

## Introduction to Part I

One of the most important trends in early print was the proliferation of writings about death. While death as subject matter featured abundantly across genre and form, the early modern period also saw the publication of a large number of bespoke studies about preparations for death, or, more precisely, instructions for how to die well. Over fifty manuals or treatises about dying well were published between 1590 and 1700, only several of which are excerpted in this anthology. Some representative titles will offer a flavour of their content: Thomas Lupset's *The Way of Dying Well* (1534; see entry I.3); Anonymous, *The Manner to Die Well* (1578); John More's *A Lively Anatomy of Death* (1592); Christopher Sutton's *Disce Mori* [or] *Learn to Die* (1600); George Strode's *The Anatomy of Mortality* (1632); and Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying* (1651; see entry I.14). Such studies were influenced by the Continental phenomenon of the *ars moriendi* (the art of dying), a set of instructional manuals in how best to prepare for death that circulated widely in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

These Christian treatises drew, of course, upon a much longer philosophical concern with living well and thereby dying well that can be traced back to Socrates' famous lament: 'Ordinary people seem not to realize that those who really apply themselves in the right way to philosophy are directly and of their own accord preparing themselves for dying and death.'<sup>2</sup> Such a desire for readiness for death, and how it intertwines with a virtuous life, finds some comparison with Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* (or happiness leading to virtue) and Cicero's 'let us obey joyfully and thankfully [in death] and consider that we are being set free from prison and loosed from our chains'.<sup>3</sup> The cognate *memento mori* tradition, the invocation to remember one's mortality as a prompt to prepare for death, also finds roots in antiquity, and is most clearly articulated in the Stoic philosophy of Seneca. With reason leading to virtuous thought and action in this tradition, death – and its

<sup>1</sup> These circulated in two versions: the *Tractatus* or *Speculum, artis bene moriendi*, attributed to an anonymous Dominican friar (possibly undertaken at the request of the Council of Constance); and the shorter *Craft of Dying*, which is based upon the second chapter of the longer work (see William Caxton's version, entry I.1).

<sup>2</sup> *Phaedo* in Plato *CD*, 64a.    <sup>3</sup> Cicero *TD*, 1.49.

accompanying loss of reason – was something to be feared; paradoxically, however, a life filled with fear of death ‘will never do anything worthy of a man who is alive’.<sup>4</sup> Thus, preparation for death was key for Seneca, helping the individual negate their fear of death and enabling them to live a virtuous life. Mortality was something to be always kept in mind, something to be contemplated daily as the days, hours, and minutes moved ceaselessly towards the individual’s final end.<sup>5</sup>

In early Christian teaching, the afterlife held at first two paths: Heaven or Hell. Purgatory, the middle path by which the departed could eventually reach Heaven (through the expiation of their sin by suffering, aided by prayers of intercession from those left behind) only became Church doctrine in western Europe by the twelfth century. It was this middle path, which offered hope for those in sin, that was central to the wars of religion and religious reformations of the late medieval and early modern period. Good preparation for death in the Roman Catholic belief system, as prescribed in the early *ars moriendi* manuals noted above, circled around the belief that it was never too late to repent for a life badly led, and that virtuous action in this life directly impacted upon the individual’s destination in the afterlife. Within such a set of beliefs, an individual’s final moments were especially significant: the eternal fate of one’s soul was dependent upon its state as it departs the body natural (see entry IV.2 *The Summoning of Everyman* for a dramatic representation of dying well). The leaders of the Protestant Reformation denounced and rejected the idea of Purgatory as a superstitious relic without scriptural basis; for followers of Jean Calvin, only some, the elect, were now thought predestined for Heaven while the remainder were doomed for Hell. In the reformed faith of the English state religion, established through Henry VIII’s Act of Supremacy (1534) but only fully outlined doctrinally, and in terms of liturgical practice, in the decades that followed (see entry II.2 on ‘The Order for the Burial of the Dead’), what occurred at the moment of death was central to continuing disputes. The tidal shifts between the austere Protestantism of Edward VI, the Counter-Reformation of Mary I, and the

<sup>4</sup> Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, in *Moral Essays*, trans. John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), vol. 2, 11.6.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. ‘every day a little of our life is taken from us; even when we are growing, our life is on the wane. We lose our childhood, then our boyhood, and then our youth. Counting even yesterday, all past time is lost time; the very day which we are now spending is shared between ourselves and death’ (Seneca *EP*, 1.24.20).

more moderate Protestantism of Elizabeth I, meant that, for people of all ranks in English society, preparations for death were tied up with broader existential questions about what death entailed. The imperative to remember to die well, perpetuated by the authors of instructional manuals, as well as preachers, philosophers, and poets, meant that old Church thinking about the *ars moriendi* enjoyed a second life in post-Reformation England. Our entries in Part I exemplify the evolution of this tradition.

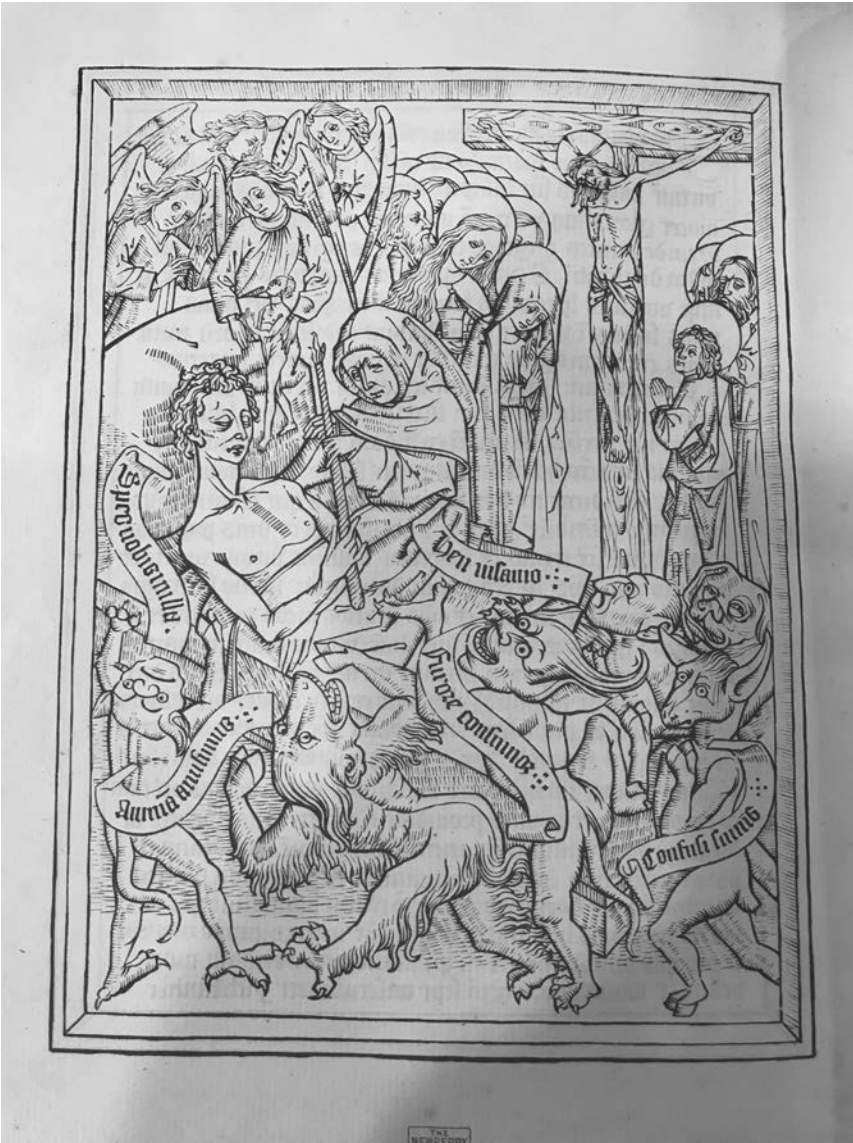


FIGURE 1.1 Allegorical deathbed scene. *To Know Well to Die* (London: William Caxton, 1490; STC 789), n.p. Image used courtesy of The Newberry Library

## I. I

WILLIAM CAXTON

### *To Know Well To Die* (1490)

#### *About the author*

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William Caxton (1415x24–1492), while an apprentice to a prosperous London silk merchant in the Low Countries, was drawn to the lucrative possibilities of the new industry of printing. He established a press in Bruges where he was part of the household of Margaret of York (sister of Edward IV and wife of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy), who encouraged him to publish stories from Homer, thus making his *Recuyell of the Histories of Troy* the first book printed in English. Other translations followed upon his return to Westminster around 1476, when he set up the first press in England and produced over a hundred books including Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Chaucer's complete works, *The Golden Legend*, *Aesop's Fables*, and *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

#### *About the text*

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Like many of Caxton's books, *To Know Well To Die* was his own translation of a French text from a work originally written in Latin. As it happens, he was working on it in the months leading up to his own death. Manuscripts of his source survive in two distinct versions, one long and the other short. Caxton had a keen eye for identifying what kinds of book would prove marketable (about a hundred editions were printed in Europe before his English version), and he correctly speculated that this popular Continental work of domestic piety would attract a wide readership in England.<sup>1</sup>

#### *The arts of death*

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Caxton's *To Know Well To Die* is a continuation of the medieval *ars moriendi* devotional practice designed to bring consolation and pragmatic instruction to the dying person (the *moriens*) and attending family. The long version is

<sup>1</sup> Later English *ars moriendi* texts in the main follow Caxton's successful model; see entries I.3 (Lupset) and I.14 (Taylor).

attributed to an anonymous Dominican friar: the first four of its six chapters give hope to the *moriens* by keeping him from temptation, reminding him of Christ's love, and urging him to imitate Christ; the final two chapters advise family and friends about deathbed protocol, and supply suitable prayers for the occasion. The short version (from which our excerpt is drawn) is the second chapter of the longer one which concerns the five temptations to be resisted while dying. These temptations and their mitigating 'inspirations' are depicted in ten illustrations that frequently accompany *ars moriendi* block books, showing five scenes of demons assailing the *moriens* and five of angels coming to his aid (see Figure 1.1). Bridging the confessional divide of Catholicism and Protestantism, the *ars moriendi* predates printing and persists as a literary genre well into the eighteenth century.

### *Textual notes*

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[T]he arte [and] crafte to knowe well to dye (Westminster, 1490; STC 789), A1<sup>r</sup>–A2<sup>r</sup>.

### *To Know Well To Die*

When it is so that what a man maketh or doeth, it is made to come to some end. And if the thing be good and well made, it must needs come to good end. Then by better and greater reason every man ought to intend in such wise to live in this world, in keeping the commandments of God, that he may come to a good end. And that out of this world full of wretchedness and tribulations he may go to heaven, unto God and His saints, into joy perdurable.<sup>2</sup> But now in these days, few there be that advise them of their end so much as they ought to do. Though they be sick, ancient, or old, and to them cometh this folly by a foolish hope that every man, in what estate he be, hath an hope to live long. And, therefore, hath this present treatise been made, composed in short terms for to teach every man well to die whilst he hath understanding, health, and reason, to the end that it is needful to him to be the better warned, informed, and taught. The which treatise is divided into six parts, of which the first treateth of the praising of death and how one ought to die gladly. The second treateth of the temptations that they have which be or lie in the article of death. The third treatise is of the questions

<sup>2</sup> 'everlasting'

that ought be made to them then. The fourth containeth a manner of instructions and of teaching that ought to be made to them. The fifth, of the remembrance that God hath won and suffered for us. The sixth and last treateth of certain orisons and devout prayers that they ought to say if they may; or else ought to be said before them, by some that be assistant or present.

*Of the allowing or praising of the death and how one gladly ought for to die.*

As then the bodily death is the most fearful thing of all other things, so yet is the death of the soul of as much more terrible and reproachable as the soul is more noble and more precious than the body. And the death of sinners is right cursed and evil, but the death of just and true people is precious before God, for the dead men be well happy that die in our Lord. To this purpose, sayeth Plato, 'the continual remembrance of the death is sovereign wisdom'.<sup>3</sup> Also for truth the bodily death of good people always is none other thing but the issue, or going out, of prison and of exile, and discharging of a right grievous burden, that is to wit of the body; finishing of all things, and end of all maladies and sicknesses, and also of all other strifes mortal. It is the voiding of this present wretchedness; it is consumption of all evils, and the breaking of all the bonds of this cursed and evil world. It is the payment of the debt of nature, return into the country, and entry into joy and glory. Therefore, sayeth the wiseman<sup>4</sup> 'that the day of thy death is better than the day of thy birth'.<sup>5</sup> But this word ought to be understood for them that be good only. [...]

For well to die is gladly to die; and to conne<sup>6</sup> die is to have in all times his heart ready and apparelled to<sup>7</sup> things heavenly and supernal. And that at every hour, when the death shall come to the person, that he be found ready; and that he receive it without any contradiction but also joyfully as he should abide the coming of his good friend. To this purpose, sayeth the philosopher,<sup>8</sup> 'That natural reason well counselled judgeth that the good death ought better to be chosen than the evil life, and that one ought sooner to choose thy bodily death than do anything against the weal of virtue'.<sup>9</sup> Thus then it

<sup>3</sup> *Phaedo* in Plato *CD*, 67d–e

<sup>4</sup> Solomon, king of Israel (reigned 970–31 BCE), renowned for his learning, discernment, and wise judgements

<sup>5</sup> Eccl 7.1 (Vulgate); cf. entry I.9 (Perkins)    <sup>6</sup> 'know how to' (from OE. *cunnan*)

<sup>7</sup> 'prepared for'    <sup>8</sup> Aristotle

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle *CW*, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1115a, 6–10; a classical theme echoed by Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), I.13.

appeareth of the praising of the death; and that every good person and religious ought to desire departing of the body and soul for to be with our Lord Jesus Christ, and for to leave this present world for the better to live in the world to come.

### Suggested further reading

Appleford, *Learning*.

Beaty, *Craft*.

William Blades, *The Life and Typography of William Caxton*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

## I . 2

ANONYMOUS

### *The Calendar of Shepherds* (1518)

#### *About the author*

The work of several contributors drawing on a range of French manuscript sources, *Le Compost et kalendrier des bergiers* (Paris, 1493) was first printed by Guyot Marchant who had enjoyed considerable success with *La Danse Macabre* (1485), some images from which were reused in the *Kalendrier*. A Scots-English translation by Alexander Barclay was published by Antoine Vérard (Paris, 1503); three years later, Richard Pynson printed a corrected English version with the French woodcuts. Wynkyn de Worde brought out a rival English version (London, 1508) translated by Robert Copland<sup>1</sup> to whom ‘the Horner’ poem is attributed (included below in the excerpts). Julian Notary’s 1518 edition however, based on Copland’s translation, became the standard text for subsequent English printings as it deftly brings together and augments the earlier versions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *MA* I.3 on Copland’s other translation activities.

<sup>2</sup> See Joseph J. Gwara, ‘Wynkyn de Worde, Richard Pynson, and *The Kalender of Shepherdes*: A Case Study in Cast-Off Copy and Textual Transmission’, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 112.3 (2018), 293–356: ‘The early Tudor printers competed aggressively to issue revised editions of *The Kalender of Shepherdes* at regular intervals, copying and updating each other’s books every two or three years’ (295).



*About the text*

While capitalizing on the fashion of pastoral themes and characters associated with living a simpler life in harmony with nature, this book offers a range of contemporary views on medicine (especially phlebotomy and physiognomy), nutrition, and astronomy; it maps planetary influences onto the body and links the annual calendar to a person's life, each month being equated to six years of the biblically prescribed lifespan of 'three score and ten' (Ps 90:10). A heavily illustrated compendium of useful information, it contains a perpetual calendar, phases of the moon, folk wisdom, and proverbs; sacred concerns include the ten commandments, Lord's Prayer and Creed, meditations for a range of spiritual needs, the seven deadly sins, and exhortations to reform one's life followed by descriptions and vivid images of tortures in Hell.

*The arts of death*

There is a distinct overlap between the *Calendar of Shepherds* and *Dance of Death* in imagery and content. Some of the same woodcuts appear in both works, and each offers practical advice about how to live well so as to make proper provision for death. Our excerpt consists of three sections where this *memento mori* message is delivered in terms of 'the saying of a dead man', 'the song of death' (Figure 1.2),<sup>3</sup> and a five-stanza rhyme royal poem – showing a 'Blackamoor'<sup>4</sup> blowing his horn of warning while holding Death's dart<sup>5</sup> (Figure 1.3) – admonishing readers to 'cease of their sins at the sounding of a dreadful<sup>6</sup> horn'.<sup>7</sup> The visual trope of the domesticated and subservient 'Blackamoor' as a herald and harbinger, in this case of death, has a long

<sup>3</sup> This same image is used, among other places, on the 1530 title page of *The Summoning of Everyman* (entry IV.2).

<sup>4</sup> The word 'blakemor' as a way to refer generally to people of African descent appears as early as the thirteenth century, a term also used in heraldic blazoning. See the Introduction for a more detailed account of the problematic racialized linking of blackness to death in early modern European thought and literature.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. entry IV.6 (Gascoigne); see Figure 0.1.

