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Lunar Imagery and Royal Panegyric in John Lyly's Plays

On the second of February of the "wondrous year" of 1588 John Lyly's play *Endimion, The Man in the Moon* was presented in front of the queen. It was a great success and the playwright's ambitions were rewarded by the queen's remark that he would make a good Master of the Revels at court. A decade later, another play by Lyly *The Woman in the Moon* echoing the subtitle of *Endimion* was published. For the first time, Lyly wrote the text in blank verse and the prologue announced that it was "but a Poets dreame,/ The first he had [...] but not the last, unless the first displease" (Prologus 17–19). The work turned out to be the last one by Lyly; presumably, it did not arouse the acclaim the writer expected. In both plays, the lunar imagery and its association with power and the female principle were dominant. While the first used the Moon in an encomiastic manner to compliment the queen, the latter relied on the negative associations of the image. The following paper claims that the differences of the 'lunar' language used by Lyly in his court plays marks the deterioration of his success and hopes for a court career. Furthermore, it will argue that the change of the lunar imagery is part of a more general disillusionment with the extreme allegorical mode of the cult of the monarch and signals a shift in the iconology of the moon from panegyric to a more critical voice in the late 1590s.

From the late 1570s, Queen Elizabeth was celebrated in pageantry, poetry, and shows in the language of allegory that appropriated elements of classical mythology. One of these tropes was her association with the Roman goddess Diana. Many writers, among them George Peele, Sir Walter Ralegh, and John Lyly used the imagery of the moon to compliment the queen. Lyly, besides referring to epithets of Diana in his language, explored further themes related to the Diana cult: the conflict between duty and love, female power and chastity. The most intriguing expression of the Diana cult of the queen can be found in his play *Endimion,* which draws a striking parallel between the celestial body and the character of the queen.

Yet the moon's negative connotations with the underworld and witchcraft quickly found their way into the writings of the age. In all of Lyly's works, there is an undercurrent of criticism of the life at court. As Philippa Berry says: "Both his prose and dramatic works sound an occasional note of scepticism about the courtly values which he superficially appears to be promulgating" (Berry 1989, 112). As the playwright grew older in the service of the court and never achieved the post of the Master of the Revels that he so dearly hoped for,[1] his voice embittered. In his final work *The Woman of the Moon,* the Diana cult of the queen turns into "a melancholy instance of an image tarnished and an image lost" (Bevington 1968, 185).

The Diana Motif

The phrases "Virgin Queen" and "Queen Elizabeth I" have been identical in the cultural memory of the last four hundred years, yet the young princess who stepped on the English throne in 1558 was not expected by her contemporaries never to marry and to put an end to the Tudor dynasty.

[1] See his two disappointed petitions to the queen (Bond 1973, I:67–71).

In spite of her first public speech as a queen where she expressed her wish to remain unmarried,[2] her courtiers, her parliaments and her subjects exercised a constant pressure on Elizabeth to choose a husband in order to produce an heir to the throne. Several entertainments staged for her contained references to her future marriage and welcoming hosts wished her the blessings of the state of matrimony. Nevertheless, Elizabeth continued to stress her contentment with her virgin state in her speeches,[3] and expressed her thanks whenever virginity was praised[4] and her anger at the attempt to consult her on such business.[5] Yet as part of England's foreign policy, the diplomatic marriage negotiations spread well into the 1580s, when Elizabeth was over forty years old. In her early reign her praise used Biblical typology and recommended her godliness, wisdom and justice to the subjects, but with the passing of years and the advanced age of the queen her virgin state was excused and exploited by propaganda.

Among the first instances where the queen's virginity was openly celebrated was at the entertainment at Woodstock in 1575, and at the entry of the queen into the city of Norwich in 1578. In a device written by Thomas Churchyard at Norwich, Cupid was captured, his coach destroyed and his bow handed over to Elizabeth as a sign of her victory above love (Nichols 1969, II:191). On the same visit the phrase "Virgin Queen" was used for the first time referring to Elizabeth I (Collinson 2007, 138). In an evening masque of gods and goddesses, Diana handed over her gift to the queen with the following words "Who ever found on earth a constant friend,/ That may compare with this my Virgin Queene?" (Nichols 1969, II:163). From the mythological characters that were utilized in her emerging cult, the figure of Diana was one of the most useful ones. On the one hand, it was already current in the royal panegyric of the French court by the 1570s, on the other, hand it offered an opportunity to celebrate the aging queen's virginity.

