the portrait of

26. Ivi: 1.
27. Ivi: 1.
28. Ivi: 2 after the contents.
29. Moore 1968: 783-803.

its addressee and the thirty collected maps clearly show. Yet, despite all this, Drayton's masterpiece was virtually ignored by his average contemporaries, or the "lazy minds" Drayton himself refers to in his *Letter to the General Reader*. The failure that *Poly-Olbion* turned out to be was announced and explained ahead of time in Drayton's letter to his readers, showing that he seemed aware of the difficult and hostile times he was living in:

> In publishing this Essay of my Poeme, there is this great disadvantage against me; this it commeth out at this time, when Verses are wholly deduc't to Chambers, and nothing esteem'd in this lunatique Age, but that is kept in Cabinets, and must only passe by Transcription; In such a season, when the Idle Humerous world must heare nothing that either favours of Antiquity, or may awake it to seeke after more, then dull and slothfull ignorance may easily reach unto: These, I say, make such against me, and especially in a Poeme, from any example, either of Ancient, or Modern, that have proved in this kind.[30]

The poem's unsuccessful publication was due to the "lunatique Age" it belonged to: a period of total lack of interest in antiquities and ignorance spreading across the country.

To carry out this ambitious plan, England's past had to be displayed through her natural riches, while her landscape would speak for itself as much as her rivers, woods, forests and towns would recount the great events of national history, famous monarchs and proud examples of patriotism. Drayton's powerful verse was meant to attract its readers' attention and make them feel bewitched by their country's beauties, wealth and power. Unfortunately, Drayton's lines turned out to be dull and his poem was soon said to be too long and boring.

30. Drayton 1612: *To the Generall Reader*.

All things considered, *Poly-Olbion* was not very different from other works[31] with which Drayton shared more openly his enthusiasm for what he was doing and his love of his native country. What really differentiates Drayton's work from his predecessors' when it was published – less than a decade had passed since good Queen Bess had died and had been replaced by a king coming from the north – was that things at court had changed bitterly for the worst and people were deeply concerned about England's proud independence and the way in which her control over Ireland and Wales had been imposed. The late English queen had taught her subjects not to accept the yoke of a foreign king and to stand tall in their awareness of belonging to a powerful and unconquerable nation. After Elizabeth's death in 1603, however, England came to be governed by a foreign king, James Stuart VI who was known to be a weak and feeble man incapable of replacing his predecessor.

When the first part of Drayton's work came out in 1612, the new king's political plans were already clear and had deceived England's most conservative minds.[32] To mitigate the situation England had to be reassessed and her original values had to be displayed and hailed in the works of her greatest artists. Drayton's work should be considered one of them: a long poem celebrating "the unity of the island under James I, the heir of the Tudors who had joined the Red Rose and the White. [...] his more general ethical intent was to appeal for the co-existence of all in peace and love".[33]

31. Geography and History are intermingled, as in Camden's work; each county is preceded by a map, as in Camden and Speed; England's beauties and riches are enlisted, as in all the other works of the same kind.
32. McEachern 1996: 138-191.
33. Moore 1968: 783-800.

Drayton's text of approximately 15,000 lines is divided into thirty *Songs* introduced by as many maps illustrating the county, or counties, described in verse. The poet commits his journey to a muse whose role is both to inspire him and to guide him in the depiction of his land. Accompanied by a "True native Muse", the reader will embark on a long journey through England and Wales, travelling from west to east, from Cornwall to Kent, and then south to north through Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Cheshire. Drayton focuses on the most outstanding rivers, forests, vales and mountains of his country, whose nymphs tell the story of its great historical events and the legendary myths surrounding them. Songs I-XVIII are completed by Selden's illustrations, "intended to clarify and complement the historic-antiquarian background of Drayton's digressions".[34]

Drayton's passionate description of England raises the question of whether he had personally seen all the counties he depicts, or had drawn inspiration from existing maps and volumes. What we know for certain is that Drayton knew his native county Warwickshire perfectly well. It was also Shakespeare's county, situated in the very heart of England, half-way between the Catholic north and the Anglican south, the mountainous landscape of the northern counties and the fertile plains of the southern ones.