<sup>6</sup> 'worthy of dread'; fearful expectation or anticipation of some horrific outcome warranting awe and great care; cf. Shakespeare (*Hamlet* 3.1.79), 'the dread of something after death'

<sup>7</sup> Cf. John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* (London: 1493; STC 12142), fol. xxii<sup>v</sup>, an inset tale concerning one for whom the 'trump of death' has sounded, being advised to show proper humility and penance so the king will be inclined toward clemency and countermand the order of execution

history in the European popular imagination,<sup>8</sup> stemming in part from the homophonic correspondence of ‘Moors’ and *mors* (the Latin noun for death).<sup>9</sup>

*Textual notes*

*The kalender of shepardes* (London: 1518; STC 22410), M4<sup>r</sup>–M4<sup>v</sup>; (London: 1528; STC 22411), L4<sup>v</sup>–L5<sup>r</sup>, U4<sup>r</sup>–X1<sup>r</sup>.

*The Saying of a Dead Man*

Man look and see  
 Take heed of me  
 How thou shalt be  
 When thou art dead,  
 Dry as a tree  
 Worms shall eat thee  
 Thy great beauty  
 Shall be like lead.

The time hath been  
 In my youth green  
 That I was clean  
 Of body as ye are,  
 But for mine eyen<sup>10</sup>  
 Now two holes bene<sup>11</sup>  
 Of me is seen  
 But bones all bare.

Now entend<sup>12</sup>  
 For to amend.

<sup>8</sup> e.g., Abraham Cowley, *Cutter of Coleman Street* (London 1663; Wing C6669), 4.6.48: ‘He’s Dead long since, and gone to the Blackamore’s below.’ See Introduction, ‘Racializing Death’.

<sup>9</sup> This perennial theme is elaborated further (also with reference to ‘morris’ dancing) by William E. Engel, ‘Death Slips onto the Renaissance Stage’, in *Acts and Texts: Performance and Ritual in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Laurie Postlewaite and Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 269–302, esp. pp. 269–71.

<sup>10</sup> ‘my eyes’

<sup>11</sup> ‘are’; also owing to phonic similarity, a possible pun on the Anglo-Saxon derived word for bone, *bein*

<sup>12</sup> ‘attend’; ‘direct attention to’

<sup>13</sup> ‘impure’; ‘unclean’    <sup>14</sup> ‘liking’, ‘delight’

O mortal creatures, sailing in the waves of misery  
 Avail the sail of your conscience unpure<sup>13</sup>  
 Flee from the perils of this unsteadfast weary  
 Drive to the haven of charity most sure  
 And cast the anchor of true confession  
 Fastened with the great cable of contrition clean  
 Wind up thy merchandise of whole satisfaction  
 Which of true customers shall be over seen  
 And brought to the warehouse of perfection  
 As perfect merchants of God by election  
 [...]

*The song of death to all Christian people*

(See Figure 1.2.)

Though my picture be not to your pleasure<sup>14</sup>  
 And if you think that it be dreadful  
 Take it worth<sup>15</sup> for surely in substance  
 The light of it may to you be profitable  
 There is no way also more doubtful  
 Therefore learn to know yourself and see  
 Look how I am and thus shall thou be  
 And take heed of thy self, in adventure rede I<sup>16</sup>  
 For Adam's apple we all must die.  
 [...]

How every man and woman ought to cease of their sins  
 at the sounding of a dreadful horn

(See Figure 1.3)

<sup>13</sup> 'as something valuable'; 'worthy matter'

<sup>16</sup> 'be advised by me about your risky journey'



FIGURE 1.2 Death with coffin. *Calendar of Shepherds* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1528; STC 22411), L4<sup>v</sup>. Image used courtesy of The Newberry Library



FIGURE 1.3 Moor with horn. *Calender of Shepherds* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1528; STC 22411), U4<sup>v</sup>. Image used courtesy of The Newberry Library

Ho, ho, you blind folk, darked in the cloud  
 Of ignorant fume,<sup>17</sup> thick and mystical  
 Take heed of my horn, tooting all aloud

<sup>17</sup> 'noxious vapour'

With boisterous sounds, and blasts boreal<sup>18</sup>  
 Giving you warning, of the Judgement final  
 The which daily is ready, to give sentence  
 On perverse people, replete with negligence.

Ho, ho, betime, or that it be too late  
 Cease while ye have space and portunate<sup>19</sup>  
 Leave your follies, or death make you checkmate  
 Cease your ignorant incredulity  
 Cleanse your thoughts of immundicity<sup>20</sup>  
 Cease of your pecunial pensement<sup>21</sup>  
 The which defileth your entendment.<sup>22</sup>

Ho, ho, people, infected with negligence  
 Cease your sins, and manifold cruelties  
 Dread God your maker, and his righteous sentence  
 Cease your blindness of worldly vanities  
 Lest he you smite with endless infirmities  
 Cease your coveting, gluttony, and pride  
 And cease your superfluous garments wide.

Cease of your oaths, cease of your swearing,  
 Cease of your pomp, cease of your vainglory,  
 Cease of your hate, cease of your blaspheming,  
 Cease of your malice, cease of your envy,  
 Cease of your wrath, cease of your lechery,  
 Cease of your fraud, cease your deception,  
 Cease of your tongues making detraction.

Flee faint falsehood, fickle, foul, and fell  
 Flee fatal flatterers, full of fairness  
 Flee fair feigning, fables and favel<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> 'cold', 'bracing' (ME. *boriall*, north wind)    <sup>19</sup> 'opportunity'

<sup>20</sup> 'immundite things'; 'impurities'    <sup>21</sup> 'thoughts of financial gain'

<sup>22</sup> 'right understanding'

<sup>23</sup> 'flattery'. Favel is among the personified vices encountered on the allegorical ship of state in John Skelton, *Bouge of Court* (London: 1499; STC 22597).

Flee folks' fellowship frequenting falseness  
 Flee frantic facers, fulfilled of forwardness  
 Flee fools' fallacies, flee fond fantasies  
 Flee from fresh fablers, feigning flatteries.

Thus endeth the horner.

### Suggested further reading

- Martha W. Driver, 'When is a Miscellany Not Miscellaneous? Making Sense of the *Kalender of Shepherds*', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), 199–214.
- Phebe Jensen, *Astrology, Almanacs, and the Early Modern English Calendar* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 74–93.
- Kathleen E. Kennedy, 'Moors and Moorishness in Late Medieval England', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 42 (2020), 213–51.
- K. J. P. Lowe, 'The Stereotyping of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe', in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. T. F. Earle and K. J. P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 17–48.

## I. 3

THOMAS LUPSET

### *The Way of Dying Well* (1534)

#### *About the author*

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Thomas Lupset (c.1495–1530) was a humanist scholar and ecclesiastic, who was associated by education, career, and friendship with many of the leading figures of the Northern Renaissance. He was educated in the household of John Colet, leading to further tutelage under William Lily, probably at the newly founded St Paul's School, before proceeding to university at Cambridge. By 1513, at age eighteen or so, he was assisting Desiderius Erasmus on his new Latin edition of the New Testament. Lupset travelled widely, receiving further instruction from Niccolò Leonico Tomeo at the University of Padua. This was also where he first came into contact with Reginald Pole, an emerging senior figure in the English Church, who would have a great influence upon Lupset's career.

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*About the text*

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Lupset writes *The Way of Dying Well*, his final extant work, in the winter of 1529–1530, completing it ‘at Paris the [10th] day of January’. Lupset would die within the year from tuberculosis. His treatise about dying well was printed posthumously by Thomas Berthelet, the royal printer. Lupset’s treatise is best understood in the context of the religious upheaval of the 1520s and 1530s: it is a work of counsel with a sharp political edge. It was one of several works about death published in the politically charged period before the break with Rome: compare with Thomas More’s *Dialogue of Comfort* (1534), Richard Whitford’s *Daily Exercise of Death* (1534), and an anonymous translation of Erasmus’s *De praeparatione ad mortum* (completed in 1534, commissioned by Thomas Boleyn; translated and published as *Preparation to Death* in 1538). Amy Appleford notes that these works’ ‘common call to readers to face death with fortitude, confidence, and joy is fiercely focused on the political present’.<sup>1</sup>

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*The arts of death*

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The counsel offered in Lupset’s work is addressed to John Walker, a serving-man to Pole. It begins with a pointed comparison between the deaths of two men: Canius, a Roman nobleman put to death by Caligula, who calmly accepted his death and thereby ‘showed himself to be in spirit as far above all kings’ violent power’; and Francis Philip, a traitor executed at Tyburn in 1524, who, ‘quaking and trembling’ could ‘scant ... speak one word’ upon the scaffold, and thereby ‘died so cowardly’. With such a template for dying well or otherwise in mind, Lupset insists that death is something not to be feared if the individual has lived a good life. His humanist counsel, based upon a Senecan model of the moral essay,<sup>2</sup> is specifically directed towards men in service. Nancy Lee Beaty notes that in Lupset’s study, the ‘old wine of ecclesiastical tradition, now stale, was combined with the rather heady vintage of ancient death-literature, and poured into the new bottle of the classical moral essay’.<sup>3</sup> Our selected excerpts include Lupset’s most pragmatic advice for servingmen about how to live and die well: be in ‘continual remembrance’ of your mortality; avoid idleness, in both a spiritual and practical sense; subordinate yourself to a virtuous master who will appreciate your virtuous actions;

<sup>1</sup> Appleford, *Learning*, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> See entry III.8 (Lodge) for an exemplary moral essay by Seneca, ‘On the shortness of life’.

<sup>3</sup> Beaty, *Craft*, p. 54.



say psalms and pray to God 'ever continually' to be 'ever well minded' and thereby also a perfect servant to your master.

### *Textual notes*

*A compendious and a very fruteful treatyse, teachynge the waye of dyenge well* (London: 1534; STC 16934), E5<sup>r</sup>–E8<sup>v</sup>.

### *The Way of Dying Well*

In my mind, nothing shall further us more to a glad death than shall an ordinate<sup>4</sup> life: that is, to live in a just and a due manner after one rule and one form, ever awake in a quick remembrance of death as though every hour were our last space of endurance in this world. When you rise in the morning, determine so to pass the day following as though at night a grave should be your bed. Let every day be reckoned with you as your last. [...] This is the thing that Christ would have us do, when he so often warneth and admonisheth us to take heed and to look about us because neither the day nor the hour of our calling is certain to us. Therefore, it is our part, of a time so much uncertain to make a time sure, certain, and present, that we never be taken unawares. By the which means we shall gladly suffer death saying it is a thing so long before prepared. For why should it be a strange thing to reckon every day to be the last? I see not but that thing that happeneth and chanceth to some of us, might come to any of us, and likewise all might have that that a few hath. There is no cause to deny, but as well this day you or I might die, as we see this day some other deed. And though we be not dead this day, yet it is truth that this day we die, and daily sithen<sup>5</sup> our first birth we have died, in as much that daily some part of our life hath been diminished, and ever as we have grown, so ever life hath decreased. We were babies, we were children, we were boys, we were young men, all these ages be lost, and 'til yesterday all time past is gone and lost. This same-self day that we now live is divided and parted with death. Still without ceasing we approach to death by the expense and waste of life. Thus dying we always be, though death be not always upon us. Conceive, then, this ordinate life in your mind and bestow your time whilst you have the time.

<sup>4</sup> 'observant of order'; 'moderate'; 'temperate'    <sup>5</sup> 'since'

[Lupset digresses to praise John Walker's master, Reginald Pole, saying that Walker can lack for nothing and therefore might be tempted to be idle. Lupset describes idleness as 'the grave of living men'.]

It is not now my purpose to show what you should do that you might not only fly idleness, but also be well occupied. [...] If you see that death is not to be feared, and that by continual remembrance of death you shall prepare yourself to die gladly with a good will, the which you cannot do unless you be in hope of the everlasting life. And this hope requireth some trust in the cleanse of a good conscience, the which ever followeth a gracious intent of living well. So that if you live well, you shall die well. And of the way to live well you cannot miss if you arm your mind to be strong against all suddenness of death. Pray ever continually without ceasing you must. But what is this continual prayer I would you learned? For of prayer it is but one final portion: the saying of psalms or asking with words of God his grace. The very prayer is to be ever well minded, to be ever in charity, to have ever the honour of good in remembrance, to suffer no rancour, no ire, no wrath, no malice, no sin to abide in your delight, but to be in a continual good thought, the which you may keep whether you sleep or wake, whether you eat or drink, whether you feast or fast, whether you rest or labour, and never peradventure you can pray better than when you must give yourself to serve your master, to whom the course of your life is due. (And bounden specially when God hath given you such a master, whom your service cannot please without you be studious to please God.) For well you see, that without virtue your service were to your master an unsavoury thing. But, as I have said, it is not now my purpose to appoint you the way of living well: if you have heard enough to die well, I have for my part now said enough, and shortly by the same you shall of yourself without farther help find the way to live well.

### **Suggested further reading**

Appleford, *Learning*, esp. pp. 205–18.

Beaty, *Craft*, esp. ch. 2.

## I.4

KATHERINE PARR

*The Lamentation of a Sinner* (1547)*About the author*

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Katherine Parr (1512–1548), twice widowed and twenty years younger than Henry VIII when they married in 1543, was permitted an active role in governance. She served as Henry's regent in 1544 during his last campaign in France, the triumphant if costly Siege of Boulogne. Her household became the hub of reformed religion at court by virtue of her hosting readings of the latest English translations of the Bible and debates about the Reformation with her husband in the company of friends and theologians. Although Parr's first book most likely was a translation of John Fisher's *Psalms and Prayers* (1544), an important piece of wartime propaganda, she has the distinction of being the first woman to publish under her own name in England with *Prayers or Meditations* (1545), a selection of vernacular texts for private devotion drawn from an unobjectionable spiritual manual, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. Parr was circumspect enough never to have been linked to the presumed heresy of Anne Askew.<sup>1</sup>

*About the text*

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The publication of *Lamentation* was deferred prudently until after Henry's death. It is structured as a conversion narrative recounting Parr's own religious journey. Despite several references to her identity, the form and tone of the work are sufficiently universal that readers easily can see their own experience mirrored in it. The tripartite sequence begins with confession (albeit relentlessly self-abasing in a way not usually associated with aristocratic authors of the day) and repentance; moves next to conversion and Parr's recognition of God's truth expressed through the reformed Church; and finally, addresses prophesy with special reference to death and the Final Judgement. The text thus concludes with a timely warning that if readers do not embrace reformed soteriology then they will be condemned to hellfire. Stridently

<sup>1</sup> See entry II.4 (Foxe).

anti-Roman Catholic throughout, Parr advocates ‘scripture alone’ (A2<sup>v</sup>) and ‘justification by faith’ (B7<sup>v</sup>), exhorting those who would attain salvation to confess their sins by looking within themselves rather than outward to ‘this saint or that martyr’ (G6<sup>r</sup>).

### *The arts of death*

*Lamentation of a Sinner* focuses intently on the end of one’s mortal life as a prompt to discover how to gain eternal life. Parr writes of the ‘maze of death’, using a term that is freighted with the implications of its earlier meaning of ‘delusion’.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, then, death becomes a false illusion that keeps people desperately clutching at ‘visible idols and images made of men’s hands’ (A5<sup>r</sup>). Such things ‘obfuscate and darken the great benefit of Christ’s passion’ (A6<sup>v</sup>) and reinforce a fearful prospect of dying without the intercession of papally sanctioned ceremonies and ‘indulgences’ promising remission from sin. Instead, ‘the blood of Christ’ alone is ‘sufficient’ to cleanse the faithful of sin, ‘as he hath appointed by his word’ (A5<sup>v</sup>). Everything thus hinges on the dead body of Christ, rather than on ‘such rifferaff as the bishop of Rome hath planted in his tyranny’ (A5<sup>v</sup>). Penitent Christians therefore should be convinced by God’s holy word (by which is meant the scriptures in an approved English translation such as Henry’s ‘Great Bible’ of 1539) and the ‘book of the crucifix’.<sup>3</sup> The latter is for Parr a powerful devotional mnemonic image drawn from the Gospels (a metaphor for Christ’s ultimate sacrifice) that gives new and special Protestant meaning to the *Christus mortuus*<sup>4</sup> and *memento mori* traditions.

### *Textual notes*

*The lamentacion of a sinner* (London: 1547; STC 4827), Br<sup>v</sup>–B4<sup>r</sup>, C2<sup>r</sup>–C4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> OE. *mas* connotes ‘bewilderment’, from *amasian*, ‘to confound’.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *MA* IV.7, Thomas Fuller’s expression of how Christ’s crucified body, memorialized through the Eucharist, ‘teaches thee an art of memory’ (p. 212) by means of which one can apprehend the true significance of his sacrifice.

<sup>4</sup> *Christus mortuus* (meditating on the dead body of Christ), as part of larger devotional practice of reflecting on Christ’s humanity, received exemplary expression in medieval Christianity by Anselm of Canterbury (d.1109) in his *Meditations and Prayers*. Martin Luther, familiar with Anselm’s work as well as with Bernard of Clairvaux’s references to the ‘sacred heart’ and ‘divine *viscera*’, likewise pursued this intimate form of spiritual exercise in his *Meditation on the Passion of our Lord* (1519), a work which may well have come to Parr’s attention.

