Anne Boleyn
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Marin Theatre Company
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ANNE BOLEYN GLOSSARY

Margaret of Burgundy (pg. 1)—This refers to Archduchess Margaret of Austria (1480-1530), who was the daughter of Mary, Duchess of Burgundy and Maximillian I, Holy Roman Emperor. Anne Boleyn was sent to the court of Margaret of Austria to become one of her maids of honor in 1513. Margaret was the Governor of the Hapsburg Netherlands, the only woman to be elected as a ruler in her own right, and was well-respected as a politician.

Tower of London (pg. 1)—Originally built by William the Conquerer (1066-1087) to function as a fortress-stronghold in the Norman’s newly conquered England. Its use as a prison and a location for torture and execution increased during the Tudor reign.

The Wonderful Year, 1603 (pg. 1)—A reference to a pamphlet written by Thomas Dekker (1572-1632), an Elizabethan dramatist. The pamphlet was an account of the plague, Queen Elizabeth I’s death and King James I’s ascension, and was unique for blending together different literary genres—including journalism and poetry.

Artist’s rendering of Anne’s execution in the tower

‘hanged a man in Newark’ (pg. 3)—This refers to Gallows Field in Newark, Nottinghamshire, England. Legend has it that the area acquired its name after King James I, en route to his coronation in London, ordered a pickpocket who had been following his party to be hanged in the field without trial.

Sassanach (pg. 3)—derived from the Scottish Gaelic word sasunnach, which meant “Saxon”, sassanach means English or an English person.
Miniature (pg. 4)—
Exactly as it sounds, a miniature portrait painting, popular with 16th century elites. In real life, none of the miniatures or full-size portraits we have of Anne Boleyn can be confirmed to be the real her.

Swan neck (pg. 4)—Some contemporary accounts of Anne describe her as having a long neck; she famously quipped before her execution, “I heard say the executioner was very good, and I have a little neck.”

William Tyndale’s New Testament (pg. 5)—William Tyndale (1494-1536) created the first English translation of the New Testament, derived from the original Greek and Hebrew. He printed this translation in 1525-26. He was burned at the stake as a heretic in 1536, before he could complete his translation of the Old Testament.

Octavo size (pg. 5)—Smaller than a folio and a quarto, an octavo printing was 6 x 9 inches.

‘Now abideth faith, hope and love, even those three: but the chief of these is love.’ (pg. 6)—This comes from 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, verse 13. In the King James Bible, love is changed to charity. There is no given reason in the text why love/charity is the greatest virtue—a matter of debate for theologians.

Presbyterians (pg. 6)—Scotland underwent its own Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. The Scottish Reformation Parliament of 1560 broke with the pope and formed a new Protestant church with a heavily Presbyterian outlook. Presbyterian-style churches were run by a select group of elected presbyters (Greek for ‘elder’), similar to a board of directors. The Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587), refused to endorse the new church. Mary was forced to abdicate in 1567, and her son James was raised under the Protestant faith.

Statue of John Knox (1513-1572), leading figure of the Scottish Reformation
The wisest fool in Christendom (pg. 6)—A real phrase used to describe King James I in Sir Anthony Weldon (1583-1648)’s work The Court and Character of King James I, published in 1650, 25 years after James’ death. According to Weldon, this was “meaning him wise in small things, but a fool in weighty affairs.”

The Romance of the Rose (pg. 8)—The Roman de la Rose is a medieval French poem started by Guillaume de Lorris circa 1230, with later additions by Jean de Meun circa 1275. It is an allegorical tale of courtly love—the Lover quests for a Rose, the rose symbolizing his lady’s love.

Steany (pg. 9)—King James I’s recorded nickname for George Villiers was “steenie”, purportedly in reference to St. Stephen, who was said to have the face of an angel.

The Obedience of a Christian Man (pg. 9)—1528 book written by William Tyndale. It advocated for the divine right of kings to rule as head of their country’s church, and is the first recorded instance of that claim in English.

Masque (pg. 10)—During the Tudor period, masques were short theatrical performances with music and dance. They were performed by masked players—usually members of the Tudor court—who represented mythological or allegorical figures. The traditional masque theme was usually classical, allegorical or symbolic in nature, and complimentary to the noble or royal host.

Queen of France (pg. 11)—Anne served two French queen consorts: Mary Tudor (1496-1533), Henry VIII’s sister, and Claude of France (1499-1524). Mary Tudor married King Louis XII in 1514 and was soon widowed. Anne stayed on to serve Claude, Louis XII’s daughter, until 1522.

Mary Boleyn (pg. 12)—Anne’s older sister Mary (1499-1543) began an affair with Henry VIII around 1521, after she had married the wealthy courtier William Carey (1500-1528) in 1520. Mary’s affair with the king ended shortly before he began courting Anne, and shortly before William Carey’s death.
Sir Thomas Boleyn (pg. 13)—Thomas Boleyn (1477-1539) was the father of Mary, George and Anne Boleyn. He was appointed many ambassadorships in his time, including Ambassador to France while his daughter Anne served in the French court. He was given many jobs, titles and rewards under Henry VIII’s rule, until Anne’s execution.

Barge (pg. 14)—a large, flat-bottomed boat, used to carry goods or passengers on rivers and canals. “Richmond” here most likely refers to Richmond Palace, one of Henry’s royal residences in London—it was located on the River Thames.

York House (pg. 14)—More commonly referred to as York Place, this was the London residence of the Archbishops of York since 1245. Cardinal Wolsey significantly rebuilt York Place into a sizeable palace. When Wolsey fell out of favor with the king, Henry VIII acquired York Place and renamed it Whitehall Palace.

Legatine Court (pg. 22)—Legatine means ‘directed or authorized by a legate’. Legate is a word for an official representative of the pope.

John Fisher (pg. 22)—John Fisher (1469-1535) was a Roman Catholic bishop who served as one of Katherine of Aragon’s fiercest supporters during her and Henry’s trial for divorce, and was considered her most trusted counselor. After Henry broke with Rome and declared the marriage to Katherine null and void, Fisher refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the marriage between Henry and Anne or Henry’s status as the supreme head of the Church of England. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London and eventually tried for treason and beheaded.

Cardinal Campeggio (pg. 24)—Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio (1464-1532) was an Italian Cardinal who was sent by Pope Clement VII to handle the matter of Henry VIII’s request for divorce. The cardinal was under strict orders to prolong the proceedings, in hopes for a reconciliation between Henry and Katherine, and to make no final decision either way. True to orders, he declined to make a final decision.
**Privy Chamber** (pg. 24)—Refers to the private section of the royal residences in England. Members of the Privy Chamber were servants of the crown in a variety of ways, such as providing companionship, counsel or housekeeping.

**Farnham Castle** (pg. 26)—a castle in Surrey. Was the home of the Bishops of Winchester until Henry’s break with Rome.

**Palfrey** (pg. 27)—A lighter-weight type of riding horse.

**The sweating sickness** (pg. 31)—Though less infamous than the Plague, the sweating sickness was a mysterious and terrifying ailment that afflicted a good number of people in 15th and 16th century England. It was known for its high and quick mortality rate—many would die within 24 hours of displaying symptoms, which included flu-like shivers and a raging fever. Today the exact cause is still unknown.

**Antwerp** (pg. 33)—A city in Belgium. William Tyndale moved there to openly carry on his work of translating the Bible into English.

‘**The Lord worketh his purpose in strange ways.**’ (pg. 34)—Alternate phrasing of the common adage, commonly mistaken to be a Bible verse. In fact, the first known usage of the phrase is in William Cowper (1731-1800)’s 1779 hymn *Light Shining Out of Darkness*. Its use here appears to be entirely apocryphal.

‘**A Mighty Fortress Is Our God**’ (pg. 36)—One of Martin Luther (1483-1546)’s best known hymns, written in 1529, which paraphrases Psalm 46 from the Book of Psalms.

**Lancelot and Guinevere** (pg. 37)—Two famous players in Arthurian legend, who had a passionate and adulterous love affair under King Arthur’s nose.

**Sir Thomas More** (pg. 38)—Thomas More (1478-1535) was an important counselor to Henry VIII and a staunch Catholic, who was known for the violent methods he used against Protestants. When he refused to accept Henry’s status as the supreme head of the Church of England, he was tried for treason and beheaded.
**The Dutchman’s Daughter** (pg. 38)—From the description, sounds similar to the Scavenger’s Daughter (or the Skeffington’s Daughter), a torture device invented during Henry VIII’s reign. The opposite of the traditional rack, it compresses the body instead of stretching it.

**Settle** (pg. 41)—An old-fashioned piece of furniture, with a long wooden seat and a high back.

**Chelsea** (pg. 42)—An area in southwest London, where Thomas More resided.

**Salve Regina** (pg. 45)—A Marian hymn, also known as the Hail Holy Queen, focusing on the Virgin Mary, as is typical of many Roman Catholic prayers.

**Martin Luther’s Evening Prayer** (pg. 47)—A prayer found in Martin Luther’s 1529 *Small Catechism*, a text intended to impart the basics of Christianity to the common man. It proved very useful as a tool for parents to instruct their children about their faith. As the title implies, the evening prayer is meant to be said before bedtime.

**Calais** (pg. 51)—Now part of modern-day France, historically this refers to the Pale of Calais. Pale was an archaic English term for “area”, and the Pale of Calais was annexed by Edward III in 1346. Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII traveled to Calais in 1532, with the intention of gaining Francis I of France’s public support of their union. Anne remained in Calais the entire trip, with only Henry entering the French court. Francis did come to Calais to meet Anne.

