

John Lyly, Influencer SAA Seminar Abstracts
Seminar Leader: Lara Bovilsky, University of Oregon
Seminar Respondent: Gillian Knoll, Western Kentucky University

Lucy Boon
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Towards a Queer Temporality | Adapting John Lyly

When adapting early modern drama through a queer lens, creatives do not simply queer texts, characters or themes, but our own histories, blurring the conceptual divide between past and present. How can contemporary adaptation processes dismantle a teleological perspective that assumes that progress is inevitable, and that the present is a result of a less enlightened past? This paper argues that Lyly's plays in particular destabilise such teleological and heteronormative assumptions. It shares discoveries from a creative development that took place in Australia in 2023, where a team of LGBTIQ+ artists explored the way the themes in *Galatea* allow us to connect with histories that are typically erased or denied to our community. Moreover, it considers how and why the conditions in which Lyly was writing in early modern England have created a contemporary cultural moment. Finally, it outlines plans for a split bill production of *Galatea* and *Measure for Measure*, programmed for Qtopia Sydney's Culture Program later in 2024.

Hes Bradley,
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'A Coat to [fit] her Form': Staging and Costuming the Moon Before and After Lyly

With a focus on staging and costuming, this paper looks not just at John Lyly as an influencer but on John Lyly's influences, in particular early modern wedding masques, such as those by George Buchanan, Thomas Pounce, and William Goldingham (1565-1578), in which Diana and the moon play an integral part in suspending the heteronormativity of the occasion. Rather than regarding Lyly as an isolated originator of what was to become a popular mode of theatrical character, this paper looks at his influence in its development, by tracing the ascent of the moon as a character in a sample of masques and plays from the 1560s to the 1580s, in Lyly's *Endymion* (c 1588), and finally in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c 1595). I look at the ways that Lyly expands upon the representations of the moon in wedding masques to offer a more complex and otherworldly version of the moon in *Endymion*. I show how, in *Endymion*, Lyly calls explicit attention to the difficulty of staging and costuming this mode of character, and how, by the time Shakespeare is writing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, its staging and costuming—along with the Lylian moon's queer and animist potential—is well-known enough to be satirised.

Matthew Carter
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John Lyly and the Echoes of *Galatea* on the Field of Tilbury

John Lyly's *Galatea* was first performed in 1588 on New Year's Day at Greenwich Palace before the court. The Spanish Armada attempted to invade England in August of the same year. Perhaps surprisingly, despite the fact that Queen Elizabeth uses gender-fluid language in her famous speech to the troops at Tilbury, I find no evidence of a sustained examination of the potential influence of John Lyly's trans-affirming play on the rhetoric which Elizabeth used in her self-representation at Tilbury, despite what seem to be some rather stark parallels. In this essay, I want to examine the ways in which Lyly's play *may have* influenced the ways in which Elizabeth simultaneously self-fashioned as both a "weak" and "feeble" woman and someone with the "heart and stomach of a king." Also, I suspect that the major court politics of the day may have spurred on the creation of *Galatea* itself, which situates itself within a context of fear of invasion and anxiety about the power – and danger – of powerful women. By examining both the play and the court rhetoric around Elizabeth's gender identity, I hope to unearth previously-undiscussed contexts for Elizabeth's gender-fluid identity creation that adds richness to our understanding of both gender and theatrical performance in the early modern period.

Joel M. Dodson
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"Danger to Conjecture": Tidal Influence and Anxiety in Lyly's *Galatea*

In *Ugly Feelings* (2005), Sianne Ngai groups "anxiety" - that prevailing affect of 21st century global crisis (and of our students' stated experience of early modern literature) - with what Ernst Bloch called "expectant emotions." In the expectation of future, exogenous threats, such emotions are not only temporal but spatial. They aim, in Bloch's words, "less at some specific object as the fetish of their desire than at the configuration of the world in general" (qtd Ngai 209). In this paper, I propose to explore how Lyly's *Galatea* historicizes this state of anxiety in its setting along the Humber estuary and the uncertain fate of human creativity and influence the play discerns in its tidal threats (figured in the monster "Agar" or *eágor*). As Patricia Badir and others have shown, coastal erosion caused by agricultural modifications in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire from the fourteenth century through the recent floods of the 1570s makes *Galatea* a "distinctly postdiluvian play" (Badir 192), one whose repeated language of "fear," "misery," "horror," and "danger" characterizes its imitations of Ovid and Virgil. Tityrus and Melibeus's association of "fear" with "necessity" (1.3.26), however, equally discerns in the Humber floods a hope for other modes of invention beyond fortune's "copy" (1.1.23) - modes which the play's characters variously struggle to articulate throughout the intervening scenes as "craft" (e.g., 1.1.72, 2.3.111) or "imagination" (e.g., 2.3.145, 3.1.4). While *Galatea*'s ending in act 5 thus discloses the promise of queer futurity, its Humber setting may also disclose its dramatic and aesthetic limits - an anxiety of late Elizabethan drama, I wish to explore, that we might consider as a kind of Lylian influence itself.