*The Lamentation of a Sinner*

Behold, Lord, how I come to thee, a sinner, sick, and grievously wounded. I ask not bread, but the crumbs that fall from the children's table. Cast me not out of thy sight, although I deserve to be cast into hell fire.

If I should look upon my sins, and not upon thy mercy, I should despair; for in myself I find nothing to save me, but a dunghill of wickedness to condemn me. If I should hope by my own strength and power to come out of this maze of iniquity and wickedness wherein I have walked so long, I should be deceived. For I am so ignorant, blind, weak, and feeble that I cannot bring myself out of the entangled and wayward maze, but the more I seek means and ways to wind myself out, the more I am wrapped and tangled therein. Sooth,<sup>5</sup> I perceive my striving therein to be hindrance; my travail to be labour spent in going back. It is the hand of the Lord that can and will bring me out of this endless maze of death; for without I be<sup>6</sup> prevented by the grace of the Lord, I cannot ask forgiveness nor be repentant or sorry for them. [...] Saint Paul sayeth we be justified by the faith in Christ, and not by the deeds of the law.<sup>7</sup> For if rightwiseness<sup>8</sup> come by the law, then Christ died in vain.<sup>9</sup> Saint Paul meaneth not here a dead human, historical faith, got by human industry, but a supernatural lively faith which worketh by charity, as he himself plainly expresseth.<sup>10</sup> [...] Therefore, to learn to know truly our own sins is to study the book of the crucifix, by continual conversation in faith, and to have perfect and plentiful charity, is to learn first by faith the charity that is in God towards us.

We may see also in Christ upon the cross how great the pains of hell and how blessed the joys of heaven be and what a sharp, painful thing it shall be to them that from that sweet, happy, and glorious joy, Christ, shall be deprived. Then this crucifix is the book<sup>11</sup> wherein God hath included all things, and hath most compendiously written therein all truth profitable and necessary for our salvation. Therefore let us endeavour ourselves to study this book, that we (being lightened with the spirit of God) may give him thanks for so great a benefit.<sup>12</sup> If we look further in this book, we shall see Christ's great victory upon the cross, which was so noble and mighty. [...] And in this one battle, he overcame forever all his enemies. There was never so glorious a spoil. Neither a more rich and noble than Christ was upon the cross, which

<sup>5</sup> 'truly'   <sup>6</sup> 'except that I am'   <sup>7</sup> Rom 3:20   <sup>8</sup> 'righteousness' (from OE. *rihtwīs*)

<sup>9</sup> Gal 2.21   <sup>10</sup> Marginal note: 'Gal. 5.'   <sup>11</sup> Marginal note: '1 Cor. 2.'

<sup>12</sup> Marginal note: 'Christ's victory.'

delivered all his elect from such a sharp, miserable captivity. He had in this battle many stripes,<sup>13</sup> yea, and lost his life, but his victory was so much the greater. [...] Christ hath not only overcome sin, but rather he hath killed the same, in as much as he hath sacrificed for it himself, with the most holy sacrifice and oblation of his precious body in suffering most bitter and cruel death.

<sup>13</sup> i.e., marks on the flesh from scourging

### Suggested further reading

- Kimberly Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), ch. 2, esp. pp. 45–62.
- Janel Mueller, 'A Tudor Queen Finds Voice: Katherine Parr's *Lamentation of a Sinner*', in *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture*, ed. Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 15–47.
- Micheline White, 'Katherine Parr and Royal Religious Complaint: Complaining For and About Henry VIII', in *Early Modern Women's Complaint: Gender, Form, and Politics*, ed. Sarah Ross and Rosalind Smith (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 47–66.

## I. 5

ANNE LOCKE

### 'A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner' (1560)

#### *About the author*

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Anne Locke (c.1530–1590x1607) was a poet, translator, and reformist activist. She was a friend and confidant to the leading Scottish reformer, John Knox (c.1514–1572).

#### *About the text*

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In 1557, Locke joined Knox in Geneva, the Swiss city of the French theologian Jean Calvin (1509–1564) and the centre of staunch European reformist thought. While there she undertook an English translation of Calvin's sermons 'upon the songe of Ezechias made after he had been sicke, and afflicted

by the hand of God' (that is, Hezekiah's song of praise from Isaiah 38<sup>1</sup>). After the translation follows a sequence of twenty-six sonnets. The translator of the sermons is identified as 'A. L.' – a set of initials recognizable to London's Protestant community – but the sonnets are attributed more cryptically: 'this meditation ... was delivered me by my friend with whom I knew I might be so bold to use and publish it as pleased me'. This anonymous 'friend' is most likely a fiction by Locke to disguise her authorship, though the attribution to her pen is not entirely secure. The sonnet sequence is the first published in English. It borrows its form from Thomas Wyatt and structure from Henry Howard.<sup>2</sup>

### *The arts of death*

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The sonnets offer a paraphrase reading of Psalm 51. In this familiar psalm about penitence, David seeks God's mercy and forgiveness for sins committed in his adultery with Bathsheba and machinations ensuring Uriah's death. This poetic paraphrase of twenty-one sonnets (typically one sonnet is given for each verse) is prefaced by five sonnets, excerpted here, which seek to express the 'passioned mind of the penitent sinner'. These prefatory sonnets, which are not based upon another text, reflect more broadly upon the conditions of penitence and grace, expressed from the perspective of a sinner craving God's mercy. The speaker, whose imagined death is near, laments their 'distained life' and human wretchedness. They recognize their imminent damnation should no 'grant of grace and pardon' come. Juxtaposing a horrific vision of 'everlasting night' with hopeful pleas for mercy – the meditation on Psalm 51 that follows provides a means to beg for mercy – the speaker outlines memorably for the reader the fears that must accompany the onset of physical death.

### *Textual notes*

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*Sermons of Iohn Caluin, vpon the songe that Ezechias made after he had bene sicke and afflicted by the hand of God, conteyned in the 38. chapter of Esay. Translated out of Frenche into Englishe* (London: 1560; STC 4450), H2<sup>r</sup>–H3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Hezekiah's song was part of 'The Order for the Burial of the Dead' and primers. See entry II.2 (Cranmer) and entry II.3 (Church of England).

<sup>2</sup> See entry IV.4 (Howard).

‘A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner’

The heinous guilt of my forsaken ghost  
 So threats, alas, unto my feeble sprite<sup>3</sup>  
 Deserved death, and (that me grieveth most)  
 Still stand so fixed before my dazzled sight  
 The loathsome filth of my distained<sup>4</sup> life,  
 The mighty wrath of mine offended Lord,  
 My Lord whose wrath is sharper than the knife,  
 And deeper wounds than double-edged sword,  
 That as the dimmed and foredulled<sup>5</sup> eyes,<sup>6</sup>  
 Full fraught with tears and more and more oppressed  
 With growing streams of the distilled brine  
 Sent from the furnace of a grateful breast,  
 Cannot enjoy the comfort of the light,  
 Nor find the way wherein to walk aright.

So I, blind wretch, whom God’s enflamed ire  
 With piercing stroke hath thrown unto the ground,  
 Amid my sins still grovelling in the mire,  
 Find not the way that other[s] oft have found,  
 Whom cheerful glimpse of God’s abounding grace  
 Hath oft relieved and oft with shining light  
 Hath brought to joy out of the ugly place,  
 Where I in dark of everlasting night  
 Bewail my woeful and unhappy case,  
 And fret<sup>7</sup> my dying soul with gnawing pain.  
 Yet blind, alas, I grope about for grace.  
 While blind for grace I grope about in vain,  
 My fainting breath I gather up and strain,  
 Mercy, mercy, to cry and cry again.

But mercy while I sound with shrieking cry  
 For grant of grace and pardon while I pray,  
 Even then despair before my ruthless<sup>8</sup> eye

<sup>3</sup> ‘spirit’    <sup>4</sup> ‘sullied’; ‘dishonoured’; ‘defiled’    <sup>5</sup> ‘made dull’; ‘stupefied’ (*obsolete*)

<sup>6</sup> ‘eyes’    <sup>7</sup> ‘gnaw’; ‘consume’; ‘wear away’ (*obsolete*)    <sup>8</sup> ‘lamentable’



Spreads forth my sin and shame, and seems to say  
 In vain thou brayest forth thy bootless<sup>9</sup> noise  
 To him for mercy, O refused wight,<sup>10</sup>  
 That hears not the forsaken sinner's voice.  
 Thy reprobate and fore-ordained sprite,  
 Fore-damned vessel of his heavy wrath,  
 (As self-witness of thy beknowing heart,  
 And secret guilt of thine own conscience sayeth)  
 Of his sweet promises can claim no part:  
 But thee, caitiff,<sup>11</sup> deserved curse doth draw  
 To Hell, by justice, for offended law.

This horror when my trembling soul doth hear,  
 When marks and tokens of the reprobate,  
 My growing sins, of grace my senseless cheer  
 Enforce the proof of everlasting hate,  
 That I conceive the Heaven's King to bear  
 Against my sinful and forsaken ghost:  
 As in the throat of Hell, I quake for fear,  
 And then in present peril to be lost  
 (Although by conscience wanteth to reply,  
 But with remorse enforcing mine offence,  
 Doth argue vain my not availing cry)  
 With woeful sighs and bitter penitence  
 To him from whom the endless mercy flows  
 I cry for mercy to relieve my woes.

And then not daring with presuming eye  
 Once to behold the angry Heaven's face,  
 From troubled sprite I send confused cry,  
 To crave the crumbs of all sufficing grace.  
 With faltering knee I, falling to the ground,  
 Bending my yielding hands to heaven's throne,  
 Pour forth my piteous plaint<sup>12</sup> with woeful sound,  
 With smoking sighs, and oft-repeated groan,

<sup>9</sup> 'useless'    <sup>10</sup> 'person' (usually implying some pity or commiseration for them)

<sup>11</sup> 'prisoner'; 'wretch'    <sup>12</sup> 'expression of sorrow'

Before the Lord, the Lord, whom sinner I,  
 I cursed wretch, I have offended so,  
 That dreading, in his wreakful<sup>13</sup> wrath to die,  
 And damned down to depth of Hell to go,  
 Thus, tossed with pangs and passions of despair,  
 Thus, crave I mercy with repentant cheer.

<sup>13</sup> 'vengeful'

### Suggested further reading

Patrick Collinson, 'The Role of Women in the English Reformation Illustrated by the Life and Friendships of Anne Locke', *Studies in Church History*, 2 (1965), 258–72.

Kel Morin-Parsons, "'Thus Crave I Mercy': The Preface of Anne Lock", in *Other Voices, Other Views: Expanding the Canon in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1999), pp. 271–89.

## I.6

JOHN BRADFORD

### *A Fruitful Treatise ... against the Fear of Death* (1564)

#### *About the author*

John Bradford (1510?–1555) was an evangelical preacher, imprisoned at the King's Bench Prison in Southwark for holding heretical nonconformist religious views during the reign of Mary I. While imprisoned he wrote a series of influential Protestant treatises, emerging as a leading figure in contemporary Anglican reformist thought. Burned at the stake for heresy at Smithfield<sup>1</sup> in the summer of 1555, he was celebrated as a martyr in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.<sup>2</sup> Bradford's 'good death' was acclaimed by Foxe: 'Bradford took a faggot [i.e., from the woodpile to burn him] in his hand, and kissed it, and so likewise the stake', welcoming his death.

<sup>1</sup> Close to London's centre, the Elms, Smithfield, was an open space, used for tournaments, markets, and public executions.

<sup>2</sup> See entry II.4 (Foxe).

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*About the text*

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Writing while imprisoned and facing execution, Bradford first observes that, through 'man's judgement', he has been 'never so near' to death's 'door'. Bradford explains that there are four kinds of death – natural, spiritual, temporal, and eternal – and that the focus of his consolation will be upon the first kind, natural or physical death. He defines spiritual death as when though 'the body [is] living the soul is dead', because of sinful behaviour. Temporal death is 'a death where through the body and the affections thereof are mortified, that the spirit may live'; meaning to put to death whatever is earthly and to 'set your mind on things above' (Col 3.3–5, which Bradford cites). Eternal death is, of course, Hell. Bradford notes the oddity that people seem to fear natural death most:

the judgement of the world is not to be approved, for it careth less for spiritual death than for natural death; it esteemeth less eternal death than temporal death, or else would men leave sin, which procureth both the one and other [meaning, spiritual and eternal deaths] and [would choose] temporally to die, that by natural death they might enter into the full fruition of eternal life, which none can enjoy nor enter into that here will not temporally die, that is, mortify their affections and crucify their lusts and concupiscences. (A3<sup>r-v</sup>)

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*The arts of death*

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Railing against the pleasures to be pursued futilely in life's activities and commodities, Bradford supplies a Protestant version of well-worn *contemptus mundi* themes and tropes, and advises readers to instead recognize life's brevity and their own temporality. In one blunt passage, Bradford contrasts the brief pleasures of sexual intercourse with the pains of its pursuit in courtship, or the 'sting of conscience' if the act is unlawfully forced (that is, through rape). Rejecting the brief, inconstant, and intermittent pleasures to be found in life, he sets out the multiple hardships of misery and disease that assault the human body. Next, he considers the temptations and vices of this life, and how often people are made prey to various kinds of evil. Within these contexts of fleeting pleasures, disease, and vice, Bradford concludes that rather than fearing natural death it should be welcomed, for life is a thing to be loathed.

*Textual notes*

*A frutefull treatise and ful of heauenly consolation against the feare of death* (London: 1564; STC 3481), A5<sup>r</sup>–A8<sup>r</sup>. Preserved copies of the earlier 1560 edition are incomplete.

*A Fruitful Treatise ... against the Fear of Death*

First, consider the pleasures of this life: what they be, how long they last, how painful we come by them, what they leave behind them, and thou shalt even in them see nothing but vanity.<sup>3</sup> As, for example, how long lasteth the pleasure that man hath in the act of generation? How painfully do men behave themselves before they attain it? How doth it leave behind it a certain loathsomeness and fullness? I will speak nothing of the sting of conscience, if it be come by unlawfully. Who, well-seeing this, and forecasting it aforehand, would not forego the pleasures willingly as far as need will permit and suffer? If, then, in this one, whereunto nature is most prone, and hath most pleasure in, it be thus, alas, how can we but think so of other pleasures?

Put the case that the pleasures of this life were permanent during this life, yet in that this life itself is nothing in comparison, and, therefore, is full well compared to a candle light which is soon blown out, to a flower which fadeth away, to a smoke, to a shadow, to a sleep, to a running water, to a day, to an hour, to a moment, and to vanity itself.<sup>4</sup> Who would esteem these pleasures and commodities which last so little a while? Before they be begun, they are gone and passed away. How much of our time spend we in sleeping, in eating, in drinking, and in talking? Infancy is not perceived; youth is shortly overblown; middle age is nothing; old age is not long; and, therefore, as I said, this life, through the considerations of the pleasures and commodities of it, should little move us to love it, but rather to loathe it. God, open our eyes to see these things, and to weigh them accordingly.

Secondly, consider the miseries of this life, that if so be the pleasures and commodities in it should move us to love it yet that miseries might counter-vail and make us to take it as we should do; I mean, rather to desire to be

<sup>3</sup> Marginal note: 'This life is not to be loved in respect of the pleasures thereof, being nothing else but vanity.'

<sup>4</sup> Marginal note: 'What this life is, mark here, and learn.' These are all based on biblical allusions; for example, life is a flower (Isa 40:7), smoke (Ps 102:3), shadow (Job 8:9), etc.

loosed and dismissed hence, than otherwise. Look upon your bodies and see in how many perils and dangers you are: your eyes are in danger of blindness and blearedness; your ears in danger of deafness; your mouth and tongue of cankers, toothache, and dumbness; your head in danger of rheums<sup>5</sup> and megrims;<sup>6</sup> your throat in danger of hoarseness; your hands in danger of gouts and palseys,<sup>7</sup> etc.<sup>8</sup> But who is able to express the number of diseases, whereto man's body is in danger, seeing that some have written that more than 3,000 diseases may happen unto man? I speak nothing of the hurt that may come to our bodies by prisons, venomous beasts, water, fire, horses, men, etc.<sup>9</sup>

Again, look upon your soul: see how many vices you are in danger of, as heresy, hypocrisy, idolatry, covetousness, idleness, security, envy, ambition, pride, etc. How many temptations may you fall into? But this shall you better see by looking on your old falls, folly, and temptations, and by looking on other men's faults: for no man hath done anything so evil, but you may do the same. Moreover, look upon your name, and see how it is in danger to slanders and false reports. Look upon your goods, see what danger they are in for thieves, for fire, etc. Look upon your wife, children, parents, brethren, sisters, kinsfolks, servants, friends, and neighbours, and behold how they also are in danger, both soul, body, name, and goods as you are.<sup>10</sup> Look upon the commonweal and country, look upon the church, upon the ministers and magistrates, and see what great dangers they are in; so that if you love them, you cannot but for the evil which may come to them, be heavy and sad. You know it is not in your power nor in the power of any man to hinder all evil that may come. How many perils is infancy in danger of? What danger is youth subject unto? Man's state is full of cares; age is full of diseases and sores. If thou be rich, thy care is the greater; if thou be in honour, thy perils are the more; if thou be poor, thou art the more in danger to oppression. But, alas, what tongue is able to express the miserableness of this life? The which considered, should make us little to love it.