**The King of France** (pg. 52)—Francis I of France (1494-1547). Husband to Claude of France while Anne was in France. Known for having a great many mistresses, but also for his support of the Renaissance and its many artists and thinkers. His second wife, Eleanor of Austria, was Katherine of Aragon’s niece, which made any public acceptance of Anne Boleyn a tricky prospect.

**The Holy See** (pg. 53)—The ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Catholic Church in Rome, which also acts a sovereign and independent entity. The Holy See speaks for entire church.
**Bishops and Divines** (pg. 54)—**Bishops** are leaders of the Anglican faith, very similar to the Catholic bishops. **Divine** refers to any Anglican theologian whose written work is widely considered to be a standard of the faith. There is no definitive list of who is considered a Divine, since it is not an official ranked role like Bishop is.

‘fair on the ice’ (pg. 55)—References the River Thames Frost Fairs. The 1683-84 fair was described by English writer John Evelyn (1620-1706) very similarly to James’ description: ‘sleds, sliding with skeetes, a bull-baiting, horse and coach races, puppet plays and interludes, cooks, tipling and other lewd places, so that it seemed to be a bacchanalian triumph, or carnival on the water.’

**Dean of Lincoln** (pg. 56)—The head of the chapter of Lincoln Cathedral in the Church of England Diocese of Lincoln.

‘They unmasked a Catholic plot against me’ (pg. 58)—Prior to the more famous Gunpowder Plot, there were a couple other plots against King James I. The plot in question here is the **Bye Plot**, so called because it was considered secondary to the **Main Plot**. Though both conspiracies were Catholic in origin, only the Bye plot was foiled by fellow Catholics—Jesuits who were concerned how this would affect the treatment of Catholics in England.

**Fleet Prison** (pg. 58)—A historic and notorious London prison. Wardens of Fleet prison routinely abused their post, and the prison conditions were deplorable.

‘some speak of Robin Hood who never shot his bow’ (pg. 60)—A common idiom, referring to the heroic outlaw of English folklore. It refers to someone who boasts (or decries) something they have no direct experience with.

**Receiver General** (pg. 68)—An officer responsible for accepting payments on behalf of a government and for making payments to a government on behalf of other parties.

**Master of the King’s Jewel House** (pg. 68)—Responsible for running the Jewel House, which houses the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London.

**Master of the Court of Wards** (pg. 68)—Head of the Court of Wards, responsible for supervising royal wardships and administering the lands and revenues of wards.


**Chancellor of the Exchequer** (pg. 68)—Head of the Royal Treasury

**The Ecclesiastical Appeals Act 1532** (pg. 69)—An act of the Parliament of England, which forbade all appeals to the Pope in Rome on religious or other matters, making the King the final legal authority in all such matters in England, Wales, and other English possessions.

**The Succession to the Crown Act 1533** (pg. 72)—An act of the Parliament of England, which made Princess Elizabeth, daughter of King Henry VIII by Anne Boleyn, the true successor to the Crown by declaring Princess Mary, daughter of the King by Katherine of Aragon, a bastard.

**The Act of Supremacy of November 1534** (pg. 73)—An act of the Parliament of England, which declared that King Henry VIII was ‘the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England.’

**Tyburn** (pg. 76)—Tyburn was a village that was notorious for its gallows, where many London executions took place. In 1571 the “Tyburn Tree”—a three-sided gallows—was erected, and was once used to execute 24 prisoners at once.

**English holly** (pg. 78)—A species of holly, an evergreen tree or shrub. This species is specifically associated with Christmas as a common Christmas decoration. The plant’s design lends itself to symbolic interpretation:

“The sharpness of the leaves help to recall the crown of thorns worn by Jesus; the red berries serve as a reminder of the drops of blood that were shed for salvation; and the shape of the leaves, which resemble flames, can serve to reveal God’s burning love for His people.”

There appears to be no other significant reason why it is associated with the English.

**St. Peter-in-Vincula** (pg. 79)—Translated as ‘Saint Peter in chains’, which refers to the imprisonment of Saint Peter the Apostle under Herod Agrippa in Jerusalem, an event described in Acts of the Apostles chapter 12.
Ecclesia (pg. 80)—The literal Greek meaning is gathering

Presbyters (pg. 80)—The literal Greek meaning is elder or older

Agape (pg. 80)—The literal Greek meaning is love

John Donne (pg. 81)—John Donne (1572-1631) was an English poet and Anglican priest, considered one of the greatest English poets of all time.

Fortune’s Wheel (pg. 84)—A concept originating in medieval and ancient philosophy, concerning the unpredictable nature of fate. The wheel belonged to a Roman goddess named Fortuna. She was eventually Christianized as Lady Fortune.

George Boleyn (pg. 91)—Anne’s brother George (1503/04-1536) was married to Lady Jane Rochford, who accused Anne of committing incest with George. This accusation would lead to both Anne and George’s executions.
TIMELINE OF ENGLISH ROYAL SUCCESSION AND THE REFORMATION

1502—Treaty of Perpetual Peace between Scotland and England is signed; James IV of Scotland marries Margaret Tudor

1504—Pope Julius II posthumously dissolves the marriage between Arthur, Prince of Wales, and Catherine of Aragon, leaving her free to marry Arthur’s brother, Henry VIII.

1516—Henry and Catherine’s daughter Princess Mary is born

1517—The German monk Martin Luther publishes The Ninety-Five Theses, a list of criticisms of the Roman Catholic Church

1521—King Henry VIII writes an attack on Martin Luther; Pope Leo X titles Henry “Defender of the Faith” and excommunicates Luther

1524—Luther-influenced reformer William Tyndale expelled from England

1525—First law passed against Protestant literature in Scotland

1526—William Tyndale publishes his English translation of the New Testament

1527—King Henry VIII intends to divorce Catherine of Aragon

1529—Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, sympathetic to Catherine, is removed as Lord Chancellor to Henry

1533—Archbishop of Canterbury and reformer Thomas Cranmer declares King Henry VIII’s marriage to Catherine of Aragon null and void; King Henry marries Anne Boleyn and their daughter Princess Elizabeth is born

1534—Act of Supremacy, declaring King Henry VIII Supreme Head of the Church of England, and the Treason Act, punishing deniers of the king’s supremacy, both passed.

1535—Thomas More and others executed under the Treason Act

1536—King Henry VIII disbands Catholic monasteries and appropriates their income; Anne Boleyn is executed; King Henry marries Jane Seymour; William Tyndale is burned at the stake

1537—Henry and Jane’s son Prince Edward is born

1543—John Knox, future leader of the Scottish Reformation, converts to Protestantism; England starts war campaign against Catholic stronghold Scotland to force a marriage between King Henry’s son Edward and Mary, Queen of Scots

1547—King Henry VIII dies; King Edward VI takes the throne, unmarried

1549—Prayer Book Rebellion in southwestern England, rejecting the imposition of Protestant Reformist texts on churchgoers

1553—King Edward VI dies; his sister Mary takes the throne
1554—Queen Mary I restores Catholicism in England and the death penalty for Protestants

1556—Thomas Cranmer burned at the stake

1558—Queen Mary dies; Queen Elizabeth I takes the throne, re-establishes England’s break with the Roman Catholic Church and secures Protestant reforms to the Church of England

1560—Scottish Reformation kicks off, John Knox advocates for Presbyterianism to replace Catholicism

1567—Mary, Queen of Scots, abdicates, and the infant James VI of Scotland becomes king

1570—Queen Elizabeth officially branded a heretic by the Pope, who threatens to excommunicate any English Catholic who obeys her

1584—Scottish Parliament passes acts ensuring King James VI has power over the Church of Scotland

1587—Mary, Queen of Scots, is executed for consenting to a plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth

1588—England defeats the Spanish Armada’s efforts to re-conquer England for Catholicism; Presbyterians gain influence in Church of Scotland

1603—James VI of Scotland is crowned King James I of England

1611—King James Bible first published and used throughout the English-speaking world
Anne Boleyn and Protestantism

Anne Boleyn’s interest in the Protestant Reformation began while she was a young girl during her schooling in France.

Her French tutors introduced her to works by various reformers including Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples and Clement Marot. Lefèvre, a French theologian and humanist, had close ties to Erasmus, and Marot was a French poet who translated the Psalms into French. A courtier at the time wrote that Anne Boleyn read Paul’s Epistles and several Bible translations on a regular basis (Warnicke, 109). Her study of the Pauline epistles acquainted her with the doctrine of justification by faith, though it is not believed that she ever became a devout Lutheran (Ives, ODNB).

At the court of Queen Claude, Anne became friends with Marguerite d’Angoulême, daughter of the powerful Louise of Savoy. Louise resided at the French court since her son was the future heir for the childless Louis XII. Louise studied the arts of the Italian Renaissance and dabbled in diplomacy and politics. She treated Anne as one of her own as she raised Marguerite and Francis. Anne and Marguerite were educated in history, philosophy, theology, and languages (Lewis, “Marguerite”). Marguerite held strong views on spiritual matters and supported the translation of the Bible into French (Fabbri). Anne followed Marguerite’s example and supported the English Bible when she became queen.

