

Chapter Two
Woman in Lyly's Works

In his literary debut Lyly entered the ^{world} ~~field~~ of feminine characterization as a misogynist. The attitude toward women in Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit is definitely negative. Lucilla, who serves as an approximation of a heroine, is best described by John Dover Wilson who finds her subject to a mild form of erotomania and constitutionally fickle.¹ However, characterization is ~~hardly~~ ^{scarcely} even attempted in The Anatomy of Wit, and it is difficult even to judge the temperament of Euphues himself. He and Philautus, his friend, are generally lifeless and wooden, and we may only differentiate between the two slightly, if at all. Euphues simply appears more reserved and self-consciously didactic than Philautus, though he is equally as gullible in the face of Lucilla's vacillation.

where does this begin?

From Lucilla's actions -- rejecting Philautus in favor of Euphues and then rejecting Euphues in favor of another -- we gain the greatest insight into her character. She is "constitutionally fickle," with littlerpersonality and less wit. But her fickleness seems curiously compulsive, as if it were an innate element of feminine nature. Yet this same fickleness is the same characteristic that gives

Lucilla color and importance. Her behavior is a sense is the principal motivating element of the plot. It draws Euphues to her and creates the rupture and inevitable reconciliation between Euphues and Philautus.

In addition, Lucilla -- or, rather, Lucilla's behavior -- is largely responsible for Euphues' Cooling-Carde for Philautus and all fond lovers, which is attached to The Anatomy of Wit as a sort of postscript. The Cooling-Carde is Lyly's own contribution to the literature of the misogynous tract. In it he rails against "woemen the gate to perdition." At length Euphues analyzes the faults of women in this manner:

It is a worlde to see how commonly we are blynded with the collusions of woeman, and more entised by their ornaments being artificiall, then their proportion being naturall. I loathe almoste to thincke on their oyntments, and apoticarie drugges, the sleeking of their faces, and all their slibber sawces, which bring quesnesse to the stomache, and disquyet to the minde.²

The last sentence admirable sums up the message of the "letter": "I bidde thee farewell, and flye women."

The success of Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit encouraged Lyly to present a sequel two years later (1580) in Euphues and his England wherein Euphues and Philautus travel to England. In The Anatomy of Wit Euphues' coming to Naples from Athens and his dealings with Neapolitan society ~~has~~ traditionally been considered as autobiographically representative of Lyly's leaving the university for London. But if we must understand Neapolitan society in the first book to really mean London society, then in Euphues and his

England the frame of reference is more highly specific. This is courtly English society to which Lyly is holding up the mirror, as it were, in the second book.

Most significant, however, is Lyly's addressing Euphues and his England not to gentlemen, but rather "to a class which had hitherto been neglected -- 'the ladies and gentlewomen of England.'"³ The reading element among English gentlewomen had been steadily increasing through the years, and in addressing his second book to the ladies Lyly was the first popular author to recognize this fact. In addition, in the superficial and artificial context of a love-debating society, it would only be fair and conventional that the overtly misogynous Anatomy of Wit be counterbalanced by a work more positive in its attitude toward women.

Euphues and his England is a longer and more carefully detailed work than The Anatomy of Wit. When he is not dwelling upon the glories and superiorities of England, Lyly shows a more than rudimentary talent for character portrayal. Again Euphues and Philautus are more abstract than human; perhaps this is as it should be, for they are most importantly the eyes and ears through which Lyly presents England. Therefore ~~there~~^{we} is not ~~too~~^{ful} great a sense of incompleteness when these two fail to function as recognizable human beings.

However, Euphues and his England is chronologically significant in that it gives an early indication of Lyly's talents for feminine characterization, talents that were

to be realized much more effectively later in his dramatic works. The disputes and love debates of the plot, those pastimes "that might be pleasaunt, but not vnprofitable, rare, but not without reasoning," are perfect situations in which to place the "new woman," situations undoubtedly being re-enacted at the time in Elizabeth's court. And in Camilla ^{and} Lady Frauncis, Lyly creates two fine examples of what the woman of the Renaissance should be.

