



Galatea: Midas: John Lyly (Revels Plays MUP)

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Galatea and Midas are two of John Lyly's most engaging plays. Shortly after his early success with *Capaspe* and *Sappho and Phao* in 1583-84, he took up the story of two young women, Galatea (or Gallathea) and Phillida who are dressed up in male clothes by their fathers so that they can avoid the requirement of the god Neptune that every year 'the fairest and chastest virgin in all the country' be sacrificed to a sea-monster. Hiding together in the forest, the two maidens fall in love, each supposing the other to be a young man. This leads to delightful complications that remind us of the mix-ups in Shakespeare's romantic comedies. Galatea has become the subject of considerable feminist critical study in recent years.

Midas (1590) uses mythology in quite a different way, dramatising two stories about King Midas (the golden touch and the ass's ears) in such a way as to fashion a satire of King Philip of Spain (and of any tyrant like him) for colossal greediness and folly. In the wake of the defeat of Philip's Armada fleet and its attempted invasion of England in 1588, this satire was calculated to win the approval of Queen Elizabeth and her court.

The plays are newly presented here by the scholars who have recently edited *Campaspe*, *Sappho and Phao*, and *Endmion* for the Revels series.

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