Eric Ives, who has written numerous books and articles on her majesty, claims that she was neither a Protestant nor a staunch Roman Catholic, but a committed Catholic reformer who based her beliefs on the Bible (Ives, THJ). Despite the controversy, there is no doubt that her reformist beliefs had a tremendous impact on England.
The leading figure in the reform was Jacques Lefevre d’Etaples. His *Commentary on the epistles of St Paul*, published in 1512, abandoned the established way of interpreting scripture through allegory, tropology and analogy in favor of the literal sense understood through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In successive works he moved steadily to the conviction that for a Christian the Bible was the only authority, not scripture as interpreted by the faith of the Church.......Lefevre taught justification by faith long before Luther. His 1512 commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans explicitly stated that it is impossible for men ‘to be saved of themselves and their good works’. Human effort has no part in justification”.

Eric Ives says, “It can hardly be accidental that among her [Anne’s] surviving books is a personal manuscript text of Lefevre’s *Epitres et evangiles pour les cinquante et demux sepmaines de l’an*, each passage accompanied by an explanatory homily.

The homilies were reformed, through and through: ‘not a father of the Church, not a holy exegete, not a doctor [of the Church] is mentioned. [Lefevre] makes an absolute distinction between the Bible and tradition.

“Anne’s own manuscript retains the Bible readings in French but the commentary is in English. Professionally copied and illuminated, it had been translated by her brother George, Lord Rochford, and was presented to Anne in the autumn or winter of 1532-3.

“George was a keen reformer – Chapuys hated being escorted by him because he insisted on discussing religion – and the dedication specifically says that he was responding to a ‘commandment’ from Anne. What is more, the actual copy of the 1530-2 Alencon edition, which George used for the translation, is known to have been already available at court.

Thus for Anne to call for an additional copy and a personal one at that, must mean that the *Epistres et evangiles* had a special significance for her.
More on Marguerite, Queen of Navarre

http://departments.kings.edu/womens_history/margueritN.html


In 1534, Anne had assured Marguerite that although at the 1532 meeting there had been ‘everything proceeding between both kings to the queen’s grace’s singular comfort, there was no one thing which her grace so much desired...as the want of the said queen of Navarre’s company, with whom to have conference, for more causes than were meet to be expressed, her grace is most desirous.’ (Pg. 33)

A message from Anne to Marguerite in 1535 stated ‘that her greatest wish, next to having a son, was to see you again’ (Pg. 33).

Ives also points out that many of the books that Anne collected during her time as Queen, came from authors and printers that had been ‘encouraged by the Queen of Navarre.’ Ives even speculates that Anne would have possessed a copy of Marguerite’s Le Miroir de l’aime pecheresse, published in 1531, and claims that this exact copy might have been the one her daughter Elizabeth would use in 1545, when translating this work for her step-mother, Katherine Parr (Pg. 278).

Ives believes that there are also parallels between ‘Anne expressing her faith in fine illuminated manuscripts and Marguerite doing the same’ (Pg. 278).

It seems likely then that Anne saw Marguerite as a role-model, although Ives does not agree with earlier writers whom assumed that Marguerite was responsible for Anne’s interest in French reform (Pg. 277).
From the Archives: From The Obedience of a Christian Man

According to Tyndale experts, the translator’s basic purpose in this treatise was to set forth, based on Scripture alone, his understanding of the real duties of a Christian—and to show how the abuses and imbalances of the institutional church of the time were leading people away from these “true duties.” In the book’s several chapters, Tyndale treats, in order, the expectations God outlines in Scripture for children, wives, servants, and the king’s subjects. He then proceeds to God-ordained duties for husbands, masters, landlords, judges and king’s officers, showing how, in his interpretation, each ought to rule. Then he suggests ways in which the papacy’s abuses had usurped the authority allotted to these other powers, hence dealing with the sacraments, the Antichrist, baptism, wedlock, monastic orders, penance, confession, contrition, absolution, anointing, miracles, the adoration of saints, and prayer. He then analyzes and critiques the four approaches to Scripture interpretation that were prevalent at the time, and concludes with “a compendious rehearsal of that which goeth before.” This extract is from that “rehearsal.”

I have described unto you the obedience of children, servants, wives, and subjects. These four orders are of God’s making, and the rules thereof are God’s Word. He that keeps them shall be blessed—yea, is blessed already—and he that breaketh them shall be cursed.

If any person, from impatience or a stubborn and rebellious mind, withdraw himself from any of these, and get him to any other order, let him not think thereby to avoid the vengeance of God in obeying rules and tradition of man’s imagination.

If thou shavest shine head in the worship of thy Father, and breakest His commandments, shouldest thou so escape? Or, if thou paintest thy Master’s image on a wall and slickest up a candle before it, shouldest thou therewith make satisfaction for the breaking of His commandment? Or, if thou wearest a blue coat in the worship of the king and breakest his laws, shouldest thou so go quit?

Let a man’s wife make herself a sister of the chatterhouse, and answer her husband, when he bids her hold her peace. My brethren keep silence for me, and see whether she shall so escape. And be thou sure that God is more jealous over His commandments than man is over his, or than any man is over his wife.

Because we are blind, God has appointed in the Scripture how we should serve Him and please Him. As pertaining unto His own person, He is abundantly pleased when we believe His promises and the holy testament which He has made unto us in Christ, and [hence] for the mercy which He there showed us, [we] love His commandments.

All bodily service must be done to man in God’s stead. We must give obedience, honor, toll, tribute, custom and rent unto whom they belong. Then if thou have ought more to bestow, give unto the poor which are left here in Christ’s stead, that we show mercy to them....

Therefore, I say, is a Christian called to suffer even the bitter death for his hope’s sake, and because he will do no evil. I showed also that kings and rulers, be they ever so evil, are yet a great gift of the goodness of God, and defend us from a thousand things that we see not.

I proved also that all men, without exception, are under the temporal sword, whatsoever names they
give themselves. Because the priest is chosen out of the laymen to teach this obedience, is that a lawful cause for him to disobey? Because he preaches that the layman should not steal. is it therefore lawful for him to steal unpunished? ...

Moreover, Christ became poor, to make other men rich, and bound, to make others free. He left also with His disciples the law of love. Now love seeketh not her own profit, but her neighbor’s .... The spirituality [the clergy], therefore, are condemned by all the laws of God, who through falsehood and disguised hypocrisy have sought so great profit, so great riches, so great authority and so great liberties; and have so beggared the laymen, and so brought them into subjection and bondage, and so despised them, that they have set up franchises in all towns and villages, for whosoever robs, murders or slays them, and even for traitors unto the king’s person also.

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Lady Jane Rochford

Review of Jane Boleyn: The Infamous Lady Rochford, by Julia Fox, with an overview of her background:

http://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n08/hilary-mantel/frocks-and-shocks

Born Jane Parker, around 1505, she grew up, probably, on her father’s estates in Essex. Jane’s mother was Alice St John, daughter of a Bedfordshire landowner. Her father was Henry, Lord Morley, the scholarly translator of Petrarch and Plutarch.

Lord Morley never did become a royal adviser, which meant he was not in Henry’s firing line. But he was a loyal servant, impeccably connected, who always voted in Parliament the way the king would have wished and who was wheeled out to dignify state occasions. He gave his translations as New Year gifts to Henry, to the Princess Mary, to Thomas Cromwell. In religious matters he moved, like the king, from orthodoxy to an anti-papalist position, without departing from doctrinal conservatism. In 1537 he sent Cromwell copies of Machiavelli’s The History of Florence and The Prince, ‘to pass the time with all in the Italian tongue’. He asked Cromwell to show certain anti-clerical passages to the king: ‘In such places as the Author touches anything concerning the Bishop of Rome, I have noted it with a hand or words in the margin to the intent it should be in a readiness to you at all times in the reading.’

Jane made her debut in the historical record in 1522, when she danced in a masque at York Place, Cardinal Wolsey’s London house. The ladies were dressed as Virtues. Jane Parker was Constancy. Mary Boleyn was Kindness. Her sister, Anne, was Perseverance. If the cardinal had known how persevering Anne Boleyn would prove, he would probably have stopped the show.

Jane married George Boleyn about 1525. There is no portrait of him either. But we know him as a clever, cultured young man, sympathetic like his sister to the evangelical cause and the vernacular Bible. He was said to be a womaniser, said to be proud. Like his father, Thomas Boleyn, he served Henry in France on many diplomatic missions. He and Jane spent long stretches apart. We have no idea whether they were happy. Their marriage seems to have produced no children.

The Boleyn marriage was a good one for her. George ascended from royal page to gentleman of the privy chamber. He was one of Henry’s sporting set, a gambler, and like his father he became a rich and powerful man as a result of the sexual favours granted to the king by his two sisters and, if contemporary gossip is to be believed, by his mother before them; even the most fevered bodice-ripping novelist has trouble keeping up with what these people said and thought about each other. When Jane married him, her jointure was £1300, a very large sum to which the king contributed. Her
settlement decided what Jane would receive should her husband die before her and was later to become the subject of interesting negotiations. Fox is thorough in her exploration of Jane's financial position at every stage of her life. It is often the only clue as to her more general fortunes. The figures are there on paper; for the rest, it's like chasing a ghost. Perhaps it's Jane's very centrality that reduces her to a vanishing dot on the page. She's always where the action is, if never precisely part of it. No one writes to tell her what's going on, because she already knows. She sees and hears everything, and keeps no diary.