Lyly makes it clear that one element in favor of favor of Camilla and Lady Frauncis is the fact that they are Englishwomen. The observant Elizabethan reader would surely remember that the fickle Lucilla of The Anatomy of Wit was an Italian. But there is more to recommend these two women than the bare fact of nationality. Camilla does reject Philautus, as did Lucilla, but the rejection arises from an earlier and admirable faithful devotion to Surlius rather than fickleness. Camilla, beautiful and intelligent, is an able entrant into the world of debates and disputes. And she admits that she enjoys being "in this good company, displaying my mind...."

And, if Camilla is unattainable, there is certainly no dearth of similarly endowed young ladies in the English court. Philautus may turn to Lady Frauncis "with hir accustomed boldness, yet modesty" whom Philautus "perceived so sharp." In one particularly notable scene of the book we are presented with the picture of Camilla debating against Surlius, Philautus against Frauncis, Euphues acting

as judge. Here men and women function as intellectual equals, although the ladies are both susceptible to the vagaries of love. For even ladies "that are most wise are not free from the impressions of Fancy."

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Lyly made his dramatic debut in 1584⁴ with Campaspe, "Played beefore the Queenes Maiestie on newyeares day at night, by her Maiesties Children, and the Children of Paules." Campaspe is a romantic drama, an Ovidian romance in dramatic form. Alexander was a popular figure during the Renaissance, and in dramatizing this episode in the legend of Alexander Lyly was catering to public taste. The story of Alexander's love for his beautiful Theban captive, Campaspe, and his subsequent magnanimous resignation of Campaspe to Apelles, the painter, was an especially popular tale. In Lyly's Campaspe G. Wilson Knight sees the dramatization of a typical Renaissance conflict: soldiership versus love.⁵ The central problem of the play is also the problem of the age: what is the perfect courtly, humanistic existence? This is the sort of problem intrinsic to a book like Castiglione's The Courtier. And Lyly characteristically uses these essentially courtly Elizabethan conflicts and problems.

Hephaestion, Alexander's general, is Lyly's own representative of the misogynous tradition. In attempting to persuade Alexander to fo^rget Campaspe, he says:

You, Alexander, that would be a God, shew your selfe in this worse than a man so soone to be both overseene and overtaken in a woman, whose false teares know their true times, whose smooth words wound deep-

er then sharpe swordes. There is no surfeit so dangerous as that of honney, nor anye poyson so deadly as that of loue; in the one phisicke cannot preuaile, nor in the other counsell. (Act I, Scene 2)

This plea is spoken in the context of a typically Renaissance love debate between Alexander and Hephaestion, and, while it is an attempt on one level simply to dissuade Alexander from marrying beneath his station, its inherently misogynous tone is readily apparent.

Of all the characters in the play, however, Campaspe, with the possible exception of the bitter and iconoclastic Diogenes of Sinope, is the most human and dramatic. Alexander and Apelles emerge more as dramatic stereotypes than human beings. But Campaspe is always human and believable, although she is clearly a Lylian representative of the Renaissance woman. Her early exchanges with Apelles prove that his Petrarchan ideas of courtship are hardly a match for her biting wit:

Apel. Is it not possible that a face so faire & a wit so sharpe, both without comparison, shuld not be apt to love.

> Camp. If you begin to tip your tongue with cunning, I pray dip your pensil in colours; and fall to that you must do, not that you would doe. (III, 3)

Campaspe, however, proves to be more than a wit. She is also a woman of considerable depth, and her dawning love for Apelles is one of the charming features of the play. In a soliloquy in which she considers the problem of choosing between the noble Alexander and the artist Apelles, she says: "A needle will become thy fingers better than a Lute and a distaffe fitter for thy hand then a Scepter." (IV, 2)

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Her superficial cleverness and wit only serve as a sort of cloak for her basic simplicity and intelligence. Apelles assesses the character of Campaspe correctly: "Campaspe is not less wise then faire...." (IV, 5) A Theban captive is turned by Lyly into a paragon of Renaissance femininity.

