

Finn's Chapter - General Background

Chapter 1
specific title too

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By the late sixteenth century there had been a notable improvement in the position of the Englishwoman. This advanced status was most evident ~~in relation to~~ among the ladies of the Elizabethan avant-garde, and John Lyly was the dramatist most sensitive to the avant-garde activities of the age. His literary works, ~~and~~ especially his plays, appeared in "that brilliant and artificial phase of the English Renaissance when its activities were largely confined to an Italianized coterie around the Queen."¹ And this courtly coterie was the group to which Lyly catered.

Before the appearance of Lyly's first play in 1584, the English drama ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ had already succeeded in branching out in directions other than those suggested by the Medieval Moralities and Miracle plays. Actually, the secularized Morality was still accepted, but there had appeared new and more encouraging developments in the theatre. By the beginning of the sixteenth century the English academic world had adopted the concepts of the Renaissance, and shortly thereafter ~~the~~ English drama began to progress toward a new vitality.

In comedy, the native tradition of coarse humor was gradually diluted through the influence of the Latin comedies of Plautus and Terence and the more romantic Italian comedies ~~SIXXX~~ by such writers as Ariosto. The Latin drama's most apparent contribution was the five-act structure. But these Latin comedies also offered a number of new and complex plots that contrasted sharply with

¹ Wilson, p. 103-114.

check to see if the general way

the threadbare plots of the Moralities. Ralph Roister Doister, carefully constructed and relatively restrained, and Gammer Gurton's Needle, more apparently native but still constructed according to Latin rules, are two representative comedies of the middle sixteenth century. In 1566 the students of Gray's Inn acted George Gascoigne's version of Ariosto's Gli Suppositi, incorrectly translated as The Supposes. This play demonstrated how the ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Italians had assimilated ~~the~~ Latin comedy, and its romantic tone helped to develop in ~~the~~ English ^{and} a taste for Italian characters and plot. Then, in 1577, the play Misogonus fused the native English atmosphere, the Latin structural method, and a predominately Italian plot.

Shortly after ^{with} ~~this~~ Lyly made his appearance as "the first dominating personality that confronts the historian of the English drama."² Whether or not the critic considers Lyly a dominating literary personality, he must agree with Tucker Brooke that Lyly is historically and chronologically important. In Lyly we see the crystallization of the English comedy ~~which~~ ^{that} had been spasmodically developed by schoolmasters and students of language in academic and didactic plays. We can hardly relate Lyly's work to the coarse humor of the native Morality. His work is on a more refined level.

The order and grace of Lyly's work is apparent if we compare it with predeeding work. His plays may be considered the "first successful attempts to transplant and modify Italian eloquence and to make a drama both courtly and pungent."³ By the time Lyly ^{had begun to} ~~was~~ writing, the courtly drama was already being written according to Renaissance patterns. Although Lyly may be considered the founder of English comedy by critics who look to his predecessors, Feuillerat

² Brooke, p. 169.

³ Bradbrook, p. 5.

considers Lyly chiefly as one of a school of court dramatists.⁴
 The Revels Account book lists many ~~suggestive~~ titles of lost
 ? courtly plays ~~which indicate~~ ^{suggesting} that the classical and mythological
 ? comedy ~~which Lyly exemplified~~ ^{& not reflected} had long flourished at Elizabeth's
 court. Feuillerat feels that it would be more reasonable to
 compare Lyly's plays with these lost courtly works ~~rather~~ than
 plays like Roister Doister and Gammer Gurton. However, until
 these lost plays are discovered, Lyly must still be considered the
 first consistent English dramatist.