Like the other ladies around the queen, Jane was questioned by Thomas Cromwell. Her vilifiers believe that at this point she lodged an accusation of incest against George, in return for a promise of good treatment after his death. Is this likely? Fox points out how much Jane had to lose: status, wealth. If George were guilty of treason his estates and possessions would be forfeit. It is possible, of course, that something Jane said, unwittingly and without malice, provided ammunition against her husband. But to demonstrate her total innocence is hard. It is true that she wrote to her husband in the Tower, saying she would plead for him with the king. But she could hardly have been seen to do less, and there was no prospect of her meeting Henry face-to-face. Cromwell was turning away all petitioners, and letting Henry out only by night, to visit the incoming queen, Jane Seymour.

After George's death, his possessions were inventoried, and so were Jane’s. We can dress her, if not see her face: her satins, damasks and velvets are laid out for our inspection. The original document detailing her marriage settlement is lost but Fox has reconstructed it from other references, to see what she had to live on. It was a competence, no more; her father-in-law, Thomas Boleyn, didn't exactly cheat Jane, but he was hardly helpful to her. He was hanging onto his assets as hard as he could; his family was disgraced, and he had lost his job as lord privy seal to Thomas Cromwell. Her father, Lord Morley, didn’t seem inclined to intervene. He was, though, always on excellent terms with Cromwell, and Jane now wrote to the minister. Her letter, Fox points out, might well have been written from a template. There is no evidence of a special deal. The minister helped her sort out her affairs, but that was part of his job. Thomas Boleyn was unwilling to part with land, but came up with some more money for her. It would take a private Act of Parliament to settle Jane's entitlements, but eventually she would become a wealthy woman. In the meantime, she was soon back at court as a lady-in-waiting to Jane Seymour. We don't know what she did during that queen's short reign. Fox is reduced to: 'With her weeping ladies clustered at her side, one of them almost certainly Jane, the queen had died.'
Interview with Julia Fox, author of *Jane Boleyn*

http://www.juliafox.co.uk/A-talk-with-Julia-Fox.pdf

**How did you go about uncovering new and overlooked material pertaining to Jane’s role in the intrigues of Henry’s court?**

I began by going over the much-known material with a fresh eye. It’s surprising what you can discover if you look at things from a different perspective. Then I moved on to researching some of the people around Jane, like her birth family and the Boleyn relatives. All of this helped put Jane into a wider context. And then I had a great stroke of luck—a chance reference in the archives led me on to discover a totally unknown and ignored copy of Jane’s marriage settlement. Once I’d put the information I gleaned from that together with details from the Act of Parliament she obtained later on, I knew just what a task it had been for her to get a decent settlement after George’s execution. It’s always been said that she was rewarded for perjuring herself at his trial. By finding all about her financial situation, I knew that just wasn’t the case. She wasn’t rewarded at all. Once I’d taken that fully on board, it helped provide the evidence I needed to start derailing the myths. And then I followed a sixteenth-century paper trail. Like Watergate, you follow the money.

**What did it mean for a woman like Jane to marry into a powerful and ambitious family like the Boleyns?**

You have to remember that Jane, who was quite a catch in her own right, had no idea when she married George that his sister would ever become a crowned queen. She envisaged a life rather like that of her own mother, running the household, going to court sometimes, bringing up children. That just didn’t happen. The Boleyns were a family on the make, and were likely to get more favors from the king, but what happened must have come as just as much of a surprise to her as it did to them. And she fitted in. It was a wife’s duty to support her husband, and she did that, but she also came to revel in court life at the center of the action.
At one point in the book, you use the word “addiction” to describe Jane’s penchant for court life, which although exciting and glamorous was also highly dangerous. What do you think accounts for her addiction? Why didn’t she simply retire to a life of comfort and privilege in the country following her husband’s death? Why return to the vipers’ nest of the court?

Following George’s death, she had only £50 a year to live on; that would not have given her anything like what she had been used to. She had no country estate, and she would have been dependent on her father’s generosity. The court offered a career. When she became more prosperous, though, she did have a genuine choice. Yet you have to remember that she had been at court for most of her life; she knew it, and she probably thought she understood how it worked, having survived the fall of Anne and George. She certainly didn’t think that the time would come when she would become a victim herself. The court offered excitement, gossip, entertainment: it was life on the cutting edge. Retirement to a tranquil estate in the middle of the English countryside could hardly compete with all of that.
Ladies of the Court

Catherine of Aragon’s Women vs. Anne Boleyn’s Women

The best evidence about which ladies of the court were serving which of these two women at any given time are lists that are available of who attended these women in general, and at certain special events/transition periods.

Officially, Catherine had women in attendance until 1536, even post-banishment, but there’s no way to know how many. There is a list of women who refused to take the Oath of Supremacy and recognize Henry as Head of the Church and Henry and Anne’s marriage, and were sent away from court in 1533—we can speculate that this is the same year Catherine was officially banished. Did they go to Kimbolton with Catherine? Possibly. Catherine left some of them money when she died.

Some of the women listed as Catherine’s maids-of-honour/ladies-in-waiting did go on to attend Anne, but not until after the marriage. Anne was assigned a very small set of her own women in 1528, and a few more when she became Marquess of Pembroke in 1532. Mary Boleyn and Lady Jane Rochford attended Anne on Henry and Anne’s visit to meet King Francis I of France, and during her coronation procession. Jane Seymour, however, did not. Before 1533, we can assume she primarily serves Catherine, whereas Rochford primarily serves Anne. After Catherine is banished, Jane becomes one of Anne’s official maids-of-honour.

Here are the lists I’m working off of: http://www.kateemersonhistoricals.com/lists.htm
“The personal and familial connections that brought women to court to pursue careers in the royal household meant that their interest in politics centered on the pursuit of patronage for themselves, their kin, and their clients. In the 1530s, however, Henry VIII’s break with Rome and divorce from Katherine of Aragon produced an unprecedented situation that propelled some of the women in the royal household into high politics...The king’s decisions and demands for obedience forced Katherine’s servants and friends to choose between her and their allegiance to him, a decision that often created conflicts among their familial, dynastic, and religious loyalties...many members of [Katherine’s] household moved from her service to that of her successors without leaving any discernible traces in the extant records of difficulty about their decisions. In contrast, a small group of the queen’s long-term servants and friends...openly opposed both the divorce and religious reform. “

“In some cases, loyalty to Katherine of Aragon produced open conflicts between her servants and their fathers or husbands, despite the overwhelming weight of traditional injunctions that women should submit to male authority in the family.”

“Women who came to court with Anne Boleyn and her successors escaped the personal and familial conflicts facing those loyal to Katherine of Aragon, but they were inevitably caught up in the king’s successive matrimonial crises, which often had a politicizing effect on them. Their relationships with Henry’s successive queens and their ties to families with vested interests in the break with Rome meant that they were far more likely than Katherine of Aragon’s servants to support the king and move in the direction of religious reform.”

“Yorkist and early Tudor kings considered physical beauty young women’s primary qualification for their appointments as Maids-of-Honor because their appearance was a crucial element in the impression their courts made on their contemporaries and a major topic in reports about them.”

“In addition to being beautiful, English kings expected Maids-of-Honor to be skilled at dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, and if possible, speaking French.”

“In the first year of Henry VIII’s reign, Katherine of Aragon’s household included thirty-three aristocratic women, eighteen of whom were the wives or daughters of peers. After that, the queen’s household remained relatively stable in size. At the end of the reign, Katherine Parr’s household included thirty-three women from aristocratic families; ten were married to peers. Aristocratic women also supervised the nurserues and households of Henry VII’s and Henry VIII’s children.”
“The political and economic value of appointments in the queen’s household meant that competition for them was keen...Like men on the king’s side of the royal household, women obtained their offices through family influence and almost always functioned there as members of dense kin networks, even after they had developed independent identities as ervants of the crown. At any given moment, a small group of interconnected families dominated the royal households.”
Margaret of Burgundy

http://www.monstrousregimentofwomen.com/2015/01/margaret-of-austria-formidable.html

In an age of politically powerful women, Margaret of Austria is among the most adept, experienced, and influential--though she remains surprisingly little known. An accomplished ruler--she was regent of the Netherlands for some twenty years--she also nurtured and shaped a generation of younger women whom she trained at her court and for whom she herself was to provide a model of female sovereignty.

After Louis XI died on 31 August 1483, his son Charles became king of France and, as his "wife," Margaret of Austria, just three years old, became la petite reine, "the little queen."

But by 1491, French politic interests had changed, the alliance with Burgundy was put aside, and la petite reine was replaced. The eleven-year-old Margaret discovered that her "husband" would marry another little princess, Anne of Brittany, on 6 December 1491. For more than eight years Margaret of Austria had been Charles's "wife," raised to be and treated as the queen of France; suddenly, at age eleven, she was no longer a French queen, but neither was she sent home.

In 1494, to strengthen his Spanish alliance, Maximilian arranged for the marriage of his son (Margaret's brother), Philip of Burgundy, to Juana of Castile, while his daughter Margaret of Austria, one-time "queen" of France, would marry the son and heir of Ferdinand and Isabella.

Margaret of Austria had been forced to remain in France after her first marriage was dissolved, a discarded "wife" but a valuable hostage. She also remained in Spain after Prince Juan's death as well, perhaps as a treasured "daughter," perhaps as, yet again, a political hostage. Whatever the circumstances of her life in Castile after Juan's death, Margaret spent her time profitably, both teaching and learning. She tutored her sister-in-law Catalina of Aragon, betrothed to Prince Arthur of England, in English, while she herself learned practical lessons in politics and government from her "mother," the queen of Castile.