E. K. Chambers dates Sapho and Phao, Lyly's second play, in the same year as Campaspe, 1584. The play is a fine example of Lyly's tendency to use classical myth as a vehicle for courtly situations. Here he uses the legend of a passion between Sappho and Phao, but Sappho becomes a queen with a court in Lyly's treatment.

With this play we are introduced to the important problem of allegory in Lyly's courtly dramas. Lyly's version of the love of Sappho and Phao, the jealousy that drives Venus to have Cupid cool Sappho's affection for Phao, and Phao's final departure in despair has led scholars, Bond among them, to consider Sapho and Phao as flattery of Queen Elizabeth because it allegorically represents the relations between her and her suitor, the Duc d'Alencon. Elizabeth's vacillation and chicanery had caused Alencon to leave England on February 6, 1582. Support for this allegorical view is derived from the phrase, "the necessitie of the hystorie," in the Epilogue; the representation of Sappho as a rather majestic ruler, as opposed to Ovid's short, dark heroine; and Phao's departure to seek other destinies, an action

that parallels Alencon's departure to assume the sovereignty of the United Provinces. Before accepting this allegorical analysis, however, and in considering later ones, it might be well for us to consider E. K. Chambers' view that it "would have ruined Lyly's career to allegorize the queen."⁶

In Sapho and Phao Venus is clearly the villainess, and it is feminine passion, a passion for Phao, that drives her to her villainy. Sapho is a woman of considerable dignity, and even her moments of passion are no more than extended, languorous sighs. She is essentially lifeless, and her lifeless reserve is perhaps most evident in her final speech:

I will wish him fortunate. This wil I doe for Phao, because I once loued Phao; for neuer shall it be said that Sapho loued to hate, or that out of loue she coulde not be as courteous, as she was in loue passionate. Come, Mileta, shut the doore. (V, 5)

The tone conveyed by the last sentence is a sort of crystallization of Sapho's passivity.

Both Sapho and Venus are women of power, and Sapho and Phao is a drama ruled and guided by women. However, it is the play's group of courtly ladies who capture most attention. Their discussions of love recall similar discussions in Euphues, and it is possible that these lively neo-Platonic and Petrarchan discussions among the ladies were modelled upon similar discussions in Elizabeth's court. Mileta is the unofficial chief of these

ladies, and in her, rather than in Sapho, we see a recognizable woman. The gossip of these courtly ladies is a biting satire on feminine chatter, and Lyly handles this satire amusingly and interestingly. Of the women Mileta is the most impudent. To use an Elizabethan term, she is an "vp-start gentlewoman." Here are two of her opinions, the first on love^{and} the second on men:

I laugh at that you call loue, and iudge it onely a worde called loue. Me thinks lyking, a a curtesie, a smile, a beck, and such like, are the very Quintessence of loue. (I, 4)

It is good sporte to see them want matter: for then fall they to good manners, hauing nothing in their mouthes but 'Sweet Mistresse,' wearing our hands out with courtly kissings, when their wits faile in courtly discourses. Now ruffling their haire, now setting their ruffes, then gazing with their eyes, then sighing with a priuie wring by the hand, thinking us like to be wowed by signes and ceremonies. (I, 4)

Lyly's next play, Gallathea (1584-88), combines mythological and pastoral elements. Aside from classical sources, Lyly was indebted to Reginald Scot's Discouerie of Witchcraft, published in 1584, for the alchemical terms which figure in the play. The Alchemist, not essential to the play, is introduced most obviously to serve as a scapegoat. Making fun of the Alchemist is related to Lyly's parody on spells in Euphues and his condemnation of witchcraft in Endimion. During the Renaissance the belief in wizards and alchemists had declined, and it was considered enlightened thinking to satirize these practitioners.

The plot of Gallathea deals with the attempts of

two fathers to disguise their daughters, Gallathea and Phillida, as boys in order to evade the virgin tribute to Neptune. The two disguised girls meet in the woods and fall in love, each thinking the other ~~to be~~ male. Finally, in order to gratify their mutual attraction, Venus decides to turn one of the girls into a boy. Ilyly skillfully relates the actions of these two girls to the plot. Disguised as boys, neither is ever really sure of herself, and their signs of affection toward each other are shy and uncertain:

Phil. (Aside). What doubtfull speeches be these?
I feare that he is as I am, a mayden.

