TUMKUR UNIVERSITY

BRITISH LITERATURE

III Sem Optional English

Paper III

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UNIT TWO ONLY

Prescribed Texts

for the III Sem Optional English Course, TUT.

Paper III

British Literature [From Chaucer Up to 1800]

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Poetry:

Prose:

(From the Canterbury Tales)

General Prologue

1. The Wife of Bath

A good WIFE was there of <u>besidè</u> Bath	*near*
But she was <u>somedeal</u> deaf, and that was scath.	*somewhat / a pity*
Her coverchiefs full finè were of ground;	*finely woven*
I durstè swear they weighèden ten pound	*dare*
That on a Sunday were upon her head.	
Her hosen weren of fine scarlet red	*stockings*
Full straight y-tied, and shoes full moist and new.	*supple*
Bold was her face and fair and red of hue.	*color*
She was a worthy woman all her life.	
Husbands at churchè door she had had five,	
Withouten other company in youth,	*Not counting*
But thereof needeth not to speak as nouth.	*Now*
And thrice had she been at Jerusalem.	*3 times*
She had passèd many a strangè stream.	*foreign*
At Romè she had been and at Boulogne,	
In Galicia at St James and at Cologne.	*[famous shrines]*
She couldè much of wandering by the way*.	*1knew much*
Gat-toothèd was she, soothly for to say.	*Gap-toothed / truly*
Upon an ambler easily she sat	*slow horse*

460: at churchè door: Weddings took place in the church porch, followed by Mass inside

* 467: Chaucer does not explain, and the reader is probably not expected to ask, how the Wife managed to marry five husbands and take in pilgrimage as almost another occupation. Going to Jerusalem from England three times was an extraordinary feat in the Middle Ages. This list is, like some others in the Prologue, a deliberate exaggeration, as is everything else about the Wife.

Y-wimpled well,* and on her head a hat
As broad as is a buckler or a targe, *kinds of shield*
A foot mantle about her hippes large, *outer skirt*
And on her feet a pair of spurs sharp.
In fellowship well could she laugh and carp. *joke*
Of remedies of love she knew perchance *by experience*
For she could of that art the oldè dance. ** *knew*

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* 470: A wimple was a woman's cloth headgear covering the ears, the neck and the chin.

* * 476 : She knew all about that

Notes:

In the Wife of Bath we have one of only three women on the pilgrimage. Unlike the other two she is not a nun, but a much-married woman, a widow yet again. Everything about her is exaggerated: she has been married five times, has been to Jerusalem three times, and her hat and hips are as large as her sexual appetite and her love of talk.

The Wife's narrative opens with a defense of her many marriages, all legal, as she points out, i.e. recognized by the Church even though some churchmen frowned on widows re-marrying. The Wife challenges anyone to show her where the Scripture sets a limit to the number of successive legal marriages a person can have in a lifetime. She claims that, because she has lots of experience of marriage, she is more of an authority on that subject than the celibate "authorities" who write about it. And she knows how to use "authorities" too, if it comes to it, as the many marginal references in our text show.

1-3: "Even if no `authorities' had written on the subject, my own experience is quite enough for me to speak with authority on the woes of marriage." By authorities she means the Bible, theologians and classical authors.

4. Lordings means something like "Ladies and gentlemen." Twelve was the legal cononical age for girls to marry. Marriages took place at the door of the church followed by mass inside.

9-13: Jerome, one of the more ascetic of the Church Fathers, suggested that because Jesus is recorded as having attended only one wedding, people should not marry more than once. The Wife scoffs at this peculiar thinking.

14-16: "Now listen also to what sharp words Jesus, who is God and man, spoke on one occasion (for the nonce) when he reproved the Samaritan woman at the well." In the Gospel of John (4:4-26) Jesus tells a Samaritan woman whom he meets as she is drawing water from a well, but whom he has not seen before, that she has had five husbands, and that the man she is now living with is not her husband. He does not say why her present partner is not her husband.