It is no coincidence, then, that the song related to Warwickshire is said to be the best evidence of the author's devotion to his native land. The county is the subject of *Song 13*, and the muse's flight touches on it after leaving Staffordshire on its way to Worcestershire and Gloucestershire:

34. Trevisan 2010.

This Song our Shire of *Warwick* sounds;
Revives old *Ardens* ancient bounds.
Through many shapes the Muse heere roves;
Now sporting in those shady Groves,
The tunes of Birds oft staies to heare:
Then, finding Herds of lustie Deare,
She Huntresse-like the Hart pursues;
And like a Hermit walks, to chuse
The Simples every where that growe;
Comes *Ancors* glory next to showe;
Tells *Guy of Warwicks* famous deeds;
To th'Vale of *Red-horse* then proceeds,
To play her part the rest among;
There shutteth up her thirteenth Song.

(XIII, *The Argument*)

The *Argument* preceding the beginning of the song introduces the reader to Warwickshire and its landscape. Perhaps its most noteworthy features are the alternation of plain and groves that give the land its typical variety, and the herds of deer that make it the right place for hunting.

Warwick is introduced as "That Shire which wee the hart of England well may call" (XIII, l.2),[35] it is in fact in the Midlands, "betwixt S. Michaels Mount, and Barwick–bord'ring Tweed" (XIII, l. 4). Its illustrious earls are renowned and their ancient coat of arms well respected throughout the country: "that abroad so long advance her Beare, / By her illustrious Earles renowned everywhere" (XIII, ll. 5-6). It is at this point that Drayton enters the text, interrupting his muse's work and addressing his home county directly, begging it to accept his work:

My native Country then, which so brave spirits hast bred,
If there be virtue yet remaining in thy earth,

35. Drayton 1961. All the quotations from the text belong to this edition.

Or any good of thine thou breathd'st into my birth,
Accept it as thine owne whilst now I sing of thee;
Of all thy later Brood th'unworthiest though I bee.

(XIII, ll. 8-12)

As a humble servant, Drayton hails his county as a land of great men: Warwickshire is here personified and addressed as if it were a great patron expected to protect its simple and unworthy creature. When Drayton wrote and published *Poly-Olbion*, William Shakespeare, he too a Warwick-born author, was already a name both in London and at home, more famous and glorious than Drayton and his contemporaries. Although comparison is hidden and avoided, Drayton seems aware of his inferiority and asks for his land to protect him.

Comprising 426 alexandrines, the song can be divided into sequences ranging from the Forest of Arden to Coventry, from the hermit to Lady Godiva, from the birds and beasts to the rivers and herbs which can be found in the county. Drayton is so accurate in his description of the land and its flora and fauna that it is clear he knew it extremely well. Every bird and herb seem to remind him of some episode of his own past; each town has some story to tell and the illustrious deeds of its great men become examples of national pride and power.

The first setting to be flown over is the forest of Arden which is said to have "Her one hand touching Trent, the other, Severns side" (XIII, l. 16) – England's most famous forest lies at the very heart of the country not only for geographical reasons, but also because it is bathed by the rivers which played an important role in the ancient history of the country, limiting the Roman presence there and witnessing the first manifestations of western civilization. Warwickshire is thus at the heart of

both England and her history – it has witnessed all the great events and will play an important role in future ones.
Drayton uses the references to the Trent and the Severn to paint a pastoral portrait of his land inhabited by gracious nymphs awaken to the sounds of the river water, and the vision of simple houses built with the wood from the forest – man has adapted the land to his own needs and has established a peaceful and harmonious relationship with the surrounding countryside. The fact that man's work has not spoilt the landscape enhances the author's pastoral tone and clearly shows that Warwickshire is the best place to live in.
The harmony Drayton implicitly refers to is also supported by the variety of the rich fertile landscape:

> We equally partake with Wood-land, as with Plaine,
> Alike with Hill and Dale; and every day maintaine
> The sundry kinds of beasts upon our copious wast's,
> That men for profit breed, as well as those of chase
>
> (XIII, ll. 35-38)

The richness of the land is further displayed in a long list of the birds singing their sweet airs both when the sun rises in the morning sky and at nightfall when it sets down in the west. Besides the fowls living there, inhabitants can also rely on other animals – herds to make a living on, and game to hunt and sport with:

> Of all the Beasts which we for our veneriall name,
> The Hart amongst the rest, the Hunters noblest game:
> Of which most Princely Chase sith none did ere report,
> Or by description touch, t'expresse that wondrous sport
> (Yet might have well beseem'd th'ancients nobler Songs)
> To our old Arden here, most fitly it belongs:
>
> (XIII, ll. 93-98)

Hart hunting is the best pastime in the county, practiced also by goddess Diana and her nymphs.

