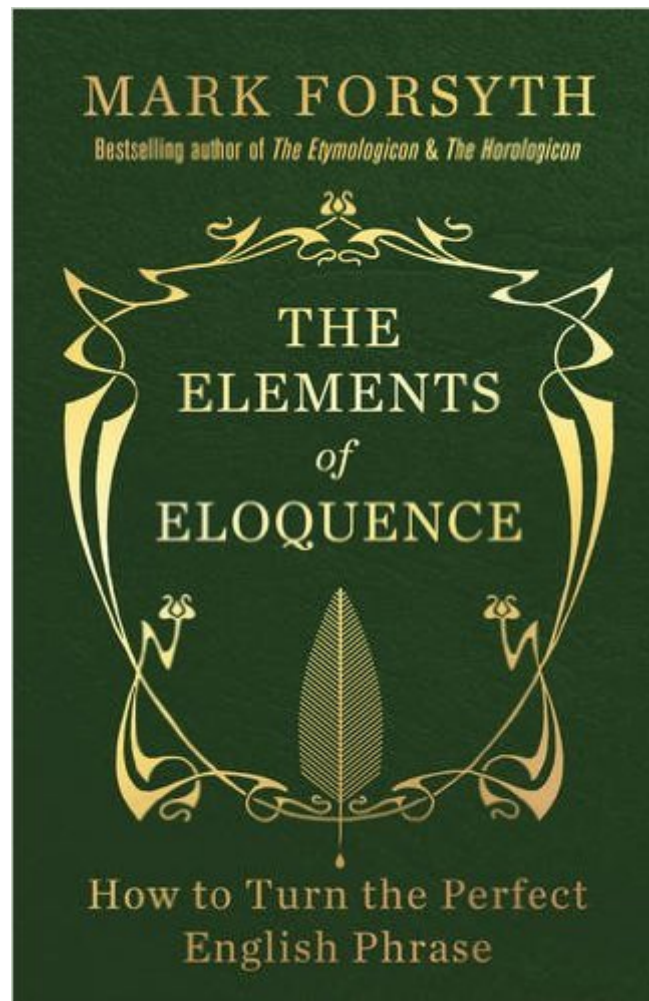


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The Elements Of Eloquence: How To Turn The Perfect English Phrase



Synopsis

In an age unhealthily obsessed with substance, this is a book on the importance of pure style, from the bestselling author of *The Etymologicon* and *The Horologicon*. From classic poetry to pop lyrics and from the King James Bible to advertising slogans, Mark Forsyth explains the secrets that make a phrase - such as 'Tiger, Tiger, burning bright', or 'To be or not to be' - memorable. In his inimitably entertaining and witty style he takes apart famous lines and shows how you too can write like Shakespeare or Oscar Wilde. Whether you're aiming for literary immortality or just an unforgettable one-liner, *The Elements of Eloquence* proves that you don't need to have anything to say - you simply need to say it well. 'An informative but highly entertaining journey through the figures of rhetoric ...Mark Forsyth wears his considerable knowledge lightly. He also writes beautifully.' David Marsh, *Guardian*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

From: [...]In the reminiscences of Bertie Wooster we find this:As I sat in the bathtub, soaping a meditative foot and singing, if I remember correctly, â€˜Pale Hands I Loved Beside the Shalimarâ€™™, it would be deceiving my public to say that I was feeling booms-a-daisy.The sentence is quoted for its use of â€˜meditative footâ€™™, in the Winter 1973 issue of the learned journal *Linguistic Inquiry*, by Robert A. Hall in his â€˜Transferred Epithet in P. G. Wodehouseâ€™™, now as well-thumbed as any article can be that is perused principally online. Stephen Fry is always citing it. Mark Forsyth, however, quotes the sentence as an example of litotes â€” affirming something by denying its opposite. Orwell was wary of that figure of speech, advising writers tempted by it to think of the

sentence, "A not unblack dog was chasing a not unsmall rabbit across a not ungreen field." Economically, Forsyth also points out that in Bertie Wooster's remark "Pale Hands" is an example of synecdoche. To find three rhetorical figures of speech in one sentence by Wodehouse fits our knowledge of him as a rather artificial writer. Nowadays that sounds like a pejorative categorisation, but it was not always so. In the times of Sir Thomas Browne (whom Forsyth, somewhat hyperbolically, calls "the first English prose writer"), to be ingenious and artificial was the bee's knees for a writer. But for the past couple of centuries, the author explains, the intentional practice of rhetorical figures has been eschewed, partly because of the Romantic fallacy that "you could learn everything worth learning by gazing at a babbling mountain brook".

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