Michael Drayton was born about a year before Shakespeare and in the same county, Warwickshire. He had a long career as poet, extending from the early 1590s until well into the seventeenth century. He collaborated on plays, wrote scriptural paraphrases, pastorals, odes, poetic epistles, verse legends, and a historical epic called *The Barons’ Wars*. His self-styled masterpiece is *Poly-Olbion*, a thirty-thousand-line historical-geographical poem celebrating all the counties of England and Wales. He made a significant contribution as well to the period’s vogue for sonnets, publishing a sequence called *Idea’s Mirror* (1594) that, following substantial revision, he republished as *Idea*. It was in fact Drayton’s standard practice to revise and add to his poems in each new edition, so that one can trace his response to shifting fashions, his rethinking of his antiquarian fascinations, and his development from an Elizabethan to a seventeenth-century poet.

*From Idea*

37

Dear, why should you command me to my rest
When now the night doth summon all to sleep?
Methinks this time becometh lovers best;
Night was ordained together friends to keep.
How happy are all other living things
Which, though the day disjoin by several flight,
The quiet evening yet together brings,
And each returns unto his love at night.
O thou, that art so courteous else to all,
Why shouldst thou, Night, abuse me only thus,
That every creature to his kind doth call
And yet ‘tis thou dost only sever us.
Well could I wish it would be ever day
If when night comes you bid me go away.

1602

50

As in some countries far removed from hence
The wretched creature destinéed to die,
Having the judgment due to his offense,
By surgeons begged, their art on him to try;
Which on the living work without remorse,
First make incision on each mastering1 vein,
Then staunch the bleeding, then trans-pierce the corse,
And with their balms recure the wounds again;

1. Master, principal.
Then poison, and with physic him restore;
Not that they fear the hopeless man to kill,
But their experience to increase the more;
Even so my mistress works upon my ill
By curing me and killing me each hour
Only to show her beauty's sovereign power.

1605