There follows a long description of deer hunting and then of how, once taken, the deer cry out as they meet their death. The sadness of the scene is then completed by a *tableau* portraying an old hermit living in the forest, a symbol of the harmony between man and nature. Drayton informs his readers about his past as a "man at Armes" (XIII, l. 175) who preferred the quite life of the countryside to the dangerous, polluted life in large towns. His life in a little cottage on the edge of the forest is gladdened by his friendship with the animals living there, the flowers that embellish the forest paths and the tall trees that lend shade to his house: his knowledge of each herb and its healing properties is in some ways an important source for Dodon's and Gerard's herbals (XIII, ll. 231-234).

A description of the rivers flowing through the country and of the Avon that crosses it, precedes a mention of the county's first important town, Coventry, and of Lady Godiva and her actions there.[36] The muse's flight brings the reader to Dunsmore and the High Crosse, the point where the roads from east to west and from south to north intersect, before moving on to Warwick, on the river Avon, the town which lends its name to the county. Drayton addresses the last section of his poem to Warwick, recounting the important event which took place there. The town is praised through the image of Guy of Warwick, the knight who is buried there and is remembered for his deeds:

> Who, thy deere *Phillis* name and Country to advance,
> Left'st *Warwicks* wealthy seate: and sayling into *France*,

36. The Godiva passage in Drayton's poem will be examined in the following pages of this essay.

At Tilt, from his proud Steed, Duke *Otton* threw'st to ground:
And with th'invalewed Prize of *Blanch* the beautious crown'd
(The *Almaine* Emperors heire) high acts didst there atchieve:
As *Lovaine* thou againe didst valiantly relieve.
Thou in the *Soldans* blood thy worthy sword imbru'dst;
And then in single fight, great *Amerant* subdu'dst.
T'was thy *Herculian* hand, which happily destroy'd
That Dragon, which so long *Northumberland* annoy'd;
And slew that cruell Bore, which waste our wood-lands layd,
Whose tusks turn'd up our Tilths, and Dens in Medowes made:
Whose shoulder-blade remaines at *Coventry* till now;
And, at our humble sute, did quell that monstrous Cow
The passengers that us'd from *Dunsmore* to affright.

(XIII, ll. 331-345)

Drayton describes his countryman with the care and enthusiasm that characterize the medieval romances and the Matter of England. Guy is here portrayed as a great knight who performed deeds of such heroism that they would be celebrated in the works of medieval poets.[37] Drayton portrays him as a great national hero, implicitly comparing him to St. George, patron saint of England. Guy is in fact the local hero who defeated the monster terrorising the county of Northumberland, who slew the cruel bear roaming the woods, and overthrew the monstrous cow terrorising Dunsmore. Drayton's words on Guy are so deeply felt that they make the reader aware of his sensitivity towards his own lands and its heroes.

The muse's flight, now approaching its end, touches the Vale of Red-Horse, celebrated for its wealth and abundance of corn. Drayton ends his *Song XIII* after a long description of the vale

37. Of the many texts celebrating the deeds of this knight, it is here worth mentioning John Lydgate and his poem *Guy of Warwick*, which are a case in point.

and of its riches in which he declares that the muse "some ease doth aske, / As wearied with the toyle in this her serious taske" (XIII, ll. 425-426).

Warwickshire and its beauty are so overwhelming that Drayton's muse needs some rest. The variety of its landscape, ranging from sweet hills to smooth plains, the wealth of its lands especially apt for deer and hart hunting, the magnificence of its major cities and the brave hearts of its heroes have moved the muse as much as the reader, who is expected to identify Drayton's county with the very heart of England. The spontaneous affection of this song comes straight from Drayton's heart and awakens the readers' emotions: Warwickshire turns out to be the most beautiful county of Elizabeth Tudor's kingdom and is fully identified with England herself.

Drayton's personal, emotional approach is not present in other similar works. It is interesting that although Drayton's text is similar to Camden's and Speed's descriptions of Warwickshire, it is completely different in structure and method. Camden introduces Warwickshire as the first of five counties known by the name that Ptolemy had given its inhabitants, Cornavii. Warwickshire is then introduced and its boundaries drawn. The reader is told about the River Avon, "running crookedlie from North-east to South-west"[38] and then the Feldon and the Woodland. The work is well structured and each region of the county is awarded the same importance and described in the same way. Camden writes about the soil and places worth mentioning: he explains the origins of their names and then describes their monuments and great

38. Camden 1610: 561.

historical characters. The towns are mentioned in order along the river so none is left out. Warwick, the main town, is described starting with the history of its name, while Coventry is mentioned as the town of Lady Godiva. The description of Warwickshire ends with an account of the Earls of Warwick, their great names and their lineage, and finally the number of parish churches in the county.

