

The Queen's Two Bodies and the Elizabethan Male Subject in John Lyly's *Gallathea* (1592)

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This article reads John Lyly's *Gallathea* as an experiment in the representation of Elizabeth in the political context specific to the mid- to late-1580s. The argument diverges from the critical tradition that regards the play as part of a series of attempts to promote representations of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen, which included Lyly's *Endimion*. The article presents *Gallathea* as introducing a parallel strain in Elizabethan political discourse where, instead of being divorced from one another, female sexuality and female authority exist in a state of happy union. Concomitantly, the article highlights how *Gallathea* gestures towards a new code of manhood and courtliness that does not regard the union between female sexuality and authority as a cause for anxiety, thereby showcasing Lyly himself as the ideal male subject in this discursive realm, equally desirous of and deserving Elizabeth's patronage.

The context for my discussion of *Gallathea* can be evoked by bringing Hans Eworth's *Elizabeth I and the 3 Goddesses* (Fig. 1) into view. The painting is a reworking of the Greek myth, 'The Judgment of Paris,' where the three goddesses Juno, Minerva and Venus submit to Paris' verdict in a contest of celestial beauty but attempt to sway his judgment by bribery. While Juno's and Minerva's schemes to tempt Paris prove unsuccessful, Venus promises him a magnificent conquest: Helen. Enchanted by the description of Helen's beauty and assured of gaining her love, Paris promptly declares Venus to be the winner. Unfortunately, Paris remains oblivious to the consequences of his bargain, for although



Figure 1: Eworth, *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses* (c. 1569)

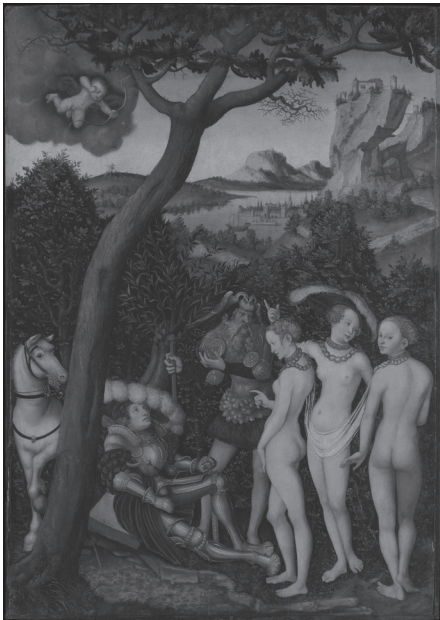


Figure 2: Cranach, *The Judgment of Paris* (c. 1530–35)

he succeeds in captivating and abducting Helen, the incensed losers Juno and Minerva seek vengeance, eventually bringing about the fall of Troy.¹ Eworth's painting, in which Elizabeth plays Paris' part of the arbiter, diverges from the myth itself and from contemporary artistic representations of it. In the myth, Paris persuades the goddesses to disrobe to aid his judgment. Typical illustrations of the myth from the period, like Lucas Cranach, the Elder's *The Judgment of Paris* (Fig. 2), preserve this detail and usually depict all three goddesses as naked. In contrast, Eworth's interpretation of the myth has only Venus in the nude.

One does not have to look far beyond the canvas to ascertain the reasons behind Eworth's departure from tradition. Dating from the late 1560s, his painting participates in contemporaneous political debates on Elizabeth's marriage and, like its discursive allies, encodes a didactic message.² Eworth appears to be cautioning Elizabeth of the perils that not only she but also her country faces in the event of choosing a 'wrong' consort, lest she, like Paris, governed by a moment of sensual illusion, should precipitate a political calamity. Eworth sets in motion a sharp dichotomy between the regally robed Elizabeth and the naked Venus: '[a]s the direction of Elizabeth's walk and gaze propels the viewer's eyes from dark to light across the allegorical spectrum, they come to rest appreciatively on Venus's spectacularly naked body.'³ With *globus cruciger* and sceptre in hand, Elizabeth reifies her political authority with a clear reminder that female sovereignty

¹ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 2 vols (1955; rpt. Harmondsworth, 1990), II, 270–73.

² Critics tend to accept Roy Strong's interpretation of the painting, in *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 1987), pp. 65–69, which takes its cue from the verses on the frame: 'Pallas was keen of brain, Juno was queen of might, / The rosy face of Venus was in beauty shining bright, / Elizabeth then came / And, overwhelmed, Queen Juno took to flight; / Pallas was silenced; Venus blushed for shame'. Strong concludes that the goddesses stand 'united in their defeat' as Elizabeth's individual merit not only combines their virtues but surpasses them. The painting itself, however, does not present a blushing, abashed Venus. Equally, while Strong recognises that the painting is 'a celebration not of a triumphant virgin queen but of a ruler who was still expected to marry', his critical emphasis is on detecting panegyric hues in the work. Flattery, however, does not preclude instruction and, as I argue, the paean to Elizabeth conceals an injunction.

³ Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 138.

and sexuality are poles apart. Prompted by the dichotomy depicted in Eworth's painting, this article conducts a focused textual analysis of the representation of the intersections between female sexuality and authority – and suggests its resonance for Elizabeth's reign in the mid- to late-1580s – in John Lyly's *Gallathea*.

Critics have engaged extensively with the political anomaly embodied by Elizabeth in early modern England. As 'the system of sovereignty was for all practical purposes predicated on a male body',⁴ defences of Elizabeth's authority 'differentiated between the private woman and the public office of a queen.'⁵ The medieval theory of the King's two bodies was evoked to stress the precedence of the male body politic over Elizabeth's female body natural, which facilitated an acceptance of Elizabeth's sovereignty. Scholars have demonstrated how Elizabeth herself 'used the medieval insistence on the priority of the traditionally male body politic to counterbalance the innate inadequacies of her body natural.'⁶ Yet Elizabeth 'remained a woman in her body natural, and therefore [was] subject to those pervasive cultural perceptions of female weakness and disability that called into question the propriety and effectiveness of her authority'.⁷ Though there was an acknowledgement of her authority by her 'faithfull and true subjects',⁸ male subjects needed to be assured that if not in the public, at least in the private sphere Elizabeth would be under some degree of male supervision, namely that of her husband. Both Deborah and Judith, biblical characters who were often evoked to raise

⁴ Ilona Bell, 'Souereaigne Lord of lordly Lady of this Land', in Julia M. Walker (ed.), *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC, 1998), 99–117 (p. 112).

⁵ Amanda Shephard, *Gender and Authority in Sixteenth-Century England: The Knox Debate* (Keele, 1994), p. 92.

⁶ Stephen Cohen, '(Post)modern Elizabeth: Gender, Politics and the emergence of early modern subjectivity', in Hugh Grady (ed.), *Shakespeare and Modernity: Early Modern to Millennium* (London and New York, 2000), 20–39 (p. 24).

⁷ Louis Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation* (London, 2006), p. 1.

⁸ John Aylmer, *An harborovve for faithfull and trevve subiectes agaynst the late blowne blaste, concerninge the gouernme[n]t of vvemen. wherin be confuted all such reasons as a straunger of late made in that behalfe, with a breife exhortation to obedience* (London: John Day, 1559), sig. A1r.

acceptance of Elizabeth's anomalous position, were married women. For Mary Beth Rose, Elizabeth's encounters with the Parliament and its repeated exhortations on the subject of her marriage reveal 'the [Parliament's] implicit hope that she would share power with a male consort'. Similarly, Helen Hackett foregrounds how even in the defences of her reign, male writers 'accommodate Elizabeth to the familiar role of queen as prompt producer of an heir, and securer of the male dynasty' in preference to representing her as politically autonomous.⁹ Elizabeth's male subjects thus took comfort in divorcing her sexuality/body natural from her sovereignty/body politic (as portrayed by Eworth) or looked forward to her marriage and eventual superintendence by a male figure.