<sup>5</sup> 'watery or mucous secretions' (*OED*)

<sup>6</sup> 'migraine'; 'dizziness' (vertigo); 'low spirits', 'depression'    <sup>7</sup> 'tremors'

<sup>8</sup> Marginal note: 'This life is more to be loathed for the miseries, than loved for the pleasures thereof. The miseries of this life concerning the body.'

<sup>9</sup> Marginal note: 'The miseries of this life concerning the soul. By looking on our old faults and temptations, and other men's faults we may see what danger we are always ready to fall into.'

<sup>10</sup> Marginal note: 'Great and weighty causes for us to be sad and heavy, and little to joy in the pleasures of this life.'

**Suggested further reading**

Seymour Byman, 'Guilt and Martyrdom: The Case of John Bradford', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 68.3–4 (1975), 305–31.

Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce, 'The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20.2 (1989), 259–75.

## I.7

JOHN FISHER

*A Spiritual Consolation* (1578)*About the author*


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John Fisher (c.1469–1535), bishop of Rochester, was a leading scholar at Cambridge University, a favourite of Lady Margaret Beaufort (the mother of Henry VII), and a distinguished and prominent Catholic theologian. His outspoken opposition to Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, and refusal to acknowledge Henry as the 'Supreme Head of the Church of England', sealed his fate: he was beheaded at the Tower of London on 22 June 1535. He was instantly heralded across Europe as a martyr of the Catholic Counter-Reformation.

*About the text*


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Fisher was imprisoned in the Tower from April 1534, and, resisting all pressure to acknowledge the King's actions through the Oath of Succession, would have been aware of his imminent fate. Here he writes to his sister, Elizabeth, a Dominican nun in Dartford, Kent, to offer guidance and consolation in the form of a spiritual meditation. The work was probably never intended for publication.

*The arts of death*


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Fisher advises that Elizabeth should imagine her final moments before death, since consideration of this will help her to attend more devotedly to 'a good and virtuous life'. In Fisher's continuation of the death arts in the Catholic vein, he sets out three guidelines for the meditation: first, that his sister should

‘devise in [her] mind, all the conditions of a man or woman suddenly taken and ravished by death’; second, that she should undertake this meditation alone and in private; and, third, that she must preface the meditation with a prayer to God to beseech his help with this. The meditation then adopts some familiar *contemptus mundi* themes, contrasting fleeting secular pleasures with everlasting spiritual life (‘O corruptible body, O stinking carrion, O rotten earth to whom I have served’), and expounding upon Heaven’s joys and Hell’s terrors. Fisher emphasizes how meditating upon and preparing for a good death, keeping natural death at the forefront of one’s mind, can enable one to live a good life.<sup>1</sup> Fisher’s advice may be seen as a double art; that is, offering both a template for his own preparations for death, and a legacy for his sister.

### *Textual notes*

*A spirituall consolation, written by Iohn Fysshier Bishoppe of Rochester, to hys sister Elizabeth, at suche tyme as hee was prisoner in the Tower of London* (London: 1578; STC 10899), A2<sup>r</sup>–A4<sup>r</sup>; B4<sup>r</sup>–C1<sup>v</sup>.

### *A Spiritual Consolation*

Sister Elizabeth, nothing doth more help effectually to get a good and a virtuous life, than if a soul, when it is dull and unlustly without devotion, neither disposed to prayer nor to any other good work, may be stirred or quickened again by fruitful meditation. I have, therefore, devised unto you this meditation that followeth. Praying you, for my sake and for the weal of your own soul, to read it at such times as you shall feel yourself most heavy and slothful to do any good work. It is a manner of lamentation and sorrowful complaining made in the person of one that was hastily prevented by death (as, I assure you, every creature may be), none other surety we have, living in this world here.

[...]

Alas, alas, I am unworthily taken, all suddenly death hath assailed me, the pains of his stroke be so sore and grievous that I may not long endure them; my last home, I perceive well, is come. I must now leave this mortal body. I must now depart hence out of this world never to return again into it. But whither I shall go, or where I shall become, or what lodging I shall have this night, or in what company I shall fall, or in what country I shall be received, or in what manner I shall be entreated, God knoweth for I know not. What if

<sup>1</sup> Cf. these adapted themes and tropes in the Protestant faith in Bradford (entry I.6).

I shall be damned in the perpetual prison of Hell, where be pains endless and without number? Grievous it shall be to them that be damned forever, for they shall be as men in most extreme pains of death, ever wishing and desiring death, and yet never shall they die. It should be now unto me much weary, one year continually to lie upon a bed were it never so soft; how weary then shall it be to lie in the most painful fire so many thousand of years without number? And to be in that most horrible company of devils most terrible to behold, full of malice and cruelty? O wretched and miserable creature that I am, I might so have lived and so ordered my life by the help and grace of my Lord Christ Jesu, that this hour might have been unto me much joyous and greatly desired. Many blessed and holy Saints were full joyous and desirous of this hour, for they knew well that by death their souls should be translated into a new life: to the life of all joy and endless pleasure, from the straits and bondage of this corruptible body, into a very liberty and true freedom among the company of heaven, from the miseries and grievances of this wretched world to be above with God in comfort inestimable that cannot be spoken nay thought. They were assured of the promises of Almighty God which had so promised to all them that be his faithful servants. And sure I am that if I had truly and faithfully served him unto this hour, my soul had been partner of these promises. But unhappy and ungracious creature that I am, I have been negligent in his service, and therefore now my heart doth waste in sorrows seeing the nighness of death and considering my great sloth and negligence.

[...]

Therefore, first and before all things prepare for this, delay not in any wise, for if you do, you shall be deceived as I am now. I read of many, I have heard of many, I have known many that were disappointed as I am now. And ever I thought and said and intended, that I would make sure and not be deceived by the sudden coming of death. Yet nevertheless I am now deceived, and am taken sleeping, unprepared, and that when I least weened of his coming, and even when I reckoned myself to be in most health, and when I was most busy, and in the midst of my matters. Therefore, delay not you any farther, nor put your trust overmuch in your friends: trust yourself while ye have space and liberty, and do for yourself now while you may. I would advise you to do that thing that I by the grace of my Lord God would put in execution if his pleasure were to send me longer life. Recount yourself as dead and think that your souls were in prison of Purgatory, and that there they must abide till that the ransom for them be truly paid, either by long sufferance of pain there, or else by suffrages done here in earth by some of your special friends. Be you your



own friend, do you these suffrages for your own soul, whether they be prayers or alms, deeds, or any other penitential painfulness. If you will not effectually and heartily do these things for your own soul, look you never that others will do them for you, and in doing them in your own persons, they shall be more available to you a thousandfold than if they were done by any other: if you follow this counsel and do thereafter, you be gracious and blessed, and if you do not, you shall doubtless repent your follies but too late.

### Suggested further reading

Klaus P. Jankofsky, 'Public Executions in England in the Late Middle Ages: The Indignity and Dignity of Death', *OMEGA—Journal of Death and Dying*, 10.1 (1980), 43–57.

Paul Strauss, *In Hope of Heaven: English Recusant Prison Writings of the Sixteenth Century* (New York and Bern: Peter Lang, 1995).

## I. 8

ROBERT GREENE

### *The Repentance of Robert Greene (1592)*

#### *About the author*

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Robert Greene (1558–1592), the first infamous print author in English, composed six stage plays and over thirty prose titles from romances and satires to cony-catching pamphlets. He gained notoriety for his dissolute behaviour and ignominious end, which the cheap-print industry commercialized with a spate of repentance pamphlets, including Henry Chettle's forged *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, Bought with a Million of Repentance*.

#### *About the text*

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Though several scholars regard *The Repentance* as a fictional account penned by Chettle or someone else, John Jowett has made a thorough case for it being mostly written by Greene and only edited for the press by Chettle. This short pamphlet, more sober and less playful than *Groatsworth*, consists primarily of

two main sections: 'The Repentance of Robert Greene, Master of Arts' followed by 'The Life and Death of Robert Greene, Master of Arts'. The excerpt comes near the beginning of the first section just after Greene has confessed to living the life of a reprobate scornful of believers and mired in excessive debauchery.

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*The arts of death*

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The excerpt dramatizes not only the infidel's mindset toward the death arts but also the turning point of Greene's moral decline, when during a terrible illness he consults Edmund Bunny's *A Book of Christian Exercise, Appertaining to Resolution*, particularly Chapter IX 'Of the Pains Appointed for Sin after this Life'. A translation of a treatise by the Jesuit Robert Parsons, Bunny's guide to dying slightly modified the Catholic text for Protestant consumption, and, having gone through multiple editions from the 1580s onwards, attested to the need for re-engaging with the *ars moriendi's* affective dimension, which Calvinism had discouraged.

Lori Humphrey Newcomb has observed that Greene's conversion scene breaks with the Elizabethan faith in the spoken word as the chief means of conveying the divine truth's power to change hearts. Later in the second section, Greene mentions how a hellfire sermon he heard at Norwich deeply moved him, but his new outlook could not withstand the jests of his mates; what does leave a lasting impression upon him is none other than reading a popular print work – a suitable activity for proselytizing in the age of a robust pamphlet industry and, as Newcomb claims, for the growing Protestant acceptance of the printed word to impart divine revelation. Along with Greene's various commercialized deathbed repentances, the medium of conversion depicted in the excerpt bears witness to the printing press and trade as an engine of the death arts.

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*Textual notes*

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*The repentance of Robert Greene Maister of Artes. Wherein by himselfe is laid open his loose life, with the manner of his death* (London: 1592; STC 12306), Br<sup>v</sup>–B2<sup>v</sup>.

*The Repentance of Robert Greene*

*Consuetudo peccandi tollit sensum peccati;*<sup>1</sup> my daily custom in sin had clean taken away the feeling of my sin, for I was so given to these vices aforesaid, that I counted them rather venial scapes<sup>2</sup> and faults of nature than any great and grievous offences. Neither did I care for death, but held it only as the end of life. For coming one day into Aldersgate street to a well-willer's<sup>3</sup> house of mine, he with other of his friends persuaded me to leave my bad course of life, which at length would bring me to utter destruction, whereupon I scoffingly made them this answer: 'Tush, what better is he that dies in his bed than he that ends his life at Tyburn?<sup>4</sup> All owe God a death.<sup>5</sup> If I may have my desire while I live, I am satisfied; let me shift<sup>6</sup> after death as I may'. My friends, hearing these words, greatly grieved at my graceless resolution, made this reply: 'If you fear not death in this world, nor the pains of the body in this life, yet doubt the second death, and the loss of your soul, which without hearty repentance must rest in hell fire forever and ever'. 'Hell', quoth I, 'what talk you of hell to me? I know if I once come there, I shall have the company of better men than myself. I shall also meet with some mad knaves in that place, and so long as I shall not sit there alone, my care is the less. But you are mad folks', quoth I, 'for if I feared the judges of the bench no more than I dread the judgements of God, I would before I slept dive into one carle's<sup>7</sup> bags or other, and make merry with the shells<sup>8</sup> I found in them so long as they would last'. And though some in this company were friars of mine own fraternity<sup>9</sup> to whom I spake the words, yet were they so amazed at my profane speeches, that they wished themselves forth<sup>10</sup> of my company. Whereby appeareth that my continual delight was in sin, and that I made myself drunk with the dregs of mischief. But being departed thence unto my lodging, and now grown to the full, I was checked by the mighty hand of God, for sickness (the messenger of death) attached<sup>11</sup> me, and told me my time was but short, and that I had not long to live, whereupon I was vexed in mind, and grew very

<sup>1</sup> Translation follows in text.    <sup>2</sup> 'thoughtless transgression' or 'escape from moral restraint'

<sup>3</sup> 'a person who desires the well-being of another'

<sup>4</sup> London's permanent gallows, located outside the city

<sup>5</sup> To 'owe God a debt' was a commonplace in the period, expressed memorably by the Scottish captain, Jamey, in *Henry V*: 'Ay owe Got a death, and I'll payt as valorously as I may' (3.3.48–49). For further reading on this subject, see Jonathan Baldo, 'Spiritual Accountancy in the Age of Shakespeare' in *Memory and Mortality in Renaissance England*, ed. William E. Engel, Rory Loughnane, and Grant Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> 'let me look after myself'

<sup>7</sup> A 'carle' is a common name for a countryman or similar fellow of low birth.    <sup>8</sup> 'coins'

<sup>9</sup> 'close compatriots'    <sup>10</sup> 'out'    <sup>11</sup> 'to seize hold of' as by a disease or death

heavy. As thus I sat solemnly thinking of my end, and feeling myself wax sicker and sicker, I fell into a great passion, and was wonderfully perplexed, yet no way discovered my agony, but sat still calling to mind the lewdness of my former life. At what time suddenly taking the book of *Resolution*<sup>12</sup> in my hand, I light upon a chapter therein, which discovered unto me the miserable state of the reprobate,<sup>13</sup> what hell was, what the worm of conscience was, what torments there was appointed for the damned souls, what unspeakable miseries, what unquenchable flames, what intolerable agonies, what incomprehensible griefs; that there was nothing but fear, horror, vexation of mind, deprivation from the sight and favour of God, weeping and gnashing of teeth, and that all those tortures were not terminated<sup>14</sup> or dated within any compass<sup>15</sup> of years, but everlasting world without end; concluding all in this of the Psalms: *ab inferis nulla est redemptio*.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Edmund Bunny, *A Book of Christian Exercise* (London: 1584; STC 19355).

<sup>13</sup> 'a person predestined by God to eternal damnation'

<sup>14</sup> 'decided' or 'determined'    <sup>15</sup> 'within due limits'

<sup>16</sup> 'From hell there is no redemption'; this line derives from the Office of the Dead, a prayer cycle for departed souls that consists of scripture, prayers, and psalms. Hence, Greene refers to it as Psalms. See entry II.2 (Cranmer).

### Suggested further reading

John Jowett, 'Johannes Factotum: Henry Chettle and "Greene's Groatsworth of Wit"', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 87 (1993), 453–86.

Lori Humphrey Newcomb, 'A Looking Glass for Readers: Cheap Print and the Senses of Repentance', in *Writing Robert Greene: Essays on England's First Notorious Professional Writer*, ed. Edward Gieskes and Kirk Melnikoff (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 133–56.

## I.9

WILLIAM PERKINS

### *A Salve For A Sick Man* (1595)

#### *About the author*

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William Perkins (1558–1602), Cambridge don, theologian, and pastor, was a prolific apologist for the established Elizabethan Church. He wrote forty-eight texts, about half published posthumously. His works on 'practical

divinity' concern the nature of salvation, define the crucial role of preaching, and stress the need for following a moral way of life. In England his writings outsold Calvin, Bèze, and Bullinger combined,<sup>1</sup> three of the main Continental Reformation thinkers to whom Perkins refers when discussing 'election to eternal life' and 'the mystery of predestination'.

### *About the text*

Beginning with Ecclesiastes 7:1 ('the day of death is better than the day that one is born')<sup>2</sup> and using a catechistic question-and-answer format that anticipates objections to the points of doctrine presented by giving biblical precedents for learning how to die well, Perkins explains that a sick person's obligations are threefold: duties owed to God, to oneself, and to one's neighbour. He ties this back into a simplified explanation of the thorny reformist theological notion of supralapsarianism (the logical sequence of God's decrees), specifically that God controls, knows, and has foreordained when and how sickness occurs and the day of one's death. Instead of teaching resignation or fatalism,<sup>3</sup> Perkins sees this as another opportunity to rejoice in God's created order and 'glorify God in all things', most notably in the 'special providence' of sickness and death that everyone daily must confront.

### *The arts of death*

Perkins's *ars moriendi* is more than just a manual to prepare for death in hope of dying well.<sup>4</sup> As with his earlier writings on conscience, this treatise focuses on navigating everyday life ever cognisant of the prospect of eternal life. The subtitle designates three types of people that the book 'may serve for spiritual instruction': '1. Mariners when they go to sea. 2. Soldiers when they go to battle. 3. Women when they travail of child.' Far from being a random sampling of possible readers, this list reflects Perkins's communitarian aims of safeguarding England's integrity and perpetuating the Protestant Elizabethan state, namely those risking their lives to sustain economic security and prosperity; those making the ultimate sacrifice for Queen and country; and those whose

<sup>1</sup> *A Legacy of Preaching, Volume One*, ed. Benjamin K. Forrest, Kevin L. King, and Dwayne Milioni (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), p. 375.

<sup>2</sup> Bishops' Bible (1568); for a comparable treatment of this same verse, see entry I.1 (Caxton).

<sup>3</sup> Consistent with Perkins's *Antididonusus* (London: 1584; STC 19064); see *MA*, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. entry I.14 (Taylor).

lives are put in peril to bring forth the next generation. Consistent with Perkins's lifelong advocacy of social justice, he maintains that anyone's death diminishes the nation and should be considered both 'a private and a public loss' (G5<sup>v</sup>).

### *Textual notes*

*A salve for a sicke man, or, A treatise containing the nature, differences, and kindes of death as also the right manner of dying well* (Cambridge, 1595; STC 19742), A4<sup>r</sup>–A6<sup>r</sup>, G5<sup>r</sup>–G5<sup>v</sup>.