The Roman goddess Diana, identified with the Greek Artemis, was the goddess of forests and hills. She was known for her skills in hunting, for her hunting companions the nymphs and her chastity, which she set as a standard for her court. In Greek mythology she was the twin sister of Apollo, from whose solar epithet Phœbus, the sun, she was often called Phoebe, the moon. In Roman mythology Diana has been associated with Artemis since the fifth century BC. She supplanted the place of the moon goddess Semele and Luna as well, and on late antique representations she was always depicted wearing a crescent moon in her hair. Artemis/Diana was sometimes also called Cynthia, after her birthplace on Delos, Mount Cynthus. The cult of Artemis/Diana was widespread in antique Greece and Rome, and her temple in Ephesus became one of the Seven Wonders of the World, and her cult was even mentioned in the New Testament (Acts 19:28).

In the early 16th century the cult of Diana was revived in France in a royal context to praise the consort of the monarch (Berry 1989, 38-60). In 1514 at the royal entry to Paris of the bride of Louis XII, Mary Tudor (Henry VIII's sister), was presented as Diana. In this context Mary received her identification as the counterpart of the king who was identified with the sun, Phœbus. The text of the pageant claimed "par Pheubus humble et doux,/ Dyana est en terre reluysant/

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[2] "Sith I first had consideration of myself to be born a servitor of almighty God, I happily chose this kind of life in which I yet live, which I assure you for mine own part hath hitherto best contended myself and I trust hath been most acceptable to God." "Lastly, this may be sufficient, both for my memory and honour of my name, if when I have expired my last breath, this may be inscribed upon my tomb: Here lies interred Elizabeth/ A virgin pure until her death." Queen Elizabeth's first speech before parliament, February 10, 1559 (Elizabeth I 2000, 56, 60).

[3] Speeches of 28 January, 10 April, 1563.

[4] At her reception at Cambridge the orator of Kings college "praised many and singular virtues set and planted in her majesty, which her Highness not acknowledging of, shaked her head and bit her lips and her fingers, and sometimes broke forth ... 'Non est veritas, et utinam.' Praising virginity, she said to the orator, 'God's blessings of thyne heart; there continue.'" (Nichols 1969, 161)

[5] See the progress to Kenilworth and her anger at the parliamentary petitions urging her to marry.

... Phœbus set roy qui domine sur nous./ Et Dyana est France la fertile" ("Through the humble and gentle rays of Phœbus, Diana shines on earth ... Phœbus is the king who rules over us, and Diana is fertile France.") (Berry 1989, 44). In the royal entry to Lyons in 1533 the queen of Francis I was associated with Diana in a similar manner. The Diana cult of the consort of the French monarchs was fully developed when the name analogy suggested it for the praise of Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of Henry II. During the reigns of the three sons of Henry II (Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III) women near the monarch (wives or mistresses) continued to be associated with Diana (Berry 1989, 47-50). While the king was compared to the sun, Phœbus, his consort was symbolically the moon, Phoebe or Diana.

The French royal panegyric was a precursor to the similar mode of praise applied to the English queen from the late 1570s. Although the French Diana discourse contained no allusions to chastity, in England the goddess's virginity became the central feature within the cult of Elizabeth. However, the other associations of the goddess were just as happily exploited by panegyrists. Diana's beauty and grace complimented the aging queen as "semper aedem" the motto used by Elizabeth. Her close association with nature led to Elizabeth's praise with flowers, and the bounty of May. The queen's court of ladies-in-waiting was seen as the court of Diana with her nymphs. Her association with the moon symbolized her freedom from the constraints of the sublunary system, and from other foreign worldly powers. Elizabeth's favourite pastime, hunting, was also connected to the figure of Diana, who in this role symbolized an independent military might.