By the mid-1580s, however, Elizabeth's subjects were beginning to realise that the Queen had effectively escaped the patriarchal surveillance guaranteed by the institution of matrimony. The death in 1584 of François, Duke of Anjou and Elizabeth's final suitor, created a discursive *lacuna* which necessitated a reconfiguration of the relationship between the Queen's authority and sexuality.¹⁰ Throughout the late-1580s, representations of Elizabeth vary considerably and are characterised by an 'interpretive ambiguity'.¹¹ On the one hand, as Carole Levin argues,¹² there were attempts to cast Elizabeth's body natural in a maternal role that sterilised her body natural and gave a different resonance to the authority that she exerted through her body politic. Yet, as 'maternity was incompatible with the public domain',¹³ such rhetorical strategy could not buttress Elizabeth's position for long.

⁹ Mary Beth Rose, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (Chicago, 2002), p. 31; Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 50.

¹⁰ Amritesh Singh, 'The Queen's Queendom: Revisiting the Elizabeth-Anjou Courtship and *The Gaping Gulf*, *Gender Questions* 2 (2014): 98–109; Blair Worden, 'Delightful Teaching: Queen Elizabeth and Sidney's *Arcadia*', in Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo (eds), *Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing* (London, 2007), 71–86.

¹¹ Matthew Woodcock, 'The Fair Queen Figure in Elizabethan Entertainments', in Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge, and Debra Barrett-Graves (eds), *Elizabeth I: Always Her Own Free Woman* (Farnham, 2003), 97–118 (p. 113).

¹² Carole Levin, 'All the Queen's Children: Elizabeth I and the Meanings of Motherhood', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 30 (2004): 57–76.

¹³ Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 77.

Equally, the cult of Elizabeth that promoted an analogy between the Queen's inviolable body and an impregnable nation was only to secure its hold from the 1590s onwards.¹⁴ Thus, from the mid- to late-1580s, Elizabeth's two bodies continued to pose a discursive conundrum.

Such was the ground that nourished John Lyly's *Gallathea*: written around 1584, performed for the Queen on New Year's Eve 1587/8, and published in 1592.¹⁵ With Humberside as its *mise-en-scene*, the play is unusual in Lyly's corpus because it is set in contemporary England and emerges as a site where the fabulous and the mundane collide. The play is set against the background of a virgin sacrifice that occurs once in five years to appease the wrath of Neptune who continues to hold a longstanding grudge against the citizens and who sends his agent, the monster Agar, to devour the chosen virgin. The play is set in motion when, independent of each other, Tyterus and Melebeus disguise their daughters, Gallathea and Phillida respectively, as boys to ensure that their beauty and famed integrity do not lead to their selection as sacrifice. Neptune, in his omniscience, observes the deception and vows divine retribution. In the meanwhile, the cross-dressed Gallathea and Phillida encounter each other in the woods and fall in love. The woods are home to Diana whose virgin acolytes find themselves at the receiving end of Cupid's prank to break their vows of chastity. Upon discovering his scheme, an incensed Diana imprisons Cupid. Simultaneously, Neptune/Agar refuses the virgin offered in the absence of Gallathea/Phillida, leading to civic pandemonium. The stage is set for *dénouement* when the remaining characters congregate in the woods: Venus to seek a release for Cupid, and Melebeus and Tyterus to claim their daughters. Venus negotiates a tripartite deal with Diana and Neptune where Cupid's release puts an end to the brutality of the virgin sacrifice (which pacifies Diana) on the assurance of her constant assistance in Neptune's matters of love. The concurrent realisation of each other's sexual identity leads Phillida and Gallathea to despair; Venus, moved by the sincerity and steadfastness of their affection, intervenes at this point and promises to transform one of them into a man at the church door where they are to marry. The company exits in a wedding procession. The parallel

¹⁴ Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, 90–165.

¹⁵ John Lyly, *Gallathea* (London: John Charlwood for the widow Broome, 1592). This edition is used for all quotations and references.

sub-plot revolves around Rafe and his brothers, who are on the quest to become apprentices. Not being within my present scope of analysis, the subplot warrants no summary.

Gallathea is acknowledged as an attempt to 'solidify [Elizabeth's] authority during a turbulent decade ... and to try and reconcile her femininity with her very masculine authority'.¹⁶ Similarly, critics note that 'Lyly wrote *Gallathea* during the period of transition that accompanied the failure of Elizabeth's last courtship, and the play reflects contemporary anxieties concerning the stability of the state'.¹⁷ Drawing on the existing scholarship on the play, this article argues that *Gallathea* creates a new paradigm where, instead of being divorced from one another, female sexuality and female authority exist in a state of happy union. In doing so, I aim to revisit the critical consensus that reads the play as part of a series of attempts to further representations of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen.¹⁸ Concomitantly, I foreground the manner in which the play gestures towards a complementary form of masculinity and courtliness that views the union of Elizabeth's two bodies favourably. I shall first examine how *Gallathea* represents a crisis in masculinity that lays the ground for female intervention. The second section extends the inquiry into masculinity to unravel the tangled nature of female desire in the play. I then turn my attention to its attitude towards female authority and suggest a metonymic link between Venus and Elizabeth that heralds a new configuration between Elizabeth's two bodies. The concluding section unites the various readings to highlight the play's attempt to create a new code of masculinity and courtliness that is a fitting consort to its union of Elizabeth's two bodies.

¹⁶ Christopher Wixson, 'Cross-dressing and John Lyly's *Gallathea*', *SEL* 41 (2001): 241–256 (p. 245).

¹⁷ Jacqueline Vanhoutte, 'Sacrifice, Violence and the Virgin Queen in Lyly's *Gallathea*', *Cahiers Elisabethains* 49 (1996): 1–14 (p. 5).

¹⁸ Theodora Jankowski, "'Where there can be no cause of affection": redefining virgins, their desires, and their pleasures in John Lyly's *Gallathea*', in Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan and Dymphna Callaghan (eds), *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects* (Cambridge, 1996), 253–74.

‘Marke all, and in the end will marre all’¹⁹: Male Misrule in *Gallathea*

Gallathea has inspired substantial scholarship with respect to its representations of femininity. There is certainly a memorable and distinctly visible female presence in the play and it is regarded by critics as ‘a drama populated substantially by female characters.’²⁰ The play’s focus on Gallathea and Phillida’s romance, the motif of the virgin sacrifice and the subplot revolving around Diana and her nymphs have proved a rich mine for feminist excavations. However, these studies do not adequately recognise that the play is equally concerned with notions of masculinity, and the very first act of the play establishes a crisis of masculinity. Although Jacqueline Vanhoutte notes that ‘the chaos that ravages the community in *Gallathea* results from male rather than female misrule,’²¹ she does not identify the spring of ‘male misrule.’ In this section I study how the play dramatises insecurities in masculine identities and discloses conflicts both within and between different codes of early modern masculinity that will eventually be subdued by female authority.

It is appropriate to note here that the ritual of the virgin sacrifice, according to the play, was established as a punitive measure not merely for the impious acts committed by the Danes but also for another transgression. Tyterus notes that in destroying the temple dedicated to Neptune ‘men had swarved beyond theyr reason’ (*Gallathea*, sig. B2v). Christopher Tilmouth remarks on the significance of the faculty of reason in the works of humanist moralists who advocated ‘using reason to suppress the passions (since, if left unchecked, the latter would drive men to intemperance).’²² Similarly, Alexandra Shepard observes that a display of excessive emotion, in contrast to exercising reason, was widely regarded as signalling the loss of manhood.²³ Thus,

¹⁹ *Gallathea*, sig. C3r.

²⁰ Laurie Shannon, ‘Nature’s Bias: Renaissance Homonormativity and Elizabethan Comic Likeness’, *Modern Philology* 98 (2000): 183–210 (p. 199).

²¹ Vanhoutte, ‘Sacrifice, Violence and the Virgin Queen’, 4.

²² Christopher Tilmouth, *Passion’s Triumph over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 1–2.

