A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
IN RELATION TO THE ENDYMION LEGEND

A Master's Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies
Indiana State College
Terre Haute, Indiana

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree

by
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August, 1962
THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis of Sister Dorothy Evelyn Laughlin, S. F., contribution of the School of Graduate Studies, Indiana State College, Series I, No. 820, under the title "A Midsummer Night's Dream in Relation to the Endymion Legend," is approved as counting toward the completion of the Master of Arts Degree in the amount of five semester hours of graduate credit.

APPROVAL OF THESIS COMMITTEE:

[Signatures and dates]

APPROVAL FOR SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

[Signature and date]
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Through the years, in the field of literary research, scholars have, from time to time, made comparative studies which have proved valuable—at least fascinating. These scholars have observed similar themes in the works of various authors and have analysed their works to show how each author recast an old story to satisfy the literary taste of his own times. The problem becomes more intriguing, however, when the two authors are contemporary.

The present study concerns itself with two contemporary playwrights, John Lyly and the immortal William Shakespeare. Both writers employ the use of the myth of Endymion. This study has for its purpose the analysis of Lyly's Endimion and Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream in an attempt to discover in what ways A Midsummer Night's Dream is a parody of Lyly's version of the Endymion legend.

R. E. Root claims that Shakespeare was ignorant of Greek myth when he says that Shakespeare was "totally unacquainted with them [Greek myths]. It is at any rate certain that he nowhere alludes to any of the characters or episodes of Greek drama, that they exerted no influence whatever on his conception of mythology." 7

It is often asserted that Shakespeare knew little Latin and less Greek, but to say that he was "totally unacquainted" with Greek myth seems a bit

doctrinaire. Even though Shakespeare had not direct access to Greek mythographers, it seems plausible that through the medium of translation and imitation he would have come to a knowledge of Greek myth and legend. Gilbert Highet, in his book on classical tradition, seems to contradict Root's opinion regarding Shakespeare's knowledge of Greek myth when he declares that "Shakespeare had enough Latin to lead him . . . to love Greek and Roman myth, poetry, and history. He lived among men who knew and admired classical literature, and he learnt from them."2 Shakespeare's debt to classical antiquity is firmly established by Highet who points out that " . . . twelve of his forty works (and those among the greatest) dealt with themes from classical antiquity; and classical imagery was an organic part of his poetry from first to last."3

Strengthening Shakespeare's claim to a knowledge of Greek myth, Douglas Bush, in Classical Influences in Renaissance Literature, reminds us that "some of Shakespeare's romantic comedies had a remote classical ancestry, since pastoral romances of the Renaissance were derived from late Greek and medieval romance . . . ."4 May A Midsummer Night's Dream, a romantic comedy, then, perhaps, claim a relationship to the Greek Endymion legend?

Charles Grosvenor Osgood, an eminent scholar in the field of classical mythology, in his treatise, "Greek Myth and the Poets," discusses the popularity of the Endymion myth in English literature. He mentions John Lyly, Michael Drayton, and John Keats as those who have developed the theme in detail.


3Ibid.

"This myth [Endymion]," he says, "is referred to incidentally by many English poets." He then proceeds to cite Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (V, i, 109-110) as one reference. Portia explains a moonless night by saying:

... the moon sleeps with Endymion,
And would not be wak'd.

Even this slight reference, it seems, would sanction Shakespeare's claim to some knowledge of Greek mythology.

Investigation of existing scholarship yielded several pieces of evidence to establish a relationship between Lyly's *Endimion* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Reverend N. J. Halpin provides the first reference. In his study, *Oberon's Vision in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Illustrated by a Comparison with Lylie's "Endimion"* (1843), he associates the two plays on the point of political allegory, attempting, in the first part, to show that "the Vision of Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is an allegorical representation of the audacious suit of the Earl of Leicester for the hand of Queen Elizabeth, at a time when he was engaged to two other ladies." In the second part he tries to show that Lyly's *Endimion* is another allegorical version of the same story with some few differences in the identification of characters. Halpin's treatment of the *Endymion*, therefore, is based on "the appropriation of the characters and incidents of dramatic entertainments to the characters and incidents of the times then current."

In his introductory notes to his edition of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1895), Israel Gollancz not only informs us of Shakespeare's acquaintance with the Endymion myth, but also associates *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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6 (London: Shakespeare Society Publication, 1843), XVI, 81.


Dream with Lyly's Endimion, as did Halpin, from the point of personal allegory. He makes reference to Oberon's vision (II.i.154-168), Shakespeare's compliment to the Queen, and asserts: "In these dozen or sixteen lines Shakespeare has actually condensed the whole story of 'Endymion,' as dramatised by John Lyly."9 Gollancz identifies "Cupid" as Endymion, "the cold Moon" and "the fair Vestal" as "Cynthia" (Elizabeth, and the "Earth" as "Tellus," Cynthia's rival in Lyly's play.10 Further on Mr. Gollancz adds: "And Shakespeare, also, is evidently using the Endymion story in order to refer to the well-known story of Lord Leicester's disappointment."11

R. Warwick Bond, Lyly's editor, in enumerating Shakespeare's imitations of Lyly, links the Endimion with A Midsummer Night's Dream in the following succinct statement: "The allegory of Oberon's speech in A Midsummer Night's Dream is largely suggested by our play Endimion..."12

Finally, in a more recent study entitled "A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Meaning of Court Marriage," Paul Olsen sees in Lyly's Endimion a plot analogous to that of A Midsummer Night's Dream. "In Endimion," says Olsen, "Cynthia, the higher love, forces Tellus, an earthly passion, to release her hold upon Endimion (the rational soul) but allows her to retain her love for Corsites (the body). Oberon (celestial love) uses love-in-idleness to force Titania to release her hold upon the changeling and to seek only the carnal or physical man, Bottom."13

It is interesting to note that most scholars engaged in the study of

Lyly's *Endimion* in relation to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have concentrated their efforts on an interpretation of the allegory in the plays, rather than on an analysis of the plot structure for other purposes. The fact that these plays have been considered together at all provides a basis for further comparative studies, one of which forms the subject of this thesis, namely, the relationship of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to Lyly's *Endimion* on the point of parody or comic inversion.

In 1923 Miss Edith Rickert proposed the possibility of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a parody of Lyly's *Endimion*. In the event that Professor Feuillerat, in his book, *John Lyly*, was correct in his identification of *Endimion* as James instead of Leicester, Miss Rickert concluded that the idiosyncrasies of Bottom throughout the *Dream* were a satire on the life and character of James. The problem under examination in this thesis, though it parallels Miss Rickert's idea of a parody, concerns itself with the idea of the myth in Lyly rather than with a personal burlesque as Miss Rickert suggests. 14

Before launching into an analysis of the two plays treating the *Endymion* theme, it seems appropriate to discuss, briefly, classical myth and its popularity during the Renaissance, and to give a brief summary of the ancient *Endymion* myth itself.

Through the channels of translation, imitation, and emulation classical influences flowed into the literature of England and other nations. The myths and tales of Greece and Rome alike have attracted almost all major English poets, as well as minor ones, from Chaucer to the present; mythology

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14 "Propaganda and Satire in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'," *MP*, XXI (1923), 53-87. See note 4 of the article.
has been for English poetry "a treasure house replete with golden tales and
glimmering thoughts, passions in the rough and smooth, and fancies rich be-
jewelled."  

Because sixteenth century taste demanded the use of classical allusions
in its literature, it is not surprising to find the writings of the time classi-
cal in content. "No one in the period," says Bush, "could set pen to paper
without invoking classical authority . . . ."  

It would require a work of greater scope than this thesis to discuss
the outstanding contributions of Renaissance writers in their treatment of the
classical themes. Let it suffice, therefore, to mention only a few genres
which were affected by the classical influence, namely, the ballad, the pas-
toral, and the romantic epic.

In an attempt to popularize the commoner myth among people who did not
"keep Ovid under their pillow," 17 mythological ballads were written from about
1560-1575. One such ballad collection was A Handful of Pleasant Delights
written in 1584. 18 Some of the references in this work are to the myth of
Pyramus and Thisbe and to the story of Troy.

Pastoral writing in both prose and verse was colored with mythology.
In English the most distinguished pastoral poem of the Renaissance was Spenser's

15 Charles M. Gayley, Classic Myths in English Literature (2d ed.;
16 Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English
Poetry (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1932), p. 34.
17 Ibid., p. 58.
18 Clement Robinson et al. ed. Hyder Rollins (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard
University Press, 1924), pp. 35-38 and p. 45. According to Mr. Rollins, it has
been generally assumed that "the extant edition of the Handful is a reissue,
with additions, of the Pleasant Sonnets of 1566."
Shepherd's Calendar, written in 1579. Spenser was thoroughly English and as Thomson says, "It was an English instinct in him to go for matter of his pastorals to the countryside he knew." Thomson goes on to say that in Spenser there is "an odd and not disagreeable mixture of rural England and classical divinities and conventions. The characters have often Greek names and seem to know a good deal of classical mythology."  

Although classical influence is all-pervading in the Renaissance epic, Spenser, in his Faerie Queene, demonstrates how "the greatest writers of the Renaissance were those who, granted their special genius, could profit from the classics without becoming sedulous apes, and without losing their own fresh vision of life or their contact with native and popular elements of tradition." Spenser, it is true, freely alludes to the tales of Greek mythology, but the chivalric matter of his Faerie Queene as well as the allegorical spirit characterizes his work as romantic. One can say, then, that although the romantic epic was influenced by classical themes, it was not ruled by them. In the tradition of his time, Spenser, as well as other Renaissance poets, while treating traditional materials, appropriated to them his own interpretation and sensuous warmth and color. This was a departure from the brevity with which ancient myth was treated.

During the Renaissance, classical myth was subjected to every kind of treatment from the sublime to the ridiculous. Sometimes the inferior art of a

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20Ibid.

21Douglas Bush, Classical Influences in Renaissance Literature, p. 35.
poet resulted in a trite handling of the myths. Gilbert Highet claims that "the best evidence that the myths invented by the Greek imagination are really immortal is the fact that they survived such treatment, and are still stimulating the imagination of poets and artists."\(^{22}\)

The mass of mythological material in Elizabethan literature is overwhelming. Douglas Bush, in *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry* summarizes the great and increasing popularity of classical themes in the following words: "They [classical themes] furnish wings (or pattens) to the translator and the literary aspirant, the story-teller and the puritan preacher, the courtly amorist and the ballad-monger, the patriotic chronicler and the philosophic moralist. Every quill-driver of the age has slept, more or less soundly, on Parnassus hill."\(^{23}\)

To the poet, then, a myth is not static and fixed. "In his mind," says Osgood, "it takes new root, and blooms again. The story of Circe in Spenser's or Milton's hands, the stories of Prometheus or Arethusa in Shelley's, of Endymion in Keats's, of Atalanta in Swinburne's, undergo transmutations that to the old intrinsic truth add new significance distilled in the poet's genius. The old legend receives new life from his handling."\(^{24}\)

In view of the popularity of classical myth in the Renaissance, therefore, it is not surprising that Lyly and Shakespeare felt the authority of the Greco-Roman myths. Both authors have taken something, but not everything, of classical form and material and have, by their own creative imaginations, moulded, blended, and changed them, adding much of their own style and subject

\(^{22}\) Highet, p. 21.


\(^{24}\) Osgood, p. 4.
matter, in the endeavor to produce something not only as good as the classical masterpieces but different and new. Lyly chose the charming Greek myth of Endymion around which to weave his court play Endymion; Shakespeare seems to be alluding to the same myth in his fanciful comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream. It seems advisable at this point to give a brief account of the ancient myth before investigating how Lyly and Shakespeare adapted it for a Renaissance audience.