Although Tucker Brooke considers Lyly's use of non-dramatic
 classica for plots an innovation based upon a desire to be novel,⁵
 classic myth had long been popular material for children's plays,
 and all of Lyly's ~~wight~~ comedies were acted by the children of
 St. Paul's and the Chapel Royal. But the study of Lyly's plots ~~is~~
 not ^{from} particularly important because they serve only as a sort of
 structure upon which ~~Lyly~~ ^{the author} superimposed the philosophies and social
 conventions of his time. Lyly's comedies were, more than those of
 any other Elizabethan dramatist, attuned to the social patterns,
 customs, and interests of the elite. Lyly created a drama that was
 both a mirror and a social guidebook to the court, and through his
 plays ~~Lyly~~ ^{he} occasionally ~~drew~~ ^{conjured} allegories ~~of~~ ^{based} actual court activities.

Because of his preoccupation with a comedy of manners that
 occasionally resembles the courtesy book rather than the play, ~~it~~ ^{Saintsbury}
~~has been claimed~~ that Lyly's theatre is but "a mere backwater in the
 general stream of dramatic progress."⁶ But before we accept this
~~acusation~~ ^{we should note}, three things ~~should be noted~~:

4. Feuillerat, p. 314.

5. Brooke, p. 170.

6. Saintsbury, p. 67.

1. Lyly was concerned with writing "amusing and provocative drama for a ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ sophisticated court."⁷ Thus, ~~Lyly~~^{he} escaped the popular demand for action and dramatic Senecan bloodiness. And even the audiences in the public theatres liked instruction as well as entertainment.
2. Shakespeare's borrowings from Lyly, whether satiric or serious, prove Lyly an influential Elizabethan theatrical figure.
3. Before turning to the ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ drama Lyly had enjoyed his greatest success with his two-part novel Euphues. Its popularity no doubt influenced his occasional tendency to reproduce the mood and pace of the novel in his drama.

Euphues played an important part in determining Lyly's ^{style and common} characteristics. By 1587 Euphues: The Anatomie of Wit was being sold in London, and its success prompted Lyly to write a sequel, Euphues and His England, in 1580¹⁵⁸¹ which equalled the success of the first part. Lyly had a gift for evaluating public demand, and in Euphues he created a work that the upper class wanted, a work that was "genuinely Renaissance, for looking to classic literature for much of its substance, it expresses itself in a style that typifies an intellectual mood of the hour."⁸ It held up to English men and women a mirror of their own society. It was written in the Italian manner of romances of polite society, Euphues ^{marked} was a change from the ~~Medieval~~ chivalric romance with its dangers, heroic hardships, and maidenly misfortune and fidelity. Instead, Lyly dwelt upon love and love-making as the chief topic of conversation, the basis for social intercourse.

7. Parnell, 1-16.

8. Baker, p. 263-76.

S. Lewis
pp 316-17
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~~basis for social intercourse.~~

In Euphuus, Lyly introduced a peculiar prose, the "euphuistic" style with its similes from "unnatural natural history," artificial use of antithesis, puns, alliteration, proverbs, and examples from ancient history. Euphuism employs rhetorical figures of sound and vocal ornament based upon three schemata: isocolon (clauses equal in length), parison (similar in form and structure), and paramoion (similar in sound). Paragraphs are ^{developed} built up by a series of comparisons. ~~claim has been made that~~ There have been claims that Lyly learned this elaborate prose form from the Spaniard Guevara and the Englishman Pettie, among others. But W. Ringler¹⁰ feels that Lyly probably learned the style from John Rainolds (1549-1607), a member of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and later ^{is} president. Rainolds was the most popular academic lecturer of the Elizabethan age, and his Euphuism was fully developed in his Latin lectures. Latin was an easier vehicle for Euphuistic expression than English, and Rainolds' Euphuism is even more remarkable when we consider that academic prose in the Elizabethan ^{is} ~~period~~ was written in the Ciceronian manner. It is significant that all the early Euphuists, ^{is} Pettie, Lyly, Gosson, and Lodge ^{is} were Oxford men. [?] This prose style created a ^{certain} great vogue ~~XXXX~~ at court, and Elizabethan lords and ladies went to great pains to perfect the new "Euphuistic" speech. Because his prose had become a valuable ^{social?} asset, Lyly naturally used it later in his dramatic work. The artificial, elaborate, and studied prose of Euphuus reflects the book's atmosphere, for it is "a very Malvolio among books, cross-gartered and wreathed as to its countenance ~~IX~~ with set smiles."¹⁰

Ringler, pp. 678-686.

