THOMAS HEYWOOD (1574?-1641), POET AND PLAYWRIGHT. For a brief biography and selections from some of his other works, see the print anthology, pp. 232-38 and pp. 256-60.

EDITIONS: Although some of Heywood’s better known dramatic works have received critical editions (such as A Woman Killed with Kindness and The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV), his verse and prose have fared less well. There have been a number of reprints of his Apology for Actors, and his translation of Ovid’s Ars Amatoria edited by M.L. Stapleton was published by the University of Michigan Press in 2000, but his Pleasant Dialogues and Dramas exists only in a 1903 facsimile edition; Gynaikeion exists in no modern edition. See Heywood’s selected works online at Luminarium (www.luminarium.org).

GYNAIKEION (1624)

From Book 5: Of Fair Women

[...]

Beauty is admirable above all, and yet subject to all. Only learning, knowledge, art and virtue are above the envy of change or malice of Fortune. Neither are you women solely beautiful. We read in Martial […] of a boy called Achillas,¹ of admirable feature; of Acanthus, whom the gods at his death, in memory of his exquisite form, changed into a flower that still bears his name.² Amongst the Romans, Scipio (surnamed Demetrius),³ and amongst the Greeks, Alcibiades, carried the palm from⁴ women, who (as Plutarch in his life reports of him) was not only wondered at in his youth, but admired in his age, his grace and comeliness still growing with him.⁵

The shepherd Corydon doted on the fair Alexis.⁶

Saxo Grammaticus⁷ speaks of Alphus the son of Gygarus, whose hairs exceeded the brightness of silver. Amaratus was changed into a sweet-smelling flower after his death.⁸ Calentius speaks of Amphimadon thus:

Phiale was enamoured of Amphimadon the fair.
Amphimadon of Phiale became the greatest care.⁹

¹ Achillas   Martial, Epigrams 3.91.
² Acanthus … name   lovely youth, beloved of Apollo; in some accounts, Acanthus is a female, Acantha (a beautiful nymph).
³ Scipio (surnamed Demetrius)   Plutarch says that Demetrius of Macedonia was so beautiful that no painter was able to do him justice; Aelian that Demetrius embellished his beauty with hair dye and perfumes.
⁴ carried the palm from   won the victory over.
⁵ Alcibiades   See Glossary (print anthology) and Plutarch, ‘Life of Alcibiades,’ Online Companion, pp. 4-8.
⁶ Heywood prefaces each quotation with the Latin original. Virgil, Eclogues, 2.
⁷ Saxo Grammaticus (c. 1150-early 13th c. CE), Danish historian.
⁸ Amaratus … death   After his death, Amaranthus was transformed by his lover, the goddess Diana, into the flower, amaranthus (Greek, ‘never-dying’), a plant that came to symbolize immortality and eternal beauty.
⁹ Calentius … care   contained in Ravisius Textor’s Epitome (1560). Phiale   nymph of Diana.
Antinous Bithinicus was a youth of that admirable beauty and feature that Adrian the emperor was enamoured of him, in whose memory he erected a temple in Mantinea, and built a city by the river Nilus; he caused his effigies to be stamped upon his own coin; therefore, Hieronymus (as Volterranus reports) calls him the emperor Adrian’s concubine. Asterius was the son of Ceres, a young man of singular form, but altogether abstemious from the love of women [...].

Asterius was the son of Ceres, a young man of singular form, but altogether abstemious from the love of women [...]

The fairest Astur follows next in field
Astor that trusts unto his horse and particoloured shield.

Attis the Phrygian youth was for his fairness beloved of the mother of the gods. Virgil speaks of Aventinus in these words:

Fair Aventinus he that of fair Hercules was born,
Boasts of his conquering steeds———

Bathyllus was the favourite or sweetheart of Anacreon the poet, of whom Pontanus’ De Stellis:

———The poet of Bathyllus was enamoured
With painted eyes, brown hair, and lips like roses red.

(By the way), sure there was a great dearth of beauty in those days amongst women when boys and catamites were so doted on by men.

Democles, an Athenian youth, was of that pulchritude that he was called by all men ‘Pulcher’ Democles,’ and (that which seldom meets with beauty) of that rare temperance that when King Demetrius plucked him to have made him a prostitute to his unlawful and beastly lusts, to shun his embraces, he leaped into a cauldron of seething hot liquor, and there drowned himself (Plutarch).

Diadumenus, the cupbearer to Augustus, was of that admirable feature that in the contention that was made at Elis, he carried the palm from both from men and women (Volterranus).