A most comprehensive study of the Endymion legend is incorporated in a doctoral dissertation by Edward LeComte entitled Endymion in England. Dr. LeComte insists that the myth has "a potent and mysterious charm all its own." "Slight though it is," he says, "it encompasses great themes: love, sleep, death, immortality, divine intercourse." Briefly, the story of Endymion is as follows: Endymion was a beautiful youth, who fed his flock on Mount Latmus. One calm, clear night Diana, the Moon, looked down and saw him sleeping. The cold heart of the virgin goddess was unquestionably warmed by his surpassing beauty, and she came down to him, kissed him, and watched over him while he slept. She visited him again and again. But her secret could not long be hidden from the company of Olympus. For more and more frequently she was absent from her station in the sky; and toward morning she was ever paler and more weary with her watching. When, finally, her love was discovered, Jupiter gave Endymion, who had been thus honored, a choice between death in any manner that was preferable, or perpetual youth united with perpetual sleep. Endymion chose the latter. He still sleeps in his Carian cave, and still the

26 Ibid., p. ix.
27 Ibid.
mistress of the moon slips from her nocturnal course to visit him. She takes care, too, that his fortunes shall not suffer by his inactive life; she yields his flock increase, and guards his sheep and lambs from the wild beasts.  

Interpretations of this simple story, begun in antiquity, are legion. According to LeComte the myth persisted under the aspects of sleep and death for about 2500 years. In the course of time it grew and was transformed. Some consider the hero to be the setting sun on whom the rising moon delights to gaze. Others consider Endymion a young hunter, who under the moonlight followed the chase, but in the daylight slept. LeComte cites others as offering an allegorical interpretation, explaining that Endymion was the first to attempt a philosophy in regard to astronomical phenomena: he discovered independently the sources of the moon’s illuminations and movements. Wherefore, devoting himself to such things by night, he did not take sleep, but slept throughout the day. Fulgentius, according to LeComte, offered an ingenious interpretation, “that the myth arose because the moon produces the dew which, by making vegetation grow, is of advantage to shepherds.”

The ancient explanations of Endymion have had interest for the poets; for example, Drayton was strongly influenced by the view of Endymion as an

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29 LeComte, p. 2.

30 Ibid., p. 3. See also note 18 of LeComte’s study for further reference.

31 Ibid., p. 25. See also note 165 of LeComte’s study for further reference.
astronomer, but "none of these ancient explanations . . . has found favor with modern mythologists." 32

Before examining the modern theories of the myth, LeComte digresses on some private theories suggested by Alexander Rose in his Mystagogus Poeticus, or The Muses Interpreter explaining the historicall Mysteries, and mysticall Histories of the ancient Greek and Latine Poets (1648). His sixth and seventh proposals are worthy of citation since they are views held by nineteenth century interpreters also. The sixth proposal reads:

The Moon falls in love with sleepy Endymeon, that is carnall and sensuall pleasures, and earthy thoughts invade those that give themselves to idleness, security, and laziness: for the Moon in regard to her vicinity to the earth, may be the symboll of earthly mindes; and because she is the mistris of the night and of darknesse, the time when carnall delights are most exercised, shee may be the symboll of such delights: and because of her often changing, shee may represent to us the nature of fooles, which delight in idlenesse, as the Moon did in Endymeon. 33

The seventh proposal reads:

Endymeon in this may signifie the Sun, with whom the Moon is in love, rejoicing and (as it were) laughing in her full light, when shee hath the full view of him, and every moneth running to him, and overtaking him, whose motion is slow, and therefore hee seems to sleep in regard of her velocitie. 34

In his seven suggestions Rose makes his reader understand that there are "as many meanings in a myth as one chooses to find." 35

With all the interpretations that have been offered for the Endymion myth, it is interesting to note that no general agreement on the part of scholars has been reached.

Alexander Haggerty Krappe, in his Mythologie Universelle describes the

33 Ibid., p. 28.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., p. 29.
Endymion myth as "charmant mais obscur." Endymion myth as "charmant mais obscur." Endymion myth as "charmant mais obscur." Endymion myth as "charmant mais obscur." "Its obscurity," says LeComte, "is no small part of its charm." Shakespeare and Lyly, charmed by the obscurity of this myth, have incorporated it into their plays in a manner which results in two extremely interesting but vastly different dramas.

Since the Endymion myth, according to LeComte, "is the only well-known myth involving the Moon," the moon-drenched imagery in A Midsummer Night's Dream offers a relationship between Lyly's Endimion printed in 1591 and Shakespeare's dream play. Although the date of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream is much disputed, it is unlikely, in the light of scholarly evidence, that Endimion followed Shakespeare's play. Horace H. Furness in the Variorum Shakespeare lists only two scholars, Furnivall (1877) and Elze-Kurz (1869), who date A Midsummer Night's Dream as early as 1590. If there had been sufficient evidence for this early date, later scholars surely would have supported it. This does not appear to be true. According to Henry Cunningham, "a fairly strong case has been made out for the autumn or winter of 1594-95, and in this date most prominent Shakespearean scholars agree..." Among the older scholars who support this date, Cunningham mentions Malone (1817), Knight (1840), Collier (1858), Dyce (1866), Keightley (1867), Dowden (1878),

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39 The date of composition is not clearly determined. It is affected by the view taken of the allegory in the play. R. W. Bond, p. 13, dates it "May to November, 1585 and the first performance at Court February 2, 1586."
Halliwell (1879), and Marshall (1888). Twentieth century scholars who support the 1594–95 date are Israel Gollancz (1908), George Lyman Kittredge (1936), G. B. Harrison (1952), Geoffrey Bullough (1957), G. W. G. Wickham (1957), and Hardin Craig (1958). It would seem safe to conclude, therefore, that Lyly's Endimion was written before A Midsummer Night's Dream and that Shakespeare may have borrowed from it.

That Shakespeare was acquainted with John Lyly's handling of classical and allegorical themes is affirmed by Samuel Tannenbaum who says: "No fewer that seven of Shakespeare's plays . . . are generally considered to have been greatly influenced by Lyly's work." G. F. Baker, in his chapter on Lyly in the Cambridge History of English Literature, acknowledges that "whoever knows his Shakespeare and Lyly well can hardly miss the many evidences that

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42 Cunningham, p.xxxv.
Shakespeare had read Lyly's plays almost as closely as Lyly had read Pliny's *Natural History.* 50 John Goodlet, in his article "Shakespeare's Debt to John Lyly," summarizes Lyly's influence on Shakespeare in the following words, mentioning in particular *A Midsummer Night's Dream:*

I believe that Lilly's style had no influence on Shakespeare's prose, but that he had evidently studied him lovingly, had taken up and developed his love of song, his pages and servants with their banter and jollity and had benefited by the example of dramatic fusing of the serious and comic elements in Lilly's dramas. Finally this influence is to be seen in a multitude of minute details of character, situation and expression, and is to be sought for principally in Shakespeare's early plays such as *Love's Labors Lost, Twelfth Night, As You Like It,* and *Midsummer Night's Dream.* 51

Finally, in his address "Shakespeare and Lyly," given at the Ninth International Shakespeare Institute in November, 1959, Professor Marco Mincoff expressed Shakespeare's debt to Lyly by saying that "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the


51 Englishe Studien, V (1882), 356-363. Cf. Lord Crawford, "John Lyly," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, ed. the Librarian, VIII, No. 2 (Manchester, 1924), 312-344. Crawford states: "It has been claimed that in comedy Shakespeare's only model was Lyly." (p. 332). Dr. F. Landmann, "Shakspere and Euphuis," *New Shakspere Society Transactions,* Series I, No. 9 (London, 1880-85), p. 241: "John Lyly's influence as a dramatic writer upon Shakspere is now universally acknowledged. There is none of all the predecessors of our great poet that was in comedy the master of our great Master in such a degree as the author of *Euphues.* Lyly's nine plays, all written before 1589, were very popular when Shakspere began to write, and it is to them that he owes so much in the liveliness of his dialogues, in smartness of expression, and especially in that predilection for witticisms, quibbles, and playing upon words which he shows in his comedies as well as in his tragedies and historical plays." Felix Schelling, *Elizabethan Playwrights* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1925), p. 62. Schelling notes the influence of Lyly on Shakspere: "It is interesting to notice that in these two comedies, *LLL* and *MND* above all his others, have critics discovered the immediate example of Lyly on Shakespeare's conception of personage and conduct of dialogue."
most fundamentally Lylian of Shakespeare's comedies." According to Mincoff, "Shakespeare's most lasting debt involved both the very concept of comedy itself, and the structural pattern which blended romantic courtship and low-comedy scenes and witty repartee." Professor Mincoff concluded his address by saying: "Lyly opened the door for Shakespeare, and when he was forced to abandon the Lylian view he abandoned comedy."

A relationship between these contemporary playwrights, then, has been established, as well as an association of the moon imagery in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the moon myth, Endymion. It remains now to see how this lovely myth is handled by Lyly and by Shakespeare. It was suggested to the writer that Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a comic inversion of Lyly's *Endimion*. With this idea in mind of the courtly versus the folkloristic, these two plays will be analyzed as to plot structure in an attempt to discover in what ways Shakespeare's romantic comedy may be a parody of Lyly's court drama. The plan of this thesis is as follows: Chapter II will present a detailed analysis of the Endymion in Lyly's *Endimion*; Chapter III will examine in detail the Endymion in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.
CHAPTER II

ENDYMION IN LYLY

A -- Lyly's Borrowings from the Myth

John Lyly, born of a gentle family, educated at Oxford, and steeped in the tradition of the Italian Renaissance, sought during his life to become a favorite at the court of Elizabeth. Lyly gives evidence, by his use of allegory, as well as by his profuse employment of classical material in his personages, imagery and allusions—all characteristic of the masque—that he found his inspiration for his court comedies in the masques and allegorical devices which preceded him.

This form of dramatic presentation as defined by Soergel in his book on the English masque is "a setting, a lyric, scenic, and dramatic framework, so to speak, for a ball."¹

Being more specific in regard to the structure of a masque, Herbert Evans, in his treatment of this dramatic form, acknowledges it to be "a combination, in variable proportions of speech, dance, and song;" and its "essential and invariable feature is the presence of a group of dancers . . . called masquers"² whose function, according to Felix Schelling, is "the creation of


'an imposing show' by their gorgeous costumes and fine presence, enhanced by artistic grouping, and by the aids which decoration and scenic contrivance can lend to the united effect."

These spectacular productions were popular at court and among the nobility and were often presented to provide variety in courtly amusement, to honor the Queen on her visits to the provinces, to celebrate the wedding of a princeling, or to add color to some festive occasion.

The court allegory, *Endimion*, under discussion in this chapter, was patterned on the structure of the masque with the customary antimasque or grotesque interlude occurring between the acts of the masque. It is interesting to note that Lyly employs the elements of the Endymion myth in the masque part of his play which is a serious consideration of romantic courtly love—the life-long dream of Endimion's love for Cynthia. In direct contrast to the high seriousness of the masque, Lyly presents in his antimasque the low, fantastic, crazy love of old Sir Tophas for the ugly enchantress Dipsas, thus providing a ridiculous take-off on romantic love.

Lyly's plays, written in a graceful elaborate prose and enveloped in an atmosphere of elegance and refinement, were deliberately prepared to be performed for a courtly circle which, according to Thomas Marc Parrott, "was dominated by a cultured, proud, and pleasure-loving Queen."