Galla. (Aside). What dread riseth in my mind. I
feare the boy to be as I am a mayden.

Phil. (Aside). Tush, it cannot be, his voice shewes
the contrarie.

Galla. (Aside). Yet I doe not thinke it, for he
woulde then have blushed.

Phil. Haue you ever a sister? (III, 3)

Each is a likeable, shy "mayden."

There are in the play, however, other representatives of womankind who are less maidenly. Telusa, a nymph of Diana whom Cupid capriciously inspires with a passion for the disguised Phillida, has a more clearly sensual awakening. She and another nymph, Eurota, inspired by Cupid to love the disguised Gallathea, enter into a conversation that expounds two basic neo-Platonic concepts:

Tel. Thou hast told what I am in vttering what thy selfe is: these are my passions, Eurota, my unbridled passions, which I were as good acknowledge and craue counsell, as to denie and endure perill.

Eurota! How did it take you first, Telusa?

Tel. By the eyes, my wanton eyes which conceiued
the picture of his face, and hangd it on the
verie strings of my hart. O faire Melebeus! O
fond Telusa! But how did it take you Eurota?

Eurota. By the eares, who sweete words suncke
so deep into my head, that the remembrance of his
wit hath bereaued me of my wisdom; o eloquent
Tyterus! o credulous Eurota! (iii, 3)

This illustrates the concept of the twonmeans of contact with physical and spiritual beauty in the neo-Platonic context. The body is reached through seeing and the soul through hearing.

Another notable feminine type in the play is the unidentified Nymph of Diana who appears in a brief exchange with Cupid in the second scene of Act One. She is an obvious continuation of the type of woman first created by Lyly in Mileta: clever, witty, impudent, extremely well pointed and self-assured.

In the Epilogue to Gallathea Lyly makes direct appeal to the courtly ladies in his audience, asking them to yield to love and telling them that love conquers all things but itself and ladies all hearts but their own.

Endimion (1588) is a compressed and involved play. In Lucian's short dialogue (Deorum Dial II) Lyly found the incident of Selene's drawing for Venus a picture of Endimion sleeping on his cloak after hunting. Endimion was subsequently awakened by Cynthia's kiss. There is also a brief allusion to the story in Ovid's Art. Am. The most consistent critical attitude toward the play is one that considers it completely allegorical. Before

accepting this allegorical interpretation, however, it might be advisable to note again E. K. Chambers' belief that Lyly would have ruined his career by allegorizing Queen Elizabeth.

The traditional allegorical interpretation sees Endimion as a representation of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Cynthia, as a representation of Elizabeth. Briefly, the story deals with the love of Tellus for Endimion, who has abandoned her to pursue his unrequited passion for Cynthia. Tellus asks a witch to charm Endimion into a forty-year slumber. He is finally awakened by a kiss from Cynthia, who will not openly return his love, and Tellus is graciously pardoned. Bond⁸⁸ argues that Tellus is Mary of Scotland, for a match had been contemplated in 1563-5 between Leicester and her.

Feuillerat,⁸⁹ on the other hand, differs from this conventional interpretation of Endimion's allegory. He feels that Lyly would have been foolish to allegorize Leicester, a favorite with the queen.¹⁰ In support of his view that Endimion is not Leicester, Feuillerat notes that Lyly, a satellite of Oxford's anti-Leicester clique, would obviously have been the last person in the world to plead Leicester's cause. He believes, rather, that the play allegorizes negotiations for a league between Elizabeth and James of Scotland.

At any rate, the play is clearly courtly in at-

mosphere, and the original mythology is hardly apparent. Endimion is very obviously a courtier; Cynthia, a queen surrounded by a court. The implied Moon-Earth allegory would also tend to support the conventional interpretation of the play, for the remote and chaste Cynthia as the Moon and the sensually passionate Tellus as the Earth would certainly work toward convincing Elizabethan audiences that the former was Elizabeth and the latter Mary.