In the 1580s, the cult discourse of Queen Elizabeth contained in growing number references to her as Diana. On depictions, the emblem of the crescent moon signified the Diana aspect of the queen. On several portraits from the late 1580s, Elizabeth appeared wearing a jewel in the form of a crescent moon in her hair.[6] A political caricature from ca. 1584–85 complimented the queen by depicting her as Diana amid her nymphs who revealed the shame of Castillo, a nymph found pregnant, presented as Pope Gregory XIII sitting on a brood of sins.[7] In 1584, George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* used the Diana associations as a basic element of the queen's panegyric. The plot of the play was set in the woods of Diana, the heavenly court to arraign the decision of Paris assembled in the bower of Diana, and the final judgement was assigned to Diana. The English nymph, Eliza, received the golden apple and unified in herself not only the virtues of the majesty of Juno, the wisdom of Pallas and the beauty of Venus, but surpassed her heavenly peers by adopting Diana's virtue of virgin chastity. The lyric poetry of Sir Walter Ralegh legitimated the Diana aspect of the queen's cult most profoundly in the 1580s:

> Praise be Diana's fair and harmless light,
> Praised be the dewes, wherewith she moues the floods;
> Praised be hir beames, the glorie of the night,
> Praised be her power, by which all powers abound.
> Praised be hir Nymphs, with whom she decks the woods,
> Praised be hir knights, in whom true honour liues, (1–6) (Latham 1951, 10–11)[8]

The imagery shows Elizabeth as the Moon goddess whose heavenly sphere is placed above the terrestrial world ("In heauen Quuene she is among the spheares," l. 9). She has special powers above the ocean ("she moues the floods," l. 7), above the dews of the Earth, and above the influence of other stars ("By hir the virtue of the starrs downe slide," l. 15). She is not subject to the passing of time ("Time wears her not, she does his chariot guide,/ Mortalitie belowe hir orbe is

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[6] See the miniatures of Nicholas Hilliard about the queen (Strong 1987, 125–128, 147–48).

[7] Peter van der Hyden *Queen Elizabeth and Pope Gregory XIII as Diana and Castillo*, ca. 1584–85. The British Museum. For a thorough analysis, see Montrose 2006, 138–140.

[8] The poem was first printed anonymously in *The Phoenix Nest*, London, 1593.

plaste," ls. 13–14) thus she is *semper edem,* "always the same." John Lyly whose career as a playwright started in the 1580s also assimilated the Diana motif into his works produced for Queen Elizabeth's court.

Diana versus Venus

The early plays of John Lyly were conceived in a period when the Diana cult of the queen was developed. His debut at court were two plays, *Campaspe*[9] and *Sappho and Phao*[10] in which the praise of the queen strikes a new note related to the Diana imagery: the contest between chastity and love.

In *Campaspe* Lyly chose the antique historical figure of Alexander the Great, to portray the royal presence. However, instead of depicting a victorious general on the battlefield, Alexander is placed in the intimate context of his inner court. He appears as a man in love who struggles to master his private feelings. The play explores the conflict between public duty and private love that a monarch has to face.

It depicts Alexander after his conquest of Thebes, falling in love with one of his captives, Campaspe. Alexander, who is victorious on the fields, is enslaved by the beauty of Campaspe. The plot of the drama investigates the possibility whether Alexander can realize his love, whether he can be a successful commander of hearts and of military adventures at the same time. In his pursuit of love, his court becomes effeminate, and his soldiers disillusioned. One of them complains: "I mislike this new delicacie & pleasing peace: for what else do we se now then a kind of softnes in every mans mind" (IV.iii.6–7). Alexander has to realize that by transforming his court into a place where members are occupied by "pen and paper to paint their loves" (IV.iii.17) he looses his majesty and strength at war. The final note reverses the beginning of the play, and the quest for peace, learning, and love are replaced by the thrill of a new military adventure.

Campaspe lacks dynamic action and the only victory of Alexander is over himself to master his feelings for Campaspe, as "it were a shame Alexander should desire to commande the world, if he could not command himselfe" (V.iv.150–51). Alexander can be regarded as the allegorical representation of Elizabeth. Although there is no direct reference to her person, the play ends in defining sovereignty as the self–sacrifice of the monarch for his people, a theme frequently appearing in the speeches of the queen, especially on occasions when the topic of her possible marriage was referred to.[11]

In his next play *Sappho and Phao,* the contest between chastity and love is further pursued. The monarch is turned into a beautiful young woman, Sappho, the princess of Syracuse. Sappho is a chaste virgin, the princess of an island, "fair by nature, by birth royal, learned by education, by government politike, rich by peace" (I.ii.6–9). Her court is peopled by ladies in waiting in a similar position of servant, companion and informal councillor as the maids-of-honour of Queen Elizabeth. Sappho, similarly to Alexander, falls in love with her own subject, Phao, the ferryman, and the audience is allowed to pry into the queen's private feelings and struggle with her emotions.

