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Jamie Paris

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Résumé de l'article

Les études de genre sur la comédie pastorale *Galatea* (1592) de John Lyly se sont principalement intéressées au potentiel queer de l'intrigue qui met en scène un travestissement de femme à homme (FTM). Bien que la critique ait souvent mis l'accent sur le rôle évocateur de l'amour homosexuel et de la fluidité des genres au sein de la pièce, elle a sous-estimé l'importance de la masculinité hégémonique et du déterminisme biologique des genres. Neptune, Tityrus et Melibeus, par exemple, entrent en compétition les uns avec les autres dans la manière dont ils vivent leur masculinité. Leur conception de ce que signifie être un homme est assez rigide et fait l'objet d'une surveillance de la part des autres hommes de la pièce. Qui plus est, bien que Phillida et Galatée deviennent queer lorsqu'elles tombent amoureuses l'une de l'autre, à l'ouverture de la pièce, elles conçoivent le genre comme naturel et immuable ; ce n'est qu'après que Vénus ait proposé de réaliser le “non-possible” (5.3.154) en transformant l'une de ces deux femmes en homme qu'elles en viennent à considérer le genre comme étant susceptible de changements. Cet article s'appuiera sur la théorie de la masculinité hégémonique de R. W. Connell pour soutenir que Neptune représente une formation rigide de la masculinité hégémonique, et que Melibeus et Tityrus représentent une forme ascendante de masculinité hégémonique.

“What condition will not miserable men accept?”: Hegemonic Masculinity in John Lyly’s *Galatea*¹

JAMIE PARIS

Corpus Christi College at the University of British Columbia

Studies of gender in John Lyly’s pastoral comedy Galatea (1592) have primarily focused on the queer potential of the female-to-male (FTM) crossdressing plot. While the critical focus on same-sex love and gender fluidity in the play has been evocative, it has understated the importance of hegemonic masculinity and biological gender determinism in the play. Neptune, Tityrus, and Melibeus, for example, reveal that their ways of being male are actually in competition with each other, quite inflexible, and closely monitored by the other men in the play. Moreover, while Phillida and Galatea become queer when they fall in love with each other, they begin the story with a view of gender as natural and immutable; they come to see gender as mutable only after Venus offers to perform the “impossible” (5.3.154) to turn one of them into a man. This article will use R. W. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity to argue that Neptune represents a rigid formation of hegemonic masculinity, and that Melibeus and Tityrus represent an ascendant form of hegemonic masculinity.

Les études de genre sur la comédie pastorale Galatea (1592) de John Lyly se sont principalement intéressées au potentiel queer de l'intrigue qui met en scène un travestissement de femme à homme (FTM). Bien que la critique ait souvent mis l'accent sur le rôle évocateur de l'amour homosexuel et de la fluidité des genres au sein de la pièce, elle a sous-estimé l'importance de la masculinité hégémonique et du déterminisme biologique des genres. Neptune, Tityrus et Melibeus, par exemple, entrent en compétition les uns avec les autres dans la manière dont ils vivent leur masculinité. Leur conception de ce que signifie être un homme est assez rigide et fait l'objet d'une surveillance de la part des autres hommes de la pièce. Qui plus est, bien que Phillida et Galatée deviennent queer lorsqu'elles tombent amoureuses l'une de l'autre, à l'ouverture de la pièce, elles conçoivent le genre comme naturel et immuable ; ce n'est qu'après que Vénus ait proposé de réaliser le “non-possible” (5.3.154) en transformant l'une de ces deux femmes en homme qu'elles en viennent à considérer le genre comme étant susceptible de changements. Cet article s'appuiera sur la théorie de la masculinité hégémonique de R. W. Connell pour soutenir que Neptune représente une formation rigide de la masculinité hégémonique, et que Melibeus et Tityrus représentent une forme ascendante de masculinité hégémonique.

1. A version of this article was first presented at the Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies, and several colleagues offered me useful feedback and encouragement. I would like to thank Patricia Badir, Glenn Clark, and Erin Lindenberg. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers at *Renaissance and Reformation* who helped me to focus and clarify the argument of the paper.

Studies of gender in John Lyly's pastoral comedy *Galatea* (1592)² have focused on the queer potential of the double female-to-male (FTM) crossdressing plot, a plot structure Lyly seems to have invented.³ Valerie Traub, for example, makes the play central to her study *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, using Cupid's line about forcing the nymphs to fall in love and practise "only impossibilities" (2.3.10) as the catalyst for her argument that the play participates in "a long heritage of female-female relations as *amor impossibilis*."⁴ Feminist and queer critics of the play like Denise Walen, Phyllis Rackin, and Theodora A. Jankowski have been insightful on the importance of androgyny and crossdressing in Lyly's innovative double FTM crossdressing plot.⁵ Rackin sees the play as destabilizing gender and sexuality, arguing that "For the girls and the gods in *Galatea*, gender is arbitrary, unreal, and reversible because the vantage point [of the gods] transcends the social to include the realm of fantastic imagination and spirit where androgyny is an image of human self-completion rather than an aberrant social category."⁶ While I take Rackin's point, her argument assumes that "gender" is synonymous with femininity in the play and misses the fact that men and male gods in the play

2. All citations to John Lyly's *Galatea* in this article are from Leah Scragg's Revels edition: John Lyly, *Galatea*, ed. Leah Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); hereafter cited in text. There is some debate about the spelling of the play and its titular character. I am following Scragg in spelling it "Galatea" and I have silently changed all instances of the spelling in this article accordingly.

3. While Lyly seems to have invented the double FTM crossdressing plot, the idea of the plot itself is loosely based on Ovid's Iphis and Ianthe, from book 9 of the *Metamorphoses*. Dating *Galatea* is somewhat difficult. According to Scragg, the play was likely written to be performed in the first Blackfriars, but there is no record of performance before Blackfriars closed in 1584. The play was registered at the Stations' Register in 1585, but the first record of production left to posterity was in 1588, when the play was performed at Greenwich by the Boys of St. Paul's (Scragg, "Introduction," *Galatea*, 16).

4. Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 6.

