

## The Power of the Eyes

The following text is taken from the 1561 translation by Thomas Hoby. I have modernized the spelling, and changed a few colloquial words here and there. Poetic metaphors have been printed in bold type.

1 The Lord Julian said: “You are much deceived. For I would not counsel the Courtier at any time to use this way, except he were sure not to have a repulse.”

2 “What should he then do?” quoth the Lord Gaspar.

3 The Lord Julian answered: “In case you will needs write or speak to her, do it with such sober mood, and so warily, that the words may first attempt the mind. And so [they may] doubtfully touch her intent and will...

4 Therefore, in my mind, the way which the Courtier ought to take to make his love known to the woman, methinks, should be to declare them in signs and tokens, more than in words.

5 For assuredly there is otherwhile a greater affection of love perceived in a sigh, in a respect, in a fear, than in a thousand words.

6 Afterwards, to make the eyes the trusty **messengers**, that may carry the **embassies** of the heart.

7 Because they often times declare with more force what passion there is inwardly, then can the tongue, or letters, or messages.

8 So that they not only disclose the thoughts, but also many times **kindle** love in the **heart** of the person beloved.

9 For those lively **spirits** that **issue out** at the eyes, because they are **engendered** near the heart, **entering** in like case into the eyes that they are leveled at, like a **shaft** to the **prick**, naturally **pierce** to the heart, as to their **resting place**, and there are at trust with those other spirits.

10 And with the most subtle and fine nature of blood which they carry with them, [imbue] the blood about the heart where they are come to, and warm it.

11 And make it like unto themselves, and apt to receive the **imprinting** of the **image** which they have carried away with them.

12 Wherefore by little and little coming and going the **way** through the eyes to the heart, and bringing back with them the **tinder** and **striking iron** of beauty and grace,

13 these messengers kindle with the **puffing** of desire the **fire** that so burns, and never ceases **consuming**. For always they bring some matter of hope to **nourish** it.

14 Therefore it may full well be said, that the eyes are a **guide** in love. Especially if they have a good grace and sweetnesse in them, black, of a clear and sightly blackness, or else gray, merry and laughing. And so comely and **piercing** in beholding, as

15 some, in which a man thinks verily that the ways that give an issue to the spirits are so deep, that by them he may see as far as the heart.