2. Sonnet 18:

William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Summary:
The speaker opens the poem with a question addressed to the beloved: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" The next eleven lines are devoted to such a comparison. In line 2, the speaker stipulates what mainly differentiates the young man from the summer's day: he is "more lovely and more temperate." Summer's days tend toward extremes: they are shaken by "rough winds"; in them, the sun ("the eye of heaven") often shines "too hot," or too dim. And summer is fleeting: its date is too short, and it leads to the withering of autumn, as "every fair from fair sometime declines." The final quatrain of the sonnet tells how the beloved differs from the summer in that respect: his beauty will last forever ("Thy eternal summer shall not fade...") and never die. In the couplet, the speaker explains how the beloved's beauty will accomplish this feat, and not perish because it is preserved in the poem, which will last forever; it will live "as long as men can breathe or eyes can see."

3. Sonnet 65

William Shakesspeare

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?

O fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

Note: Sonnet 65 Summary

Given that sad death is more powerful than even brass, stone, the earth, and the limitless ocean, how could beauty possibly stand a chance against time's rage, when beauty is as fragile as a flower? How can the sweet air of summer withstand the onslaught of the days leading to winter, which keep coming like a destructive army? How can beauty possibly survive, when time breaks down even solid rocks and strong steel gates? Oh, it's scary to think about this! Sigh, where will the thing that time prizes most of all hide? What has the strength to hold back time's quick forward march? Who can stop time from ruining beauty? Oh, no one and nothing can overcome time, unless the miracle of poetry is real—meaning that my love can survive in this poem itself, and continue to shine brightly in the black ink of these words.

Theme : The Immortalizing Power of Poetry

The speaker of "Sonnet 65" laments the fact that time changes all things. As time continues its merciless march forward, everything in the world dies, decays, or is lost. In the face of time's power, the speaker wonders how phenomena as delicate as beauty and love possibly might endure. The only thing that can hold back time, the speaker concludes, is poetry itself: even though the speaker will die one day, the words of the speaker's poetry, and the love those words express, will live on in "black ink."

The speaker acknowledges that even the strongest substances in the world are subject to the passage of time. Everything from “brass,” to “stone,” to “earth,” to the “sea” is eventually overcome by "sad mortality." In other words, everything breaks down sooner or later. Brass can get tarnished, stone becomes gravel or sand, dirt gets eroded, and the “boundless sea,” which appears limitless, has an end. Neither impenetrable rocks nor strong steel gates seem all that tough in the fight against time, which breaks through their defenses and "decays" them like everything else.

If time can destroy even “steel” and “stone,” the speaker reasons, then it follows that intangible things like love and beauty don’t have a chance of sticking around for long. Such things, in this speaker’s mind, are as delicate and fleeting as “summer’s honey breath” or a spring “flower”—and thus even more vulnerable to time’s cruel hand.

Yet the speaker also suggests that something can survive the passage of time: “this miracle”—the poem itself. If a poem has “might,” or lasting power, then it can travel into the future to be read by generations of readers. And if that’s true, perhaps love can also survive, since poetry can express and contain love. In other words, poetry is essentially immortal, and the love and beauty that such poetry contains will still “shine bright” in the “black ink” of the poem for years to come.

4. Paradise Lost (Book 1)

John Milton

OF Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of *Eden*, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of *Oreb*, or of *Sinai*, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of *Chaos*: or if *Sion* Hill
Delight thee more, and *Siloa's* brook that flow'd
Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' *Aonian* Mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.

And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumin, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justifie the wayes of God to men.

Summary: The Prologue and Invocation

Milton opens *Paradise Lost* by formally declaring his poem's subject: humankind's first act of disobedience toward God, and the consequences that followed from it. The act is Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, as told in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In the first line, Milton refers to the outcome of Adam and Eve's sin as the "fruit" of the forbidden tree, punning on the actual apple and the figurative fruits of their actions. Milton asserts that this original sin brought death to human beings for the first time, causing us to lose our home in paradise until Jesus comes to restore humankind to its former position of purity.