On 26 September 1501, Margaret of Austria again left Flanders. She set off for a proxy marriage, accompanied once more by Margaret of York. The ceremony took place late on 28 November, the marriage with Philibert taking place shortly thereafter, on 4 December.
After her arrival in Savoy, Margaret recognized that her husband, the duke, had no interest in government and no political influence. Having had the best of models in Margaret of York, Anne of France, and Isabella of Castile, Margaret of Austria for the first time became more than a wife and political pawn.

As she began her political career, interested not only in domestic affairs for in foreign policy, Margaret of Austria had a distinct advantage over the rulers who were her "colleagues." Although young and as yet unpracticed, she was neither sheltered nor inexperienced: her marriages and her travel had brought her into contact with all the European powers. Her father was archduke of Austria and the Holy Roman emperor. Her brother was duke of Burgundy and was married to Juana, heir to the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. She had spent eight years in France, and knew Louis XII, Anne of Brittany, and Anne of France. Louise of Savoy, by then the mother of the heir-presumptive to Louis' French throne, had been her childhood companion while Margaret was at the French court, and now was her sister-in-law. She had spent three years in Spain with Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon.

Although Margaret's tenure in Savoy was to be brief, it was to be important for her future career. She would never again be a wife, but she would be a ruler. In Savoy, having identified and appointed trustworthy advisors and assistants, many of whom would serve her throughout her life, she began to apply the lessons of politics and government she had learned in France and Spain. But by September of 1504 Philibert was dead.

In 1506 Margaret of Austria was twenty-six years old; she had been married three times, repudiated once and widowed twice. Although Philip's wife Juana would survive her husband by nearly fifty years, she was not to act as guardian for the four children she had left behind in the Netherlands--Eleanor, Charles, Isabel, and Mary--nor was she to serve as regent for her son. Instead Maximilian looked to his daughter to act as regent for Charles, Philip's heir in Burgundy (and Juana's heir in Spain). Margaret left Savoy on 29 October 1506, and on 18 March 1507, her father signed a document naming Margaret of Austria as regent of the Netherlands.

She would serve as regent for nearly twenty years. Her first appointment extended from 1507 to 1515, her second from 1519 to 1530. As regent, she acted as guardian for Philip's children and arranged for their education. More importantly, she would manage the government of the Netherlands for the six-year-old Charles until he came of age.
Maximilian did not seem to have complete faith in his daughter, warning her that she could be duped—but, despite her father's hesitancy, Margaret proved herself an able negotiator; "Madam Margaret," one chronicler reported, "has seen and experienced more at her youthful age . . . than any lady on record, however long her life." Another noted, "This princess had a man's talent for managing business; in fact she was more capable than most men, for she added to her talents the fascination of her sex, brought up as she had been to hide her own feelings, conciliate her opponents, and persuade all parties that she was acting blindly in their interests." Still another, noting how well she dealt with one powerful representative, commented that she was "so successful in charming him that he could refuse her nothing."
Distances

*London Palace (let’s say Hampton Court for argument’s sake) to Farnham Forest* is at least 30 miles. This would take the better part of the day, since a well-trained horse at peak condition can travel 60 miles a day.

*Wolsey threatening to send Rochford to Thomas More, via the River Thames.* If leaving from York House, about 3.5 miles on the River to get to Chelsea. York House makes the most sense, because it would have been a considerably longer distance from Hampton or Richmond and not as immediate a threat.

*Wolsey being sent to Richmond from York House,* 16 miles on the river. That would be a long night.

Other distances:

*Kimbolton Castle* is where Catherine of Aragon was banished. 60-some miles away from the rest of Henry's castles. Mary I was kept in London, forbidden to see her mother.

*Tower of London* would be 3.4 miles from York House
Hampton Court Palace, at Richmond-upon-Thames

Beaufort House, in Kensington and Chelsea

Kimbolton Castle, in Cambridgeshire

Farnham Castle, in Surrey

Resided here:
Thomas More

Resided here: Catherine of Aragon
(after banishment)

Drawing of Richmond Palace, at Richmond-upon-Thames

Resided here:
Henry and Catherine

Hampton Court Palace, at Richmond-upon-Thames

Tyburn, in Westminster

Whitehall Palace, formerly called

Tower of London Palace, at Tower Hamlets

Resided here (as prisoners):
Anne Boleyn
John Fisher
Thomas More
Thomas Cromwell
Etiquette for Bows and Greeting

**Bowing**: This is describing a medieval setting, but may still be instructive--an excerpt from *Movement for Period Plays*:

**Man’s Bow**: The right foot is carried to the back, weight remaining forward, and both knees bend. This is a modification of what one would do if one were to kneel. The body inclines slightly forward, head in line with the body, and the hat is removed with the right hand and held at the side, with the inside of the hat hidden. To recover, straighten the body and the front knee, bring the back foot to place and cover the head if that is permissible.

**Woman’s Curtsy**: Keeping feet and knees together, gently bend knees. Hands can pick up the front of the gown, or they can sweep back with palms forward, an offering gesture.

To kiss the hand of the sovereign: the subject kneels, takes the sovereign’s hand on the back of subject’s own, places the forehead on the back of the royal hand, then stands, bows or curtsies, and backs away.

The quick “bob” is done by servants and tradespeople to superiors, and does not elicit a like response. Passing bows are slighter versions of standing bows, used for greeting or acknowledging greetings while walking along a street or making one’s way through a throng of guests. To kneel, step back with one foot and sink to the knee. Rise straight up by pushing with the toes to the back foot.
For Gentlemen

You need to know, then, that should a prince or gentleman be required to approach a great king to kiss his hand, the sides of his cape or mantle (whichever it is) should be of equal length, for aside from the fact that [any unevenness] looks quite ugly, it is also necessary that he reveal the front of his body, and keep his hands down, holding both ends of his cape or riding cloak with them, so that the king will have no reason whatsoever to suspect him of carrying something beneath them that could harm him (as we have seen occur in our own day, and not too many years since). It is good, therefore, to reveal your hands and to wear your cape or riding cloak as I have said above. Moreover, you should doff your bonnet (or hat) as I have taught in the rule for doffing the bonnet; you should doff it with your right hand, changing it to your left hand as soon as you have removed it, and turning the inside of your bonnet toward the thigh corresponding to the hand in which you hold it. Upon appearing in the hall (or room) where the king is, immediately make a grave Reverence; then take four or six steps forward, and make another [Reverence]; and when you are a short distance from His Majesty, make the last one very low, so as almost to touch the floor with your knee, pretending to kiss the king's knee. Then look up and and kiss your petition, accompanying this act with another Reverence, and presenting it to him. After this, having achieved your purpose or a suitable answer from His Majesty, take leave of him, once again pretending to kiss his knee. You ought to know that in making the last Reverence you should not face His Majesty, but [should face] a little to the side, so that the king is on your right; if the king is seated, however, and you are standing, face him directly. Should the king walk along with you, stay a step behind him at all times. In turning, follow the commendable Spanish fashion of falling back three steps, always keeping His Majesty on your right. When taking your leave, make a Reverence by bowing so low that your knee almost touches the ground (as I have said above); and upon rising, retire by making three more Reverences without ever turning your back upon the king. Now I have nothing more to tell you about this.

Concerning the Reverence -- one of the social skills that the nouveau riche tried hard to acquire was bowing. Just as there were dancing masters and fencing masters to teach the important social skills, so also were there bowing masters. The depth of bow is a crucial part of the social language of acknowledging someone else's social status.
Kissing -- we don't currently make use of this gesture as the sign of respect it was intended to be. Again, Montaigne complains about pretentious people getting carried away with kissing their hands whenever they meet anyone. No one actually makes any contact with anyone or anything when performing this kissing gesture.

Keeping the king to your right -- the right hand is the side of honor, and the left hand is a lower status position. When seated, you should give the right hand seat to someone you wish to honor, and when a guest, you should insist on the left hand seat so as to honor your host.

When walking, it may involve a certain amount of flexibility to stay a step or two behind the king. If he wants to make a left turn, you need to actually step backward so you can stay in your inferior position.

Never turn your back until you are out of official range -- another universal custom.

**For a Lady**

Now as soon as a lady espies a princess or noblewoman (whichever the case), she should step out and go toward her; and before approaching her, she should make a half Reverence (that is, a little bow), and when she has come close she should kiss her own right hand (without, however, bringing it near her mouth, but holding it at some distance), bending it a little, and not holding it so rigidly that it appears to be crippled. While moving this way, she should make a grave Reverence, as indeed I showed you, pretending to kiss the princess's right hand. If she is not the equal of that particular princess or great lady, however, she should pretend to kiss the [princess's] knee. Then the princess should make a Reverence, making the same [gestures] as if she were her equal; if [she is] not she should pretend to raise her with her [own] hands, taking the visitors's left hand in her right hand. This is even more appropriate if she is her equal, for anyone who is paid a visit should always receive the caller most warmly and affectionately. Should the hostess wish to put the caller on her own right to honour her, however, the visitor should never permit it.
Meeting and Greeting

Many of the guidelines outlined above apply in normal social. Gentlemen still have to deal with their hats, their cloaks, their swords. They doff their hands, may kiss their own hand, and bow. Typically, a gentleman removes his hat with his right hand and kisses his left hand. If he needs to present his right hand (for example, to take a ladies hand for a dance or to offer a gift), he may change his hat to his left hand and kiss his right hand or the gift in his right hand. How intensely a man goes through these operations is part of the social language of status. The hat doffing is more pronounced, the bow deeper, the higher up the social scale the other person is. Between equals, the shorthand might be more of a gesture to touch the hat without taking it off completely. You can overdo it: "You need to be aware that unnecessary, empty and precious courtesies are scarce-hidden flatteries; on the contrary, [they are] so clear and obvious to all that those who make too many Reverences (by sliding their feet, kissing their hands or doffing their bonnets while bowing and scraping before their favorite ladies) lose just as much [favor in the eyes of others] as they think to gain, for their blandishments only displease and bore them.