### *A Salve For A Sick Man*

The kinds of death are two, as the kinds of life are, bodily and spiritual. Bodily death is nothing else but the separation of the soul from the body, as bodily life is the conjunction of body and soul: and this death is called the first, because in respect of time it goes before the second. Spiritual death is the separation of the whole man both in body and soul, from the gracious fellowship of God. Of these twain, the first is but an entrance to death, and the second is the accomplishment of it. For as the soul is the life of the body, so God is the life of the soul, and his spirit is the soul of our souls, and the want of fellowship with him brings nothing but the endless and unspeakable horrors and pangs of death. [...] Death is the wages of sin (Rom 6:23), it is an enemy of Christ (1 Cor 15), and the curse of the law. Hence it seems to follow, that in and by death, men receive their wages and payment for their sins; that the day of death is the doleful day in which the enemy prevails against us; that he which dieth is cursed.

*Answer.* We must distinguish of death; it must be considered two ways: first, as it is by itself in his own nature; secondly, as it is altered and changed by Christ. Now death by itself considered, is indeed the wages of sin, and enemy of Christ and of all his members, and the curse of the law, yea the very suburbs and the gates of Hell; yet in the second respect, it is not so. For by the virtue of the death of Christ, it ceaseth to be a plague or punishment, and of a curse it is made a blessing, and is become unto us a passage or mid-way between this life and eternal life, and as it were a little wicket or door whereby we pass out of this world and enter into heaven. And in this respect the saying of Solomon is most true.<sup>5</sup> For in the day of birth, men are born and brought

<sup>5</sup> Eccl 7.1: 'the day of death is better than the day that one is born'; it is the proof text of this section of his treatise.

forth into the vale of misery, but afterward when they go hence, having death altered unto them by the death of Christ, they enter into eternal joy and happiness with all the saints of God forever.

[...]

And thus much of the first point of doctrine, namely that there is a certain way whereby a man may die well; now I come to the second. Whereas therefore Solomon sayeth that the day of death is better than the day of birth,<sup>6</sup> we are further taught that such as truly believe themselves to be the children of God, are not to fear death overmuch. I say overmuch because they must partly fear it, and partly not. Fear it they must for two causes: the first, because death is the destruction of human nature in a man's own self and others; and in this respect Christ feared it without sin; and we must not fear it otherwise than we fear sickness, and poverty, and famine, with other sorrows of body and mind, which God will not have us to despise or lightly regard, but to feel with some pain, because they are corrections and punishments for sin. And he doth therefore lay upon us pains and torments, that they may be feared and eschewed; and that by eschewing them we might further learn to eschew the cause of them, which is sin; and by experience in feeling of pain, acknowledge that God is a judge and enemy of sin, and is exceeding angry with it. The second cause of the fear of death is the loss of the Church or commonwealth, when we or others are deprived of them which were indeed or might have been an help, stay, and comfort to either of them, and whose death hath procured some public or private loss.

Again, we are not to fear death, but to be glad of it, and that for many causes.

<sup>6</sup> Eccl 7.1

### **Suggested further reading**

David W. Atkinson, 'The English *ars moriendi*: Its Protestant Transformation', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 6.1 (1982), 1–10.

W. B. Patterson, *William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Louis B. Wright, 'William Perkins: Elizabethan Apostle of "Practical Divinity"', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 3.2 (1940), 171–96.

## I. IO

DOROTHY LEIGH

*The Mother's Blessing* (1616)*About the author*


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Dorothy Leigh (*née* Kempe) (d. in or before 1616) leaves next to no record. She may have been the daughter to a William Kempe or a Robert Kempe, and may have been married to Ralph Leigh, who served under the Earl of Essex at Cádiz. We know with more assurance the names of her three sons, to whom her work's second dedication is addressed.

*About the text*


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Leigh's text belongs to a subgenre of conduct books, identified as the mother's legacy. The subgenre presents a maternal voice that, stirred by an approaching death – whether or not an immediate threat – gives religious guidance to the imminently bereaved children. Although Leigh's overt purpose is to enjoin her sons to feed their souls with godly wisdom, her counsel, by virtue of going into print, addresses and seeks out a far larger audience than her progeny. In each of the forty-five chapters, Leigh sermonizes on a separate topic dear to early modern reformers, such as the necessity of private prayer, the observance of public worship on the sabbath, the choice of godly wives, and religious instruction for one's children and servants. With its twenty-three printings subsequent to its initial publication, *The Mother's Blessing* achieved a remarkable seventeenth-century popularity, being launched to the ranks of a best-seller among female-authored texts.

*The arts of death*


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The text lucidly exhibits the early modern woman's multiple roles in the *ars moriendi*, a chief responsibility of which was to compose a last will and testament. For the wife and mother, death is family business, not just an individual consideration, since Leigh conscientiously stewards the affairs of both her deceased husband and her predeceased children. In the first excerpt, Leigh states her concern with carrying out her husband's will to ensure that their



sons are well instructed in Christian piety and devotion. Her own legacy, then, is very much a matter of discharging her duty to the head of the household. From a chapter entirely devoted to issues of the *ars moriendi*, the second excerpt demonstrates her solicitude over her sons' proper attitude toward and preparation for death. Finally, the overall text suggests the way in which pronouncing 'last words' gave Leigh a rhetorical platform from which she could speak with authority in a male-dominated culture that prescribed silence for women. Scholars have thus unpacked the text's political strategy of using the maternal voice sanctified by the deathbed to confer on its author the licence to enter and be heard in the public sphere.

### *Textual notes*

*The mothers blessing. Or The godly counsaile of a gentle-woman not long since deceased, left behind her for her children ...* (London: 1616; STC 15402), A6<sup>r</sup>–A7<sup>v</sup>, B7<sup>v</sup>–B9<sup>v</sup>.

### *The Mother's Blessing*

To my beloved sons, George, John, and William Leigh, all things pertaining to life and godliness

My children,

God having taken your father out of this vale of tears<sup>1</sup> to his everlasting mercy in Christ, myself not only knowing what a care he had in his life time, that you should be brought up godlily, but also at his death being charged in his will by the love and duty which I bear him, to see you well instructed and brought up in knowledge, I could not choose but seek (according as I was by duty bound) to fulfil his will in all things, desiring no greater comfort in the world, than to see you grow in godliness, that so you might meet your Father in heaven, where I am sure he is, myself being a witness of his faith in Christ. And seeing myself going out of the world, and you but coming in, I know not how to perform this duty so well, as to leave you these few lines, which will show you as well the great desire your father had both of your spiritual and temporal good, as the care I had to fulfil his will in this, knowing it was the last duty I

<sup>1</sup> Ps 84:6 (Bishops' Bible)

should perform unto him. But when I had written these things unto you and had (as I thought) something fulfilled your father's request, yet I could not see to what purpose it should tend, unless it were sent abroad to you, for, should it be left with the eldest, it is likely the youngest should have but little part in it. Wherefore setting aside all fear, I have adventured to show my imperfections to the view of the world, not regarding what censure shall for this be laid upon me, so that herein I may show myself a loving mother and a dutiful wife, and thus I leave you to the protection of him that made you, and rest till death,

Your fearful, faithful, and careful mother, D. L.

[...]

### *Chapter 7. The fifth cause is not to fear death*

The fifth cause is to desire you never to fear death, for the fear of death hath made many to deny the known truth, and so have brought a heavy judgement of God upon themselves. A great reason why you should not fear death is because you can by no means shun it. You must needs endure it, and therefore it is meet that you should be always prepared for it and never fear it. *He that will save his life,*<sup>2</sup> sayeth Christ, *shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for my sake and the Gospels, shall find it.* Do not fear the pains of death, in what shape soever he come, for perhaps thou shalt have more pains upon thy bed and be worse provided to bear them, by reason of some grievous sickness, than thou art like to feel, when God shall call thee forth to witness his truth. The only way not to fear death is always to be provided<sup>3</sup> to die. And that thou mayest always be provided to die, thou must be continually strengthening thy faith with the promises of the Gospel; as, *He that liveth*<sup>4</sup> *and believeth shall not die, and, though he were dead, yet*<sup>5</sup> *shall he live. Meditate in the laws of the Lord day and night* (as the Psalmist sayeth) and then thou shalt be fit to bring forth fruit in due season. Then thou shalt be fit to serve God, thy king and country, both in thy life and in thy death, and always shalt show thyself a good member of Jesus Christ, a faithful subject to thy prince, and always fit to govern in the Christian commonwealth, and then thou mayest faithfully and truly say:<sup>6</sup> *Whether I live or die, I am the Lord's.* But without continual meditation of the word this cannot be done. And this was one of the chief causes why I writ unto you, to tell you that you must meditate in the word of God, for many read it and are never the

<sup>2</sup> Marginal note: 'Math. 16. 26.' Leigh actually refers to Matt 16:25.

<sup>3</sup> 'to make preparation or provision beforehand'    <sup>4</sup> Marginal note: 'John. 11. 25–26.'

<sup>5</sup> Marginal note: 'Psal. 1. 2.'    <sup>6</sup> Marginal note: 'Rom. 14. 8.'

better for want of meditation. If ye hear the word and read it, without meditating thereon, it doth the soul no more good than meat and drink doth the body, being seen and felt, and never fed upon, for as the body will die although it see meat, even so will the soul, for all the hearing and reading of the word, if that ye do not meditate upon it and gather faith and strengthen it, and get hold of Christ; which if ye do, Christ will bring you to the kingdom of his Father, to which you can come by no means but by faith in him.

### **Suggested further reading**

Jennifer Louise Heller, *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011).

Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 57–82.

## I. I I

GEORGE WITHER

### Selected Works (1628, 1635)

#### *About the author*

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George Wither (1588–1667), Puritan poet and pamphleteer, supported the Parliamentarians. John Aubrey records that John Denham appealed for Wither's life when he was captured, quipping that 'whilst G.W. lived he should not be the worst poet in England'. After two years at Magdalen College, Oxford, Wither studied law in London where he published a verse satire, *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613), for which he was imprisoned. He then tried his hand at less incendiary work, and his much-praised eclogue *The Shepherd's Hunting* (1615) was anthologized well into the nineteenth century. Wither's remaining publications included more satires (for which he was again imprisoned), *Juvenilia* (1622), and poems on religious themes – most notably *Hymns and Songs of the Church* (1623), the first hymnbook in English not based entirely on the Psalms.

*About the text*


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Drawing on his experiences during the London plague of 1625, Wither published an admonitory poem in eight cantos, *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628).<sup>1</sup> A 'remembrancer', properly speaking, was a minor official attached to the Exchequer, variously termed 'memorator' or 'rememorator', who compiled 'memorandum rolls' to remind concerned parties about pending business. Wither's register declares 'the mischiefs present' and offers 'a prediction of judgements to come if repentance prevent not'. In the selection excerpted here from canto II, Wither makes much of Charles's first Parliament (assembled June 1625, prior to his coronation), set against the backdrop of a plague in London so virulent that the second session had to be convened at Oxford. Wither concurs with those in Parliament who complained about the king's marriage contract with the Roman Catholic Henrietta Maria of France that included, in his estimation, unacceptable concessions to English Catholics.

*The arts of death*


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Wither assumes the role of a 'remembrancer' in this verse plague tract, giving a moralized account of the chaotic time of pestilence that hampered the opening years of Charles I's reign. He uses the term in the same sense as Bishop Joseph Hall who reflected on how all things in the world, if properly beheld, are 'Death's Remembrancers'.<sup>2</sup> Wither's account of the capital city overrun by disease and contagion – and the abject fear among the living of impending death – conveys many of the commonplaces of this genre in the service of delivering chastening warnings about the breakdown of the government and church offices, as well as the devastating rupture of familial and social bonds.

*Textual notes*


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*Britain's Remembrancer containing a narration of the plague lately past* (London: 1628; STC 25899), D10<sup>r</sup>–D10<sup>v</sup>, F7<sup>r</sup>–F7<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See entry II.9 (Dekker) for a treatment of the plague at the beginning of James I's reign, 1603–1604.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Hall, *Susurrum cum Deo. Soliloquies* (London: 1559; Wing H421), H5<sup>r</sup>.

*Britain's Remembrancer*

When, as you heard before, the Court of Heaven  
 Commission<sup>3</sup> to the Pestilence had given  
 To scourge our sins, and signed her direction  
 She took up all her boxes of infections,  
 Her carbuncles,<sup>4</sup> her sores, her spots, her blains,<sup>5</sup>  
 And every other thing which appertains  
 To her contagious practices; and all  
 Her followers she did about her call;  
 Appoint them to their places, and their times,  
 Direct them to the persons, and the crimes  
 They should correct, and how they should advance  
 Her main designment<sup>6</sup> in each circumstance.

Then, on she marched; not as doth a foe  
 Proclaiming war, before he strikes the blow;  
 But like an enemy, who doth surprise  
 Upon the first advantage he espies.  
 For, passing through the streets of many a town  
 Disguised like a fever, she, unknown,  
 Stole into London, and did lurk about  
 The well-filled suburbs; spreading there, no doubt,  
 Infection unperceived, in many a place  
 Before the blear-eyed<sup>7</sup> searchers knew her face;  
 And since they knew her, they have bribed been  
 A thousand times, to let her pass unseen.

But at the length, she was discovered at  
 A Frenchman's house<sup>8</sup> without the Bishopsgate.<sup>9</sup>  
 To intimate, perhaps, that such as be

<sup>3</sup> This alludes to the 'Court of High Commission', an ecclesiastical court set up by the crown to enforce laws of the Reformation settlement. The court was controversial because it was seen as an instrument of repression against those not acknowledging the authority of the Church of England. It was thus abolished in 1641 as one of Charles I's concessions to Parliament.

<sup>4</sup> 'boil cluster' <sup>5</sup> 'inflammatory swelling'; 'sores' <sup>6</sup> 'plan'

<sup>7</sup> 'tired eyes'; 'fatigued eyes from waking and watching'

<sup>8</sup> a possible allusion to one of the many followers of Henrietta Maria, recently come from France

<sup>9</sup> ward named after one of the original eight gates of London; a site of coach inns for travellers heading out of town

Our spiritual watchmen should the more foresee  
 That they with discipline made strong the ward,  
 Which God appointed hath for them to guard;  
 And chiefly, at this present, to have care,  
 Lest now, while we and France united are  
 In bodily commerce, they bring unto us  
 Those plagues which may eternally undo us.  
 For, such like pestilences soon begin,  
 And, ere we be aware will enter in,  
 Unless our bishops, both betimes and late,  
 Be diligent and watchful at their gate.

As soon as ere the women-spies descried  
 This foe about the city to reside,  
 There was a loud all-arm.<sup>10</sup> The countrymen  
 Began to wish themselves at home again.  
 The citizens were gen'ly appalled;

The senators themselves to counsel called;  
 And all (who might advise in such a case)  
 Assembled in their common meeting place;  
 Where, what discretion publicly was used;  
 What was admitted of, and what refused;  
 What policies, and stratagems invented;  
 That mischiefs,<sup>11</sup> coming on, might be prevented,  
 I cannot say: For I had never wit,  
 Nor wealth enough, to sit in counsel, yet.

[...]

For with a doubled, and redoubled stroke  
 The plague went on; and, in (among us) broke  
 With such unequalled fury, and such rage;  
 As Britain never felt in any age.  
 With some at every turning she did meet.  
 Of every alley, every lane and street  
 She got possession: and we had no way,

<sup>10</sup> 'alarm'; 'a warning cry' (call 'to arms')    <sup>11</sup> 'nefarious schemes'

Or passage, but she there, in ambush, lay.  
 Through nooks, and corners, she pursued the chase,  
 There was no barring her from any place:  
 For in the public fields in wait she laid;  
 And into private gardens was conveyed.  
 Sometime, she did among our garments hide;  
 And, so, disperse among us (unspied<sup>12</sup>)  
 Her strong infections. Otherwhile (unseen)  
 A servant, friend, or child betrayed hath been,  
 To bring it home; and men were fearful grown  
 To tarry, or converse, among their own.  
 Friends fled each other, kinsmen stood aloof;  
 The son, to come within his father's roof  
 Presumed not; the mother was constrained  
 To let her child depart unentertained.  
 The love, betwixt the husband, and the wife,  
 Was oft neglected, for the love of life;  
 And many a one their promise falsified,  
 Who vowed, that naught but death should them divide.  
 Some, to frequent the markets were afraid;  
 And some to feed on what was thence purveyed.  
 For on young pigs such purple spots were seen,  
 As marks of death on plague-sick men have been;  
 And it appeared that our suburb-hogs  
 Were little better, then our cats and dogs.

Men knew not whither they might safely come,  
 Nor where to make appointments, nor with whom.  
 Nay, many shunned God's-house, and much did fear  
 So far to trust him, as to meet him there.  
 In brief, the plague did such destruction threat,  
 And fears, and perils were become so great,  
 That most men's hearts did fail; and they to flight  
 Betook themselves, with all the speed they might:  
 Not only they, who private persons were,  
 But, such as did the public titles bear.

<sup>12</sup> 'unnoticed', 'undetected'

### Suggested further reading

Andrew McRae, 'Remembering 1625: George Wither's *Britain's Remembrancer* and the Condition of Early Caroline England', *English Literary Renaissance*, 46.3 (2016), 433–55.