As in *Campaspe* love again proves to be destructive for the majesty of the monarch. In the scenes portraying her lovesick, she lies in a bed and groans in a near hysterical manner: "Hey ho: I know not which way to turn me. Ah! ah! I fainte, I die!" (III.iii.1–2). In the display of such feminine weakness Sappho loses all her pretence to majesty. It is only after she conquers her love that she regains her power to act: she captures Cupid and becomes "on earth the Goddesse of affec-

[9] Presented at Whitehall on 1 January 1584. Printed by Thomas Cadman in London, 1584.

[10] Presented at Whitehall on 3 February 1584. Printed by Thomas Cadman in London, 1584.

[11] See her public speeches of 1559, 1576, 1586, 1588 (Elizabeth I 2000, 54, 170, 187, 326).

tions" (V.ii.64). While Sappho is allowed to admit that love is "a thing unfit for my degree," Phao is not released from the bond of love for the queen. His constancy and loyalty are elevated to the height of heroic courtliness: "My life shalbe spente in sighing and wishing, the one for my bad fortune, the other for Sapphoes good" (V.iii.20–22). His attitude foreshadows the interest of Lyly in defining courtly service for a female sovereign in his play *Endimion.*

Gallathea[12] represents an interesting phase of Lyly's examination of the conflict between chastity and love. The play depicts the goddesses, Diana and Venus, and their contest above the control of humans. The story contains no royalty; it shows the world of ordinary people. Love triumphs over chastity in the play, but the victory of Venus is dubious in a sixteenth century context: two country girls fall into love with each other and only the magic transformation of one into a boy resolves the situation. The play equivocates both on the triumph of Venus and on the majesty of Diana. Venus calls Diana "goddess of hate" (V.iii.35) and one feels the cruelty of a tyrant as she declares

> As for thee *Cupid,* I will break thy bowe, and burne thine arrows, binde thy handes, clyp thy wings, and fetter thy feete. ... *Venus* rods are made of Roses, *Dianaes* of Bryers. ... Thou shalt be used as *Dianaes* slave, not *Venus* sonne. All the world shall see that I will use thee like a captive, and shew my self a Conqueror. (III.iv. 74–76, 79, 91–93)

This is the first play in which the negative aspects of the Diana myth appear.

Cynthia: Moon and Monarch

After exploring the conflict of chastity and love, the public duty and private feelings of a monarch, Lyly finally arrived to the fullest, most monumental allegorical celebration of the chaste ruler in his play *Endimion, The Man in the Moon.* The play's powerful and virtuous female sovereign, Cynthia, is openly connected to the lunar imagery of the Diana cult. The Moon within this context comprises ideas of power, influence, femininity and chastity. In *Sappho and Phao* the queen's sovereignty was unconnected with the connotations of the moon goddess. Phao's complaint rather associated her with the other celestial body, the sun, the symbol of kingship: "for Phao! Unhappy, canst thou not be content to behold the sunne, but thou muste couet to build thy net in the Sunne?" (II.iv.3–4). Conspicuously *Endimion, The Man in the Moon* starts with a similar love complaint of a subject, but this love is aimed at the feminine Moon:

> *End.* I find Eumenides, in all things both variety to content, and satiety to glut, saving only in my affections, which are so staid, and withal so stately, that I can neither satisfy my heart with love, nor mine eyes with wonder. My thoughts, Eumenides, are stiched to the stars, which being as high as I can see, thou mayest imagine how much higher they are than I can reach.
> *Eum.* If you be enamoured of anything above the moon, your thoughts are ridiculous, for that things immortal are not subject to affections; if allured or enchanted with these transitory things under the moon, you show yourselfe senseless to attribute such lofty titles to such trifles.
> *End.* My love is placed neither under the moon nor above.
> *Eum.* I hope you are not sotted upon the Man in the Moon.
> *End.* No; but settled either to die or possess the moon herself.
> *Eum.* Is Endimion mad, or do I mistake? Do you love the moon, Endimion?
> *End.* Eumenides, the moon. (I.i.1–25)

[12] It was entered in the *Stationer's Register* 1 April 1585, but Lyly was unable to bring it to court, and the play was acted before the queen at Greenwich only on 1 January 1588. It was printed by Iohn Charlwoode in London, 1592.