Cynthia is a woman of great majesty. It might be said that she represents the ideal woman ruler. At the same time she appears a sort of "divine" creature, a goddess -- "one that all the world wondreth at." Endimion in ^{his} courting Cynthia, ~~is~~ ^{bears a decided resemblance} ~~decidedly~~ similar to Keats' hero of the same name, for both are seeking a sort of ideal beauty or love:

End. Why troublest thou me, hauing neither heade
to conceiue the cause of my loue, or a hart to
receiue the impressions? followe thou thing
owne fortunes, which creepe on the earth, & suffer
me to flye to mine, whose fall though it be des-
perate, yet shall it come by daring. (I, 1)

Cynthia is clearly an idealization, an Elizabethan personification, of the chaste, wise, fair superwoman.

Tellus, on the other hand, earthy and sensual, has all the characteristics of a woman whose love has been scorned. She pursues "a reuenge incredible, and, if it may be, Unnatural." But, in spite of these dark tendencies toward revenge, Tellus is particularly Lylilian in that she is at the same time wise and "faire." However, in playing her jailer, Corsites, for a fool, she "will

practice that which is most customarie to our sex, to dissemble." (IV, 1) Of all the characters in the play *Tellus*, principally because of the depth of her passion and designs, is the most dramatic. As G. Wilson Knight remarks, "There is something dark and tragic in the passion of *Tellus* for *Endimion*."¹³

A lesser character who deserves mention is *Semele*, the beloved of *Eumenides*, *Endimion's* friend. She is *Lyly's* personification of the shrew, a female prototype whose appearance in the woodcuts and literature of the age reflects the fascination that the concept of the shrewish woman held for Elizabethans. *Semele* is the "very waspe of all women, whose tongue stingeth as much as an Adders tooth." And, in *Endimion*, as in *Sapho and Phao*, one of the features of the play is the lively discussion of love by the court ladies. Again, the emphasis is upon the Petrarchan and neo-Platonic, and the ladies involved in the discussion are amusingly grave.

Mother Bombie (1587-90) presents a problem. It seems to have almost no *Lylian* characteristics. Of all of *Lyly's* plays it alone seems to have no direct source, although the idea of rascally servants aiding their young masters in marriage schemes against the parents' wishes is obviously from Terence. The tradition of child-changing and the subsequent discovery thereof that resolves the plot is also Roman. But, in addition to its lacking a source, *Mother Bombie* contains none of the courtly, mythological, or allegorical elements that characterize

Lyly's plays. Here Lyly abandons the somewhat idealized Lylian world and creates a realistic picture of life.

The play is largely peopled by the stock characters of Italian comedy: the avaricious old man, rascally servants, the Balia, the young student in love. Bond ascribes the play to Lyly because it was performed by the Paul's boys, its scene is laid in Kent (Lyly's native region), it uses typically Lylian phrases, and it is included in Blount's Six Court Comedies of 1632.

Violet Jeffery, however, finds¹¹ these arguments "far from convincing,"¹² ~~and~~ argues that "it would be hard to find a play of the time more unlike the rest of Lyly's work." K. N. Colville assumes a relatively safe position in the debate by concluding, "The play was probably an experiment."¹³

Because the figures in Mother Bombie are largely stock characters, most of them are basically unreal, and the play is distinguished by little notable character development. Mother Bombie, who would seem the principal character, is really of little interest. She is neither essential to the plot nor does she have any real influence upon the other characters aside from the fact that they go to her to have their fortunes told. In this respect she is different from Dipsas, the enchantress of Endimion, for Dipsas is an integral part of the plot.

Of the three young women in the play, Livia is the

most ^{notable?} outstanding. Her character alone would seem to prove Lyly's authorship of the play, for she is clearly a sister to Mileta of Sapho and Phao, a bright young woman with ¹dancing wit and a piercing mentality who speaks "wittily but unciuilly." In the following speech, discussing matches made by parents, she is criticizing an Elizabethan social custom of long standing:

Indeed, our parents take great care to make vs aske blessing, and say grace when as we are lyttle ones, and growing to yeeres of iudgement, they deprive us of the greatest blessing, and the most gracious thing to our mindes, the libertie of our mindes.... For mine own parte (sweete Candius) they shall pardon me, for I will measure my loue by mine owne iudgement, not my fathers purse or peeuishness. (I, 3)

Crude speech → We suspect that there is hardly any subject upon which Livia will not express her forthright opinion, for she is a "girle that knows her lerripoope."