Kira L. S. Newman, "'Shutt Up": Bubonic Plague and Quarantine in Early Modern England', *Journal of Social History*, 45.3 (2012), 809–34.

Rebecca Totaro, *The Plague Epic in Early Modern England: Heroic Measures, 1603–1721* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 171–226.

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### *About the text*

Wither's main contribution to *A Collection of Emblems* (1635) consists in his straightforward verse commentaries on 200 emblems printed from plates originally engraved by Crispijn van de Passe for Gabriel Rollenhagen's two-volume *Nucleus emblematum selectissimorum* (1611–1613). Wither divides his collection into four books and adds a 'lottery' at the end of each book,<sup>13</sup> a single verse speaking directly to readers about the lot that came their way, with reference to each specific emblem. To facilitate this recreation, a pattern for a cut-out spinner is included at the end, thereby enhancing the reader's engagement with the text, whether alone or in sociable groups. 'For my meaning is not, that any should use it as an oracle, which could signify, infallibly, it is divinely allotted; but, to serve only for a moral pastime' (A2<sup>v</sup>).

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### *The arts of death*

Out of 200 already existing emblems to which Wither contributed his own distinctive moralizing poems, 10 explicitly show a death's head or skeleton,<sup>14</sup> and another 30 admonish readers to use their brief time on earth in wholesome endeavours – and yet all of them, in one way or another, urge readers to consider each emblem as a goad to self-improvement. Although Wither had no say about the images, he did exercise considerable liberty with his explanatory poems. In the two representative excerpts included here, he engages key aspects of the visual lexicon associated with the death arts and elaborates on the conditions of mortal temporality. Each emblem is introduced with a

<sup>13</sup> No lotteries appear in Rollenhagen's work; a precedent can be found, however, in a Jesuit emblem book by Jean David, *Veridicus Christianus* (Antwerp, 1601).

<sup>14</sup> See *MA* VI.7 for a comparable emblem by Francis Quarles with the scriptural motto: 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this Death?'



rhymed couplet (a feature not found in Rollenhagen's original format), followed by a circular image encompassed by a Latin motto, which provides the point of departure for his poetic ingenuity. A few of Wither's heading couplets will serve to indicate how prominently the death arts figure into his overall project: 'By knowledge only, life we gain, / All other things to death pertain' (B1<sup>r</sup>); 'This rag of death, which thou shalt see, / Consider it; and pious be' (B4<sup>v</sup>); 'Death is no loss, but rather, gain; / For we by dying, life attain' (D3<sup>r</sup>); 'Death, is unable to divide / Their hearts, whose hands true-love hath tied' (P3<sup>r</sup>); and, in a description of ageing he writes that stomach aches and other maladies, 'The harbingers of death, sometime, begin / To take up your whole body, for their inn' (Ccr<sup>v</sup>). He even uses his own image prefacing the volume as an occasion for meditating on morality (A3<sup>v</sup>–A4<sup>r</sup>)<sup>15</sup>:

When I behold my picture, and perceive,  
 How vain it is, our portraiture to leave  
 In lines, and shadows (which make shows, today,  
 Of that which will, tomorrow, fade away).  
 [...]  
 Our everlasting substance lies unseen,  
 Behind the foldings of a carnal screen,  
 Which is but vapors thickened into blood,  
 (By due concoction of our daily food)  
 And still supplied, out of other creatures,  
 To keep us living, by their wasted natures  
 Renewing, and decaying, every day,  
 Until that veil must be removed away.

### *Textual notes*

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*A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne, Quickened With Metricall Illustrations, Both Morall and Divine ... and disposed into lotteries* (London: 1635; STC 25900d), G3<sup>r</sup>, Aar<sup>v</sup> (see respectively Figure 1.4 and Figure 1.5)

<sup>15</sup> This play was not lost on Edward Collier who included it in his *Still Life with a Volume of Wither's 'Emblemes'* (1696) among other images associated with the *vanitas* tradition such as musical instruments, wine, and jewels emblematic of the fleeting pleasures of life; a skull and hourglass symbolizing the inevitability of death; and a Latin inscription at the top left corner from Eccl 1:2, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'; Tate Britain (ref. N05916).

*A Collection of Emblems*

As soon, as we to be, begun;  
We did begin, to be undone.



FIGURE 1.4 Infant leaning on a death's head. George Wither, *A Collection of Emblems* (London: 1635; STC 25899), G3<sup>r</sup>. Image used courtesy of The Newberry Library

When some, in former ages, had a meaning  
An emblem of mortality to make,  
They formed an infant, on a death's head leaning,  
And, round about, encircled with a snake.<sup>16</sup>  
The child so pictured, was to signify,  
That, from our very birth, our dying springs:  
The snake, her tail devouring, doth imply  
The revolution, of all earthly things.

<sup>16</sup> the 'ouroboros' symbol, associated with eternity in the Hermetic humanist tradition

For, whatsoever hath beginning, here,  
 Begins, immediately, to vary from  
 The same it was; and, doth at last appear  
 What very few did think it should become.  
 The solid stone, doth molder<sup>17</sup> into earth,  
 That earth, ere long, to water, rarifies;<sup>18</sup>  
 That water, gives an airy vapour birth,  
 And, thence, a fiery comet doth arise:  
 That, moves, until itself it so impair,  
 That from a burning-meteor, back again,  
 It sinketh down, and thickens into air;  
 That air, becomes a cloud; then, drops of rain:  
 Those drops, descending on a rocky ground,  
 There, settle into earth, which more and more,  
 Doth harden, still; so, running out the round,  
 It grows to be the stone it was before.  
 Thus, all things wheel about; and, each beginning,  
 Made entrance to its own destruction, hath.  
 The life of nature, ent'reth<sup>19</sup> in with sinning;  
 And, is forever, waited on by death:



FIGURE 1.5 Owl on a death's head. George Wither, *A Collection of Emblems* (London: 1635; STC 25899), Aar<sup>v</sup>. Image used courtesy of The Newberry Library

<sup>17</sup> 'decay'; 'slowly disintegrate'    <sup>18</sup> 'makes more refined'

<sup>19</sup> 'enters'; 'from its initial appearance'

The life of grace, is formed by death to sin;  
And, there, doth life-eternal straight begin.

Whilst thou dost, here, enjoy thy breath,  
Continue mindful of thy death.

When thou beholdest on this burying-stone,  
The melancholy night-bird,<sup>20</sup> sitting on  
The fleshless ruins of a rotten skull,<sup>21</sup>  
(Whose face, perhaps, hath been more beautiful,  
Then thine is now) take up a serious thought;  
And, do as thou art by the motto taught.  
Remember Death: and, mind, I thee beseech,  
How soon, these fowls may at thy window screech;  
Or, call thee (as the common people deem)  
To dwell in graves, and sepulchres, by them,  
Where nothing else, but bats, and owls, appear;  
Or, goblins, formed by fancies, and, by fear.  
If thou shalt be advised, to meditate  
Thy latter end, before it be too late,  
(And, whilst thy friends, thy strength, and wits may bee  
In likely case, to help and comfort thee)  
There may be courses taken, to divert  
Those frights, which, else, would terrify thy heart,  
When death draws near; and help thee pluck away  
That sting, of his, which would thy soul dismay.  
But, if thou madly ramble onward, still,  
Till thou art sinking down that darksome-hill,  
Which borders on the grave (and dost begin  
To see the shades of terror, and of sin

<sup>20</sup> 'owl'; sacred to Athena (Minerva in the Roman pantheon), goddess of wisdom and prudence

<sup>21</sup> See Introduction with reference to Geoffrey Whitney's emblem entitled '*Ex maximo minimum*' (from the greatest to the least): 'Lo, now a skull, both rotten, bare, and dry, / A relic meet in charnel house to lie' (f3').

To fly across thy conscience) 'twill be hard  
 To learn this lesson; or, to be prepared  
 For that sad parting; which, will forced bee,  
 Between this much beloved world, and thee.  
 Consider this, therefore, while time thou hast,  
 And, put not off this business, till the last.

### Suggested further reading

Miranda Anderson, 'Mirroring Mentalities in George Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes*', *Emblematica*, 20 (2013), 63–80.

Calabritto and Daly, *ED*

Pierre Le Duff, "'Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne": George Wither's *Collection of Emblemes*', *Revue de la Société d'études anglo-américaines des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 76 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.4000/1718.2894>.

## I. I 2

ANONYMOUS

### 'The Unnatural Wife' (1628)

#### *About the text*

The English broadside ballad gained cultural currency during the rise of the sixteenth-century printing press. Along with the pamphlet, it became the dominant cheap print vehicle, capitalizing upon sensational topics such as religious controversies, bawdy drinking songs, wonders and divine portents, plagues, military conflicts, and notorious crimes. Its frequent combination with a woodcut illustration enabled common folk to see themselves reflected in both verbal and visual media, thus helping to establish a proto-public sphere before the advent of the newspaper. Street ballads regularly omitted the author's name as in the case of 'The Unnatural Wife', included here in its entirety. It is an example of 'a good night ballad', which supposedly communicates the dying confession of a murderer on the eve of execution. Alice Davis, the unnatural wife in question, slew her husband with a kitchen knife,

when he demanded a shilling from her. Though records attest that Alice entered a plea of pregnancy in an attempt to escape the death penalty, she was executed for 'petty treason'. Statute law regarded the murder of a husband as a kind of treason against the sovereign and the state, and consequently Alice was not hanged but burned at the stake after the manner of a convicted traitor. Alice's case inspired at least one other ballad, 'A Warning for all Desperate Women' (London: 1628; STC 6367).

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### *The arts of death*

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The shame of being remembered in a murder ballad clashes strikingly with the wish for a blessed passing. 'O to think', laments the eponymous 'insatiate countess' of Marston's play, 'whilst we are singing the last hymn, and ready to be turned off, some new tune is inventing by some metre-monger, to a scurvy ballad of our death!'<sup>1</sup> For their time, early modern murder ballads promulgated an inverted *ars moriendi*. Whereas the traditional art instructed believers in the preparation for a good death, the murder ballad warned readers, as does the repentant Alice in her final stanza, to avoid the doubly fatal path taken by the condemned: her fiery punishment for her crime may be the prologue of a second, ultimate immolation at the Last Judgement. Alice's pitiful confession of how she was caught up in a juridical-disciplinary regime starting with the constable and ending with the judge also internalizes the institutional imperatives of the civic order. According to Stuart Kane, this ballad turns her domestic, private malefaction into a public spectacle for the buying audience. The way in which it reveals the elaborate surveillance machinery operating around mariticide – first the crime and then the punishment – suggests that, in this case, the death arts belong less to the individual woman than to the omniscient state.

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### *Textual notes*

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*The unnatural wife: or, the lamentable murther, of one goodman Davis, Locke-Smith in Tuttle-streete, who was stabbed to death by his wife, on the 29 of June,*

<sup>1</sup> John Marston et al., *The Insatiate Countess*, ed. Giorgio Melchiori (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 5.2.60 ff.

1628. *For which fact, she was arraigned, condemned, and adjudged to be burnt to death in Smithfield, the 12 July 1628* (London: 1628; STC 6366).

'The Unnatural Wife'

*To the Tune of Bragandary*<sup>2</sup>

If woeful objects may excite  
the mind to ruth and pity,  
Then here is one will thee affright  
in Westminster's fair city.  
A strange inhuman murder there,  
To God and man as doth appear:  
oh murder,  
most inhumane,  
To spill my husband's blood.

But God that rules the host of heaven  
did give me o'er to sin,  
And to vild<sup>3</sup> wrath my mind was given,  
which long I lived in;  
But now too late I do repent,  
And for the same my heart doth rent:  
[chorus]<sup>4</sup>

Let all cursed wives by me take heed,  
how they do, do the like,  
Cause not thy husband for to bleed,  
nor lift thy hand to strike;  
Lest like to me, you burn in fire,  
Because of cruel rage and ire:  
[chorus]

<sup>2</sup> A tune, which would have been familiar to many buyers, was always included with a ballad's title.

<sup>3</sup> 'vile'

<sup>4</sup> The chorus is the last three typographic lines of the first stanza: 'oh murder, / most inhumane, / To spill my husband's blood'.

A locksmith late in Westminster  
my husband was by trade,  
And well he lived by his art,  
though oft I him upbraid;  
And often times would chide and brawl,  
And many ill names would him call.  
[chorus]

The second part. To the same tune.

I and my husband forth had been  
at supper at that time,  
When as I did commit that sin,  
which was a bloody crime;  
And coming home he then did crave,  
A shilling of me for to have.  
[chorus]

I vow'd he should no money get,  
and I my vow did keep,  
Which then did cause him for to fret,  
but now it makes me weep;  
And then in striving for the same,  
I drew my knife unto my shame:  
[chorus]

Most desperately I stabbed him then,  
with this my fatal knife,  
Which is a warning to women,  
to take their husband's life;  
Then out of doors I straight did run,  
And said that I was quite undone.  
[chorus]

My husband I did say was slain,  
amongst my neighbours there,  
And to my house they strait way came,  
being possessed with fear,



And then they found him on the floor,  
Stark dead all welt'ring in the gore.<sup>5</sup>  
[chorus]

Life fain I would have fetched again,  
but now it was too late,  
I did repent I him had slain,  
in this my heavy state;  
The constable did bear me then  
Unto a justice with his men.  
[chorus]

Then justice<sup>6</sup> me to Newgate<sup>7</sup> sent,  
until the sessions<sup>8</sup> came,  
For this same foul and bloody fact,  
to answer for the same;  
When at the bar I did appear,  
The jury found me guilty there.  
[chorus]

The judge gave sentence thus on me,  
that back I should return  
To Newgate, and then at a stake,  
my bones and flesh should burn  
To ashes, in the wind to fly,  
Upon the earth, and in the sky.  
[chorus]

Upon the twelfth of July now,  
I on a hurdle<sup>9</sup> placed't,  
Unto my execution drawn,  
by weeping eyes I past;  
And there in Smithfield<sup>10</sup> at a stake,

<sup>5</sup> i.e., to lie prostrate in one's blood    <sup>6</sup> 'a judge or magistrate'

<sup>7</sup> London prison; see entry I.17 (Smith).    <sup>8</sup> 'the sitting of a judge to hold a judicial trial'

<sup>9</sup> a kind of frame or sledge upon which traitors were pulled through the streets on their way to execution

<sup>10</sup> See entry I.6 (Bradford).

My latest breath I there did take.  
 [chorus]

And being chained to the stake,  
     both reeds and faggots then  
 Close to my body there was set,  
     with pitch, tar, and rozin,<sup>11</sup>  
 Then to the heavenly Lord I prayed,  
 That he would be my strength and aid.  
 [chorus]

Let me a warning be to wives  
     that are of hasty kind,  
 Lord grant that all may mend their lives,  
     and bear my death in mind,  
 And let me be the last I pray,  
 That ere may die by such like way.  
     oh Father  
     for thy Son's sake,  
 Forgive my sins for aye.

<sup>11</sup> 'resin', a flammable material

### **Suggested further reading**

- Simone Chess, "And I my vowe did keepe": Oath Making, Subjectivity, and Husband Murder in "Murderous Wife" Ballads', in *Ballads and Broad-sides in Britain, 1500–1800*, ed. Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini with the assistance of Kris McAbee (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 131–47.
- Stuart A. Kane, 'Wives with Knives: Early Modern Murder Ballads and the Transgressive Commodity', *Criticism*, 38.2 (1996), 219–37.

## I. I 3

JANE OWEN

*An Antidote against Purgatory* (1634)*About the author*

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Jane Owen (*fl.* 1617–1625), an English recusant, hailed from Godstow, Oxfordshire, according to the title page of her only existing work. Little is known about her, other than the fact that she was, in all likelihood, a descendant of George Owen (1499–1558), the longstanding royal physician who acquired Godstow Abbey as his principal residence. During Jane's lifetime, George's descendants were noted for their recusancy at Godstow and on the Continent.

*About the text*

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Owen's treatise is basically a fundraising salvo for the Catholic community forced underground by England's laws. The treatise's four sections lay out a transparent agenda of exhorting wealthy English recusants to open their purses. The first section, explicitly committed to evoking fear, translates a chapter from Cardinal Bellarmine's *The Mourning of the Dove* (1617) that graphically depicts the pains endured by Purgatory dwellers. The second section explains how the title's antidote, that is, charitable acts or 'alms-deeds', can mitigate such afterlife suffering. For this reason, Owen apparently directed the printer (\*5<sup>r</sup>–\*5<sup>v</sup>) to insert in the footers of facing pages the verse from Matthew 5:26 in the Vulgate: at each leaf's turn, the reader will be able to meditate upon the ominous words 'Thou shalt not go out from thence, till thou repay the last farthing'.<sup>1</sup> The third section builds a persuasive case for actively working toward avoiding or mitigating Purgatory's afflictions, and, finally, the fourth raises the specific good works to be practised; for example, donating funds to maintain the education of poor young English scholars overseas will save them from entering the ungodly Protestant universities of their homeland and, when they return from the Continent, will allow them to keep the Catholic religion alive in England (I3<sup>v</sup>–I7<sup>v</sup>). Since the treatise may have been published at St Omer in the Spanish Netherlands, Owen's call for

<sup>1</sup> translated from the Douay–Rheims Bible

alms-deeds may have been made on behalf of St Omer's Jesuit College, which educated English recusant men, and on behalf of Mary Ward's Institute of the Blessed Mary, a convent which, established by the Yorkshire woman, set up schools for English recusant girls. The treatise's affiliation with Flanders suggests that Owen may have conveyed donations herself to the needy English Catholics abroad.