Who can doubt at this point that Endimion is really in love with a celestial object? Throughout the first scene the equivocation on the object of Endimion's love is maintained. The celestial body, the Moon, becomes Cynthia, the sovereign, who stands between the things immortal and those that are transitory. But where does she belong? Is the love for her madness, or is it only a trifle? What love is due to her then? The play suggests these questions from the very first scene and pursues to answer who Cynthia is from an earthly perspective and what her love means for her subjects.

The plot of the play starts on Endimion's unmatched dotage on Cynthia. He deserts his love, Tellus, who in revenge employs the old enchantress, Dipsas to conjure eternal sleep for Endimion. Eumenides seeks help and in the well of a hermit he is granted the fulfilment of one wish if he is a true lover. He wavers between the choice for the love of Semele, and the friendship for Endimion, and chooses the second as he claims it is higher in virtue than love for a woman. He gets an oracle that the kiss of "whose figure of all is the perfectest, and never to be measured; always one, yet never the same, still inconstant, yet never wavering" (III.iv.198–200) will awake his friend; a riddle in which the queen, Cynthia, and the moon are identified. After two brief appearances, Cynthia becomes the true centre of events only in the fifth act: she wakes Endimion from his enchanted sleep, restores his youth, releases the servant of Dipsas from magic, and couples four pairs in marriage.

In the final act amid the general rejoicing Cynthia stands alone, ultimately remaining an outsider unable to share in the happiness of others. Throughout the drama she is only addressed in superlatives. Before her appearance her fame is announced even by her enemies. She is "a mistress of ripe years and infinite virtues, great honours and unspeakable beauty" (.i.71–72), she is "incomparable" (II.i.119), "governeth all things" (I.ii.36), on her "hands the compass of the earth is at command" (III.i.34–35), and "by her influence both comforteth all things, and by her authority comandeth all creatures" (I.ii.41–43). Yet her perfectness and her almightiness make her a sterile object of adoration. Cynthia is not only called a celestial object, but she is so far removed from the other characters of the play as the moon is from the terrestrial objects. She is unattainable not only for Endimion but for her other subjects too. She judges and punishes, commands and orders, but does not engage in homely conversation with anyone. She is not only incomparable, but also inaccessible.

In the play, the only affectionate relation of Cynthia to another character is to Endimion, the courtier. She accepts the love of Endimion, but only as far as it is termed service:

> *End.* The time was Madam, and is, and euer shall be, that I honoured your highness aboue all the world; but to strech it so far as to call it loue, I neuer durst. There hath none pleased mine eye by *Cynthia,* none delighted mine ears but *Cynthia,* none possessed my heart but *Cynthia.* I haue forsken all other fortunes to followe *Cynthia,* and here I stand ready to die if it please *Cynthia.* Such a difference hath the Gods sette between our states, that all must be duetie, loyaltie, and reuerence; nothing ... be termed loue. ...
> *Cynth. Endimion,* this honourable respect of thine, shalbe christened loue in thee, & my reward for it fauor. Perseuer *Endimion* in louing me, & I account more strength in a true hart, then in a walled Cittie." (V.iii.161–170, 179–182)

The only proper attitude the play allows towards this perfect celestial object, this chaste maiden queen is loyalty and service. There is a hierarchy of loves presented within the play. The love for a mortal woman is the basest; friendship is of a much worthier character; and the love of the monarch is of the highest degree achieved only by the best and most virtuous courtiers, such as Endimion. However, one can feel no sympathy with this character, who betrayed his love to "moon-gaze" at the most perfect body. The ideal courtliness of Cynthia's court is cold and distant for all the other characters of the play.