5. Denise A. Walen, "Constructions of Female Homoeroticism in Early Modern Drama," *Theatre Journal* 54.3 (2002), and *Constructions of Female Homoeroticism in Early Modern Drama* (London and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005); Phyllis Rackin, "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," *PMLA* 102.1 (1987); Theodora A. Jankowski, "'Where there can be no cause of affection': Redefining Virgins, Their Desires, and Their Pleasures in John Lyly's *Gallathea*," in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, ed. Valerie Traub, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 253–74.

6. Rackin, 30.

are passionately attached to being perceived *as men*. Gender is not imagined as arbitrary in this play once the social construction of masculinities is revealed. According to John Tosh, while masculinity is observed everywhere in culture, it can be difficult to study because of “its relative invisibility.”⁷ Once the different masculinities of the play become visible, we see that Galatea and Phillida may come to see their gender as fluid, but that the men in the play experience their gender as relatively rigid and inflexible.⁸

While the critical focus on same-sex love and gender fluidity in the play has been evocative, it has understated the importance of hegemonic masculinity in the play. According to Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard, R. W. Connell's work has become foundational for the historical study of masculinity because she explores the diversity and dynamism between different masculinities.⁹ Hegemonic masculinity happens, within a gender system, when men are made by distinguishing themselves from women and weaker men, such that “A culture which does not treat women and men as bearers of polarized character types, at least in principle, does not have a concept of [hegemonic] masculinity in the sense of modern European/American culture.”¹⁰ According to Connell, “at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted,” while other ways of being male are actively repressed.¹¹

For Connell, hegemonic masculinity “is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities,” and the interplay between ways of being male does not involve the elimination of subordinated masculinities.¹²

7. John Tosh, “What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *History Workshop* 38 (1994): 180.

8. I am not suggesting that my work is the first to deal with masculinity in the play. Christian Billing, for example, focuses on ways that Lyly maximizes the erotic potential of the adolescent boy actors in the play. His concern, however, is not with the masculinity of the fathers, nor with the daughters' attitude towards their fathers' masculinity. Christian M. Billing, *Masculinity, Corporality, and the English Stage: 1580–1635* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 30.

9. Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard, “What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500–1950,” *Journal of British Studies* 44 (April 2005): 277.

10. R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 252.

11. Connell, *Masculinities*, 77–81. Connell notes, elsewhere, that hegemonic masculinity is where one way of being male among a plurality of ways subordinates rather than eliminates other masculinities: R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 183–88.

12. Connell, *Gender and Power*, 183.

What is necessary is that hegemonic masculinity and its subordinated ways of being male all work together to maintain “practices that institutionalize men’s dominance over women.”¹³ In this play, Neptune represents a culturally exalted vision of hegemonic masculinity, while Melibeus and Tityrus represent a form of hegemonic masculinity that is being actively subordinated. Both ways of being male involve some level of domination over women and weaker men. As Connell notes, while hegemonic masculinity can be maintained by force and power, “ascendancy of one group of men over another [is not] achieved at the point of a gun,” since such a violent ascendancy is fundamentally insecure; for hegemonic masculinity to be secure, it must be “embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies and so forth,” such that its hegemonic structure takes on the force of an obvious and unchallengeable ideology.¹⁴ The way that the men of the village are willing to submit to Neptune and his desires demonstrates that they view his way of being male as being unchallengeable, but the fact that Tityrus and Melibeus are willing to hide their daughters shows that they are willing to risk challenging Neptune’s hegemony to avoid doing something they see as “unnatural” and “unreasonable” (4.3.5–6). The ideology behind a hegemonic masculinity is only in force when it seems natural and reasonable, but as soon as it seems unnatural, new forms of ascendant hegemonic masculinity will arise to replace an older way of being male with one that seems more natural.

There is a family resemblance in this play between hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy. As Connell notes, women, and especially women who identify with emphasized femininity, may not feel particularly oppressed by hegemonic masculinity, since it involves “a successful collective strategy in relation to women” that reinforces patriarchy and obligatory heterosexuality. While hegemonic masculinity can involve toxic masculinity, it is typically maintained through ways of being male that imply that men can provide for women materially and socially.¹⁵ In this way, while not all hegemonic men are

13. Connell, *Gender and Power*, 184.

14. Connell, *Gender and Power*, 184.

15. When Connell discusses media images of hegemonic men, she points to John Wayne and Sylvester Stallone. These are large, muscular men who can “protect” women and who are frequently represented as men whose jobs involve protecting women and weaker men. They are both “everyman” and they represent models of masculinity that the average man simply cannot attain. Connell’s point is not that

in positions of power or heads of households, hegemonic men are frequently represented in popular culture as powerful and prosperous men who can care and provide for women and weaker men. Feminist philosopher bell hooks defines patriarchy as “a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that domination through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence.”¹⁶ Using psychological terrorism and violence to maintain hegemonic masculine power in the play coincides with an insistence on rigid, God-given gender norms, and thus with men (and women) who are willing to fight for the rigidity of those norms to preserve what political, social, or religious power they have within a given field of gender. The challenge of the fathers to maintain paternal control over their daughters prompts Neptune to execute his will through force, and this use of force makes the “obviousness” of his divine right less secure. What is at stake in the fathers’ plots to “overreach” Neptune by hiding their daughters, then, is a conflict between two different ways of being male, and the need for Neptune to actively repress an ascendant way of being male before it becomes a threat to his cultural hegemony.

1. Shame and emergent masculinity

Neptune uses the virgin sacrifice as a cultural means to demonstrate his power, since the sacrifice encourages the men of the village to feel ashamed and helpless. Consider, for example, the way that the Augur speaks about Neptune. He tells the men of the village that it may seem “against nature to sacrifice [their] children,” but that it is “against sense to destroy your country” (4.1.4–5). He acknowledges that Neptune is “pitiless to desire such a prey” but that if Neptune does not “have his right,” the men of the village will not “have [their] quiet” (4.1.15–16). Before the sacrifice, he tells the men to “Bring forth the virgin, the fatal virgin, the fairest virgin, if you mean to appease Neptune and preserve your country” (5.2.1–2). Repeating the term “virgin” three times places

every hegemonic man is represented as a protector and a provider; rather, she is suggesting that this emphasis on protection and provision is part of how hegemonic masculinity comes to be seen as an idealized way of being male. Connell, *Culture and Power*, 183–84.

16. bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 18.

emphasis on the term, reminding the fathers of how valuable and innocent Neptune's prey is, and in turn how helpless they are to prevent Neptune from taking his right. Neptune is a powerful and unreasonable tyrant ruler, and the men of the village are compelled to sacrifice to him or face his wrath. As Peter Saccio notes, Neptune first flooded the village as a punishment for a previous "sacrilege" and "In order to secure remission of the flood, a quinquennial homage to Neptune, in the form of the less devastating but not less horrible virgin-sacrifice, [is] established."¹⁷

To appease Neptune, the men of the village must perform an act of submission to an angry deity, whereby they agree to sacrifice "the fairest and chastest virgin in all the country" (1.1.48) to be devoured by an Augur as a peace offering to Neptune (1.1.50–51). As Galatea notes "What condition will not miserable men accept?" (1.1.45). The sacrifice encourages fear and submission, compelling the men of the village to stay miserable and obedient to the will of an arbitrary and angry deity. The sacrifice creates a socially-crippling distinction between categories of men, whereby Neptune can demonstrate his dominance by demanding a virgin sacrifice, and the fathers must demonstrate their submission by offering their daughters for devouring. The plot thus turns on two shepherds refusing to "unnaturally" sacrifice their daughters to a tyrant god. Neptune is outraged that "silly shepherds" (2.2.18) and shameful "swains" (2.3.26) dared to attempt to overreach him.¹⁸ It is in this sense that I read Neptune as the hegemonic man of the play. Hegemonic masculinities are normative masculinities but not "normal," in that very few men are able to embody a hegemonic ideal. Hegemonic masculinity "require[s] all other men to position themselves in relation to it" and while hegemonic masculinity is not synonymous with violence, it is "supported by force" and its ascendancy is "achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasions."¹⁹ Neptune, thus, attempts to subordinate the fathers while establishing his dominance through a cultural institution designed for men to perform submission to his godhead.

17. Peter Saccio, *The Court Comedies of John Lyly: A Study in Allegorical Dramaturgy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 115.

18. According to the *OED*, a "swain" is a man of low rank, or who would serve other men. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "swain" (n. 1 and 2), accessed 1 August 2017, oed.com.

19. R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society* 19.6 (2005): 832.

Tityrus and Melibeus represent a subordinated form of hegemonic masculinity in the play. According to Connell, “Hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women.”²⁰ Tosh argues that hegemonic masculinity “makes socially crippling distinctions not only between men and women, but between different categories of men—distinctions which have to be maintained by force, as well as validated through cultural means.”²¹ In *Galatea*, if the fathers represent a subordinated form of masculinity that privileges love for one’s daughter over a fear of divine punishment, Neptune represents a hegemonic ideal that uses force to compel obedience.

Consider, then, the story that Tityrus tells Galatea about Neptune’s temple, and what it tells us about the ideologies of masculinity in the play. Apparently, a community of farmers and fishermen dedicated a temple to Neptune and offered “sacrifice by fire to get safety by water, yielding thanks for perils past and making prayers for good success to come” (1.1.19–22). This pious form of life would have included a form of masculinity whereby men live in some harmony with Neptune, freely offering sacrifices as signs of submission to the god of the sea in exchange for safety on the waters. But, when the Danes came, they represented an emergent ideology that did not care about Neptune and pulled down his temple, angering Neptune so much that he destroyed the town through inundation, taking away from the men of the village the ability to farm and fish (1.1.24–38). After the Danes left, those who remained had to pay the price of their impiety: a virgin sacrifice every five years (1.1.46). In this way, Neptune re-establishes his hegemonic dominance over the men of the village by making them take up a religious practice designed to shame them, and in turn he teaches the men to submit to his will, thereby subordinating their ways of being male. Indeed, the Augur, and the two countrymen seem resigned to appeasing Neptune, and they articulate this submission as an act of masculine wisdom. For example, the Augur is concerned that the men of the play “Let Neptune have his right” (4.1.15–16) by being “wise” and agreeing to sacrifice their daughter for the good of the community (4.1.17), implying that being unwise is being unmanly.

20. Connell, *Gender and Power*, 183.

21. Connell, *Gender and Power*, 192.

The fathers represent a subordinated form of hegemonic masculinity because they are willing to act out of love for their daughters rather than fear of Neptune, while the other men represent a more submissive masculinity where men act out of fear of Neptune. In theory, if their rebellion is successful, their way of being male could become ascendant, and thus more fathers could decide to overreach Neptune by hiding their virgin daughters from him, forcing Neptune to use more and more force to maintain his “rights” to the daughters through might. But what we see is that such a use of power will become destabilizing. For example, when Neptune reflects on how he will punish the fathers, he says that he will kill all virgins, such that “To be young and fair shall be accounted shame and punishment, insomuch as it shall be thought as dishonourable to be honest as fortunate to be deformed” (5.3.19–21). As Diana notes, such a punishment will not work, since virtue “always deserveth praise and honour” (5.3.24–24). This is what Connell means when she says that hegemonic masculinity can involve physical and psychological force, but that it cannot be maintained at the barrel of a gun. The men of the village would likely find such a perpetual sacrifice too unnatural, and this would lead either to more rebellion, or to the men just moving to greener pastures.

Neptune takes the fathers’ attempts to overreach his authority personally. As Saccio argues, “the defiance to Neptune is a personal insult to his status: appointed homage to his godhead is denied him in the father’s attempt to evade the virgin sacrifice.”²² He is being overreached by men he considers “swains” (2.3.26), and he says that these men are attempting “to be equal with gods, seeking by craft to overthrow them that by power oversee them” (5.3.11–12). Neptune’s phrasing implies that there is something inherently shameful about the fathers’ attempt to overreach him. One of the ways that masculinity is rigid and inflexible in this play is the fixation the men have on shame and honour—a characteristic they share with Galatea. According to Gail Kern Paster, shame was a form of social discipline in early modern English culture,²³ and as Elizabeth Foyster argues, “The language of ‘honour’ was how men and women talked about their gender roles” in the early modern period, with men and women being shamed for being dishonourable:

22. Saccio, 102.

23. Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 14.