²³ Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), p. 67.

besides serving as a grim reminder of the consequences of blasphemy, the sacrificial rite in *Gallathea* was also introduced to restore the normative masculinity that was displaced by men who had forfeited the faculty of 'reason'. The dramatic action of *Gallathea* starts when the joint between masculinity and reason becomes unhinged. Tyterus sees himself as a 'fearefull Father' who has to cope with the 'vexing care' of protecting his daughter, Gallathea, who he believes is destined to be sacrificed to Neptune (sig. B2r). Recognising the wisdom in Gallathea's advice to submit to the political imperatives in operation, he remarks that 'it's hard for the sicke to followe wholesome counsaile' (sig. B3v) – an admission of the ailing state of masculine authority. Similarly, Melebeus' decision to disguise Phillida is an attempt to preserve his masculinity. He instructs Phillida: 'thou shalt therefore disguise thy selfe in attire, least I should disguise my selfe in affection, in suffering thee to perrish' (sig. B4v). If coerced into leading Phillida to the sacrificial altar, Melebeus would have to 'disguise' or dissimulate his paternal affection by embracing the collective decree with patriotic fervour. Safeguarding Phillida through her 'disguise' would obviate any necessity for him to practise deception. The word 'disguise', used twice in Melebeus' speech, carries the weight of his anxiety. Phillida's 'disguise' is meant to be superficial and swiftly cast away as it affects only her 'attire'. This is designed as a precautionary measure to prevent a grave and irreversible 'disguise' where Melebeus risks losing himself. Despite Phillida's reluctance to enter into his 'sower deceit' (sig. H1v), Melebeus succeeds in shoring up his sinking masculinity with a telling irony: in insisting on Phillida's disguising herself and breaching gender boundaries, Melebeus seeks to secure those very boundaries.

Later in the play, Augur commands the male assembly thus: 'If you think it against nature to sacrifice your children, thinke it also against sence to destroy your Countrey' (sig. E4r). Tyterus, in an attempt to deflect public attention away from his daughter, Gallathea, cautions Melebeus: 'I hope you are not so careful of a child, that you will be carelesse of your Countrey, or adde so much to nature, that you will detract from wisdome' (sig. F1v). 'Sence' and 'wisdome' are close allies of the masculine faculty of reason and in not allowing these traits to determine their actions both Melebeus and Tyterus risk losing the state of manhood granted to them. Further, if Melebeus does not surrender his daughter, he ceases to be wise and thus masculine; yet if he does so, his grief will render him irrational, which would equally

result in the loss of his masculinity. Thus, the predicament of Melebeus and Tyterus discloses the conflict between two sites of masculinities – the domestic and the civic. While heading a household ‘was often approached as the precondition of men’s political involvement within the wider community’,²⁴ in Melebeus and Tyterus, *Gallathea* presents characters that expose the fault lines of patriarchy and reveal the lack of individual agency in choosing where to situate one’s masculinity – in protecting one’s family or in serving the communal good. It later emerges that gender norms are designed to preserve and perpetuate hierarchies which in the play privilege the supreme patriarch, Neptune. Neptune brands Tyterus and Melebeus as ‘unreasonable’ (sig. F3v), for not honouring the tenets of this hierarchy, thereby divesting them of their masculinity. Apoplectic at their deception, Neptune plots his own grim charade: disguised as a shepherd he enters the woods to ‘marke all, and in the end marre all’ (sig. C3r).

Alongside anxieties surrounding gender identities in the world of men, *Gallathea* also dramatises a gendered conflict within the divine social order. Cupid is affronted by one of Diana’s nymphs who challenges his masculinity by making disparaging remarks about his relatively low status in the hierarchies both of men/humans and gods. He is addressed as a ‘faire boy’ (sig. B3v), hence not belonging to the privileged community of men, and a ‘little god’ (sig. B3r), thus insignificant in terms of authority and rank (*emphases mine*). Apart from chafing at not being granted the status of divinity he believes himself to be entitled to, Cupid also resents Diana and her train as they seem to have formed a self-governed, exclusively female community with Diana as its sovereign. Alert to the extent to which Diana’s political authority is predicated on detachment from female sexuality, Cupid’s wounded masculinity seeks to reassert itself on two planes. He not only wants to violate the private, inner world of the nymphs by forcing them to reassess their commitment to Vestal vows, in the process he also seeks to replace Diana and establish himself as the normative male authority over this community. Resolved to raise himself on the gendered chain of being, Cupid devises a cunning plan for Diana’s nymphs to acknowledge him as a ‘great god’ (sig. B3r). He disguises himself as a girl, enters Diana’s train, and seeks to sway the nymphs with a chant of tired Petrarchanisms in which love

²⁴ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 70.

is 'a heate full of coldnesse, a sweet full of bitternesse, a paine ful of pleasantnesse, which maketh thoughts have eyes, and harts eares, bred by desire, nursed by delight, weaned by jelousie, kild by dissembling, buried by ingratitude' (sig. B3r).

The various operations of masculinity in the play illustrate how early modern masculinity 'constantly fears the loss of its power and must constantly guard against the threat of disempowerment'.²⁵ The male characters of *Gallathea* not only share a common purpose in safeguarding their masculine authority but also resort to the same stratagem to achieve it: disguise. Moreover, the play is sensitive to how attempts to ward off the 'threat of disempowerment' can reveal conflicts among various codes of masculinity. If we assume that an engagement with contemporary ideas of femininity 'reveals the anxieties and contradictions of masculinity in early modern patriarchy',²⁶ it follows that Neptune, Cupid, Melebeus, Tyterus, and Augur, though united in their attempts to control female destiny and desire, are paradoxically also at variance because of it. The crisis within masculinity in the play has the potential to lead to tragic consequences which are portended in Neptune's ominous resolution to 'marre all'. Instead, the plot deploys this crisis to examine constructions of masculinity and to create an opening for female intervention.

'What is to Love or the Mistresse of love impossible?'²⁷ : Towards A New Discourse of Female Desire

In early modern England, it has been argued, the 'key to male power ... was thought to be sexual control over women'.²⁸ It is this ideology that drives Cupid's *coup* of usurping Diana's authority by making her nymphs fall in love with the cross-dressed Gallathea and Phillida. The transvestite Cupid achieves a transient victory: the

²⁵ Todd Reeser, *Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), p. 30.

²⁶ Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 28.

²⁷ *Gallathea*, sig. H1r.

²⁸ Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 4.

nymphs assemble a familiar chorus of desire that keeps measure with Petrarchan paradoxes. Telusa ponders over ‘what newe conceits, what strange contraries breede in [her] minde’ (sig. D2r) and, in favouring amorous dalliances over Vestal vows, seals Cupid’s triumph: ‘I will forsake Diana for [Phillida]’ (sig. D4v). Eurota and Ramia too voice their dissent from Diana’s philosophy: Ramia says ‘Love is a God, and Lovers are vertuous’, with which Eurota concurs, ‘Indeede Ramia, if Lovers were not vertuous, then wert thou vicious’ (sig. D3r). For Theodora Jankowski, Cupid’s ploy situates the nymphs outside patriarchal control, empowered to act as a ‘subject actively engaged in desiring an other or obtaining pleasure for herself and/or another’.²⁹ However, the cluttered platitudes that characterise their desire and their concordance with Cupid’s agenda script female desire on male terms and, although granting temporary relief from Diana’s unyielding regime, can scarcely be admitted to be liberating.

Lyly’s *Endimion*, I would argue, is also fuelled by ‘an underlying male anxiety that female sexuality cannot be contained’ and seeks to diffuse it.³⁰ While both plays have numerous female characters, in contrast to *Gallathea*, *Endimion* dramatizes their relationships with male suitors and, in the process, reveals a more conventional stance on female sexuality. *Endimion* pulses with unrequited desires: Endymion pines for the unobtainable Cynthia; Tellus strives for Endymion’s affection; Corsites is smitten by Tellus; and Eumenides yearns for Semele who is indifferent to his addresses. The amorous entanglements of the play reveal how ‘male suitors are obviously incapable of controlling the independent and capricious behaviour of the women and fall prey to female manipulation’.³¹ The effects of female manipulation on men are dire. Tellus conspires with a witch, Dipsas, to put Endymion in an enchanted sleep wherein he continues to age and wither. Later in the play, Tellus tricks Corsites into meddling with the faeries in the woods, as a punishment for which he becomes deformed. Similarly, Dipsas gleefully admits a defiance of wifely duties: ‘in the prime of

²⁹ Jankowski, ‘Redefining Virgins’, 256.

³⁰ Reeser, *Moderating Masculinity*, 21.