Milton's speaker invokes the muse, a mystical source of poetic inspiration, to sing about these subjects through him, but he makes it clear that he refers to a different muse from the muses who traditionally inspired classical poets by specifying that his muse inspired Moses to receive the Ten Commandments and write Genesis. Milton's muse is the Holy Spirit, which inspired the Christian Bible, not one of the nine classical muses who reside on Mount Helicon—the "Aonian mount" of I.15. He says that his poem, like his muse, will fly above those of the Classical poets and accomplish things never attempted before, because his source of inspiration is greater than theirs. Then he invokes the Holy Spirit, asking it to fill him with knowledge of the beginning of the world, because the Holy Spirit was the active force in creating the universe.

Milton's speaker announces that he wants to be inspired with this sacred knowledge because he wants to show his fellow man that the fall of humankind into sin and death was part of God's greater plan, and that God's plan is justified.

Analysis

The beginning of *Paradise Lost* is similar in gravity and seriousness to the book from which Milton takes much of his story: the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. The Bible begins with the story of the world's creation, and Milton's epic begins in a similar vein, alluding to the creation of the world by the Holy Spirit. The first two sentences, or twenty-six lines, of *Paradise Lost* are extremely compressed, containing a great deal of information about Milton's reasons for writing his epic, his subject matter, and his attitudes toward his subject. In these two sentences, Milton invokes his muse, which is actually the Holy Spirit rather than one of the nine muses.

By invoking a muse, but differentiating it from traditional muses, Milton manages to tell us quite a lot about how he sees his project. In the first place, an invocation of the muse at the beginning of an epic is conventional, so Milton is acknowledging his awareness of Homer, Virgil, and later poets, and signaling that he has mastered their format and wants to be part of their tradition. But by identifying his muse as the divine spirit that inspired the Bible and created the world, he shows that his ambitions go far beyond joining the club of Homer and Virgil. Milton's epic will surpass theirs, drawing on a more fundamental source of truth and dealing with matters of more fundamental importance to human beings. At the same time, however, Milton's invocation is extremely humble, expressing his utter dependence on God's grace in speaking through him. Milton thus begins his poem with a mixture of towering ambition and humble self-effacement, simultaneously tipping his hat to his poetic forebears and promising to soar above them for God's glorification.

Milton's approach to the invocation of the muse, in which he takes a classical literary convention and reinvents it from a Christian perspective, sets the pattern for all of *Paradise Lost*. For example, when he catalogs the prominent devils in Hell and explains the various names they are known by and which cults worshipped them, he makes devils of many gods whom the Greeks, Ammonites, and other ancient peoples worshipped. In other words, the great gods of the classical world have become—according to Milton—fallen angels. His poem purports to tell of these gods' original natures, before they infected humankind in the form of false gods. Through such comparisons with the classical epic poems, Milton is quick to demonstrate that the scope of his epic poem is much greater than those of the classical poets, and that his worldview and inspiration is more fundamentally true and all-encompassing than theirs.

The setting, or world, of Milton's epic is large enough to include those smaller, classical worlds. Milton also displays his world's superiority while reducing those classical epics to the level of old, nearly forgotten stories. For example, the nine muses of classical epics still

exist on Mount Helicon in the world of *Paradise Lost*, but Milton's muse haunts other areas and has the ability to fly above those other, less-powerful classical Muses. Thus Milton both makes himself the authority on antiquity and subordinates it to his Christian worldview.

The *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* are the great epic poems of Greek and Latin, respectively, and Milton emulates them because he intends *Paradise Lost* to be the first English epic. Milton wants to make glorious art out of the English language the way the other epics had done for their languages. Not only must a great epic be long and poetically well-constructed, its subject must be significant and original, its form strict and serious, and its aims noble and heroic. In Milton's view, the story he will tell is the most original story known to man, as it is the first story of the world and of the first human beings. Also, while Homer and Virgil only chronicled the journey of heroic men, like Achilles or Aeneas, Milton chronicles the tragic journey of *all* men—the result of humankind's disobedience. Milton goes so far as to say that he hopes to "justify," or explain, God's mysterious plan for humankind. Homer and Virgil describe great wars between men, but Milton tells the story of the most epic battle possible: the battle between God and Satan, good and evil.

5. The Sun Rising

John Donne

Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school boys and sour prentices,
Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long;
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both th' Indias of Spice and mine
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.

