

papists at home procured bawdy books to be translated out of the Italian tongue, whereby overmany young wills and wits, allured to wantonness, do now boldly contemn all severe books that sound to honesty and godliness. In our forefathers' time, when papistry as a standing pool covered and overflowed all England, few books were read in our tongue, saving certain books of chivalry, as they said, for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, were made in monasteries by idle monks or wanton canons; as one for example, *Morte Darthur*,⁹ the whole pleasure of which book standeth in two special points—in open manslaughter and bold bawdry; in which book those be counted the noblest knights that do kill most men without any quarrel and commit foulest adulteries by subtilest shifts: as Sir Lancelot with the wife of King Arthur his master, Sir Tristram with the wife of King Mark his uncle, Sir Lamorak with the wife of King Lot that was his own aunt. This is good stuff for wise men to laugh at or honest men to take pleasure at. Yet I know when God's Bible was banished the court and *Morte Darthur* received into the prince's chamber. * * *

1570

9. Sir Thomas Malory's Arthurian romance. See above, p. 392.

JOHN FOXE

1516–1587

John Foxe's career at Oxford University, where he had become a fellow of Magdalen College, was interrupted when his Puritan convictions led him to protest energetically against some college rules and practices. He then served as tutor to the children of various great houses, but when Mary became queen in 1553 and the persecutions of Protestants began, he fled to the Continent. His great book was already under way: its first version (Strasbourg, 1554) was in Latin, and dealt with the persecutions suffered by the early Protestants, particularly Wycliffe and John Hus. But the book grew and grew as Foxe received from England accounts of the hideous tortures and persecutions being inflicted on the Protestants there. When Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, Foxe returned at once to England, and there he translated his Latin volume, adding to it hundreds of stories of the Marian martyrs (many true, some doubtful, some ridiculous). The English edition was published in 1563; its title was *Acts and Monuments of these latter and perilous days, touching matters of the church, wherein are comprehended and described the great persecution and horrible troubles that have been wrought and practices by the Romish prelates from the year of Our Lord a thousand to the time now present*.

It was immediately and enormously popular. Foxe saw life melodramatically, in terms of black and white; his book is a compendium of memoirs, stories, eye-witness accounts, personal letters, and the like, rendering the words, acts, and sufferings of some hundreds of martyrs in graphic—if often

fictionalized—detail. The final version of the book is massive—over six thousand folio pages, containing four million words. Apart from fanning the flames of anti-Catholic feeling, Foxe had an immense influence upon English nationalism. His stories, from the medieval crypto-Protestants burned for heresy to the Protestant martyrs who passed through the fiery trials of the Marian persecutions, tended to show that England was the land of a new chosen people, destined to lead the way toward the kingdom of God on earth. Foxe's second edition (1570) was so impressive that a copy of it was placed, with the Bible, in every English church.

From Acts and Monuments

The Words and Behavior of the Lady Jane [Grey]¹ upon the Scaffold

These are the words that the Lady Jane spake upon the scaffold, at the hour of her death. First, when she mounted upon the scaffold, she said to the people standing thereabout, "Good people, I am come hither to die, and by a law I am condemned to the same. The fact against the queen's highness was unlawful, and the consenting thereunto by me; but, touching the procurement and desire thereof by me, or on my behalf, I do wash my hands thereof in innocency before God and the face of you, good Christian people, this day." And therewith she wrung her hands, wherein she had her book. Then said she, "I pray you all, good Christian people, to bear me witness that I die a true Christian woman, and that I do look to be saved by no other mean, but only by the mercy of God, in the blood of his only Son Jesus Christ; and I confess that when I did know the word of God I neglected the same, loved myself and the world; and therefore this plague and punishment is happily and worthily happened unto me for my sins; and yet I thank God of his goodness that he hath thus given me a time and respite to repent. And now, good people, while I am alive, I pray you assist me with your prayers." And then, kneeling down, she turned her to Fecknam,² saying, "Shall I say this psalm?" And he said, "Yea." Then said she the psalm of *Miserere mei Deus*³ in English, in the most devout manner, throughout to the end; and then she stood up, and gave her maiden, Mistress Ellen, her gloves and handkerchief, and her book to Master Bruges.⁴ And then she untied her gown, and the hangman pressed upon her to help her off with it; but she, desiring him to let her alone, turned towards her two gentlewomen, who helped her off therewith, and also with her frows paste,⁵ and neckerchief, giving her a fair handkerchief to knit about her eyes.

1. Daughter of the duke of Suffolk. On the death of King Edward VI she was proclaimed queen by the Protestant faction but was overthrown by the Catholic Mary. For an account of her educational accomplishments see the selection from Ascham's *Schoolmaster* pp. 1025–26.

2. John de Feckenham, last abbot of Westminster,

employed by Queen Mary to convert obdurate heretics. He had tried in vain to convert Lady Jane to Catholicism.