¹⁰ Vincent, p. 140.

Shakespeare was to use "Euphuism" satirically, notably in Love's Labour Lost and in those speeches ~~which~~ ^{TSJ} Falstaff delivers in ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ characteristically Lylian prose.¹¹

That such a book as Euphuus should be so popular indicates ~~XXX~~ the temper of certain Elizabethan Elements, a temper ~~which~~ ^{TSJ} [?] strangely enough, fused the vulgar and the aesthetic. Elizabeth herself, to whom Lyly constantly looked for favor and aid, was a great lover of the elaborate. She ~~XXXXXXXX~~ personally preferred the Roman mass to the simpler Anglican service and decorated the royal chapel in a particularly garish style. Services were accompanied by the organ, trumpets, and cornets. And to these instruments the queen added the grunting sackbut, her "one and somewhat singular contribution to the cause of reform."¹² In the midst of this ornate society of the court, lords and ladies who were attempting the "Euphuistic" speech "Crawled with vermin and ~~XXXXXXXX~~ performed their natural functions like barnyard fowl."¹³

In this society of sharp contrasts it is clear that Lyly preferred to ignore the vermin and emphasize the resplendent. There was hardly a man in Elizabethan England more Italianate and ascetic than the Earl of Oxford, who, Feuillerat says, "incarnait tous les défauts at tous les vices que la noblesse anglaise rapportait de ses voyages sur le continent; c'était le type les plus pur des Anglais italianisés de l'époque, le vrai 'mirroir du Tuscanisme.'" ¹⁴

~~and~~ it was this man to whom Lyly dedicated Euphuus and His England and for whom he worked as private secretary. In understanding the

11. Bethell, p. 54.

12. Willison, p. 24.

13. Ibid, p. 86.

14. Feuillerat, p. 81.

(see Nottingham in Renaissance history) 7

character of this man with whom Lyly had wished to associate, we gain some insight into the character of Lyly himself. From the beginning of his career Lyly clearly planned a lifelong devotion to a social element in which ~~the~~ women copied the queen's ornate array in farthingales and the bejewelled and ear-ringed men rejoiced in an almost feminine devotion to the niceties of dress. In his plays as well as his novel Lyly was to be a spokesman for an Italianate England. A contemporary description of the Lylian scene by a visitor to ~~XXX~~ England, Emanuel van Meteren, is ~~perhaps~~ *particularly* ~~most effective~~: "They (the English) are full of courtly and affected manners and words, which they take for gentility, civility, and wisdom."¹⁵ Yet, we may agree with Allardyce Nicoll that "This display, this ostentatious richness, this variety, are the outward expression of that inner vitality which we recognize as the prime quality of Elizabethan times."¹⁶

Even more important to this ~~particular~~ particular study, however, is the fact that Queen Elizabeth was not only the arbiter of dress and customs, but also a sort of inspiration to the Elizabethan woman. Although the movement toward a truly Renaissance Englishwoman had begun early in the century, Elizabeth was a practical and very visible example of ~~what~~ *even* woman; ~~potentially could be~~ *?* Catherine of Aragon is recognized as the first woman to ~~directly~~ *have* stimulate *directly* interest in the concept of the Renaissance woman.¹⁷

She came to England after having been reared in what was then the most brilliant court in Europe; and by the time of Elizabeth, even

15. Nicoll, p. 28.
 16. Ibid., p. 23.
 17. Gagen, p. 13.

over this change helps little

I am afraid the 2 parts of this sentence really have nothing to do with one another & the last stands.

the women of the growing middle class who were relatively ignorant of the more recent and advanced social and intellectual developments had attained a status as partners with their husbands and as proprietors. But the upperclass woman of Lyly's world had attained an even more advanced, though perhaps less practical, status.