Within the idealized panegyric of the queen in *Endimion*, the aspect of the negative associations of the moon imagery appears. Lyly based his play on the antique story of the shepherd Endimion told by Ovid in *Heroides* XVIII § 63, who fell in love with the Moon, and chose eternal sleep as his love could not be fulfilled (Thomas 1978, 36–37). In the more popular version of the story by Pausanias in the *Description of Greece* V.i.4., it was the moon who got enraptured with the shepherd and enchanted him into eternal sleep (Thomas 1978, 37). Though the words of the play refer to the first version, yet the other tradition, in which the moon bewitches the shepherd, looms in the background. The first scene's conversation readily offers itself for such an interpretation too. Eumenides asks his friend to cease these affections "a dotage no less miserable than monstrous" (I.i. 35), and ends the scene with the lines "without doubt Endimion is bewitched; otherwise in a man of such rare virtues there could not harbour a mind of such extreme madness. I will follow him, lest in this fancy of the moon he deprive himself of the sight of the sun" (I.i. 104–108).

Bewitching was not far from the image of Diana. Diana was often seen as a "triformis" goddess, thus associated with the triple Hecate and the underworld. Renaissance Neoplatonic discourse delighted in exploiting images where a god exerted his power in a triple from (Wind 1968, 36). Diana was in heaven Cynthia, the moon; on Earth Diana, the huntress; and in the underworld Hecate, the enchantress.

Philippa Berry studied Diana's connection to the underworld and witchcraft in the early modern English context. She found that in England it was not until the major witchcraft trial at Chelmsford, Essex, 1582 where eighteen women were condemned and hanged that the topic was foregrounded (Berry 1989, 129). Reginald Scot in his book *Discovery of Witchcraft* (published in 1584) wrote:

> Certain wicked women following Sathan's provocations, being seduced by the illusion of divels, beleve and professe, that in the night time they ride abroad with Diana, the goddesse, or else with Herodias, with an innumerable multitude, upon certaine beasts, and passé over manie countries and nations, in the silence of the night, and doo whatsoever those faires or ladies command. (Quoted in Berry 1989, 130)

The period curiously coincides with the emergence of the Diana cult of Queen Elizabeth. In Lyly's *Endimion* Cynthia's power can be threatening as it can beguile her subjects. Did she not bewitch an honest and virtuous man into forgetting his former promises to another lady and to choose the life of a hermit to gaze upon the moon? Furthermore, Cynthia is capable throughout the drama to conjure magic. She makes the choice to kiss Endimion and to retransform Bagoa from a tree into a human.

The only other character in the play who can exert her influence upon others is Dipsas, the enchantress. She can "darken the sun ... and remove the moon of her course, [and]... restore youth to aged" (I.iv.28–29). Cynthia thus has a devilish counterpart within the play in the image of Dipsas. Dipsas seems to be the negative image of Cynthia's fairness. The panegyric of her ugly features[13] mirrors the praise of the beauty of Cynthia, and the unexplainable passion of Sir Tophas for her stands in parallel with the dotage of Endimion on Cynthia. Thus a negative undercurrent, hardly perceivable, disturbs the moon imagery of Cynthia's praise in *Endimion*.

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[13] Oh, what a fine, thin hair hath Dipsas! What a
pretty low forehead! What a tall and stately
nose! What little hollow eyes! What great
and goodly lips! How harmless she is, being
toothless, – her fingers fat and short, adorned
with long nails like a bittern! In how sweet a
proportion her cheeks hang down to her breasts
like dugs and her paps to her waist like bags! (III.iii.62–70)

The Dark Side of the Moon

John Lyly's last play, *The Woman in the Moon*[14] explores the dark aspects of lunar symbolism and expresses a strong feeling of misogyny. Anxieties about female power appear and the virtue of the female sex in general is questioned. The criticism is so outspoken, that one doubts the truth of the statement on the title page of the play's first edition, which claims that it was performed in front of the queen.[15] *The Woman in the Moon* renders the blackest image about the female sex among Lyly's plays. In his influential prose work *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit* (1578) Lyly accused women of a weakness of character and an inconstancy of mind, yet the English queen was tactfully exempted from criticism by a sequel *Eupheus and His England* (1580). In *The Woman in the Moon* this opinion about women echoes his early misogyny, and the moon imagery of the queen's panegyric is utilized to express this unfavourable view about the female sex. Although most critics point out, as Hunter does, that "the extension of this idea that the satire on woman is pointed at Queen Elizabeth should be too absurd,"[16] yet the imagery of the play shows a distorted reflection of the images of the cult of Elizabeth, that deserves serious attention.