From Ovid Lyly absorbed an extensive knowledge of mythology. It is little wonder, then, that he chose mythological subjects for his court comedies.

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3 Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama*, p. 94.


In all his mythological plays, however, the themes from classic myth and legends are "cleverly reshaped to catch the fancy of an Elizabethan audience." The mythological figures are so close to the courtiers and characters of Lyly's time that G. P. Baker says: "We are constantly tempted to see, in this or that figure, some well known person of the court, to hear in this or that speech, some sentiments according with known opinions of this or that notability." A study of Lyly's masterpiece of court allegory, Endimion, will show how he, thoroughly of the Renaissance, looking back to the classics, and stimulated by modern Italian thought, reshaped the ancient myth of Endymion to satisfy the intellectual courtly audience of his day.

In the discussion of Lyly's handling of the myth the following plan will be used: first, a consideration of the author's borrowings from the myth and his rearrangement of them, and secondly, his introduction of new material.

Dr. LeComte, in his dissertation, describes the moon myth Endymion as "slight and as elusive as a moonbeam" providing little in the way of incident. This observation explains, perhaps, why critics are agreed that the myth had little to offer Lyly in the way of plot.

According to LeComte, "Lyly has not so much used the ancient myth as the properties of the myth. He borrowed from it the names of two of his three chief characters [Endimion and Cynthia]. He borrowed the long sleep and Cynthia's kiss."
R. W. Bond agrees that "the classical myth afforded Lyly the bare suggestion of Endymion's slumber and the kiss of Cynthia, but it is obvious that these were insufficient materials for a play."\(^{10}\) Mrs. Josephine W. Bennett, in her article "Oxford and Endimion," prefaces her interpretation of Lyly's play as a political allegory with a reminder that although the play had its inception in the classical myth, Lyly "has preserved only the two chief characters and the central situation [that is], Endymion's sleep and the unique kiss with which Cynthia awakens him. The rest of the story he makes over to suit himself."\(^{11}\) The three points of comparison, therefore, in the play and the myth are, the names of the chief characters, the sleep of Endimion, and the kiss of Cynthia. An examination of how Lyly rearranged and reshaped this inherited material to suit his purpose can now be made.

Violet Jeffery, in her handling of Lyly's mythological plays, gives us a starting point for a discussion of the Endimion when she observes that Lyly "reduces gods and goddesses, and mythological characters to one level. They become not only human beings, but above all polished men and women of the court."\(^{12}\) In the light of this statement the moon-goddess, Cynthia, becomes in the play an earthly queen surrounded by members of her court who address her as "Your Maiestie" and "Your Highnesse" three times in Act III, twice in Act IV, and four times in Act V. Critics who consider the play a political allegory, though they differ in the identification of many characters, are in

\(^{10}\) Bond, III, p. 81.

\(^{11}\) FMIT, LVII (June, 1942), 363.

agreement that Cynthia represents Elizabeth. Lyly's retention of the name Cynthia in the 'traditional character of Queen of Chastity has a deep significance for him as a court poet. It was fashionable during his time for poets to refer to the Queen as Diana or Cynthia since she was the virgin queen. This classical name became a symbol for the Renaissance ideal of virginity, and when used with reference to Elizabeth was highly complimentary.

In the myth (treated in Chapter I), Cynthia is a goddess, the moon-goddess, in love with the mortal shepherd lad, Endymion. Lyly reverses this situation. His Cynthia is a mortal, an earthly queen, not a goddess, though she retains something of the character of a goddess in her remoteness. Endimion himself does not claim immortality for the person of Cynthia as one sees from his conversation with Tellus.

Tellus: Wilt thou make her immortal?
Endimion: No, but incomparable.

In his expression of praise of and devotion to Cynthia, however, he claims

\[\text{II.i.86-7}\]


\[14\text{Throughout this study, act, scene, and line numbers are taken from "Endimion," The Complete Works of John Lyly, ed. R. W. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), III.} \]
immortality for her affections and virtues: "... Cynthia I honour in all
humilitie, whom none ought, or dare adventure to loue, whose affections are
immortall, & vertues infinite." 15

Throughout the play Cynthia discharges the duties of an earthly ruler.
She responds to the salutation of "Your Maiestie" and "Your Highnesse."
Members of her court incur the displeasure of the Queen and are exiled or im-
prisoned. For her tatling tongue, Tellus, a lady in the Queen's court and her
rival as well, is banished to the Castle of the Desert. The Queen banishes her
with these words: "Presumptuous gyrl, I will make thy tonge an example of
unrecoverable displeasure. Corsites, carry her to the Castle in the Deserete,
there to remaine and weaue." 16 And again, at the suggestion of Panelion, a
lord of her court, Cynthia threatens to punish Semele, beloved of Eumenides,
with the forfeiture of her tongue if she speaks during the year, so spiteful
is her speech: "Semele, if thou speake thys twelue-month, thou shalt forfe
thy tonge." 17

In an effort to find a remedy for the sleeping Endimion, Cynthia
orders the lords of her court to search the world for it. Addressing Eumeni-
des, friend of Endimion, in her tone of authority she says:

Eumenides, if eyther the Soothsayers in Egipt, or the Enchanters in
Thessaly, or the Philosophers in Greece, or all the Sages of the worlde
can find remedie, I will procure it; therefore dispatch with al speeds;
you Eumenides, into Thessalia. You Zontes into Greece, (because you are
acquainted in Athens.) You Panelion to Egypt, saying that Cynthia
sendeth, and if you will, commandeth." 18

15II.i.96-98.
16III.i.40-42.
17IV.iii.72-73.
18III.i.46-51.
Contrary to the situation in the myth, Cynthia in the play is not in love with Endimion. Lyly has transformed him from a shepherd lad into a typical Renaissance courtier in love with his queen. Cynthia, far from loving Endimion, by her coldness and remoteness actually spurns his love, thus placing him in the category of the disdained lover—a distinctive feature of the code of courtly love. By his words and actions Endimion identifies himself as a romantic, love-sick courtier. A portion of his soliloquy to Cynthia shows him to be a victim of the love-melancholy of his day. As he speaks in praise of his lady, an essential in the courtly love code, he also laments his own inferiority: "O Fayre Cynthia! O unfortunate Endimion! Why was not thy byrth as high as thy thoughts, or her beautie lesse then heauenlie? or why are not thyne honors as rare as her beautie? or thy fortunes as great as thy deserts?"\(^{19}\)

And again: "I am ... that Endimion, whose eyes neuer esteemed anie thing faire but thy face, whose tongue termed nothing rare but thy vertues, and whose hart imagined nothing miraculous but thy gouerment."\(^{20}\)

According to the convention of the courtly love code, the lover was to prepare himself for the lady by deeds of valor. Endimion protests his desire to obtain Cynthia's love in face of grave danger: "There is no Mountain so steepe that I will not clime, no monster so cruell that I will not tame, no action so desperate that I will not attempt."\(^{21}\)

He whom love vexes eats and sleeps little and is constantly sad and sighing for the beloved. Endimion exhibits these characteristics, for he says:

\(^{19}\)II.i.1-4.

\(^{20}\)II.i.36-38.

\(^{21}\)II.i.6-8.
"Beholde my sad teares, my depe sighes, my hollowe eyes, my broken sleepe, my heauie countenance." In his lament to Cynthia, Endimion shows himself to be possessed constantly by thought of the beloved; another essential in the code of courtly love: "... remember my solitarie life, almost these seaven yeeres: whom haue I entertained but mine owne thoughts, and thy vertues? What companie haue I vsed but contemplation? Whom haue I wondered at but thee?

Haue I not spent my golden yeeres in hopes, waxing old with wishing, yet wishing nothing but thy loue?"

In the above quotation the reference to the solitary life shows a direct influence of the myth, in which the lad Endymion led a solitary existence on Mt. Latmus. Perhaps, in the play, this solitary life refers to a period when Endimion was absent from the court.

Endimion's love for Cynthia is one of devotion and admiration rather than a consuming passion. According to Parrott, "... Endimion may quite ... represent an ideal courtier, smitten with that fantastic blend of love and adoration which was a recognized fashion in the great Queen's days." Always Endimion shows his affection for Cynthia in terms of great timidity. He speaks aloud of her only when alone or in conversation with his best friend, Eumenides. In the presence of the queen herself Endimion manifests shyness. When Cynthia, after awakening Endimion from his enchanted sleep, questions him about his love for her, he admits his affection for her, but adds that he has hesitated at any

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22. II. 1. 11-12.
23. II. 1. 14-22.
time to call it love: "The time was Madam, and is, and ever shall be, that I
honoured your highness above all the world; but to stretch it so far as to
call it love, I never durst." In his timidity Endimion admits to Cynthia
that his devotion to her is based on "dutie, loyaltie, and reverence." He has
no intention of terming it love. There is no reference in the play to a pro-
posed marriage. From this it seems that Endimion is represented as a courtier
devoted to the cause of his queen. Although he manifests the characteristics of
a courtly lover, he is really in love with an unattainable ideal which the
queen represents. The love of Endimion for Cynthia, then, is platonic in char-
acter, represented in such a way that it preserves the character of Diana or
Cynthia as Queen of Chastity. In this respect Lyly departs once again from the
myth, for Violet Jeffery admits that "according to the original myth as handled
by Theocritus, Pausanias and Propertius, the love of Selene [Diana] and
Endimion was in no sense platonic and would not reflect credit upon the Queen
styled Diana . . . ."27

This brief consideration of the characters of Cynthia and Endimion
shows that Lyly simply borrowed the names of the mythological characters and
endowed them with the thoughts, words, and actions of typical members of the
Renaissance court circle, Cynthia representing the Queen and Endimion her
favorite courtier.

Borrowing again from the myth, Lyly makes use of the sleep of Endimion.
According to the myth, Diana, the moon-goddess, warmed by the beauty of Endimion,

25^V.iii.162-64.

26 Gayley, p. 149. The later classical and the modern poets have identi-
fied Diana with Selene, the more ancient goddess of the moon.

27 John Lyly and the Italian Renaissance, p. 96.
visited him each night and kissed him as he slept on Mt. Latmus. Some mythographers attribute the sleep of Endymion to Jupiter. They claim that, since Endymion was so honored by Diana's nightly visit, 'perhaps Jupiter gave him as a reward the choice of death or perpetual youth united with perpetual sleep.' Others feel that Cynthia herself cast him into the sleep to enjoy his beauty.

During this long period of inactivity, according to the myth, Endymion did not age nor did his fortunes suffer. His flocks increased and his lambs were protected from the wild beasts.

A study of the play shows the enchanted sleep of Endimion to be a pivotal point in the drama. The themes of Lyly's own invention are all connected with this long sleep of Endimion. The jealousy theme gave rise to the enchantment theme which resulted in Endimion's being cast into the sleep, and the friendship theme was instrumental in Endimion's restoration at the end of the play. The plot of Lyly's romance, however, compelled him to deviate widely from the simplicity of the myth in regard to the reason for the long sleep, the inducer of it, and the effects of this sleep on Endimion.

Endimion was cast into an enchanted sleep by the malice of Tellus, a well-born young lady at the Queen's court, who, in love herself with Endimion, resented his affection for Cynthia. Consequently, as Henry Gray in his study "A Possible Interpretation of Lyly's Endimion" says: "Lyly's romance makes it necessary that Tellus should find a sorceress to work her spell upon Endimion." The sorceress, Dipsas, then, cast Endimion into a magic sleep from which neither Art nor Nature could arouse him—only the kiss of Cynthia. LeComte points out that "critics agree that the long sleep on the lunary-bank symbolises the Queen's disfavor." 