³¹ Natalia Khomenko, “Between You and Her No Comparison”: Witches, and Healers, and Elizabeth I in John Lyly’s “Endymion”, *Early Theatre* 13 (2010): 37–63 (p. 45).

my husbands youth, I diuorced him by my devillish Arte.³² Thus, like *Gallathea*, *Endymion* also presents its audience with masculinity in crisis. This crisis is resolved on Cynthia's intervention wherein the unruly women in the play are punished for 'typically feminine crimes: dangerous sexual desire and dangerous speech', which marks a return to and reinforcement of conventional hierarchies.³³

The critical consensus on Cynthia's role in *Endymion* as reinforcing patriarchal structures that corset and contain female desire enables an appreciation of *Gallathea*'s heterodox stance on female sexuality. The crisis in masculinity in *Endymion* is rooted in the women of Cynthia's court who are 'deceptive, disruptive, uncontrollable, and desirous of power'.³⁴ This feminine 'deviance' is to be rectified through marriage which 'becomes an instrument to defuse dangerous female power'.³⁵ The resolution directed by Cynthia in the *dénouement* not only ensures that women are contained within the institution of matrimony but also fulfils the individual desires of male characters in the play. Coerced into acknowledging the futility of her desire for Endymion, Tellus is bid to marry Corsites. Similarly, Semele is pressed into marrying Eumenides and makes peace with her fate in a declaration that underscores the compelling force of Cynthia's authority: 'I am content your Highnesse shall command ... Madame, I accept of Eumenides' (sig. K2r). Cynthia pronounces Dipsas to be 'wedded to wickednes' – the verb underlining the enormity of her conduct – and commands her either to return to her husband Geron or be 'punished to the vttermost' (sig. K3v); thus subdued, Dipsas promptly tenders an apology and vows to resume her wifely duties. Significantly, the central courtship of the play – Endymion's affection for the chaste Cynthia – remains unconsummated. The implications this has for Elizabethan politics, especially in the light of Cynthia's serving as a placeholder for Elizabeth, will be examined in the next section. For now, suffice it to note that Cynthia's function in *Endymion*

³² John Lyly, *Endymion* (London: John Charlwood for the widow Broome, 1591), sig. I3v. This edition is used for all quotations from and references to the play.

³³ Christine M. Neufeld, 'Lyly's Chimerical Vision: Witchcraft in *Endymion*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 43 (2007): 351–369 (p. 365).

³⁴ Khomenko, 'Witches, and Healers', 45.

³⁵ Neufeld, 'Lyly's Chimerical Vision', 361.

demonstrates how ‘the woman who has the prerogative of a goddess, who is authorized to be out of place, can best justify her authority by putting other women in their place.’³⁶

The trope of cross-dressed female characters allows *Gallathea* to tease out different implications of female displacement. Jankowski observes that cross-dressing enables both Gallathea and Phillida ‘to explore not only the possibilities of a woman-only society, but of an economy of desire that is similarly woman-centered.’³⁷ Yet, neither of the two girls intentionally experiences or explores the possibility of a ‘woman-only society’. The only scene in the entire play where the girls and Diana and her train are on stage together, the girls express no interest in benefiting from such a society. Phillida agrees to become a part of Diana’s hunting party ‘not for [the] Ladies companie’ (*Gallathea*, sig. C3v) but to court Gallathea. With the exception of the *anagnorsis*, the girls are consistently shown to be in each other’s society, believing the other to be a man. The confusion experienced by Phillida and Gallathea due to their disguises is part of the play’s larger project of reworking the definitions of virginity and questioning patriarchal restrictions on female desire and agency.

Jankowski neatly encapsulates the contemporary position on virginity: ‘The virgin’s bodily integrity is reinforced by a similar “spiritual” integrity, a purity of thought as well as deed, which suggests that she herself is neither desired nor desiring ... The virgin is expected to be the object of desire or pleasure, never the subject actively engaged in desiring an other or obtaining pleasure for herself and/or another.’³⁸ The dialectic of desire in the play forces the characters either to embrace or reject the parameters of virginity thus defined. Diana’s nymphs rehearse patriarchal condemnation of female sexuality in disparaging Venus as ‘amorous and too kinde for [her] sexe’ (sig. B3r). Telusa is distressed to discover how the expression of desire undoes her identity as a virgin in a patriarchal society: ‘O Telusa, these words are unfit for thy sexe beeing a virgine, but apt for thy affections being a Lover’ (sig. D2r). Phillida reiterates the refrain

³⁶ Louis Montrose, ‘“Shaping Fantasies”: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture,’ *Representations* 2 (1983): 61–94 (p. 76).

³⁷ Jankowski, ‘Redefining Virgins,’ 258.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 255–56.

that finds femininity as incommensurate with the pursuit of desire: 'It were a shame if a mayden should be a suter, (a thing hated in that sexe)' (sig. D4r).

Yet, emboldened by their masculine attire and empowered by their love for each other, both Phillida and Gallathea defy gendered boundaries. Phillida determines to 'transgresse in love a little of [her] modestie' (sig. D2v); the transgression is to be measured in terms of voicing female sexuality, in becoming a desiring subject rather than a desired object, and in taking control of her sexual destiny. The reason why Diana's nymphs bay for revenge on Cupid is that, although they may hold on to the physical aspect of virginity, experiencing carnal desire has effectively divorced them from the circumspect definition of virginity which patriarchy endorses and which fixes their identities. That the definition of virginity encompassed more than the intactness of the hymen is evident in the urge to find the 'chastest virgine' as a sacrifice (sig. B2v), thus suggesting degrees of virginity, with the most chaste being the one who is oblivious to *both* the consideration and consummation of sexual desire. Thus, at the end of the play neither Gallathea nor Phillida is any longer the 'chastest' though their hymens remain intact.

While I do find Jankowski's interpretation of the female-orientated economy of desire operating in the play useful for my analysis, I would like to stress that it functions in a far more complex manner. It is important to appreciate that, notwithstanding the suspicions that plague them about the other's real sexual identity, the girls are deceived by each other's disguises. At the conclusion of the play Gallathea testifies, 'I had thought the habite agreeable with the Sexe' (sig. H1v). Phillida echoes the sentiment, 'I had thought that in the attyre of a boy, there could not have lodged the body of a Virgine' (sig. H1v). Although critics have detected a nascent "lesbian" desire at work,³⁹ it is worth noting that, in its original performance by an all-male company, the play would have been marked by a more pertinent "gay" sensibility, which is hinted at in Phillida's coquettish remark to Gallathea: 'Seeing we are both boyes, and both louers, that our affection may haue some showe, and seeme as it were loue, let me call thee Mistris' (sig. F3r). The intricate sexual dynamics of the play, however, invite a dismissal of anachronistic assumptions

³⁹ Traub, *Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 327–29.

of sexuality to reveal a labile world of gender and sexuality peculiar to Elizabethans. Both Gallathea and Phillida define their attraction in heteroerotic (and not homoerotic, be it “lesbian” or “gay”) terms; deceived by each other’s disguises both Gallathea and Phillida believe the other to be a boy and recognise the other’s desire as functioning on a masculine rather than feminine principle. In each other’s eyes, they become the ideal male lover whose economy of desire mirrors and complements theirs. The metamorphosis at the end is designed to ensure that the girls’ (and by extension female) fantasy of an ideal male lover is realised.⁴⁰ Read in the context of its first performance where the parts were played by the boy actors of the Children of Paul’s, *Gallathea* bears witness to Bly’s observation on how ‘the body of the cross-dressed [boy] actor is aggressively eroticized’ and presents itself as an object of sexual desire for a female audience.⁴¹ *Gallathea* heralds a new ratio of sexuality where female desire remains contingent on the availability of a heteroerotic parameter, the normative ‘cause of affection’ (sig. H1v), but is fulfilled in fashioning a new anatomy of masculinity that parades, rather than conceals, its artifice. The existing ‘regimes of heterosexuality’ are disrupted⁴² not to introduce a space for Sapphic love but to create a new register for the consummation of desires that remain hedged in heteroeroticism yet are predicated on female autonomy.