Pandora, her name meaning 'the gifted', is elevated to a unique position in the drama: she is the only woman on Earth, adored by all men. This unrivalled privilege is coupled with the most pitiful state: she is the most powerless person on Earth, constantly subjected to and acting according to the various influences of the seven planets, among which the influence of the moon is the worst. The planet Luna makes Pandora "lunatic, foolish and frantic" (V.i.66–67). While Luna's power is the dominant within the play, it is deprived of majestic authority with which the influence of the Moon was associated in Elizabeth's eulogy.

The play is set on the island of Utopia and presents the creation by Nature of the first woman on Earth, Pandora. Her beauty arouses the envy of the seven planets, and they decide to exert an influence above her. Pandora receives a melancholy mood from Saturn, thirst for power from Jupiter, unmaidenly militancy from Mars, lust from Venus, and falseness from Mercury. It is remarkable that only Sol, the sun, associated with kingship – that is male authority – endows Pandora with honest virtues. Luna, the last planet exercises the worst influence over Pandora. She makes her "idle, mutable, forgetfull, foolish, fickle, franticke, madde" (V.i.307–8). The plot represents the influence and majesty of the moon as destructive, and denounces the virtues of women, thus forming the play into an expression of misogyny. In the fifth act as Pandora is placed in the sphere of the moon, Nature pronounces his judgement:

> Now rule, Pandora, in fayre Cynthias steede,
> And make the moone inconstant like thy selfe;
> Raigne thou at womens nuptials, and their birth;
> Let them be mutable in all their loues,
> Fantastical, childish, and foolish, in their desires,
> Demanding toyes:
> And starke madde when they cannot haue their will. (V.i.320–26)

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[14] Entered in the *Stationer's Register* under the date 22 September 1595, printed for William Ionesin in 1597, London.

[15] Pincombe claims that there is no evidence of the play ever being performed. (Pincombe 1996, xiv).

[16] "The idea that the satire on woman is pointed at Queen Elizabeth should be too absurd to require refutation. Elizabeth was sometimes known as Pandora ... but the mere coincidence of names prove nothing. ... No court dramatist could show in a play 'as it was presented before the Highness' a picture of the royal Pandora as 'sullen ... proud ... bloody-minded ... idle, mutable, forgetful, foolish, fickle, frantic, mad' and then suppose that this would entertain as a personal portrait the lady whose motto was *simper eadem*." (Hunter 1962, 219–20).

At the end of the play Pandora and Cynthia occupy a ruling position, but their power only causes a harmful influence to emanate upon Earth.

Lyly directly associates the moon with the triple aspect of Diana within the play and underlines the image's infernal connotation:

> *Luna:* ..... stay with Cynthia ...
> Rule thou my starre, while I stay in the woods,
> Or keep with Pluto in the infernall shades" (V i.281, 283–4)

The play cannot be understood in any way complimentary to Elizabeth as the negative aspects of lunar power are demonstrated to their fullest.

The Woman in the Moon refers in its title to the most encomiastic play of Lyly *Endimion: The Man in the Moon.* While Cynthia, described simply as "the queen" in the dramatis personae of *Endimion* without being identified as the queen of any particular land, gestures at the historical Elizabeth Tudor, there is no trace of any correspondence between England's sovereign and the characters Pandora or Cynthia in *The Woman in the Moon.* However, the shift from panegyric to misogyny, from a positive aspect of male service to the negative description of female servitude, from symbolism of a majestic celestial body to the infernal, lunatic associations of Cynthia is too conspicuous not to be noticed. This general disillusionment mirrored in the lunar imagery of Lyly's plays had both personal reasons in the playwright's career, and echoed the rising dissatisfaction of the last years of the queen's reign.