honour, reputation, credit, or a good name could be the rewards for men and women who upheld the ideals of patriarchy. The insults of “whore” and “cuckold” were targeted against those who did not direct their relationships towards this ideal. The ideology of patriarchy thus led to the construction of a system of morality which rewarded or chastised those who succeeded or failed to live up to its requirements.²⁴

Calling the men overreaching swains, then, is a way of implying that there is something shameful or unmanly about their desire to preserve their daughters' lives. Neptune sees the fathers' ascendant, loving masculinity as a threat to his established power—and perhaps to the power of the gods themselves—and he will “mar all” (2.3.29) as a means of protecting his domination. While the fathers are acting out of love for their daughters, they are also protecting their economic and biological legacies, since their daughters are marriageable assets. Thus, the issue is not that one group of men wants the daughters to become free while another wishes to repress them, but that both groups want to maintain and control the asset of their daughter's fair virginity, and the competition between the men revolves around who has the right to control the daughters. While hegemonic forms of masculinity can be maintained through force, they can also be maintained by making men who embody ascendant ways of being male feel ashamed of themselves. It is telling that the mortals of this play experience their gendered identity in terms of an internalized shame.

This sense of shame in the play is clearest when the Augur tells the men of the village that “This is the day wherein you must satisfy Neptune and save yourself” (4.1.1–2). The Augur sees the sacrifice as a necessity, or something that all men of the village must do, even if they think it is “against nature to sacrifice your children” (4.1.4–5), since a failure to comply with Neptune's desire for a sacrifice will cause him to “destroy your country” (4.1.5–6). At times of shame, one feels exposed, with an acute and intense feeling of embarrassment; Sara Ahmed argues that “shame can reintegrate subjects in their moment of failure to live up to a social ideal. Such an argument suggests that the failure to live up to an ideal is a way of taking up that ideal and confirming its necessity.”²⁵ The men are suggesting to the fathers that there is a masculine ideal in the

24. Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex, and Marriage* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 5.

25. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 106.

village—i.e., stoically sacrificing one’s daughter to appease Neptune and serve the greater good of the community—and they are shaming the fathers for not living up to this ideal, however arbitrary. In this sense, being a “man” is about being wise, and repressing your feelings towards your children, so that you can do the greater good of avoiding Neptune’s wrath. Neptune forces the men of the village to either live a safe life filled with shame and submission, or to rebel and risk the rage of an angry god.

In rejecting the choice of sacrificing their daughters to Neptune, the fathers act out of love for their daughters, but they have substantially different, even shameful, motivations. Galatea suggests that her “father doteth” on her, and that his “blind love corrupteth his fond judgment” (2.1.6–7). The implication is that there is something shameful about his “fond care” for his daughter that makes “his partial eye as far from truth as his heart is from falsehood” (2.1.8–10). The play represents the father’s masculinity as having a strong undercurrent of shame. While shame is unpleasant and uncomfortable, it points to things one unconsciously takes pleasure in. Silvan Tomkins argues that shyness, shame, and guilt are “one and the same affect,” an affect caused by an “incomplete reduction of interest or joy” in a person or object that brings the subject pleasure.²⁶ According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “without positive affect, there can be no shame: only a sense that offers you enjoyment or engages your interest can make you blush.”²⁷ As Ahmed notes, shame is what happens when we fail and it is seen by others whose opinion we care about.²⁸ To preserve his daughter’s honour, for example, Tityrus hides his daughter in the forest dressed as a boy, telling her that the only way for them “To avoid [...] destiny” is to “use an unlawful means, your honour preserved, than intolerable grief, both life and honour hazarded, and to prevent, if it be possible, thy constellation by my craft” (1.2.67–71). There is a vagarious quality to the way Tityrus speaks, showing that he is deeply uncomfortable discussing this topic with his daughter. Moreover, the issue here is one of power and control. In this play, patriarchs maintain power over women by withholding information from them, perhaps because they are ashamed to speak this information, since doing so would force

26. Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Adam Frank, and Irving E. Alexander (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 134.

27. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, and Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 116.

28. Ahmed, 105.

them to discuss their daughter's sexuality and, in turn, their powerlessness to control that sexuality in the face of more powerful men.

While Melibeus also acts out of love for his daughter, it seems that his love is more *éros* than *storge*. Indeed, Tityrus overtly accuses him of having an “affection (I fear me) more than fatherly” (4.2.41) and of creating a “common inconvenience” to hide “a private mischief” (4.2.43–44). There is an undercurrent of shame in Melibeus's relationship with Phillida. Melibeus's concern is that Phillida is “too fair, being [his] Phillida” (1.3.1–2). According to Melibeus, this is not just a matter of a father thinking that his daughter is beautiful. As he notes, “Everyone thinketh his own child fair, but I know that which I most desire and would least have, that thou art fairest” (1.4.4–6). Melibeus will not “disguise [himself] in affection, in suffering [Phillida] to perish by a fond desire” (1.3.7–8). He cannot renounce his daughter and the pleasure she brings him, and he cannot face the pain implied by allowing her to be devoured by the Augur. This concern, then, is not with preserving his daughter's honour, but with preserving her beauty and, in turn, the pleasure he takes in her beauty.

When it is time for the men of the village to present their daughters for the sacrifice, Tityrus attempts to shame Melibeus into revealing to the other men that he has a daughter by evoking Melibeus's incestuous desire, saying, “Did not I see (and very lately see) your daughter in your arms, whenas you gave her infinite kisses, with affection (I fear me) more than fatherly” (4.2.38–40). Melibeus does not deny the claim that he was holding and kissing a younger woman, he merely denies that it was his daughter:

Did you ever see me kiss my daughter? You are deceived; it was my wife. And if you thought so young a piece unfit for so old a person, and therefore imagined it to be my child, not my spouse, you must know that silver hairs delight in golden locks, and the old fancies crave young nurses, and frosty years must be thawed by youthful fires. (4.2.54–59)

As Billing notes, “Melibeus inadvertently reinforces” the “accusation of paedophiliac incest” when he confirms that he was with a younger woman.²⁹ Melibeus is not concerned with preserving his daughter's virtue, but he is concerned with preserving her beauty as a reflection of his own, perhaps because he cannot admit to himself that he has a more than fatherly love for

29. Billing, 64.

his daughter. Thus, while the play is deeply critical of Neptune's desire to have the fairest daughter sacrificed to him, the implication is that Tityrus and Melibeus also represent potentially harmful forms of ascendant masculinity. The hierarchy seems to be that it would be better for the daughters not to be sacrificed as virgins to Neptune, than to be so sacrificed; and better for the daughters to be doted on than for their fathers to have an incestuous desire for them. But, notwithstanding the differences, all of these ways of being male are represented as being shameful and unethical.