After Catherine we may observe a gradual change in the education and position of the courtly lady. Sir Thomas More had given his daughters the same training that his son had received. The daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke were celebrated for their erudition, and one of the^m, Anne, ~~was~~ Francis Bacon's mother, in 1550 made so fine a translation of Bishop Jewel's Apology for the Church of England that Archbishop Parker insisted on having it published. Another of Cooke's daughters, Elizabeth, married Sir Thomas Hoby, the translator of Castiglione's The Courtier, a book ~~which~~ had great influence upon upper class English social customs. And Lady Jane Grey, another important figure in the Tudor tapestry, was famed for her learning.

"During the Elizabethan age cultural interests became fashionable for women, so that the educated woman became a kind of ideal, and the principles of her education were those of the humanistic scholars." ¹⁹ Indeed, of Elizabeth herself the humanist Roger Ascham wrote: "There are many honourable ladies now who surpass Thomas More's daughters in all kinds of learning; but among all of them the brightest star is my illustrious Lady Elizabeth, the king's sister...." ²⁰ This was in 1550, and even at this date, ~~there were~~ "many honourable ladies" with pretensions to learning.

This "new woman" captured the imagination of the Elizabethans.

18. Camden, p.5.

19. Ascham, I, p. 60 .

*began to dominate
back of social
and intellectual world
scene?*

Women had moved out of the obscurity in which they had been kept by the Church for centuries and began to circulate in economic and intellectual spheres. In Elizabethan^s time~~s~~ hundreds of books and pamphlets were written in an attempt to explain and question this new woman of the Renaissance, among them The Praise and Dispraise of Women (1579), Thomas Nash's The Anatomie of Absurdity; Contayning a breefe confutation of the slender imputed praises to feminine perfection (1589), and Stephen Gosson's Quippes for Upstart Newfangled Gentlewomen, Or a Glasse, to view the Bride of vainglorious Women (1595). Although these titles may suggest a generally anti-feminist tone, most writers urged that formal education be included as essential for women. "Woman no longer occupied the fictitious position she had held during the Middle Ages, when, lifted by convention to a false height, she was in reality too often degraded."²⁰ During the Renaissance, woman was to make amazingly swift strides toward a social and intellectual position she could never have hoped to attain during the Middle Ages.

Before the ^{time} age of Elizabeth the conventional attitude toward women had largely been established by Petrarch's devotion to his Laura. Ironically enough, Petrarch was principally remembered for his love for Laura because it fused well with the Platonic tendencies of the age. Neo-Platonism had become a fashionable philosophy, especially in its attitude toward love. The manuals of courtesy and polite conversation, along with Petrarch's poems and other Italian works, presented to the English the neo-Platonism of the Renaissance. The Platonic ideals came to England from Italy, and the Italian influence ~~was~~ in conversation was largely felt in a Platonism, of which little ~~was~~ ^{of which came} from Plato himself. Petrarch was the final authority in

20. Einstein, p. 86.

in this ^{would} field, and these Platonic ideals, along with the emphasis upon conversation, created a fashionable Englishwoman who was particularly Italianate. ✓

According to Platonic doctrine, the possession of beauty for contemplation was a necessary feminine attribute, and the Elizabethans favored a beauty that combined the colors of red and white in different combinations. But equally important to this "new woman" was the possession of wit. For, as Violet Jeffery explains, "The attitude of the Renaissance courtier to woman ~~was that of a man to a creature with a certain capacity for awakening love and a certain skill in discussing the phenomena of love.~~"²¹ Here we see the mingling of the two concepts: beauty to awaken love and wit to discuss it. The art of conversation was ^{an area} a field in which the Elizabethan woman should be as adept as she was in the ^{fields} fields of letters, music, drawing, and painting. Conversation became a fine art. As a conversationalist the perfect woman of the Renaissance "should have sweetness of voice, gravity of expression, and purity of meaning."²²

This emphasis upon wit and the corresponding ability to converse had become a staple in literature. Even Edmund Tilney, who was Master of the Revels during Lyly's career as a dramatist, wrote in 1568 a treatise in octavo entitled A briefe and pleasaunt discourse of duties in Mariage in which the bright Lady Julia ably enters. Lyly's Euphues was characterized by an even more extensive treatment of the conversation in which women functioned on a level with men.