The only two other girls who figure to any extent in the play are Serena and Silena. Serena is a rather static character whose only notable characteristics are refined manners, poise, and cultivated speech. She is, however, a sincere character. Silena, on the other hand, is mentally retarded, and, in the age of Elizabeth, qualified as a very comic character. Strangely enough, Silena remains one of Lyly's funniest creations:

My name is Silena, I care not who know it, so I doo not: my father keeps me close, so he does; and how I have stolne out, so I haue, to goe to olde Mother Bombie to know my fortune, so I will; for I haue as fayre a face as euer trode on shoo sole, and as free a foote as euer lookt with two eyes.
(II, 3)

When asked her age, this "lunaticke or foolish" girl replies, "I shall be eightheene next beare-baiting."

Between 1589 and 1590 Lyly wrote Midas, a mythological-pastoral-allegorical play based upon the familiar legend of the golden touch. The story of Midas is told in Ovid's Metamorphoses. The date of composition is an important factor in making the allegorical interpretation of the play plausible. Midas is generally taken to represent Philip of Spain. The presence of a court and the play's basically courtly atmosphere would seem to support this attitude. Also, Midas' greed may easily allegorize Philip's ambitious designs on territories and, more particularly, his greed for the gold that Spain's possessions in the Western hemisphere were producing. The ^{UN-}successful attempts of Midas to subdue the Island of Lesbos (England) represent the defeat of the Armada in 1558.

Lyly's interest in this play is most obviously directed toward developing the career of Midas, for his principal theme seems to be a satire on greed, a theme that exists only in connection with Midas. As a result, the women in Midas occupy a relatively minor position. Most notable among them is Sophronia, the daughter of Midas. She is a representative of the Sapho-Cynthia tradition. Lyly, however, succeeds in making her just as noble but less majestic than either Sapho or Cynthia. This may attest a delicacy in Lylian character portrayal that is able to differentiate between princesses and

queens. Sophronia is wise, courageous, and capable of talking with the king's counsellors as an equal or ^y managing the ladies of the court. Into the superficial and light atmosphere of the court, particularly the atmosphere of the court ladies, she injects a tone of wisdom and sense:

Soph. And thou, Caelia, and all you ladies, learn this of Sophronia, that beautie in a minute is both a blossome and a blast: Loue, a worme which seeming to liue in the eye, dies in the hart. You be all yong, and faire, endeuor all to be wise & vertuous, that when, like roses, you shal fall from the stalke, you may be gathered and put to the still. (II, 1)

Along with Sapho and Phao and Endimion, Midas deals in part with the trivialities of the court ladies. Of these court ladies Suavia is the most compelling. She is ^{is} witty, impudent, outspoken woman, an extension of the type of woman Lyly had created earlier in Mileta of Sapho and Livia of Mother, a woman whose "tounge is so nimble it will neuer lye still." Her caustic wit all but disrupts the discussions of the ladies (III, 3), so that Sophronia must plead, "Let our comming sport not tourne to spight."

Love's Metamorphosis (1589-90) is a "wittie and Courtly Pastorall." Lyly's source was Ovid's Metamorphoses and possibly Boccaccio's Filocolo. Briefly, this play tells the story of three of Ceres' Nymphs who disdain the love of three foresters. For this Cupid turns the nymphs into a rock, a rose, and a bird. The almost overpowering sub-plot concerns Ceres' revenge on

Erischthon, a wealthy farmer who ^{has} killed one of her nymphs.

