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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE
DRAMATIC WORKS OF JOHN LYLY
TO LATER ELIZABETHAN COMEDIES

A Thesis
Submitted in candidature
for the degree
of
Master of Arts
of the
University of Durham
by

Christopher G. Gilbert

1965

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D E C L A R A T I O N

I declare this work is the result of my independent investigation. I further declare that the accompanying dissertation has not been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed Christopher S. Gilbert
(Candidate)

P R E F A C E

During the composition of this thesis I have received valuable help from many people and wish to offer my sincere thanks in particular to Mr. Michael Lloyd of the University of Keele, who first aroused my interest in Lyly; to Professor Leech, my supervisor at Durham, whose constant interest and advice has been invaluable, and to Dr. R.A. Foakes whose assistance during the final stage of composition has been most welcome.

In common with all students of John Lyly I am deeply indebted to R. Warwick Bond's edition of his work; surely one of the great editions of its day. I have also profited greatly from the exact researches of others, notably Sir Edmund Chambers, Professor A. Harbage, H.N. Hillebrand and Professor G.K. Hunter.

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A B B R E V I A T I O N S

The following is a list of the abbreviations used in the course of this thesis:

E.L.H.	Journal of English Literary History.
H.L.Q.	Huntington Library Quarterly.
J.E.G.P.	Journal of English & Germanic Philology.
M.L.N.	Modern Language Notes.
M.L.Q.	Modern Language Quarterly.
M.L.R.	Modern Language Review.
M.P.	Modern Philology.
M.S.R.	Malone Society Reprint.
N.Q.	Notes and Queries.
P.M.L.A.	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.
P.Q.	Philological Quarterly.
R.E.S.	Review of English Studies.
Sh. Q.	Shakespeare Quarterly.
Sh. S.	Shakespeare Survey.
S.P.	Studies in Philology.

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CHAPTER I

LYLY'S DRAMATIC ROOTS

Lyly's comedies have close relations with two main traditions of dramatic entertainment. Firstly the courtly revels and shows with which the Queen was frequently entertained during her Progresses to the residences of important subjects, and secondly the chorister drama centred on the Royal Chapels which had developed into a significant tradition. Several subsidiary influences are also apparent, such as the Moral Interlude, Plautine comedy, Italian pastorals and the native romantic drama.

During Elizabeth's reign the court year was frequently punctuated by entertainments officially organized by the Revels Office. The Queen's delight in courtly revels was indeed, so ardent that when the court visited the country houses of her wealthy subjects they invariably took considerable pains to provide elaborate amusements. During the great Progresses of the second decade of her reign a tradition of courtly entertainment grew up which culminated in the Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth (1575). The accounts of these lavish revels provide the first record of the literary side of Elizabethan court shows.

Robert Laneham's celebrated description of this occasion suggests that the Princely Pleasures (1) contained elements that were later developed by John Lyly when he came to write comedies for the court. The Earl of Leicester employed George Gascoigne to write a short mythological playlet on the theme of Elizabeth's chastity (2). This piece, Zabeta, is of particular interest since it plainly foreshadows Lyly's forest comedies. The slight plot, mythological cast, woodland setting and emphasis on elegant speeches and spectacle, all designed to convey a graceful compliment to the Queen, clearly anticipate Lyly's more delicate handling of similar themes. Other devices penned by Gascoigne also evoke the world of Lyly's comedies; for example, Sylvanus' farewell speech, relates how:

'Diana passeth often times through this forest with a stately traine of gallant and beautifull Nimphs.'

and describes how Zabeta, a chaste woodland nymph, punishes her amorous suitors by metamorphosing them

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1. J. Nichols, The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, 1823, i, pp. 426-523.
 2. C.T. Prouty, George Gascoigne, New York, 1942, p.178.

into:

'most monstrous shapes..... some into
Fishes, some other into foules, and
some into huge stony rocks.'(1)

Similar penalties are used to coerce the reluctant nymphs to accept their lovers in Love's Metamorphosis.

Concrete parallels between the "Kenilworth" revels and Lyly's comedies are not copious, but the very fully documented Entertainment at Norwich (1578), provides convincing evidence that Lyly's comic mode was indebted to this tradition.

Thomas Churchyard was specifically summoned to Norwich three weeks before the court was due and employed to devise:

'fair shews and pleasant pastimes.'(2)

His most interesting contribution was a pastoral-mythological playlet which took the form of a contention between Venus and Cupid, and Dame Chastity and her maids.(3)

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1. Gascoigne, Works, ed. J.W. Cunliffe, Cambridge, 1907-10, ii, pp.124-25.
 2. Nichols, op.cit., ii, p.182.
 3. Ibid., ii, pp.188-98.

On arrival Elizabeth was welcomed with an address which calls to mind the idiom of Lyly's Prologues:

'It is reported (moste gracious Queene) that Egypte is watered with the yerely overflowing of the Nilus, and Lydia with the golden streame of Pactolos, whychething is thought to be the cause of greate fertilyte of these countries:'(1)

The poetic tincture of the prose, nice sense of expression and wealth of classical allusion closely resembles the Prologues to Campaspe.

Churchyard's short play was intended as a piece of court flattery on the subject of chastity, the action being designed as a frame-work for a debate on the subject of Love. The setting is a forest, where Cupid, who has run away from Venus, meets Chastity and her maids, Modesty, Temperance, etc. They taunt him for being a 'paltry God' and denounce his 'peacocks pride' and 'pretty pranks'; Chastity confiscates his bow and arrows and, after delivering a homily, sends him 'like a fugitive away'. She then presents his bow to the Queen:

1. Nichols, op.cit., ii, p.157.

'bycause (she) had chosen the best
life since none coulde wounde
hir Highnesse hart' (1)

The play ends with a song in praise of the virgin
life.

The contention in Churchyard's court show is
basically the same as that enacted between Venus
and Diana in Gallathea, and Ceres and Cupid in
Love's Metamorphosis. Diana's stately oration
extolling chastity in Gallathea, and Sapho's triumph
over Venus for the control of Cupid's arrows in
Sapho and Phao, are further illustrations of
continuity between the two writers.

In Sapho and Phao (V.i, 3-39) the list of the
different properties of Cupid's arrows is virtually
duplicated from the earlier work:

'Marke here my shaftes: this all is made of woodde,
Which is but soft, and breedes but soft good-will.
Now this is guilte, yet seemes it golde full good,
And doth deceyve blind loving people still.
But here is one is seldom felte or seene:
This is of golde, meete for the noblest Queene.'(2)

In another "Device"(3) Churchyard presented a tableau
of fairies to dance and sing before the court: such

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1. Nichols, op.cit., ii, p.189.
 2. Ibid., ii, p.164.
 3. Ibid., ii; pp.211-13.

picturesque spectacles also feature in Gallathea and Endimion.

During the second period of Royal Progresses in the 1590's Lyly seems to have been employed by members of the aristocracy to devise 'pleasant pastimes' for Elizabeth:(1) these are directly related to the earlier tradition of courtly entertainments. However, it has seldom been sufficiently emphasized that Lyly's pastoral-mythological comedies are also largely a continuation of the court-show expanded into a five-act structure. The pattern built into most of Lyly's comedies corresponds to a formal débat: War versus Love in Campaspe; Chastity versus Love in Gallathea, Sapho and Phao and Love's Metamorphosis; and Love versus Friendship in Endimion.

The chief difference is that Lyly used multiple plots; invested his allegorical themes with a lively comic spirit, and normally wrote in prose. These characteristics appear to be derived from another tradition, that of chorister drama; otherwise his material and technique are related to the courtly revels. Gascoigne, Churchyard and Lyly all shared a desire to convey a graceful compliment to Elizabeth by means of a sophisticated entertainment embroidered with songs, dances and 'pleasing shows'.

1. Lyly, Works, ed. R.W. Bond, Oxford, 1902, i, pp.378-86 and 404-09; but G.K. Hunter, John Lyly, 1962, pp.83-84, is sceptical of Bond's ascription.

During Elizabeth's reign one of the staple amusements at court was the play. The number usually ranged from six to ten a year, presented at Christmas, Candlemas and Shrovetide.(1) The Revels Office was responsible for purveying entertainment, suitable plays being generally selected on a competitive basis from the available stock of the adult and children's companies.(2)

In the Tudor period there were two traditions of child acting: Grammar-school players, and the chorister drama. Play acting was an approved method for training schoolboys in deportment, elocution and rhetoric. Udall at Eton, Taylor at Westminster, and Mulcaster at Merchant Taylors', "exercised" their pupils before semi-public audiences and occasionally the Revels Office commissioned their plays for a court performance.(3) However, this tradition never grew into an important branch of drama.

Choirboys attached to noblemens' houses were sometimes enlisted to perform plays before private audiences, but the chorister drama which was to evolve into a significant theatrical organization was centred upon the Chapel Royal, St. Paul's and Windsor Chapel.

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1. E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, 1923, i, pp.213-14.
 2. Ibid., i, pp.71-105.
 3. A. Harbage, Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions, New York, 1952, pp.30-31.

The staff of the Chapel Royal included a Master of Grammar, who, as well as schooling the choirboys, was expected to write and produce plays for the court.(1) The first record of the Chapel children being recruited to act at court was at Christmas 1515 when they performed Troilus and Pander written and produced by their master William Cornish.(2) The Children of St. Paul's choir school started to act plays in 1551 under the supervision of Sebastian Westcote and from that year until 1582 they presented annually an almost unbroken string of plays at court(3). In 1567 the boys of Windsor Chapel directed by Richard Farrant also began to appear at court(4).

The Chapel masters regularly "rehearsed" their plays before select paying audiences in central London. Westcote used his singing school at St. Paul's and in 1576 Farrant and Hunnis combined to launch a theatrical enterprise at tenements in the precincts of Blackfriar's Priory(5). Although the composition and production of plays rested mainly in the hands of the choirmaster, professional writers, such as Lyly

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1. H.N. Hillebrand, The Child Actors, Urbana, 1926, p.41.
 2. Ibid., p.54.
 3. Harbage, op.cit., p.34.
 4. Hillebrand, op.cit., p.127.
 5. Ibid., pp.90-91.

and Peele were occasionally called upon to supply plays. In fact all but one of the plays written by the choirmasters have vanished and Lyly's comedies form easily the largest body of plays which survive from the Elizabethan chapel tradition. Our knowledge of this repertory prior to Lyly's Campaspe (1584), rests upon two texts (one of doubtful authenticity), a handful of play titles, and a few contemporary allusions.

Richard Edwardes master of the Chapel Royal boys was author of Damon and Pythias, a tragi-comedy on the theme of friendship, licenced in 1567 and published in 1571 (1). The action concerns two travellers Damon and Pythias whose friendship is tested when Carisophus and Aristippus, hangers-on to the court of Dionysius, accuse Pythias of being a spy. The character groups display something of the balanced organization of Lyly's plays, and the dialogue on occasion strikes a Lylian note. The sprightly banter of the pages Will, Jack and Stephano, is akin to that of the servants in Campaspe: they discuss their masters' eccentricities and complain of perpetual hunger in a similar vein (2).

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1. Information about the dates of plays has been derived from E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage. 4 vols. Oxford, 1923, unless otherwise stated.
 2. Edwardes, Damon and Pythias, M.S.R., 437-449.

- Steph. I am as hungry now, as when I
went to dinner:
Your philosophical diet, is so
fine and small
That you may eate your dinner and
supper at once and not surfaite
at all.
- Damon Stephano, much meat breedes heavynes,
thinne diet makes thee light.
- Steph. I may be lighter thereby, but I shall
never rune the faster.
- Damon I have had sufficiently discourse
of amitie.
- Steph. Course or discourse, your course is
very course for all your talke.

Elsewhere there is a lengthy scene in which Will and Jack taunt Grim the Collier and pick his pocket(1), a trick which resembles one played on Motto the barber in Midas. The situation in the main action where Dionysius is counselled by Eubulus to exercise mercy,(2) recalls Hephaestion's advice to Alexander on the responsibilities of a statesman(3). Again, Damon's sententious utterances on friendship, and Pythias's long speech before he is reprieved from death, are paralleled by the orations of Geron and Haebe in Endimion and Gallathea respectively. In

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1. Edwardes, op.cit., 1356-1760.
 2. Ibid., 842-941.
 3. Campaspe, II ii, 29-76 (This and all subsequent quotations from Lyly's works have been taken from R.W. Bond's edition in three volumes, Oxford, 1902).

the matter of characterization Edwardes' satirical portrait of Carisophus anticipates Lyly's treatment of Sir Tophas and the pages, too, belong to the same race.

The most obvious differences between the dramatists are Lyly's use of prose and the fact that his central theme, love, is absent from Edwardes' play. However, Endimion deals with friendship and there is evidence that Damon and Pythias is not fully representative of his output, since contemporaries considered his strength to be in the sphere of love comedy(1).

The Contention between Liberality and Prodigality, printed in 1602, may be a refurbished version of Westcote's Prodigality(2) acted by the children of St. Paul's c.1567. It may be described as a "mixed Morality", in which an antagonism between two of the characters, Tenacity and Prodigality, is finally resolved by the intervention of a third, Liberality who stands for the golden mean of conduct. The action is frequently interrupted by comic figures such as Tom Toss and Dick Dicer. This frame-work reappears

1. Hillebrand, op.cit., p.84.

2. Ibid., pp.128-30.

in Midas and also occurs in Gallathea, where the golden mean between the values of Venus and Diana is discovered in virtuous marriage, and low-comedy is provided by a group of ruffians who elbow their way through the play.

In the light of the foregoing reconstruction of the traditions of chorister drama and the Progress entertainment, Lyly must be considered as one, and not necessarily the best, of a school of court dramatists. When he started to write, some sixty chapel plays, not including revels, must have been acted before Elizabeth. His plays survived; whilst those of his predecessors have perished, or exist merely as entries in the Revels account book; suggestive titles indicating that a classical and mythological drama with romantic variations on the theme of love, and perhaps exhibiting many of the features of Lylian comedy, had long flourished at Elizabeth's court(1).

Lyly's advance, probably lay in enhancing and refining techniques of dialogue and improving the dramatic structure of existing modes.

1. Harbage, op.cit., pp.66-68.

Although the Progress entertainment and the court play were Lyly's main models other dramatic traditions can be traced in his comedies.

The lively native tradition of folk pastimes such as Whitsun pastorals, Robin Hood plays and May games sometimes blended with the literary drama(1). Peele, for example, embroidered The Arraignment of Paris (acted at court c.1584), with reminiscences of rustic merrymakings and festival pageantry(2). C.R. Baskervill has collected evidence which suggests that mythological figures sometimes featured in country pastimes(3). Since such popular revels infiltrated the Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth and Peele's sophisticated court show, it is quite possible that Lyly also adopted some of their practices in his pastoral-mythological plays. It has not, however, proved possible to demonstrate this.

The Minstrel group was a traditional means of entertaining the aristocracy and their various stunts occupy a marginal station in Lyly's comedies; the tumbler and dancer who are somewhat arbitrarily thrust into Campaspe(4) indicate the persistence of this type

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1. See C.L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, Princeton, 1959, Ch.2.
 2. B. Ford, ed. The Age of Shakespeare, 1955, pp.60-61.
 3. C.R. Baskervill, 'Some Evidence for Early Romantic Plays in England', M.P., XIV (1916-17), pp.229-51 and 467-521.
 4. Campaspe, V.i.

of amusement.

There is little doubt that the Morality was the kind of play most frequently performed during the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign. Like Will to Like typifies this genre where the serious "moral" action is repeatedly interrupted with farcical episodes entirely unrelated to the main plot(1). The irregular intrusion of a group of low-comedy figures into the main action of Gallathea illustrates the survival of this comic scheme in Lyly's work. Later he evolved techniques for linking his comic groups to the principal events and organizing their pranks around a definite plot, but Campaspe, Sapho and Phao, Gallathea, and Midas retain something of the jerky structural pattern of a Morality.

The Classical comedy of Terence and Plautus, greatly admired by educated Elizabethans, was first imitated by academic writers. Udall's Ralph Roister Doister (c. 1553), Gammer Gurton's Needle (c. 1563), by Mr. S. of Cambridge, are early anglicized versions of Roman comedy which introduced new character types, comic situations and the intrigue plot to the English stage. Lyly's only play almost wholly based on the Plautine pattern of comedy was Mother Bombie.

1. This subject is fully discussed by O.E. Winslow, Low Comedy as a Structural Element in English Drama, Chicago, 1926, Ch.2.

There is one other type of play which formed a considerable part of the nation's output in the generation before Lyly started his career as a dramatist: the popular Romance. As with the early Chapel plays, practically all the texts have perished; however, Sir Clyomon and Clamydes and the anonymous Common Conditions are probably late survivals from this tradition(1). If this is so, tales of adventure and spectacular deeds involving chivalrous knights, damsels in distress, magicians and dragons formed the staple of many lost plays. In 1582 Stephen Gosson's idea of a play was of:

'the adventures of an amorous knight,
passing from countrie to countrie for
the love of his lady, encountring
many terrible monster' (2)

In Gallathea the monster Agar, a devourer of maidens, has to be appeased, and Haebe, his intended victim, plays the role of a damsel in distress. The fantastic plot of Endimion also reflects the popular romantic drama; it included: a beautiful lady banished to a remote castle; a wicked enchantress who induces a charmed sleep which results in Eumenides' quest; a

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1. Harbage, op.cit., p.62
 2. Gosson, Plays Confuted in Five Actions, ed. W.C. Hazlitt, 1859, p.181.

magic fountain in a desert; and Endimion, the central character, is portrayed as a knight from the world of romance; he declares that to obtain Cynthia's love:

'There is no Mountain so steepe that I
will not climbe, no monster so cruell
that I will not tame, no action so
desperate that i will not attempt'.(1)

In assessing the relative importance of the various influences it must be stressed that the "Progress" and "Chapel" traditions played a decisive part in the formulation of Lyly's comedies, whereas the others appear to be subsidiary ones which from time to time exercised a limited control over his invention.

It has been seen that Lyly derived the essentials of his comic method from the techniques of earlier playwrights, but the form and content of his comedies were also affected by certain non-dramatic influences which must also be considered. For example, Lyly's choice of material was conditioned by the fact that he wrote for the court; Italian pastoral drama

1. Endimion, II i. 6-8.

furnished suggestions for plots, and renaissance critical theory influenced his act structure.

Lyly was one of a group of writers who sought royal patronage. Like Edmund Spenser he obtained a post as secretary to a nobleman (Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford)(1), and his comedies, like the Faerie Queene, were calculated to attract Elizabeth's favour. A number of petitions have survived which record his acute disappointment at not being rewarded, as he had hoped, with the Mastership of the Revels:

'Thirteen yeares, your: Highnes Servant;
Butt; yett nothinge' (2)

Praying for the Queen at the end of a play, as in Ingeland's The Disobedient Child, Edwardes' Damon and Pythias, and Ulpian Fulwell's Like Will to Like, seems to have been a regular feature of dramatic performances-similar to the function of the National Anthem today(3). Lyly and Peele, however, composed plays in which the whole action was designed to pay an elegant compliment to the Queen. Lyly's blend of classical myth, allegory, renaissance wit and flattery

1. Bond, op.cit., i, p.24.

2. Ibid., i, p.70.

3. E.C. Wilson, England's Eliza, Harvard, 1939, p.96.

achieved its finest expression in Endimion, where Cynthia is glorified as an idealized portrait of Elizabeth. Elsewhere she was expected to see herself pleasingly mirrored as Sapho, Diana, and Alexander :

'a great prince, whose passions and thoughts do...far...exceede others in extremitie'.(1)

yet resists the impulses of love in the interests of the state. Lyly's comedies have much in common with other literature which was specially attuned to the taste of the court, such as Peele's Arraignement of Paris (c.1584) and Thomas Blenerhasset's mythological poem A Vision of the True Minerva (1582). Parallels with the Progress entertainments have already been noted.

Lyly's first literary venture was the spectacularly successful novel Euphues, published in two parts in 1578 and 1580. He was probably stimulated to write plays partly by a desire to exploit the reputation he had made as a novelist; at any rate, the composition of Euphues certainly influenced his comedies. The leisurely romantic tale is handled so as to give the gentlemen and ladies ample opportunity to discuss the

1. Campaspe, II.ii. 8^o-2.

subject of love and to debate such issues as the relative merits of beauty, virtue, riches and learning in a husband or wife. Such refined dialogues were to become the conversational norm of his comedies. Lyly's first play, Campaspe, published in 1584, illustrates this point. The main theme bears upon the value of love, and the finely phrased discourses between Alexander and Hephaestion on the rival merits of love and generalship closely resemble the kind of debates in Euphues which so delighted fashionable society. In Sapho and Phao, Sybilla's lengthy exposition of love-precepts to Phao, and the scene in Endimion in which groups of court ladies discuss their suitors, display the same kind of wit and eloquence as Euphues.

The researches of V.M. Jeffery have revealed that Lyly owed a debt to Italian playwrights which Bond, in 1902, did not suspect. She concludes:

'Lyly's material is in fact identical with theirs, his treatment of it equally resembles theirs! (1)

This is an overstatement of her case, but she has shown that since the early 16th. century there had

1. V.M. Jeffery, John Lyly and the Italian Renaissance Paris, 1929, p.61.

existed in Italy a mature tradition of Pastoral drama from which Lyly drew inspiration. Gallathea, Love's Metamorphosis and Mother Bombie borrow plumes from such plays as, Luca Centile's Agia and G.B. della Porta's Cinta. Midas, in particular, appears to adapt scenes from Zoppio's Mida. Therefore Italian Pastoral drama is another influence to be reckoned with in tracing the descent of Lyly's comic technique.

Educated Elizabethans placed a high value on rhetorical expression, accordingly Lyly cultivated the arts of language. His style displays the ornamental devices, prodigality of simile, iteration, amplification, analogy, varied repetition and so forth prescribed by scholastic theory. Lyly's humanistic training tended to emphasize style rather than structural form, with the result that more craftsmanship was devoted to producing an opulent texture than the overall organization of a work of art.(1)

The Elizabethan's admiration of linguistic dexterity was accompanied by a love of variety of matter, so marked in the Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth. Both considerations encouraged writers to place emphasis on content rather than structure. In the

1. This subject is fully discussed by M. Doran, Endeavors of Art, Wisconsin, 1954, Ch.2.

Prologue to Midas Lyly alludes to the effect of this taste on artistic decorum:

'... what heretofore hath beene served in severall dishes for a feaste, is now minced in a charger for a Gallimaufrey.'(1)

This tendency to concoct a loose, mixed entertainment is apparent even in Lyly's most finished plays, but it was tempered by another factor in his academic training.

As part of his education Lyly would automatically receive grounding in renaissance theories of comedy of which Terence and Terentian commentators such as Donatus formed the core. The principal methods of studying Classical comedy were through rhetorical analysis, and the examination of the tripartite movement from the protasis through the epitasis to the catastrophe and resolution.(2) This regular development of the plot was, according to Baldwin, integrated with a five-act structure by Willichius and Wagnerus, and further harmonized with Aristotle's narrative requirements of beginning, middle and end.(3)

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1. Midas, Prologue, 17-19.
 2. M.T. Herrick, Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century, Urbana, 1950, p.106.
 3. T.W. Baldwin, William Shaksper's Five-Act Structure, Urbana, 1947, pp.228-51.

Lyly would have learned that a modern playwright must observe this system in order to write a good play. Baldwin has further shown that Lyly employed the five-act structure with increasing skill until he arrived at the advanced intrigue action of Mother Bombie(1). This, then, was the frame-work which Lyly used to discipline the rambling entertainments inherited from the Progress Revels.

This chapter has been concerned firstly to show how Lyly exploited the work of earlier dramatists and secondly to reconstruct the interplay of forces - literary and environmental - which governed the development of his comic art. The survey has been a lengthy, but necessary prelude to the study of individual comedies.

1. Baldwin, op.cit., pp.493-543.

CHAPTER 11

LYLY'S COMEDIES

Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poetry, written about 1583(1), contains a valuable account of recent developments in English drama. His views are particularly interesting for students of Lyly because, coming from a courtier, they may be regarded as a fair indication of courtly taste in dramatic entertainment.

Sidney found little to praise when reviewing contemporary comedy:

'Playes bee neither right Tragedies,
nor right Comedies, mingling Kinges and
Clownes, not because the matter so
carrieth it, but thrust in the Clowne by head and
shoulders to play a part in majesticall
matters, with neither decencie nor discretion:'(2)

he continues:

'wee have nothing but scurrillitie
unwoorthie of anie chaste eares,
or some extreame shewe of doltishnesse,
indeed fit to lift up a loude laughter
and nothing else:'(3)

He recommended comic playwrights to make a distinction between 'loud laughter' and 'delight', and urged:

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1. B. Ford, ed. The Age of Shakespeare, 1956, p.51.
 2. Sidney, The Defense of Poesie, ed. A. Feuillerat, iii, 1923, p.39.
 3. ibid., p.40.