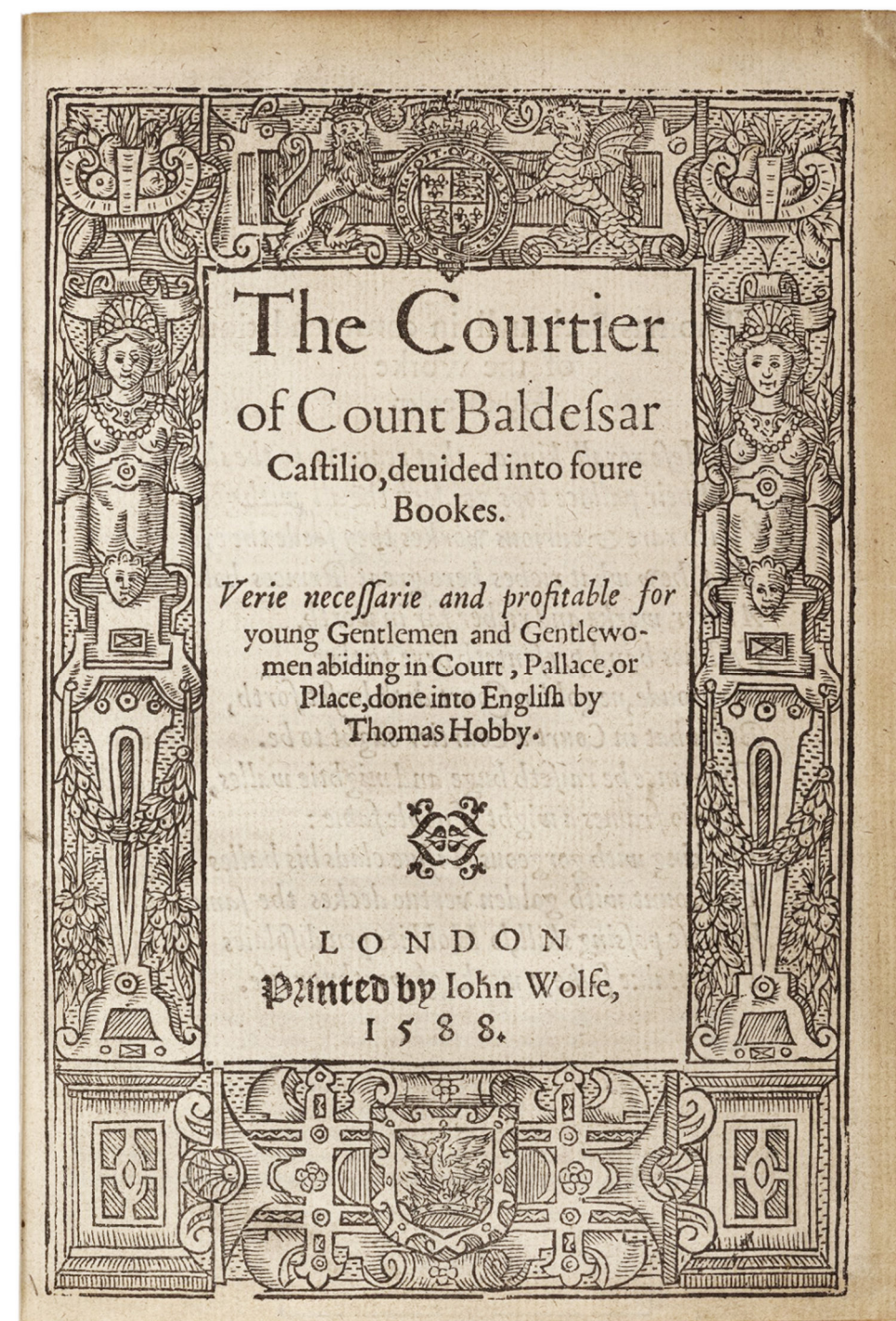
16 The eyes therefore lie lurking like **soldiers** in **war**, lying in wait in **ambush**. And if the form of all the body be well-favored and of good proportion, it draws unto it and allures whoso beholds it far off, until he comes near.

17 And as soon as he is at hand, the eyes **shoot** and, like **sorcerers**, **bewitch**.

18 And especially when by a **straight line** they **send** their glistering **beams** into the eyes of the wight beloved at the time, when they do the like, because the spirits **meet together**.



Giuliano de' Medici  
(1479–1516)



English translation of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il cortegiano*, by Thomas Hoby. The translation had first appeared in 1561, three years before Shakespeare's birth. This is the 1588 edition. Nowadays English translations are usually titled *The Book of the Courtier*.

Edited selections from Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short, for Henry Cripps, 1621), p. 558–561.

Edited for readability. Key terms printed in bold type.