John Speed's account of Warwickshire is much shorter: Camden's eleven pages are condensed in just one page. This time Warwickshire is chapter 27 and lies between Worcestershire and Northamptonshire. The county is introduced by a short paragraph on its boundary, followed by some information on its shape: "The forme thereof is not much unlike to a Scallop-shell, growing from her Western-head, & spreading her body wider, with many indents".[39] Paragraph three describes the Feldon and the woodland, while the fourth deals with its inhabitants, originally known as Cornavii. Coventry is mentioned before Warwick, and Lady Godiva is described as a champion of the poor. Speed places the tourist attractions of the county and products of the soil in the last paragraph, preceding a long list of the county's most important people and places.

Put this way, it is clear that the authors had different aims and want to convey different messages to their readers. Both Camden and Speed wrote texts which could easily be turned into modern tourist guides, their descriptions being founded on the most important information concerning the land and its history, while Drayton's work is clearly of a different nature. Its alexandrines make it not a modern guide for travellers, but

39. Speed 1611: 53.

a poem conveying love of the country and deep sorrow over its recent political issues.

Lady Godiva is a clear example of the role Drayton's feelings and emotions play in his poem. She appears on the scene in the passage where Drayton speaks of Coventry and its history. Originally the town was just a "poor thatched village", which subsequently grew in fame and power thanks to Godiva, who rebelled against her husband Leofrick to set the population free from his yoke:

> The Duke, to make her cease,
> Told her that if shee would his losse so farre infonrce,
> His will was, she should ride starke nak't upon a horse
> By day light through the street: which certainly he thought,
> In her heroïck breast so deeply would have wrought,
> That in her former sute she would have left to deale.
> But that most princely Dame, as one devour'd with zeale,
> Went on, and by that meane the Cittie cleerly freed.
>
> (XIII, ll.272-279)

However, Drayton's cameo of Godiva is not limited to this alone. He draws the reader's attention to the assonance between Godiva and Lady Goodere, the woman he secretly loved throughout his life. Her name, Anne, becomes a pun on the River Ankor in the lines immediately after.

> The first part of whose name, Godiva, doth forereed
> Th' first syllable of hers, and Goodere halfe doth sound.
> But further then this place the mysterie extends.
> What Arden had begun, in Ancor lastly ends:
> For in the british tongue, the Britaines could not find,
> Wherefore to her that name of Ancor was assign'd:
> Nor yet the Saxons since, nor times to come had known,
> But that her being heer, was by this name for-shown,
> As prophecying her. For, as the first did tell

Her Sir-name, so againe doth Ancor lively spell
Her Christned title Anne.

(XIII, ll. 280-291)

Lady Godiva is just one example of Drayton's personal description of Warwickshire. More examples can be found in the sections dealing with local herbs, animals and hunting. The passage on hunting is quite a long sequence that includes a description of the Forest of Arden and of goddess Diana's pitiless chases. Drayton manages to give a living picture of deer hunting, which actually is an unequal fight between the "lustie" (XIII, l. 128) animal and its pursuers. The poor hart is chased, his movements tracked by the hounds' noses and his strength overwhelmed by skilled hunters. The "noble stately Deere" (XIII, l. 135) proudly shows his courage, "his high-palm'd head up-beares, / His body showing state, with unbent knees upright" (XIII, ll. 128-129), but then, "bereav'd of strength, / His long and sinewy legs" (XIII, ll. 147-148) fail him and he is soon overcome by his merciless pursuers. The poet and the reader are involved in this scene as much as the hunter and his prey, and in so doing are forced to display their own feelings.

It is this lyrical approach which distinguishes Drayton's work from the others mentioned earlier: *Poly-Olbion* is a text dealing not only with England as a country, but also as a creature whose body speaks through its veins, limbs and joints - the rivers, the mountains, the hills and the plains; the towns, the villages and their inhabitants; the birds and the beasts; the flowers and the trees. Everything is alive and gives life to England as if it were a living creature.

The map of Warwickshire[40] is clear evidence of this: pagan gods inhabit the land embodying rivers, towns and woods. Long-haired nymphs symbolize the rivers; young women in 16th-century costumes stand for the towns; young creatures with bows and arrows suggest the presence of woods and forests. They are mythological beings who interact with Drayton's muse (Fig. 3): their words bear witness to England's past glory and give voice to the *querelles* of her present day. Thanks to them, Drayton successfully gives the history of his country: after all, they have always been there and know its history better than anyone else.