She's all states, and all princes, I,

Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus.
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.

Note: "The Sun Rising" is a poem written by the English poet John Donne. Donne wrote a wide range of social satire, sermons, holy sonnets, elegies, and love poems throughout his lifetime, and he is perhaps best known for the similarities between his erotic poetry and his religious poetry. Much of his work, including "The Sun Rising," was published after his death in the 1633 collection Songs and Sonnets. In "The Sun Rising," the speaker orders the sun to warm his bed so that he and his lover can stay there all day instead of getting up to go to work. The poem's playful use of language and extended metaphor exemplifies Donne's style across his work, erotic and religious alike.

"The Sun Rising" Summary

Hey sun, you old, disruptive busybody, why are you shining past the windows and closed curtains to pay an uninvited visit to me and my girlfriend? Do lovers really have to structure their schedules around your movements across the sky? You rude, inflexible, and insensitive jerk, go scold boys who are late to school and apprentices who are sulky about their early morning. Go tell the king's hunting party that the king is about to ride out on a hunt, and urge lowly farm workers to start their harvesting duties. Love, in all its forms, is above the influence of seasons and weather. It is also above the influence of hours, days, and months, which, unlike love, wear out like old rags as time passes.

Why should you think your beams are so worshipped and strong? I could block them out by closing my eyes, except that I wouldn't want to stop looking at my lover that long. Assuming that her eyes aren't so bright that they've blinded yours, go check, and tomorrow evening tell me whether both the East Indies and West Indies are where you left them, or whether they are right here next to me. Ask to see the kings you saw yesterday, and you will hear that they are all lying here in this bed.

My lover is every country, and I am every prince. Nothing else exists. Princes only pretend to be us; compared to our love, all honor is a cheap copy, and all wealth is a futile attempt to attain riches. You, sun, should be half as glad as we are that the whole world fits here in the bedroom. Your old age demands that you take it easy. Because your job is to keep the world warm, you can do your job by keeping us warm. By shining here on us, you can shine everywhere; this bed is your center, and the bedroom walls are the outside boundaries of the solar system.

6. The Pulley

George Herbert

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
“Let us,” said he, “pour on him all we can.
Let the world’s riches, which dispersèd lie,
Contract into a span.”

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure.
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

“For if I should,” said he,
“Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;
So both should losers be.

“Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast.”

Note: "The Pulley" is English Metaphysical poet George Herbert's reflection on humanity's restlessness and God's loving wisdom. In this tender, witty poem, a speaker imagines God creating humankind and giving people every possible blessing but one: "rest." The longing for a kind of peace one can't find on earth, the poem suggests, is just another part of God's plan to draw humanity back into a divine embrace. This poem first appeared in the posthumous collection The Temple (1633).

The Pulley” Summary

When God created humanity, he happened to have a cup of blessings to hand, and said to himself: "Why don't I give humanity every gift I can think of? I'll gather up all the world's far-flung wealth and shrink it down into one little human lifetime."

First, he gave humanity strength, which made a path for the rest of the virtues. Then he poured out beauty; then, wisdom, noble morality, and delight. But when he'd almost finished emptying the blessings-cup, God held back, seeing that only peace was left in the bottom.

He said, "If I also gave this last precious gift to my creation, people would love the things I gave them and forget all about me; they'd be so peacefully contented with their lives on earth that they wouldn't think to love the God who created all this goodness. Both humanity and I would lose out on something if that happened!

"So let's do things this way: humanity can keep all the other gifts I've given them, but they'll also feel a constant, regretful, distracting longing. Humanity shall be greatly blessed, but also tired out by life's travails, and by a nagging desire to come home to me. That way, if pure moral goodness doesn't draw them back to me, then exhaustion will!"

“The Pulley” Themes

Theme Humanity's Restlessness and God's Goodness

Humanity's Restlessness and God's Goodness

Being a person, “The Pulley” suggests, means being “rich” in blessings but also full of “repining restlessness”—that is, a sorrowful, fidgety, distracted longing for a kind of peace and satisfaction that one simply can’t find on earth. The poem suggests that God gave people all sorts of precious gifts when creating human beings, but held back the final blessing of “rest.” That lack of “rest” means that earthly life is marked by an unquenchable dissatisfaction and longing. But this, the speaker argues, is all part of God’s benevolent plan: the “weariness” of such longings will eventually draw people back to “rest” in God’s embrace.