In the 1580s and early 1590s, the expertise in the allegorical language of the queen's cult promised many literary talents an opportunity to utilize their skills in a financially rewarding way. John Lyly also built great hopes upon a career at court. He strived for a courtly position, either in the Revels Office or at the Office of Tentes and Toyles, which was responsible for the mounting of plays and masks at court. In a petition to the queen, he refers to the queen's "gracious favour, strengthened with conditions that I should aim all my courses at the Revels" (Bond I. 64–65). A further petition from the late 1590s addressed to the queen also expressed his disappointment over the undeserved neglect of his talents (Pincombe 1996, 86). The embittered tone of the letters shows Lyly's failure of receiving any courtly office or financial success.

Lyly's "darkening" moon imagery paralleled a tendency of growing dissent. In the final decade of the reign bad harvests, outbreaks of the plague, and wartime taxation burdened the country and led to increasing discontent among the population (Guy 1988, 403–7). The constant threat of military invasion contributed to the people's yearning for a king who could deal with matters personally on the battlefield. The feeling of impatience with female rule was strengthened by Catholic propaganda from aboard.[17] The incident of John Feltwell, who claimed to have said in 1591 "The queene was but a woman and ruled by gentlemen ... so that poore men cold get nothinge ... We shall never have a merry world while the Queene lyveth"[18] demonstrates this opinion well. The last decade of Elizabeth's rule saw the rise of rumours, gossips and writings that challenged her female authority and undermined her moral reputation as a woman. The strict measures of the authorities to cope with the unrest reinforced the criticism of the Elizabethan regime. The official control over the queen's cult image tightened, yet a growing number of incidents recording disrespectful behaviour and slanderous reports challenged its effectiveness. In such a climate, the Diana cult of the queen became destabilized through its possible connotations with witchcraft and the underworld. During the very last years of the queen, the sun, the image of kingship, replaced the moon imagery.

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[17] See, for instance, Allen 1588.

[18] Quoted in Levin 1998, 77–78.

Such a change of emphasis can be seen on one of the best known portraits of the queen, on the 'Rainbow' portrait.[19] The crescent moon jewel that celebrates her as Diana appears in the headdress barely visible, but the radiant light that shines through her skin, the only source of light in the otherwise dark picture, emphasizes her association with the sun. The correspondence is underlined by the motto above the hand of the queen that holds the rainbow, *None sine sole iris*, 'No rainbow without the sun.' In the verse cycle of Sir John Davis, *Hymns of Astraea,* the sun symbolism is used, too, instead of the lunar one: "Behold her in her virtue's beams/ Extending Sun-like to all realms" (Davis 1599, B^{4v}); or in the description of her magnanimity she is sitting "sun-like [...] above the wind,/ Above the storms and thunder" (Davis 1599, D^{1v}).

Lyly's exploration of the unfavourable connotations of the Moon in his last play cannot be dismissed in such a context. It is a sign of disillusionment, disrespect, and covert criticism towards the monarch he once eulogized.

Conclusion

The present paper analysed the use and abuse of the iconology of the moon in the career of the playwright John Lyly spanning the years of the 1580s and 1590s. It was argued that Lyly's treatment of the image of the moon showed a correlation with the development of the cult of Queen Elizabeth. In 1578, in the initial phase of the cult's formation, Lyly's first prose work, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578), expounded the view that women consisted of "falsehood, jealousy, and inconstancy" (Lyly 1928, 95) and that the "nature of woman is grounded upon extremities" (Lyly 1928, 115), but made an exemption of the English queen. At the height of the patriotic enthusiasm for the cult, on the eve of the attack of the Spanish Armada, Lyly wrote *Endimion, The Man in the Moon,* one of the most important manifestation of the queen's praise using the metaphors of the Diana cult. The central motif complimenting the queen was the moon. Yet Lyly's treatment of the lunar imagery was not free from the negative connotations that were inherent in the Diana cult. His last play enumerated all possible misogynistic traits associated with the moon, thus echoing his first work, but allowing no exception for any female. It expressed not only his own, but a generation's impatience with the cult of Elizabeth, which, directly or indirectly, played such a decisive influence on the literary output of the Elizabethan age.

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[19] The painting is in the collection of the Marquess of Salisbury, at Hatfield House. Roy Strong attributes the canvas to Marcus Gheeraerts upon stylistic grounds, while Erna Auerbach assigns it to Isaac Oliver upon the known patronage of Oliver by Robert Cecil. For the details of the discussion see Strong 1987, 161.

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