Fig. 3. Drayton's Warwickshire.

40. The images taken from Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* come from the same edition as the quotations from the text.

Conclusion: Drayton's England as Elizabeth I

The notion of England as a living creature identifiable with a human being, and especially with a young and beautiful woman, is already conveyed in the very first pages of the text, where a richly drawn frontispiece is flanked by an explanatory sonnet:

> THROUGH a *Triumphant Arch*, see Albion plas't,
> In *Happy* site, in *Neptunes* arms embras't,
> In *Power* and *Plenty*, on her *Cleevy* Throne
> Circled with *Natures Ghirlands*, being alone
> Stil'd th' *Ocea's Island*. On the Columnes been
> (As Trophies raiz'd) what Princes Time hath seene
> Ambitious of her. In her younger years,
> Vast Earth-bred *Giants* woo'd her: but, who bears
> *In golden field the Lion passantred*,
> Æneas Nephew (*Brute*) them conquered.
> Next, Laureat *Caesar*, as a Philtre, brings,
> *On's shield*, his Grandame *Venus*: Him her Kings
> Withstood. At length, the *Roman*, by long sute,
> Gain'd her (most Part) from th' ancient race of Brute.
> Divors't from Him, the *Saxon sable Horse*,
> Borne by sterne *Hengist*, wins her: but, through force
> Guarding the *Norman Leopards bath'd in Gules*,
> She chang'd hir Love to Him, whose Line yet rules.
>
> (*The Frontispiece*)

The eighteen-line poem written in rhyming couplets explains the image of the frontispiece (Fig. 4), where Albion is a young woman seated on a throne under an arch surrounded by four male figures portraying Brute (Eneas' nephew who was shipwrecked on the English coast); Julius Caesar, embracing a shield, signifying the Roman conquest of the island; a Saxon warrior reminding the readers of the Germanic tribes who invaded England in 410 a.C.; and the Norman conqueror giving origin to the English Middle Ages. Taken together, both poem

and image convey a very precise idea of what England meant to Drayton: a beautiful country protected by the surrounding sea, rich in history and proud of its present identity.

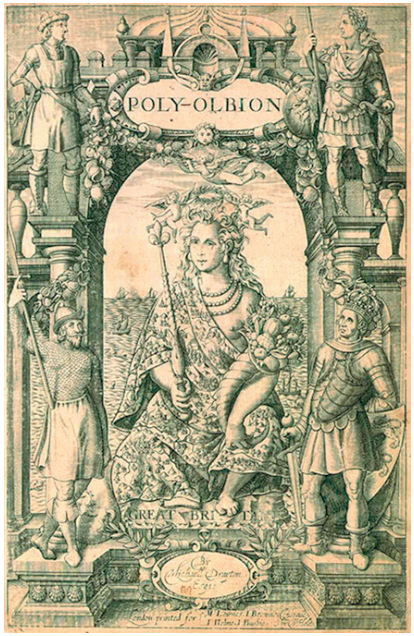

Fig. 4. Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612) frontispiece.

As for the woman sitting under the arch, the reader sees the reassuring face of his late queen, Elizabeth I, whose long reign had granted England peace and prosperity. The young woman is dressed in a map of the country and the shape of her body vaguely recalls the shape of Britain's major island: Elizabeth *is* England, the one who raised her head after the war against Spain and imposed her dominion on the seas. As the cornucopia in the woman's left hand suggests, England is

a rich country, with before it a bright, prosperous future of power and glory.

Drayton's England simultaneously shows and bears witness to the late queen's total identification with her country. The process had started long before,[41] when England was forging her own identity under the banner of the Anglican Church and the founding of the colonial empire. Elizabeth built a bridge between England, the early English Renaissance and modern times by trusting in its potential as a great nation. In the last years of her reign, England went through a difficult period: the lack of a direct heir to the throne, together with the turn-of-the-century superstitions, had given rise to doubts and fears which the queen's successor would be expected to resolve. Thus, when James VI arrived from Scotland, England was eager to start a new chapter of her history, hopeful to find in James the resources to carry forward what Elizabeth had begun. In reality, James never lived up to Elizabeth's legacy and the country soon started to miss her.