'the whole tract of a Comedie
should be full of delight'(1)

Thus Sidney advocated a refined, intellectual enjoyment rather than the gross hodge-podge of 'madde Antiques' and popular farce that normally prevailed. Stephen Gosson, too, in his harshly critical treatise Plays Confuted in Five Actions, published in 1582, commended a similar type of comic experience:

'wee have eares to heare, and eyes to see....
Comedies presenting delight to both,
are not so rashly to be condemned'.(2)

Shortly after Sidney and Gosson had expressed their views on contemporary drama Lyly's comedies started to appear, and in his Prologues he expressed a determination to refine comedy along lines strikingly similar to those suggested by Sidney and Gosson. The Blackfriars Prologue to Sapho and Phao (1584), provides an interesting statement of his artistic aims. He warns the audience that they 'cannot reape (their) wonted mirthes', and goes on to explain:

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1. Sidney, op.cit., p.40.
 2. Gosson, Plays Confuted in Five Actions, ed. W.C. Hazlitt, 1859, p.210.

'Our intent was at this time to move inward delight, not outward lightness, and to breede--soft smiling, not loude laughing: knowing it to the wise to be as great pleasure to heare counsell mixed with witte, as to the foolish to have sporte mingled with rudeness'.(1)

This important passage indicates that Lyly deliberately set out to exclude vulgar, rowdy and chaotic elements from his plays and attempted to devise a refined comic mode attuned to the taste of the more discriminating among his aristocratic audiences. There is no evidence that Lyly's court comedies were directly inspired by Sidney's plea for 'delightful' entertainment, but in view of Sidney's great prestige in court circles it is not improbable that his views might influence a young courtier with literary ambitions.

The subject of love which had proved successful in the two parts of Euphues became a central theme in Lyly's comedies. His formulation of a distinctive kind of love-game comedy based on formal actions, witty dialogue, fanciful mythological plots and elegant stylistic display, represented a departure from the comic practice of his predecessors. At a time when loose and hurried dramatic writing was the rule he invested his work with a symmetry of design, a delicate romantic fancy, an exquisite

1. Sapho and Phao, Prologue at Blackfriars, 7-11.

refinement of style and a literary finish which brought immediate acclaim. Campaspe, his first play, went through three issues in a year(1).

Unfortunately, due to the almost wholesale disappearance of pre-Lylian comedies written for courtly audiences, it is not certain to what extent Lyly was a pioneer in the province of artificial High Comedy within a pastoral and mythological frame-work. He is at any rate the first Elizabethan dramatist, whose plays have survived, who formulated a definite theory of comedy designed to provide intellectual delight through lively conversational play in a witty love-game between men and women.

Lyly's first play, Campaspe, was acted at court on January 1st., 1584. The plot, based on a little known episode in Alexander's career, was nicely calculated to satisfy the romantic temper of his audience and at the same time explore a problem of special interest to the English court: what is a ruler to do when assailed by the impulse of love? Lyly's chief preoccupation appears to have been how to reconcile a sense of the comic stemming from Latin Comedy with a sensibility for romance. The action occurs in the open air - the market place in Athens - and employs simultaneous settings: a

1. Bond, op.cit., ii, p.230.

distinctly Terentian environment. The appearance of the courtesan Lais, and the presence of rascally slaves also indicates a desire to resemble Roman Comedy. On the other hand, the story of Alexander's passion for the hand-maid Campaspe in preference to the well-born Timoclea and the tender love scenes between Apelles and Campaspe cater for the Elizabethans' taste for romance. The debate between the claims of love and the obligations of statesmanship which runs through the play provides the kind of intellectual interest common in court entertainments, while the subtle aura of compliment that surrounds the figure of Alexander serves as a device of court flattery.

Alexander is portrayed as an ideal ruler whose integrity is jeopardized by an infatuation for Campaspe: 'an humble hand-maid borne of meane parentage'(1). Hephaestion, his general, vainly tries to dissuade him from succumbing to 'the soft and yeelding' pleasures of love; however, on learning of the mutual passion of Campaspe and the painter Apelles, he magnanimously renounces her and returns to the calls of higher duty by preparing for an expedition against Persia.

The play sensitively examines the nature of love and the problems of moral self-management it poses

1. Campaspe, I. i. 71-72.

for a ruler. Love is mainly a subject for talk: Lyly is not concerned, as yet, to explore its comic possibilities in action. He contrasts Alexander's seemingly shallow infatuation, aroused by sexual allurements, with the sincere love of Apelles and Campaspe, expressed in a series of dialogues subtly suggestive of intense emotion.(1)

Several different attitudes towards love emerge from the play. Diogenes sees traditional romance as a mere cloak for sexual indulgence: 'Your filthy luste you colour under a courtly colour of love'(2). Hephaestion (who acts as a moral counsellor) is also scornful of the 'flattering madness of love', and urges Alexander to understand that 'the weak conceites of love'(3) are fit only for common beings and that Princes have an obligation to recognize a higher code of duty. Alexander's ultimate control over his passion was clearly intended as a compliment to Elizabeth who regarded the responsibilities of statesmanship as of greater importance than the gratification of private desires.

Light relief is provided by three comic pages who mimic, mock and rail against the eccentric behaviour of their masters. They appear at intervals throughout

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1. Campaspe, III iii and IV, ii & iv.
 2. Ibid., IV, i, 36-37.
 3. Ibid., III, iv, 18.

the play and are only indirectly related to the main action. Mirth is aroused by comic dialogues that rely on brisk wit, lively quips, word play, parody and so forth, rather than on farcical antics. The three sons of Sylvius who give an exhibition of tumbling, singing and dancing in the last act, appear to be an interesting survival from the sort of recreation commonly furnished by minstrel groups. Among the group of philosophers Diogenes is the only one effectively portrayed; his forceful tirades against the corrupt society of Athens(1) display a serious concern to halt moral regression.

The superiority of Campaspe over the few earlier court comedies that have survived, such as Damon and Pythias by Richard Edwardes, derives largely from Lyly's impressive handling of style. The basic style, a neat antithetical prose, is varied with judgement to obtain special effects. The rapid exchanges of the pages calls for a witty fencing style;(2) whereas, in Hephaestion's formal oration against Love(3), Lyly employed an eloquent diction elaborated with rhetorical devices. Melippus's jocular account of soliciting the philosophers(4) is related in an informal rambling manner; on the other hand, Diogenes' realistic prose adds cogency to his invective, while the lyrical

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1. Campaspe, IV, i, 24-53.
 2. See for example, III, ii, 9-66.
 3. Campaspe, II, ii, 29-76.
 4. Ibid., I, iii, 1-24.

dialogues between Apelles and Campaspe convey tender emotion.

If, as M.C. Bradbrook has observed:

'The development of Elizabethan comedy is very largely the development of its language'(1)

then Lyly deserves an honourable position for having evolved a prose style which proved an entirely adequate instrument for his comic art.

Lyly's second play, Sapho and Phao, performed at court on March 3rd., 1584, is related both to Campaspe and to mythological court shows such as Thomas Churchyard's Cupid and Dame Chastity performed before the Queen at Norwich in 1778.(2) It is constructed for the same aggregate of players as Campaspe, and employs the same dramatic pattern, merely reversing the triangle so that two women fall in love with one man.(3) The main theme of Campaspe - the testing of the fortitude of a ruler to withstand temptation - is also duplicated.

Sapho and Phao is to some degree guided by the requirements of court flattery; for example, Elizabeth was doubtless intended to see herself pleasingly

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1. M.C. Bradbrook, The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy, 1955, p.49.
 2. J. Nichols, The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, 1823, ii, pp.188-98.
 3. Baldwin, op.cit., p.505.

mirrored in Sapho's resolute restraint of her passion, but the claim that the action daringly shadows the courtship of the Queen by the Duke of Alençon is less certain,(1) although it is reasonably clear that Sapho's dream(2) is to be interpreted as Lyly's appeal to Elizabeth for patronage.(3)

The main theme of the play concerns the attempts of Venus and Cupid to compel Sapho, Princess of Syracuse, to yield to a desire for Phao, a beautiful commoner, and Sapho's successful conquest of her dishonourable passion. She declares:

'If I gette Cuppid from thee, I my selfe will be the Queene of love. I will direct these arrowes.'(4)

Eventually Venus herself develops an uncontrollable desire for Phao and finds herself unable to resist 'the unbrideled thoughtes of (her) hearte'(5). Sapho's final capture of Cupid indicates that Love (Cupid), will henceforth be guided by the principles of virtuous and honourable love (Sapho), and not 'lewed passions' (Venus), 'that yeelde so often to the impressions of Love'(6) (Phao's sex appeal). The outcome is thus a

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1. G.K. Hunter, John Lyly, 1962, pp.173-77.
 2. Sapho and Phao, IV, iii, 1-20.
 3. Baldwin, op.cit., pp. 500-502.
 4. Sapho and Phao, V, ii, 25-26.
 5. Ibid., V, ii, 60-61.
 6. Ibid., V, ii, 59-60.

direct compliment to Elizabeth, whose chastity has been shown not to be the easy kind of the unassailed, but the great chastity of the much tempted.(1)

Love, as well as being the subject of an allegorical struggle, forms the chief topic of conversation throughout the play. Sybilla, the figure of Experience, delivers two lengthy sermons to Phao on the subject of courtly love;(2) and elsewhere a group of court ladies wittily discuss love, mocking the absurd affectations of their suitors while amusingly betraying their own infatuation with the opposite sex.(3) Lyly's contemporaries undoubtedly enjoyed such burlesque on their favourite pastime.

One of Lyly's outstanding achievements in Sapho and Phao was his portrayal of women. Female characters played a minor part in earlier plays, and were normally shadowy figures such as Videna in Gorboduc. Lyly, however, skilfully captured the frivolous traits, idle chatter, bickering and sharp wit of court ladies. Melita and Favilla, in particular, convey a delightful impression of femininity.(4) Sapho is somewhat idealized, a circumstance which permitted little scope for realistic characterization. Venus approximates more nearly to

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1. B.F. Huppé, "Allegory of Love in Lyly's Court Comedies," E.L.H., XIV (1947), pp.99-102.
 2. Sapho and Phao, II, i, and II, iv, 38-118.
 3. Ibid., III, iii, 1-81 and IV, iii, 21-95.
 4. Sapho and Phao, III, iii and I, iv.

psychological realism, being 'at one time almost completely a woman, at another a classical goddess, only sometimes completely the allegorical figure, the Queen of Love.'(1) Lyly for the first time attempted to represent the workings of the female mind when aroused by the impulse of love.

A variety of subsidiary interests surround the main action. Trachinus a courtier and Pandion a scholar, each with a page, appear at intervals throughout the first three acts, provide mirth by displays of syllogistic wit, clever talk about court jargon and etiquette, and sing a number of part songs. The episodes in which they are engaged do not tell a connected story and there is no attempt to relate them to the main plot.

The substance of the play lies in the allegory and the dialogue, rather than in a well developed strain of action. It represents a highly skilful attempt to formulate a new kind of cultured comedy based on elegant stylistic display, refined wit and men and women in love, all interacting within the modified frame-work of a traditional courtly entertainment.

Lyly's third play, Gallathea, was entered in the Stationer's Register on April 1st., 1585, and since

1. Huppé, op.cit., p.99.

it contains material from Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft, published in 1584, it is reasonably clear that it was written for the court season 1584-5.(1)

The action takes place in a wood on the coast of Lincolnshire, but the scene resembles an Arcadian "tout en pastoral" setting more closely than the English countryside. The play consists of three partially interlocking actions: the plot about the yearly tribute concerns the affairs of a pastoral community and displays the influence of Italian comedy; the mythological action resembles the formal debate-structure of a court show; and the comic by-plot about the adventures of three shipwrecked brothers, exemplifies the tradition of native farce. Lyly made little attempt to fashion the various actions into a unified piece of plotting. The pastoral story suffers from the lack of a genuinely complicated structure to develop and untie, and the episodes in the comic sub-plot are only connected by the loosest of narrative threads. The focus of interest in the play, in so far as it exists, lies in the allegorical struggle between Venus and Diana.

In writing Gallathea Lyly attempted to unite comedy, romance and allegory by welding three distinct

1. Baldwin, op.cit., p.506.

dramatic traditions: native farce, Italian pastoral drama and the mythological court show within the frame-work of a single play. His failure to overcome the artistic problems involved can be gauged by comparing Gallathea with another forest comedy - A Midsummer Night's Dream, in which Shakespeare successfully integrated a similar tripartite action by carefully combining his plots, blending his tones and making a skilful use of setting to ensure structural and atmospheric harmony.

Lyly introduced an element of novelty into his desultory pastoral plot by making two girls disguised as boys fall in love with each other, but the manner of resolving this situation by a miraculous change of sex is rather unsatisfactory. He seems to have been more concerned to invest his story with allegorical meaning than invent an ingenious plot, vivid characters and interesting dialogue.

The intellectual mainspring of the play - the attempt to assess the relative merits of love and chastity - is embodied in the allegorical contention between Venus and Diana instead of being translated into dramatic action. The mythological scenes which provide a frame-work for their antagonism are perfectly designed to display Lyly's characteristic comic mode. The smart badinage between Cupid and Diana's nymphs(I ii), the latter's descriptions of their first impressions

of Love (III, i), and Cupid's saucy prattle as he is forced to untie love-knots (IV, ii), illustrate the kind of fanciful comedy at which Lyly excelled.

The opposition of Venus and Cupid to Diana and her nymphs is expressed through a series of delightful dialogues and stately orations which combine elegance, wit and intellectual refinement with a technique comparable to the debate-structure of a court show. These scenes well illustrate the formal allegorical manner which Lyly used to articulate his important themes. For example, in the last act, Diana's humiliation of Cupid implies a condemnation of irresponsible and wanton love, but her eventual approval of the deep mutual love of Phillida and Gallathea indicates a recognition that virtuous conjugal love deserves respect, although it does not detract from the supreme virtue of chastity.

The subsidiary action of Gallathea concerns the adventures of three shipwrecked brothers who appear at intervals in a string of low-comedy episodes entirely unrelated to the main action. They jest purposelessly with words, indulge in farcical by-play with a Sailor, an Alchemist and an Astronomer, and sing several rollicking songs to cover up their many awkward entrances and exits: their ancestry in the roistering figures of the Morality drama seems probable. Their random

intrusions introduce a realistic element into the otherwise Arcadian scene, and it has been pointed out that they also serve to give an impression of lapsed time within the main action.(1)

Endimion, probably written for the court season 1585-86,(2) was first printed in 1591 by J. Charlewood who wished to ascertain whether there was a demand for Lyly's plays before he ventured to publish two others which had come into his hands.(3) His choice suggests that Endimion had been a success on the stage. The structure, based on Lyly's regular device of contending powers and governed by his usual five-act formula,(4) is more elaborate than anything he had attempted previously and is integrated with a well organized comic sub-plot. Elizabeth's beauty and virtue are glorified through the figure of Cynthia, the merging of action into courtly compliment being typical of the kind of idealization practiced by her courtier poets.(5) Thomas Blenerhasset's narrative poem A Revelation of the True Minerva (1582) belongs to the same branch of literature, and may have provided

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1. O.E. Winslow, Low Comedy as a Structural Element in English Drama, Chicago, 1926, p.68.
 2. Bond, op.cit., iii, p.11.
 3. Ibid., iii, p.18.
 4. Baldwin, op.cit., p.526.
 5. J.W. Bennett, "Oxford and Endimion," P.M.L.A., LVII, (1942), pp. 354-69.

Lyly with a precedent for investing his story with topical significance.(1)

The main theme of the play is the conflict of two kinds of love within Endimion's heart. In his devotion to Cynthia he is the ideal courtly lover, a man of 'rare virtues' dedicated to pure spiritual passion, but his loyalty to Cynthia is threatened by an insidious desire for Tellus who represents earthly passion:

'I will entangle him in such a sweet nette, that he shall neither find the meanes to come out, nor desire it. All allurements of pleasure will I cast before his eyes, insomuch that he shall slake that love which he now voweth to Cynthia'.(2)

After having failed to seduce Endimion she enlists the help of a witch, Dipsas, to revenge herself by placing him in a magic slumber from which he is eventually rescued by his faithful friend Eumenides who secures for him Cynthia's kiss which breaks the spell. His re-dedication to virtuous Platonic love completes the allegorical cycle.

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1. Blenerhasset, A Revelation of the True Minerva, ed. J.W. Bennett, New York, 1941, p. viii.
 2. Endimion, I, ii, 41-44.

The central action is reinforced by a series of minor amorous intrigues involving members of Cynthia's court. The principal romantic complications concern Corsites' passion for Tellus, and Eumenides' attempts to win Semele, which includes an episode necessitating a choice between the claims of his love for Semele and the obligations of his friendship for Endimion:⁽¹⁾ a theme common in Renaissance literature, and one nicely attuned to the interests of Lyly's audience.

Lyly's handling of the comic sub-plot is impressive. Sir Tophas and his satellites do not elbow their way through the play as did the comic group in Gallathea, but are skilfully related to the main action as a kind of pendant parody. Sir Tophas, an early attempt to domesticate the braggart of Roman Comedy on the English stage, amusingly burlesques the courtly figure of Endimion: both are in love, fall asleep, dream and utter panegyrics. Sir Tophas boasts of fantastic military exploits, affects the fashionable love melancholy of the day, pens sonnets and considers himself a complete courtier. He is served by a group of cheeky pages who mock his pretensions to love, valour and learning, pungently mortify his vanity,

1. Endimion, III, iv.

expose his affections and ridicule his absurd behaviour. The organization of the comic action and the skill with which it is tied to the main plot represents a major technical advance in the development of Elizabethan comedy.

The structural unity of Endimion is strengthened by an atmospheric harmony produced by the poetic tincture of the prose. The romantic dream-like mood is further enhanced by the presence of suggestive emblems: the fountain, the sleeping figure and the tree. The action revolves round these fixed points like a slow tune in contrast to Gallathea and Love's Metamorphosis where opposed groups move in a dance-like pattern. Songs and music contribute to the masque-like quality of the play.

The main preoccupation of Endimion and, indeed, the focus of interest in the majority of Lyly's comedies, is a comparison of different conceptions of love. Endimion is portrayed as the ideal Petrarchan lover, the nature of his devotion being established early in the play:

'Beholde my sad teares, my deepe sighes, my
hollowe eyes, my broken sleepes, my
heavie countenaunce. Wouldst thou have
mee vowde onelie to thy beautie? and
consume everie minute of time in thy
service? remember my solitarie life,

'almost these seaven yeeres: whom have I entertained but mine owne thoughts, and thy vertues? What companie have I used but contemplation? Whom have I wondreed at but thee?'(1)

Eumenides is unable to understand his friend's passion for an unattainable person; he seeks a reward for his wooing - the yielding of the lady to her lover, or, as he expresses it: 'the enioying of my mistrisse'(2) Eumenides' views represent those of a normal romantic lover. Tellus, an intense, strongly passionate woman, exemplifies love divorced from spirituality and so degraded to a merely sensual satisfaction, while Sir Tophas, a caricature of the typical courtly lover, is used to burlesque the code of conduct prescribed in romantic literature, his passion for the hag Dipsas being a gross parody of the proper ritual of courtship.

Hazlitt has observed of High Comedy:

'The union of the three gradations of artificial elegance and courtly accomplishments in one class (of character), of the affectation of them in another, and of absolute rusticity in a third, forms the highest point of perfection'(3)

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1. Endimion, II, i, 11-17.
 2. Ibid., V, iii, 199.
 3. W.C. Hazlitt, "On Shakespeare and Ben Jonson", in his Lectures on the English Comic Writers, Oxford, n.d., p.45.

Endimion goes far towards achieving this excellence.

Midas, probably written in 1589 and first performed at court on January 6th., 1590, is unusual in that it does not concentrate on Lyly's favourite subject, love. In the Prologue Lyly apologized for presenting a 'mingle-mangle', explaining that his intention was to please as many different shades of taste as possible: a confession which helps to account for the unorthodox amalgam of moral fable, historical allegory, pastoral-mythological material and farcical episodes.

Midas is, perhaps, best regarded as a modified moral comedy, which through the exposure and correction of Midas's follies, asserts the values of enlightened statesmanship. In the opening scene Midas is misled by his counsellors into believing that unlimited wealth will secure love:

'Chastitie wil growe cheape where gold
is not thought deere; Celia, chast
Celia shall yeeld,'(1)

and military success:

'these petty ilands neer to Phrygia
shal totter, and other kingdoms be
turned topsie turvie.'(2)

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1. Midas, I, i, 113-14.
 2. Ibid., I, i, 111-12.

The three counsellors personify politically evil values: Lust (Eristus), Avarice (Mellacrites) and War (Martius), but his daughter, Sophronia, who is portrayed as a Prudence figure and understands the true nature of a 'princely mind', eventually prevails upon her father to govern according to the ideal of the golden mean. 'Let Phrygia,' she urges, 'be an example of chastitie, not luste; liberalitie, not covetousnes; valor, not tyrannie'(1).

In the fourth act the scene switches from the court to an Arcadian woodland where Midas commits another error of judgement by preferring the music of Pan to that of Apollo, and is made to wear asses ears as a punishment. The morality pattern is concluded in the final scene in which Midas humbly repents his former arrogance, avarice and lust, having acquired self-knowledge and political discretion.

The comic sub-plot in no way serves the main action, being only connected to it through the episode concerning Midas's golden beard. A barber, four pages and the wench Pipenetta are involved in a sketchy story contrived to provide opportunities for merry pranks and clever banter such as the dialogue enumerating the paraphernalia of a lady's toilet (I, ii), the syllogistic wit combat to prove there is no difference

1. Midas, II, i, 104-105.

between gold and an egg (II, ii), and the mockery of courtly affectation.

The leisurely pastoral-mythological scene of the song contest in Act IV conveys the impression of having been deliberately elaborated to give Lyly an opportunity to display his elegant prose style. Apollo's lengthy oration is rhetorical in the sense of the word defined by T.S. Eliot as:

'any adornment or inflation of speech which is not done for a particular effect, but for general impressiveness.'(1)

This quality is suggested by such poetic lines as:

'A Carter with his whistle & his whip
in true eare, mooves as much as Phoebus
with his firie chariot, and winged horses.'(2)

The play contains several oblique references to Phillip II of Spain and the defeat of his Armada and, by implication, to Elizabeth.(3) The identification of Midas with the Spanish King is suggested in Act III scene i, where he alludes to a disastrous naval

1. T.S. Eliot, The Sacred Wood, 1920, p.77.

2. Midas, IV, i, 44-46.

3. Hunter, op.cit., pp. 179-82.

expedition against the virtuous ruler of the island Lesbos. The golden touch must refer to the fabulous Spanish treasure in America. An awareness that the comedy satirized a foreign ruler obviously gave the story an extra dimension for contemporary audiences, but the historical allegory by no means provides the main focus of interest in the play.

Several short scenes are apparently fortuitously included merely to illustrate Lyly's different abilities: the delightful interlude between Sophronia and her court ladies (III, iii), who find it impossible to exclude the subject of love from any discussion, closely resembles scenes in Sapho and Phao and Endimion; the isolated interlude in which three pages converse wittily with a huntsman (IV, iii), is modelled on the dialogue between Raffe, Robin, Dick and the Mariner in Gallathea, and the scene in which five shepherds appear (IV, ii), exhibits yet another aspect of Lyly's literary style.

The basic plot of Midas is similar to that employed in Campaspe, but the structure has been remodelled and extended in order to provide a framework for Lyly to show off his artistic repertoire. The play has little of the formal balance and atmospheric unity characteristic of Lylilian comedy because,

as Lyly stated in the Prologue, it was deliberately designed to furnish varied entertainment.

Love's Metamorphosis probably belongs to roughly the same period of composition as Midas, although it was not printed until 1601. It is a short play, owing to the absence of an independent action involving a comic group such as operate in Lyly's earlier comedies: this feature may have originally existed and been later excised for some reason, possibly because it contained references to the Mar-Prelate controversy.(1)

Love's Metamorphosis is related to the pastoral and mythological action of Gallathea. Both plays are set in a forest near the sea, unite love stories involving human and mythological beings, employ the device of transformation, and the structure of each is built on the same system of contending forces: Love versus Chastity. One variation is, that, in Gallathea the nymphs are pliable and Diana is firm, whereas in Love's Metamorphosis Ceres is yielding and her attendant nymphs stubborn.

Most of the figures in Love's Metamorphosis possess a 'shadow character' corresponding to a particular psychological bent. In this scheme Ceres stands for

1. Bond, op. cit., iii, p.297.

chaste, spiritual love; Cupid, on the other hand, is the exponent of sensual passion, but condemns unrestrained carnal lust as exemplified by the Siren; while Fidele, 'the express patterne of chastitie' represents the value of virginity. The nymphs and the foresters illustrate different attitudes to romantic love. The interaction of these 'shadow characters' invests the light comic action with an allegorical system of meaning. For example, the ideals of Ceres and Cupid are shown to be capable of reconciliation by their mutual recognition of the supreme value of the fruitfulness of virtuous conjugal love:

Ceres though to love it be no vice,
yet spotlesse virginitie is the
onely vertue.

Cupid what is love, divine love, but
the quintescens of chastitie,(1)

The three nymphs typify perverse attitudes to courtly love: they are cruel (Nisa), coy (Celia), and fickle (Niobe), and delight in arousing amorous impulses in their suitors merely to thwart them. Their chastity springs from pride and selfishness. The three foresters are also self-centred, falling into the error of regarding love as a ritual of 'giftes, words, othes, sighs, and swounings.'(2) they seek merely to

1. Love's Metamorphosis, II, i, 118-124.
2. Ibid., IV, i, 65-66.

gratify their own desires. Throughout the play Ceres and Cupid attempt to correct these false ideals of conduct.