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10 Antinous ... concubine  Emperor Hadrian (reigned, 117-38 CE) loved Antinous of Bythnia (b. ca. 110/112 CE), and when the young man drowned in the Nile, Hadrian’s grief was public and overwhelming: he erected innumerable statues of Antinous around the empire. Hieronymus Saint Jerome (c. 345-420 CE) in De Viris Illustribus (‘Of Famous Men’) [chpt. 22]. Volterranus Raffaelo Volterranus (Maffei) [1451-1522], Italian historian and humanist.

11 Astur Aeneas’ ally in the latter’s battle against Turnus (Aeneid 10.160).

12 Attis . . . gods  See Glossary (print anthology).

13 Aeneid 7.655-657. Aventus, son of the Greek god-hero Hercules; he was Turnus’ beautiful and courageous ally in the war against Aeneas.

14 See Anacreon (print anthology).

15 Giovanni Pontanus (14269-1503), Italian humanist and neo-Latin poet (Urania, sive de stellis [1505]), but probably taken from Ravisius Textor’s Epitome (1560).

16 catamites youths kept to satisfy the sexual desires of their masters.

17 Pulcher Handsome, Beautiful.

18 plucked chose (with some sense of ‘attempted to seize or force’).


20 For poems on Diadumenus, see Martial, Epigrams 3.64, 6.34 (print anthology, pp. 242-43, 244) and ‘Martial,’ Online Companion.
than for his elegancy of form. Galetes was a youth of that excellent feature, and so endeared to Ptolomaeus that when divers malefactors (and for great crimes) were led to execution, only at his entreaty he spared their lives.\textsuperscript{21} [...] Of Hyas, the son of Atlas and Aethra, Ovid 5. \textit{De Fasti}:\textsuperscript{22}

Olympus’ weight did not as yet
Great Atlas’ back adorn,
When as the lovely Hyas of
Conspicuous shape was born.

Hylas, the son of Hyadamus, was not only endeared to Hercules, but doted on by the nymphs called Dryades.\textsuperscript{23} Julius, the son of Aeneas and Creusa, was taken for Cupid, the son of Venus.\textsuperscript{24} Juvencius was the minion\textsuperscript{25} of Catullus, as Lygurinus was to Horace; so likewise Lycus, of whom he thus speaks:

Lycus rare,
Both for his black eyes and his black sleek hair.\textsuperscript{26}

Something more freely he speaks of the pulchritude of Nearchus in \textit{Carmina} and his \textit{Odes}.\textsuperscript{27} [...] 

In Hephaestion was that majestical beauty [...] for his exquisite form he was especially beloved of Alexander\textsuperscript{28} [...] Phodrus Fliensis, who was the familiar of Socrates and Plato, was for exquisite shape compelled to be prostituted by the bawd his master. [...] 

[...]

Spurinae was a youth of such an alluring beauty, that when he could neither reserve himself from suit of men or importunities of women, he deformed his own beauty with scratches and wounds to preserve his own chastity (Valer. Max. de Verecundis).\textsuperscript{29} Magnes Smyrnaeus was the most beautiful of his age, and so acceptable to the Gyges, king of Lydia, that when his parents cut off his delicate and fair hair (somewhat to take off the king’s affection) the king was so incensed that for that cause alone he made war against the Magnesians (Pausan[ias] apud Volater[anus]).\textsuperscript{30} [...] I could reckon up others, as Pelops, Idas,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Galetes ... lives Aelian, ‘Various History,’ \textit{Online Companion}, p 1.
\item Fasti 5.5.170. Hyas, son of Atlas, king of Mauritania.
\item Hercules, Hylas and the Dryades See Glossary, print anthology.
\item Aeneid goes to meet Queen Dido of Carthage; Cupid accompanies him disguised as Aeneas’ son, \textit{Julus} (Ascanius) [\textit{Aeneid} 1.675-694]).
\item minion lover.
\item Horace, \textit{Odes} 1.32.11 (Lycus beloved of the 5\textsuperscript{th} c. BCE Greek poet, Alcaeus).
\item Hephaestion See ‘Alexander and Hephaestion,’ Glossary (print anthology).
\item Spurinae beautiful Etruscan youth, irresistible even to virtuous women; he disfigured his face to halt their propositions (Valerius Maximus [1\textsuperscript{st} c. CE Roman historian], ‘De Verecundis,’ 4.5)
\item King Gyges of Lydia loved the beautiful boy \textit{Magnes Smyrnaeus} [of Smyrna] (Pausan[ias] apud [i.e., following] Volater[anus])
\end{enumerate}
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Jason, Artaxerxes, Cyrus, Troilus, Patroclus, Hymene, the least of them a prince, the minion to a king, or the dearly beloved of some queen or goddess.

This is only to put you in mind, O women, that though you have engrossed a great proportion of beauty, yet you are not possessed of all, since not only men, but diverse other creatures share with you; neither have I introduced these to derogate anything from your worths, only to abate some of that ambition or self-love which is commonly attendant upon beauty.

[...]