‘Then follow us’⁴³ : Lyly’s *Venus as Elizabeth*

Critics observe that ‘John Lyly’s plays depend on the presence of Elizabeth I for a full deployment of meaning.’⁴⁴ Lyly’s ambitions to

⁴⁰ *Gallathea*’s magical resolution, where a virgin is promised the ideal husband, could also indicate a wistful longing for the monarch’s spouse lingering in the nation’s imagination. This would then be of piece with Lyly’s earlier work in the decade, *Euphues and His England* (1580), which, Hackett argues, ‘hovers between wishing for Elizabeth’s marriage and accepting that her virginity is perpetual’ (*Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen*, 119). It is scarcely credible, however, that Elizabethans were expecting their fifty-year old Queen to marry and procreate when *Gallathea* was performed in 1588.

⁴¹ Mary Bly, *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queens on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford, 2000), p. 23.

⁴² Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford, CA, 1992), p. 129.

⁴³ *Gallathea*, sig. H2r.

⁴⁴ Vanhoutte, ‘Sacrifice, Violence and the Virgin Queen’, 1.

advance in the court, as charted by George Hunter and Steven May,⁴⁵ and the first performance of *Gallathea*, where the play is at pains to 'neyther offend [Elizabeth] in Scaene nor sillable' (sig. B1v), indicate that the play was designed as a panegyric; but how it delivers that is a notable crux. For Vanhoutte, 'although *Gallathea* is one of the only two plays that Lyly set in England and the only one for which a prologue addressed explicitly to the queen survives, charting its connection to Elizabeth has proved quite difficult ... [as it] offers no readily identifiable ruler figure'.⁴⁶

Critics who have approached the text with a view to finding an 'identifiable ruler figure' that may flatter the Queen have reached curious conclusions. Christopher Wixson argues plausibly that the play was designed for 'the maintenance, legitimization and celebration of [Elizabeth's] authority'.⁴⁷ Although I sympathise with this critical perspective, I hesitate to accept his reading of the play where Neptune is proposed as Elizabeth's proxy who works to legitimise her authority. Wixson posits that Neptune is 'the primary image of divine authority in *Gallathea* ... [and] the play works to legitimate him as a ruler and ideologically to devalue the unnatural defiance of patriarchal and monarchical authority'. However, he dismisses Neptune's responsibility for establishing and maintaining the violent custom of virgin sacrifice. The introduction of the monster Agar, in Wixson's view, 'blurs the connection between Neptune and the brutalized virgin', thus sanitising Neptune's authority and making it acceptable in the eyes of the Queen.⁴⁸ In assuming that the play advocates a congruity of patriarchal with monarchical authority, and in his reading of the play as duplicating, instead of interrogating, hierarchies of Greek gods, Wixson's study becomes a telling example of how even critical readings submit to structures predicated on masculine domination. In a similar manner, Shannon proposes Neptune as the 'identifiable ruler figure' in the play. This inevitably creates a need for Shannon to prise Neptune away from the virgin sacrifice as well. She writes,

⁴⁵ G.K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (London, 1962), pp. 69–88; Steven May, *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets: The Poems and Their Contexts* (Asheville, 1999), pp. 35–36.

⁴⁶ Vanhoutte, 'Sacrifice, Violence and the Virgin Queen', 1.

⁴⁷ Wixson, 'Cross-dressing and John Lyly's *Gallathea*', 244.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 245–46.

‘whatever offense might have touched Elizabeth’s authority in Lyly’s representations of Neptune (as an irrational devourer of virgins whose legitimacy might be impugned thereby) is substantially obviated by the play’s identification with the virgins and by its constant affirmation of Neptune’s ultimate authority’.⁴⁹

When not arguing for Neptune’s ‘ultimate authority’ as the placeholder for Elizabeth’s sovereignty, critics fall in line with Lancashire who states that ‘[t]here may even be a light mockery of Elizabeth in Lyly’s presentation of Diana raging against love; her speeches become somewhat shrewish, a bit shrill’.⁵⁰ While I do not deny the element of mockery in the depiction of Diana, I argue that it is directed towards patriarchal constructions of virginity which the play seeks to redress. Although it is tempting to read Diana as Elizabeth, especially when Lyly’s Cynthia – typically regarded as Elizabeth’s alter ego in *Endimion* – is brought to recollection, *Gallathea* engages in a more complex representative politics. A quick comparison between the two plays serves to illustrate how *Gallathea* offers a fresh instance of a *rapprochement* of the Queen’s two bodies.

Endimion’s Cynthia and *Gallathea*’s Diana are not only semantic cognates, they also share and espouse similar values. Cynthia, displeased with the disorderly garrulousness of the women in her court, resolves to ‘tame [their] tongues, and [their] thoughts’ (*Endimion*, sig. D4r). This is strongly reminiscent of Diana who also suffers no ‘prating’ and is quick to ‘bridle’ tongues (*Gallathea*, sig. E4r). Similarly, while ‘nothing pleaseth [Cynthia] but the fairenesse of virginities’ (*Endimion*, sig. F4r), Diana is severely displeased on discovering her nymphs to be ‘vnchast in desires, immoderate in affection, vntemperate in loue, in foolish loue, in base loue’ (*Gallathea*, sig. E3r). Cynthia and Diana adopt similar corrective measures to rectify deviancy: Diana sentences Cupid to ‘weaue Samplers all night’ (*Gallathea*, sig. F2r), even as Cynthia confines Semele to ‘the Castle in the Deserte, there to remaine and weaue’ (*Endimion*, sig. E1v). Crucially, both Cynthia’s and Diana’s power rests on a clear separation between female sexuality and authority.

⁴⁹ Shannon, ‘Nature’s Bias’, 200.

⁵⁰ Anne Lancashire (introd.), ‘*Gallathea* and ‘*Midas*’ (London, 1970), p. xxii.

Since Diana's devotion to virginity fuels her authority, in declaring a preference for amorous dalliances over vows of chastity, her nymphs are not merely challenging her in an ideological debate but instead declare themselves as mutinous subjects. Diana's fury at the loss of her subjects' allegiance is understandable: 'Diana stormeth that sending one [nymph] to seeke another, shee looseth all' (*Gallathea*, sig. D3r). The nymph Servia, whose name has an ironic etymological resonance with notions of service and submission, is another such rebel who 'loveth deadly, and exclaimeth against Diana' (sigs D3r–D4v). Diana senses the infringement on her political authority and the disloyalty of her subjects most keenly: 'is there no place but my Groves, no persons but my Nimphes?' (sig. E4r). Mistakenly believing Venus to be the agent behind the pandemonium in her kingdom, Diana declares 'well shalt [Venus] know what it is to drib [her] arrowes vp and downe Dianaes leies' (sig. E3v). Diana claims sovereignty within the territorial boundaries of her kingdom: the groves are hers as are the leas and she will not countenance attempts to usurp her. It is unsurprising therefore that on confronting Cupid Diana employs martial language to re-establish her authority: 'I will vse thee like a captiue, and shew my selfe a Conqueror' (sig. E4r). Once captured, Cupid is condemned thus: 'All the stories that are in Dianaes Arras, which are of love, you must picke out with your needle, & in that place sowe Vesta with her nuns, and Diana with her Nimphes' (sig. F2r). The 'apt punishments' (sig. E4r) by which Diana restores her authority reveals the extent to which it is removed from female sexuality.⁵¹

⁵¹ Cupid's waywardness in Book III of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* provokes an altercation between Venus and Diana that is similar to the one dramatised by Lyly. In her meticulous study of the epic, Kathleen Williams focuses on the metaphors of hunting that characterise early modern representations of both Diana and Love (Cupid/ Venus) to suggest a striking kinship between the goddesses of Chastity and Love. Williams argues that Spenser juxtaposes the conspicuous differences between Venus and Diana with the curious connections between them to enlarge upon the theme of *discordia concors* that pervades through Book III. For Williams, the goddess's adoption of Chrysogone's twins (where Venus and Diana choose to mother Amoret and Belphoebe respectively) indexes a tense resolution to their dispute with their antithetical perspectives resting in a state of an 'armed alliance', leaving room for Spenser to offer poetic meditations on the manner in which concord and harmony are effected: Kathleen Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass* (London, 1966), 79–121 (p. 100).