Historically, women's roles are more private and less public. They make Reverences (curtsey) as part of social introductions, but don't have swords and capes and removable hats. If she is wearing one, a lady never removes her cap. Hand kissing seems to be an activity between ladies. I have not seen women described as kissing their hands when introduced to men. It is the man's responsibility to kiss his hand, since he is the one being honored by the lady.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Face-to-face</strong></th>
<th>Your Eminence</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Greeting</strong></td>
<td>Your Grace (British)</td>
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**Envelope Address**  
His Eminence, John Cardinal Doe, Archbishop of Erewhon  
("Cardinal" goes between first and last names)

**Letter Salutation**  
Most Reverend Eminence  
Most Eminent Cardinal

**Formal Closing**  
Kissing the Sacred Purple

**Abbreviations**  
His Eminence: H.E.;  
Eminence: Emus. (*Eminentissimus*)

**Other**  
Kneel on your left knee and kiss ring as sign of respect for his office. If kneeling would be awkward or impossible, bow at the waist and proceed (do not do either if the Pope is present). Stand when he enters the room and remain standing until he invites you to sit. Men must remove their hats in his presence. Repeat reverential gestures when leaving his presence.
George Villiers


- Villiers family line consisted of minor nobles, fairly low on the status pole
- A 47-year-old James I met a 22-year-old George in 1614, at a hunt
- George replaced the Scottish Robert Carr as James’ favorite at court
- After James I’s patronage, George’s rank (Earl of Buckingham, to Marquess of Buckingham to Earl of Coventry and Duke of Buckingham) skyrocketed, and so does the standing of the Villiers family
- 1620, married Lady Katherine Manners, who converted from Catholicism to Protestantism
- Remained in the Stuart court under Charles I, but is assassinated in 1628

http://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Villiers-1st-duke-of-Buckingham

George Villiers’s father was a knight and a sheriff in Leicestershire. Introduced to James I in August 1614, the charming, handsome Villiers soon replaced the Scottish favourite Robert Carr, earl of Somerset, in the king’s esteem. His relationship with James became sexual, and he retained the king’s passionate support to the end of the latter’s life. He became master of the horse in 1616, earl of Buckingham in 1617, and lord high admiral in 1619. By using his power both to elevate and to enrich his relatives, he alienated the upper classes from the crown.

Buckingham played his first major part in politics in 1623, when he and James’s son, Prince Charles (later King Charles I), visited Madrid to arrange a marriage between Charles and the daughter of the Spanish king. In attempting to conclude an alliance with Spain, Buckingham hoped to use Spanish influence to recover the Palatinate, an electorate of the Holy Roman Empire, for James’s son-in-law, Frederick V. But the arrogance of Buckingham—James had already created him a duke (May 18, 1623), the first known in England since the execution of the duke of Norfolk (1572)—contributed to the collapse of the marriage negotiations. He then returned to London and, with parliamentary backing, pressured James to go to war with Spain.

After Charles ascended the throne in March 1625, Buckingham’s leadership led to a series of disasters. The marriage he arranged between Charles and the French Roman Catholic princess Henrietta Maria failed to bring about an Anglo-French alliance, and it angered Parliament by raising the threat of a Catholic succession to the English throne. In addition, the vast naval and land expedition Buckingham sent against the Spanish port of Cádiz in October 1625 was so poorly organized and equipped that it disintegrated before it could storm the city. Hence, a bill to impeach the duke was introduced in Parliament in May 1626. In order to save him, Charles dissolved Parliament in June. Buckingham’s case
was then tried before the royal Court of Star Chamber, where, to no one’s surprise, the charges were dismissed.

Meanwhile, England was drifting toward war with France. In June 1627 Buckingham personally took command of an 8,000-man force sent to relieve the port of La Rochelle, a Huguenot (French Protestant) stronghold under attack by French government troops. After a four-month campaign in which Buckingham showed bravery—and an ignorance of the arts of war—his shattered army was compelled to withdraw. The Parliament of 1628 tried to force Charles to dismiss the favourite, but the king was unflinchingly loyal to his friend. On August 17 Buckingham arrived at Portsmouth to organize another expedition to La Rochelle. Five days later he was stabbed to death by John Felton, a naval lieutenant who had served in his campaigns and who misguidedly believed that he was acting in defense of principles asserted in the House of Commons. The populace of London rejoiced at the news.

http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/stuart-england/george-villiers-duke-of-buckingham/

Villiers was born on August 28th 1592 at Brooksby in Leicestershire. His father was a minor noble who had remarried and Villiers was born to his second wife, Mary Beaumont. He knew that in future years he would have to compete with his half-brothers for a share of his father’s modest estate. His mother was an ambitious woman and she saved enough for him to be educated in France. Here Villiers learned to dance, duel and ride with a degree of expertise. By all accounts Villiers was an athletic and well-built man. One contemporary described him as “no one dances better, no man runs or jumps better.”

James first met Villiers at Apethorpe in August 1614. James was forty-seven.

“He (James) was of middle stature, more corpulent through his clothes than his body, yet fat enough, his clothes ever being made large and easy, the doublets quilted for stiletto proof, his breeches in pleats and full stuffed……his eye was large, ever rolling after any stranger that came into his presence, in so much as many for shame have left the room, as being out of countenance….his legs were very weak….and that weakness made him ever leaning on other men’s shoulders; his walk was ever circular, his fingers ever in that walk fiddling about his codpiece.”

James was immediately taken in by Villier’s appearance. In 1615, Villier’s was made a Gentleman of the Bedchamber. His advance after this was swift. In 1616, Villiers was appointed Master of the Horse, made a Knight of the Garter and became Viscount Villiers. In 1617, he became Earl of Buckingham and in 1619, he was made a Marquess.
Such a swift advance up the social order was bound to provoke negative thoughts with regards to both James and Buckingham and the latter certainly made enemies. It was not unusual for a king to have favourites – but the speed with which Villiers climbed the social ladder and was promoted was too much for many.

Their public displays of affection only served to bring the court into more disrepute. James referred to him as “my sweetheart”, “my sweet child and wife” and “my only sweet and dear child”. In response to this, Buckingham flattered the king at every opportunity. There can be little doubt that Buckingham knew what he was doing (he ended his letters to the king with “Your majesty’s most humble slave and dog”) and that by pandering to James he knew that he was enhancing his own position within the royal court. In 1617, James explained to the Lords why he was making Villiers Earl of Buckingham:

“I, James, am neither God nor an angel, but a man like any other. Therefore I act like a man, and confess to loving those dear to me more than other men. You may be sure that I love the Earl of Buckingham more than anyone else, and more than you who are here assembled. I wish to speak in my own behalf, and not to have it thought to be a defect, for Jesus Christ did the same, and therefore I cannot be blamed. Christ had his John, and I have my George.”
KING JAMES, REVISED

History's best seller turns 400

A century ago, on the three-hundredth birthday of the King James Version of the Holy Bible, Theodore Roosevelt said that "no other book of any kind ever written in English—perhaps no other book ever written in any other tongue—has ever so affected the whole life of a people." Today that effect may be less obvious. Reading the King James Bible aloud is no longer the cornerstone of an American education, even for the religiously devout; none of the major Christian denominations use the King James Version as their primary scripture, opting instead for more recent, "accessible" translations. Yet the language of the King James Bible remains our language, and not just by way of the countless biblical phrases—from "a drop in the bucket" to "you reap what you sow"—that are still pervasive in contemporary English. As scholar and biblical translator Robert Alter writes, the language of the 1611 translation "continued to suffuse the culture even when the fervid faith in Scripture as revelation had begun to fade."

With this legacy in mind, Harper's Magazine marked the quadricentennial of the King James Bible by inviting some of our finest poets and novelists to select a verse or short passage from the translation and respond to it, with no restrictions on the form of this response. Taken together, the results remind us of what Edmund Wilson once wrote about biblical language, that our culture never "seems quite to accommodate it. Yet we find we have been living with it all our lives."

Paul Guest was recently named a 2011 Guggenheim Fellow in Poetry.

Howard Jacobson's novels include The Mighty Walter, Kalooki Nights, and The Finkler Question, which won the 2010 Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

Benjamin Hale is the author of the novel The Evolution of Bruno Littlemore.

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Don Chaixson is the author of four books, including the poetry collection Where's the Moon, There's the Moon.

Marilynne Robinson's most recent book is Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self.

Illustrations by Andrea Dossō
A MIRROR UP TO NOTHING

By Howard Jacobson

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

—Genesis 1:31

It won't get much better for God or for his creations than it is on the evening and the morning of the sixth day. Genesis 2 ends on a high romantic note, with the first man and the first woman naked in each other's trembling presence—I've invented the “trembling” but I think it's warranted—and entirely unashamed. But by the time Genesis 3 is through, the gates to the garden are shut fast and Cherubim with flaming swords bar the way back. What went wrong is usually what engages our attention, but what went right in those thirty-one verses of Genesis 1 is no less arresting if you are interested in art.

