war were largely bluff and that there was much enthusiasm in England for the campaign. Louis A. Knafla, on the other hand, looks at Elizabeth’s reign in a stimulating and valuable article on the admissions to the Inns of Court, which clarifies, indeed modifies, Lawrence Stone’s educational “revolution.” It is a pity that a work of such quality should be marred by the use, if not the invention, of such a clumsy term as “antihumanism.”

In his concluding article on the rule of law, G. R. Elton surveys the whole Tudor period, and is concerned once again to dispel the tenacious concept of Tudor despotism. In true Eltonian style he slays the paradox that has been found in sixteenth-century England of a deference to sovereign law accompanied by an augmentation of regal power. There is no paradox once it is recognized that regal power only grows by means of statute. The prerogative, though perhaps growing in effectiveness, remained subordinate to parliament. Less successful is Professor Elton’s encounter with Professor Hurstfield, who has pointed out that the existence of the rule of law does not preclude despotism. As the earlier essay in this book on the Duke of Buckingham illustrated well, the law could be wielded in a despotic manner. Even Cromwell may have been guilty of despotic behaviour, and it is a weak defense of his handling of the 1536 Canterbury election to say that evidence we do not possess might well vindicate him. The question of whether the Tudors were or were not despotic cannot, of course, be resolved until there is an agreed definition of despotism. It may be accepted that under the Tudors England enjoyed a more representative government than virtually any other European country; Tudor monarchs, moreover, generally operated within the law; yet, as Professor Elton observes, “Tudor law, like Tudor life, was often savage.” Ought we then to substitute the term “Tudor savagery” for “Tudor despotism”? Surely not!

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For those who accept the validity of periodization in literary studies, the character of an age or even a decade is often better recognized in minor writers who reflect or conserve fashions than in those whose innovations or audacities create them. Two demonstrations of this assertion are provided by Elizabeth Pomeroy’s study of the verse anthologies which, at least chronologically, define the Elizabethan period, since “the first and last of them . . . nearly coincide with the dates of Elizabeth’s reign”; and Richard Harding’s renovative account of Michael Drayton, whose poetical longevity and retrospective idealism established him as the last of the Elizabethans in a Jacobean age. As Harding suggests, Drayton’s burial in Westminster Abbey was probably earned not by his poetic reputation but by his personal legend “among young poets and writers who had never seen Sidney or Spenser or Marlowe.”

The miscellany compilers were conservative by occupation and de facto; Drayton, it seems, by nature and upbringing. Tottel’s Miscellany thrived on the poetry of Wyatt, some
years dead; England’s Helicon (1600) gave a last-minute summary of the pastoral ideal when it had already succumbed to self-parody, in As You Like It and elsewhere. A Poetical Rhapsody (1602) was reprinting a large number of love sonnets when the main vogue for them was already over. Similarly, Drayton’s own Idea, continually revised up to 1619 and only then containing his most famous sonnet, “Since there’s no help, come let us kiss and part,” must have seemed “terribly dated” to his contemporaries, while his return in 1630 to a simple-minded pastoralism may have looked more like a poetic second childhood than the oblique criticism of Jacobean politics and morality it was presumably intended to be.

But whereas the miscellanies provide a fairly reliable index to fashions in short poetry, a decade or two after they had occurred, Drayton’s gift to the literary historian is of a more complex nature. He was at times innovative, as in nationalizing Ovid’s Heroides in England’s Heroical Epistles, or in anticipating the seventeenth-century trends to encyclopaedic history (Poly-Olbion) and biblical epic (Noah’s Flood). But he also provides one of the most ostentatious examples of deference to current fashions, in his wholesale revision of Mortimeriados (1596) into The Barons’ Wars (1603), including the shift from the seven-line rhyme royal to the modish Italian octave. (Hardin’s discussion of these poems seems to me to obscure this remarkable feat, and the influence on Drayton of Daniel’s Civil Wars, and behind Daniel, of Tasso.) What made Drayton definitive of the Elizabethan Age were not his generic choices, in which he looked sometimes back, sometimes forward, and sometimes seemed caught in a slightly absurd race for contemporaneity; it was his consistent belief in the idea of a nation with a historical past, a strong sense of geographical place, and an imperialistic future, a belief which, by its very anachronism in the 1620’s and 30’s, also helps to define negatively what we mean by Jacobean. Using four of Drayton’s odes for an opening definition of this idealism, Professor Hardin proves its centrality even in Drayton’s most negative poetic statements.

The reader of this review will by this time have surmised that the two studies, though comparable, are not of equal value. Professor Pomeroy’s analysis of the miscellanies bears all the marks of a thesis courageously handled, but somewhat short of matter, especially given the pre-existence of fine editions by Hyder E. Rollins. Much of its value consists in reproducing in an economical format the present sum of bibliographical knowledge about these collections. There is considerable repetition between the introductory chapter and those describing individual miscellanies of special significance; and the author has had to fall back on accounts of metrics for filler. There is also an unconvincing hypothesis that all the poems in the Phoenix Nest constitute an “extended elegy” for Sidney. Professor Hardin’s book, on the other hand, though equally dependent on the pre-existence of fine editing, makes a considerable contribution to the literature on a rather neglected poet. He develops a totally convincing relationship between Drayton’s unchanging temperament and the kind of poems he wrote as the times changed around him. Hardin almost manages, also, to provide a chronological account of a poet whose constant revisions and delayed publication of earlier work defy chronology; and he makes one want to go back and read Drayton again. The same cannot be said of the miscellanies.

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