2. Embarrassed daughters

The FTM crossdressing plot in *Galatea* is evocatively queer. Walen calls *Galatea* "The most striking example of textual female homoeroticism to emerge before the end of the sixteenth century."³⁰ As Leah Scragg notes, the gender politics of the play are evocatively contemporary.³¹ As Jankowski argues, the irony of the play is that "the fathers' desire to control their daughters' destinies frees the virgins, Galatea and Phillida, to explore not only the possibilities of a woman-only society, but of an economy of desire that is similarly woman-centered."³² According to Jennifer Drouin, Diana and her band of chaste women exist in "a lesbian separatist 'public'" where women have the freedom to explore each other, at least in part, because of the absence of men making demands on their time, bodies, and sexuality.³³ While I find these readings provocative, I want to add to them by pointing out that the daughters do not start out as lesbians, and that they seem despondent when they find out that the other is a maiden. For example, when it is revealed to them that they have each been in love with a maiden, Galatea calls herself "unfortunate" and Phillida calls herself "Accursed" (5.3.120–21), and both daughters argue that they have made an innocent mistake (although it is hard to know if they are being honest here, or if they are saying what they think their fathers and the gods want to hear):

30. Walen, "Constructions of Female Homoeroticism," 423–25; see also Walen, *Constructions of Female Homoeroticism*, 135–37, and Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*.

31. Scragg, "Introduction," *Galatea*, 30–31.

32. Jankowski, 256.

33. Jennifer Drouin, "Diana's Band: Safe Spaces, Publics, and Early Modern Lesbianism," in *Queer Renaissance Historiography: Backward Gaze*, ed. Vin Nardizzi, Will Stockton, and Stephen Guy-Bray (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 86.

Neptune: Do you both, being maidens, love one another?

Galatea: I have thought the habit agreeable with the sex, and so burned in the fire of my own fancies.

Phillida: I had thought that in the attire of a boy there could not have lodged the body of a virgin, and so was inflamed with a sweet desire which now I find a sour deceit. (5.3.126–31)

They are clearly still attracted to each other even after it is revealed that the other is a maiden, with Galatea articulating “the fire of [her] fancies” (5.3.128), and Phillida calling her love a “sweet desire” (5.3.131). Yet, they seem crushed, since they seem to assume that they will not be able to live with each other as women even if they do love each other. By the end of the play they are absolutely in love with each other, with Galatea confessing her “love” for Phillida is “engraven in [her] heart with [Phillida’s] eyes” (5.3.135–36), and Phillida saying that Galatea is “imprinted in [her] thoughts by her words” (5.3.137–38). The daughters begin the play, however, as passionately attached to heterosexuality and the values of patriarchy, as evidenced when they verbally critique their fathers’ embarrassing plan. They do not see their fathers as measuring up as real men, and their criticism of their fathers betrays their attachments to hegemonic norms of what men ought to be. The daughters, then, are ashamed both of their fathers and of their masculine apparel.

Before Galatea and Phillida fall in love with each other, they articulate masculinity in terms of shame. When Galatea first watches Phillida while she is dressed as a boy, she observes that “boys are in as great [a] disliking of themselves as maids” (2.1.19). Galatea’s underlying assumption is that boys must be free to like themselves in a way that maidens are not, and in turn she is surprised to find that boys may have some of the same feelings of shame and self-loathing that girls do. Both Galatea and Phillida speak to the audience directly about the “boy” they are observing, but they seem unable to muster up the will to speak to each other. Phillida asks, “But why stand I still? Boys should be bold?” (2.1.34). Phillida seems to inherently understand masculinity through its potential for shame and failure. Her exclamation is a statement of what boys ought to do, and it is followed by inaction. The idea that boys *should* be bold helps us to see that when Lyly theorizes mortal heterosexual masculinities, his interest is in men’s failure to live up to their ideals of what they ought to do, say, or be.

The daughters find the idea of putting on men's apparel shameful. Galatea is critical of her father's plan to "avoid [...] destiny" (1.2.67) by hiding her in the forest in men's clothes. Tityrus is powerless to prevent Galatea from being sacrificed, and he is worried that her "beauty will make [her] to be thought worthy of this god" (1.2.66–67). Since he cannot prevent destiny by force, he will use "craft" (1.2.71) to preserve the life of his fair daughter and, in turn, to attempt to overreach Neptune. Galatea is very critical of her father, telling him that "over-carefulness makes [him] forget, that an honourable death is to be preferred before an infamous life" (1.2.82–84). She bravely tells her father that "Destiny may be deferred, not prevented; and therefore it were better to offer myself in triumph than to be drawn into it with dishonour" (1.2.77–79).

As a woman, she suggests that her honour depends on preserving not her physical beauty but her virtue, and the way for her to do this is to willingly give herself to Neptune. She is not a "child" who longs to live forever, and thus she asks her father to resolve not to fear her death. She says that "Nature hath given me beauty; Virtue courage: Nature must yield me death; virtue honour" (1.2.88–89). While Galatea eventually obeys her father in his shameful plan, what underpins her speech is that she is braver and more honourable than he is. Her rejection of her father demonstrates her internalization of early modern ideologies of womanhood, and her criticism of her father implies that she does not think he quite lives up to the stoic bravery she would expect from an early modern father.

Galatea returns to her criticism of her father when she returns to the stage in act 2. After complaining about her shameful outfit, she laments her father's dotting over her: "Thy father doteth, Galatea, whose blind love corrupteth his fond judgment, and, jealous of thy death, seemeth to dote on thy beauty; whose fond care carrieth his partial eye as far from truth as his heart is from falsehood" (2.1.6–10). The way that Galatea uses the term "dotting" implies that she sees something shameful in her father's behaviour. Indeed, her father's shameful affection for his daughter compels her to put on a shameful disguise.