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28Anglia, XXXIX (1916), 196. 29LeComte, p. 77.
The magic sleep which overtook Endimion lasted forty years, during which time Endimion became an old man. Endimion's love, like the object of his love, Cynthia, remained unchanged by the passage of time. It was she alone whom he recognized when the spell was broken: "... only divine Cynthia, to whom time, fortune, destiny, & death, are subject, I see and remember, and in all humilitie I regard and reverence."30 Others in the play retained their youth and were not affected by the passage of time.

In the myth, therefore, the sleep was induced by Cynthia or Jupiter as a reward; in the play it was induced by the enchantress as a means of revenge on the part of Cynthia's rival, Tellus. The consequences of the long sleep for Endymion in the myth were favorable—perpetual youth and protection for his flocks; those for Endimion in the play were unfavorable—old age and the loss of his friends until such time as the favor of Cynthia made him young again.

A final borrowing from the myth is the kiss of Cynthia. According to the myth, as stated before, Cynthia visited Endymion nightly and kissed him as he slept. The kiss did not awaken him, nor did Cynthia intend that it should. It was simply a token of her love and affection for the shepherd lad. In the play, on the contrary, the royal kiss is given only once, and it is not a symbol of love and affection but a sign of favor shown to a favorite courtier by his queen. The magic fountain had revealed to Eumenides, friend of Endimion, the secret of Endimion's awakening: "When shee whose figure of all is the perfectest, and never to be measured—alwaies one, yet never the same—still inconstant, yet never waveringshall come and kisse Endimion in his sleepe,

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30 v.i. 55-57.
Geron, husband of the witch, Dipsas, interprets the circle as "of all Figures the perfectest" and "Cynthia of all circles the most absolute." He entreats Eumenides to go to Cynthia and tell her of his successful quest, assuring him that "shee [Cynthia] that sent to finde meanes for his Endimion's safetie, will now worke her cunning." Upon learning that a kiss from her would wake Endimion, Cynthia graciously bestows "that which yet neuer mortall man could bost of heretofore, nor shall euer hope for heereafter." By this kiss, therefore, Cynthia does not manifest her love for Endimion but simply her favor. Cynthia's remark to Endimion following his profound expression of devotion and reverence for her strengthens the claim for the royal kiss as being a favor from the queen: "Endimion, this honorable respect of thine, shalbe christned love in thee, & my reward for it" One sees from these lines, too, that Cynthia permits Endimion to love her, but she will not openly return this love.

It was necessary for plot purposes that Endimion be overtaken by the magic sleep, but it was necessary for the restoration of all lovers to their intended mates that Cynthia awaken Endimion. Following closely on the royal kiss, all lovers are satisfied. Cynthia had remarked that "... sith Endimion is restored, wee will haue all parties pleased." Endimion acknowledges his passion for Cynthia and is therefore "vowed to a service, from which death

31 III.iv.155-158.  
32 III.iv.167-169.  
33 III.iv.183-185.  
34 V.i.23-24.  
35 V.iii.179-180.  
36 V.iii.207-208.
cannot remove him"; 37 Tellus confesses her revenge against Endimion, is pardoned and is united to Corsites, her jailer in the Castle of the Desert; Eumenides wins Semele by offering to sacrifice his tongue to ransom her. For this she considers him a faithful lover. Geron, exiled to the fountain for fifty years by Dipsas' intrigues, is now reunited to her, who at the command of Cynthia, has forsworn her Arte of Enchanting; and lastly, Bagoa, Dipsas' maid, turned into an aspen tree by the witch for revealing the truth of Tellus' plot, recovers her human shape and becomes the wife of the foolish Sir Tophas. It would seem from this that Lyly's borrowing from the myth, the kiss of Cynthia, was needed to resolve all the situations in the plot, which themselves lay outside the narrow scope of the myth.

37 v. iii. 242.
H — Lyly's New Material

It has been shown how Lyly reshaped the properties of the myth for his purpose. It now remains to discuss the new material he introduced. Lyly chose romantic elements that would appeal to a Renaissance court audience—a love-motif which in court circles would very likely involve a triangle and a jealousy theme, a friendship theme which would appeal to the Renaissance sense of the nobility of honor and friendship as superior to love, and the enchantment theme that would savor of the classics. Lyly introduces this new material and weaves it around the elements of the myth to construct a drama of court life.

Lyly introduces into the play a third principal character, Tellus, subject and rival of the Queen. Throughout the play she is represented on a plane comparable to that of the Queen. R. W. Bond says that one of the leading features about her is that "she is the object of general admiration and courtship ..." 38 Quotations from the play support this. Endimion admits that she is "faire," "wise," and "honorable," and further on he adds: "Was she not fortunate whom so many followed?" 39 Of herself Tellus says: "Endimion excepted, what is he that is not enamoured of my beautie?" 40 And again, Corsites, alluding to Tellus's popularity at court says: "I am sorrie so sayre a face shoulde bee subject to so hard a fortune, and that the flower of beautie, which is honoured in Courts, shoulde heere with in pryson." 41 Only in majesty does

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38 Bond, p. 89
40 IV.i.6-7.
41 III.ii.2-5.
Tellus yield to Cynthia as Endimion observes: "... thy Maiestie Cynthia al the world knoweth and wondereth at, but not one in the world that can imitate it, or comprehend it."^2

Endimion, also of the court, has given Tellus reason to believe that he loves her. When Tellus discovers, however, that Endimion prefers the Queen, she disregards the advice of her confidante, Floscula, and jealously plots revenge against Endimion. She resolves to turn him into a very dissolute young man and thereby bring down the Queen's displeasure upon him.

The jealousy plot at this point necessitates an enchantment theme, for Tellus, not able to win Endimion by beauty or wit, seems to be contemplating sorcery as a means of accomplishing her malicious purpose. Her confidential attendant, Floscula, remarks, in an attempt to dissuade her: "There cannot be a thing more monstrous then to force affection by sorcery, neither doe I imaginanie thing more impossible."^3 Tellus comes upon Dipsas, the old witch, who as amazing powers. On consulting Dipsas, she is told that no incantation can "plant affection where it is not, and ... supplant it where it is."^4 Dipsas admits she has no power "to rule harts," but she can "breede slacknes in loue, though never root it out." She promises Tellus "that all his [Endimion's] loue shall be doubted of by Cynthia" but further warns her that "this will weare out with time, that tredeth all things dowe but trueth."^5

By some magic Dipsas casts Endimion into a long sleep from which neither Art nor Nature can wake him. This is confirmed later in the play when Cyptes,

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^2II.iii.16-18.
^3I.iv.6-8.
^4I.iv.16-17.
^5I.iv.32-33 and 45-47.
a lord of Cynthia's court, assures her "that no Arte can vndoe it [long sleep], for that heaviness argueth a mallice vnremoueable in the Enchauntriesse and that no power can ende it till shee die that did it, or the heauens show some means more then miraculos." R. W. Bond remarks: "It is to be noted that the action of Dipsas against Endimion is undertaken with reluctance and purely at Tellus' prompting, 'for,' says Dipsas, 'from her gather wee all our simples to maintaine our sorceries . . . .' Dipsas' schemes are ruined in the end and only the mercy of Cynthia saves her; furthermore, her witchcraft is depicted as a hateful weapon. By presenting Dipsas in this light, Lyly seems to take a stand against "popular superstition and belief in magic." 

The malicious Tellus continues her intrigues even after being imprisoned by Cynthia for slandering Endimion. Cynthia at the time did not know Tellus' real machinations against him, these being revealed to her at the end of the play. In prison Tellus perseveres in her deceits and induces her enamoured jailer, Corsites, to perform an act hostile to Endimion and doomed to failure, with the promise that "you onelie shall possesse me as a lover, and in spight of malice haue me for a wife." Corsites, victim of her treachery, becomes the laughing stock to Cynthia and members of her Court when they visit the lunary bank and find him pinched and put to sleep by fairies. Here Lyly injects a bit of folklore into his serious play. It provides an occasion for song and dance customary in the masque form of drama. After awakening Corsites

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46 IV.iii.145-148.
47 Bond, p. 98.
48 Jeffery, p. 97.
49 IV.i.58-59.
and hearing his story, Cynthia admits publicly to her lords the jealous nature of Tellus: "Howe say you, my Lordes, is not Tellus alwaies practising of some deceites." Concerning the significance of the jealousy theme in this play, R. W. Bond holds that "... it is ... probable that the plot against Endimion is, chiefly, the author's device for linking together the different personages of his plot, while it serves to enlist sympathy for his hero, the favourite." 51

Fully conscious of the classical philosophy of friendship, Lyly, in his prose and in his drama, is a significant figure in the development of this theme. Before examining Lyly's treatment of it, however, a cursory glance at the ideas embodied in the classical theories and their revival in the Renaissance seems advisable.

Mills, in his comprehensive study of the friendship theme, provides the reference when he expresses Aristotle's analysis of the ideal friendship as found in Nichomachean Ethics, VIII, IX and Eudemian Ethics, VII:

The essentials are: a basis of virtue; a life of intimacy, even to the extent of living together; love for the person and character of the friend (a consequence of respect for virtue rather than for the accidental possessions and accomplishments); and a life of action for the benefit of the friend (since loving is better than being loved). Hence a person finds happiness for himself in activity for his friend. There is an identity of the two persons (one soul in two bodies). Such a friendship is durable, as it is based on virtue and reason, not on passing accidents. 52

Since Aristotle's theory is more definite than Plato's, Mills agrees that "the later theories of friendship, especially as they receive definite literary treatment in the sixteenth century, are more Aristotelian than Platonic." 53

50 P. 114-115. 
51 Bond, p. 98.
53 Ibid., p. 5.
Through the medium of translation and the printing of such works as Cicero's De amicitia (the locus classicus for all previous ideas on friendship), and De officiis as well as Erasmus's Adagia (1500), students and educated people of the first half of the sixteenth century had plenty of opportunity to become acquainted with the classical ideas of friendship. Thus there was a revival of interest in classical friendship thought following the period of the Middle Ages when there was no glorification of the friendship theme for its own interest. 54

In addition to the translations of the classics, the translation of the bulk of popular literature, according to Mills, "helped pass along some of the medieval ideas that, in the latter half of the sixteenth century came into conflict with, or joined with, the theme of classical friendship." 55 This commingling of romantic with classical elements is further emphasized by Mills when he observes that "in addition to the chivalric love thought that persisted straight on from the Middle Ages, a new current of courtly-love ideas, refined and expanded in Italy through the influence of Platonism, came in with the introduction of Italian influence and joined with influence of the immediate and direct Platonic thought that touched England as one aspect of the Renaissance." 56 Violet Jeffery concludes that Lyly was directly indebted to the Italian neo-platonic treatises for his material for the Endimion, not in his introduction and treatment of the friendship theme alone, but in the fact that he used the theme "as a necessary accompaniment of his treatment of love," 57 a method employed by his Italian predecessors.