3. Psalm 51.

4. Thomas Bridges, vice-lieutenant of the Tower of London.

5. Elaborate headdress.

From: The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 5th ed.
New York: W.W. Norton, 1986

Then the hangman kneeled down and asked her forgiveness, whom she forgave most willingly. Then he willed her to stand upon the straw; which doing, she saw the block. Then she said, "I pray you, despatch me quickly." Then she kneeled down, saying, "Will you take it off before I lay me down?" And the hangman said, "No, madam." Then tied she the kerchief about her eyes, and feeling for the block she said, "What shall I do? Where is it? Where is it?" One of the standers-by guiding her thereunto she laid her head down upon the block, and then stretched forth her body and said, "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit"; and so finished her life, in the year of our Lord God 1553, the twelfth day of February.

1563

JOHN LYL

1554-1606

John Lyly was the grandson of William Lily, the author of the standard Latin grammar which every schoolboy studied. After receiving the A. M. degree at Oxford, Lyly went to London and sought the patronage of Lord Burleigh and his son-in-law, the earl of Oxford. With the publication of *Euphues* he became instantly famous. The title of the book is Greek for "well-endowed," but a fuller explanation may be found in Ascham's *Schoolmaster*, where perhaps Lyly got it: "*Euphues* is he that by goodness of wit and applicable by readiness of will, to learning, having all other qualities of the mind and parts of the body that must another day serve learning." The subtitle, "Anatomy of Wit," means something like "analysis of intelligence."

The prose style of Lyly's book is called Euphuism, from its title that names its hero. This style has two features: an especially elaborate sentence structure and a wealth of ornament of various kinds. Sentence structure is based on parallel figures from the ancient rhetorics. Ornament includes incidents from history or poetry, proverbs, and similes drawn from pseudoscience, from Pliny, from textbooks, or from the author's imagination.

Euphuism became a rage for a while, especially at court. The publisher of Lyly's *Six Court Comedies* in 1632 informed his readers that "All our ladies were then his [Euphues' or Lyly's] scholars, and the beauty in court who could not parley Euphuism was as little regarded as she which now there speaks not French." In Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.346-365, Falstaff, when he is pretending to be the king admonishing his wayward son, Prince Hal, speaks Euphuistic prose.

This highly artificial and elaborate style did not last, of course, but it is an example of a fascination with language and its possible artifices that extended to all classes of Elizabethans. "It is a world to see," wrote Lyly, "how Englishmen desire to hear finer speech than the language will allow, to eat finer bread than is made of wheat, to wear finer cloth than is wrought of wool."

Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit

[Euphues Introduced]

There dwelt in Athens a young gentleman of great patrimony, and of so comely a personage, that it was doubted¹ whether he were more bound to Nature for the lineaments of his person, or to Fortune for the increase of his possessions. But Nature impatient of comparisons, and as it were disdainful a companion or copartner in her working, added to this comeliness of his body such a sharp capacity of mind, that not only she proved Fortune counterfeit, but was half of that opinion that she herself was only current. This young gallant, of more wit than wealth, and yet of more wealth than wisdom, seeing himself inferior to none in pleasant conceits, thought himself superior to all in honest conditions, insomuch that he deemed himself so apt to all things, that he gave himself almost to nothing, but practicing of those things commonly which are incident to these sharp wits, fine phrases, smooth quipping, merry taunting, using the sweetest rose hath his prickle, the finest velvet his brack,³ the fairest flower his bran,⁴ so the sharpest wit hath his wanton will, and the holiest head his wicked way. And true it is that some men write and most men believe, that in all perfect shapes, a blemish bringeth rather a liking every way to the eyes, than a loathing any way to the mind. Venus had her mole in her cheek which made her more amiable: Helen⁵ her scar on her chin which Paris called *cos amoris*, the whetsome of love. Aristippus⁶ his wart, Lycurgus his wen: So likewise in the disposition of the mind, either virtue is overshadowed with some vice, or vice overcast with some virtue. Alexander valiant in war, yet given to wine. Tully eloquent in his glozes, yet vainglorious: Solomon wise, yet too too wanton: David holy but yet an homicide:⁷ none more witty than Euphues, yet at the first none more wicked. The freshest colors soonest fade, the teenest⁸ razor soonest turneth his edge, the finest cloth is soonest eaten with moths, and the cambric sooner stained than the coarse canvas: which appeared well in this Euphues, whose wit being like wax apt to receive any impression, and having the bridle in his own hands, either to use the rein or the spur, disdainful counsel, leaving his country, loathing his old acquaintance, thought either by wit to obtain some conquest, or by shame to abide some conflict, and leaving the rule of reason, rashly ran unto destruction. Who preferring fancy before friends, and his pres-

¹ Wondered.² Moderation.³ Break, flaw.⁴ Flisk.⁵ Greek queen whom Paris abducted to Troy; reputedly the most beautiful woman in the world.⁶ Greek philosopher, known for his pursuit of pleasure. Lycurgus was a Spartan lawmaker.⁷ Alexander was a Macedonian king, conqueror

of Asia and Egypt; he killed his friend Clitus in a drunken brawl. Tully (Marcus Tullius Cicero) was the great Roman orator, famous for his glozes (flattering speeches). Solomon was the third king of Israel, famous for his wisdom and his many wives. His father, David, got Bath-Sheba pregnant and had her husband, Uriah, killed so he could marry her.

⁸ Keenest.