Crossdressing was potentially shameful and dishonourable in the early modern period. Michael Shapiro, in *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage*, notes that crossdressing was illegal and considered sinful. Christian Reformers were particularly influenced on this issue by Deuteronomy 22.5.³⁴

34. Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 16.

In the Vulgate, the line is “Non induetur mulier veste virili, nec vir utetur veste feminea: abominabilis enim apud Deum est qui facit hæc”; in the King James Bible (1611), this line becomes “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.”³⁵ According to Shapiro, crossdressing became a sign of engagement in punishable sexual offenses. FTM crossdressers “were accused or suspected of prostitution or fornication” and the authorities assumed that the “immediate purpose of male apparel [...] was [the] temporary concealment of identity.”³⁶ Women who dressed as men were charged with crimes as diverse as “fraud, desertion, theft, burglary, bigamy, drunkenness, rowdiness, or lesbianism.”³⁷ Perhaps the most infamous denunciation of FTM crossdressing in the early modern period came from John Williams, who, in his “Sermon on Apparel” (1619), suggests that crossdressing is the devil’s way of re-writing gender norms.³⁸ Williams says that God “had divided male and female [...] the devil hath joined them.”³⁹

Galatea expresses shame for her immodest outfit in a way that demonstrates an internalization of her culture’s attitude towards crossdressing. In his work on Shakespearian tragedy, Stanley Cavell argues that “shame is the specific discomfort produced by the sense of being looked at; the avoidance of the sight of others is the reflex it produces” such that “Under shame, what must be covered up is not your deed, but yourself.”⁴⁰ In a direct address, *Galatea* tells the audience, “Blush, *Galatea*, that must frame thy affection fit for thy habit, and therefore be thought immodest because thou are unfortunate. Thy tender years

35. Gordon Campbell, ed, *The Holy Bible: Quatercentenary Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 73.

36. Shapiro, 18.

37. Shapiro, 19.

38. Williams, cited in Billing, 129.

39. Williams, cited in Billing, 129.

40. To be clear, Cavell is distinguishing between shame and guilt. For Cavell, when people experience shame, they try to avoid being seen by others (it is the “don’t look at me” response), whereas with guilt, they try to avoid having others look at what they did. In this way, shame is about the self, whereas guilt is about the act. *Galatea* does not express guilt or disgust over putting on men’s clothing, but she does express shame. Here I would only note that shame is a normal part of learning how to dress, and many people feel a sense of shame when they put on clothing outside of traditional gender norms. Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare: Updated Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 49.

cannot dissemble this deceit, nor thy sex bear it” (2.1.1–4). Galatea articulates her gender as natural and immutable, rather than as arbitrary and merely preformed. Galatea’s situation is undignified and the inappropriate outfit makes her self-conscious. On stage, alone, and in men’s apparel, she says “Oh, would the gods had made me as I seem to be, or that I may safely be what I seem not!” (2.1.4–6). She cannot be herself without fear of the reprisal of Neptune, who would have her sacrificed as a fair virgin tribute; she is upset that the gods did not make her a man if she must perform being one. She is exposed as powerless to resist her father or Neptune, and she finds herself dressed in clothing that she judges to be unseemly.

Phillida objects not to the shameful of dressing as a man but to the idea that she will not look good in men’s clothing. As she notes, she “shall be ashamed of my long hose and short coat, and so unwarily blab out something by blushing at everything” (1.3.21–22). When Phillida is first told that she will have to hide in the forest “in man’s apparel” (1.3.15), she complains that “It will neither become my body nor my mind” (1.3.16). Like Galatea, Phillida here articulates gender as natural and immutable, rather than as arbitrary and merely preformed. Phillida expands on the idea, saying “For then I must keep company with boys, and commit follies unseemly for my sex, or keep company with girls, and be thought more wanton than becometh me” (1.3.18–21). After she puts on men’s apparel, Phillida protests: “I neither like my gait nor my garments, the one untoward, the other unfit, both unseemly” (2.1.14–15).⁴¹ It is interesting that Phillida only considered how she will fail at being a boy, and does not consider that the men or women that she is with might help her find a *seemly* way of being a boy.

There is an evocative silence in the text, insofar as Galatea is overtly critical of her father and his plan, but Phillida seems to just accept what her father tells her to do. After complaining about how she will look in men’s apparel, she finally says “I agree, since my father will have it so, and fortune must” (1.4.26–27). She complains about her outfit, but she never chides her father for making her put the garments on. Perhaps what is being implied here is that Melibeus’s more-than-fatherly love is not the ultimately harmless doting of Tityrus towards Galatea, but something far more abusive, shameful, and unspeakable.

41. Per the *OED*, “unseemly” can mean “uncomely, [or] unhandsome”; “seemly” can mean something of “a pleasing or goodly appearance.” See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “seemly” (adj.), accessed 23 April 2018, oed.com.

For Galatea and Phillida to be with each other, they need to help each other articulate ways of being male that are not defined by shame. When Galatea and Phillida question each other, they help the other construct a gendered identity that they prefer, to the point where Galatea asks if Phillida can “love [her] before all Diana’s nymphs” (3.3.56–57), and Phillida asks Galatea “Can you prefer a fond boy, as I am, before so fair ladies, as they are?” (3.3.659–61). Each respects the idea that the other may prefer “fair ladies,” and yet each is courting the other “as a boy”—even if they suspect that the other may be a maiden. Simon Chess argues that Phillida and Galatea learn how to love each other through a process of gendered labour.⁴² Jane Ward argues that women in femme/FTM relationships use “affective and bodily efforts” that involve “a significant amount of training, study, and practice” to help their partner create their preferred gendered sexual identity by “actively suspending self-focus in the service of helping others achieve the varied forms of gender recognition they long for.”⁴³ While we do not see the maidens reveal to each other that they know that the other is a woman and/or queer, they do have a conversation that implies that they “know” about the sex and sexuality of the other:

Phillida: You promised me in the woods that you would love me before all Diana’s nymphs.

Galatea: Ay, so you would love me before all Diana’s nymphs.

Phillida: Can you prefer a fond boy, as I am, before so fair ladies, as they are?

Galatea: Why should not I as well as you.