Ceres' three disdainful nymphs, Nisa, Celia, and Niobe, those "immodest" and "silly girles," are the play's most lively characters. They are "cruell Nisa, borne to slaughter men," "coy Celia, bred vp in skoffes," and "wauering, yet wittie Niobe," all projections of Lyly's earlier Miletta, Suavia, and Livia. The three nymphs are witty, impudent, obstinate, and scoffing:

Niobe. Inconstancie is a vice, which I will not swap for all the vertues; though I throwe one off with my whole hand, I can pull him againe with my little finger; let vs enourgge them, and write something; if they censure it favorable, we know them fooles; if angerly, we wil say they are froward. (I, 2)

They are the girls whom nothing will "mooue." Significantly, the close of the play sees them all "tamed" and ready to "consummate what Cupid hath commaunded."

Ceres is drawn in the tradition of Sapho, Cynthia, and Sophronia. She is a queen-symbol ~~and~~ ^{with} exercises not only authority but also a terrible power when crossed. She is wise and acts as a sort of mentor and guardian for the nymphs in the same manner that Sophronia guided her court ladies. Ceres, however, is capable of showing more tender feeling than her actions of revenge would lead one to believe:

Ceres. My sweet Nymphs, for the honor of your sex, for the loue of Ceres, for regard of your own countrie, yeeld to loue; yeeld, my sweete Nymphes, to sweete loue. (V, 4)

And love is certainly the guiding force in this play in which the dramatic action gradually moves toward a

matrimonial conclusion marked by its ceremony.

E. K. Chambers dates The Woman in the Moone as Lyly's last play, written between 1590 and 1595. He bases his decision largely upon the fact that this, Lyly's only play in blank verse, is written in the verse of the '90's rather than of the '80's. The play is chiefly pastoral in type, though it contains certain characteristics of the masque and the mythological play. Four Utopian shepherds pray to Nature for a woman. Nature creates Pandora, but in the process she robs all the goddesses of their best features. The Seven Planets, growing jealous, decide to ruin Pandora by exercising upon her in turn their worst influences. Finally, the shepherds want only to be rid of her, and Nature graciously relegates Pandora to a sphere of the Moon.

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The Woman in the Moone, essentially undramatic, is related to the more spectacular masque, but it is important to this study because it is Lyly's only drama completely misogynous in tone. Of the Seven Planets who influence Pandora in turn, only one, Sol, exerts any good influence:

Sol. She shalbe louing, liberall, and chaste,
Discreet and patient, mercifull and milde,
Inspired with poetry and prophesie,
And vertues apperteyning to womanhoode.

(III, 1, ll. 7-10)

The other planets succeed in making Pandora uniformly unpleasant. Saturn makes her melancholy, sullenly sorrowful, "selfwild, and tounge-tide, but full fraught with teares." Under the influence of Jupiter she is

filled with "Ambition" and "Disdaine." Mars turns her into a "vixen Martialist." Venus says:

Ile haue her wittie, quick, and amorous,
Delight in reuels and in banqueting,
Wanton discourses, musicke and merry songs.
(III, 3, ll. 2-4)

Under Mercury she becomes "theeuish, lying subtle, eloquent," and finally Luna appears to make her "new fangled, fyckle, foolish, mad."

When Nature intervenes to dispose of Pandora, Pandora begs that she be relegated to Luna:

Pan. Fayre Nature let thy hand mayd dwell with her,
For know that change is my felicity.
(V, 1, ll. 300-301)

Again, she makes a more detailed plea:

Pan. But Cynthia made me idle, mutable,
"orgetfull, foolish, fickle, franticke, madde;
These are the humors that content me best,
And there fore will I stay with Cynthia.
(V, 1, 307-310)

In finally deciding to place Pandora in the custody of the Moon-?Cynthia-Luna, Nature expresses Lyly's theme in the play:

Nat. Now rule, Pandora, in fayre Cynthias steede,
And makerthe moone inconstant like thy selfe;
Raigne thou at womens nuptials, and their birth;
Let them be mutable in all their loues,
Fantasticall, childish, and folish in their
desires,
Demaunding toyes:
And starke madde when they cannot haue their
will.
(V, 1, ll. 320-326)

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Lyly's range in feminine characterization was fairly broad, but, as we shall see, it was ~~still~~ confined to a specific and distinct class of woman.

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