In the other story which makes up the play Erisichthon symbolizes Rapacity and Jealous Envy. His vicious attack on chaste Fidelia stems from a 'cankered nature', which, through the generous love of his daughter Protea, is eventually cured. The Siren exemplifies love reduced to mere physical allurements. Protea, by helping her father and rescuing Petulius from the Siren, asserts the value of altruistic love. She and Petulius alone achieve the bliss of true love based on mutual affection, restraint and an unselfish desire to make the other happy.

Lyly's attempt to explore the nature of Love is further amplified in the witty skirmishes between the nymphs and the foresters. When the couples meet the nymphs ridicule the foresters' attempts to actualize the traditional role of the enamoured courtier, and easily reduce them to confusion in the ensuing wit combats. However, both parties appear to be aware that they are engaged in a kind of love-game comedy, in which they adopt antagonistic attitudes in order to enjoy a stimulating battle of the sexes. Niobe observes:

'... as great sport doe I take in
coursing their tame hearts, as
they doe paines in hunting their
wilde Harts.'(1)

The witty dialogue between the warring couples provides delightful entertainment..(2) Lyly's method of dramatizing an intellectual conflict between different attitudes towards love by means of witty verbal combat (3) was later employed by Shakespeare in Love's Labour's Lost.

In Love's Metamorphosis the couples fail to resolve their psychological differences: the men continue to pose as traditional courtly lovers, while the nymphs remain sceptical of their ardour. Ceres and Cupid, the presiding deities, successfully reconcile their conflicting theories of love, but the nymphs reluctantly accept their suitors only when compelled by divine sanction. The transformation scene, in which their capitulation occurs, introduces an element of spectacle into the action, but is hardly a satisfactory method of releasing the carefully built up tensions between the antagonists.

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1. Love's Metamorphosis, I, ii, p. 24-25.
 2. See in particular III, i.
 3. This aspect of the play is well brought out by D.L. Stevenson, The Love Game Comedy, New York, 1946, pp. 168-71.

As regards structure, Lyly employed a symmetrical frame-work sustained by elaborately balanced groups of characters and formally patterned dialogue. Within this frame-work he brought to the English stage the complexities of Elizabethan amorous thought: Love, his central theme, is explored both allegorically and through witty dialogue containing subtle intellectual and psychological insights.

Mother Bombie was probably written for the 1589-90 season, but the only evidence that it was ever performed at court is its inclusion in Blount's Six Court Comedies, printed in 1632. It displays no signs of having been designed to satisfy the tastes of the court, and it is tempting to suppose that it was intended not for the court, but for performance at the Paul's boys' private theatre.(1)

Mother Bombie represents a distinct break with the 'gallimaufry' technique of Lyly's earlier comedies. He has abandoned the leisurely poetic style, mythological apparatus, stately romanticism and allegorical mode of his courtly entertainments and written a realistic comedy modelled on Italian comic practice and its ancestor Roman farce. The setting, an open square or street with seven houses between which the action shifts rapidly, resembles the locus of Latin Comedy. The

1. Hunter, op. cit., p.81.

complex nature of the plot, which employs disguise, mistaken identity, inopportune coincidence, the restoration of long-lost children, and rascally men servants who assist their young masters to outwit their parents, also shows the influence of Roman Comedy. However, by 1590 Elizabethan audiences expected comedies to contain some romantic sentiments, accordingly Lyly combined the classical elements with a story about the love of Candius and Livia.

The action is carried forward by the intrigues of four servants who help Candius and Livia to avoid the odious marriages arranged by their fathers, who, in the best tradition of Latin Comedy, are portrayed as testy, avaricious old men. The sweethearts typify the new romantic influences that were entering Elizabethan Comedy: Livia's declaration: 'I will measure my love by min owne judgement, not my fathers purse,' (1) illustrates the trend. The contention of 'Youth versus Age' is a theme which runs through the entire action, however, Lyly's main concern was not with the romantic story, but with the comic invention, nimble wit and 'merry cozening vein,' of the servants. Mother Bombie is best regarded as a marathon 'set of wit well played'; an exuberant word-farce on the lines of the dialogue of Ralph Roister Doister.

1. Mother Bombie, I, iii, pp. 109-110.

The four servants, interacting with the four fathers and three pairs of lovers, give the intrigue plot a secure structural symmetry, disturbed only by the figure of Mother Bombie; the episode involving a hackneyman, a sergeant and a scrivener; and three fiddlers, who provide music for the wedding feast which concludes the play.

The excellence of Mother Bombie stems from the 'world of waggery' contrived by the comic servants and from the linguistic dexterity of their dialogue. They organize the inane wooing of the two idiots(IV,ii) and arrange the trick whereby two parents unknowingly bless the betrothal of the children whose marriage they firmly oppose (IV,i). As well as contriving droll situations the servants supply a delightful display of deft wit, mimicry and general merriment which, instead of being static exhibitions of ingenious word-play (as in Campaspe and Sapho and Phao), serve to forward the plot. Their smart repartee is admirably integrated with the stratagems which mobilize the action.(1)

Mother Bombie exemplifies a kind of realistic comedy previously confined to Lyly's sub-plots: using a frame-work suggested by Roman Comedy, he created a

1. Mother Bombie, II,i, illustrates this point well.

merry word-farce which differed in genre from all his other comedies. In The Woman in the Moon, usually regarded as his last play, he experimented in another direction by using a pastoral-mythological plot as the basis for a satirical comedy in blank verse.

The title page of the first edition of The Woman in the Moon (1597) states that it was 'presented before her Highnesse,' but gives no information about the acting company; an omission which lends some support to the conjecture that it was intended for adult actors, since Lyly employed blank verse and included an element of slapstick comedy alien to the Chapel tradition.(1) He also departed from his usual courtly practice whereby Elizabeth was able to see herself pleasingly mirrored in the central role.

The action is designed to lampoon the absurd ritual of courtly love. Lyly had mocked the pretensions of romantic lovers in Love's Metamorphosis, now he concentrated the temperamental differences of the three nymphs into the single person of Pandora whose swift changes of mood are induced by planetary influences. It is interesting to note that her obsessions are referred to as 'humours'.(2) The entire

1. Hunter, op.cit., pp.82-83.
2. This word occurs: I,i. p.221; II,i, p.111; II,i,p.163; V,i, p.309.

play can, in fact, be regarded as a study of behaviour resulting from an unbalance of humours: a method of characterization which anticipates Ben Jonson's mode of portraying the structure of personality.(1)

The action opens with the creation of Pandora by Nature in answer to the prayers of four amorous shepherds, who believe women to be 'compact of every heavenly excellence.' However, the seven Planets join in league against her and cause her moods to fluctuate wildly, with the result that the shepherds find her: 'sullen ... proud ... bloody minded ... idle, mutable, forgetfull, foolish, fickle, franticke, madde...'(2) and become disillusioned with romantic love. Pandora's servant, Gunophilus, alone perceives that women are by nature child-like and whimsical. He observes:

'O absolute Pandora! because folish,
for folly is womens perfection. To
talkwidely, to loke wildly, to laugh
at every breath and play with a
feather, is that would make a Stoyke
in love.'(3)

The Woman in the Moon is markedly different in comic temper from Lyly's previous pastoral-mythological plays. The typical Lillian formula of delightful entertainment with light conceits of lovers is replaced

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1. This point was first made by C.R. Baskerville, English Elements in Jonson's Early Comedy, Texas, 1911, pp.72-74.
 2. The Woman in the Moon, IV, i, p.303-308.
 3. Ibid., V, i, p. 115-118.

by a harsher, more realistic study of disillusionment with romantic love. Further, the action is not founded on a formal debate-structure, but possesses a continuous narrative interest. The hilarious nocturnal scene, involving unkept trysts, multiple incidents of mistaken identity, deception, betrayals, an elopement and general confusion, is the culmination of an admirably organized intrigue comparable to the complicated dramatic situations in The Two Angry Women of Abingdon by Henry Porter and Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream.

The figure of Gunophilus is also a new feature in Lylian comedy. He is given a determining role in the action by holding the key to plot complications and, by linking the various characters, secures the structural stability of the play. Thus, he represents a great technical advance on the groups of cheeky pages and roistering youths who intrude into the action of many of Lyly's earlier comedies. His humour springs less from word-play than from his rueful comments on the imbroglio; this together with his fantastic monologue,⁽¹⁾ and the fact that he alone speaks entirely in prose, links him with Shakespeare's clowns such as Launcelot Gobbo.

1. The Woman in the Moon, III, ii, p.203-218.

Pandora represents the culmination of a long series of attempts to explore the nature of women from Campaspe through Sapho and Tellus to the nymphs in Love's Metamorphosis. The artificial manner by which her moods are governed does not seriously detract from the impressiveness of Lyly's study of feminine psychology.

After the inhibition of the Chapel companies in 1591 Lyly seems to have periodically composed a number of brief entertainments to amuse Elizabeth on her royal Progresses. Thus the wheel came full circle, for he returned to the simple dramatic form of the court show which he had originally elevated, expanded and transformed to the dignity of High Comedy within the frame-work of a five-act structure.

CHAPTER III

LYLY'S IMPACT ON COMEDY 1580-1594

The year 1592 may be said to have ended an era in the history of Elizabethan comedy. By that date Lyly had written his last play, with the possible exception of The Woman in the Moon; the chorister companies had recently been suppressed, not to be re-formed for a decade; and the public theatres were temporarily closed on account of the plague. When the popular theatres re-opened in 1594 the old brigade of dramatists, dominated by the university wits, had, with the exception of Shakespeare and Munday, either died or ceased to write for the stage.

This chapter will be devoted to the comedies of Wilson, Porter, Munday and the university wits, written prior to 1592.

George Peele may have known Lyly at Oxford, or he may have met him on first coming up to London in 1581.(1) Both contributed prefatory pieces to Thomas Watson's Passionat Century of Love, and the first play of each was performed at court during the 1583/4 season, so they were, in some respects, competitors.

1. D.H. Horne, The Life and Minor Works of George Peele, New Haven, 1952, i, p.66.

The Arraignment of Paris possesses interesting affinities with Lyly's courtly mythological comedies. Peele's subject, the classical myth of Até and the golden apple, had been used on several previous occasions to express a graceful compliment to the Queen.(1) The Arraignment therefore belongs to the same branch of literature as Thomas Churchyard's Cupid and Dame Chastity and Lyly's Sapho and Phao. The latter play contains a traditional device of courtly compliment - the presentation of Cupid's arrows to Sapho/Elizabeth, which is paralleled in The Arraignment by Diana's award of the golden ball to 'the gracious nymph Eliza.'(2)

As in Lyly's court comedies the style of The Arraignment is ornate, polished and artificial, and the plot slight, being made up of a succession of tableau-like scenes containing stately orations, pretty mythological displays, songs, dances and ornamental spectacles. Nashe commended it for 'pregnant dexterity of wit, and manifold varietie of invention';(3) a remark which could apply equally to Lyly's comedies. However, the element of wit is conspicuous in only one

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1. J.D. Reeves, "The Judgment of Paris as a Device of Tudor Flattery," N.Q. CXCI (1954), pp. 7-11.
 2. Peele, The Arraignment of Paris, ed. A.H. Bullen, 1888, i, V, i, 157.
 3. Nashe, Works, ed. R.B. McKerrow, iii, p.323.

scene of The Arraignment, (1) whereas it dominates Lyly's comic technique. Also, the relatively simple patterns of picturesque units in Peele's play were elaborated by Lyly into increasingly complex designs. For example, the wooing episodes and spectacular transformations in Love's Metamorphosis are not merely grafted onto the action, but form an integral part of the plot. Nevertheless, the fourth act of Midas, which features a song contest, a shepherd dialogue and a scene with huntsmen, suggests that Lyly occasionally reverted to Peele's comparatively primitive mode.

The Arraignment can be regarded as an expanded court-show which forms an interesting link between the Progress entertainments of Gascoigne and Churchyard, and Lyly's mature court comedies. Peele followed this play with The Hunting of Cupid, of which enough fragments survive to testify that it was a similar type of pastoral drama.(2)

Peele's first two plays were written for the court, but he later joined his fellow university wits who served the public theatres. His best known production during this period is The Old Wives' Tale (c.1592), a brief medley consisting of a fairy tale plot of

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1. The Arraignment, IV, i, 1-32.
 2. Horne, op.cit., i, p.71.

enchantments and transformations, lost maidens, gallant rescuers and sundry marvels. The play is often regarded as a burlesque on the kind of fanciful romantic comedies in vogue a few years previously - an early Knight of the Burning Pestle.

There are indications that The Old Wives' Tale was intended for a private theatre. The satire on Gabriel Harvey contained in the character Huanebango suggests a cultured audience, and the staging requires simultaneous settings similar to those employed in The Arraignment. The Queen's Men, who owned the play, are known to have acted frequently at court in the early 1590's. It may therefore be conjectured that it is a deliberately archaic romance, written to amuse a sophisticated audience.

It is interesting to note that elements derived from archaic romance also feature in Endimion, which contains an enchantress, fairies, a charmed sleep, a magic fountain, a castle in the desert, a dream, a dumb-show, a sensational return to youth and other marvels. The fact that certain elements in Endimion belong to the same make-believe world as The Old Wives' Tale, suggests that both playwrights derived material from the outmoded tradition of fabulous romance probably to gratify a consciously quaint fashionable taste. The Prologue to Endimion draws attention to

this strain of fantasy:

'.... if it seeme ridiculous for the method, or superfluous for the matter, or for the meanes incredible ... wee can make but one excuse. It is a tale of the Man in the Moone.'⁽¹⁾

Endimion and The Old Wives' Tale both contain a character named Eumenides who goes on a quest and encounters an elderly man who imparts good advice. The prophecies of Erestus parallel the riddling fortunes told by Lyly's Mother Bombie, and a trio of fiddlers, similar to the ones in Mother Bombie and Gallathea, make a brief appearance. These resemblances, although slight, reinforce the impression that Lyly and Peele shared certain assumptions about the nature of comedy. However, it would be misleading not to emphasise that The Old Wives' Tale is basically a loose amalgamation of "popular" romantic elements, whereas Lyly wove his multiple plots into carefully balanced designs and subdued the "popular" elements to conform to a standard of courtly decorum.

When Robert Greene started to write for the stage,

1. Endimion, Prologue, 2-5.

about 1590, Lyly's plays stood as the best achievement of the age in the field of comic entertainment. However, Greene realized that Lyly's artificial High Comedy, based on a witty analysis of courtly love, was hardly likely to appeal to a public accustomed to colourful romantic plots and boisterous farce. Accordingly, in his first play, Alphonsus King of Aragon, he turned to Marlowe's Tamburlaine for inspiration; and George-a-Green, thought to be his first comedy, (1) contains a lively dramatic action interspersed with low-comedy in the spirit of the native Robin Hood dramas. However, two of Greene's later comedies, James IV and Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, possess underlying themes strikingly similar to those of Lyly's "political" comedies - Campaspe and Midas.

James IV is an historical romance based on the same theme as Midas - the moral self-management of rulers. Both plots operate within a simple morality frame-work. James IV, the youthful King of Scotland newly married to Dorothea an English princess, develops a lustful passion for Ida, a virtuous Scottish noblewoman. The King's moral regression is symbolized by the rejection of his wise counsellors and their replacement by corrupt flatterers. The subject of the play is the correction of the King's 'reachless course of youth' and his acquisition of 'riper judgement', which brings the

1. This play was assigned to Greene by J.C. Collins, The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene, ii, Oxford, 1905, pp.160-63. Although the evidence for his authorship is in conclusive it is convenient for present purposes to regard it as his.

knowledge that is is futile 'to bee a King of men ... yet (have) no power to rule and guide him selfe'.(1) The play ends with the banishment of the evil counsellors, the re-affirmation of his love for Dorothea, and the return of order and peace to the realm.

James IV contains more dramatic action than Midas, but the moral issues it explores, and the overall structural pattern whereby serious matter is 'interlast with merriment and rime'(2) are remarkably similar to Midas.

The brisk prose dialogues between Slipper, Nane and Andrew (I,ii), and between Andrew and the Purveyor (II, ii, 1175-1200), are probably modelled on the sprightly repartee of Lyly's pages. Greene, like Lyly, also incorporated a variety of songs and shows into his action. James IV opens with music and a fairy dance; elsewhere, there are directions for: 'a rownd of Fairies, or some prettie dance';(3) 'a dance and hornpipe'; a martial pageant; a chorus of huntsmen; and, at one point, 'musical songs ... or a maske, or what prettie triumph you list.'(4)

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1. Greene, James IV, ed. J.C. Collins, II, i, 825-826.
 2. Ibid., III, iii, 1462.
 3. Ibid., I, iii, 605.
 4. Ibid., V, ii, 1931.

These shows, like similar features in Gallathea and Midas, were included mainly for their entertainment value.

Although James IV and Midas represent dissimilar comic traditions, one boisterous and popular, the other artificial and courtly, yet, within their different contexts, they share certain thematic interests, employ similar structural principles and possess a number of comic ingredients in common.

Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay is a well plotted romantic comedy invested with the carefree spirit of the native Robin Hood plays. The action is rooted in the life of the English countryside and the characters are portrayed with colourful vigour. The heroine, Margaret, displays an attractive, almost Shakespearean animation and warmth of personality.

It is interesting to note that, as with James IV and Midas, there are thematic affinities between Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay and Lyly's Campaspe. There may be a conscious allusion to Campaspe in Edward's lines: 'Injurious Lacie, did I love thee more/ Than Alexander his Hephestion?' (1)

1. Greene, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, ed. J.C. Collins, III, i, 947-948.

In both plays a prince becomes infatuated with a maiden of humble birth who is secretly in love with one of his close friends who betrays a position of trust by wooing the girl himself. The prince eventually discovers the deception, but is forced to acknowledge that love cannot be coerced, magnanimously yields the girl to his rival, and returns to the calls of higher duty with the claim to have conquered love:

..... in subduing fancies passion,
Conquering thy selfe, thou getst the richest spoile.(1)

Both dramatists combine their main story with a comic sub-plot; although here, it must be admitted, there are no parallels between the banter of Lyly's pages and the wizardry of Greene's friars.

In conclusion it may be observed that, although James IV and Friar Bacon differ in important respects from Lyly's comedies, they do possess certain thematic interests in common.

Robert Wilson was one of the last dramatists to write straightforward moral comedies. He definitely

1. Friar Bacon, III, i, 1043-1044.

composed The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London (c. 1589), The Three Ladies of London (c. 1581), and The Cobbler's Prophecy (c. 1594), and may have been the author of A Knack to Know a Knave (1592).

All are "mixed moralities" and aim to amuse, as well as to provide a didactic commentary on social corruption.

A statement on the title page of The Three Lords (equally applicable to all four plays), describes it as:

'Comically interlaced with much honest
Mirth, for pleasure and recreation,
among many Morall observations and
other important matters of due Regard.'

The main theme of The Three Ladies of London is the corruption of Love and Conscience by Lady Lucre. The cast is a large one, and this trio interacts with rogues such as Fraud, usury, and Dissimulation who are opposed by virtuous figures - Hospitality, True Friendship and a clergyman. A clown, Simplicity, plays in and out of the action and, by means of quarrelling, begging and singing, enlivens the play with noisy badinage and fooling. The organization of the action is haphazard with many random intrusions of low-comedy. At the close a Judge delivers judgement on the malicious characters.

A Knack to Know a Knave concerns corruption in England during the reign of King Edgar and is combined with a romantic story. The action is firmly rooted in the everyday world and, like The Three Ladies and The Three Lords, operates within a simple Morality frame-work. The main action is concerned with Honesty's exposure of the knavery of a Farmer, a Courtier, a Coney catcher and a Priest whose misdemeanours illustrate contemporary evils such as rack-renting, monopolies, usury and bribery. The action is lively, well plotted and ruled by clear moral values; the play is in fact an excellent example of the final phase of the Morality tradition.

The two plays by Wilson so far discussed clearly have very little in common with Lyly's aristocratic entertainments; even so, it is possible to detect marginal similarities between Wilson's moral comedies and Lyly's comic mode. For example, Midas is basically a morality play on the subject of avarice, and the straggling plot involving the shipwrecked brothers in Gallathea is probably a survival from the traditionally haphazard low-comedy elements of morality plays. Therefore, there is some evidence that vestiges of the outmoded Morality tradition underlie Lyly's mature comedies.

Wilson's first two plays were straight moral comedies, but, as has been remarked, he introduced a romantic story into the action of A Knack to Know a Knave. The Cobbler's

Prophecy represents Wilson's final attempt to modernise a morality plot by incorporating new material into the traditional frame-work.

The Cobbler's Prophecy is a wretched, but historically interesting play, since it appears to have been influenced by Lyly's comedies. It was intended to provide a commentary on social virtues and vices, but unlike its predecessors, it employs a cast of mythological and earthly beings who interact in a manner which recalls the pattern of the action of Sapho and Phao. The character Contempt fulfills the function of the mischievous Cupid in Lyly's comedies; he creates discord between Mars and Venus and, because he is related to the figure of Vice in the old moralities, acts as a corrupting influence throughout the play. The action contains a debate between a scholar, a courtier and a soldier concerning the merits of their respective professions:(1) an interlude reminiscent of the rivalry between the scholar and courtier in Sapho and Phao. Elsewhere, Mars, like Alexander, is tempted to abandon his military career for the pleasures of love. The most striking indication of Wilson's attempt to utilize Lyly's comic system is, however, suggested by the blending of mythological and mortal worlds.

1. Wilson, The Cobbler's Prophecy, M.S.R., 216-420.

The Two Angry Women of Abingdon (c. 1598)(1) by Henry Porter, is a lively realistic comedy about life in an English village. The action stems from the contention between two mothers who oppose the marriage of their son and daughter. The young couple resort to an intrigue which culminates in an hilarious nocturnal escapade involving episodes of mistaken identity, deliberate impersonation and numerous uproariously funny encounters between the hostile parties. Philip aptly observes:

'tis Christmas sport of Hob man blind,
All blind, all seek to catch, all misse: '(2)

The characters are vividly portrayed and the action is brilliantly manipulated to release the antagonistic forces inherent in the plot.

The play appears to be far removed from Lyly's love-game comedies with their concern for elaborate artifice and intellectual refinement. But Mother Bombie, although less boisterous, employs a similar plot based on parents' hostility to their childrens' betrothal, and depends on a broadly similar system of comedy derived

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1. J.M. Nosworthy, "Notes on Henry Porter," M.L.R., XXXV (1940), pp.517-21 suggest this play is a pre-Shakespearian, but his early dating is not generally accepted.
 2. Porter, Two Angry Women of Abingdon, M.S.R., 2505-2506.

from farcical situations and amusing dialogues in the setting of an English provincial town. It is possible to argue that both plays are in a continuous line of descent from Gammer Gurton's Needle.

In The Woman in the Moon Lyly experimented with a broader type of humour which culminated in a nocturnal woodland scene involving beatings, mistaken identity and elopement analogous to episodes in Porter's comedy, while Gunophilus's function of promoting misadventure resembles that of the servants Hodge and Dick Coombs in The Two Angry Women. If, as has been suggested, The Woman in the Moon was written for the popular stage, this circumstance would help to explain the intrusion of elements from popular comedy into Lyly's customary courtly realm.

Anthony Munday was a very prolific dramatist, but only two comedies of which he was the sole author have survived: Two Italian Gentlemen, performed at court in 1584, and John a Kent and John a Cumber, written about 1589(1) for the public stage. The earlier play, based on Pasqualigo's Il Fedele(2), continues the trend started by Gascoigne's Supposes of adapting Italian comedy for the English stage. Munday followed his source fairly closely although he reduced the number of characters to thirteen and made several minor modifications to the

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1. I.A. Shapiro, "Shakespeare and Mundy", Sh.S., XIV (1961), p.28.
 2. Ibid., p.27.

intrigue plot. The play is mainly interesting as an example of a dramatist turning to Italianate comedy to entertain the court. Lyly, it will be remembered, also derived inspiration from the Italian comic tradition, but whereas Munday virtually translated his source, Lyly cross-fertilized the Italian comic mode with the native "Kenilworth" tradition.

John a Kent and John a Cumber represents a tradition of popular romantic comedy entirely unrelated to Lyly's courtly mode. The play consists of fabulous adventures loosely organized into an episodic narrative about the rivalry of two magicians, and depends on an extravagant use of disguise, improbable situations and farcical antics. The English wizard John a Kent, like Greene's Friar Bungay, is chiefly exercised in assisting a pair of young lovers to marry.

Munday's two comedies serve to emphasize the widely different repertoires of the courtly and public theatres in the 1580's.

The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune (c. 1582), is one of the very few court comedies (apart from Lyly's plays) to have survived from the 1580's. The anonymous author employed a mythological frame-work for a romantic story interspersed with comic elements - a formula which displays interesting affinities with Lyly's mythological comedies.

The plot concerns a contention between Venus and Fortune who are finally permitted by Jupiter to test their rival powers on a pair of mortal lovers:

Venus, for that thy love thy sweet delight,
thou shalt endure to encrease their joy:
and Fortune thou to manifest thy might,
their pleasures and their pastimes thou shalt destroye.(1)

Throughout the last four acts the rival deities preside over, and strive to control, the fluctuations of a romantic melodrama about a king's hostility to the marriage of his daughter to a foundling. The couple seek refuge with a hermit who proves to be an exiled nobleman and the father of the foundling. Fortune, however, places further obstacles in their path and, since neither deity can win a decisive advantage, they agree to submit to the arbitration of Jupiter.