God bestows all kinds of wonderful gifts on “man,” the speaker observes, from “strength” to “beauty” to “pleasure.” Pouring out a bountiful “glass of blessings” on the work-in-progress that is humankind, God seems abundantly generous. But God also reserves one final blessing: “rest,” or peace.

If God were to give humanity this final crown “jewel,” the poem reflects, people would be too happy on earth, “and rest in Nature, not the God of Nature.” In other words, if people were too contented during their lifetimes, they wouldn’t long to be reunited with God, whose embrace offers a deep peace and fulfillment that’s beyond anything on earth. And if that were so, they’d “lose[]” out on a blissful reunion with their loving creator. Without this rest, on the other hand, they’ll delight in life, but still pine for the peace that only God can give.

A longing for a peace beyond what the earth can offer thus becomes a “pulley” that gradually winches humanity back toward God. This conceit presents restless longings (and perhaps even a longing for permanent relief from suffering), not as a flaw in an otherwise lovely existence, but as part of a wise and loving divine plan. By holding back “rest,” this poem suggests, God slowly draws humanity toward the peace of heaven.

6. To The Doubtful Reader

Aemilia Lanyer

> Gentle Reader, if thou desire to be resolued, why I
> giue this Title, Salue Deus Rex Judaeorum, know
> for certaine, that it was deliuered vnto me in sleepe
> many yeares before I had any intent to write in this
> maner, and was quite out of my memory vntill I had written
> the Passion of Christ, when immediately it came into my re-
> membrance, what I had dreamed long before; and thinking
> it a significant token, that I was appointed to performe that
> Worke, I gaue the very same words I receiued in sleepe as the
> fittest Title I could deuise for this Booke.

Note: The Poems of Summary

An introductory poem to one of her collections, this text is short and sweet. Lanyer relates how she had first thought of the title in a dream and only recently remember it. Seeing as her message is intertwined with love, in the Christian tradition, she addresses her reader as doubtful in order to make good upon her dream and perhaps reach somebody who otherwise wouldn't read the text.

To the Vertuous Reader

Lanyer makes clear that she is a woman writing in behalf of women. She appeals to her readers to allow sincerity to reflect more accurately their own value, rather than seeking to please men who have fickle taste. In direct opposition to the traditionally understood role of women in her society, Lanyer tells her readers that they are

valuable for who they are and capable of becoming warriors of faith, without ever appealing to a man to affirm or assist.

To the Queenes Most Excellent Majestie

In this poem Lanyer essentially expresses her appreciation and affection for the queen, whom she has never met. It's a fan letter. She praises the queen for her representation of the strong, capable, and wise capacity of women, being entrusted with such a high responsibility as the care and keeping of the entire nation. Lanyer asks that the queen may take notice of the fact that her subjects, like Lanyer, recognize her leadership and appreciate it.

The Description of Cooke-ham

This poem is dedicated to the place where Lanyer lived for many years. She is preparing to leave her home and thus bidding a tender farewell. To her, Cooke-ham represents a place of nurture and creativity. It was here she first pursued her writing. It was here, beneath her favorite tree, that she received her first kiss. It was here that she invested in the neighbors' gossip. After so many years, Lanyer attempts to place her memories in the past, where they belong, while simultaneously grafting her relationship to the place, Cooke-ham, into her permanent identity.

7. A Little learning is a dangerous thing

by **Alexander Pope**

A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.
Fired at first sight with what the Muse imparts,
In fearless youth we tempt the heights of Arts,
While from the bounded level of our mind
Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind;
But more advanced, behold with strange surprise
New distant scenes of endless science rise!
So pleased at first the towering Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
The eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last;
But, those attained, we tremble to survey
The growing labors of the lengthened way,
The increasing prospects tire our wandering eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence;
The sound must seem an Echo to the sense:
Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar:

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too labors, and the words move slow;
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er the unbending corn, and skims along the main.
Hear how Timotheus' varied lays surprise,
And bid alternate passions fall and rise!
While, at each change, the son of Libyan Jove
Now burns with glory, and then melts with love,
Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow,
Now sighs steal out, and tears begin to flow:
Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found,
And the world's victor stood subdued by Sound
The power of Music all our hearts allow,
And what Timotheus was, is DRYDEN now.