Similarly, *Endimion* also preserves the separation between the austere body politic and the amorous body natural. Cynthia is unobtainable precisely because of her vowed chastity. Even in her reversal of the spell on Endymion, which requires her to kiss him, Cynthia labours to mark it as an exception: 'And although my mouth hath beene here tofore as vntouched as my thoughts, yet now to recouer thy life . . . I will do that to *Endimion*, which yet neuer mortal man coulede bost of heere tofore, nor shall euer hope for heereafter' (*Endimion*, sig. H2v). Cynthia's authority, which, as I note above, exerts itself principally in circumscribing the role of women, can only sustain itself as long as it remains untainted by sexuality. It is imperative that the kiss shared between Cynthia and Endymion be presented as an aberration – however benign – even as the plot reverses the standard version of the myth in making the mortal fall in love with the lunar deity. Preserving the dichotomy between female sexuality and authority, Cynthia enjoys plenary power in *Endimion* and serves as the 'readily identifiable ruler figure' in whom Elizabethan politics can be discerned.

In *Gallathea*, on the other hand, there are three deities – Diana, Neptune, and Venus – vying for the position of 'ultimate authority'. Jeanne McCarthy's observation that 'given the abundance of historical and cultural narratives supporting masculine rule, it seems likely that boy company playwrights had some difficulty finding a positive icon or iconography with which to represent the female ruler' invites us to be more measured in tracing likenesses between Elizabeth and Lyly's characters.⁵² To suggest Neptune as Elizabeth's counterpart in the play is not merely to disregard the violence he seeks to perpetrate on virgins, but also to overlook his resolve to 'marre all' (*emphasis mine*). Equally, to surmise that Elizabeth eagerly identified herself in and encouraged representations of virginity – and, by extension, posit Diana as her surrogate in *Gallathea* – is to be inattentive to recent critical discoveries that highlight the cult of the Virgin Queen as a product of political exigency rather than Elizabeth's personal desires.⁵³ Instead, the political climate of the mid- to late-1580s, when Elizabeth's last courtship was still fresh in memory and the cult of the Virgin

⁵² Jeanne H. McCarthy, 'Elizabeth I's "picture in little": Boy Company Representations of a Queen's Authority', *Studies in Philology* 100 (2003): 425–462 (p. 451).

⁵³ Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, 90–118.

Queen had not gained the momentum it was to receive in the 1590s, offered a unique context for celebration. In attempting to fashion a figure who unites female sexuality and female authority in a happy union and who radically departs from trite binaries, Lyly capitalises on the moment. And, in Venus, he creates precisely this figure.

The altercation between Diana and Venus is not solely on account of Cupid's imprisonment but can also be detected in the diametrically different positions they adopt in relation to patriarchal notions of femininity. Jankowski rightly observes that 'Diana's speech, as well as her dialectical conflict with Venus throughout the play, serves to isolate virginity – and virgins – from love and desire and thus reinforces the early modern construction of (biological) virginity'.⁵⁴ '[A]morous and too kinde for [her] sexe' (*Gallathea*, sig. B3r), Venus' unruliness lies in her insubordination to the tenets of ideal womanhood. In *Gallathea*, Venus employs her formidable imagination and deploys the comic energy of the genre to conclude the play in a manner that unsettles contemporary precepts on femininity. On learning their true sexual identities both Gallathea and Phillida are dismayed at the fate that awaits their passion: 'Unfortunate Gallathea if this be Phillida'; 'Accursed Phillida if that be Gallathea!' (sig. H1v). Neptune and Diana, patriarchy's advocates, are in unison. For Diana, the girls must rid themselves of 'fond fo[u]nd affections'; Neptune rebukes the girls for their 'idle choyce, strange, and foolish' (sig. H1v). Phillida moans that her 'sweet desire' turned out to be a 'sower deceit' (sig. H1v). The 'sower deceit' was a product of both Tyterus and Melebeus, who sought to shape the narrative in a way that consolidated their flagging masculinity. In the right course of early modern patriarchal narratives, the girls' mutual desire should terminate on a note of bereavement where, in Cupid's terse summary of the economy of marriage, their sexual destiny will be determined 'by money, not love . . . by force, not faith, by appointment, not affection' (sig. F2v). However, Venus, the *deus ex machina*, intervenes and announces, 'Then shall it be seene, that I can turne one of them to be a man, and that I will' (sig. H1r).

It is crucial to note that Venus relies not merely on her divine powers to bring about this magical transformation. She cites a precedent where she had brought about a similar metamorphosis: 'Was it not Venus that did the like to Iphis and Iauthes?' (sig. H1r).

⁵⁴ Jankowski, 'Redefining Virgins', 259.

Significantly though, it was not Venus but the goddess Isis who was the benign deity that facilitated the union of this unusual pair. Mark Dooley comments that the courtly audience, well versed in Ovid (the source of the Iphis-Ianthes tale), would have found Venus' attitude towards the myth cavalier. He concludes that through this manoeuvre and by concealing which of the two girls will become a man, Lyly presents 'a radical alternative to heterosexual marriage by resisting the closure offered in his source'.⁵⁵ To extend Dooley's observation, in reworking the Iphis-Ianthe myth and in directing the *dénouement*, Venus also appropriates the authorial agency that has until this point rested with Neptune. The last scene begins on an ominous note with Neptune's determination to bend the *dénouement* to his will: 'I will make havocke of Dianaes Nimphes, my Temple shall be died with Maydens blood' (sig. G3v). This is consistent with his first resolution in the play where Neptune declares: 'I will into these woodes and marke all, and in the ende will marre all' (sig. C3r). In seizing diegetic control out of Neptune's hands, Venus delivers the promised comedy in a manner inseparable from her narrative where female desire, sexuality and autonomy prosper. Further, Neptune, who judges there to be 'no cause of affection' (sig. H1v) between the girls, expects Venus to submit to his verdict. Venus' reply, however, supplants Neptune's authority and firmly establishes her own: 'I like well and allowe it' (sig. H1v; *emphasis mine*).⁵⁶ By reconciling the disparities between female authority and sexuality endemic to early modern understanding, Venus emerges as the most fitting 'identifiable ruler figure' for Elizabeth in the play.

⁵⁵ Mark Dooley, 'Inversion, Metamorphosis, and Sexual Difference: Female Same-Sex Desire in Ovid and Lyly', in Goran V. Stanivukovic (ed.), *Ovid and the Renaissance Body* (London, 2001), 59–76 (p. 73).

⁵⁶ This is an interesting moment in the play and full of exciting possibilities for staging. Neptune is silenced by Venus' response, and he does not utter a word for the next thirty-six lines and then, quite ironically, does so only to agree with Venus' decision on the fate of the girls. How is Neptune supposed to react to this challenge to his authority? What manner of expressions and body language should he display in performance? Should his consent to Venus' decision on the fate of the girls be clouded with shades of resentment and sullenness?

'I am content, because she is a Goddess'⁵⁷: Gallathea's (Ideal) Male Subject

Alongside the appreciation of how Lyly's works 'made a demonstrable intervention in notions of female identity',⁵⁸ scholarship is also alert to the extent to which they reflect contemporary codes of masculinity, particularly in their relation to Elizabeth's rule.⁵⁹ In her analysis of Camden's *Historie of Princess Elizabeth*, Ilona Bell notes that 'Elizabeth's most remarkable achievement is ... keeping her own unruly male subjects, the "stout and warlike" English, from rebelling against her female rule. Camden's history is at once a tribute to a woman who successfully wields power in a man's world and a forceful reminder that it is a man's world'.⁶⁰ This tension between Elizabeth and her male subjects has been found lurking in Lyly's plays, which signal an 'unease about male submission to female rule – in particular that of

⁵⁷ *Gallathea*, sig. H1r.

⁵⁸ Andy Kesson, "'It is a pity you are not a woman': John Lyly and the Creation of Woman", *Shakespeare Bulletin* 33 (2015): 33–47 (p. 36).