The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune is probably representative of a class of court comedies which have not survived. The narrative interest is more sustained than in Lyly's love-game comedies, but the romantic adventures are set within a characteristically Lylian frame-work of mythological figures whose function corresponds closely to that of the seven Planets in The Woman in the Moon. The idea of contending deities influencing the course of human affairs is integral to

1. The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune, M.S.R., 260-263.

the design of the majority of Lyly's comedies, but the mythological apparatus is generally integrated into the main action instead of operating as an external force - The Woman in the Moon being a significant exception. Also, the obstacles encountered by Lyly's lovers are usually ones of personal psychology rather than exterior impediments.

Summers Last Will and Testament by Thomas Nashe was probably first performed before an aristocratic audience at Croydon in 1592.(1) It is based on the pageant shows and revels traditionally presented before Elizabeth during her Progresses, and is therefore related to the courtly entertainments of Lyly and Peele; but, whereas their pastoral-mythological comedies develop the more literary features of the "Kenilworth" tradition, such as the playlets by Gascoigne and Churchyard, Nashe's play is rooted in the popular seasonal carnivals which formed an important part of the revels.

The action of Summers Last Will and Testament functions within a contrived frame-work of the seasonal cycle instead of following the structure of a plot. It consists of a series of tableaux presented by the ghost of Will Summers, Henry VIII's jester, containing

1. R.B. McKerrow, Works of Thomas Nashe, 1910, iv, pp. 416-19.

traditional festive groups such as the four seasons, rustic pageant figures such as Harvest, Orion with his huntsmen, and Solstitium carrying balances and an hour-glass.

The structure of Lyly's woodland comedies tends to conform to a somewhat similar pattern of tableau scenes with little narrative interest. His Gods and Goddesses doubtless introduced an element of display corresponding to the lavish spectacle of Nashe's carnival figures. In Love's Metamorphosis the transformation scene, the figure of the Siren and the harvest rites in honour of Ceres, afford an opportunity for pretty spectacle.

Lyly and Nashe both invested their work with a courtly compliment to Elizabeth. Nashe used the idea that she was exempt from seasonal change:

A charmed circle draw about her court,
Wherein warme dayes may daunce, & no cold come;(1)

Lyly, on the other hand, generally shed his compliment over the entire plot.

The two playwrights exemplify different aspects of courtly entertainment. Nashe's comedy is essentially a sophisticated folk festival based on rural pastimes

1. Nashe, Summers Last Will and Testament, ed. R.B. McKerrow, iii, 1853-1854.

and liberally interspersed with songs, dances and orations whereas Lyly combined the slight pastoral-mythological shows of the Royal Progresses with serious themes. Elements from both traditions were brilliantly assimilated in Love's Labour's Lost, a comedy written for an aristocratic audience by a dramatist with far greater gifts than either Nashe or Lyly.

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND OUTCROP OF LYLIAN COMEDY 1600-1603

In the first Quarto of Endimion, issued in 1591, the Printer's Address to the Reader alludes to the fact that 'the Plaies in Paules' had recently been dissolved. This sudden fall from royal favour, which terminated a particularly active period in their history, may have been a punishment for dabbling in the Marprelate controversy.(1) The inhibition appears to have been enforced since the children's companies are not heard of again in London for nearly a decade.(2)

During this interregnum James Burbage erected a playhouse for adult actors in the precincts of the old Blackfriar's Priory, but in response to protests from the local residents the Privy Council prevented him from opening it. In September 1600 he leased the building to Henry Evans who had previously been associated with the Paul's boys. Evans formed an alliance with Nathaniel Giles, master of the Chapel Royal, and together they revived the dormant Chapel company, using the playhouse constructed by Burbage as their headquarters.(3)

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1. H.N. Hillebrand, The Child Actors, Urbana, 1926, pp. 143-49.
 2. A. Harbage, Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions, New York, 1952, p.40.
 3. Ibid., pp. 38-40.

One of the first productions at the new Blackfriar's playhouse must have been a revival of Lyly's Love's Metamorphosis, since it was released for publication on 25 November, 1600, bearing a statement that it was 'First playd by the Children of Paules, and now by the Children of the Chappell.' Cynthia's Revels, licensed on 23 May, 1601, was definitely another early play. The whole venture sponsored by Evans and Giles was from start to finish a commercial enterprise maintained by private capital. The managers had no formal connections with the royal household, nevertheless, the new company quickly found encouragement from that quarter, being invited to act at court twice in 1601 and three times the following year.(1)

The circumstances which led to the revival of the other children's company have yet to be established. All that is known is, that in 1600, plays suddenly began to be printed as 'acted by the children of Paul's.'(2) A disparaging passage in Marston's Jack Drum's Entertainment which alludes to the Paul's boys, suggests that they, too, began by resurrecting old plays:

... but they produce
Such mustie fopperies of antiquitie,
And do not sute the humorous ages backs
With cloathes in fashion.(3)

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1. Hillebrand, op.cit., pp. 172-73.
 2. Ibid., p.207.
 3. Marston, Jack Drum's Entertainment, ed. H. Harvey Wood, iii, p. 234.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that in the Induction to Cynthia's Revels Jonson issued a warning that :

'the umbrae, or ghosts of some three or foure playes, departed a dozen yeeres since, have bin seene walking on your stage heere: take heed, boy,.... 'twill fright away all your spectators quickly.'(1)

Two Paul's plays, released for publication in 1600, The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll and The Maid's Metamorphosis, may plausibly be identified with the 'mustie fopperies of antiquitie' referred to by Marston. The company acted at court twice in 1601: on one occasion they presented The Contention between Liberality and Prodigality, which there is good reason to believe consisted of a refurbished version of Sebastian Westcote's old moral play Prodigality, first performed about 1565.(2)

Both children's companies, therefore, recommenced with revivals from the old repertory of chorister plays. The ridicule with which they were greeted shows that this tradition had become hopelessly outmoded; accordingly, the respective managers sought the services of modern dramatists. Paul's employed John Marston and Thomas Middleton, while the Chapel enlisted Ben Jonson and George Chapman(3) to

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1. Jonson, Cynthia's Revels, ed. C.H. Herford and P. Simpson, iv, Induction, 194-198.
 2. Hillebrand, op.cit., pp. 128-30.
 3. Ibid., p.266.

initiate a programme more in tune with contemporary taste.

The character of the children's companies had undergone a profound change since their dissolution, when, as amateurs, their function had been to present plays at court under the direction of a choirmaster who was appointed by the sovereign and normally wrote the plays himself. They had, in fact, relied sporadically upon professional writers such as Lyly, Peele, and Munday to supply comedies and also "exercised" the choirboys before paying audiences, but the organization of the revived companies was thoroughly commercial and not designed primarily to satisfy the requirements of the court.(1)

The effect of the suppression of the children's companies on Lyly's career was to compel him to turn from writing court comedies to the provision of Progress entertainments, virtually the sole remaining dramatic pastime which still demanded his particular gifts. Nevertheless, the amateur, William Percy, who catered for truly private audiences, continued to imitate Lyly's pastoral-mythological comedies at the turn of the century. He even revised his plays for the Paul's boys, but, although they seem to have been acted in private houses

1. Harbage, op.cit., p.40.

before small aristocratic gatherings, it is reasonably certain that they never appeared on the London stage.(1)

William Percy, second son of the eighth Earl of Northumberland, is one of the most enigmatic Elizabethan playwrights. He spent most of his life as a recluse in Oxford, published a volume of sonnets in 1594, and, between 1601 and 1603, wrote five plays which form a remarkable chapter in the history of private theatricals.

Percy appears to have been quite out of touch with the contemporary theatre, his plays being planned for a multiple stage with sign-boards. His sophisticated blend of classical myth, Renaissance learning, and masque-like pageantry, harks back to the courtly tradition of the 1580's. Miss Hope Dodds and Professor Hillebrand maintain that his comedies were intended to grace special social occasions and that the author must be regarded as a kind of dramatic master of ceremonies for his family.(2) The Prologue to The Faery Pastoral, for instance, was obviously addressed to the King, since it contains a reference to 'your Majesty', and Miss Dodds has established the probability that it was performed on 8 June, 1603, when the Earl of Northumberland entertained James I at Syon House. The fantastic action which contains pastoral, mythological and hunting scenes with opposed sets of

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1. The best account of Percy's dramatic activities is by H.N. Hillebrand, "William Percy - An Elizabethan Amateur," H.L.Q. I (1937-38), pp. 391-416.
 2. Ibid., p. 392.

lovers, a farcical sub-plot and a sprinkling of songs, continues the Lylian tradition of comedy. The Aphrodysial and Arabia Sitens were also written for some definite occasion and display Lylian influence.

The manuscript of The Faery Pastoral or The Forest of Elves, preserved at Alnwick Castle, bears the date 1603. The text is prefaced by a catalogue of stage requisites, several of which - a hollow oak, a low well, a green bank and 'a hole to creep in and out of' - also occur in one or more of Lyly's plays. The woodland setting is also suggestive of Lyly's forest comedies.

The pattern of the action corresponds closely to Love's Metamorphosis and Gallathea, being founded upon contending sets of characters. A group of comic figures, Sir David the schoolmaster and his associates, appear in a loosely connected story which provides a stratum of low-comedy similar to the antics of the shipwrecked brothers in Gallathea.

In the main plot, Hypsiphyle, princess of Elvida forest, is deposed by Oberon, King of the fairies, for permitting his woods to decay while she spends her time 'tripping o're the greens'. Prince Orion is appointed guardian of the forest in her stead and throughout the play they argue about the best methods of managing a deer forest. Hunting was James I's favourite pastime, therefore Percy's choice of subject, and in particular

the choice of Orion to succeed Hypsiphyle, was clearly intended as a compliment to the new sovereign. Lyly, of course, also invested his comedies with discreet courtly flattery.

Orion's fairy huntsmen, Laerchus, Picus and Hippolon, find their amorous overtures to Hypsiphyle's fair huntresses are disdainfully repulsed. When the couples meet the dialogue follows much the same lines as the antagonistic exchanges between the nymphs and foresters in Love's Metamorphosis. In one conversation the girls enumerate their suitors' shortcomings:

- Florida Mark'st nott how my Gentleman draweth
in his lips when he but talketh lyke
a paire of deale Boardes? Camilla.
- Fancia Rather lyke two shooe-soales had got
a leake.
- Florida And how filthy he suppeth in his Potage!
Roupe Roupe.
- Camilla Picus is so formall forsooth he will
rather spet into his dish then take
furth with his napkin an unsavourly
morsell.
- Florida I though he had been lispig verses
the whiles.(1)

The dialogue continues thus for a hundred lines.

1. Percy, The Faery Pastoral, ed. J. Haslewood, I, iv.
(pp. 109-110).

This passage is one of many which recall speeches from Lyly's comedies (compare Sapho and Phao I.iv. 34-40).

The girls decide to 'serve them each an Elvish Trick'. Laerchus is trapped in a well, Picus imprisoned in a hollow oak and Hippolon exhausts himself pursuing Camilla through the forest. These episodes are suggestive of the pranks in The Woman in the Moon. The huntsmens' anger also reflects something of the bitter disillusionment with romance in that play:

You broode of vipers, you Sect of Falsitye,
You howse of horrors, you pits of crueltye.(1)

The men gain their revenge by adopting the disguise of three characters from the sub-plot, which leads to further comic situations in which the girls are shut up in a kiln and a henhouse.

Percy made no attempt to integrate the group of low-comedy figures into the main action. They merely wander through the play contributing idle prattle, tedious anecdotes and coarse jokes. Their dialogue contains little of the sparkling repartee and linguistic dexterity that make Lyly's sub-plots delightful.

Percy used a fanciful story as the frame-work for a love-game comedy which displays something of the

1. The Faery Pastoral, II,vii. (p.131).

balanced organization and light-hearted High Comedy of Lyly's pastorals. Since The Faery Pastoral was designed to entertain an audience which included the King it was natural for Percy to turn to Lyly's comedies for inspiration. The artistic intention of both dramatists appears to have been virtually identical, although Percy's inferior literary gifts deprive his work of Lyly's sprightly elegance.

Percy probably wrote The Aphrodysial or Sea Feast for the occasion of the christening of his nephew, Algeron, on 15 October, 1602.(1)

The "Aphrodysial" is a feast given each year by Oceanus in honour of Cytherea. The festival is held upon the sea shore and provides the background for a fantastic series of by-plots and amorous intrigues between the guests. In a cast of twenty-eight the principal figures are Oceanus and Cynthia, Hero and Leander, Arion and Talus, rivals for Thetis; Vulcan, who attempts to seduce Humida and Arida, the daughters of Protea; four fishermen, three Cyclops, three Graces, Cupid and Belan a sea-master. The play is constructed out of a relatively naive system of tableau scenes, each group of characters clearing the stage before the next enters. There is little dramatic movement and

1. M.H. Dodds, "William Percy's Aphrodysial", N.Q., CLXI (1931), p. 237.

the author included numerous songs and musical interludes to cover up the many awkward entrances and exits.(1)

Percy attempted to combine a Lylian type plot with the technique of a mask or court show - the element of mythological pageantry being developed at the expense of a clearly defined dramatic action. A few quotations from the stage directions will suffice to suggest the colourful decor he employed:

The stage hong all with clows collour,
otherwise with Arras, or other Sea Properties
befitting.(2)

The costumes too, were gorgeous:

Oceanus brave and glorious to behold.(3)
Proteus's daughters the one in sea blew,
the other in sand colour satten.(4)

Percy also incorporated ingenious scenic devices:

Then the Hall opening, was seene a Summer
Nooneday couch of sand collour, with sort of
Dreames Animate and Inanimate of divers
cullours, hanging by invisible threds of
silke ... being but bigge as pawns of Cheese.(5)

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1. I am indebted to the Director of the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford, for providing facilities to use the microfilm copy of The Aphrodysial in the Institute Library.
 2. Percy, The Aphrodysial, F.120 v., (a microfilm of the Percy Plays in the Henry E. Huntington Library was used - see previous footnote).
 3. Ibid., F. 132 r.
 4. Ibid., F. 120 r.
 5. Ibid., F. 139 r.

Lyly's mythological figures were certainly richly attired, for example, the Siren in Love's Metamorphosis is described as flaunting golden locks and holding a glass and a comb, but there is nothing to suggest that he ever envisaged spectacle on such an elaborate scale.

In order to disentangle the multiple plots of The Aphrodysial Percy was forced to employ Cytherea as a deus ex machina, a function similar to that assigned to Venus in Gallathea. Also, in common with Gallathea, the action contains mythological disguise; a trick of metamorphosis; and four fishermen, who, like Lyly's trio of sailors, contribute low-comedy and wretched puns;

Ponticus	Carpe.
Gripus	I lyke not these carping Jacks, I.
Harpax	Evry eache of them have, at dinner, beene thouroughly carpt ...(1)

It would, however, be misleading to overstress the Lylian elements in The Aphrodysial. The play contains no clear dramatic patterns, controlled exposition of a theme, or imaginative cohesion. It is essentially a semi-dramatic entertainment relying for its appeal more on music and spectacle than witty dialogue and High Comedy.

Arabia Sitens or A Dreame of a Drye Yeare, dated 1601, appears to have been intended for some special festival since the Prologue refers to 'this blissd day'.(2) Once

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1. The Aphrodysial, F. 144 r.
 2. M.H. Dodds, "A Dreame of a Drye Yeare", J.E.G.P. XXXII (1933), pp. 190-91.

again Percy furnished his work with ideas from earlier court drama. Mahomet sends two angels Haroth and Maroth to search for wicked mortals. In Arabia lives a cruel maiden, Epimenide, who commands her shepherd suitors Calelo and Tubal to obtain the purse and signet ring of Geber, an unscrupulous enchanter.

In the third Act we learn that Epimenide has been under the influence in turn of six of the deadly sins and is at present dominated by Pride. This situation resembles the plot of The Woman in the Moon at the point where Pandora, under the malign influence of Jupiter, sends her suitors on dangerous missions. Haroth and Maroth are themselves ensnared by Epimenide's charms, but their advances are scornfully repulsed. They convey her back to heaven where, inspite of her quarrelsome disposition, Mahomet falls passionately in love with her, much as Jupiter falls in love with the moody, peevish Pandora. In heaven she remains impossibly haughty and rude, so Mahomet condemns her to remain for ever in the moon with the two unfaithful angels.

The central situation of an alluring woman, who, under the influence of various malicious forces repulses her suitors and is finally punished by bannishment to the moon, compels comparison with The Woman in the Moon. Although Percy's play is a farce and lacks Lylian grace the earlier play undoubtedly furnished the fundamental idea; one of the angels in fact refers to the Pandora

legend:

... she is crept new
Furth Pandoraes Bottle into the world.(1)

Cuck-Queans and Cuckolds Errants, dated 1601, is very different from the three comedies already considered. The main action is a well constructed domestic farce involving two married couples. A second plot concerns the theft of a golden cup and its subsequent recovery. The criss-cross pattern of the action is in some respects comparable to the intrigue plots of Mother Bombie or The Merry Wives of Windsor - both farces written for private audiences.

From this survey of Percy's output it is evident that his plays represent an attempt to continue the tradition of Elizabethan court comedy. His amateur approach to structural matters and slender literary gifts render his plays intrinsically poor; however, they are remarkable for the evidence they afford of having been modelled on Lylian comedy, and therefore occupy an important position in this thesis.

The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll, The Contention between Liberality and Prodigality and The Maid's Metamorphosis, all anonymous Paul's plays acted during 1600 and 1601, represent the last attempts to entertain the audience

1. Quoted: Dodds, op.cit., p. 186.

of a private theatre in London with plays culled from the period prior to the suppression of the children's companies in 1590. This trio of comedies was revived at a watershed in Elizabethan drama; the old chapel tradition had become outmoded, yet the new fashion for realistic satire had not properly emerged: each exemplifies a different type of chorister play: the Italianate intrigue, the morality and the pastoral-mythological romance.

There is reason to believe that The Contention between Liberality and Prodigality, presented at court in 1601, is a refurbished version of Sebastian Westcote's moral interlude Prodigality, first acted by the Paul's boys about 1565.(1) It is difficult to account for the revival of this obsolete play unless the absence of more modern scripts compelled the company to rely on their old stock of plays.

It is reasonably certain that The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll was one of the 'mustie fopperies of antiquitie' slightly referred to by Marston in Jack Drum's Entertainment.(2) It belongs to the same genre of chorister comedy as The Two Italian Gentlemen by Munday, the action being set in Italy and consisting of fantastic love intrigues intermixed with a medley of farcical episodes.

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1. H.N. Hillebrand, The Child Actors, Urbana, 1926, pp. 128-30.
 2. Ibid., p. 209.

The first recorded performance of The Maid's Metamorphosis occurred in 1600, but it has not yet been established whether at that date it was a new play or a revival. It combines mythological, forest and courtly elements in an unrealistic action strongly reminiscent of Lyly's pastoral comedies.

For the romantic scenes the author employed ornate iambic pentameters somewhat similar to the verse of Peele's Arraignment. The sprightly prose used by the group of comic servants was obviously strongly influenced by the idiom of Lyly's comedies. In fact Bond was so impressed by the Lylian qualities of the prose dialogue(1) that he suggested the managers of the Paul's company might have commissioned him specially to write these scenes.(2) There is no external evidence to support this conjecture. However, the following exchanges exhibit striking affinities with Lyly's witty servants in Campaspe and Mother Bombie.(3)

Enter Juculo, Frisco, and Mopso, at three
severall doores.

Mop. Juculo, whither jettest thou? hast thou
found thy Maister?
Jo. Mopso wel met, hast thou found thy mistresse?
Mop. Not I by Pan.
Jo. Nor I by Pot.

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1. Especially The Maid's Metamorphosis, ed. R.W. Bond, II, ii, and III, ii.
 2. Bond, op.cit., III, p. 337.
 3. Campaspe, III, ii, 4; Mother Bombie, II, i, 1-47.

- Mop. Pot? what god's that?
Jo. The next god to a Pan, and such a pot
it may be, that as he shall have moe
servants then all the Pannes in a
Tinkers shop.
Mop. Frisco, where hast thou bene frisking?
hast thou found?
Fris. I have found.
Jo. What hast thou found Frisco?
Fris. A couple of crack-roapes.
Jo. And I.
Fris. I meane you two.
Jo. I you two.
Mop. And I you two.
Fris. Come, a trebble conjunction: all three, all three.(1)

The alternation of "poetic" love scenes with interludes of comic dialogue; the interaction of Arcadian, mythological and human figures, the occurrence of formal speeches, songs, and a fairy dance, and the heroine's metamorphosis, closely resemble the pattern of Gallathea. S.R. Golding has shrewdly observed that:

'the whole play is indicative throughout of a poet and playwright, who took as his models the popular masterpieces of Spenser, Lyly and Peele.'(2)

Further parallels may be cited: the wooing of Eurymine in Act I is conducted in a manner which recalls the wooing of Pandora; the singing match at the end of the

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1. The Maid's Metamorphosis, III, ii, 1-17.
 2. S.R. Golding, "The Authorship of The Maid's Metamorphosis," R.E.S., II (1926), p. 279.

first Act is a device also employed in Midas, and Aramantus, the hermit, who tells riddling fortunes, serves the same function as Lyly's old Mother Bombie. In short, the play exemplifies many of the characteristics of Lyly's pastoral-mythological comedies.

After the defeat of the Armada Elizabeth's troubles eased and the Royal Progresses started once more. This meant that her aristocratic hosts were obliged to find writers to devise the traditional revels which attended such visits. Lyly's striking success as a court dramatist had undoubtedly earned him a reputation as a purveyor of courtly entertainment, he would therefore be exceptionally well qualified for the task of devising Progress entertainments. The inhibition of the Paul's boys in 1590 had curtailed Lyly's career as a dramatist; it is, therefore, at least plausible that he was employed by the nobility to amuse and compliment the Queen.

R.W. Bond was the first scholar to attribute a number of such pieces to Lyly, on the grounds that they display his characteristic idiom, repeat many of his favourite themes and contain echoes from his acknowledged work.(1) The discovery in 1953 of two previously unrecorded entertainments, one of which bears Lyly's name, improves

1. Bond, i, pp. 378-86 and 404-09, but G.K. Hunter, John Lyly, pp. 83-84 is sceptical of Bond's ascription of these entertainments to Lyly.

the case for ascribing to him the collection printed by Bond.(1) These eight semi-dramatic pastimes certainly reflect Lyly's technique, being elegantly wrought vehicles designed to delight the sophisticated taste of the court and convey a graceful compliment to Elizabeth.

The most important entertainments were given at Elvetham (1591); Quarrendon, Bisham and Sudeley (1592); Mitcham (1598), and Harefield (1602). This miscellaneous collection of pretty mythological shows, dialogues, formal orations, songs, fairy dances and picturesque tableaux which make up these entertainments may be compared to a loose mosaic of excerpts from the court comedy of the previous decade. The amusements represent a revival of the dormant "Kenilworth" tradition, reinforced with material derived from Lyly's masterpieces.

On her Progresses Elizabeth was normally welcomed with a formal address, in many ways comparable to the court Prologues which preface Campaspe and Sapho and Phao. The oration in praise of Cynthia in the opening scene of Endimion is also somewhat similar to the complimentary speeches which Elizabeth was accustomed to hear. The Porter's speech at Cowdray opens in a stately manner: 'The walles of Thebes were raised by Musicke: by musick these are kept from falling', and builds up to a crescendo

1. Lyly, Queen Elizabeth's Entertainment at Mitcham, ed. L. Hotson, New Haven, 1953.

of eulogy:

'O miracle of Time, Natures glorie,
Fortunes Empresse, the worlds wonder!'(1)

lines which recall the passage in Endimion:

'Cynthia, too too faire Cynthia, the
myracle of Nature, of tyme, of Fortune.'(2)

Songs and spectacles were always a conspicuous feature of the entertainments, in fact it is recorded of the song of Coridon and Phyllida at Elvetham that:

'it pleased her Highnesse, after it had bene
once sung to command it againe.'(3)

Similar picturesque spectacles frequently occur in Lyly's comedies.

The pastoral-mythological show of Daphne and Apollo presented at Sudeley clearly reflects the imaginative world of Lylian comedy. The action opens with Apollo pursuing Daphne, followed by a shepherd who laments that Daphne, his chaste love, had been transformed

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1. Bond, i, p. 423.
 2. Endimion, I, iv, 36-37.
 3. Bond, i, p.447.

into a tree to save her from Apollo's lust. The penultimate tableau shows:

'Apollo with (a) tree, having on the one side one that sung, on the other one that plaide'.

Finally,

'the tree rived, and Daphne issued out'

and fled to Elizabeth, Queen of Chastity, to safeguard her virginity.(1) The episode may be compared with Fidelia's account of her plight in Love's Metamorphosis.(2)

The debat, a favourite frame-work for the action of Lyly's comedies, also furnishes the main interest in several of the Progress entertainments. At Mitcham the Painter, the Poet and the Musician debate the rival merits of their skills for honouring the Queen and at Sudeley Melibaeus and Nisa debate the relative constancy of men and women.(3)

The dialogue between Liberty and Constancy at Quarrendon exemplifies Lyly's technique of creating tension by means of subtle overtones.(4)

Li. What is the band of thy faith?
Co. My worde.
Li. Your worde ys winde, & no sooner spoken than gone.