You don't have to believe in the Judeo-Christian God to be pleased he was an artist. When it comes to making something out of nothing, an artist-god beats a warrior-god every time. As though on a whim—there are some who say he must have been lonely, but it could just as easily be argued that he was bored—he creates the heaven and the earth. “And God said, Let there be light”: who he said that to has long been a matter of theological controversy—a council of angels himself?—but it is clearly not an order, or even a wish that needs to explain itself. He would have it that way, that's all. The creative urge is upon him. No sooner does he speak for light, than light is. “And God saw the light, that it was good,” meaning that he didn't know for sure how it was going to be before he made it.

The question of the artist's autonomy has plagued literary criticism: can the artist be said to owe responsibility to anything outside his work, does he hold a mirror up to nature, or is the nature that the artist manufactures the only one safe to refer to when it comes to art? If God is the model of the artist, then the question is settled: there was no world prior to God the artist's creating it, not even a blueprint for one. He holds the mirror up to nothing. Seeing the light, he doesn't worry that it fails to measure up to some idea of light existent already in his mind or in the still formless void. He conjures up the concept at the same time that he creates the thing, and sees that it is good.

Had God not turned out to have a plan for the man and woman he went on to create, he might be open to the charge of mere aestheticism, and his work dismissed as art for art's sake. With a plan, the question of how art that cannot refer to anything outside itself can nonetheless have a function beyond itself is also settled: the art both is and isn’t all there is. With the creation of beauty comes the responsibility of purpose. The light is good in and of itself, but what is it good for? It's good because I say it is, God will later tell Job. But that's just the bluster of the artist. It's good because it reveals an idea. The artist isn’t obliged to explain what that idea is.

Hour by hour, what he has done reveals itself to him. Only when the six days of creation are complete is he able to stand back and admire. “... and, behold, it was very good.” This revelation is profoundly touching in its innocence. Behold—look, somebody! If he was lonely before he started to make art he is even lonelier now, like every artist, in the moment he seeks appreciation. He is thrown back on the only praise that ultimately counts—his own. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was” ... no longer just good but “very good.”

In the delight it takes in itself, in its childlike self-wonderment, this is the most perfect expression of artistic satisfaction. No wonder Coleridge echoed it in his fanciful encomium on Shakespeare, who, once he is satisfied that “creation in its outline” is perfect, “seems to rest from his labour, and to smile upon his work, and tell himself that it is very good.”

Later on, when laying down the law, God remembers his long-abandoned artistry—morality has come to occupy his time now—and in language recalling his original dynamic cosmogony, forbids his people from making any "likeness of any thing that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." No artist will be surprised by the jealousy of this. One impulse in the making of art is the negation of the art of others. When it comes to the creation of worlds, yours, if you mean what you are about, must prevail.

Ever since Moses conveyed the second commandment to the Israelites, Jewish artists have
trembled at their own temerity. Hence the intense seriousness of Jewish art. You do not set out lightly to rival God. But also, you do not set out without his example forever before you. The light you create must be like no other. Nothing less than its being very good will satisfy you.

And you must not expect that those it shines upon will either thank you for it or behave well as a consequence.

That disappointment inevitably waits on art explains why God the artist first destroyed his work and then walked out on it.

THE ARROW BY DAY

By Charles Baxter

 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day.

—Psalm 91:5

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High

the son takes his place at his father's table
and draws himself down for a sentence to express his soul's gratitude—
song of the grain, song of the field whose harvest
has spared him privation and hunger,
that illness has neither found him again nor sought him out,
in thankfulness

a thousand shall fall at thy side

and the mother who approaches her daughter lying in cotton sheets
eyes bright and feverish, in need only of comfort
descended from Him who resides beyond knowing,
the words not of now but of the horizon's forever
rolling and thunderous, and then at the instant softened
in consolation

Hast thou not poured me out as milk?

and the lover borne toward his beloved
wanting her only, and the words in their place to praise her
and the roof of her mouth like the best wine—
music not of men nor of women
but sounded like wind through the trees, and rainfall,
in love

The axe is laid unto the root of the trees

words almost foreign, because the voices of God come not
to our ears as our own voice, but as the other, as poetry itself
to which we must rise, this struggle, this sacred
and almost inaudible song that ascends skyward
just out of reach, out of our hearts, our hearing—
Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this.
ABSALOM DIES

By John Banville

And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away. And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.
—2 Samuel 18:9-10

Then as it may fault? It was not. All the same I got it in the neck, though not as the King's son did in his. It happened in the famous battle of Ephraim Wood, which we should have lost, seeing as how the rebels outnumbered us by I don't know how many, but won instead. The thing was as good as over, and I was faring nicely, keeping my head down out of the aim of Israel's archers. I'd done my share of killing among the sons of Judah, and was bent on getting home to the missus and a decent dinner—in those days we had a fine little place in the valley, over near Beer Shean—after that is, I'd picked up my share of the spoils, thank you very much.

Anyway, I was cantering out of a defile and there he was, the rebel Absalom himself, hanging in a tamarisk tree—they wrote later that it was an oak, but that was poetic license, as you might say. I knew him straight off, by that famous hair of his, and the Star of David he had the gall still to sport on his breastplate. What had happened, it seemed, was that he was riding close under the tree and got his neck jammed somehow where two thick branches forked, and his horse ran on and left him dangling there. I reckon he would have been throttled already only that those swaths of hair formed a sort of protective collar around his throat. His legs were going like mill wheels, and he was clawing at the branches something desperate, only all in vain: stuck fast, he was. I almost laughed, seeing him caught up like that, and his warhorse nearby, calm as you like, nibbling the sweet grass and swishing his tail against the flies.

I rode up till I was right under the dangling man. He swiveled his eyes downward—very bloodshot they were, by now—to see who it was that had come to have a look at him in his predicament. He tried to speak, though he couldn't, not properly, with his jaws clamped together that way. In the end, though, I understood him. Kill me, he was muttering, kill me! And I would have, to put him out of his misery, if he had been anyone else but the King's boy, rebel or no rebel. Sorry, mate, I said, no can do. For I was remembering Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and what happened to them.

The thing about our King, as the Lord liveth, and I say this with all due respect, is that he's odd. I don't say more than that: odd, that's all. There was that business of him dancing for the Lord in front of the Ark of the Covenant—what was that about? I mean, why keep a high priest of the Temple if you're going to do the dancing yourself? And what of the day when he heard the news that Saul his great enemy had fallen on his sword, and that Jonathan the son of Saul had perished also? Did he rejoice, did he clap his hands and caper? Rather, he wept, and rent his clothes, and fainted, and cried out that the beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

But I was speaking of those two, Baanah and Rechab, who thought to do their King a kindly deed and cut off the head of Ishboseth the son of Saul and sometime captain of his army. It seemed a fine and clever thing to do, considering how sore a thorn in David's side had been the House of Saul, but was the King grateful to those enterprising lads? Oho, no. Instead of showering gold pieces upon them in reward, he screamed at them for slaying a righteous person in his own house, and had them slain in turn, and their hands and feet cut off and hung out to dry, while the head of Ishboseth his enemy he buried with all pomp and honors of the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

See? Odd.

So there I was, under that tamarisk tree, listening to Absalom the King's son gurgling and gargling, wondering to myself what might be the best thing to do in this tricky situation, when, luckily, I heard nearby the great horn of Joab's troop, and galloped me over the side of a high hill and met the King's general and told him how I had come upon the turncoat Absalom hanged in a tree. First he didn't believe me—suspicous
type, our General Joab—then he said he assumed I had dispatched the villain on the spot. When he heard I hadn’t he called me a dead dog’s head, saying if I had done the thing he would have given me ten shekels of silver and a girdle—yes, a girdle—and took a fistful of arrows himself and went down into the gully where the tamarisk tree was and gouged them into Absalom’s heart.

They cut him down, then, the King’s dead son, and stuck him in a hole in the ground and piled stones on him, and Joab sent two messengers—why two, the LORD only knows—they being Cushi and Ahimaaz, running to the city, to bring the glad tidings to the King that his son who had rebelled against him was dead and buried.

Glad tidings, my eye. We were approaching the city ourselves when we heard the King weeping and wailing, and I swear that Joab’s men, even they, and I along with them, might have been moved to tears by his desolate cries. O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! Though mind you, I couldn’t help thinking of those two pairs of hands and feet strung up over the pond at Hebron, dried to twigs and parchment by now, and was glad it was Cushi and Ahimaaz and not I who had brought the dread news to Jerusalem.

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INTERVIEWING JANET MALCOLM

By Dan Chiasson

For if any be a bearer of the word, and not a doer, be 
is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass.
—James 1:23

To interview the interviewer, you need a mirror.
She’s trading privacy for peek-a-boo.
Janet Malcolm writes the questions that she answers.

Her apartment had the air of “New York Writer”:
The cat, the glass-top table, a park view;
On the far wall, facing us, an ornate mirror.

Her cat, and not her id, caused the disorder;
(This poem is partly false and partly true);
Janet Malcolm writes the questions that she answers.

The cat was just one detail in the picture.
The table was classic Mies van der Rohe.
Outside, the reservoir was a big mirror.

That day my objectivity danced with hers,
Our journalistic egos danced a tango,
And she rewrote my questions she had answered.