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**“I’ll be revenged as I may”:
Benedick’s Covert Lyly-esque Masquerade in *Much Ado About Nothing***

Lyly’s *general* influence on Shakespeare is a scholarly commonplace, but not claims of *specific* allusions to *Campaspe* in *Much Ado About Nothing*. I show specific, significant influence there, not just in the euphuism of Benedick’s manic wit and repartee with Beatrice vis-a-vis Apelles and Campaspe, but also the improbable “matchmaker” who facilitates each play’s romantic climax: Lyly’s Cynic ‘Dog’ Diogenes as previously unsuspected model for Dogberry.

Dogberry as more than clueless Kemp-like ‘natural fool’ has drawn sporadic scholarly attention since Allen’s seminal 1973 essay “Dogberry”, notably including his oddly Christian overtones (Kirsch et al). I join Tracy Cummings (2019 dissertation) in seeing Dogberry as an Elizabethan Columbo, an Armin-like ‘artificial fool’ who, like Diogenes, speaks truth to, and sways, power. I then take a further interpretive leap, claiming that the characters we watch dissembling in *Much Ado* are Shakespeare’s collective hint at the *undisclosed* presence of a master dissembler, Benedick, who (*a la* Portia/Balthasar in *Merchant*), gowns himself as justice-deliverer ‘Dogberry’; and of Benedick’s improbable ally, Hero, who plays “Verges” while ostensibly in hiding.

Improvisational and manipulative like Iago, but *not* evil Benedick, with his co-conspirator, Hero, and their accomplices, Borachio and the Friar, orchestrate Hero’s slander; then, on cue, her exculpation. Why? To induce disdainful Beatrice (bringing Leonato’s likely dowry) to wed him – all at no *actual* risk in a fatal duel. This is the comic ‘revenge’, heretofore undetected by scholars, that Benedick cryptically vowed after Beatrice dubbed him ‘jester’.

This alternate Dogberry/Benedick, inspired by Lyly’s improbably persuasive Diogenes, also illuminates the longstanding mystery of why Kemp left the Lord Chamberlain’s Men soon after *Much Ado* was written – perhaps Dogberry was written for (or co-written by?) Robert Armin, who much later repeatedly hinted at this alternate *Much Ado* in his 1609 translation/adaptation of *The Italian Taylor and his Boy*.

Camila Reyes
USC

Girlhood, Gender Nonconformity, and Queer Erotics in Lyly’s *Galatea*

Much of the recent scholarship on Lyly’s *Galatea* has focused on the queer potentiality of the drama, and rightfully so. The play’s open-ended conclusion and lightheartedness when it comes to its portrayal of gender and sexuality has produced fruitful discussions on early modern thinking towards these subjects. Scholars such as Valerie Traub, Theodora Jankowski, and more recently, Simone Chess, have discussed the play’s depiction of lesbianism, queer virginity, and

gender labor, respectively. I seek to contribute to recent scholarship on the queer potentiality of Galatea through the lens of girlhood studies.

This paper focuses on the depiction of queer girlhood in Lyly's *Galatea* and what the play can teach us about girlhood in the early modern period more broadly. I define girlhood as encompassing the ages of 12 to approximately 25-26, which is considered the marriageable period of a woman's life and when she is on the cusp of adulthood. I view girlhood as a formative, transitional stage of a woman's life in which they have the space and freedom to explore queerness, as reflected by special female friendships, gender nonconformity, and female-centered communities. These queer aspects of girlhood are frequently depicted in early modern English literature, with *Galatea* providing a particularly rich depiction of gender nonconformity and queer eroticism. My paper illustrates that gender nonconformity is a common aspect of queer girlhood, and I contend that *Galatea* presents a particularly freeing vision of girlhood that has a positive, transformative effective on the various communities of the play.