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1. Bond, i, pp.479-80.
 2. Love's Metamorphosis, I, ii, 90-130.
 3. Bond, i, pp.481-82.
 4. Compare Campaspe, IV, ii, 28-45 and IV, iv, 1-10.

- Co. Yet doth it binde to see what is
spoken donne.
Li. You can do lyttle yf you cannot
maister your worde.
Co. I should do lesse yf my worde did
not maister me.
Li. It maisters you in deede, for it
makes you a slave.
Co. To none but one whome I chuse to serve.
Li. It is basenes to serve though it
be but one.
Co. More base to dissemble with more that one.
Li. When I love all alyke I dissemble with
none.
Co. But if I love manie will anie love me?(1)

The pastoral playlet acted at Bisham emulates Lyly's use of the theme of chastity to pay a graceful compliment to Elizabeth. Pan's overtures to a pair of shepherdesses exactly captures the idiom of Lyly's lovers:

'.... you know my suite, love, my vertue,
Musicke, my power, a godhead.....How doe you
burne time, & drowne beauty in pricking
of clouts, when you should bee penning
Sonnets?....I love you both, I know not which
best, and you both scorne me, I know not
which most. Sure I am, that you are not so
young as not to understand love, nor so wise
as to withstand it, unlesse you think your
selves greater than gods, whereof I am one.'(2)

The show concludes with a pageant of Ceres and her nymphs in which Ceres presents her crown of Peace and Plenty to Cynthia.

1. Bond, i, pp.461-62.
2. Ibid., p.473.

It is interesting to find a body of work in the 1590's - that may or may not be by Lyly - which in essentials corresponds so closely to Lyly's comic artistry. It affords another indication that his version of courtly entertainment remained fashionable in exclusive aristocratic circles long after it had become outmoded on the London stage.

There is little evidence of medieval drama at Oxford and Cambridge, but about the middle of the sixteenth century, following the example of continental humanists, the comedies of Terence and Plautus were acted as a facet of educational training and during Elizabeth's reign it became customary to perform neo-classical plays on certain festive occasions.(1)

About 1580 Latin versions of Italian comedies rapidly became popular. Pastoral romances involving disguise, confusions of sex, betrayals and incredible amorous entanglements seem to have been popular with university audiences. Two such plays were Leander and Labyrinthus adapted from the Italian and translated into Latin by Walter Hawksworth of Trinity College, Cambridge. The latter was based on G. B. Della

1. The following account of University Drama is mainly derived from F.S. Boas, University Drama in the Tudor Age, Oxford, 1914.

Porta's Cinta from which Lyly derived several episodes in Gallathea.(1) About 1582, Victoria, a Latin version of Il Fedele by Luigi Pasqualigo, was produced at St. John's. The same play was translated by Anthony Munday and acted at court in 1584 under the title The Two Italian Gentlemen.(2)

The Cambridge comedies represent a foreign form of art transplanted in England, whereas, when Lyly borrowed material from Italian pastoral comedy he combined it with English elements. University drama is a little kingdom on its own; however, it is related to the tradition of court comedy in so far as both owe a debt to contemporary Italian plays.

In the closing years of Elizabeth's reign a number of topical and satirical comedies in the vernacular were staged in Cambridge. Their appearance may be accounted for by the growing taste for satirical literature at the time.

Club Law, attributed to George Ruggle, seems to have stemmed from the persistent hostility which existed between the University and the Corporation. It is a direct satire on prominent townsmen and the 'merry and abusive' action includes a rowdy cudgelling fracas, and a procession in which the mayor is born through the town in a tub. The

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1. V.M. Jeffery, John Lyly and the Italian Renaissance, Paris, 1929, p.83.
 2. I.A. Shapiro, "Shakespeare and Mundy", Sh.S., XIV (1961), p.27.

three Parnassus plays belong to the same genre: they contain satirical allusions to recognizable literary figures and, although the main theme is the search of graduates for employment, the plays make topical references to the war of the theatres in London.(1) J.B. Leishman has indicated many parallels with contemporary verse satire and "humour" comedy. For example, Gallio the foolish courtier is a Jonsonian figure, and Amorettò is modelled on Master Stephen and Fastidious Brisk. The influence of Jonson is everywhere discernable.

Lyly never admitted anything approaching the rowdy realism of the Cambridge vernacular comedies into his work. However, Midas, Endimion and Sapho and Phao reflect recent political events connected with the court and contain a dash of satire. Both traditions illustrate how a coterie audience tends to determine the form and content of a play, particularly in the matter of topical ingredients.

Narcissus, a Twelve Night Merriment performed at St. John's, Oxford, in 1603, suggests that, alongside the comedies in Latin and the satirical plays, there existed a taste for light fantastic amusement akin to the tradition of courtly revels. Narcissus is a slight, sophisticated play composed of twelve scene-units and two songs.(2) The sketchy action, derived partly from

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1. My remarks on the "Parnassus" plays owe much to J.B. Leishman's introduction to his edition of The Three Parnassus Plays, 1949.
 2. Narcissus, ed. M.L. Lea, 1893.

Ovid's Metamorphoses, is mixed with diverse extraneous elements included solely for their recreational value. The woodland setting, mythological story, cast of nymphs and shepherds, loosely combined into a light entertainment may be regarded as a debased form of court-show.

It is interesting to find that of the three strands of University comedy, the academic Latin comedies were based on Italianate material similar to that which Lyly wove into his plots, and that the one pastoral-mythological playlet which has survived also displays a distant kinship with Lyly's work. Only the realistic satire which drew its inspiration largely from Jonson's comedies showed no awareness of Lyly's achievement in the comic sphere.

CHAPTER V

LYLY AND JONSON

Ben Jonson was the most versatile of the dramatists who transformed the prevailing tradition of comedy towards the end of the sixteenth century, and paved the way for the playwrights who served the private theatres when they re-opened in 1600. He formulated an essentially new kind of realistic satire based on the abnormal effects of an unbalance of humours on individual behaviour. In actual fact, Jonson's really decisive break with previous dramatic modes did not occur until Sejanus (1603) and Volpone (1606) therefore his six earliest comedies, four of which possess distinct affinities with Lyly's stagecraft, may be regarded as experimental.

According to Renaissance theory, one of the functions of comedy was to expose folly and eradicate vice.(1) This had been the guiding-light of the Morality tradition, and the transitional stage from this to Jonson's satirical comedy of manners may be studied in A Knack to Know a Knave and Three Lords and Three Ladies of London by Robert Wilson. Both writers show a similar preoccupation with improving social morality through the castigation of fools and rogues. Jonson, however, made certain structural

1. M. Doran, Endeavors of Art, Wisconsin, 1954, esp. Ch.4.

modifications, and replaced Wilson's crude verse with efficient prose dialogue.

In the Induction to Every Man Out of His Humour Jonson explained his didactic intentions through the person of Asper:

'Well, I will scourge those apes;
And to these courteous eyes oppose a mirrour,
As large as is the stage, whereon we act:
Where they shall see the times deformitie
Anatomiz'd in every nerve, and sinnew.'(1)

It would have been inappropriate for Lyly, as an entertainer of his betters, to set himself up as a moral censor; nevertheless, he sometimes lampooned ridiculous behaviour. In Endimion the absurd affectations of Sir Tophas are amusingly portrayed, and the Astronomer and Alchemist in Gallathea are caricatured in much the same way as Jonson's charlatans. The forceful corrective spirit of Diogenes informs Campaspe, and Midas contains a condemnation of arrogance and avarice. Therefore, although Lyly never employed a Jonsonian zeal in his denunciation of social pests, he does, in a small way, anticipate Jonson's brand of satire.

The two playwrights possess almost nothing in common regarding structural principles. Jonson invariably

1. Jonson, Every Man Out of his Humour, ed. C.H. Herford and P. Simpson, iii, Induction, 117-21.

provided a well integrated axis for episodes to turn on, and incorporated his different elements into a single realistic action; whereas, with the exception of Mother Bombie, Lyly's plots are desultory, impeded by comic intrusions, and frequently mixed with matter derived from the tradition of courtly revels.

Witty dialogue formed the main-spring of Lyly's comic machinery, and Jonson learned a great deal from him about the creation of the lively prose dialogue to which his "Humour" plays owe so much of their vitality.

Jonson placed a greater emphasis than Lyly upon character. The figures in his early plays were often based on Plautine models or stock types from the old Moralities, skilfully moulded to resemble contemporary social types, and usually endowed with a humourous trait. Lyly, however, was actually the first dramatist to employ the theory of humours as a method of characterization.

In Euphues the word "humour" is constantly applied to follies, and characters in the comedies who are intended to represent recognizable social types, such as Sir Tophas the pretentious courtier, are delineated by fixing on an abnormal temperamental bent referred to as a "humour".(1) The most striking instance of this occurs

1. C.R. Baskervill, English Elements in Jonson's Early Comedy, Texas, 1911, pp.59-60.

in The Woman in the Moon, a comedy entirely preoccupied with the strange moods of Pandora which originate in a successive disequilibrium of humours. Under each planetary influence she behaves as one of Jonson's humour types might do if dominated by the same inclination. Reviewing her actions she declares:

'Thou madst me sullen first, and thou Jove, proud;
Thou bloody minded; he a Puritan:
Thou Venus madst me love all that I saw,
And Hermes to deceive all that I love;
But Cynthia made me idle, mutable,
Forgetfull, foolish, fickle, franticke, madde;
These be the humors that content me best,
And therefore will I stay with Cynthia.'(1)

In Midas the individual master-passion of each counsellor, war, avarice and love, is repeatedly termed "humour". However, technically, the closest parallel to Jonson's method of comical satire, is to be found in the subsidiary action of Endimion, which Lyly contrived explicitly to ridicule Sir Tophas's humour of vanity. His opening speech introduces the theme of humours:

'I brooke not thys idle humor of love,
it tickleth not my lyver.'(2)

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1. The Woman in the Moon, V, i, 304-310.
 2. Endimion, I, iii, 7-8.

a remark which indicates the drift of the ensuing comic action.

To recapitulate. Although Jonson announced that his intention was to 'shun the print of any beaten path', (1) parts of his route had already been sketchily mapped by Lyly. Indeed, Cynthia's Revels, his one specifically courtly play, shows abundant evidence of a careful study of Sapho and Phao, Gallathea and Endimion. However, it must be stressed that Lyly's comedies were primarily entertainments, designed to 'move inward delight', and usually confined to the sphere of courtship: they seldom display the intellectual and moral seriousness, or the realism which characterize Jonson's work.

The Case is Altered (c. 1597), is the only play known to have survived from the period before Jonson achieved fame with his "Humour" comedies. It stands apart from the main-stream of his dramatic output and may be dealt with briefly.

In The Case is Altered, Jonson combined two plots taken from Captivi and Alularia by Plautus. (2) The action includes a love story which turns upon mistaken identity and sudden recognition and contains a number of household servants who bear a family resemblance to Lyly's comic

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1. Jonson, Cynthia's Revels, ed. Herford and Simpson, iv, Prologue, 10.
 2. Herford and Simpson, op.cit., i, pp.307-10.

pages. The result is a quazi-romantic cross between Roman and Elizabethan comedy, reminiscent of Lyly's Mother Bombie. Lyly was the leading comic dramatist of the previous decade, it thus seems reasonable to infer that their generic resemblance may be attributed to the fact that Jonson was receptive to some of his ideas.

Jonson's next play, Every Man in his Humour, first acted in 1598 at the Curtain, was an immediate success and heralded a new epoch in comedy.(1) In his own words he wrote to:

'.... shew an Image of the times,
And sport with humane follies, not with crimes.'(2)

In this play an intrigue plot serves as a frame-work for the presentation of "humour" characters; that is, men whose moral and emotional nature lacks sanity. The various gulls, fops and social pests undergo a programme of ethical reform supervised by individuals of a 'discreet and understanding judgement.' For example, Bobadill is portrayed as a cowardly braggart, and Matheo subscribes to the futile ideals of fashionable society; each is made to appear ridiculous, is humiliated, and

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1. Herford and Simpson, op.cit., i, p.331.
 2. Jonson, Every Man in his Humour, ed. Herford and Simpson, iii, Prologue, 23-24.

then firmly reproved. This form of realistic satire on contemporary manners had occurred sporadically in previous drama, but Jonson effected a major break through.

The subsidiary action of Endimion furnishes a striking parallel to Jonson's comic method. Lyly's burlesque of Sir Tophas's courtly accomplishments has much in common with Jonson's treatment of Bobadill. However, Lyly's comedies were on the whole too closely related to the frivolous tradition of courtly revels for Jonson to use as a foundation for his vigorous crusade against the follies of the time. In Campaspe, Diogenes's tirades against corruption in Athenian society,(1) show a kindred corrective spirit, but Jonson's plot machinery and satiric scope originate in formal verse satire rather than amplify the light-hearted mockery of contemporary manners found in earlier court drama.

During the 1590's satirical verse became very popular, but an official restraining order of 1599, banning the publication of satires, is thought to have inhibited its expression.(2) In Every Man Out of his Humour Jonson astutely evaded the inhibition by adapting the methods and function of formal satire for dramatic purposes.(3) Therefore, this comedy, first performed at the Globe in 1599, owed comparatively little to the stimulus of earlier playwrights.

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1. Campaspe, IV, i, 24-53.
 2. O.J. Campbell, Comicall Satyre, San Marino, 1938, p.1.
 3. Ibid., p.1.

The play was designed as a gigantic satire on the futility of fashionable social ideals. The action consists of a series of episodes which display the ludicrous behaviour of a group of gulls, fops and social pests. For example, Fastidious Brisk, who embodies the humour of an 'affecting courtier', is raked with invective, involved in situations which expose his folly and humiliate his pride, and is finally purged of his stupid obsessions. Fungoso is portrayed as a shallow gull, intent on aping men of fashion; Carlo Buffoon flaunts an arrogant and scurrilous humour; and Puntarvolo exhibits the qualities of a vain-glorious knight. Each is ridiculed and compelled to reform his ways.

An episode in Every Man Out of his Humour sheds light on Jonson's attitude to Lyly. It concerns Saviolina, described in the preface as 'a court lady with a light wit'. She corresponds to the type of vain and witty maiden who abound in Lyly's comedies. Lyly was the first dramatist to give prominence to women, therefore it is hardly surprising that Jonson looked to him for a model. In fact, Macilente observes: 'her jests are of the stampe, (March was fifteene yeres ago.)(1) which seems to indicate that Jonson consciously connected her with Lyly. Cynthia's Revels, first performed at Blackfriars in 1600, is a play of exceptional interest since it was obviously designed to be presented at court.(2) Lyly's comedies were acknowledged

1. Every Man Out of his Humour, III, ix, 136-137.

2. Herford and Simpson, op.cit., I, p.393.

masterpieces in the field of courtly entertainment, therefore, although Cynthia's Revels represents another attempt to construct a dramatic equivalent to formal satire, Jonson purposely incorporated a number of Lylian elements into his play; such as using the traditional mythological apparatus of court comedy and choosing Cynthia's court as a setting for a satirical study of manners. His characters are grouped with a formal symmetry comparable to Lyly's practice, and the set of flirtatious, proud and witty court ladies corresponds to Lyly's coteries of maidens. Not only was Cynthia's Revels intended for child actors, written in prose, and interspersed with songs, but it may be regarded as a direct continuation of the Lylian tradition.

In common with Endimion the action takes place in and around the court of Cynthia; the figure of Cynthia representing Elizabeth as a paragon of virtue. She also appears at the end of each play as a moral arbiter. Both dramatists introduce topical allusions into their plots; in Jonson's case, the passage describing the death of Actaeon(1) is generally taken to be a rash reference to the disgrace of Essex.(2) Lyly's veiled allusions to contemporary events have frequently been discussed.(3)

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1. Cynthia's Revels, V, xi, 14-21.
 2. E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, 1923, iii, p.364.
 3. J.W. Bennett, "Oxford and Endimion", P.M.L.A., LVII (1942), pp. 354.69.

The opening scene of Cynthia's Revels, which is set in a grove with a fountain, and consists of a sprightly dialogue between Cupid and Mercury, at once suggests the fanciful world of Lylian comedy. In fact, one of Cupid's speeches virtually duplicates one delivered by his counterpart in Gallathea.(1) Jonson's version runs as follows:

Here doe I meane to put off the title of
a god, and take the habite of a page, in
which disguise (during the interim of
these revells) I will get to follow some
one of Dianaes maides, where (if my bow
hold, and my shafts flie with but halfe
the willingnesse and aime they are directed)
I doubt not, but I shall really redeeme
the minutes I have lost, by their so long
and over-nice proscrition of my deitie,
from their court.(2)

A good example of the way in which Jonson expanded situations derived from Lyly's comedies is supplied in the episode where Amorphus instructs Asotus 'in the noble and subtile science of courtship.'(3) This scene resembles the one in Sapho and Phao, where Criticus gives Molus tuition in court etiquette,(4) but it is handled with greater assurance, and the satire is more damaging.

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1. Gallathea, II, ii, 1-15.
 2. Cynthia's Revels, I, i, 105-112.
 3. Cynthia's Revels, II, i.
 4. Sapho and Phao, II, iii.

In his portrayal of court society Jonson placed a greater stress on realistic satire than Lyly had done. At the court of Cynthia live four foolish gallants and four conceited ladies. The men represent various defects of character: Hedon (voluptuousness); Anaides (impudence); Amorphus (self-love) and Asotus (prodigality). The ladies, who are governed by Moria, Lady Folly, embody avarice, self-love, lightness, and laughter. Through situations contrived by Cupid and Morus, these individuals are forced into amusing displays of their inane social refinements, and then anatomized and bombarded with scornful comments by the scholar Crites.

The coterie of ladies correspond to the groups of women who represent false ideals of courtly conduct in Lyly's comedies. For example, in Endimion, Tellus is oversensual, Semele spiteful and insolent, and Scintilla and Favilla sharp-tongued and given to bickering. The portrayal of the counsellors in Midas (each being endowed with a master passion, or "humour,") is related to Jonson's method of characterizing his stupid gallants. His pages, Cupid and Morus, are basically repetitions of Epiton, Dares and Samias in Endimion. Therefore, although Cynthia's Revels possesses the added refinement of a masque, in which Cynthia's offending subjects betray their follies, the action and

characterization show affinities with Lyly's court comedy. The satirical scope is broader and more vigorously sustained than anything in Lylian comedy, nevertheless, it represents an extension of Lyly's subject matter, method of construction and comic technique.

The Poetaster was written in 1601 and performed the same year by the Children of the Queen's Chapel. It is the last comedy of Jonson's formative period, and, although it grew out of the background of bickering known today as the stage quarrel,(1) it illustrates rather well the basic differences between his comical-satire and Lyly's court comedy.

Jonson's mission as a dramatist was to combine amusement with the censure of social imbecility. Lyly, on the other hand, designed his comedies as light entertainment on the lines of a court-show. He sought to delight his audience with High Comedy and wit, rather than reprove or improve them. However, he sometimes incorporated satirical elements into his predominately fanciful actions; the sub-plot of Endimion, in particular, foreshadows Jonson's concern with the ridicule of absurd manners.

By 1601 the Lylian school of comedy was rapidly

1. Herford and Simpson, op.cit., i, pp. 416-41.

declining as an active force in drama; the Jonsonian formula, based on intrigue and satire, was everywhere in the ascendant. However, realistic satire may be discerned emerging in Lyly's plays, and conversely, Jonson's early work exhibits something of Lyly's comic methods. The case of Cynthia's Revels reinforces the argument, developed elsewhere, that Lyly continued to hold sway in the narrow field of aristocratic entertainment long after he had ceased to exercise a significant influence on the repertoire of the public playhouses.

CHAPTER VI

LYLY AND SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's development as a comic dramatist may, perhaps, best be understood as a continuous process of experimentation; firstly with relatively simple literary forms, such as Plautine comedy, the Lylian entertainment, the Italian romance and native farce; and then, with increasing skill, he blended the various kinds until he produced the marvellous synthesis of traditions which we recognize as "Shakespearian".

Shakespeare's arrival in London probably coincided with a re-awakening of interest in Lyly's comedies caused by the publication of the first Quartos of Gallathea, Endimion and Midas, and the reissue of Campaspe and Sapho and Phao in 1591 and 1592. The dedications of Venus and Adonis (1593) and Lucrece (1594), suggest, firstly, that Shakespeare was under Lyly's spell, and secondly that he had connections with a man of rank. The latter supposition is strengthened by the fact that Chettle backed his apology for having published Greene's attack on him in A Groats-worth of Wit with a reference to the high esteem in which Shakespeare was held by 'divers of worship' who admired

both his character and his 'facetious grace in writing'.(1) It is interesting to note that when Edward Blount reprinted six of Lyly's comedies in 1632 he used the term 'Facetiously-Quicke'(2) to describe their style.

It is highly probable that several of Shakespeare's comedies were originally intended for the kind of aristocratic audiences that Lyly had entertained. Plays such as Love's Labour's Lost, A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Merry Wives of Windsor clearly show that Lyly's High Comedy proved to be a constructive force in shaping Shakespeare's comedies. However, they differed in certain respects from Lyly's plays; for example, Shakespeare abandoned the convention of using mythological characters and, except for a single passage in A Midsummer Night's Dream, he also severed the connection with court flattery. But he continued to dabble with topical allusions, and above all, by making love and courtship his main theme, he perpetuated the Lylian tradition. Shakespeare's superior command of language and powers of realizing character immeasurably enriched Lyly's comic mode, but the younger dramatist frequently adopted the same structural pattern which

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1. This point is made by J.D. Wilson, The Essential Shakespeare, Cambridge, 1933, pp. 48-9.
 2. Quoted Bond, op.cit., iii, p.1

could blend romantic courtship, witty dialogue and low-comedy scenes.

The notion of the "antique" seems to have exercised a special charm over Shakespeare. It pervades his sonnets and appears to have affected his prose style. His comic prose is allied to the semi-Euphuistic Elizabethan tradition favoured by Lyly. It is a style where language is woven into decorative patterns and embroidered with quaint ornamental images to create a half-poetic effect very different from Jonson's realistic prose. In his comedies Shakespeare generally employed this artificial mannered prose derived from the older comedy of the court.(1) He gradually developed a more naturalistic expression, but he is virtually alone among his contemporaries in clinging to Lylian devices of rhetoric, wit and repartee. This embellished style is most apparent in Love's Labour's Lost, but, enhanced by a greater richness of texture, it still persists in As You Like It, the wit combats of Much Ado, and even occurs in The Winter's Tale.(2)

Another fundamental contribution to Shakespearian comedy was Lyly's well developed sense of design, in particular his method of relating subsidiary actions to

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1. See L. Borinski, "Shakespeare's Comic Prose", Sh.S., VIII (1955), pp. 57-68.
 2. The Winter's Tale, I, i.

the main plot by means of balancing groups of characters. In matters of plot Shakespeare's chief models were Latin Comedy and Lyly, normally used independently, but united with consummate artistry in Twelfth Night.

Lyly was probably the first English playwright to make Love his main theme, and Shakespeare is directly indebted to his comedies for a method of dramatizing a current controversy over the nature of romantic love.

Lyly's characteristic love-game comedy was founded on a conflict of attitudes; his men in Love's Metamorphoses and The Woman in the Moon, woo their ladies according to the code prescribed by genteel tradition, but the women are scornful of their lover's attempts to enact the traditional ritual of courtship. When the couples meet this antagonism leads to witty verbal exchanges. Lyly normally reconciled his warring lovers through a compromise enforced by divine sanction. The characters are not used to dramatize a story, but to display the comic possibilities of friction between the ideal world of romance and normal human experience. This sort of interplay forms the basis of Shakespeare's comedies of courtship. (1) In Love's Labour's Lost the ladies ridicule the lords for their amorous posturing; benedick and Beatrice laugh at courtly love, and Rosalind mocks Orlando when he expresses the traditional wish to die for love.

1. An important discussions of Shakespeare's debt to Lyly occur in D.L. Stevenson, The Love Game Comedy, New York, 1946, Ch's. xi and xii and G.K. Hunter, John Lyly, 1962, Ch. vi.

Lyly's comedies inevitably appear somewhat arid beside Shakespeare's lively actions, brisk witty dialogues, and animated characters. Shakespeare undoubtedly handled love-game comedy with more subtlety and insight into lover's problems; his work is informed with a stronger imagination and enriched by the constant interplay of appearance and reality; yet, his young men continue to seek the ideals of romance in the real world and have their behaviour mocked by sceptical maidens. From Lyly, too, he learned the value of introducing songs to impart mood. It is unwise to claim too much credit for Lyly, nevertheless, it is indisputable that he supplied the groundwork for several of Shakespeare's comedies.

Lylilian strains tend to die away as Shakespeare moved from artificiality to naturalism. However, his schooling in Lylilian court comedy was such that all his comedies (with the exception of The Taming of the Shrew), betray clear signs of Lylilian influence. Naturally, the romances of Robert Greene, Italian comedies and other traditions, also played a part in determining the form of his plays.

The Comedy of Errors is known to have been performed at the Christmas Feast at Gray's Inn in 1594 and it has been argued that it may have been specially written for this occasion.(1) At any rate it belongs in spirit to

1. S. Thomas, "The Date of The Comedy of Errors," Sh.Q., VII (1956), pp. 375-84.

the private theatricals of the previous generation and, since the Paul's boys acted a play called The History of Error in 1577 and seem to have revived it in 1583, (1) there are grounds for regarding Shakespeare's comedy as a continuation of this tradition.