54Mills, pp. 16-75. Here the author gives a detailed account of the views on friendship during the Middle Ages.
55Ibid., p. 79.
56Ibid., p. 110.
57Jeffery, p. 54.
It remains now to examine Lyly's use of the popular theme of friendship in *Endimion*. Mills gives us a hint as to its importance in the drama when, enumerating the classical and romantic elements united in the play, he stresses the idea that "the central crisis turns upon the question of friendship." 58

Eumenides, a lord of Cynthia's court, proves himself throughout the play to be a chivalrous and devoted friend of Endimion and a devoted lover of Semele. Early in the play he observes Endimion's distracted condition and follows him, in imitation of the classical idea of the friend sharing the troubles of his friend, "least in this fancie of the Moone, he deprive himselfe of the sight of the Sunne." 59

In the third act of the play this friendship becomes evident, for when Tellus and Semele make slighting remarks about Endimion, Eumenides reproaches them in defense of his friend, and they are all accused by Cynthia of wrangling. Eumenides begs pardon of the Queen but in the following words excuses himself on the basis of his friendship for Endimion: "... such is my unspotted faith to Endimion, that whatsoeuer seemeth a needle to pricke his finger, is a dagger to wound my heart." 60 Here again, Eumenides shares the adversity of his friend, and his "unspotted faith to Endimion" indicates that their friendship is based on virtue—another classical tenet.

Entering still further into the misfortunes of his friend, Eumenides becomes distressed at learning of Endimion's mysterious long sleep. He, exemplifying a life of action for the benefit of his friend, solicits Cynthia's aid

58 Mills, p. 154.
59 I.i.78-79.
60 III.i.21-23.
to restore Endimion. She agrees and sends her philosophers the world over seeking the remedy for the release of the sleeping Endimion.

The unselfish devotion to his friend entails on Eumenides a long absence from court at the bidding of Cynthia. In the course of his quest he comes upon Geron, exiled to the magic fountain by his wife, Dipsas. Upon hearing the purpose of Eumenides' mission, Geron counsels him to look into the magic fountain, assuring him that "who so can clearly see the bottom of thys Fountaine shall haue remedie for any thing." 61 The magic fountain would reveal its secret only to the faithful lover as Geron further remarks: "Who so ever can shedde the teares of a faythfull Louer shall obtaine any thing he would . . . ." 62 Gazing into the fountain, Eumenides sees engraved in marble these words: "Aske one for all, and but one thing at all," 63 and thus he is acclaimed a faithful lover. Lyly joins to the friendship theme the love element absent for the most part in previous friendship literature of the century. The fate of Endimion now rests upon Eumenides' choice of a favor from the fountain. Finding himself unable to make a decision between Semele, who possesses his love, and Endimion who deserves it, Eumenides seeks the advice of Geron. This old gentleman discourses at length on the superiority of friendship over love, reflecting definitely the classical views regarding the relative values of friendship and love:

Eumenides, release Endimion, for all things (friendship excepted) are subject to fortune: Love is but an eye-worme, which onely tickleth the heade with hopes and wishes; friendship the image of eternitie, in which there is nothing moveable, nothing mischeevous. As much difference as there is betwenee Beautie and Vertue, bodies and shadowes, colours and life; so great oddes is there between love and friendship.

61 III. iv. 22-23.
63 III. iv. 81-82.
Louve is a Camelion, which draweth nothing into the mouth but ayre, and nourisheth nothing in the bodie but lunges: beleue mee Eumenides, Desire dyes in the same moment that Beautie sickens, and Beautie fadeth in the same instant that it flourisheth. When adversitie flows, then loue ebbes: but friendship standeth stiffe in stormes. Time draweth wrinkles in a fayre face, but addeth fresh colours to a fast friende, which neither heate, nor cold, nor miserie, nor place, nor destiny, can alter or diminish. O friendship! of all things the most rare, and therefore most rare because most excellent, whose comforts in misery is [sic] alwaies sweet, and whose counsels in prosperitie are ever fortunate. Vaine loue, that only comming neere to friendship in name, woulde seems to be the same, or better, in nature. 64

"The problem," says Mills, "is not as in the 'Knight's Tale,' where two friends contest for the same lady; it is that of a man placed in a situation where he must choose between friendship and love."65 Impressed by the wisdom of Geron's words, Eumenides makes a noble sacrifice of his love to friendship and is instrumental in bringing about the restoration of Endimion. By double virtue of his truth as a lover and a friend, therefore, Eumenides learns from the magic fountain that Endimion can be awakened by the kiss of Cynthia. At the request of Eumenides, Cynthia coyly kisses the sleeping Endimion and awakens him. After recognizing Eumenides, Endimion praises his friendship as "immortall," and "not to be compared to the light affection of a woman."66 In this tribute to his friend, Endimion expresses the whole idea of the nobility of friendship. As a reward for recognizing the superiority of friendship to love, Eumenides is given happiness in love, for, at the command of Cynthia, Semele accepts him. Ilyly thus employs the friendship theme as a "capital dramatic situation."67

64 III.i.11-147.
65 Mills, p. 154.
66 IV.i.149-150.
67 Mills, p. 154.
A by-plot or antimasque affords fun as a contrast to the high seriousness of the main plot. Sir Tophas, the amusing braggart soldier, provides the pages with many opportunities for pranks and jokes. They play up to his boasting and find fun in mockery. At his entrance he pompously boasts of his martial exploits: "I kil by the dosen and haue for euery particular adversarie a peculliar weapon."68 One smiles at learning his victims to be birds and fish. Tophas displays his learning but usually he is defeated in a battle of wits. He scorns the love of the maids in waiting at Court, claiming love to be for weaklings, "for such men as can digest nothing but milke."69 In the very next act, however, Tophas succumbs to the love disease himself and is infatuated with the old enchantress, Dipsas. Tophas adopts the Petrarchan pose of a courtier, sighs for love of his lady, and writes silly sonnets in her praise.

The high point of burlesque occurs when Iyly puts into the mouth of Tophas a seemingly rapturous apostrophe to Dipsas, in which he exaggerates, not the beauties of the lady, but her defects:

0 what a fine thin hayre hath Dipsas! What a prettie low forehead! What a tall & statelie nose! What little hollowe eyes! What great and goodly lypes! Howe harmlesse shee is beeing toothlesse! her fingers fatte and short, adorned with long nayles like a Bytter! In howe sweete a proportion her cheeckes hange downe to her brests like dugges, and her pappes to her waste like bagges! What a lowe stature shee is, and yet what a great foote shee carryeth! Howe thrifty must she be in whom there is no waste! Howe vertuous is shee like to be, ouer whom no man can be ielous.70

R. W. Bond claims this passion of Tophas for the ugly Dipsas to be a parody of Endimion's love for the unattainable and ideal beauty which was Cynthia.71

68 I.iii.65-66.
69 II.ii.31.
70 III.iii.52-60.
71 Bond, p. 7.
According to Daniel Boughner in his article "The Background of Lyly's Tophas," "... the adventures of Tophas lie outside the main action of the play." The whole sub-plot or antimasque, however, is connected with the main plot or masque by Tophas' ridiculous passion for the old witch Dipsas who functions as the connecting link. At the close of the play Tophas is mocked again and frustrated in his love for Dipsas when her husband, Geron returns, but he turns his attentions to Bagoa, Dipsas' maid, restored by Cynthia from an aspen tree to human shape. He cares not whether she be "true love or false, so she be a wenche ... ." This antimasque, then, provides balance for the play and a soft, smiling, thoughtful laughter rather than a loud, spontaneous one, for Lyly was ever mindful, even in the farcical parts of his play, of the society of cultivated men and women to which he appealed.

In summary, Lyly borrowed three elements from the ancient myth; the names of his two main characters, the long sleep, and the kiss of Cynthia, reshaping them to suit his own purpose. To these borrowings he added material of his own invention; the jealousy, friendship, and enchantment themes which he colored with his Euphuistic English style in an effort to present a dignified drama of the contemporary happenings of the inner court circle. In the drama the mythological element is so overshadowed by the court element that Bond sums ...
up Lyly's use of the Endymion myth thus: "He has, therefore, woven round this beautiful picture [Endymion on Mt. Latmus] a drama of Court life, which has no place, nor counterpart at all in the classical myth." 75

In the following chapter a consideration will be made of Shakespeare's apparent use of this same myth in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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75 Bond, p. 81.
CHAPTER III

ENDYMION IN SHAKESPEARE

In 1932 Hector Genouy contributed a rewarding study to the body of Shakespeare scholarship entitled "Considerations sur Le Midsummer Night's Dream de Shakespeare." The entire article is pertinent to this thesis since the author designates Lyly's plays as a source for the themes of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Although some critics have claimed Shakespeare to have borrowed from Chaucer, Green, and some old ballads, Genouy has the following to say:

"Mais ce que l'on ne dit pas—et qui pourtant a plus d'importance qu'une sèche énumération de noms que Shakespeare aurait empruntés à droite et à gauche, c'est que le Midsummer night's dream est en relation étroite avec les masques et comédies de cour dont Sidney, Peele et Lyly furent les représentants de 1578 à 1605."

Again, placing special emphasis on Lyly as a direct inspiration to Shakespeare, Genouy asserts: "... il [Shakespeare] avait en mémoire ou sous la main les drames de Lyly, et c'est encore là qu'il faut chercher les sources de son inspiration."

All the themes in A Midsummer Night's Dream were not fully developed in Lyly's plays, but Genouy is of the opinion that Shakespeare borrowed freely from several of his plays, namely, Gallathea, Endymion, and Midas. In Gallathea he observes that the subject differs from the Dream, but it furnishes

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1 *Revue de l'enseignement des langues vivantes*, XLIX (1932), 299.

an interesting comparison: "... dans l’une et l’autre pièce les deux jeunes filles quittent la ville pour fuir vers le bois."\(^3\) Other parallels are cited from the same play. In the *Endymion* "il est question (acte IV, Sc. 3) de quatrre fées qui dansent et chantent, et endorment Corsites."\(^4\) Even the idea of the translation of Bottom finds its counterpart in Lyly:

> Enfin l’idée de coiffer Bottom d’une tête d’âne vient incontestablement du souvenir de cette autre pièce de Lyly, *Midas*, où (acte IV, Sc. 4 et acte V) il est longuement question de cette métamorphose du roi de Phrygie, accomplie par le malicieux Apollon.\(^5\)

Genouy summarizes his claims for Shakespeare’s debt to Lyly with special reference to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as follows:

> Il est donc impossible de ne pas reconnaître dans le *Midas* de Lyly, la première partie de la pièce, celle qui a trait aux Jeunes amoureux et au monde des fées, l’influence immédiate de Lyly, ses procédés dramatiques et, par instants, les paroles mêmes de ses personnages, et il est surprenant que cette influence n’ait pas été jusqu’ici mise en lumière.\(^6\)

By relating the plot themes of the *Dream* not only to Lyly’s *Endymion* but also to his other court comedies, Genouy strengthens the relationship between these two playwrights and establishes a solid foundation for making a comparative study of the Endymion myth in the two plays.

Shakespeare, it is thought, wrote *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to grace some grand court wedding, for this play contains all the elements which the guests would expect to find in a wedding play: an interesting and happy love story, with songs and dances; some whimsical foolery, making fun of lovers and their love stories; deities of classical mythology, and something very pretty

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\(^3\) Genouy, p. 300.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 301.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 302.

\(^6\) Ibid.
about Queen Elizabeth. It is interesting to note that Shakespeare, although he disliked flattery, managed to introduce a few lines of courteous compliment to the Queen:

And the imperial votress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.