Phillida: Come, let us into the grove, and make much of one another, that cannot tell what to think of one another. (3.2.55–63)

What I find evocative, from the point of view of gendered labour, is Phillida’s insecurity. She wants to be loved as a boy before all of Diana’s nymphs. When Galatea says that she will do so, on the condition that Phillida loves her over any other fair lady, they are in the process of giving each other a gender. It is on this condition that Phillida invites Galatea into the more intimate grove, away

42. Simone Chess, “‘Or whatever you be’: Crossdressing, Sex, and Gender Labour in John Lyly’s *Gallathea*,” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 38.4 (2015): 145–66.

43. Jane Ward, “Gendered Labour: Transmen, Femmes, and Collective Work of Transgression,” *Sexualities* 13.2 (2010): 236–54, 237.

from the audience, so that they can “make much of one another.” There is some debate about what the women do while they are making much of each other, with some possibility that there is an implied double-reader structure here, where heterosexual readers will assume that they go off to continue talking, while queer readers may assume that they go off to do something far more intimate.⁴⁴ While making much of each other could be read as discursive, it is likely that this could be played with erotic implications. After all, they are going to “make” and not “tell,” with the implication that they will do things that will create the other rather than interrogate each other.

This is the difference between gendered labour and hegemonic masculinity in the play in a nutshell. As Ward notes, while gendered labour is more visible in queer relationships, “all genders demand work, and therefore all people both give and require gendered labour.”⁴⁵ When gendered labour intersects with power (such as masculinity, wealth, and whiteness), powerful subjects can begin to demand gendered labour from others.⁴⁶ The men of the play force women and weaker men to be something or desire something, even if they do not wish to do so. Once Galatea and Phillida fall in love, they are perfectly happy to stay in a liminal space of not compelling the other to say if she is a boy or a girl, straight or gay, and they put their labour into making much of the other person, rather than asking that person to make much of themselves.

In this way, the play shows same-sex desire in a double FTM crossdressing scene that involves a divestment from shame; Galatea and Phillida divest from shame by rejecting constructions of gender that depend on shame. In contrast, Neptune uses fear and terrorism to force the men of the village to remain invested in ways of being male that benefit him. The fathers attempt to act lovingly towards their daughters within this environment, but they never quite divest from shame as completely as their daughters do.

44. Walen notes that “Though early modern playwrights do not script instances of female-female sex, members of the audience know that such behavior is possible”; in particular, she notes that in this scene Lyly “constructs an expectation of female homoerotics but den[ies] its fulfillment, relying on the spectator’s ability to pull references from various cultural discourses inscribing female homosexual behavior,” suggesting that viewing such plays might have been similar to watching films under the early Production Code. See Walen, “Constructions of Female Homoeroticism,” 424–25; see also Walen, *Constructions of Female Homoeroticism*, 135–37.

45. Ward, 239.

46. Ward, 239–40.

In fairness, this divestment by the daughters from a traditional sex–gender system is not complete. They are unable to say what they have “made” of each other, and if we assume that they had sex in the grove, we have to assume either that they are lying at the end of the play when they confess their ignorance of the biological sex of the other maiden, or that they are unable to confess their sexual desire for a woman openly in the presence of their fathers and the gods. One possible way of reading this is that the fathers’ confession that they attempted to overreach Neptune forces Galatea and Phillida out of the closet well before either is willing to publicly admit that they are in love with a maiden, and thus they are only saved from desire by Venus’s approval of their relationship and willingness to turn one of the daughters into a man. Indeed, Venus does some gendered labour of her own in this reading, getting the daughters to first declare before their fathers and Neptune that their loves are “unspotted, begun with truth, continued with constancy, and not to be altered till death” (5.3.146–47). These questions reinforce patriarchy, making the daughters confirm that they have not had sex against their fathers’ wishes (a dubious claim, unless you define sex as something that can only occur between a man and a woman), and that they did not plot against their fathers to end up in the forest together. Finally, by asking them if they will love each other until death, Venus gets them to confirm that their love is not a phase, and thus that they are unlikely to participate in a heterosexual marriage economy. Once this is confirmed, Venus offers to “turn one of them to be a man” (5.3.151–52), thereby ensuring that the marriage can be contained within the larger heterosexual marriage economy as being between a man and a woman. The implication is that the fathers cannot keep control over both daughters’ reproductive and matrimonial futures, but that if they go along with the plan, at least one of the daughters will remain a maiden to be married off to the other. Even with these conditions, the fathers only consent to this because, as Tityrus puts it, Venus “is a goddess” (5.3.177). Venus seems to be showing the daughters that they cannot be together as women, but that if one of them is willing to do the gendered labour of being transformed into a man, she can create a situation whereby their love may endure.

3. Divine masculinities

If the ideology of masculinity in the play is that “boys should be bold” (2.1.34), then the boldest of the men is Neptune. Neptune is offended by the very idea

of being overreached by less powerful men. As Saccio argues, “the defiance to Neptune is a personal insult to his status” since the “appointed homage to his godhead is denied him in the father’s attempt to evade the virgin sacrifice.”⁴⁷ Neptune calls the fathers “silly shepherds,” opining that they cannot “go about to deceive great Neptune in putting on man’s attire upon women” (2.2.18–19). Neptune articulates the shepherds as lesser men who should serve him, while implying that their primary function is “shepherding” Neptune’s group of maidens. In this way, Neptune’s gendered identity depends on rigid gender hierarchies, where some men are “swains” who provide him with fair virgins, while daughters should obey their fathers and present themselves as potential virgin sacrifices.

While the Augur facilitates the virgin sacrifice, even he is unable to justify the boldness of Neptune’s actions on moral or religious grounds, telling the men of the village that it is “better [...] to offer a virgin than suffer ruin” (4.1.3–4). The Augur reads Neptune like Thrasymachus in Plato’s *Republic*, who argues that justice is nothing more than what is in the best interest of the stronger party, or that might makes right.⁴⁸ The Augur says that the men may “think it against nature to sacrifice your children” but that they should “think it against sense to destroy your country” (4.1.4–6). They must “Let Neptune have his right, if you will have your quiet” (4.1.15–16). In this reading, real men are not bold but stoic, repressing whatever feelings of moral outrage they may have about the sacrifice and gaining the strength to accept what they cannot change. The Augur describes Neptune as “pitiless to desire such a prey” (4.1.6–7), slipping from a language of sacrifice to one of hunting, where Neptune is consuming daughters for sport, an action more akin to a tyrant than to a deity. If Neptune’s might makes right, then the needs of the many for peace and prosperity should override the private feelings of the few. In this way, while Neptune is not a father, he is a patriarch in hooks’s sense of the term. He will rule over weaker men and women, perceiving himself as endowed with the right to demand a sacrifice. In turn, the men of the village are stoically resigned to giving this sacrifice to him as a means of preventing inundation and thereby preserving community.