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### *The arts of death*

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Owen's treatise indicates not only the doctrinal force that Purgatory still exerted on English Catholics but also the dated nature of that vision – a vision at odds, according to Dorothy Latz's analysis, with newer attitudes promoted by the Council of Trent, whose edict discouraged preaching and instruction from promulgating medieval superstitions about Purgatory as a place of torture. In the excerpt, which comes from the treatise's third section, Owen wants to rouse schismatic Christians from spiritual lethargy by contemplating their final moments as an ultimate vantage point for self-reflection upon their current behaviour. She invites them to imagine themselves on their deathbed – a pre-eminent mnemonic locus freighted with anxiety, truth, and authority – where they will have a final colloquy with their souls on how they conducted their lives.

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### *Textual notes*

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*Antidote against purgatory. Or discourse, wherein is shewed that good-workes, and almes-deeds, performed in the name of Christ, are a chiefe meanes for the preuenting, or migatating the torments of purgatory* ([Saint-Omer], 1634; STC 18984), F8<sup>v</sup>–F9<sup>v</sup>, G1<sup>r</sup>–G2<sup>r</sup>; G3<sup>r</sup>.

### *An Antidote against Purgatory*

Well then, my poor and dear Catholic, who for many years through thy wicked dissimulation in matters of religion hast most highly offended God. Imagine thyself that at this very instant thou wert lying upon thy deathbed: (that bed, I say, which the Prophet calleth, *lectum doloris*, (Psalm 40)<sup>2</sup> the bed of grief) worn away with pain and sickness and not expecting to escape but

<sup>2</sup> Ps 40:4 (Vulgate)

looking every minute for thy last dissolution. How would thy judgement be altered? and wouldst thou not thus, in all likelihood, reason and dispute with thy own soul? ‘True it is, I thank God, of his most infinite and boundless mercy, that as a straying sheep I am at length brought into Christ’s sheepfold, and I hope to die (through the benefit of our Saviour’s passion, and of the holy Sacraments) his servant, and in state of grace, and finally to enjoy the interminable joys of heaven. But alas, though the guilt of eternal damnation, incurred by my long former schismatical life and by my many other infinite sins, as I hope through God’s infinite mercy, be remitted; yet temporal punishment due for all my former said sins in most inexplicable torments of purgatory doth expect me.

‘My poor soul must continue in those burning flames (how many years, his divine Majesty only knoweth) for the expiating of my said sins, before I can arrive to heaven. When I was in health, enjoying my temporal state in all fullness, how easily with a voluntary relinquishing of a reasonable part thereof to pious and religious uses, could I have avoided, at least mitigated, these now imminent and unavoidable torments? Good God! where then were my wits? The very ploughman provides for the time of winter; yea the ant, to the which we are sent by God’s word (Proverbs 6)<sup>3</sup> to be instructed, hoards grains of corn for his after sustenance. And have I so negligently carried myself, as to lay up beforehand no provision against this tempestuous and rugged future storm? O beast, that I was! Sweet Jesus, how far distant were my former course of life and daily actions from ever thinking of this unavoidable danger?

[...]

O that I had been so happy, as to have followed the wholesome advice, given to me by way of presage in a little treatise, entitled *An Antidote against Purgatory*. I then did read it, but with a certain curiosity, as thinking it nothing to belong to me. But, alas, I now find it to be a true Sybil<sup>4</sup> or prophet of my future calamitous state.

Well then, seeing my own hourglass is almost run out, let me turn my speech to you, dear Catholics, in my health my chiefest familiars and with whom I did most consociate<sup>5</sup> in my former pleasures. There is no difference between you and me, but the time present and the time to come. You all must once be forced to this bed of sorrow and be brought to your last sickness. To

<sup>3</sup> Prov 6:6–8 (Vulgate)

<sup>4</sup> one of a group of ancient women thought to have the abilities of prophecy and divination

<sup>5</sup> ‘associate together’

you then, and to all others, who are negligent in providing against this day, I do direct this my charitable admonition. You are yet in health and perhaps as improvident in laying up spiritual riches against this fearful day, as myself have been. O change your course, while there is time. Let my present state preach to you and suffer these my last dying words to give life to your future actions; since they preach feelingly whose pulpit is their deathbed’.

[...]

To these and the like disconsolate and tragical lamentations in the inward reflex of thy soul, my dear Catholic, shalt thou in thy last sickness be driven, if thou seek not to prevent the danger in time. Therefore, remember that he is truly wise who laboureth to be such in his health, as he wisheth to be found in God’s sight at the hour of his death.

### **Suggested further reading**

Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 25–26, 71–72.

Dorothy L. Latz (ed.), ‘Introductory Note’, ‘Jane Owen’ in *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), part 2, vol. 9.

## I . I 4

JEREMY TAYLOR

### *Holy Dying* (1651)

#### *About the author*

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Jeremy Taylor (15 August 1613–13 August 1667) received his BA and MA from Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and was advanced by William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. He preached at Lambeth and was appointed Chaplain in Ordinary to Charles I. Owing to Laud’s trial and eventual execution by the House of Commons toward the end of the First English Civil War (1644–1645), Taylor understandably came under suspicion and several times was imprisoned. He travelled to Wales where he served as chaplain to and was protected by Richard Vaughan, Earl of Carbery. After the Restoration, Taylor was made Bishop of Down and Connor in Ireland. He is remembered in the Church of England’s calendar of saints on 13 August.

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*About the text*

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Written as a follow-up to *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650), Taylor's *Holy Dying* (1651) reads as a consolation for his patron, Lord Vaughan, upon the death of his wife (Taylor's own wife died, incidentally, after the publication of the first volume). The first half of *Holy Dying* gives practical suggestions for cleansing and building up the soul in preparation for the attainment of Heaven; the second half is a memorial sermon. Taylor's periodic sentences imitate at the grammatical level what the larger work concerns, namely, last things. Taylor favours, and his prose fully realizes, the rhetorical possibilities inherent in the Ciceronian grand style which emphasizes the main idea by placing it at the end, after a concatenation of subordinate, often meandering, clauses and other modifying terms and suggestive parallel images. Readers thus find themselves experientially adrift in the flow of the sentence, discovering along the way new insights and contingent considerations about the larger theme until, at last, with the period, coming to a satisfying place of rest – and hence reflection.

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*The arts of death*

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Taylor's book stands prominently at the end of a long line of English works steeped in the late medieval *ars moriendi* (see Figure 1.6). It blends the conventional consolation form with familiar and perennial tropes associated with *contemptus mundi*, *vanitas*, and *memento mori* to instruct readers in the 'means and instruments' of preparing for a 'blessed death'. In the style of a sermon, he discloses (as the subtitle puts it) 'the remedies against the evils and temptations proper to the state of sicknesses, together with prayers and acts of virtue to be used by sick and dying persons, or by others standing in their attendance'. Each chapter has discussions of moral instruction and theology, usually with summary sections couched in terms of 'the consideration reduced to practice', and provides model prayers to help readers frame their own supplications to God whose aid is fundamental to the achievement of one's spiritual aims in the face of death.

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*Textual notes*

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*The rule and exercises of holy dying* (London: 1651; Wing T361A), B1<sup>v</sup>–B2<sup>r</sup>, B5<sup>v</sup>–B6<sup>r</sup>.

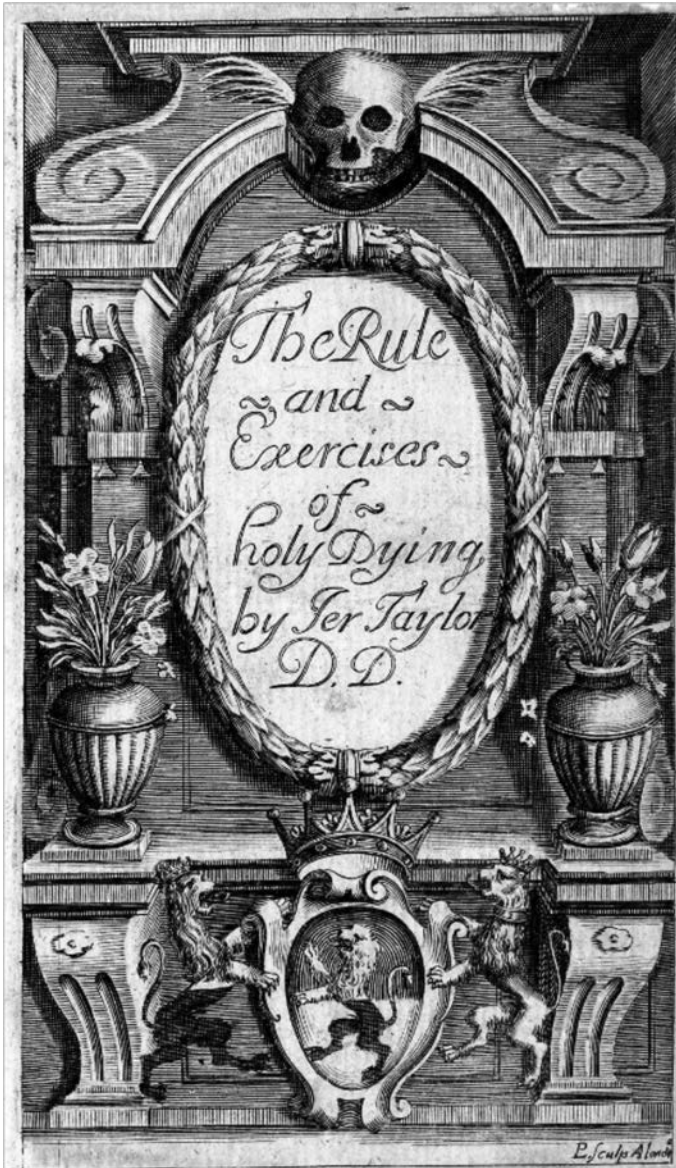


FIGURE 1.6 Sepulchral death's head. Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (London: 1651; Wing T361A), frontispiece. Image used courtesy of The Newberry Library



*Holy Dying*

So is every man: he is born in vanity and sin; he comes into the world like morning mushrooms, soon thrusting up their heads into the air and conversing with their kindred of the same production, and as soon they turn into dust and forgetfulness; some of them without any other interest in the affairs of the world, but that they made their parents a little glad, and very sorrowful: others ride longer in the storm; it may be until seven years of vanity be expired, and then peradventure the sun shines hot upon their heads and they fall into the shades below, into the cover of death, and darkness of the grave to hide them. But if the bubble stands the shock of a bigger drop, and outlives the chances of a child, of a careless nurse, of drowning in a pail of water, of being overlaid by a sleepy servant, or such little accidents, then the young man dances like a bubble, empty and gay, and shines like a dove's neck or the image of a rainbow, which hath no substance, and whose very imagery and colours are phantastical; and so he dances out the gaiety of his youth, and is all the while in a storm, and endures, only because he is not knocked on the head by a drop of bigger rain, or crushed by the pressure of a load of indigested meat, or quenched by the disorder of an ill placed humour: and to preserve a man alive in the midst of so many chances, and hostilities, is as great a miracle as to create him; to preserve him from rushing into nothing and at first to draw him up from nothing were equally the issues of an almighty power.

[...]

It is a mighty change that is made by the death of every person, and it is visible to us who are alive. Reckon but from the spritfulness of youth, and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness, and strong flexure of the joints of five and twenty, to the hollowness and dead paleness, to the loathsomeness and horror of a three days' burial, and we shall perceive the distance to be very great, and very strange. But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood,<sup>1</sup> and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven, as a lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness, and the symptoms of a sickly age; it bowed the head, and broke its stalk, and at night having lost some of its leaves, and all its beauty, it fell into the portion

<sup>1</sup> the prominent and pliant topmost part of a flowering plant

of weeds and outworn faces. The same is the portion of every man, and every woman; the heritage of worms and serpents, rottenness and cold dishonour, and our beauty so changed that our acquaintance quickly knew us not, and that change mingled with so much horror, or else meets so with our fears and weak discouragements, that they who six hours ago tended upon us, either with charitable or ambitious services cannot without some regret stay in the room alone where the body lies stripped of its life and honour. I have read of a fair young German gentleman who living often refused to be pictured, but put off the importunity of his friends' desire by giving way that after a few days' burial they might send a painter to his vault and, if they saw cause for it, draw the image of his death unto the life. They did so, and found his face half eaten, and his midriff and back bone full of serpents, and so he stands pictured among his armed ancestors. So does the fairest beauty change, and it will be as bad with you and me; and then, what servants shall we have to wait upon us in the grave, what friends to visit us, what officious people to cleanse away the moist and unwholesome cloud reflected upon our faces from the sides of the weeping vaults, which are the longest weepers for our funeral.

### **Suggested further reading**

Benjamin Guyer, *The Beauty of Holiness: The Caroline Divines and Their Writings* (London: Canterbury Press, 2012), esp. ch. 6.

Gerard H. Cox III, 'A Re-Evaluation of Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 73.4 (1972), 836–48.

Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, ed. P. G. Stanwood, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), introduction.

## I. I 5

JOHN BATCHILER

### *The Virgin's Pattern* (1661)

#### *About the author*

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John Batchiler (1615–1674) received his BA and MA from Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He served as chaplain in the Parliamentarian army, during which time he was appointed one of twelve licensers who authorized the publication of divinity works. With the Restoration, he added his name to the ranks

of clergymen ejected from the Church of England and is remembered as a Protestant dissenter by Edmund Calamy's early-eighteenth-century *Nonconformist Memorial*. Shortly after his ejection, he worked at the girls' school that his father-in-law, Robert Perwich, ran out of his home in Hackney.

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*About the text*

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This octavo book eulogizes John Batchiler's sister-in-law, Susanna Perwich, the most talented and brightest pupil of the 800 girls who passed through the Hackney school. The title page identifies Susanna as 'Mrs.', though she was most assuredly not wed – the honorific could prefix the name of an unmarried lady or girl in the period. Not only did she possess the typical parts of good breeding such as needlework, accountancy, housewifery, and cookery, but she was also a 'delicious' and admirable singer, a gifted and accomplished musician on the bass viol and lute, and an incomparably skilful dancer in English country and French forms. The turning point in her life came when her gentleman suitor intent on making a match suddenly died, inducing her to recommit herself to God. Composing both a prose and a lengthier verse biography, Batchiler holds up her strict devotional regimen as a rare pattern for others to emulate. That is ostensibly why he dedicated the book to the young ladies and gentlewomen of the girls' schools in and about London. But commemorating Susanna also gave Batchiler a platform for defending these schools against accusations of morally corrupting their charges and promoted the educational efficacy of the Hackney school where he worked. Batchiler does not fail to advertise the names of Susanna's individual masters whose expert tutelage made possible the blossoming of her numerous accomplishments.

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*The arts of death*

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Susanna died at twenty-five years old, in 'the flower of her age', after having caught a chill from sleeping in wet linens during a visit to London. Eleven of the prose biography's forty-two pages describe her drawn-out death. The great attention Batchiler places on the event suggests that Susanna's passing was the climax of her ongoing communion with God and the crowning achievement of her life, shedding light on the Restoration's idealization of maidenhood. The excerpt demonstrates the enduring power of the 'good death' in the *ars moriendi*, not just for Protestant dissenters but even for the

wider educated public. Though owning very little, Susanna expresses a dying wish to leave both a material and spiritual legacy: her friends are to receive her personal belongings and her directions for a godly life.

### *Textual notes*

*The virgins pattern, in the exemplary life and lamented death of Mrs. Susanna Perwich, daughter of Mr. Robert Perwich, who departed this life ... July 3, 1661* (London: 1661; Wing B1076), C7<sup>r</sup>–C7<sup>v</sup>, D2<sup>r</sup>–D2<sup>v</sup>.

### *The Virgin's Pattern*

At last as she was saying that she had nothing to leave them<sup>1</sup> in memorial of her, presently her father told her he gave her free liberty to dispose of whatever she had; at which she was very much pleased and thanking of him, distributed to every one according to her own mind; her several rings to be worn distinctly, as she directed, by her father, mother, and sisters; two of her rings she put upon her fingers, taking them off again, gave them to be kept for her two brothers beyond sea,<sup>2</sup> as a token to them from her dying hand; all her clothes, her watch, and a certain piece of plate marked with her own name, she gave to one sister; all her works and instruments of music to be divided betwixt three other sisters; her books also she disposed of; and as a legacy to all gentlewomen of the school, she commended her dying desires<sup>3</sup> and requests to them that they would not spend their time in reading of vain books but instead thereof, to betake themselves to the best book of all, the Bible, and such other choice books, as might do their souls most good; as also that they would be constant in the use of private prayer that they would be careful to sanctify the Lord's Day, and not waste those precious hours in over-curious dressings; and that they would behave themselves reverently at the public ordinances,<sup>4</sup> it having been a great offence to her formerly when any have done the contrary.