II.i.163-164.7

How concise is Shakespeare's compliment as compared with Lyly's Endimion, a long, elaborate compliment to the Queen! Gibson suggests that Shakespeare really makes the Queen the center of the play; that he purposely introduces various love troubles and intrigues into the lives of the mortals and the fairies to emphasize the fact that the Queen was "fancy-free" from such marital difficulties, "thereby raising the virginity of the Queen in sublime grandeur above both mortals and fairies."8

A Midsummer Night's Dream is more of a poem than a play—beautiful in its pageantry, splendor, and completely lyrical tone. Four plots are in progress; the love story of Theseus and Hippolyta form the framework for the spectacle; the story of the two pairs of lovers and their cross-love forms the central theme, and, according to Hardin Craig, "is treated with such lightness of touch, such conventionality of style, such suggestion of youthfulness, that in spite of its threatened griefs, it is not to be taken too seriously."9 Into the frame, the masque of the play, the comic antimasque is inserted, this being

7Throughout this study, act, scene, and line numbers are taken from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. George Lyman Kittredge (Chicago: Ginn and Company, 1936).
8John Paul Gibson, Shakespeare's Use of the Supernatural (London: Cambridge University Press, 1908), p. 120.
divided between the rustics and the fairies. The Pyramus and Thisbe travesty prepared by Bottom and the mechanicals is designed for the wedding of the royal couple. The fairy plot of Oberon and Titania ties all the others together and unifies them into an organic whole.

In order to appreciate fully Shakespeare's treatment of the myth in Lyly, it would be profitable to consider first his relation to the myth itself.
A -- Shakespeare's Borrowings from the Myth

There is evidence in the play that Shakespeare uses the Endymion myth, although there is no mention of the myth by name nor any identification by name of the characters of the Dream with the characters of the myth. To recall briefly the elements of the myth: it is the only outstanding moon myth, encompassing the great themes of love, sleep, death, immortality, and divine intercourse; a goddess, Cynthia, is in love with a mortal shepherd lad, Endymion; Endymion is cast into a perpetual sleep united with perpetual youth; the goddess visits him each night and kisses him as he sleeps.

Shakespeare has located his play in an enchanted moonlit wood. The gorgeous moon imagery is concentrated in the very center of the play and permeates the whole drama. In the opening lines of the play, Hippolyta, whose wedding to Theseus forms the framework for the entire drama, announces that the new moon will be a witness to their wedding:

Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.

I.1.7-10.

The next new moon was to have significance for Hermia, who on that day was to choose to wed Demetrius or to be ostracized from society. Theseus, who will judge her decision, counsels her to

Take time to pause; and by the next new moon--
The sealing day betwixt my love and me
For everlasting bond of fellowship--
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
Or on Diana's altar to protest
For aye austerity and single life.

Titania identifies the fairy frolic with the moonlight hours:

If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us.

II.i.140-141.

Among the other services to be rendered to her enamoured lover, Titania orders her fairies to

. . . pluck the wings from painted butterflies
to fan moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.

III.i.175-176.

Titania speaks of the paleness of the moon as an unpropitious sign:

Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And through this distemperature we see
The seasons alter.

II.i.103-105.

Oberon refers to the moon in telling his vision to Puck:

That very time I saw (but thou couldst not)
Flying between the cold moon and the earth
Cupid, all arm'd.

II.i.155-157.

This profusion of moon images would seem to suggest and strengthen the notion that Shakespeare was acquainted with the moon myth Endymion and possibly had it in mind when composing his dream play.

To be sure, the great themes of the myth, with the possible exception of death, are present in the fantasy and are handled by the poet in a charming manner. As for love, Frank Sidgwick predicates that the whole play is devoted, to the "comic aspect of love, its eternal youth and endless caprice, laughing
at laws and laughed at by the secure."\(^{10}\) The central action of the play is the story of a pair of distracted lovers, set at cross-purposes by the mischief and mistake of Puck. Parrott justly remarks that "the dominating idea is that of the irrational nature of love, ... presented in its most fantastic form in Titania's dotage on the 'translated' Bottom."\(^{11}\)

It is obvious from the title of the play that the theme of sleep is of paramount importance. J. B. Priestly observes that "A Midsummer Night's Dream has all the character of a dream; its action is ruled by caprice and moonlit madness; its personages appear to be under the spell of visions or to walk and talk in their sleep: ..."\(^{12}\)

In this play there are no gods and goddesses of classical antiquity, no Cynthia, no Endymion, but a Fairy King and a Fairy Queen. The immortality of the fairies is made clear from several passages in the play. Bottom is addressed by the fairy with this greeting: "Hail mortal!" (III.i.178), which would indicate that the fairy himself was immortal; Titania speaking of the changeling's mother implies the same idea:

\begin{quote}
But she, being mortal, of that body did die,
And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
And for her sake I will not part with him.
\end{quote}

II.i.135-137.

Puck, laughing at Helena and Demetrius, exclaims:

\begin{quote}
Lord, what fools these mortals be!
\end{quote}

III.ii.115.


Titania, when waking beneath Oberon's spell, falls in love with the 'translated' Bottom and addresses him as "gentle mortal" and promises:

I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

III.i.163-164.

Also, after being released from the charm, Titania entreats Oberon:

Come my lord, and in our flight
Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.

IV.i.102-104.

The last important theme of the myth echoed in the Dream is divine intercourse. Shakespeare's divinities, the elves and fairies of the enchanted forest, intermingle with the humans on a scented summer night under the gentle light of the moon. Although Shakespeare pictures this close association of spirits and mortals, he "never allows us to forget the gulf between them—that they live in different worlds governed by different laws." Gibson excuses the apparent immorality of Titania's becoming enamoured of Bottom by admitting that it happens "only after a very special spell has been cast over her." The presence of these great themes in the play would seem to offer an association of A Midsummer Night's Dream with the myth. Another clue to Shakespeare's familiarity with the legend is gleaned from a study of the Titania—Bottom episode where the poet handles the idea of the goddess in love with the mortal. This point will be expanded in the discussion of the Dream as a parody of the myth in Lyly's Endimion. The enchanted sleep of Endymion found its way

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14Gibson, p. 98.
into Shakespeare's fairyland, too, but it endured for one night instead of forever as in the myth. In the foolish caressing and kissing of the ass-pated Bottom one recognizes the kiss of the goddess, another borrowing from the myth.

These illustrations show that Shakespeare was not only acquainted with the myth, but that he actually borrowed some of the elements from it: references to the moon, the goddess-mortal idea, the long sleep, and the kiss.

The Endymion myth itself is slight but beautiful in its simplicity. In the analysis of Lyly's play, treated in Chapter II, it was pointed out that although Lyly's Cynthia was not immortal, she retained the qualities of a goddess and her relations with Endymion were always reserved and dignified—almost cold. A conclusion might be drawn from an examination of Lyly's play that the author exhibits a serious handling of the myth in the masque of his play, and that the burlesque element has no place in it.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, as a great comic artist having frequent recourse to parody and burlesque, handles the goddess-mortal relationship in the comic antimasque of his dream play, in the Titania-Bottom episode. This reversal of situations—the myth in the masque of Lyly against the myth in the antimasque of Shakespeare intimates that Shakespeare will parody the myth in Lyly, for it is the nature of an antimasque to parody. It is true that Shakespeare's antimasque parodies the more serious part of A Midsummer Night's Dream (if any part of it can be called serious), but it seems to burlesque the myth in Lyly's masque, too. The very fact that Shakespeare handles the myth in the comic portion of his play would indicate that he is smiling at the seriousness of the classic myth.
3 — Shakespeare’s Use of the Myth in Lyly

It remains now to examine *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in relation to Lyly’s *Endimion* in an attempt to see how Shakespeare parodies the myth in the court drama.

From an examination of the two plays there is indication of several general similarities. In regard to their structural framework, both are court plays with a more or less serious masque interspersed by the comic relief of the antimasque. It was shown in the preceding chapter that Lyly’s play was strictly for the court audience, as the refined and the educated only could recognize the images and allusions in it. Shakespeare’s masque, although it has courtly interest, also has popular appeal. Stratford offered him many of his situations, characters, fairy lore and descriptions.

There is a court setting in both plays. In Lyly it is the court of Cynthia exhibiting all the formality of the English Court. The Queen is surrounded by Tellus, a lady of her court, Scintilla and Favilla, her maids-in-waiting, and her courtiers, Endimion and Eumenides with their pages, Dares and Samias. Pernelon and Zontes, lords of the court, a Greek philosopher, Pythagoras, and an Egyptian soothsayer, Gypses, complete the court circle. The classical names and the types of characters in this court setting bespeak Lyly’s scholarly emphasis. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Shakespeare has created a fairy realm with a Fairy Court, a community of fairies ruled over by the princely Oberon and the fair Titania. Like earthly monarchs Oberon has his court jester, Puck, that “merry wanderer of the night” whose chief characteristics are roguery and sportiveness. Titania, too, has her fairy attendants, Peaseblossom, Cobweb,
Moth, and Mustardseed, whose names Sidgwick observes, suggest "grace, lightness, speed and smallness."¹⁵ This fairy court would strongly appeal to the popular audience, for the fairies, made familiar by common tradition, were much in fashion in Shakespeare's day. He founded his elfin world "on the prettiest of the people's traditions and has clothed it in the ever-living flowers of his own exuberant fancy."¹⁶

Finally, in both Endimion and A Midsummer Night's Dream the dream idea is present. Lyly treats it as an incident—Endimion sleeping on the lunary bank has a dream about the Queen, which upon awakening, he relates to her. It is not significant for the plot, but it provides material for the critics who are engaged in the allegorical interpretation of the play. With Shakespeare the dream idea is the whole substance of his play. In the woods where all is magic, music, and moonlight, the whole world of love is awry. Here in the forest are all the diversities that enter into "such stuff as dreams are made of"—the world of fact and fancy, the beautiful and the grotesque, the lofty and the low—all producing an atmosphere of confusion. The whole series of wild incongruities of which the play consists testifies to the dream idea. They could never have happened but in a dream. In the epilogue of the play Puck clearly tells the audience it has been dreaming:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this and all is mended—
That you have but slumb'red here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.

V.i.430-436.


Parallels abound in the play, but the genius of the poet has twisted or reversed them with the result that his treatment of the Endymion myth takes on the nature of a parody.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines parody as "a composition in prose or verse, in which the characteristic turns of thought and phrase in an author or class of authors are imitated in such a way as to make them ridiculous, especially in applying them to ludicrously inappropriate subjects; an imitation of a work more or less closely modelled on the original, but so turned as to produce a ridiculous effect."\(^{17}\)

In considering the element of parody in *Endymion* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the treatment of the moon is significant. Ilyly retains the romantic idea of the moon throughout his drama. Endymion desires to "possesse the Moone herselfe."\(^{18}\) Shakespeare, on the other hand, now and then reverses the situation and rejects the whole romantic concept of the moon. Titania and Oberon, for instance, having recently quarrelled, are "ill met by moonlight," not well met. A realistic domestic situation prevents them from enjoying the romanticism of a moonlit night. Realism appears again when the boorish peasants are to meet in the palace wood "by moonlight" to rehearse their play. During the rehearsal the mechanicals realize that in the play Pyramus and Thisbe must "meet by moonlight." Snout, in consternation, inquires: "Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?"\(^{19}\) Bottom, totally oblivious of the moon's romantic properties, suggests they look in the almanac to make sure: "A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out

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\(^{18}\) *Endymion* I.i.14.

\(^{19}\) *Dream* III.i.52.
moonshine, find out moonshine."²⁰ Quince, showing again the realism of the rustic mind, recommends that someone come in with "a bush of thorns and a lanthorn" and take the part of Moonshine. At the actual performance before the court of Theseus, Starveling, cast in the part of Moonshine, leaves nothing to the imagination of the audience when he introduces himself:

This lanthorn doth the horned moon present
Myself the man i' th' moon do seem to be.

V.1.248-249.

From the above passages it is clear that Shakespeare at times shows a complete lack of the romantic note associated with moonlight. By emphasizing the realistic, placing the moon on an earthly plane to make it look ridiculous, he appears to parody Lyly's serious treatment of the romanticism of the moon.