She’d interviewed herself, I realized later;
I was bystander to a rendezvous.
I stared at my reflection in the mirror.
Janet Malcolm wrote the questions she had answered.
LOWER THAN THE ANGELS

By Benjamin Hale

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the Angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

—Psalm 8:4–8

The author of the one English book more important than the King James Bible understood that human exceptionalism is a fiction. In place of the Bible’s hierarchical ordering of all matter and life—illustrated in medieval or Renaissance texts as the Great Chain of Being: a staircase leading in discrete planes up to God, with humans on their own step, between the angels and the animals—Darwin’s On the Origin of Species offers another structure, in which every species alive represents the tip of a branch on the tree of life, which can be imagined not as a staircase or ladder but as a vast, outwardly branching network. It makes no sense to pluck a single leaf off that tree and proclaim it different from all the rest by divine decree, no matter whether that leaf represents the human being or the ring-tailed lemur. The human refusal to abide such nonlinear models of life has plagued us and the world we inhabit, and the blame for this persistent refusal falls in part on beautifully written poison like Psalm 8, which is my favorite of them precisely because it enrages me more than anything else in the Bible.

The Psalm echoes Genesis 1:26, in which God makes man in his image (or, to be persnickety about it, “our image,” possibly referring to angels or other, premonotheistic gods), and puts all mortal creation beneath his feet. The anthropocentric ordering of the Judeo-Christian universe has fostered an attitude dominant in our culture that uncompromisingly divides “man” from “beast.” Christian theology requires the assumption of human exceptionalism, since the Christian heaven is a human one. It requires us to assume that we alone have culture and the capacity for morality; that only by the light of our “unnatural” (whether this means supernatural or contradictory to survival of the fittest) human morality can we overcome the amoral, purely self-interested State of Nature. The dichotomy that pits humanity and morality against “nature” does not align with observations of moral, social, and altruistic behavior in primates or in many other mammals—dogs, elephants, bats—something that suggests that both the good and the bad in us have precedent in other species.

The achievements of some Homo sapiens sapiens are, admittedly, fairly impressive. No other animal on this planet could have compiled a document of such complicated and glorious insanity as the King James Bible. Does a gulf of quantitative difference so vast as that between humans and other animals not at some point become qualitative itself? Where are the religions of the animals? Where are their space shuttles and toothbrushes and nuclear bombs? One of my favorite rebuttals to this common argument—besides reminding those who make it that it has long been used to justify distinguishing more or less “primitive” peoples—comes from Douglas Adams: “Man always assumed that he was more intelligent than dolphins because he had achieved so much—the wheel, New York, wars and so on—while all the dolphins had ever done was much about in the water having a good time. But conversely, the dolphins had always believed that they were far more intelligent than man—for precisely the same reason.”

I read the Bible with fascination, awe, terror, and joy. Of all its poetry and philosophy, its darknesses and silences and its great many gorgeous offenses, what I hate in it the most is its helping establish, in the Western philosophical tradition, the claim of human exceptionalism so alluring that Darwin’s most influential defenders and even today’s antireligious polemicists have persisted in it. Thus the Huxleyan Richard Dawkins: “What I am saying, along with many other people, among them T. H. Huxley, is that in our political and social life we are entitled to throw out Darwinism, to say we don’t want to live in a Darwinian world.” This implies that the “Darwinian world” of the animals does not include politics and society—or morality. Drawing a circle in the sand around humanity and calling that line morality patters down the same path as creationism. The “God delusion” is less important a target than the delusion that God made us in his image, crowned us with
glory and honor, and put all things beneath our feet. This unnecessary and scientifically baseless error has misguided popular understanding of evolutionary biology, and is environmentally dangerous: if human beings did not so like to think of ourselves as “a little lower than the angels,” then we might be more humble, less inclined to destroy the earth simply because we feel it’s ours and therefore ours to destroy.

Desmond Morris, paraphrasing Huxley, said he saw his “fellow man not as a fallen angel but as a risen ape.” That’s better than calling us the “crown of creation,” but “fallen” and “risen” are still the wrong words; the Great Chain of Being still haunts the rhetoric. Though it’s a nice sentence, I’d prefer to rephrase it as, “not a fallen angel but just an ape.” Granted, a great one.

AFTER DAMASCUS

By Paul Guest

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.
—Acts 26:28

All day long your eyeballs hummed
a tune you didn’t know. Something Germanic,
storming. The middling overture
to one of those Esther Williams movies.
Women were always arcing into lime-colored water.
And singing. They were singing.
And now you think about meaning,
and your relation to it, so much there is
you don’t understand. The singing makes no sense,
you decide in the shower, where
you have never been moved,
not to singing. Not even to sadness.
You’ve been quiet a long time.
Maybe all your life. And now, your eyes
seem to tremble in their sockets.
You think of a glass of water
vibrating on a table. An earthquake,
or a train, is coming. This place is far away.
And no one is left. No one is returning,
with crumpled belongings
in heavy sacks slung on their ruined backs.
No one is singing. You hurt—
you decide this is pain,
this is what pain is. No part of you is broken.
No bruises and no disease
and no neurological torpor
filling you up like a cold season.
Your body is strange.
Dragonflies mate in flight,
you once read many summers ago,
and until you saw this
kneeling in the sop of mud beside a stream,
their wings singing,
their insectile selves coupled, one,
you thought this
could not be true.
You were about to pray. What were the words?
WHAT WE MAY BE

By Marilynne Robinson

Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

—1 Corinthians 15:51-52

The whole of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is beautiful. But just here there is a rise in the language, a pent joy, a vision under profound restraint, that is like nothing else. “Lo! I tell you a mystery,” as the Revised Standard Version has it, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” Paul is telling his new converts that, at the end of things, we will be changed from human beings into human beings, from the first Adam to the second Adam—“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.” Ophelia says, “Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.” It is the voice of life, disheartened with itself and yearning for more life, for the other self or selves we know most intimately in their elusiveness.

The phrase “in the twinkling of an eye” appears here first in the fourteenth-century translation of the Latin Vulgate made by John Wycliffe and others. Paul wrote in Greek “in the blink of an eye,” and Jerome rendered this faithfully as in ictu oculi. The Wycliffites took a word from the unaccountably rich vocabulary the ancestors of the English language created to mark subtle differences in the appearance of light, enabling all their generations of descendants to distinguish a glimmer, a glint, a glimmer. Or the translators simply adopted an idiom. This was the period of Chaucer and Langland, when a robust vernacular literature flourished, taking its pleasures from the vividness and ingenuity of common speech. In Chaucer one finds “hise eyen twynted” and “a list shymeryng of a light.” So far as I can discover, every major English translation has followed Wycliffe in this detail, including the King James Version of 1611.

This very ingratiating, very human image seems to me to interpret the passage, or to leave a trace of the intention with which Wycliffe and others around him did their work. Wycliffe, an Oxford professor, was burned for his labors. He died a natural death but was exhumed in order to be burned, a fact that speaks tellingly of the potency of the barrier he had breached with his translation. At the time his Bible was first circulating, the great Peasants’ Revolt, a failed rebellion against poverty and repression, had just ended, and this no doubt made the populism of the project particularly objectionable to the authorities. And in fact Wycliffe was associated with a movement called Lollardy. The Lollards were preachers, at first Oxford students, who went out under cover of night to read to the poor in the countryside from the English Bible. They were violently suppressed, yet their movement persisted into the sixteenth century, when it merged with the Reformation.

These days the Bible seems to be used largely to shore up authority, or to legitimize political interests that claim a special fealty to Christianity. The Bible is much thumped and little pondered. So it may not be obvious why people living in the Middle Ages who enjoyed the rare privilege of literacy would have put themselves at terrible risk in order to carry Scripture into the hovels of the poor and defeated. “Gospel” is itself an old English word meaning glad tidings or good news. So perhaps enough of the first meaning still clung to it to give Wycliffe’s translation of evangelion as “gospel” a special power.

“Beholde I shewe a mystery unto you.” These are the words of William Tyndale, another Oxford scholar, who completed his version of the New Testament in 1526. But he was, he said, making a translation that a plowman would understand. Much of the celebrated beauty of the King James Bible is owed to Tyndale, and to his imagined readership, the plowman, whose language he returned to him in this extraordinary, very loving work. Tyndale was burned for his labors.

These are the origins of the Bible in English, the vehemently unauthorized precursors of the Authorized Version of 1611, or the King James Version, as we call it in America. Its greatness is owed in large part to the fact that it has preserved much that is best in the work of its martyrs, including a sense of the urgent generosity that lay behind their words. Imagine a tensored youth taking a page or two of Scripture from his sleeve and kneeling to read, by some small, furtive light that, since it played on English faces, flickered or gleamed. “We shall all be changed, and that in a moment, and the twinkling of an eye.” He’d have been reading to old Adam the deliver, the man of earth, the bearer of the primordial curse whose toil was grossly embittered by the impositions of his fellow men. And in the quiet of the peril they shared he’d have brought him the vision of himself as the new Adam, not burdened and coerced by the needs of his hungry body and by the entrapments of his degraded condition, but wholly conformed to himself as a living soul. We know what we are, but we know not what we may be. Anyone who speaks English understands what is meant by the twinkling of an eye, that genial look of inward pleasure that cannot be mistaken and cannot be feigned. It passes even between strangers like a shared secret, a sign of deep human recognition. Lo, I tell you a mystery.