It shares a similar frame-work and system of comedy with Lyly's Mother Bombie, composed c.1590. In both the action shifts between several houses in an open square or street; each contains comic servants who are sent on errands and then sought by their masters; and the plots are based on mistaken identities, inopportune coincidences and culminate with the restoration of long-lost children. Shakespeare's play is derived mainly from Plautus's Menaechmi: (2) the act structure, characters, and comic system of Mother Bombie are similarly indebted to Roman comedy. Both plays typify the influences which came into English from Latin comedy through the combination of classical elements with a romantic theme. The Comedy of Errors is coloured with an unclassical streak by the romantic story of Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse and the pathos which surrounds the figure of Aegeon. (3) It is a more skilfully contrived play than Mother Bombie and

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1. E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, 1923, iv. p.151 and p.159.
 2. T.W. Baldwin, William Shaksper's Five-Act Structure, Urbana, 1947, pp.665-90.
 3. H.B. Charlton, "Romanticism in Shakespearian Comedy", Shakespeare Criticism 1919-1935, ed. A Ridler, 1936, pp. 243-44.

much funnier, yet it belongs to the same "moment" in the evolution of Elizabethan drama. Although few exact parallels with Mother Bombie exist, the name Dromio suggests that Shakespeare knew Lyly's play.

On only two other occasions - in The Merry Wives of Windsor and Twelfth Night - did Shakespeare evolve a plot under the influence of Roman comedy, and the balance of probability suggests that both were intended for court performance. These courtly affiliations make these plays of particular interest since there is evidence that Shakespeare remembered Lyly's old comedies.

The Merry Wives of Windsor is partly based on Terence's Eunuchus; Falstaff, for instance, is portrayed as a lecherous old braggart in the tradition of Thraso, but most of the Latin features are submerged in the wholly English setting of a small provincial town.(1) The atmosphere of bustle and activity relates it to native precursors such as The Two Angry Women of Abingdon, and the story of Anne Page together with the scene in Windsor Great Park are entirely Shakespeare's own invention.

It is generally accepted that, as recorded by Dennis, The Merry Wives of Windsor was written in haste at the

1. Baldwin, op.cit., pp. 555-59.

bidding of Queen Elizabeth, who desired to see Falstaff in love.(1) A reference to the Order of the Garter suggests that it may have been written for the Garter Feast in 1597.(2)

It is interesting that the character of Dr. Caius recalls Lyly's satirical treatment of Sir Tophas, he may also have been meant to lampoon some person connected with the court. However, it is in the topical ingredients, crowded mainly into the final act, that the link with Lyly is most apparent.(3)

Shakespeare wrote two versions of the brief masque in the last scene, one version appeared in the 1602 Quarto, and the other in the First Folio: in language and characterization they are quite different. In the Folio version the verse is ornate, courtly, and stilted with formal conceited language entirely favourable to flattery and the art of the boy actor. The Quarto version lacks this sophistication, it is genial, satirical and rather vulgar, lacking the others' charm and refinement of expression. Its rowdiness suits the farce of the preceding action.

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1. Shakespeare, Works, ed. C.J. Sisson, 1953, p.55.
 2. Ibid., p.55.
 3. The following discussion of The Merry Wives is derived in part from two articles: J.H. Long, "Another Masque for The Merry Wives of Windsor," Sh.Q., III (1952) pp. 39-43; and W.J. Lawrence, "Thomas Ravenscroft's Theatrical Associations," M.L.R., XIX (1924), pp.418-23.

Shakespeare added to its burlesque qualities by glancing at several plays previously performed at court, namely Endimion, Love's Metamorphosis and Mother Bombie.

Endimion contains the episode of Corsites' punishment for lechery, indicated by the stage direction 'The Fayries daunce, and with a song pinch him,' at which he cries: 'The Gods blesse mee from love & these prettie Ladies that haunt this greene!(1) which were, no doubt, almost exactly Falstaff's sentiments when he found himself in the same situation. The Hackneyman, Scrivener and Sergeant in Mother Bombie closely resemble the Hackneyman, Sergeant and Broker mentioned in the Quarto masque, and, finally, the reference to Falstaff as a 'metamorphosed youth' was conceivably intended to allude to the recently revived Love's Metamorphosis (in which the nymphs would have been acted by boys). If, as is sometimes suggested, the Children of Windsor Chapel, who had already acted Lyly's comedies, participated as fairies the allusions would carry added point.(2)

When The Merry Wives of Windsor was performed before James I at Windsor in 1604 Shakespeare probably rewrote the masque - a traditional vehicle for flattery - and worked in the Lylian allusions and the compliment to the Prince of Wales, Lennox and others, who had been installed as Knights of the Garter six months earlier.

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1. Endimion, IV, iii, 28 and 131-132.
 2. Long, opcit., pp.41-2.

Anne Page's elegant speech about the Garter ceremony and Falstaff's eloquent use of classical allusions inevitably recall the polished language of Lyly's comedies:

Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns. O powerful love! that, in some respects, makes a beast a man, in some other, a man a beast. You were also, Jupiter, a swan for the love of Leda. O omnipotent Love! how near the god drew to the complexion of a goose! A fault done first in the form of a beast. O Jove, a beastly fault! And then another fault in the semblance of a fowl; think on't, Jove; a foul fault! (1)

It is clear that, like Jonson in Cynthia's Revels, and Percy in The Forest of Elves, Shakespeare took a close look at Lyly's masterpieces before he ventured to entertain his sovereign.

Once Lyly had formulated a type of comedy acceptable to his audience he had been content to play variations on that theme for the remainder of his career as a dramatist. Shakespeare was more versatile and soon after his arrival in London, c. 1590-92, started to experiment

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1. The Merry Wives of Windsor, V, v, 3-12. (The Globe Edition of Shakespeare's Works, ed. W.G. Clarke and W.A. Wright, 1924, has been used for quotations throughout this thesis.)

with most of the current formulas. The Comedy of Errors, The Taming of the Shrew, The Two Gentlemen of Verona and Love's Labour's Lost represent four basic modes of Elizabethan comedy: Roman, farcical, romantic, and Lylian, respectively. He mixed some of all in each, for example, The Taming of the Shrew combines the native tradition of the farcical interlude with a romantic neo-Italian intrigue, based on Gascoigne's translation of Ariosto's I Suppositi.(1) In The Shrew Shakespeare worked within a tradition of boisterous farce entirely remote from the realm of Lyly's court comedies.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona, (c. 1592), is a sentimental romantic intrigue worked out under the pervasive influence of Lyly's comedies. The usual assumption that the source of Shakespeare's plot is to be found in the tale of Felix and Felismena in Montemayor's pastoral novel Diana presents difficulties regarding the accessibility of an English text. It seems at least equally likely that the lost play Felix and Philiemena, acted before Elizabeth during the 1584-5 season, contained the version of the story known to Shakespeare.(2) The Two Gentlemen also resembles contemporary Italian comedies such as Pasqualigo's Il Fedele, which was translated by Munday in 1584 and acted at court under the title The Two Italian Gentlemen.

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1. Sisson, op.cit., p.291.
 2. Ibid., p.28.

These affiliations suggest that Shakespeare's play is in some way related to the courtly tradition of the 1580's. Further, the play repeats the theme dramatized in Endimion and debated in Euphues - the relative value of love and friendship. However, the resemblance between The Two Gentlemen and Lylian comedy is rather one of technical detail than substance and design.

The intermezzi of Speed and Launce seem to be modelled on Licio and Petulus in Midas; for example, Speed's catalogue of his mistress's virtues(1) is related to a conversation in Midas (V, ii, 22-46). The use of low-comedy to guy romantic sentiment was also fore-shadowed by Lyly. Speed, like Epiton, persistently ridicules his master's love-lorn infatuation, and Launce's description of his farewell to his family(2) burlesques Proteus's farewell to Julia just witnessed by the audience.

As well as the use of low-comedy to parody events in the main plot the badinage, quips, and logic chopping of the servants may also have been copied from scenes between Lyly's pages(3). Certain scenes recall specific passages in Lyly's work: Valentine's advice to the Duke of Milan on how to woo,(4) is taken from the scene in

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1. The Two Gentlemen, III, i, 300-395.
 2. Ibid., II, iii, 1-36.
 3. Compare Midas, I, ii and Endimion, III, iii with The Two Gentlemen, II, v.
 4. The Two Gentlemen, III, i, 89-105.

Sapho and Phao where Sybilla instructs Phao in the arts of courtship:

.... be diligent: for that womenne desire nothing more then to have their servants officious.... Flatter, I meane lie; litle things catch light mindes,... Be prodigall in prayes and promises.... Chuse such times to break thy suite, as thy Lady is pleasant. Write, and persist in writing;... In conceite studie to be plesaunt, in attire brave.... Can you sing, shew your cunning; can you daunce use your legges.... If she seeme at the first cruell, be not discouraged. I tell the a straung thing, womenne strive, because they would be overcome:.... But be not pinned alwaies on her sleeves, straungers have greene rushes, when daily guests are not worth a rushe... Beleewe me great gifts are little Gods.(1)

Shakespeare constantly employed the style of witty and refined dialogue which Lyly had invented to delight courtly audiences.

However, Shakespeare's dramatic characterization, in particular of Julia, shows advances on Lyly's portraiture, and his handling of comic incident is more assured and sustained. There is what Hazlitt termed a 'high poetic spirit' which Lyly never aspired to, and the conflict between love and friendship, and between the ideals of romance and the facts of reality, is more

1. Sapho and Phao, II, iv, 58-107.

subtly presented. Nevertheless, the play confirms the impression that although Shakespeare was concerned with an Italianate form of comedy never attempted by Lyly, he was considerably influenced by the latter's comic technique.

There are cogent reasons for believing that Love's Labour's Lost and A Midsummer Night's Dream were originally intended for aristocratic audiences. The source hunter has little to offer for these two plays, (since Shakespeare invented the plots himself and elaborated them after the manner of Lyly's comedies. Shakespeare was never dominated by a single tradition, but Love's Labour's Lost and A Midsummer Night's Dream are best understood as direct descendants of Lyly's courtly entertainments.

Love's Labour's Lost reflects some definite historical events which took place at the court of Henry of Navarre at Nérac in 1578,(1) it also contains an unusual number of topical allusions, well summarized in the introduction to the Arden edition of this play.(2) It is highly probable that Lyly intended Sapho and Phao, Endimion and Midas to shadow recent political episodes connected with the inner court circle. Shakespeare's play may even have

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1. Love's Labour's Lost, ed. R. David, 1951, pp.xxvii-xxviii.
 2. Ibid., pp. xxxvii-l.

been written to grace one of Elizabeth's Progresses. A.K. Gray has argued(1) that it was performed at Tichfield in 1591 when the Earl of Southampton entertained the Queen, and it is interesting to note that on the same Progress she witnessed brief entertainments by Lyly at Cowdray and Elvetham. Gray also suggests that it was originally designed to be acted by children, since it contains six parts for boy actors. Until weightier evidence is discovered it is impossible to prove that Love's Labour's Lost is a court comedy, but a study of the substance and structure of the play confirms the external evidence of a courtly provenance.

Shakespeare apparently modelled Love's Labour's Lost on Endimion and Gallathea, although there is no need to assume with T.W. Baldwin that he was present at court performances of these two comedies, since both were in print by 1591(2). The relationship of Armado and Moth duplicates that of Sir Tophas and Epiton in Endimion, and both plays feature a sub-plot which exists as a pendant parody of the main action. Shakespeare borrowed the mechanics of the sequence of overheard confessions of broken vows from Gallathea,(3) and surrounded it with static scenes of wit similar to those in Love's Metamorphosis.

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1. A.K. Gray, "The Secret of Love's Labour's Lost," P.M.L.A., XXXIX (1924), pp. 581-612.
 2. Baldwin, op.cit., p.790.
 3. Gallathea, III, i.

Shakespeare enlarged the sub-plot by the addition of Holofernes, Sir Nathaniel, Costard and Dull; and, towards the end, where Lyly's minor actions usually peter out, he gathered all the characters together in the Pageant of the Nine Worthies. The final songs bring the action to a close, being used thematically in contrast to Lyly's mainly "decorative" use of song.

The carefully balanced groups of characters and the formal pattern of the action where plot is virtually non-existent resembles Lyly's mature comic method in Love's Metamorphosis. Both plays are set in woodland and their essence resides in the grace and charm of dialogue, visual appeal, and the witty analysis of love.

Love's Labour's Lost dramatizes a debate between the rival merits of Love and Learning: when this has been resolved in the first two acts, the interest shifts to Lyly's sphere - the contradictions between the requirements of conventional romantic courtship and the authentic sentiments of love. Shakespeare criticizes ornate language used by courtly lovers as well as their absurd posturings. This theme is developed with greater skill than Lyly commanded, and the interaction of the couples is more subtly amusing, but the spirit and comic scheme are identical to Love's Metamorphosis where the sharp wit of the nymphs serves to discipline the exaggerated

ardour of the foresters. However, at the point in Act IV, where the Lords forswear ritual courtesy, Lyly would have introduced a Goddess to compel the ladies to accept their lovers; Shakespeare, on the other hand, reconciles their antagonism through a genuine intellectual development from an adolescent to a mature understanding of love.

In Lyly's comedies witty dialogue is emphasised more than character or plot. Guided by his example, Shakespeare also concentrated on the cultivation of an elegant, elaborately embroidered prose such as fashionable Elizabethan audiences delighted in. He only rarely used euphuism, but the smart repartee, learned puns and verbal ingenuity of his dialogue, and the fanciful imagery of the longer speeches continues the style of the earlier dramatist. The distinctive texture of this style is well described by Berowne when he forswears:

Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
Figures pedantical....(1)

Allowing for the fact that Shakespeare's lovers are more human and lively, their 'sets of wit' less artificial, and his action proceeds with more ease and naturalness,

1. Love's Labour's Lost, V, ii, 406-408.

both dramatists' picture of aristocratic society is basically similar. There is, however, less resemblance between the figures in the sub-plots. The group in Love's Labour's Lost derives from the stock types of the Commedia dell'arte, (as the alternative names in the First Quarto suggest) rather than from native comedy, although their speech still tends to be Lylian. Armado, like Sir Tophas, is used to satirize a contemporary social type - the affected courtier, although it is unwise to ascribe him to a single source.(1) The pages Moth and Costard, indeed, recall Lylian prototypes, but the eccentric Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel display comic possibilities unexplored by Lyly.

To sum up: Shakespeare's material and comic method is strikingly close to Lyly's. The overall design, the tissue of the dialogue, and the themes are more complex and richer (as revealed, for instance, in B. Roesen's sensitive study of the play), (2) yet, allowing for Lyly's inferior gifts, one could scarcely wish for a more convincing proof of the shaping influence of Lyly's plays.

It is highly probable that A Midsummer Night's Dream was originally written to grace some noble wedding, possibly that of Elizabeth Carey and Thomas Berkeley in 1596, and later modified for the Public stage.(3)

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1. D.C. Boughner, "Don Armado and the Commedia Dell'arte", S.P. XXXVII (1940), pp. 201-24.
 2. B. Roesen, "Love's Labour's Lost", Sh.Q., IV (1953), pp.411-26.
 3. Sisson, op.cit., p.207.

This circumstance helps to explain why Shakespeare's comedy resembles Lyly's courtly entertainments which were the approved method of honouring and amusing aristocratic gatherings.

Professor Mincoff has claimed that A Midsummer Night's Dream is the most fundamentally Lylian of all Shakespeare's comedies.(1) Structurally the play resembles Gallathea which weaves three separate strands of action - a romantic pastoral, a mythological fable and low-comedy scenes - into a composite whole. In Shakespeare's play the same pattern serves to unite three distinct groups - the mechanicals, the lovers and the fairies. The most notable difference lies in the strengthening of plot connections to give a more close-knit structure. In Gallathea Lyly fails to link the adventures of the three shipwrecked brothers to the main action until the final scene where they function as minstrels at the wedding celebrations, whereas each appearance of Bottom and his group serves to point towards the culmination of Act V where they present their play at the nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta. In addition, Shakespeare imposed a powerful imaginative unity on his varied material by evoking a poetic atmosphere of moonlight through iterative imagery, something which Lyly attempted in Endimion. Both used a forest setting

1. M. Mincoff, "Shakespeare and Lyly", Sh.S., XIV (1961), p.21.

and fostered a dream-like mood. Indeed, the apology contained in the Prologue to The Woman in the Moon:

If many faults escape in her discourse,
Remember all is but a Poets dreame.(1)

is repeated in Shakespeare's Epilogue:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here.
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream(2)

The mythology of love in A Midsummer Night's Dream is strikingly similar to Lyly's. The magic juice is equivalent to Cupid's arrows in Gallathea and Sapho and Phao, both being outside forces employed to entangle lovers. Theseus and Hippolyta are endowed with a mature understanding of love to provide a contrast to the frenzied youths and maidens, in the same way that the wisdom of Protea in Love's Metamorphosis establishes a standard of good sense. In both plays the quarrelling lovers eventually find happiness through the intervention

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1. The Woman in the Moon, Prologue, 16-17.
 2. A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i, 430-35.

of supra-natural beings. They demonstrate that true love is achieved by unselfishness and the rational control of sensual desire.

Shakespeare's picturesque fairyland contributes more charm and variety to his comedy than Lyly's often cumbersome mythological apparatus, and his seemingly effortless poetic imagination makes Lyly's endeavours to gain similar effects appear tedious and dull.

Hazlitt praised the 'sweet and flowing'(1) style of Endimion, yet his admiration is not widely shared, while Coleridge's opinion of the passage beginning 'Now the hungry lion roars' is generally endorsed:

'... in the perfectness of the lines -
proportion, grace, spontaneity! ...
O what wealth, what wild luxuriance,
and yet what compression and condensation
of English fancy'.(2)

The fact that Lyly never achieved the brilliance of dialogue or the poetic richness of A Midsummer Night's Dream should not obscure the fundamental kinship of this play to the tradition he created. The element of courtly compliment, so prominent in Lyly's comedies, recurs in

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1. Hazlitt, Complete Works, ed. P.P. Howe, 1931, vi, p.201.
 2. Coleridge, Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, ed. T.M. Raysor, 1930, i, p.102.

Oberon's famous 'Flying between the cold moon and the earth' speech.(1) The 'fair vestal throned by the west', clearly contains some allegorical allusion to Elizabeth although few now accept Halpin's ingenious attempt to interpret the passage by relating it to the Elizabeth-Leicester romance suggested by the plot of Lyly's Endimion.(2)

The degree of continuity is impressive, but A Midsummer Night's Dream cannot be adequately represented solely in terms of Lyly's specialized courtly tradition. For example, the pattern of the action also corresponds to the seasonal folk festival of May Games. Stubbes in his summary of May Day customs, describes young men and maids who:

'run gadding overnight to the woods, where they spend the whole night in pleasant pastimes.'(3)

The action of Shakespeare's comedy moves from the court to a wood 'a league without the town', where the wooing takes place, and back again: Oberon, prince of fairies, is made into a May King and Titania acts the role of a Summer Queen:

I am a spirit of no common rate:
The summer still doth tend upon my state;(4)

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1. A Midsummer Night's Dream, II, i, 157-168.
 2. J.N. Halpin, Oberon's Vision, 1843.
 3. Quoted C.L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, Princeton, 1959, p. 119.
 4. A Midsummer Night's Dream, III, i, 157-58.

Puck promotes the spirit of misrule. Next morning Theseus concludes:

No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, (1)

The fact that the design of the action corresponds to the pattern of a folk festival emphasises the unwisdom of ascribing the shaping influences that lie behind any play by Shakespeare to a single source.

The mingling of diverse traditions, apparent in all the plays discussed in this chapter, was carried further in Shakespeare's three most mature comedies: As You Like It, Twelfth Night, and Much Ado About Nothing. In these comedies the Lylian strains gradually die away, they can still be heard in Rosalind's wit and the repartee of Benedick and Beatrice, but Shakespeare's interest seems to have shifted to the comic possibilities or the discrepancy between appearance and reality.

As You Like It, normally assigned to the year 1599, represents the final phase of Shakespeare's experiments with the design of Lyly's pastoral entertainments. Lyly's patterns are no longer obtrusive, as they had been in Love's Labour's Lost and A Midsummer Night's Dream, the

1. A Midsummer Night's Dream, IV, i, 136-137.

comic elements are more varied and organized with greater sophistication. The action is not dramatic or eventful and contains none of the farcical low-comedy of Twelfth Night and Much Ado. After the second act the plot becomes merely a light frame-work for a series of delightful conversational scenes, interspersed with spectacles, pageantry and songs, such as, the wrestling match, the procession of huntsmen and the Masque of Hymen. The prose is not Euphuistic, but the witty dialogues contain many picturesque and farfetched images which recall the artificiality and quaint charm of Lyly's court comedies:

Celia. When Nature hath made a fair creature, may She not by Fortune fall into the fire? Though Nature hath given us wit to flout at Fortune, hath not Fortune sent in this fool to cut off the argument?

Rosalind. Indeed, there is Fortune too hard for Nature, when Fortune makes Nature's natural the cutter-off of nature's wit.

Celia. Peradventure this is not Fortune's work neither, but Nature's; who perceiveth our natural wits too dull for reason of such goddesses and hath sent this natural for our whetstone; for always the dulness of the fool is the whetstone of the wits. How now, wit! whither wander you?(1)

The formal pairing of the couples at the end under the auspices of an attendant Goddess may have been suggested by Lyly's comedies, and the device of making the heroine

1. As You Like It, I, ii, 46-59.

disguised as a boy speak the Epilogue may have been prompted by the example of Lyly's Gallathea.

Rosalind and Celia possess more spirit and femininity than Lyly's women, the men are less shadowy and, as Dr. Johnson observed, the comic dialogue is more 'sprightly', but the witty love-game which Lyly invented is still the method by which Shakespeare presents Orlando and Rosalind. The outstanding difference between As You Like It, and, say, Love's Metamorphosis, is that, whereas Lyly merely duplicated his main situations with three pairs of undifferentiated lovers, Shakespeare individualized his couples and played variations on the theme of Pastoral romance.(1) Orlando woos Rosalind in the conventional manner of an Elizabethan courtier; she mocks his conventional amorous postures and effusions, as the nymphs in Love's Metamorphosis ridicule their lovers. At one point her tactics strongly resemble the behaviour of Pandora in The Woman in the Moon:

I set him every day to woo me: at which time would I, being but a moonish youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles ... would now like him, now loathe him; then entertain him, then forswear him, now weep for him, then spit at him; that I drave my suitor from his mad humour of love to a living humour of madness;(2)

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1. This aspect of the play is well brought out by H. Gardner, "As You Like It", More Talking of Shakespeare, ed. J. Garrett, 1959, pp. 17-32.
 2. As You Like It, III, ii, 428-440.

The relationship of Phebe and Silvius mirrors the classic situation of ardent lover and cruel mistress found in literary Pastorals. Silvius's extravagant sentiments resemble those of the besotted shepherds in The Woman in the Moon. The triangle of William, Touchstone and Audrey is intended to burlesque ideal love by representing realistic country lovers.

In Endimion, Lyly had explored the comic possibilities of juxtaposing widely differing attitudes to love. Therefore, it was only a step for Shakespeare to transfer this scheme from a courtly to a pastoral setting. In fact he blended Lyly's pastoralism with the atmosphere of Robert Greene's popular romantic comedies. The open air feeling of the English countryside, the carefree "Robin Hood" spirit, and the colourful portrait of Rosalind were inspired by such plays as Friar Bacon and The Pinner of Wakefield. There are numerous elements in As You Like It which are not derived from Lyly's comedies, for example, the court versus country debate, the vivid awareness of Time, and the melancholy figure of Jaques, who casts a shadow over the bright Arcadian scene. Thus, although many of the situations, and much of the dialogue originate with Lyly, the comedy is enriched by new themes and a greater variety of characters. Shakespeare organized plot, characters and dialogue into a beautifully balanced poetic and dramatic unity which always just escaped Lyly.

The dramatic forms of The Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night and Much Ado are developed from traditions which are properly theatrical; that is, structure and dialogue follows a plot. They stand apart from the comedies which possess an underlying Lylian pattern where plot is used as a light frame-work for conversational scenes and spectacle.(1)

The Merchant of Venice, written c. 1596-7, unites two stories, one dramatic and realistic, the other romantic and poetic. The comedy presents a new kind of conflict involving a deep concern with human values quite beyond the scope of Lyly's comic vision. It explores themes unrelated to sexual love such as, usury, justice and friendship. Shakespeare's portrait of Shylock, Portia's penetrating speeches on Mercy, and the overall tempo of the action have no counterparts in Lyly's love-game comedies. However, Shakespeare continued to favour the method of dialogue employed by Lyly. Portia speaks courtly Euphuistic prose⁽²⁾ to differentiate her social position from the more common-place speech of her maid Nerissa, while the clowns, Launcelot and Old Gobbo, indulge in linguistic gaucheries. The practice of stratifying characters by their degree of verbal refinement seems to have originated with Lyly.

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1. This distinction is made D.L. Cecil, The Fine Art of Reading, 1957, pp. 23-77.
 2. The Merchant of Venice, I, ii.