⁵⁹ *Endimion*, for instance, has been variously read as urging 'Elizabeth to recognize the essential goodness of loyal English Catholics like Oxford [Lyly's patron] and to forgive their indiscreet attachment to the Catholic faith' (David Bevington, 'Lyly's *Endymion* and *Midas*: The Catholic Question in England', *Comparative Drama* 32 (1998): 26–46, p. 34); a *roman à clef* of the Throckmorton plot with Tellus as a caricature of the treasonous Mary Stuart who is brought to heel by Cynthia/Elizabeth (Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (London, 1990), p. 129; Neufeld, 'Lyly's Chimerical Vision', 354–55); and as laying the 'terms of the perfect relationship between a devoted courtier and an ideal ruler' (Leah Scragg, 'The Victim of Fashion? Rereading the Biography of John Lyly', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 19 (2006): 210–226, p. 221). I approach *Gallathea* not with a view to offer a precise or an absolute key to deciphering its allegorical representations but to spell out the discursive possibilities it explores in relation to the constructions of gender and sexuality at the Elizabethan court. In this, I follow the lead of Andrew Bozio who remarks that Lyly's work 'engages in a more oblique theorization of the court than a topical reading would imply' (Andrew Bozio, 'The Contemplative Cosmos: John Lyly's *Endymion* and the Shape of Early Modern Space', *Studies in Philology* 113 (2016): 55–81, p. 79).

⁶⁰ Ilona Bell, 'Elizabeth I – Always Her Own Free Woman', in Carole Levin and Patricia A. Sullivan (eds), *Political Rhetoric, Power, and Renaissance Women* (Albany, NY, 1995), 57–84 (p. 57).

the male courtier – without actively criticising the queen herself'.⁶¹ In her analysis of *Endimion*, Neufeld argues that while the play 'invokes the witch – an embodiment of the "unnatural" woman at this point in Elizabethan culture – to portray explicitly the victimisation of the male courtier in the fictional gynocentric environment, it was the unnatural woman at the centre, not the margins, of historical society who posed a threat to the self-conceptualisation of the male humanist courtier'.⁶² This dialogic relationship between masculinity and femininity is crucial to my analysis of *Gallathea*; the two genders were (and are) constructed in tandem and a reworking of one has a bearing on the other.

An analysis of the performative elements of gender in the play that culminate in Venus' promise of a metamorphosis reveals the manner in which *Gallathea* suggests a new code of courtly masculinity, which complements its unique representation of Elizabeth's two bodies. In her survey of the children's companies of the Elizabethan era, McCarthy argues how their representations of Elizabeth differed from masques, the other staple form of entertainment at court. For McCarthy, masques were strategically deployed by male courtiers to circumscribe Elizabeth's authority, to press upon her the necessity of sharing her power with a male consort, and to alleviate their anxieties at their submission to a female ruler. In contrast to masques, boy companies gave Elizabeth the handle of 'miniature aesthetics' with which to control and regulate courtly manliness. Through capitalising on the fashion of keeping miniature portraits at the court, Elizabeth 'was quite capable of manipulating the rhetoric of the miniature, with all its implications of diminished status or power'. This representational strategy was emulated by children's companies (including Lyly's own Children of Paul's) that 'served to enhance the queen's authority by suggestively infantilizing the Elizabethan subject'.⁶³

Even as the 'miniature aesthetics' in operation monitored and checked disaffected male courtiers, the impersonation of boy actors as adult men opened the discursive space where masculinity (similar to

⁶¹ Lucy Munro, 'The Humour of Children: Performance, Gender, and the Early Modern Children's Companies', *Literature Compass* 2 (2005): 1–26 (p. 16).

⁶² Neufeld, 'Lyly's Chimerical Vision', 353.

⁶³ McCarthy, 'Boy Company Representations of a Queen's Authority', 441, 448.

femininity) could be shown as a social construct.⁶⁴ On the strength of material objects being not mere appendages but crucial constituents of early modern gender,⁶⁵ the cross-dressed virgin heroines of *Gallathea* elude detection by Diana, the goddess of virginity, herself! Diana's encounter with the girls is marked by a curious exchange with Gallathea:

Diana. God speede, faire boy.
 Gallathea. You are deceived, Ladie.
 Diana. Why, are you no boy?
 Gallathea. No faire boy.
 (sig. C2r).

For all her celestial powers, Diana is persuaded into regarding both Gallathea and Phillida as boys purely by their apparel. The rueful remarks of Gallathea and Phillida on how their 'habite' and their 'attyre' led them to the belief of the other's being a man eventually served as the creative fuel to Shakespeare's comedies which 'often invite the conclusion that masculinity is more like a suit of clothes that can be put on and taken off at will than a matter of biological destiny'.⁶⁶ Although Gallathea has no knowledge of how men behave, she is aware of '(the question among men [that] is common) are you a maide?' (sig. C2v).

Masculinity is a performance so searchingly evaluated that in her inability to enact it, Gallathea either risks exposing her actual sex or being dubbed effeminate. She is alert to the affirmation of masculinity, made in an exclusively male domain, which demands the correct response to the common question. *Gallathea*, however, not only parses the performance of masculinity but, in the metamorphosis promised at its conclusion, attempts to construct an entire new anatomy. *Gallathea's* comic buoyancy changes the exclusively male rite of passage in the end where manhood is created and affirmed by a female agent – Venus.

⁶⁴ Munro, 'The Humour of Children', 12.

⁶⁵ Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁶⁶ Bruce Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (Oxford, 2000), p. 3.

Recognition how in the early modern period ‘male as well as female gender roles are cultural constructions that are performative and even masquerades’⁶⁷ has been inspired by Judith Butler’s seminal theorisation of gender as performance. I would like to turn to Butler at this point to render the metamorphosis promised at *Gallathea*’s end legible in the discursive context of its production. In her pioneering work, Butler argues not only that gender is performative but that sex and gender are homologues. Dismissing the dichotomy between sex and gender as specious, she writes:

Sex [cannot] qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along ... the body is [customarily] figured as a mere *instrument* or *medium* for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related. But “the body” is itself a construction, as are the myriad “bodies” that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender.⁶⁸

The idea that ‘anatomical facticity’ is produced discursively and that the body is constructed through an accretion of iterative performance of gendered behaviour has a particular bearing on *Gallathea*. Kent Cartwright argues that *Gallathea* ‘makes sexual attraction into something performed’.⁶⁹ To take a step further, it is the performance of masculinity, however unconvincing, that facilitates the girls’ romance and, in the play’s *dénouement*, unveils ‘the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established’.⁷⁰ In *Gallathea*, the interplay between the discursive and the somatic that is fundamental to the synchronous creation of sex and gender is conducted upon

⁶⁷ Jennifer Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 7.

⁶⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London, 2007), pp. 11–12. I am enormously indebted to Butler’s seminal work on constructions of gender and sex and, in focusing on Elizabethan England through a new historicist perspective, hope to demonstrate a particular instance of gender ‘as a constituted *social temporality*’ rather than a transhistorical concept (p. 191).

⁶⁹ Kent Cartwright, ‘The Confusions of *Gallathea*: John Lyly as Popular Dramatist’, *Comparative Drama* 32 (1998): 207–239 (p. 209).

⁷⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 10.

the word 'tongue' – instrumental to both anatomy and discourse. Cupid characterises vows articulated by 'a mans tongue' as fickle and unreliable: 'it is the fairest and the falsest, doone with greatest arte and least trueth, with best colours, and worst conceits' (sig. F2v). Gallathea's eloquence offsets this. Phillida insists that Gallathea's 'faith is imprinted in [her] thoughts by her words' (sig. H1v). Eurota too falls in love with Gallathea because of his/her 'sweete words' and testifies that 'the remembrance of his wit, hath bereaved mee of my wisdome' (sig. D3r). Although Venus does not disclose which of the two girls will be transformed into a man, textual evidence strongly hints that it will be Gallathea.

Critical opinions are divided on the subject of the final metamorphosis. Cartwright contends that '[t]he metamorphosis ought not to be completed onstage nor the choice revealed because the maidens resemble each other enough to make the selection irrelevant'.⁷¹ Similarly, Phyllis Rackin writes 'that neither we nor the characters know or care which of Lyly's girls will be transformed demonstrates the arbitrary quality of sexual difference'.⁷² Vanhoutte, on the other hand, makes a distinction between Gallathea and Phillida, judging the former to be 'public, verbal, masculine' and the latter to be 'private, visible, feminine'. She notes various 'gender based distinctions between the heroines in the play' to conclude that 'Gallathea herself will become a young man'.⁷³ Reavley Gair observes how this distinction was in all likelihood realised in the play's performance before Elizabeth:

Phillida is played by a boy with a voice still soprano, whereas Gallathea is a superannuated chorister, with a broken voice (or one breaking): Phillida remarks, 'I feare me he is as I am, a mayden ... Tush it cannot be, his voice shewes the contrarie'.⁷⁴

Unlike Phillida, Gallathea is uniformly disguised as a boy throughout the play. Gallathea's own desire to become a man, 'O woulde the gods

⁷¹ Cartwright, 'The Confusions of *Gallathea*', 222.