As importantly as this positive attitude toward women and their
 21. Jeffery, p.44.
 22. Einstein, . 86.

abilities and potentialities existed in the Renaissance and in Elizabethan England, there existed also a strongly misogynist attitude. Indeed, ~~the~~ diatribe against women became a characteristic feature of the Renaissance. Boccaccio was foremost among misogynists, both in point of time and vehemence. Bembo had devoted one whole book of his Asolani to a denunciation of love and women, and both he and Boccaccio were well known in England. Castiglione's The Courtier in Hoby's translation had become a sort of standard Elizabethan work. In it Castiglione endows two characters, Gasparo Pallovicino and Niccolo Frigio, with fierce antagonism toward women, which they satisfy by listing women's failings, their ambitions, cruelty, vanity, fickleness, and frivolity. Lyly develops this theme in Euphues in the "Cooling Card for Philautus and all fond lovers," a strongly misogynist piece of ~~WAX~~ writing. Carroll Camden offers his own explanation of this tradition: "The subject of the dispraise of women is as ancient as the sex, but the popularity of such diatribes in the English Renaissance was due to many factors: medieval monasticism and the attitude of such Church fathers as Tertulian, the opposite side of the coin which first showed the woman of the Petrarchan sonnets, the problem of female rulers, and the desire of the reading public for some satiric fare, different from the avalanche of religious books."²³ He should have added the strong influence of the Italian writers.

Lyly seems to sense the publicity value of the "Cooling Card," for Euphues and His England is primarily addressed to women. In Euphues Lyly had already recognized the "new," Renaissance idea of the capable and articulate woman. Thus, in his novel Lyly had already recognized what may be considered the two major attitudes

23. Camden, p. 23.

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toward women in Renaissance England, the one ~~which~~^{that} maintains the misogynist tradition, and the other ~~which~~^{that} ~~admits~~^{accepts} and characterizes the learned and able woman. If any group in England was sensitive to these intellectual, philosophical, literary, and social concepts, it was certainly the fashionable court circle. Not only was Lyly "keenly alive to foreign and domestic influences about him,"²⁴ but also his plays "more precisely than any others, reflect the court of Elizabeth."²⁵

~~So, when Lyly turned from the novel to the drama, he retained his grasp of the contemporary opinions~~

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When Lyly turned from the novel to the drama, he retained his grasp of the contemporary opinions concerning women. Because love is so important a theme in Lyly's dramatic work, just as it is in his Euphues, the dramatist Lyly must inevitably demonstrate his attitude toward women. Actually, G. Wilson Knight / in evaluating Lyly's plays / finds a preoccupation with love almost characteristically Lylian, and Lyly "crowns Cupid, or Eros, for the first time in England as the lord of dramatic ritual."²⁶ For a courtly audience that was habitually subject to the most extravagant sorts of flirtation Lyly created a ~~frankly admitted~~^{frankly admitted} ~~pleasing and gratifying~~^{pleasing and gratifying} literature dedicated to pleasing and gratifying.

In several of his prefaces and epilogues Lyly makes direct appeal to the ladies of the court. He seems always ~~eager~~^{eager} to gain the attention and indulgence of these women, and, most particularly, of Queen Elizabeth herself. As Jean Gagen explains /, "John Lyly recognized the importance of his courtly feminine audience and frankly

24. Baker, p. 273.

25. Knight, pp. 146-163.

26. Ibid., p. 157.

catered to it."²⁸ And, although Lyly had gained his greatest fame with Euphues before he wrote his plays, he seems to have always been determined to maintain his reputation as a clever figure of the avant-garde who would impress courtly circles with his understanding and extremely timely interpretations of the contemporary scene. Women, one of the greatest contemporary phenomena, were one of Lyly's very visible preoccupations.

27. Gagen, p. 85.

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