By the time Drayton published his *Poly-Olbion* in 1612, James I had already proved a failure and his policy of unifying England and Scotland had proved unacceptable to both his En-

41. Elizabeth Tudor's identification with England was frequent throughout her reign. One of the first pictorial identification of the queen with her country occurred in the canvas mentioned before: Quentin Metsys the Younger's *The Sieve Portrait*, executed in 1579 as the ultimate message to the Duke of Alençon's wooing and marriage proposal. Another important canvas suggesting the identification of the queen with England is *The Ditchley Portrait*, executed by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger in 1592. This time, the queen is standing on the map of England which coincides with the Earth – the identification of England with the entire world is thus complete. For more details on both paintings see Strong 2003: 134-141. Further information on Queen Elizabeth's portraits can be found in Pomeroy 1989.

glish and Scottish subjects. Simply put, Drayton was desperately trying to remind his fellow countrymen of what England had become with Elizabeth. His poem is clear evidence of his anti-Stuart feelings, and the frontispiece expresses his nostalgia for the good old times, those when Good Queen Bess sat triumphant under the royal canopy of state and England ruled the waves, foremost among the other European countries.

References

Barber, P. 2007. "Mapmaking in England, ca. 1470-1650." In Harley, J.B. and Woodward, D. eds. *The History of Cartography*, vol. 3. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1623.

Camden, W. 1610. *Britain: or, A chorographicall description of the most flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Ilands adioyning, out of the depth of Antiquitie: Beautified with Mappes of the several shires of England*. Londini: Impensis Georgii Bishop & Ioannis Norton. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435017950031&view=1up&seq=9 (last visited 21 June 2022).

Drayton, M. 1612. *Poly-Olbion*, 1612, *To the Generall Reader*. The text is available online, https://eebo.chadwyck.com/search (last visited 21 June 2022).

Drayton, M. 1961. "Poly Olbion." In William Hebel, J. ed. *Michael Drayton. Works*, vol. 6. Oxford: Blackwell.

Harrison, W. 1968. *The Description of England*. Edelen, G. ed. Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press.

Kantorowicz, E.H. 1937. *The King's Two Bodies: a study in mediaeval political theology*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Leland, J. 1907. *The Itinerary*. Toulmin Smith, L. ed. London: George Bell and sons.

Levy, F.J. 1964. "The Making of Camden's *Britannia*." *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 26/1: 70-97.

McEachern, C. 1996. *The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590-1612*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Meres, F. 1636. *Palladis Tamia Wits Treasury*. London: for Richard Royston. The text is available online: https://eebo.chadwyck.com/search (last visited 21 June 2022).

Moore, W.H. 1968. "Sources of Drayton's Conception of Poly-Olbion." *Studies in Philology* 65/5: 783-803.

Morrison, S. 2015. "Viewing the Changing 'shape or pourtraicture of Britain' in William Camden's *Britannia*, 1586-1610." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 18/1-2: 1-19.

Ortelius, A. 1608. *Theatrum orbis terrarum Abrahami OrtelI Antuerp. geographi regii*. London: Printed by Iohn Norton. The text is available online: https://www.proquest.com/docview/2240895785/Sec0002/B1FD62ECD8164104PQ/3?accountid=9941 (last visited 21 June 2022).

Pomeroy, E.W. 1989. *The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*. North Haven: Archon Books.

Richardson, R.C. 2004. "William Camden and the Re-discovery of England." *Transcriptions of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 78: 108-123.

Rockett, W. 1995. "The Structural Plan of Camden's *Britannia*." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26/4: 829-841.

Saxton, C. 1579. *Atlas of the counties of England and Wales*. London. The text is available online: https://www.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240895788/42AB8E765B74566PQ/3?accountid=9941&imgSeq=1 (last visited 21 June 2022).

Smith, D.K. 2016. *The Cartographic Imagination in Early Modern England. Re-writing the World in Marlowe, Spenser, Raleigh and Marvell*. Oxford: Routledge. Online edition: https://books.google.it/books?id=XJavxwm4rGQC&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (last visited 21 June 2022).

Speed, J. 1611. *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain*. London. The book is available on Early English Books Online data base, https://eebo.chadwyck.com/search (accessed July 2019).

Strong, R. 2003. *Gloriana. The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*. London: Pimlico.

Tanfield, E.C. and Peterson, L. eds. 2012. *Mirror of the Worlde*. Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Trevisan, S. 2010. *Michael Drayton's Poly-Olbion: A Study in Perspective*. Tesi di Dottorato discussa presso l'Università degli Studi di Padova. The text is available online: http://paduaresearch.cab.unipd.it/2376/ (last visited 21 June 2022).