The predominant element of the myth under consideration is the immortal-mortal relationship. In the myth the moon-goddess is in love with the mortal shepherd lad Endymion; in Lyly the mortal Endimion loves the goddess-like mortal Cynthia; in Shakespeare the diminutive fairy goddess Titania, under the enchantment, loves the ridiculous mortal Bottom. A study of the various plot and character situations in the two plays will show that Shakespeare parodies the serious handling of the myth in Lyly's play.

In both plays the action begins as a result of jealousy. Tellus, in Endimion, jealous of Endimion's love for Cynthia, maliciously plots revenge against him: "Yes, I will entangle him in such a sweet nette, that he shall neither find the meanes to come out, nor desire it."²¹ Domestic troubles

²⁰Dream III.1.53-55.
²¹Endimion I.11.41-42.
ensue at the fairy court of Titania and Oberon. Puck, sprightly messenger of Oberon, discloses the nature of the difficulty in his warning to a fairy of Titania's train:

Take heed the Queen come not within his sight,
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,
Because that she, as her attendant, hath
A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king;
She never had so sweet a changeling.
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.

II.i.19-27.

The king and queen of the fairies do meet, however, and the quarrel continues. Oberon makes a final appeal to obtain the changeling, but Titania fearlessly stands up in opposition to him and resolutely refuses to part with the boy:

The fairyland buys not the child of me.

II.i.122.

At his wife's failure to acquiesce to his wishes, Oberon plots revenge, as Tellus did, but his bears no malice:

Thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.

II.i.146-147.

The humor of this whole situation lies in the jealousy of Oberon over a changeling, a mere plaything, while the object of Tellus' jealousy is a lover, a matter of more serious import. This jealousy gives rise to an enchantment theme in the two plays. The instrument of the enchantment, its effects, and the place where it occurs are treated differently by the two playwrights. The ugly old witch Dipsas, at the bidding of Tellus, casts Endimion into a long sleep from which nothing but the kiss of Cynthia can awaken him: "These eyes
must I seal up by Art, not Nature, which are to be opened neither by Art nor Nature." In the Dream, Oberon, king of the fairies, having a knowledge of the virtues of herbs and flowers, proposes himself to cast a spell over Titania with the love-in-idleness flower whose juice

\[
\text{on sleeping eyelids laid,} \\
\text{Will make or man or woman madly dote} \\
\text{Upon the next live creature that it sees.}
\]

II.1.170-172.

This spell will endure until such time as Titania releases the changeling to Oberon. She is self-willed, but he still holds sway over her, determined to release her only when she gives him what he wants:

\[
\text{And ere I take this charm from off her sight} \\
\text{(As I can take it with another herb)} \\
\text{I'll make her render up her page to me.}
\]

II.1.183-185.

A solitary lunary bank describes the place of Endimion's enchantment. With Lyly place is of no great importance; with Shakespeare it is everything. The wealth of his luxuriant imagination is poured forth as he pictures with exquisite delicacy the bower of the fairy queen. Oberon describes it to Puck as the place where he will enchant her:

\[
\text{I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,} \\
\text{Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows;} \\
\text{Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,} \\
\text{With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.}
\]

II.1.249-252.

Shakespeare's fanciful handling of these elements seems to throw into relief the prosaic nature of Lyly's.

Around the corner from Titania's bower the "rude mechanicals" are

\[22\text{Endimion II.iii.28-29.}\]
rehearsing a play. Chief among them is Bottom, the weaver. Before he arrives in fairyland to become the paramour of the Queen of the fairies, it would be well to examine his character as he appears before his "translation."

Parrott identifies Bottom as "Shakespeare's first fully realized, highly individual, and unmistakably human character." Priestly describes him as "a man of this world, comfortably housed in flesh, a personage of some note among the artisans of Athens ..." Bully Bottom obviously possesses a special quality which makes him the central figure in this most popular piece of fairyland literature. John Palmer suggests that the French have the word which defines this quality. "Bottom is débrouillard—equal to all occasions and at home wherever he may be. Nothing can disconcert or put him down or prevent him from being entirely and happily himself."

Leadership, realism, self-importance, enthusiasm, and fearlessness are among Bottom's outstanding characteristics.

He manifests his leadership at the first meeting of the players. Quince, although named master of the revels, is obviously no leader; he needs counsel and support. It is Bottom who, in a spirit of good-fellowship, suggests that Quince call the roll, describe the play, and assign the parts. Although Bottom takes the initiative at the rehearsal, he accepts Quince's authority and never questions his decisions. Palmer notes that Bottom does not "unduly press either himself or his suggestions on the company but yields with good grace to the common voice."

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24 Priestly, p. 2.
26 Ibid.
The realism of the rustic stands out in bold relief as he makes suggestions for the play. Cast in the part of Pyramus, Bottom must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. With his usual reply to every difficult situation, "I have a device to make all well," he offers a solution: "Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not kill'd indeed; and for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. This will put them out of fear." Again, Bottom agrees that "a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing." In order to avoid frightening the ladies, he advises the lion to tell the audience his name and entreat them "not to fear, not to tremble" that "he is a man as other men are." The selecting of characters for the moonlight and the wall are other examples of Bottom's realism.

Bottom has an inordinate opinion of his own powers. There is not a part in the play which he cannot and does not want to play. If he is conceited, it is probably due to the perpetual flattery of his fellow clowns who admit his genius without hesitation. When Bottom is lost in the woods, Flute exclaims: "If he come not, then the play is marr'd; it goes not forward, doth it?"

Quince attests to Bottom's importance by remarking that "he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens." Most noticeable among his good qualities is his enthusiasm. Bottom loves life and copes with it; he is willing to meet all occasions and to throw himself into any part that life offers him. Priestly points out that it is not

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27 Dream III.i.17-23.
28 Dream III.i.43-47.
29 Dream IV.i.5-10.
just Bottom's conceit that makes him want to play every part himself; it is his real interest in the drama. He could picture himself playing any part and "playing it in such a manner as to lift the audience out of their seats." When finally cast for the part of Pyramus, Bottom shows an eagerness to come to grips with the details of the part by focusing his attention on make-up: "What beard were I best to play it in?"

Fearlessness has a place in Bottom's character, too. Abandoned by his companions at night in the haunted wood, he sings and jests to show that he is not afraid: "I will walk up and down here, and will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid."

In spite of all his good qualities, however, Bottom is a real country bumpkin in his outlook. His many malapropisms are employed by the dramatist, of course, to produce a ridiculous effect.

While Titania sleeps in her bed of flowers, Puck's love of mischief equips Bottom with an ass's head and he tumbles, as it were, into fairyland, into the arms of the bewitched Titania. Here in fairyland with Titania and Bottom, where all is gossamer and moonlight, Shakespeare treats in reverse all the outstanding situations of the myth in Lyly's Endimion. The characters involved are Cynthia and Endimion and Titania and Bottom.

Lyly's queen is a goddess-like mortal bearing the name Cynthia; Shake-speare's immortal fairy queen bears the less classical name Titania. Perhaps the poet purposely avoided the use of such names as Cynthia or Diana, for they

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30 Priestly, p. 8.
31 Dream I.ii.93.
32 Dream III.i.126-127.
are associated with Queen Elizabeth. Titania's foolish conduct while under her enchantment is so ridiculous that had she been equated by name with Elizabeth, the play would have been more of an insult to the Queen than a compliment. Furthermore, Titania does not function in the capacity of goddess of chastity, married as she is to Oberon, King of the Fairies.

In retaining the name Endimion for his courtier, Lyly places him on the same romantic plane with the shepherd boy of the myth. Shakespeare must, of necessity, choose a prosaic name such as Bottom for Endimion's counterpart in the Dream, for he is as gross, earthy, and unromantic as Endimion is charming and romantic. How incongruous had Bottom borne such a poetic name as Endimion. Here, then, in the very choice of names, Shakespeare makes light of the serious romanticism of the myth in Lyly.

The position of the lover and the beloved in the two plays is significant in this series of reversals.

In Lyly's play Endimion is the wooer of the goddess-like queen, Cynthia. He woos her as it were, from a distance, for he would not be so bold as to call his affection for her "love" but rather a devotion, reverence, or admiration: "Such a difference that the Gods sette between our states, that all must be dutie, loyaltie, and reverence; nothing (without it vouchsafe your highness) be termed love."33 There is a seriousness and a dignity about Endimion's love for Cynthia. The situation is reversed in the Dream. Titania, the immortal Queen of the Fairies, does the wooing. There is nothing bashful about her manner of courting the most absurd clown that ever entered fairyland. Awakening from a sleep during which she has become enchanted, she finds herself enamoured of an ass--Bottom, the weaver, wearing the ass's head. It is a case of love at first sight. When Bottom sings, she thinks she hears an

33Endimion V.iii.168-170.
angel:

What angel wakes me from my flow'ry bed?

III.i.132.

Titania, far from being shy, as Endimion was, loses no time in protesting her love for Bottom--his voice, his shape, his intelligence and all:

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.
Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note;
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force (perforce) doth move me,
On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

III.i.140-151.

Bottom, then, a most unfit creature for a fairyland, no sooner makes his appearance than he is instantly accepted as the chosen lover of the Queen of the Fairies. Titania, under the spell of the juice of love-in-idleness, reserves her attentions and rapture for an absurd rustic. In her right senses she would never have tolerated the sight of him. Bottom is reluctant to stay in the woods, but Titania declares that he shall stay with her whether he will or not. The diminutive Titania shows her monstrous paramour every courtesy, promising him fairies to do his bidding and a bed of flowers to sleep on:

I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee;
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep;
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

III.i.160-164.

With queenly graciousness Titania instructs her fairies to "be kind and courteous to this gentleman." (III.i.167) What could be more ridiculous than to call this ass-crowned creature a gentleman? As part of her own manner of wooing Bottom, Titania takes every care to make him comfortable. She asks
if he wishes some music and concerns herself with what he would like to eat.
If incongruity is the essence of the comic, there is certainly no more incongruous situation than the scene in Titania's bower when Bottom with his large ass's ears, falls asleep in the arms of the dainty and doting Titania.
Robert Law, in his study "The pre-conceived patterns' of A Midsummer Night's Dream," reaffirms this idea: "... half the fun arising from the courtship of Bottom by the fairy queen lies in the very incongruity of the situation.
Titania in her senses would always be repelled by the crudeness of the rustic ass; her efforts to please him and speak his language are ridiculous because impossible." 34

Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!

IV.i.43-48.

By this silly fascination of the beautiful fairy Titania for the repulsive Bottom, Shakespeare parodies the highly serious love or admiration of Endimion for Cynthia.

It is true that Titania is made to look ridiculous in her love for Bottom, but it must be remembered that Shakespeare created her the essence of loveliness. Whether in her senses, as she consorts with Oberon in the fairy realm, or under the influence of the potion, as she lavishes her affections on her strange lover, she maintains a royal dignity and an airy courtliness. Shakespeare does not allow Titania's grace and beauty to be surpassed by Bottom's earthiness.

34 Studies in English (University of Texas, 1943), pp. 13-14.
Another idea from Lyly's play which Shakespeare employs in the *Dream* is the kiss. Lyly makes it a lofty element. It is the charm needed to release Endimion from his long sleep. The magic fountain reveals this secret to Eumenides: "When shee whose figure of all is the perfectest, and neuer to bee measured—alwaies one, yet neuer the same—still inconstant, yet neuer wavering—shall come and kisse Endimion in his sleepe, hee shall then rise; els neuer." 35 The "shee" of the prophecy is interpreted as Cynthia. It is an interesting observation that this kiss was given only once by Cynthia as a sign of favor emphasizing its sacredness and seriousness. There is no question of love involved.