Deborah Solomon
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Reading Forms of Comparisons in Lyly's Prose Fiction

For too long, writing about Lyly's prose fiction has necessitated an apologetic stance, the assumption being that readers of any period other than the early modern will need significant persuasion to think *Euphues* worthy of being read or even read about. Fortunately, the tides are turning in Lyly's favor these days, and scholars such as Andy Kesson and Steve Mentz are providing much needed critiques of the problematic categorizations and anachronistic assumptions that have prevented today's readers from appreciating the value of Elizabethan prose fiction – not just within the early modern literary milieu but within our own cultural moment as well. To further this goal of inviting new appreciation for a neglected literary form, this essay will approach Lyly's prose fiction from the context of early modern imitative and comparative practices. While the art of imitation itself and the educational structures by which it thrived continue to generate interest and new interpretive possibilities (see, for example, Catherine Nicholson's "Commonplace Shakespeare" and Colin Burrow's *Imitating Authors*), what has received less attention are the various conventions inviting comparative analysis that grew directly from such practices. When a reader can confidently assume a precedent – more likely a series of precedents – for each work in hand, then the process of appreciating the creativity of the work will naturally involve comparison of some kind (ranging from linguistic patterns to the interpretive potential of different print contexts). Lyly's prose fiction – the best-selling and most widely read literary work of the period – offers a prime case study for exploring this meeting point of adaptive composition and comparative reading. His creation of a character based on Roger Ascham's concept of "euphues" in *The Scholemaster* not only dramatizes the definition of wit itself (and in the process comments on Ascham's overall promotion of pleasure in learning), but also suggests a readership interested in personalizing the counsel found in readily available self-help material. At one point in the narrative, a popular plotline begins to emerge involving two friends with a single love interest; crucially, Lyly changes the climax to fit his new context (instead of sacrificing his love for his friendship, Euphues sacrifices his

friendship for his love). Only a reader familiar with previous versions of the tale (the most famous being Boccaccio's Titus and Gisippus) would understand the full import of this shift in focus from friendship to wit. But opportunities for comparison can just as easily be found without ever leaving Lyly's text, which reads at times as a selective yet cleverly narrativized collection of the contrastive verbal techniques taught in the schools of the period. His experiments with aesthetic rivalry, appear not just at the sentence level (which, of course, has become one of the defining features of Euphuism), but also in its frequent juxtapositions of genres and shifts of perspective. Even his metaleptic addresses to the reader support clever tensions between fiction and reality, literary *persona* and living author. By exploring such moments of comparative potential in Lyly's text (and perhaps in one of the many "Euphuic books" that followed it, if time and space allow) I hope to inspire more creative ways of appreciating Lyly's prose fiction, and by extension, the early modern practice of comparative reading.

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'Where Wisdom and Fortitude Bears Sway':

Models of Conquest and Rule in *Campaspe*, *Tamburlaine Part I*, and *The Wars of Cyrus*

Tamburlaine's swagger onto a London stage in the late 1580s was accompanied by an audacious proclamation of the play's ambition to break with the old. Scholarship has seized on this promise. Marlowe's play is credited with a power of intertheatrical influence that almost matches the power that the conqueror king wields within the play's world. It is true that in 1587-88, many London playhouses offered plays set in exotic Mediterranean locations that showcased plots of military campaigns and conquests performed by historic or legendary figures: that Marlowe's play inspired these is less certain. This paper suggests that *Tamburlaine Part I* can be read alongside the anonymous *The Wars of Cyrus* as responses to the model of kingship and conquest provided by John Lyly in *Campaspe* (1583).

In particular, it looks at the way in which rulers and military conquerors wield their power over captives, suggesting that the relationship between female captives and male rulers is key to interrogations of kingship and monarchical power. By considering indoor and outdoor drama in London in the 1580s as mutually interdependent, it offers a perspective on Lyly as influential not only within the refined sphere of court comedies, but that his conqueror king can serve as a counterpoint for those who followed.

In Lyly's play, the legendary conqueror king Alexander the Great must learn to dominate not only foreign lands but also his own feelings after he falls in love with one of his captives, Campaspe. The play opens with multiple declarations of Alexander's magnanimity in victory, but once he falls in love, this moderation is replaced by a model of kingship that demands obedience and emotional compliance: dictatorial Alexander is much like Marlowe's Tamburlaine. However, the ability of his female captives to retain a sense of self and resist and the moderating influence of his friend and general Hephestion alters Alexander's perspective once again, and the all-powerful conqueror king comes to recognise that might is not right. *Campaspe* presents a model for successful kingship in which the monarch should have 'as great

care to govern in peace, as conquer in war.' I argue that this typically Lylian balanced model for conquest and rule is adopted in *The Wars of Cyrus* and reversed in *Tamburlaine*.