

## EUPHUIISM

The Anatomy of Wit by John Lyly, and its subsequent companion volume Euphues and His England, were published in 1578 and 1580 respectively. Both became extremely popular as a part of the renaissance revival of interest in classical rhetoric as a model for courtly, and even bourgeois, discourse. Lyly's prose style, as we shall see, carried the practice of symmetry (or "equality") of syntax to its furthest extreme. Shakespeare, along with most other poets of the period, was influenced by the euphuistic style, although with Shakespeare it often appeared in his plays as the subject of parody, as here.

From Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit: "And yet, Philautus, if there be any man in despair to obtain his purpose or so obstinate in his opinion that, having lost his freedom by folly, would also lose his life for love, let him repair hither and he shall reap such profit as will either quench his flames or assuage his fury, either cause him to renounce his lady as pernicious or redeem his liberty as most precious. Come therefore to me all ye lovers that have been deceived by fancy, the glass of pestilence, or deluded by women, the gate to perdition; be as earnest to seek a medicine as you were eager to run into a mischief. The earth bringeth forth as well endive to delight the people as hemlock to endanger the patient, as well the rose to distil as the nettle to sting, as well the bee to give honey as the spider to yield poison. If my lewd life, gentlemen, have given you offense, let my good counsel make amends; if by my folly any have been allured to lust, let them by my repentance be drawn to continency. Achilles' spear could as well heal as hurt, the scorpion though he sting yet he stints the pain, though the herb Nerius poison the sheep yet is it a remedy to man against poison, though I have infected some by example yet I hope I shall comfort many by repentance."

All of which sounds strangely like Benedick in MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING:

"I have known, when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife; and now he had rather hear the tabor and the pipe: I have known, when he would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armour; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turned orthographer; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. . . . One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace."

Or directly mocked by Falstaff in HENRY IV, PART ONE:

"Harry, I do not only marvel where thou spendest thy time, but also how thou art accompanied. For though the camomile, the more it is trodden on, the faster it grows, yet youth, the more it is wasted the sooner it wears. That thou art my son I have partly thy mother's word, partly my own opinion, but chiefly a villainous trick of thine eye and a foolish hanging of thy nether lip that doth warrant me. If then thou be son to me, here lies the point: why, being son to me, art thou so pointed at? Shall the blessed sun of heaven prove a micher and eat blackberries? A question not to be asked. Shall the son of England prove a thief and take purses? A question to be asked."