In the *Dream* a direct contrast is apparent. Viewing Shakespeare's picture, the reader beholds the kiss reduced to a sentimental, comical affair, becoming part of a situation in which Shakespeare again brings together the most beautiful and the most grotesque to produce a whimsical effect. Having prevailed upon Bottom to stay in the woods as her lover, Titania lures him to her bower. Here in the most gorgeous of settings, the gracious queen of fairy-land caresses Bottom's "aimiable cheeks" and lavishes kisses without number on the "fair large ears" of her ass-crowned consort:

> Come, sit thee down upon this flow'ry bed,  
> While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,  
> And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
> And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

IV.i.14.

The juxtaposition of the fairy and the mortal in this instance results in an incongruity which destroys the serious nature of the kiss as pictured by Lyly.

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35 *Endimion* III.iv.155-159.
The long sleep, briefly treated with the jealousy theme earlier in this study, will be considered separately here to show how it, too, deserves a place among Shakespeare's inversions of situations in Lyly's play. A weirdness accompanies the witchery of Dipsas as she casts Endimion into the sleep; whereas a dainty sprightliness attends the mischief of Oberon and Puck as they enchant Titania and Bottom. The traditional "Ho! Ho! Ho!" of Robin Goodfellow can almost be heard as he makes his escape after fastening the ass's head on Bottom. Some of the particulars of the sleep can now be treated.

Endimion sleeps for forty years; Eumenides tells him so: "Thou hast here slept fortie yeeres ... and behold, the twig to which thou laiedst thy head, is now become a tree." During this time Endimion ages. Upon awakening he finds himself with "a gray beard," "hollow eyes," "a withered bodie," and "decayed lymes."

Titania and Bottom awake in their sleep, so to speak, and enjoy only one night together in fairyland, a midsummer night at that. There is no time for them to age, but indeed there is a transformation. Titania is out of her senses, though not physically changed; Bottom is beyond all recognition—half-man, wearing the ludicrous head-dress of an ass. With Endimion the change is expected after a long sleep of forty years; with Bottom it is unexpected and staggering.

Endimion leads a solitary life during his enchantment. Bottom, on the contrary, finds himself in "a forest peopled with sportive elves and sprites and fairies feeding on moonlight and music and fragrance; a place where Nature herself is preternatural; where everything is idealized even to

36 Endimion V.i.50-52.
37 Endimion V.i.47-48.
the sunbeams and the soil; where the vegetation proceeds by enchantment and there is magic in the germination of the seed and secretion of the sap . . . ."38 Sidney Lanier beautifully describes the activity of the little elves. They are at work "down in the kingcups and clover, killing cankers in the musk-rose buds, foraging for Bottom's honey-bags, distressing and blessing lovers."39 Here in the center of activity Bottom holds court with the queen of the fairies. The sleep element might be described as treading through Endimion but tip-toeing through the Dream.

The final and most important link in the chain of reversals is the consideration of Bottom as the antithesis of Endimion. Special emphasis will be placed on Bottom's position at the court of Titania, his manner of holding court, and his attitude toward the Queen of the Fairies.

Lyly casts Endimion in the role of a courtier. There is no incongruity here, for Endimion, handsome, charming, and romantic is in his proper setting as the Queen's courtier.

Bottom, too, is assigned a position at court. Shakespeare, however, has him, in his transformed state, bypass the courts of mortals and reign in the highest position of the fairy realm as King Consort to the Queen of the Fairies. Here at the court of Titania, Bottom is droll precisely because, as Priestly remarks, "he is a most prosaic soul called to a most romantic destiny."40 Shakespeare, it appears, parodies here the romantic character of Endimion by placing Bottom, who among his own rough companions in the woods

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40 Priestly, p. 5.
does not hold even the status of a shepherd, in a position at court which outranks that held by Endimion.

Against the background of the whole play which is steeped in an atmosphere of romance, honest Bottom the weaver appears anything but romantic. Nowhere in the play is his lack of romanticism more pronounced than in the scene where he holds court in fairyland. Priestly describes him as "a trade-unionist among butterflies, a ratepayer in Elfland." A consideration of Bottom’s court behavior and his attitude towards the queen will reveal him the antithesis of the romantic Endimion.

All of a sudden, on a midsummer night, Bottom finds himself in a situation most unexpected and far remote from his previous experience. He is ushered into the kingdom of the immortals who "have nothing earthly in their composition and are hardly to be distinguished from the quivering leaves and the mist of hyacinths, tiny creatures spun out of cobwebs and moonshine." Far from shrinking from the wizardries of the night, Bottom, in his new character of an ass with his "large fair ears" accepts the situation and acquits himself very creditably.

No sooner has the lovely Titania awakened from her sleep and confessed her love for Bottom, than he, with a ready wit, makes a profound observation on the disunion of love and reason, showing his tendency toward the didactic and the sententious: "Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days. The more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make them friends." To Titania's praise of his wisdom, Bottom coolly replies:

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41 Priestly, p. 5.
42 Ibid., p. 2
43 Dream III. i. 145-150.
"... if I had 't-ri ten enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn." Bottom takes the love of the Queen of the Fairies as a matter of course. In her presence he is completely at ease; nothing disturbs his equanimity. D. Wilson remarks: "His [Bottom's] cool prosaic commonplaces fit in with her [Titania's] rhythmical fancies as naturally as the dull grey of the dawn meets and embraces the sunrise ... "

Bottom meets the fairies appointed to wait on him, over whom he is now master, with his customary good-fellowship and geniality: "I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you." In the manner of royalty, Bottom turns to the next attendant: "Your name, honest gentleman?" His courtesy to these little elves is charming, but his walking and talking in the ass-head is what makes him supremely ridiculous—a kind of comic monster. In his greeting to the fairy, Mustardseed, Bottom identifies himself as the realistic "hempen homespun." His only thought is of a piece of beef with mustard, and he feels sorry for Mustardseed: "That same cowardly, giantlike ox-beef that devour'd many a gentleman of your house. I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now." In Titania's bower, Bottom is perfectly at home. The attentions of the fairy queen neither flatter nor fluster him. Endimion would have bent in reverent awe before Titania; Bottom scarcely recognizes her presence. There is no trace of romance in him.

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44Dream III.i.152-154.


46Dream III.i.185-200.
Bottom brings much of that which is himself into fairyland with him. The same enthusiasm with which he rehearses in the woods with his friends accompanies his assigning the various duties to the fairy attendants:

"Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipp'd humblebee on the top of a thistle; and, good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, monsieur; and good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not."

It is amusing to see the earthy Bottom making the delicate choice of a "red-hipp'd humblebee on the top of a thistle." His mispronunciation of the word "monsieur" and his delight in the "tongs and the bones" as his choice of good music are some of the humours of a bumpkin at court. Bottom scales the heights of asininity when he expresses to Titania his choice of food: "I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay." Hudson sums up the double role played by Bottom in the antimasque of the Dream as follows:

Bottom's metamorphosis is the most potent drawer out of his genius. The sense of his new head-dress stirs up all the manhood within him, and lifts his character into ludicrous greatness at once. Hitherto the seeming to be a man has made him content to be little better than an ass; but no sooner is he conscious of seeming an ass than he tries his best to be a man; while all his efforts that way only go to approve the fitness of his present seeming to his former being.

Although Bottom, under a spell, spends the night in a moonlit world of fairies, he does not lose his grip on reality. He is King Consort to a fairy—but also an ass and Nick Bottom, the weaver.

The essence of the parody of A Midsummer Night's Dream on Lyly's Endimion lies in the character of Bottom at the court of Titania. He is so

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47 Dream IV.i.10-16.
48 Dream IV.i.33-35.
49 Hudson, p. 274.
gross, homely, and unromantic that he could never under any circumstances be an Endymion, either in Lyly's play or in the myth itself, where beauty and romanticism characterize the courtier and the shepherd lad.

In summary, the parallels for parody in the two plays are as follows:

**Endimion**

1. Court circle of Cynthia
2. Moon idea--serious
3. Jealousy motif. Tellus is jealous of Endimion's love of Cynthia. She employs witch to enchant him--malice involved. Place of enchantment lacks color in Lyly.
4. Names of Cynthia and Endimion retained from the myth.
5. Cynthia is a goddess-like mortal, a queen. Not in love with Endimion.
7. Sleep--lasts forty years. Endimion ages--solitary life.

**Dream**

1. Fairy Court of Titania and Oberon
2. Moon idea--made ridiculous at times
3. Jealousy motif. Oberon jealous of Titania's love of the changeling, a plaything. No malice involved. Oberon casts Titania under a spell with flower juice. Place of enchantment beautiful.
4. Names changed to Titania and Bottom.
5. Titania--immortal--queen of fairies. Foolishly in love with Bottom when under the spell.
6. Kiss--a foolish demonstration of Titania's dotage on Bottom. A ridiculous thing in this play.
7. Sleep--lasts one night. Bottom transformed into an ass; Titania out of her senses. Life of great activity in the woods.
8. Bottom, a rustic, who under a spell is King Consort to the Queen of the Fairies. Not in love with her. Gross, earthy, unromantic. Antithesis of Endimion.

Whatever else it is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a comedy; therefore, humor is a necessity. Shakespeare uses the Endymion myth for the comic element, the Titania-Bottom episode, in his play, making it a parody of the myth as handled by Lyly in his romantic court comedy, *Endimion*. 
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study has been to discover in what ways A Midsummer Night's Dream is a parody or comic inversion of the Endymion legend as found in Lyly's court play Endimion.

In Chapter I, a brief account of the evidence showing Shakespeare's acquaintance with Greek myth was made as well as a cursory study of the existing scholarship which shows a relationship between Lyly's Endimion and Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. It was found that most scholars engaged in the study of this relationship of the two plays have concentrated their efforts on an interpretation of the allegory of them. Only one study related them on the point of parody. In this chapter also a consideration of classical myth and its popularity in the Renaissance has been made. The ballad, the pastoral, and the romantic epic were discussed as having been influenced by classical myth. A summary of the Greek myth "Endymion" together with several of its interpretations concludes the chapter. Scholars have not reached any general agreement as to which is the correct interpretation.

An analysis of the Endymion legend as found in Lyly's Endimion has been made in Chapter II. It has been pointed out that Lyly borrowed three elements from the myth: the names of his two chief characters, the long sleep of Endymion, and the kiss of Cynthia. To this inherited material he added several themes of his own: the jealousy, friendship, and enchantment themes which he handled in a manner to please a court audience.
Chapter III has been devoted to an analysis of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in relation to Lyly's *Endimion* to see how Shakespeare parodies Lyly's treatment of the myth. First, a study of Shakespeare's borrowings from the myth itself was made. It was discovered that he actually used several elements from it: the idea of the moon in his imagery, the important themes of love, sleep, immortality, and divine intercourse, the goddess-mortal idea, the sleep, and the kiss. Secondly, a comparative study with Lyly's play showed that Shakespeare used many of the same situations as Lyly but that he reversed them to produce a comic effect. The following parallels were noted: the moon idea, the jealousy motif, the goddess-mortal relationship, the names of the chief characters, the kiss, the sleep, and the Endimion-Bottom relationship. The examination of these points yielded enough evidence to conclude that Shakespeare was familiar with the Endymion myth itself, and that he had in mind the myth as treated by Lyly in his *Endimion* when he wrote the antimasque of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. 
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