The action of Much Ado About Nothing, written c. 1598, is based on an intrigue, and thus continues the trend away from Lyly; Lyly's High Comedy is, however, perpetuated in the witty prose dialogues between Benedick and Beatrice. But the main narrative events are not enacted by them, and there is a sense in which the scenes in which they are involved have been grafted onto the play. Their verbal sparring, which arises from an antagonism between romance and scepticism, is similar to the wit combats of Lyly's lovers, although Shakespeare is always more skilled in exploiting dialogue to reveal character. (1)

The rupture between Claudio and Hero which verges on tragedy, is another indication that Shakespeare was turning away from Lyly's light-hearted love-game comedy to a more serious study of emotion arising from disillusionment in romantic love; a concern which eventually, in Troilus and Cressida, forced him to relinquish the comic vision.

Twelfth Night represents the culmination of the line of Shakespeare's comedies stemming from The Comedy of Errors and The Two Gentlemen of Verona, just as As You Like It represents the climax of the strain which

1. Shakespeare's debt to Lyly in Much Ado is discussed by D.L. Stevenson, The Love Game Comedy, New York, 1956, pp. 208-18.

derives from Lyly's courtly tradition. The comedy unites a beautifully contrived romantic action with an hilarious sub-plot. Neither copies Lyly's structure nor his manner. The action plays variations on the theme of adjusting imaginary ideals of love to accord with reality. The sanity and good sense of Viola cures the illusions of Olivia and corrects the sentimental postures of Orsino; while Sir Toby and his followers attempt to reform Malvolio's humour of self-love by putting him through the conventional satiric routine of Jonson's plays. Sir Andrew's mental vacancy is also displayed after the fashion of a Jonsonian "humour" character.

Lyly experimented with this type of comedy in Endimion, but Shakespeare transformed and expanded Lyly's hesitant gestures into a whole new realm and system of comedy.

CHAPTER VII

LYLY'S RELATIONSHIP TO POPULAR COMEDY 1594 - 1603

When the public theatres re-opened after the severe plague epidemic of 1592-94, all the leading dramatists, with the exception of Shakespeare, the chief playwright of the Chamberlain's Men, had either died or given up writing for the stage. For the following six years Shakespeare's output consisted mainly of comedies and chronicle histories; he may have broken new ground in the history plays, but in the realm of comedy he tended to look back to Lyly's masterpieces. Therefore, during the 1590's, the truly popular comic tradition is best illustrated by the plays written by the prolific group of dramatists employed by Philip Henslowe, manager of the Admiral's Men.

This chapter will be concerned with eighteen "popular" comedies written between 1594 and 1603; of this number, four can be assigned to Thomas Dekker, and two each to William Haughton and Thomas Heywood; the remainder were the product of collaboration or remain anonymous. Within this period the complexion of comedy underwent a steady change. Initially, romantic medleys of love and adventure, stuffed with low-comedy and commonly mixed with pseudo-historical material, were in demand. This type of play, foreshadowed by comedies such as James IV and Fair Em, were popular throughout the 1590's, The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green, written c. 1600 by Day and Chettle, being

a good late example. About 1597 Haughton's Englishmen for my Money started a fashion for comedies about London life. A little later domestic comedy, usually built on the faithful wife and prodigal husband story, such as How a Man may Choose a Good Wife from a Bad, became generally popular.

There is little to suggest that Henslowe's playwrights were inspired by the beautifully contrived patterns, delicate wit and artificial elegance of Lyly's court comedies. Nevertheless, evidence exists that under special circumstances they did "consult" his courtly entertainments. For example, when Dekker revised his Old Fortunatus for presentation at the court, he modelled his characters and dialogue according to Lylian standards. However, ordinarily their function was to concoct a play with a vivid story, a strong romantic interest, amusing situations, stirring verse and colourful characters, such as Dekker's The Shoemaker's Holiday.

Lyly's influence, so apparent in the 1580's, was largely eclipsed in the 1590's by that of Robert Greene. This was noted by Henry Upchurch in a passage from the preliminary matter to Menaphon (1589):

Of all the flowers a LILLIE on(c)e I lov'd,
Whose labouring beautie brancht it selfe abroad;
But now old age his glorie hath removd,
And Greener objectes are my eyes aboad.(1)

1. Quoted T.W. Baldwin, William Shaksper's Five-Act Structure, Urbana, 1947, p.815.

After the suppression of the Paul's boys in 1590, Lyly may have attempted to adapt his comic mode to the changed theatrical conditions in The Woman in the Moon, (1) but in spite of concessions to the popular tradition it remains divorced from the main dramatic currents of the 1590's.

The form and content of plays are always largely determined by the nature of the audience for which they are intended. Lyly wrote for a highly educated and sophisticated social clique, while the popular playwrights catered for lower social orders who held very different views on the nature of comedy. Henslowe's dramatists wrote extremely rapidly and frequently in collaboration, therefore, they rarely had time to polish and revise a script. In 1598 Dekker wrote two plays himself and collaborated in fourteen others, (2) whereas Lyly averaged a play a year. In the Address to the Reader prefixed to Heywood's The English Traveller he declared: 'it never was any great ambition in me, to be in this kind voluminously read'. This attitude is in marked contrast to writers such as Lyly and Jonson who consciously produced "literature", frequently with a view to publication.

Unhappily, Henslowe's dramatists have left nothing as illuminating as the critical Prologues of Lyly and

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1. G.K. Hunter, John Lyly, 1962, p.242.
 2. G.B. Harrison, Elizabethan Plays and Players, 1940, pp.230-31.

Jonson for ascertaining their views on the nature and function of comedy, but the Prologue to Dekker's If This Be Not a Good Play, the Devil Is In It, acted at the Red Bull in 1612, gives a hint of the aims of a popular dramatist.(1) The first demand is for poetry that will 'tye (the hearer's) Eare (with golden chaines) to his Melody'. Secondly, a quick creation of audience response, to make them 'clap their Brawny hands' and fill their 'Brest(s) ... with Raptures'. These straws suggest that the comic requirements of "popular" audiences were in no way comparable to Lyly's intellectual High Comedy.

Lyly's concern with design at the expense of plot, his pursuit of allegorical themes, subtle refinements of style and cultivation of an artificial dream-like atmosphere, contrasts with the sprawling energetic actions, lively characters, expressive language and robust humour which formed the substance of popular comedies. The author of Mucedorus (possibly the most admired comedy of its age)(2), declared his aim was to provide' mirth, mix'd all with lovely tales',(3) whereas Lyly endeavoured to move his audience with 'inward delight'.

The comedies to be examined in the remainder of this chapter have been divided into five groups as follows:

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1. G.F. Reynolds, "Aims of a Popular Elizabethan Dramatist", P.Q., XX (1941), pp. 340-44.
 2. M.C. Bradbrook, The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy, 1955, p.72.
 3. Mucedorus, ed. H. Tyrrell, Doubtful Plays of Shakespeare, 1851, p.351.

- (i) Topographical countrified comedies.
- (ii) Domestic comedies.
- (iii) Pseudo-historical comical-romances.
- (iv) London "outwitting" comedies.
- (v) Lylian syntheses.

Each group will be discussed in turn.

The first section includes Haughton's Grim the Collier (1600), the anonymous The Merry Devil of Edmonton (c. 1603), and Mucedorus (c. 1598). These plays consist of lively rural adventures with comic complications and a prominent love interest.

The plot of The Merry Devil concerns the schemes of two lovers to avoid the distasteful marriages arranged for them by their parents. It includes a daring escape from a convent, a nocturnal elopement, a chase, a clandestine wedding, and ends with the amicable reconciliation of all parties. This romantic action is combined with the exploits of a group of villagers from Enfield who choose the same night for a poaching expedition. The collisions of the poachers, the lovers, the fathers and the bailiffs as they blunder about the forest in darkness results in hilarious confusion similar to the nocturnal mistakings in The Two Angry Women of Abingdon. The eventful action delightfully evokes the atmosphere and life of the English countryside.

The realistic vigour of The Merry Devil stands at the opposite pole to Lyly's Arcadian forest comedies with their formal actions, elegant rhetoric, and artificial

High Comedy. The earthy colloquial language in particular contrasts with Lyly's verbal refinement.

Banks. Foot, here's a dark night indeed: I think I have been in fifteen ditches between this and the forest - Soft, here's Enfield church: I am so wet with climbing over into an orchard, for to steal some filberts - Well, here I'll sit in the church-porch, and wait for the rest of my consorts. (1)

Grim the Collier of Croydon provides substantially the same kind of comic amusement as The Merry Devil. The main plot, which concerns an aristocratic romance, is skilfully combined with an extensive burlesque in which a Miller, a Priest and Grim the Collier compete for the hand of a simple countrymaid.

Mucedorus is an idyllic Romance about the adventures of a disguised prince who woos and weds a princess. The story is not set in England and contains no realistic comic group, therefore Mucedorus stands slightly apart from the two plays just discussed. Comedy is furnished by the page, Mouse, whose 'merry conceits' and nonsensical antics punctuate the action. He is a country bumpkin rather than a cousin of Lyly's quick-witted servants. The most instructive difference between Lyly and the author of Mucedorus is their divergent attitude to love. Lyly treats love whimsically, exploring the comic possibilities of the interaction of opposing attitudes to love. His

1. The Merry Devil, ed. H. Tyrrell, p. 316.

interest is analytical, and his attitude one of light-hearted scepticism; whereas, in Mucedorus, the code of romantic love is accepted as an ideal and used to glamorize the hero. Most popular dramatists were content to write comedies containing a good story, colourful characters, stirring speeches and an element of humour. Lyly entertained his audiences with more intellectual recreation.

Marital troubles had been a traditional subject for comedy ever since Noah and his wife appeared in the mediaeval miracle cycles. Henslowe's team of dramatists also experimented with different forms of domestic comedy, of which Patient Griselda by Dekker, Chettle and Haughton, and Heywood's How a Man may Choose a Good Wife from a Bad, are the most considerable surviving examples.

Heywood's comedy exploits the theme of the prodigal husband who must choose between a faithful wife and a wanton mistress. Arthur, the dissolute husband, severely tests the patience of his sweet-tempered wife, but finally repents, acknowledges her virtue, and their love is reborn. The plot is rich in episode and enlivened by a humorous subsidiary action about a lecherous schoolmaster's pursuit of a wench. How a Man may Choose endorses decent social values and makes no attempt to pander to the taste for obscenity and sexual sensationalism which the contemporary private theatre was beginning to exploit.

Patient Griselda dramatises the familiar popular fable of domestic trials recounted by Chaucer's Clerk. The main

story is ^aremified by two sub-plots which obliquely bear on the central situation; one develops into a "taming of the shrew" farce, the other concerns a maiden who obstinately refuses to marry her lover. A clownish servant, Babulo, provides merriment. The play is essentially another example of the comic formula defined by the author of Mucedorus as '... mirth, mix'd all with lovely tales'.

Since Henslowe's dramatists frequently wrote in collaboration, they tended to develop a common attitude to action, character and language. This is one reason why it is rarely possible to assign an anonymous popular play to a particular author.(1) Lyly, on the other hand, was able to develop a specialized comic technique. This is one of the fundamental differences between his comedies and the comedies of the Admiral's Men.

Comedies which combined historical and fictional material were popular throughout the 1590's. Henslowe was regularly supplied with "pseudo-historical comical-romances" in the tradition of Fair Em and James IV, although they were generally better plotted than the earlier medleys.

The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green, written in 1600 by Day and Chettle, is a good example of the kind of comical-romances based on fictitious historical events frequently

1. Bradbrook, op.cit., p.120.

written by Henslowe's dramatists. It must have been an extremely popular play since Haughton joined Day in producing a second part later the same year and they followed this up with a third part in 1601.(1)

The action is set in England at the time of the hundred years' war. Starting with the well tried situation of fraternal treachery which results in banishment and a disguised return to seek justice, the plot rapidly develops into a farfetched intrigue. The play is well plotted, but contains few original ingredients. Like the authors of modern Westerns, Henslowe's playwrights were often content to provide variations on a successful dramatic formula which gave scope for swift action, vivid characterization, amusing episodes, and lavish romantic sentiment.

A Knack to Know an Honest Man (c. 1594) belongs to the same genre and was also a notable success, being staged on twenty-one occasions in two years.(2) Few plays had so persistent a run. The unknown author employed the familiar situation of a betrayal of friendship, the victim's disguised return and ensuing romantic complications interlaced with the pranks of a comic page.

The Trial of Chivalry (c. 1600), appears to anticipate the romantic tragi-comedy of Beaumont and Fletcher. The

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1. E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, 1923, iii, p.285.
 2. Chambers, op.cit., iv., p.24.

play conflates two episodes from Sidney's Arcadia.⁽¹⁾ It starts as a conventional historical comedy about political struggle between England and France, however, when in Act III, the action moves into a forest setting, the fantastic episodes involving repeated confusions of identity, supposed betrayals, infatuations, duels between friends and magical cures, anticipate the love entanglements of Philaster. The pastoralism is quite unlike anything encountered in Lyly's forest comedies. The extravagant sentiments also suggest Fletcher:

Philip. To Hunt him for revenge
The darkest angle of this universe
Shall not contain him: through the bounded world
Ile prosecute his flight with ceacelesse steps,
And when long travell makes them dull or faynt,
Bayting them fresh with Bellamiraes wrongs,
Like Eagles they shall cut the flaxen ayre
And in an instant bring me where he is.⁽²⁾

The play ends happily with a reconciliation between the Kings of England and France and the marriage of their children.

The Weakest Goeth to the Wall (c. 1600), also follows traditional lines. Briefly, during the absence of the French King the Duke of Anjou usurps power, is eventually

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1. C.R. Baskerville, "Sidney's Arcadia and The Tryal of Chivalry," M.P., X (1912), pp. 197-201.
 2. The Trial of Chivalry, ed. A.H. Bullen, O.E.P., 1882-85, iii, p. 315.

overthrown, and a Spanish invasion repulsed. A romantic interest is provided by the passion of a foundling (who turns out to be a long-lost nobleman) for Odillia, a Duke's daughter. Humour is supplied by a group of low-comedy figures. As usual, the story has a happy ending.

The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntington (1598), by Munday and Chettle and the anonymous Look About You (1599), are both historical comedies set in England in the twelfth century. Their plots consist of extremely elaborate political intrigues which involve:

'sundry misdemeanors thefts and shifts in other men's disguise'.(1)

In both cases the more weighty "historical" action is interlaced with 'mirthful matter full of game'(2) based on the legendary adventures of Robin Hood and his 'jolly huntsmen'. The result is a well contrived plot providing sustained excitement and many light-hearted episodes.

It should by now be apparent that the kind of comic amusement supplied by Henslowe's dramatists was fundamentally different from Lyly's courtly entertainment, in a way that Shakespearian comedy was not. In Lyly's plays narrative is subordinated to overall formal design, the characters

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1. Look About You. In Dodsley, VII, p.497.
 2. Chettle and Munday, The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntington. In Dodsley, VIII, p.185.

are frequently portrayed as allegorical figures, and his artistic emphasis placed on elegant stylistic display, witty dialogue and spectacle, the resulting High Comedy being intended to stimulate intellectual 'delight' rather than provoke uproarious laughter. Henslowe's "hacks" on the other hand, produced swift, well plotted actions containing colourful characters, hilarious low-comedy, and abundant romantic sentiment to excite the audience with poetic rapture. Unlike Shakespeare, they made no attempt to assimilate elements from the masterpieces of the earlier court dramatist.

Englishmen for my Money, written by Haughton in 1598, inaugurated a new comic fashion for "outwitting" comedies set in London. The plot is simple: Pisaro, a money-lender living in London, plans to marry his three spirited daughters to three wealthy middle-aged foreigners, who only speak the most bizarre English. The girls, however, have three English sweethearts, who are in the financial clutches of their miserly father. By concerted scheming the young lovers outwit the foreign suitors and trick Pisaro into approving of their union.

The action contains certain situations commonly encountered in Italian comedy. For example, the bold use of disguise, the trick of the feigned illness, nominal marriage and sudden return to lusty good health, and the way in which the unwanted suitors are rushed to and fro in the night, the Dutchman finally being left suspended from a bedroom window in a basket. The background of

London street names gives local colour and adds reality and plausibility to the plot, and the triumph of the Englishmen introduces a patriotic note.

Haughton's play owed nothing to the Plautine intrigue pattern, but, like Mother Bombie, it seems to have been influenced by Italian comedy.(1) The action of Mother Bombie appears artificial and academic when compared with the realistic vigour and robust comic inventiveness of Englishmen for my Money, yet the earlier comedy may be said to anticipate its general method and design.

The Shoemaker's Holiday (1599), by Dekker, is a light-hearted story about cockney life, glorifying the ordinary English craftsman. 'Nothing is purposed' says the Prologue, 'but mirth and pleasant matter'; the main characters are all cheerful and attractive, such as the young lovers who elope, elude their fathers and are happily married, and Simon Eyre, who utters inspiring patriotic sentiments. Many among Dekker's audience would have been able to recognize idealized copies of themselves among the characters. Lyly also held up a flattering mirror to his audience in Endimion, but his artificial High Comedy, steeped in the ideals of courtly love, operated on a completely different level to the rhapsodic entertainment of The Shoemaker's Holiday.

The Fair Maid of the Exchange, written about 1602 by Thomas Heywood, is another genial "outwitting" comedy set

1. K.M. Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, Oxford, 1934, ii, pp. 419-23.

in the metropolis. The plot is an involved intrigue about rival lovers, interspersed, as usual, with humorous episodes. The Prologue announces:

'Our Muse borrowing no colours from
a quaint disguise(a) proud quothurnicke
action shall devise'(1)

which shows that Heywood did not try to mask the fact that his comedy was concocted out of the usual ingredients.

Henslowe's dramatists understood the taste for which it was needful to cater if the company was to prosper, therefore, they were prone to follow popular fashions, just as in his sphere Lyly knew what was demanded of court comedy. The need to satisfy audience expectations does much to explain the differences between Elizabethan comedies.

The reopening of the private theatres about 1600, created a temporary renewal of interest in Lyly's comedies. Old Fortunatus, by Dekker, and the anonymous The Wit of a Woman, show that even the popular playwrights shared this quickening of interest.

In Old Fortunatus, revised for a court performance in December 1599,(2) the influence of Lyly is everywhere apparent. The Prologue, which takes the form of a dialogue

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1. The Fair Maid of the Exchange, ed. B. Field, 1845, Prologue, 2-7.
 2. Chambers, op.cit., iii, p.291.

between two old men, echoes Lyly's prose style so exactly that Bond believed him to be the author.(1)
The passage is heavily laden with Euphuism:

A just yeere: yet that yeere hath seemd
to me but one day, because her glorie
hath beene my howrely contemplation, and
yet that yeere hath seemd to me more
than twice seven yeres, because so long
I have beene absent from her. Come there-
fore, good father, lets goe faster, least
we come too late: for see, the Tapers of
the night are already lighted, and stand
brightly burning in their starrie Candle-
sticks. (2)

The dialogue of Shadow,(3) an unmistakably Lylian comic page, emulates the badinage used by the witty servants in Campaspe, Midas and Mother Bombie. In Agipyne Dekker portrayed a nimble-witted court lady, who converses in a clever shallow way about lovers and questions of love. She is related to Lyly's frivolous and haughty maidens:

'... we had all rather die than confesse
wee love; our glorie is to heare men sigh
whilst we smile, to kil them with a frowne,
to strike them dead with a sharpe eye, to
make you this day weare a Feather, and
to morrow a sicke night-cap.(4)

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1. R.W. Bond, "Addendum on Lyly's Songs", R.E.S., VII (1931), pp. 445-47.
 2. Dekker, Old Fortunatus, ed. F. Bowers, Prologue, 19-25.
 3. See in particular Old Fortunatus, I, ii, and II,ii, 1-102.
 4. Ibid., III, i, 142-145.

Dekker obviously modelled certain characters and much of the dialogue on Lyly's court comedies.

Feuillerat noted only two direct borrowings from Midas.(1) However, the two plays deal with the same subject -: avarice, and both plots are contained within a loose morality frame-work. In the opening scene Fortunatus, like Midas, is presented with a choice between 'Wisdom, strength, health, beauty, long life and riches' and, like Midas, he chooses wealth:

Gold is heavens phisicke, lifes restorative,
Ohtherefore make me rich:(2)

and subsequent events show that 'endlesse follies follow endlesse wealth.'(3)

The principal action relates the adventures which befall Fortunatus and his sons, but the narrative is liberally punctuated with songs, musical interludes, dances, and stage spectacles in the same way that Lyly's comedies include extraneous divertissements. The course of the story is influenced by Dame Fortune, rather as the Planets preside over and determine events in The Woman in the Moon. The traditional courtly device of the pageant-tableau is used at regular intervals to introduce

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1. A. Feuillerat, John Lyly, Cambridge, 1910, p. 485.
 2. Old Fortunatus, ed. Bowers, I, i, 292-293.
 3. Ibid., II, ii, 239.

the figures of Virtue and Vice who contend for sovereignty. These tableaux resemble the shows in Peele's Arraignement, and, less obviously, the formal debates between Venus and Diana, and Cupid and Ceres, in Lyly's pastorals. The final scene culminates in a panegyric in praise of Elizabeth.

When revising Old Fortunatus for the court Dekker merely incorporated certain Lylilian elements into a predominantly "popular" romantic plot and gave some of the characters and parts of the dialogue an appropriate courtly mien. It is interesting to find one of Henslowe's dramatists who, as late as 1599, still heeded Lyly's ideas on how to compose a courtly entertainment. Dekker's next comedy, Satiromastix, was firmly rooted in the popular dramatic tradition.

It is not known for which company the anonymous The Wit of a Woman, printed in 1604, was written, but the author unequivocally emulated Lyly at a time when the range of comic possibilities for a dramatist was wide. It may represent an attempt to bring a taste for refined formal comedy to the audience of a popular theatre.

The play is written throughout in brisk Lylilian prose and the intricate plot follows a symmetrical pattern. The action involves four families, each consisting of a son, a father and a daughter: events are contrived to produce a geometrical pattern of rivalry between the sons and the fathers for the girls, and a quadruple hoax results in

the marriage of the sons and daughters.

The plot corresponds to the symmetrical design and group organization of Mother Bombie. The action of both comedies occurs in a street with four principal houses and centres upon the evasion of enforced marriage. Each exploits the theme of Youth versus Age, and engenders a similar type of merriment from witty dialogue and comic "outwitting" situations, rather than developing character and romantic sentiment.

When by themselves the daughters' prattle is similar to that of Lyly's coteries of court ladies; Erinta declares:

'... let us have a-bout with our witts,
to fit our wils to the full.'(1)

The girls are spirited, the youths more subdued, and the four fathers display the same traits as the parents in Mother Bombie. Various figures, derived according to Miss K.M. Lea, from the Commedia dell'arte, appear briefly, these include a pair of ruffians, a country maid and an old nurse. Mother Bombie also contains a scene which introduces "superfluous" characters: a hackneyman, a sergeant and a scrivener.

The most significant difference between the two plays is that Lyly employed mischievous page boys to assist the

1. The Wit of a Woman, M.S.R., 124-125.

couples by contriving schemes, whereas, in The Wit of a Woman, the tricks are invented by the lovers.

In the 16th century Italian Comedy was rigidly divided into two incompatible traditions, the academic Commedia erudita, and the popular Commedia dell'arte based on improvisation. There was practically no interaction between these separate repertoires.(1) The same sort of rift between learned and popular comedy existed in Elizabethan England, but it never became as pronounced as in Italian comedy. Shakespeare, for example, successfully combined the popular and courtly traditions; Lyly's comedies contain an infusion of "popular" elements, and themselves exerted a sporadic influence on popular dramatists. Therefore, although it is clearly necessary to make some distinction between court comedy and the kind of amusement provided by Henslowe's dramatists neither can be considered in isolation. Many critics believe that the unique vitality of the best Elizabethan comedy is due to this reciprocal interaction.

1. K.M. Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, Oxford, 1934, ii, pp. 174-76.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RETREAT FROM LYLY IN THE PRIVATE THEATRES

The re-opening of the private theatres at the turn of the century created a sudden demand for new plays. At first the two children's companies were obliged to revive past successes, such as Love's Metamorphosis and The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll, but these 'mustie fopperies of antiquitie', as Marston dubbed them, were apparently greeted with derision.(1) The managers therefore enlisted the services of four young dramatists, who had previously worked for Henslowe: Jonson, Chapman, Marston and Middleton.(2)

The last three years of Elizabeth's reign proved to be a period of unsettled taste among theatre-goers, and in endeavouring, as Marston expressed it, to:

'sute the humorous ages backs
with cloathes in fashion.'(3)

the new recruits produced a crop of experimental and imitative comedies. The Prologue to All Fools, by Chapman, refers to this uncertain state of taste:

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1. H.N. Hillebrand, The Child Actors, Urbana, 1926, p.205.
 2. A. Harbage, Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions, New York, 1952, pp. 70-71.
 3. Marston, Jack Drum's Entertainment, ed. H. Harvey Wood, iii, p.234.

Who can show cause, why th'ancient comic vein
Of Eupolis and Cratinus (now reviv'd
Subject to personal application)
Should be exploded by some bitter spleens,
Yet merely comical and harmless jests
(Though ne'er so witty) be esteem'd but toys,
If void of th'other satirism's sauce?(1)

However, by the accession of James I, it was evident that select audiences generally approved of plays which combined a romantic intrigue plot with satirical social comedy.

Private comedies written during the years 1600-1603 may be roughly divided into three categories. One group derives from foreign models, the borrowed material being anglicized and mingled with satire on contemporary manners. All Fools, for instance, adapts two of Terence's plots; the groundwork of May-Day and What You Will is supplied by contemporary Italian intrigue comedies, and the action of Jack Drum's Entertainment springs from the Commedia dell'arte.