Neptune displays a remarkable lack of emotional control when he discovers that the fathers allowed Hebe to be sacrificed in place of one of their

47. Saccio, 102.

48. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 15.

daughters. While Neptune is, at first, content to “mark all” and observe the plot of the fathers, he is clear that “in the end [he] will mar all” (2.3.28–29). His threat is not to harm the fathers who have transgressed against him, but to harm everyone in the village for allowing this threat to continue. Later, Neptune accuses the fathers of being “men” who think themselves “equal with gods, seeking by craft to overreach them that by power oversee them” (5.3.11–12). Neptune will no longer be “appeased by submission,” but he shall

make havoc of Diana's nymphs, my temple shall be dyed with maidens' blood, and there shall be nothing more vile than to be a virgin. To be young and fair shall be accounted shame and punishment, insomuch as it shall be thought as dishonourable to be honest as fortunate to be deformed. (5.3.16–21)

In a kind of godly temper tantrum, Neptune proposes a genocide of guiltless, honourable virgins, the implication being that he would mar everyone rather than accept that he will not get his way. This genocide of virgins is only prevented because Diana pleads that the virtuous virgins should not suffer “both pain and shame” when they deserve “praise and honour” (5.3.25–26). The play thus draws an antithesis between two ways of being male. The fathers think that the end (keeping their daughters alive) justifies the means (placing their daughters in potentially dishonourable attire). Neptune thinks that might makes right, and that weaker men should submit to the will of the gods.

The mortal men of this play seem to experience their masculinity in terms of shame. Neptune, in contrast, seems defined by his inability to experience shame and, in turn, by his willingness to shame others. The prologue of the play compares Neptune to Cesar who “had such piercing eyes that whoso looked on him was constrained to wink” (8–9). Such a man will have his way, regardless of how he makes others feel. As *Galatea* notes, Neptune produces “miserable men” who are willing to accept any form of punishment, however arbitrary or unjust that punishment seems (1.1.45). While Neptune's rage speaks to a fear that he is not actually in control, and thus a fear that his hegemonic power is slipping, he never implies that anything he has said or done is shameful. Thus, Lyly presents us with a contrast between two systems of gendered identity. One system uses shame, fear, and coercion to maintain gender conformity; the other

system—the system that unfolds between girls in the forest—uses safety, trust, and play to encourage gendered co-creation.

In this way, it matters that the play ends by reinforcing rigid notions of masculinity and heteropatriarchy. Neptune gives up on the virgin sacrifice as a means of brokering a peace between Venus and Diana, bragging that he “hath dealt well with beauty and chastity” (5.3.90). Neptune never acknowledges that the sacrifice was wrong, nor does he apologize for forcing the men of the village to submit to his will. Rather than confront Neptune about the injustice of the virgin sacrifice, Tityrus tells Neptune that he and Melibeus are “Those that have offended thee to save their daughters” (5.3.110–11). Neptune is clear that the trick did not work, telling the fathers “Well, your deserts have not gotten pardon but these goddesses’ jar” (5.3.116–17). For Neptune, the only reason to end the sacrifice is the fight between the goddesses; the actions, feelings, or desires of the fathers are irrelevant to him. He is unwilling to back down to the desires of mortal men, but will compromise with other divine women, so long as those women acknowledge his charity and grace. The implication is that Neptune would not have compromised with either Diana, or chastity, or Venus, or beauty; rather, the goddesses working in tandem were able to redirect Neptune away from his desire for a virgin sacrifice. As Walen argues, Lyly’s play is unique in that it does not find “a suitable male partner for the female characters” after the disguises are removed; in contrast, other early modern plays with FTM plots tend to end by reinforcing heterosexual marriage and finding the girl a male partner “whether she has shown interest in one or not.”⁴⁹ As Rackin notes, the play is evocative in that it allows the girls to express their love for each other after they have discovered that the other is a boy, and the girls do not seem to care who will end up as a boy, as long as they end up together.⁵⁰ While this shows that the girls care more about each other than about gender, the fact that one of them must be changed into a man shows that the play is anxious to contain its subversive energy by reinforcing that heterosexual marriage is the only form of union that can be imagined on the early modern stage. Even then, heterosexual union between a woman and a woman turned into a man is not shown in the play; Lyly leaves this union to the imagination of the audience.

49. Walen, “Constructions of Female Homoeroticism,” 424–25.

50. Rackin, 30.

The play ends, then, by reinforcing rigid notions of masculinity based on hierarchies of submission. The fathers submit to Neptune’s and Venus’s will. The daughters submit to the will of their fathers and the gods and goddesses on the stage. They agree that the price of being together is a union in a church, where one of them will become a man and the other will, in theory, have to submit to that man’s will. Indeed, the play’s epilogue reinforces the idea that women are helpless to resist Venus and Cupid and must “yield to love” (5) and “Confess [Cupid] a conqueror, whom ye ought to regard, sith it is impossible to resist” (10–11). Women, according to the epilogue, cannot conquer their own hearts, but those hearts can be conquered by others against their will (10–12). In the epilogue, gender once again becomes rigid rather than arbitrary, and the careful work of gendered labour helping two women build a love for each other gives way to a concept of love as violent and irrational—a model in which young hearts of helpless maidens are conquered. Thus, while the gender politics of the play are, on the whole, radical, we should not lose sight of the fact that its politics of masculinity bend but do not break. That is, if the play opens with Neptune as a hegemonic man and the fathers as representing ascendant forms of hegemonic masculinity, the play ends with Neptune refusing to compromise with mortal men, and the way of being male represented by the fathers still being actively suppressed.