- 1 [558] There is not one of a thousand falls in loue but their is some one part or other, which pleaseth him most, and **enflames** him about the rest. All parts are attractiue, but especially **the eyes**.
- 2 [560] Philostratus Lemnius cries out of his mistris' eies, they had so **enflamed** his **soule**, that no water could quench it: *What a tyranny*, saith he, *what a **penetration of bodies** is this, thou **drawest me with violence**, and **swallowest me vp**.*
- 3 The strongest **beames** of beauty are still **darted** from thy eies, and as men catch dotrells, by putting out a legge or an arme, by those **mutuall glances** of the eyes they first **inveagle one another**. Of all eies, by the way, **black** are the most amiable, entising, and the fairest.
- 4 Now last of all, I will shew you by what meanes beauty doth **fascinate, bewitch**, as some hold, and **worke vpon the soule** of a man **by the eie**. For certainly I am of the poets minde, Loue doth bewitch vs, and strangely change us. [561] Heliodorus proues it at large that Loue is witchcraft: *it **gets in at our eyes, pores, nostrels, and ingenders the same qualities, and affections in vs, as were in the party whence it came**.*
- 5 The manner of the fascination, as Ficinus declares it, is thus. *Mortall men are then especially **bewitched**, when as by often **gazing one on the other, they direct sight to sight, and ioyne eye to eye**, and so drinke and sucke in loue betweene them, for **the beginning of this disease is the eye**. And therefore he that hath a cleere eye, though he be otherwise deformed, by often looking vpon him will make one mad, and tye him fast to him by the eyes.*
- 6 Leonardus telleth vs that by this enteruew, *the purer **spirits are infected**, the **one eye pearceth** through the other **with his rayes, which he sends forth**: and many men are of such excellent **piercing eyes**, that their brightnesse is such they compell their spectators to looke off, and they can no more endure them, then the Sunne beames.*
- 7 The **rayes**, as some think, sent from the eyes, **carry certaine spirituall vapors with them**, and so infect the other party. I knowe they that hold [the theory of intromission] will make a doubt of this, but Ficinus proues it from bleare eyes:

### Assignment 1

Group the metaphors, as much as possible, into to the realms of experience, reality, or thought, from which they are taken. Note that some metaphors occur only once.

### Assignment 2

Compare the texts by Castiglione and Burton (dating from 1527 and 1621, respectively), and assess the extent of their agreement, with regard to both thought and metaphorical usage,

### Assignment 3

Lord Julian describes the power of the eyes very much in terms of what goes on inside the body. Sketch, in the outlines given below, how a glance of the eyes causes someone else to fall in love, where the glance is made, where it arrives, and so on.

### Relevant passages of interest in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*:

|   |                               |  |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Act I, sc. 1<br>lines 3–6     | <i>Val. to Proteus.</i> Were 't not affection <b>chains thy tender days<br/>To the sweet glances of thy honored love,</b>  |
| 2 | Act II, sc. 4<br>lines 87–89  | <i>Val. to Silvia.</i> This is the gentleman I told your Ladyship Had come along with me, but that his mistress <b>Did hold his eyes locked in her crystal looks.</b>    |
| 3 | Act II, sc. 4<br>lines        | <i>Prot. alone.</i> <b>Is it mine eye</b> , or Valentine's praise,<br>Her true perfection, or my false transgression,<br><b>That makes me reasonless</b> to reason thus? |
| 4 | <i>ibid.</i><br>lines 107–108 | <i>Prot. to Silvia.</i> Not so, sweet lady, but too mean a servant<br>To have <b>a look</b> of such a worthy mistress.   |
| 5 | Act V,<br>lines 23–25         | <i>Prot. to Silvia.</i> <b>Vouchsafe me for my meed but one fair look;</b><br>A smaller boon than this I cannot beg,<br>And less than this I am sure you cannot give.    |
| 6 | Act V,<br>lines 41–42         | <i>Prot. to Silvia.</i> What dangerous action, stood it next to death,<br><b>Would I not undergo for one calm look!</b>  |
| 7 | Act II, sc. 7<br>line 15      | <i>Julia to Lucetta.</i> <b>O, know'st thou not his looks are my soul's food?</b>  |
| 8 | Act III, sc. 1<br>lines       | <i>Duke to Val.</i> Besides, the fashion of the time is changed—<br>How and which way I may bestow myself<br><b>To be regarded in her sun-bright eye.</b>                |
| 9 | Act IV, sc. 2<br>lines 48–50  | <i>Val. or Thu. or Musician.</i> <b>Love doth to her eyes repair</b><br>To help him of his blindness;<br>And, being helped, inhabits there.                              |