⁷² Phyllis Rackin, 'Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage', *PMLA* 102 (1987): 29–41 (p. 37).

⁷³ Vanhoutte, 'Sacrifice, Violence and the Virgin Queen', 8–9.

⁷⁴ Reavley Gair, *The Children of Paul's: The Story of a Theatre Company, 1553–1608* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 106, quoting from *Gallathea*, sig. D4v.

had made me as I seeme to be' (sig. C2v), and her request for Venus to be her benefactor ('sweete Venus be my guide', sig. D2v), strengthens the probability that eventually it will be Gallathea who transforms into a man. Further proof will be found in the name Gallathea that has its origins in the Greek myth of Pygmalion and Gallathea, where Pygmalion, mesmerised by Venus' beauty, creates a sculpture of a woman that bears a likeness to Venus and calls it Gallathea. Moved by the sincerity of Pygmalion's affection, Venus brings the sculpture to life. The *leitmotifs* of metamorphosis and insurmountable barriers to love being removed by Venus in this myth bear a close affinity to the dramaturgy of *Gallathea*. Further, in becoming the male spouse in the union, Gallathea's metamorphosis also transforms the ideological position of 'a man's tongue' discussed above. It expands beyond the ordinary, as illustrated by Cupid, to accommodate and ally itself with female desire, which is distinguishable by the characteristics listed by Venus – 'unspotted, begunne with trueth, continued wyth constancy, and not to bee altered tyll death' (sig. H1v).

With his/her metamorphosis in the offing, Gallathea emerges as a fitting consort to the play's representation of Elizabeth's two bodies: his/her happiness remains contingent upon the 'judgement and favour' of Venus (sig. A2r), the figure of (female) authority in the play, even as his/her 'tongue' fulfils female desire. This is contradistinctive to *Endimion* where, for all its extolling of Elizabeth's virtues, political allegiance remains contingent on entrenched divisions between female authority and sexuality. Moreover, the fashioning of Gallathea as the ideal male subject under female governance is concomitant with the quelling of the male misrule that initiated the dramatic action and which possibly alludes to topical concerns. Benjamin Grossberg notes how 'the need for Elizabeth to contain male-male violence was dire ... [as] feuds might also lead to factional violence, to courtiers keeping retainers, forces of their own that could potentially threaten the realm.'⁷⁵ In *Gallathea*, Venus establishes her authority in a manner that subdues the factional violence precipitated by competing claims to be masculine: Neptune agrees to discontinue the ritual of virgin sacrifice instead of 'shew[ing] great crueltie' (sig. F3v); Tyterus and Melebeus capitulate to female authority in a declaration which is all

⁷⁵ Benjamin Scott Grossberg, 'Politics and Shifting Desire in Sidney's "New Arcadia"', *SEL* 42 (2002): 63–83 (p. 64).

the more remarkable when juxtaposed with their defiance of Neptune – ‘I am content, because she is a Goddess’ (sig. H1r); and finally, on a smaller scale, Cupid remains a little boy who is rescued by his mother. Venus’ representation as a figure of female authority that prevents the catastrophic consequences of feuding masculinities could be read as an allegorical resolution of contemporary concerns. In this, *Gallathea* suggests itself as part of ‘the cultural shift in the English aristocracy from violent warriors to courtiers or gentlemen.’⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion*, 2. It is also possible that through this discursive endeavour Lyly was attempting to set himself and his patron, the Earl of Oxford, as advocating a model of political allegiance and courtliness that was distinct to the one promulgated by the militant Protestants at Elizabeth’s court. As I have discussed elsewhere (‘The Queen’s Queendom’), the Anjou courtship brought to head the disquiet experienced by militant Protestants over Elizabeth’s two bodies. Most famously, Sidney’s letter urging Elizabeth against the match was circulated widely in manuscript and evoked her wrath (Jacqueline Vanhoutte, ‘Elizabeth I as Stepmother,’ *ELR* 39 (2009): 315–335). Sidney’s *Arcadia*, written when he was banished from the court (or in self-imposed exile), is frequently read as encoding the turmoil of the period and as a meditation on a courtier’s relationship with his monarch: see Peter C. Herman, “Bastard Child of Tyranny”: The Ancient Constitution and Fulke Greville’s “A Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney”; *RQ* 55 (2002): 969–1004, Bi-Qi Beatrice Lei, ‘Relational Antifeminism in Sidney’s “Arcadia”’, *SEL* 41 (2001): 25–48, and Grossberg, ‘Politics and Shifting Desire in Sidney’s “New Arcadia”’, 63–83. Blair Worden’s magisterial *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney’s ‘Arcadia’ and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven, CT, 1996) remains the most comprehensive account. Additionally, Sidney and Oxford had a storied feud whereupon Sidney was chastised by Elizabeth for challenging Oxford to a duel: see Maureen Quilligan, ‘Sidney and His Queen’, in Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (eds), *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture* (Chicago, 1988), 171–196, and Herman, “Bastard Child of Tyranny”, 981–982. Given this animosity between his patron and Sidney, *Gallathea* could be read as a critique of the model of masculinity espoused by Sidney, although it had been over a year since his death when the play was first performed at court. This line of enquiry is beyond the bounds of my argument; however, it suggests wider avenues that could be taken in exploring *Gallathea* within the field of early modern masculinity. For instance, it is possible to see the play as adumbrating the measured view of heroic masculinity that characterises Shakespeare’s *oeuvre* and which has been read as such by Robin Headlam Wells in *Shakespeare on Masculinity* (Cambridge, 2000). Wells brings to light how for the supporters of militant Protestantism, ‘the terms “masculine” and “manly”, together with “chivalrous”, “virtuous”, and “honourable”, were a code that signified allegiance to a well-defined political agenda’ (p. 9). Wells foregrounds how this bellicose notion of masculinity was in conflict with the ones proffered by the refined and pacifist standards of civic humanism. This ideological conflict coalesced to form a Hercules-Orpheus dyad of masculine ideals which, in his heroes as divergent as Prospero and Henry V, was deployed by Shakespeare for dramatic impetus.

The intercourse between the discursive and the somatic further yields the synchronised construction of another set of “two bodies” – the text and the titular character – that work in tandem to pleasure female desire and affirm female authority. Even as *Gallathea* is the consummate desire of female characters in the play, *Gallathea* seeks to take its ‘last rest’ in Elizabeth’s ‘wonted grace’ (sig. A2r). Insofar as ‘Lyly uses his plays to represent himself and his relationship to Elizabeth and her court’,⁷⁷ *Gallathea*’s discursive endeavours present Lyly as attempting to please the Queen by erasing the dichotomy between Elizabeth and Venus, depicted in Eworth’s painting and entrenched in Elizabethan political ideology. Equally, in its gestures towards a new code of manhood and courtliness that does not regard the union between female sexuality and authority as a cause for anxiety, it appears to present Lyly himself as the ideal male subject in this discursive realm, who merits Elizabeth’s ‘judgement and favour’. Lyly’s *Gallathea* is not quite a ‘paean to virginity’⁷⁸ nor does it present its ‘female characters [as] always under the control of a father or a male ruler’ to reify patriarchal ideology.⁷⁹ Instead it serves as a panegyric devised for the Queen which dissolves the polarisation between female sovereignty and sexuality to unite them, and sketches a new code of courtly masculinity that celebrates this union. In the process, one gets a glimpse of a short-lived representational possibility that emerged in the mid- to late-1580s.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Derek Alwes, “‘I would fain serve’: John Lyly’s Career at Court’, *Comparative Drama* 34 (2001): 399–421 (p. 389).

⁷⁸ Jankowski, ‘Redefining Virgins’, 256.

⁷⁹ Wixson, ‘Cross-dressing and John Lyly’s *Gallathea*’, 251.

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