A second group is based on romantic entanglements and amusing hoaxes lampooning recognizable social types. The action conforms to the widely held notion that the function of comedy was to criticize conduct. The Dutch Courtesan, by Marston, is the outstanding example of this genre.(2)

The remaining plays, such as The Old Law, Blurt Master

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1. Chapman, All Fools, ed. T.M. Parrott, Prologue, 13-19.
 2. E.K. Chambers dates this play 1603-4; that is shortly after the death of Elizabeth, it has nevertheless been selected for discussion owing to its exceptional interest.

Constable and Sir Gyles Goosecap, employ fantastic comic plots and tend to ignore serious moral issues. Only The Thracian Wonder and The Gentleman Usher possess affinities with the romantic comedies of the popular stage, rather than the repertoire of the children's companies.

The main task of this chapter will be to compare the two bodies of children's comedies separated by almost a decade of inactivity. At first sight the transformation appears virtually complete, but a careful examination suggests that the progression from Lyly's formal courtly entertainments to the comic modes in vogue after the re-opening of the private theatres was not entirely unpredictable. The degree of continuity is, in fact, surprising.

Lyly's comedies had been designed to amuse Elizabeth's court, but after 1600, apart from the isolated instance of Cynthia's Revels, the "coterie" dramatists did not specifically seek the approval of court audiences: they were content to reflect the taste and interests of the upper and upper-middle classes who mostly patronized the private theatres.(1) Lyly had, to some extent, also been aware of such a non-aristocratic audience, since his comedies were performed before paying audiences at Blackfriars as well as at court.(2) Thus, although they were

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1. W.A. Armstrong, "The Audience of the Elizabethan Private Theatres," R.E.S., X (1959), pp. 234-49.
 2. G.K. Hunter, John Lyly, 1962, p. 97.

primarily court-orientated, it would be unwise to ignore the possible influence of this secondary enterprise. Indeed, T.W. Baldwin believes that Sapho and Phao was not originally intended, for the court.(1)

The dramatists who served the private theatres after their re-opening disregard those aspects of Lylian comedy which stemmed from the tradition of the Royal Progresses, such as the pastoral and mythological conventions. But they developed the kind of comic formula exemplified in the sub-plot of Endimion. This action, in fact, contains, in miniature, the ingredients of many successful private comedies written after the re-opening. It is based on an intrigue to expose the pretensions of "humour" characters, and contains satire, farce, witty dialogue and a romantic interest, together with Italian elements. It was designed to contrast with the serious allegory of the main action. After 1600, however, the patrons of the private theatres clamoured for exactly this type of comic recreation divorced from the more specifically courtly aspect of the old Chapel tradition. The exposure of folly and the humiliation of rogues were given a central position. Lyly's practice of using a comic underplot was abandoned, and all comic interests became incorporated in a single, unified action. The result was comparable to enlarging the scope, increasing the complexity, and expanding the satirical elements of Lyly's "Sir Tophas" plot.

1. T.W. Baldwin, William Shakespear's Five-Act Structure, Urbana, 1947, pp.500-01.

The revived comic tradition contained a strong satirical bent. Satire had generally been mild in Lyly's plays, but his portrayal of Sir Tophas's humour of bellicosity is an early instance of the type of comic character that became prominent in later private drama. Such figures were often modelled on stock characters from Italian comedies, similarly anglicized, and made the target for volleys of derision.(1) Both phases of private comedy display the influence of Italian drama: this may, therefore, be regarded as another tendency which survived the interregnum.

One of Lyly's most impressive achievements was his characterization of women. His allegorical figures and witty court ladies did not produce much progeny: it was in his study of Tellus's strongly passionate nature that he foreshadowed the lustful and alluring females such as Francischina and Imperia, who appear in the later comic drama. Lyly's sprightly page-boys frequently recur: T.M. Parrott constantly mentions them in his prefaces to Chapman's comedies. (2)

The "coterie" dramatists' reputation for dabbling in dangerous personal satire (the censors were compelled to interfere in the case of Lady Furnifall in Sir Gyles Goosecap),(3) follows a trend set by Lyly, since the

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1. This subject is discussed by D.C. Boughner, "The Background of Lyly's Tophas," R.M.L.A., LIV (1939), pp.967-73.
 2. T.M. Parrott, ed. The Comedies of George Chapman, 1914, p.893.
 3. Harbage, op.cit., p.79.

action of Endimion almost certainly shadows the events of a notorious contemporary scandal.(1)

Cumulatively these areas of similarity suggest the existence of a considerable degree of continuity between the two separate periods of private comedy. However, before examining individual plays it will be necessary to note the important points of divergence.

Elizabeth's sense of propriety had discouraged indecent humour and led to a polite form of courtly entertainment. The upper class patrons of the private theatres, however, relished scurrility and plots about sexual promiscuity and the seamy side of London life. The "coterie" dramatists pandered to this appetite for smutty jokes and curiosity about the more depraved aspects of human nature.(2) This jaded taste is neatly summarized in the Induction to John Day's The Isle of Gulls:

First Gent. I love to heare vice anatonizd &
abuse let blood in the maister vaine:

Second Gent. Give me a scene of venery that will
make a mans spirrits stand on theyr
typ-toes and die his bloode in a deepe
scarlet, like your Ovid's Ars Amandi:
there flowes the true Spring-head of
Poetry and the verie cristall fount
of Parnassus.(3)

This spirit is very different from Lyly's refined, intellectual conception of entertainment as expressed,

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1. J.W. Bennett, "Oxford and Endimion", P.M.L.A., LVII, (1942), pp. 354-69.
 2. Harbage, op.cit., pp. 186-222.
 3. Day, The Isle of Gulls, ed. A.H. Bullen, 1881, pp.5-6.

for example, in the prologue to Sapho and Phao:

'Our intent was at this time to move
inward delight, not outward lightnesse,
and to breede (if it might bee) soft
smiling, not loude laughing: knowing
it to the wise to be as great pleasure
to heare counsell mixed with witte, as
to the foolish to have sporte mingled
with rudenesse.'(1)

Another major change was the disappearance of Lyly's characteristic comic patterns. He generally alternated comic episodes, consisting of farcical antics and clever banter entrusted to a specific character group, with his serious allegorical action. Alternatively, as in Love's Metamorphosis, he employed formal, dance-like patterns with balanced character groups. The new generation of playwrights preferred intrigue plots involving amusing schemes which gave scope for the elaboration of comic character and an opportunity for farce. This comic prescription was approached by Lyly only in the sub-plot of Endimion, and partially in Mother Bombie. In many respects Ben Jonson eclipsed Lyly as a determining influence, particularly where Lyly was weak: in character, action, and satire.

Love, treated in the spirit of High Comedy through

1. Sapho and Phao, Prologue at Blackfriars, 7-11.

a combination of allegory and wit, formed the main theme of all Lyly's plays (apart from Midas). Chapman partly continued Lyly's love-game comedy, but, as a rule, his successors regarded love merely as a basis for romantic intrigue and a target for satire. Only rarely, as in Marston's The Dutch Courtesan, is it examined seriously. In this instance the difference between the two dramatists broadly corresponds to the difference between the artificial love of Spencer's Amoretti and the realistic exploration of sexual passion in Donne's Songs and Sonets.

The young dramatists, fresh from writing for Henslowe, urgently needed to discover a comic mode acceptable to the patrons of the private theatres. Their experimental period lasted approximately three years, during which time they turned to Lyly, Jonson and Italian comedy for inspiration. Lyly can hardly be credited as a major directing force upon this repertory, but he does suggest later developments, when, as in the sub-plot of Endimion, he deviated from the conventions of the courtly "Kenilworth" tradition. Lyly must be regarded as a discerning and, within limits, an adventurous playwright, willing to experiment, and alert to trends which later blossomed when there was no need to inhibit comic invention for fear of offending Elizabeth.

The children's comedies written between the re-opening of the private theatres and the death of Elizabeth may be classified into four groups, which will be discussed in turn.

The first batch consists of plays related to the Italian comic tradition: All Fools and May Day, by Chapman, and Marston's What You Will and Jack Drum's Entertainment. What You Will is representative of this group. The plot, a close adaptation of Sforza d'Oddi's romantic intrigue comedy Morti vivi, (1) concerns the schemes of various lovers for the hand of a supposed widow, and the ensuing confusion when her long-lost husband returns on the eve of her wedding. It offers a lively action with varied characters, a satiric streak, and a liberal allowance of farce.

His next play, Jack Drum's Entertainment, is supposed to take place in Highgate, but, as Miss K.M. Lea has pointed out, the mechanics of the plot have been annexed from the stock imbroglios of the Italian Commedia dell'arte. (2) The motifs of fraud and disguise, the feigned death and the ruse of the lover in a sack, together with the main comic figures, obviously derive from this tradition. The characters are invested with peculiarly English traits in order to give added point to the satire. His braggart courtier had been foreshadowed by Sir Tophas, but, in comparison with Lyly's comedy, Marston greatly increased the number and prominence of such hybrid English-Italian characters by making an intrigue plot the basis of a whole play.

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1. Marston, Plays, ed. H. Harvey Wood, ii, p. xx.
 2. K.M. Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, Oxford, 1934, ii, pp. 419-23.

Chapman, who wrote for the rival private theatre at St. Paul's, followed a similar course. He based May Day on the famous Italian play Alessandro, by Piccolomini,(1) slightly modifying the action and anglicizing the characters. The figure of Alessandro is converted into a colourful Elizabethan cavalier, and Quintilliano, like Sir Tophas, is an English miles gloriosus, who exists to be duped and made a laughing-stock. The involved romantic story displays few affinities with Lylian comedy; instead, it continues the mode of court comedy represented by Munday's The Two Italian Gentlemen - that of copying a well-known Italian source. Lyly vacillated in his use of Italian comedy, and always assimilated foreign influences into his own characteristic manner. The real forerunner of this group of plays is The Two Italian Gentlemen.

Chapman may have originally written All Fools for the Admiral's, but the version that has come down to us was revised for performance at Blackfriars c. 1603-4(2). The story is based on the plots of Terence's Heautontimorumenos and Adelphi,(3) the characters, too, are related to the stock types of Latin Comedy. Gostanzo is a crusty Terentian father, but Valerio, his prodigal son, is portrayed as an Elizabethan gallant. Davus, the intriguing slave, is transformed into Rinaldo, a quick-witted younger brother, and the courtesan

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1. Parrott, op.cit., p.732.
 2. Chambers, op.cit., iii, p.252.
 3. Parrott, op.cit., p.702.

into a secret wife. Thus Chapman has contrived to create an atmosphere of Elizabethan realism. The comedy focuses on the uneven path of true love and the ingenious hoaxes inflicted on parents by their children. Into this frame-work is incorporated a satirical sketch of humours developed through amusing situations in the manner of Jonson. The strict, miserly Gostanzo is tricked out of his senile folly, and Cornelio, an upstart gentleman and jealous husband, and Dariotto, an affected courtier, are made to display their fatuous behaviour and submit to a programme of satirical correction. The presence of satiric and romantic material in a frame-work of Latin intrigue first occurs in The Case is Altered (c. 1597). Mother Bombie (c. 1590), is also a quasi-romantic cross between Roman and Elizabethan comedy, but although both dramatists explore similar territory Jonson's play corresponds more nearly to All Fools.

In the period under review there are definite indications of a reaction against the leisured intellectual delight provided by Lyly's entertainments. The amplified orations with which his comedies abound are parodied in several plays.(1) All Fools indicates the growth of a taste in the private theatres for lively farcical actions, caricature and satire. Such new-fangled elements rarely intrude into the courtly material of Lyly's comedies, and were invariably subordinate, or confined to his late plays.

1. Chapman, All Fools, ed. T.M. Parrott, III, i, 182-257 and V, ii, 236-326.

His influence on these four comedies was much less than the impetus derived from Ben Jonson and Italian models; however, his plays can be seen to contain hints of several future trends.

The practice of adapting foreign comedies, as Gascoigne, Munday, and to a lesser extent Lyly had done, was only one expedient followed by the dramatists who revived the comic tradition of the private theatres. Sir Gyles Goosecap and The Gentleman Usher, by Chapman, and Middleton's Blurt Master Constable and The Old Law (which has the significant secondary title of A New Way to Please You), abjure assistance from abroad and rely more on the example of their native predecessors, Jonson and Lyly.

Middleton was one of the young dramatists recruited by the Paul's company to set it on its feet after the failure of their attempt to revive old plays.(1) In Blurt Master Constable he invented a theatrically effective romantic intrigue plot, studded with various comic figures to provide amusing situations and scope for satire on affected behaviour. These qualities probably reflect current taste fairly accurately. The plot develops along the lines of the subsidiary action of Endimion. Lazarillo, a pompous Spaniard, champion of Mars and Venus, is attended by a trio of pages who saucily comment on his fantastic decorum in the same witty style used by Epiton and his

1. Chambers, op.cit., iii, p.437.

companions towards Sir Tophas.(1) He has an affair with a courtesan, Imperia, but whilst paying a nocturnal visit is ignominiously pitched into her cellar. The diverting scenes where he encounters Constable Blurt and his officers,(2) were probably suggested by the rather similar scene involving the watch in Endimion.(3) There is other evidence that Middleton learned from Lyly: the lengthy lecture which Lazarillo delivers to the Ladies(4) is paralleled by Sybilla's long homilies in Sapho and Phao, and the precocious page boys imitate the wit and banter of Lyly's pages.(5) Their names, Pilcher, Doyt (a small coin), and Dandipratt, are a source of quibbles, similar to the puns on Halfpenny in Mother Bombie. There is one passage of Euphuistic prose(6) and several dances and Lylian songs.(7) Thus, although Middleton attached greater importance to lively incident and an effective romantic story, he retained distinctive traces of the old-fashioned Lylian tradition.

Middleton's next comedy, The Old Law, may have been revised by Rowley and Massinger,(8) but he almost certainly conceived the wildly improbable plot, and the cast of

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1. Middleton, Blurt Master Constable, ed. A. Dyce, i, pp. 235-37.
 2. Ibid., pp. 292-94.
 3. Endimion, IV, ii.
 4. Blurt Master Constable, pp. 276-79.
 5. Ibid., pp. 235-37 and 242-43.
 6. Blurt Master Constable, p. 231.
 7. Ibid., p. 298.
 8. Chambers, op.cit., iii, p.438.

outrageous scoundrels. The play is full of scenes of lust, callousness and debauchery. Depravity and hypocrisy are treated farcically, and, although the delinquents are opposed by a group of virtuous characters, the result is an unpleasantly rancid form of humour. It is plain that the criterion of taste amongst the patrons of the private theatres had been drastically transformed since the 1580's. This particular trend was not even faintly anticipated by Lyly. The only correspondence with his comedies is that a group of low-comedy figures duplicate the situations of the main plot, thus binding the two actions by a structural device used in Endimion.

When Chapman switched from serving the Admiral's men to the private companies, it was obvious that he could no longer write the mixtures of adventure and farce, such as The Blind Beggar of Alexandria, which had been acclaimed at the Rose.⁽¹⁾ His first two plays were derived from Italian comedies, but the following two, Sir Gyles Goosecap and The Gentleman Usher, owe allegiance to Jonson and Lyly.

The plot of Sir Gyles Goosecap is very slight; and, like Lyly's actions, is based on the balanced organization of groups (in this case three knights and three ladies) who, through the mischievous contrivances of a trio of pages, become engaged in a series of comical encounters.

1. Parrott, op.cit., p.673.

The result resembles a cross between the amusing scheming of Mother Bombie and a satirical portrayal of amorous follies similar to Lyly's handling of the three foresters and nymphs in Love's Metamorphosis. The chief difference is that Chapman has abandoned the pastoral convention as a frame-work for his study of Elizabethan manners. Will and Jack, who devise the comical situations, are related to the mocking pages of Endimion. Their gusto for word play, wit combats, and impudent delight in outwitting their masters, is well illustrated in the opening scene. The satire on courtship, as in Lyllyan comedy, is designed to amuse the mind rather than provoke uproarious laughter through slapstick farce or the incredible convolutions of a plot. Although Sir Gyles Goosecap contains little direct imitation of Lyly, there is a very general continuation of his structural method, prose dialogue, and light satiric attitude towards love.

The Gentleman Usher strengthens the impression that Chapman was aware of the Lyllyan tradition in his early plays. The first two acts contain many characteristic features - frequent interludes of song, dances, instrumental music and a pageant 'shew' - adornments usually associated with child actors. However, an abrupt change occurs in the last three acts, which smack of the poetic tragi-comic spirit of Beaumont and Fletcher. The play suddenly turns into a romantic comedy of sensational adventure akin to the curious The Thracian Wonder (c. 1602), of unknown provenance.

It should be becoming clear that Lylian comedy made a significant contribution to the comic technique of several plays written soon after the re-opening of the private theatres. The emergence of a new taste, grossly apparent in The Old Law, also appears in The Dutch Courtesan, in which Marston achieves a compromise by handling traditional themes in a modern spirit. A detailed comparison between this play and Endimion affords an excellent opportunity to gauge the nature of the change in comic fashions.

Marston's declared theme was to show 'the difference betwixt the Love of a Curtezan, and a wife.'⁽¹⁾ Lyly's comedy also analyses different conceptions of Love, but in terms of an idealized courtly society. The Dutch Courtesan explores a brutal world of bawds, brothels and treacherous prostitutes, in which the vividly realistic action and characters are the means for an intensive study of sexual psychology. A brief resumé of the plot will help to show where Marston's interests lie.

Young Frevil has for sometime freely indulged in lechery with Franceschina, a savage and compellingly beautiful courtesan. His best friend, Malheureux, deplures this promiscuity, but agrees to accompany him on a farewell visit to his mistress on the eve of his betrothal to the modest Beatrice. The stoic abstainer, is himself ensnared by the sex appeal of this 'fair devil', and

1. Marston, The Dutch Courtesan, ed. H. Harvey Wood, ii, p.69.

becomes a hopeless slave to passion. Incensed by Frevil's desertion, the whore presents Malheureux with the alternative of foregoing his satisfaction, or slaying his friend. He reveals his plight to Frevil, and they decide to fabricate the murder. Franceschina double-crosses Malheureux, her treachery is discovered, and, for her sins, she is led off to 'the extremest whip and jaile.' The moral argument pursues the following lines.(1) Frevil always recognized that his passion for Franceschina was merely physical, leaving him free to forsake her and discover the 'true love' of Beatrice. Malheureux, the upright man of firm abstinence, is, through his unhappy experience, made to understand that sexual desire is natural, and that it is best controlled by being allowed a natural outlet so that it will not contaminate true spiritual love. This is Marston's wisdom. He also, incidentally, shows that love for a woman cannot compare with loyalty to a friend.

Lyly's Endimion contains an equally perceptive analysis of courtly love exposed to similar stresses. He contrasts Endimion's past desire for the physical voluptuousness of Tellus, with his virtuous Platonic love for Cynthia. Eumenides' choice between assisting Endimion and winning Semele also introduces a love versus friendship theme. Further, the main action of Endimion is generated by the alluring and malignant personality of Tellus, whose revenge

1. My account of the moral theme of this play is indebted to G. Cross, "The Dutch Courtesan Reconsidered", E.L.H. XXVII, (1960), pp. 30-43.

for being jilted results in the hero's magic slumber. She, like Franceschina, is the most powerfully realized figure in the play.

The essential difference between the two comedies is one of tone. Marston uses energetic language, forceful characterization, and melodramatic intrigue, in a realistic setting. His fusion of intellect and strong emotion is "Jacobean" in spirit. Lyly's play, on the other hand, is basically an example of "Elizabethan" comedy, 'a tale of the Man in the Moone', enacted in an atmosphere of courtly make-believe. His plot is desultory, employing allegory and philosophical debates to articulate the themes, rather than intense dramatic conflicts. The language of Endimion is quaint and decorative, the whole conducive to a dreamy intellectual delight. The Dutch Courtesan, written over a decade later, contains no traces of the aristocratic "Kenilworth" tradition which Lyly had used as a frame-work for his study.

The comparison of these two plays reveals only one aspect of the literary revolution of the 1590's which led from Sidney to Donne; from Spenser to Marston's satires; and from A Midsummer Night's Dream to Measure for Measure. It is one purpose of this chapter to discover the nature of this change as it affected comic decorum, and to discover whether there was, in fact, an absolute discontinuity between Lyly's plays and the output which followed the re-opening of the private theatres.

Chapman, it will be remembered, wrote The Blind Beggar of Alexandria and A Humourous Day's Mirth for Henslowe before he changed his allegiance. The former was the most popular play of its season.(1) He used a large cast in a lively continuous action close to farce, and included the novelty of a quick change artist. A Humourous Day's Mirth is chiefly remarkable for its anticipation of Jonson's "humour" plays and the total absence of a romantic interest. The action is based on a half-comic and half-satiric exposure of human failings. Lemot and Lavel, like Malicente, contrive situations where the characters exhibit the wildest excesses of their follies and later achieve their reform. The fashion of parading contemporary affectations, diagnosed as humours, appeared sporadically in Endimion and The Woman in the Moon. Chapman applied this idea systematically to his entire list of characters and invented a virtually new comic method of controlling his action. The prose dialogue betrays extensive Lylilian influences.

One play remains to be discussed: Marston's Histriomastix, a revision of an anonymous play of the same name, probably first acted c. 1590 at the Inns of Court.(2) The progress of the action through six stages, each dominated by a divine power, corresponds to the over-all design of The Woman in the Moon. The theme is the cyclic

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1. Parrott, op.cit., p.673.
 2. Chambers, op.cit., iv, p. 18.

progression of society through times of Peace, Plenty, Pride, Envy, War and Poverty. These abstractions are represented by allegorical figures who successively preside over and influence the action, which concerns the fortunes of Sir Oliver Owllet's players, and various groups of nobles, city wives, merchants and lawyers. Peace breeds parasites, who thrive in a time of Plenty; the ensuing Pride causes civil strife, which brings Poverty; tranquillity is finally restored when Elizabeth begins her reign.

The allegorical figures provide occasion for pageantry and formal orations similar to the spectacles and speeches of Peele's Arraignement or Lyly's comedies. The action contains many songs and "shews"; such as, a Morris dance, a Masque, a song of harvest folk with a tableau of Ceres, Pluto and Bacchus. Thus, the action is carried on amidst the apparatus of an allegorical court show including a compliment to Elizabeth. There appear to be no direct borrowings from Lyly, nevertheless, Histrionastix displays interesting affinities with the courtly tradition. The play is something of a mongrel between the two periods of private comedy. It retains obvious characteristics of the Lylian tradition, such as the plot machinery, the mythological figures, and the trappings of song and 'pleasing shews,' but, Crisogonus, the scholar, who broods over the follies of the world, is a thoroughly Jonsonian character. The cast of mortals, too, belong to the later period of realistic satire. This two-faced complexion, perhaps helps to explain why Histrionastix

was one of the earliest plays staged by the new managers of Paul's, anxious to please as many shades of taste as possible.

It is time to summarize. The many different points of contact between Lyly and later private comedy show that in spite of his specialization he participated in most of the important comic developments of his age. He emerges as a versatile man of letters, alert to modern currents of taste, and one whose artistic standards were respected. When the new generation of children's playwrights were hesitantly re-formulating the lapsed tradition 'to sute the humorous ages backs,' many of them appear to have studied his comedies before writing their own. As a major directing force he was not comparable to Jonson, but he clearly left his stamp on such early plays as Sir Gyles Goosecap, Blurt Master Constable, and The Gentleman Usher. The elegant aristocratic entertainments of the "Kenilworth" tradition, which he had transformed into cultured High Comedy, was outmoded when the private theatres re-opened, but satire on contemporary manners (usually mild in Lyly), rapidly gained in popularity. Apart from the page boys and Sir Tophas, his typical characters mostly disappeared and his formally organized plots were supplanted by more eventful romantic intrigues.

Cynthia's Revels is an isolated example of private comedy especially written to impress the court and also produced on the London stage after 1600. It is also isolated in its virtually complete continuity with the Lylian comic tradition.

After some preliminary experimenting, the "coterie" dramatists realized that the comic formulae they had inherited from Lyly were unsuited for their modern needs. They solved their artistic problem by writing comedies based on romantic intrigue plots, containing comic characters and amusing episodes, generously laced with satire and bawdy jokes.

After 1600 the demand for pastoral-mythological allegories combined with High Comedy which, fifteen years earlier, had delighted audiences at Blackfriars, became confined to specifically aristocratic occasions such as the amateur Percy catered for. Lyly's manner and interests had been so perfectly attuned to the taste of the contemporary court-orientated society that it was inevitable his comic mode would require drastic remodelling to maintain its vitality. Lyly's prestige, however, was so considerable that the young dramatists initially tried to assimilate his kind of comedy whilst responding to the more fashionable demand for Italianate and Jonsonian fare.

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Any attempt to compile a list of every article or book which I have consulted in the course of my study would require a prodigious amount of space. I have been careful to include all the important primary texts considered in the foregoing inquiry: these form the first part of the bibliography. Where some particular authority has been followed the reference has been given in a footnote and the book or article cited in the bibliography. Other works from which I have derived significant help, but have had no occasion to mention in the notes are also recorded. The following list will, I hope, provide a useful list of source material and critical literature available on the subject of this thesis.

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