[...]

<sup>1</sup> Marginal note: 'With her father's leave gives all she had to several friends.'

<sup>2</sup> Marginal note: 'Distributes her rings, clothes, works, books, and instruments.'

<sup>3</sup> Marginal note: 'Her legacy to the gentlewomen of the school.'

<sup>4</sup> 'instituted worship, as opposed to private devotion'

On the Monday morning, she often muttered out very softly, these words, 'two days<sup>5</sup> and an half more, and then I shall be at rest', which she repeated two or three times; and accordingly from that very time, she did live two days and an half, to wit, till<sup>6</sup> Wednesday noon following, and then began to draw on apace towards her last breath.

Indeed, her pains now seemed to leave her, or her strength rather, being able no more to struggle; and so lying in a kind of quiet sleep at last panting for breath a short space in a small silent groan gave up her precious soul into the hands of God, whose angels carrying it away to heaven (as we have comfortable ground of hope to believe) left us all in bitter mourning and wailing over her dead body.

When she was laid out in the chamber where she died, dressed in her night<sup>7</sup> clothes, one would have thought she had been in a kind of smiling slumber; and now the gentlewomen, with the rest of the family, and some neighbours coming to see her and give her their last salute, it would have broken one's heart to have heard and seen many cries, tears, and lamentations that the room was filled with.

<sup>5</sup> Marginal note: 'She foretells the hour of her own death.'

<sup>6</sup> Marginal note: 'And dies at the same hour.'

<sup>7</sup> Marginal note: 'The great lamentation at her laying out.'

### **Suggested further reading**

Felicity James, 'Writing Female Biography: Mary Hays and the Life Writing of Religious Dissent', in *Women's Life Writing, 1700–1850: Gender, Genre, Authorship*, ed. Daniel Cook and Amy Culley (Basingstoke, UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 117–32.

Amanda Eubanks Winkler, *Music, Dance, and Drama in Early Modern English Schools* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), ch. 4.

## I. I 6

JAMES JANEWAY

*A Token for Children* (1676)*About the author*


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James Janeway (1636–1674) was a popular nonconformist minister, who came from a family of preachers. According to Edmund Calamy's *Nonconformist Memorial*, he established a meeting at Rotherhithe, in south-east London, attracting such a great following that the Church of England's high party sought to have him shot on two occasions. His evangelistic publications were as well sold as his meetings were attended.

*About the text*


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Divided into two parts and preceded by a short introduction to educators, the 1676 edition gathers together thirteen examples of the lives of pious children. With the examples, Janeway hopes to proselytize the young, for he does not pull any punches when posing his blunt rhetorical questions to parents and teachers: 'Are the souls of your children of no value? Are you willing that they should be brands of hell?' (part 1, A3<sup>r</sup>). The first part's preface, which follows the introduction, is fittingly addressed to juvenile readers who will receive spiritual edification from, in the words of the subtitle, 'holy and exemplary lives and joyful deaths'. Well into the eighteenth century, Janeway's little book became an essential literary vehicle, an evangelistic companion to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, by which the more Puritan-leaning of English and American families captivated the moral imagination of their young charges. The excerpt, extracted from the finale to the volume's concluding example, gives an account of the rapturous death of the son of a Dutch merchant, the eleven-year-old John Harvy, who died from the 1665 plague.

*The arts of death*


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What is noteworthy about Janeway's text is that it collects and fetishizes the last words of expiring children, embracing fully this oft-neglected age group within the Protestant practices of the *ars moriendi*. As Janeway reassures readers in the introduction to educators, his sources are based upon eye and ear

witnesses of ‘experienced solid Christians’, and ‘several passages are taken verbatim in writing from [children’s] dying lips’ (part 1, A5<sup>r</sup>–A5<sup>v</sup>). The recorded last words, transcending everyday communication, belong to the ‘language of Canaan’,<sup>1</sup> an expression Janeway applies to the speech of the precocious Anne Lake in the ninth example (part 2, A12<sup>v</sup>). The other deathbed children similarly discourse with scriptural authority and divine inspiration so much so that the pedagogical relationship between parent and progeny turns upside down. In the excerpt, the bible-quoting John Harvy, a wise old soul, spends his final moments instructing, nay passionately adjuring, his disconsolate mother to conduct herself as a pious Christian before the Almighty. The Protestant death arts were not as overtly scripted as the traditional *ars moriendi*, but, nonetheless, radiated as much, if not more, emotional and intellectual intensity as the former.

### Textual notes

*A token for children being an exact account of the conversion, holy and exemplary lives and joyful deaths of several young children* (London: 1676; Wing J478), part 2, D9<sup>v</sup>–D12<sup>r</sup>.

### *A Token for Children*

40. His mother looking upon his brother, shaked her head, at which he asked, if his brother were marked.<sup>2</sup> She answered, ‘Yes, child’. He asked again, whether he were marked. She answered nothing. ‘Well’, says he, ‘I know I shall be marked; I pray let me have Mr. Baxter’s book,<sup>3</sup> that I may read a little more of Eternity before I go into it’. His mother told him that he was not able to read. He said that he was, ‘However, then pray by me, and for me’. His mother answered that she was so full of grief that she could not pray now, but she desired to hear him pray his last prayer.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Grammar teacheth to speake well, but not the language of Canaan, that is, the holy language of God, as prayer doth,’ says William Burton, *An exposition of the lords prayer* (London: 1594; STC 4174), A6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> ‘marked’: ‘to choose or destine for death by God, Death, or the Devil’; see *Richard III*, 1.3.292. It may also allude to the mark placed on a building inhabited by plague victims.

<sup>3</sup> ‘He was (next to the Bible) most taken with reading of Reverend Mr. Baxter’s works, especially his *Saints’ Everlasting Rest*’ (part 2, D9<sup>v</sup>).

41. His mother asked him whether he were willing to die and leave her. He answered, 'Yes, I am willing to leave you, and go to my heavenly Father'. His mother answered, 'Child, if thou hadst but an assurance of God's love I should not be so much troubled'.

42. He answered and said to his mother, 'I am assured, dear mother, that my sins are forgiven, and that I shall go to heaven', for, said he, 'Here stood an angel by me that told me I should quickly be in glory'.

43. At this, his mother burst forth into tears. 'O, mother', said he, 'did you but know what joy I feel, you would not weep, but rejoice. I tell you I am so full of comfort that I can't tell you how I am. O, mother, I shall presently have my head in my Father's bosom, and shall be there, where the *four and twenty elders cast down their crowns and sing hallelujah, glory and praise, to him that sits upon the throne: and unto the Lamb forever.*'<sup>4</sup>

44. Upon this, his speech began to fail him, but his soul seemed still to be taken up with glory, and nothing now grieved him but the sorrow that he saw his mother to be in for his death. A little to divert his mother, he asked her what she had to supper, but presently in a kind of divine rapture, he cried out, 'O what a sweet supper have I making ready for me in glory.'<sup>5</sup>

45. But seeing all this did rather increase than allay his mother's grief, he was more troubled and asked her what she meant thus to offend God: 'know you not, that it is the hand of the Almighty. *Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God,*<sup>6</sup> lay yourself in the dust, and kiss the rod of God, and let me see you do it in token of your submission to the will of God, and bow before him'.<sup>7</sup> Upon which, raising up himself a little, he gave a lowly bow and spake no more, but went cheerfully and triumphingly to rest in the bosom of Jesus.

Hallelujah.

FINIS.

<sup>4</sup> reference to Rev 4:10    <sup>5</sup> Rev 19:9    <sup>6</sup> 1 Pet 5:6

<sup>7</sup> 'all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him' (Ps 22:29)

### **Suggested further reading**

Ralph Houlbrooke, 'Children's Deaths in the Seventeenth Century', in *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State*, ed. Stephen Hussey and Anthony Fletcher (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 37–56.



## I.17

SAMUEL SMITH

## 'A True Account of ... Last Dying Speeches' (1690)

*About the author*

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Samuel Smith (1620–1698), son of a London grocer, earned both BA and MA at St John's College, Oxford. He lost his rectorship at the parish church of St Benet Gracechurch, when he refused to take the oath prescribed by the 1662 Act of Uniformity. In 1676, London's court of aldermen appointed him the Ordinary – that is, chaplain – of Newgate, an ecclesiastical living attached to the city's largest and most infamous prison.

*About the text*

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Late in the seventeenth century, there arose a new type of reportage on last dying speeches, which had long been propagated by ballads and criminal biographies. As it came to be entitled, with slight variations, 'The Ordinary's Account of the Behaviour, Confession, and Dying Words ... of the Malefactors executed at Tyburn ...' was a companion to 'The Proceedings of the Old Bailey', the publication of London's central criminal court, located beside Newgate Prison. The account officially recorded the Ordinary's ministrations to the condemned, especially his attempt to bring them to repentance through spiritual counsel, before they were carted three miles to Tyburn, where the principal gallows of London stood. This regular serial publication, first started by Samuel Smith in the 1670s, became one of the actual duties of Newgate's Ordinary. It had a popularity that did not wane until the mid-eighteenth century.

*The arts of death*

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The serialized account commercialized the *ars moriendi* on an altogether new level. It permitted readers a voyeuristic glimpse of the final intimate scene where the chaplain ministered to the individual prior to his or her passing. But what distinguished the situation from the earlier deathbed vigil was that the Ordinary enforced upon the criminal a 'good death' so as to elicit, during the confession, sensational stories ripe for saleable copy. For example, later

that same year, Smith published an account of the Golden Farmer, a notorious robber and murderer, but, despite his repeated, nay desperate, cajoling to disburden his conscience, Smith could not prevail upon him to confess the lucratively lurid details of his wicked life (*A True Account* [London, 1690; Wing S4206B]). Smith's hypocritical self-righteousness at the expense of those whose suffering he exploited for profit, ironically enough, earned him printed parodic elegies when he died.<sup>1</sup> As suggested by the excerpt's treatment of Catholics, the office of the Ordinary was a bully pulpit at Newgate, on the Scaffold, and in print, ideologically managing and controlling the condemned prisoners during the juridical stages post-sentencing so that they would not impeach church and state authority at their execution – a public spectacle that attracted large crowds.

### *Textual notes*

*A true account of the behaviour, confession, and last dying speeches of the seven criminals that were executed at Tyburn, on Friday the ninth of May, 1690* (London: 1690; Wing T2351A), Brs.

## 'A True Account of ... Last Dying Speeches'

On the Lord's day<sup>2</sup> the Ordinary preached twice on the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse of the 147<sup>th</sup> Psalm, viz., 'He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds'. Whence was observed that sin makes deep and deadly wounds in all the soul's faculties, especially in the conscience. It is a spreading and a deceitful, destructive wound, because most men suffer it to rank and fester.

Then were laid down the recital of such sins which do most wound the conscience and grieve the Spirit of God; and for what reasons sinners must be sensible of their sinful state, before they will apply themselves to Christ for healing and renewing grace.

On Monday the Ordinary inquired how their hearts were affected. They did one by one give some account that they were sensible of their sin and misery. To which was replied that there are many deceitful pretences on which

<sup>1</sup> See for example, *Elegy occasioned by the death of the Reverend Mr. Samuel Smith late ordinary of Newgate* (London: 1698; Wing E353) and *The Works of Mr. Thomas Brown*, ed. J. Drake, 3rd ed., 4 vols. (1715), vol. 4, pp. 41–45.

<sup>2</sup> Sunday, the day of rest and worship

most men build their hopes of future happiness. Therefore, I<sup>3</sup> stated the whole method of salvation as clearly as I could to their mean understandings, and found that, as they obtained more knowledge, they grew more sensible of their sinful state, and more fit for the healing comforts of Gospel promises.

On Tuesday I required an account, whether they did clearly apprehend the requisite indispensable qualifications for salvation. But finding that they did not, I stated the nature of evangelical contrition, or true brokenness of heart for and from sin, how this differs from mere legal attrition<sup>4</sup> in the convictions only of conscience without any change of corrupt nature. Also, I stated what are the impediments of healing and renewing grace and urged on them many arguments to come to Christ for the binding up and healing their wounds in conscience. I laid down the characters<sup>5</sup> of true faith and repentance that they might not be deceived with false hopes of heaven. After much discourse with them severally, they were dismissed with prayer, and the singing of a Penitential Psalm.<sup>6</sup> I visited them every day till their execution, and most days twice.

[...]

Now remains somewhat to be spoken as to the other three condemned prisoners, viz., John Williams, James Chambers, and William Column, who all appeared at the time of their execution to be Papists, though visited often by the Ordinary. Williams spoke particularly, saying that he died a Papist and was always true to the interest of the late King James,<sup>7</sup> denying the fact for which he was condemned. The other two said little, but continued praying to themselves, by turning their faces from the other four before mentioned. Yet one thing may be noted, whilst the Ordinary was praying with the other four, Column seemed to attend devoutly, which Williams and Chambers checked him for.

Afterwards the Penitential Psalm being sung, they were all turned off.<sup>8</sup>

Let every true hearted and unprejudiced Protestant, of what rank and quality soever, see now what kind of instruments, and dubbed utensils, the late King James has to work withal, no better than housebreakers, and

<sup>3</sup> In his accounts, Smith's narration routinely shifts from third person to first person.

<sup>4</sup> i.e., repentance motivated by fear of punishment and inferior to true contrition

<sup>5</sup> 'tokens and signs'

<sup>6</sup> The Penitential Psalms are the seven psalms numbered 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.

<sup>7</sup> James II, the Catholic King deposed by the Protestants William and James's daughter Mary in 1689

<sup>8</sup> 'hanged'

common thieves, who have been fairly convicted by our English laws: yea, such laws that King James himself must needs have made use of, for the conviction of such cruel miscreants as these were, if he had been seated in the royal throne (which God forbid). These, and such like, are the men that, even when the ropes are about their necks, and just ready to be turned off, they will spit their venom against the face of the government, and if it were possible stone to death all the spectators. Yea, the very civil officers who are ordered by law to attend their execution were affronted, the prisoners dying (as it were) like mad men, putting a bold face upon't, as if there were no heaven to condemn, nor no hell to torment, trusting only to the deluding vanities of a vain hoped-for purgatory. Which the laborious and never wearied Jesuits, and untired Popish priests do always buzz in their ignorant ears, till they have them so fast that they can never be unlinked, from the cunning devices, and devilish stratagems of that Whore of Babylon<sup>9</sup> who has always been striving to make the nations drunk with the blood of her fornications, by joining their Gog and Magogs<sup>10</sup> together to undo, yea, (and if it were possible) to deceive the very elect,<sup>11</sup> which such silly earthworms as those will not be sensible of till they come to feel the dreadful effects of it (in another world) to their final and everlasting destruction and misery, from which dismal sentence they can never be redeemed.

This is the whole account which I can give of this session, though I visited them every day till their execution.

Dated this 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 1690.

Samuel Smith

Ordinary.

<sup>9</sup> a disparaging name for the Roman Catholic Church (Rev 17:5)

<sup>10</sup> apocalyptic enemies of the Church (Rev 20:8), typologically drawn from the prophesied destruction of Israel in Ezek 38

<sup>11</sup> i.e., those chosen to go to Heaven

### Suggested further reading

Peter Linebaugh, 'The Ordinary of Newgate and his Account', in *Crime in England, 1550–1800*, ed. J. S. Cockburn (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 246–69.

Andrea McKenzie, *Tyburn's Martyrs: Execution in England, 1675–1775* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).

## PART II

### *Funereal and Commemorative Arts*



Thou drawest near unto them that seek thee to hear their prayers;  
yea, thou art their shield and protection in all their necessities. As  
for the proud workers of iniquity, thou seest them afar off, thou  
beholdest them with a fierce look, to their confusion, to destroy  
and root out their memorial out of the everlasting beatitude.

Anne Wheathill, *A Handful of Wholesome (though Homely) Herbs  
Gathered out of the Goodly Garden of God's Most Holy Word*  
(London: 1584; STC 25329), N7<sup>v</sup>–N8<sup>f</sup>

Neither doth *Corin* full of worth and wit,  
That finished dead *Musaëus* gracious song,  
With grace as great, and words, and verse as fit;  
Chide meagre death for doing virtue wrong:  
He doth not seek with songs to deck her hearse,  
Nor make her name live in his lively verse.

Henry Chettle, *England's Mourning Garment Worn Were by Plain  
Shepherds, in Memory of their Sacred Mistress, Elizabeth* (London:  
1603; STC 5122), D2<sup>f</sup>

Death is a divider, and so is doom, two shall be in the field, the  
one shall be taken, and the other shall be refused.

William Leigh, *The Dreadful Day Dolorous to the Wicked*  
(London: 1610; STC 15423.5), F1<sup>v</sup>

... the Lord brought me into the shadow of death time after time,  
laying me on my sick bed, and pale death still looking me in the  
face with dreadful terrors and amazement; yea to the very pit's  
brink of hell (in my own apprehensions) which is the worst of  
deaths; yea, through a land where no man passeth, or dwells, hav-  
ing none to condole my misery, none being acquainted with it, or  
me ....

Anne Venn, *A Wise Virgins Lamp Burning ... Written by her own  
Hand, and Found in her Closet after her Death* (London: 1658;  
Wing V190), U3<sup>v</sup>