(From An Essay on Criticism)

Note: A little learning is a dangerous thing" Summary

It's dangerous to learn only a little bit about the arts (or any subject). If you don't study in depth, as though drinking deeply from the mythical fountain of knowledge, you won't really understand anything. Small sips from the fountain of knowledge go to our head, but drinking deeply returns us to thinking clearly. As adventurous young critics or artists, excited by our first inspiration from the Muse (goddess of the arts), we strive for the heights of achievement. From the limited vantage point of our own minds, we take a shortsighted view of the future and don't look back at the ground we've covered. Once our study is more advanced, we're surprised to see whole new areas of knowledge looming ahead of us! At first, we're happy to tackle these huge metaphorical mountains. We climb the valleys and seem to walk on air. We seem to have left the cold, harsh terrain behind already, and we assume that the first mists and slopes we make it past are also the last. But once we conquer them, we're shaken to see the increasing difficulty of the path stretching farther and farther ahead of us. The

widening landscape exhausts us and tempts us to quit. Hills give way to hills, and mountains pile on top of mountains!

Themes

Shallow Learning vs. Deep Understanding

Part of a longer poem on artistic and critical taste, "A little learning is a dangerous thing" contrasts the shallow arrogance of novice critics (or artists) with the informed humility of their more experienced counterparts. According to the poem's speaker, people who have learned only a "little" about the arts are dangerously prone to overconfidence, because they don't know how much they don't know. By contrast, people who have learned a lot are "sober[ed]" by how much they still have to learn. Extensive experience in the field is the only way to discover how vast and challenging the field is. Thus, the passage urges readers to study the arts in depth rather than superficially—and warns that serious study will humble rather than flatter them.

The speaker argues that it's "dangerous" to learn only a "little" about the arts because limited understanding breeds overconfidence and faulty judgment. The speaker warns that if readers don't "Drink deep" from "the Pierian spring"—the mythical fountain of the Muses, Greek goddesses of artistic inspiration—they won't really "taste" it at all. That is, if they content themselves with "shallow" knowledge of the arts, they'll be foolishly "intoxicate[d]" by false sophistication. Only by going deeper into the subject, as if "drinking" deeply from that intoxicating fountain, will they (paradoxically) gain a "sober[ing]" wisdom.

Switching metaphors, the speaker compares an education in the arts to mountain climbing, and young critics/artists to naive climbers who imagine they've conquered "the Alps" when the climb has barely begun. The speaker advises that, rather than assuming they know everything after learning a few things (taking just a few steps on that metaphorical climb), students of the arts should expect a long, humbling struggle.

When "fearless youth" believe they will conquer "the heights of Arts" almost immediately, the speaker warns that they're taking "Short views" (i.e., being shortsighted). As learners become more "advanced" in the field, "[n]ew, distant scenes of endless science"—of endless knowledge still to be gained—open up before them. Metaphorically, the more "mountains" we've "attained" in the arts, the more mountains appear on the horizon, daring us to conquer them.

The speaker warns that the "growing labours" of such an education can be daunting. The challenge "tires our wandering eyes," tempting people to quit and try something else. Yet while this passage doesn't actually urge students of the arts to give up, it doesn't exactly give them a pep talk, either. It's a "sober[ing]" reality check and a fair warning against premature arrogance, applicable well beyond the arts. If a novice doesn't learn their field "deep[ly]," the speaker suggests, they may as well have learned nothing at all. In fact, they've deceived themselves, and their faulty judgement may deceive others.

9. A Poison Tree

William Blake

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I waterd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

Note: A Poison Tree is a short and deceptively simple poem about repressing anger and the consequences of doing so. The speaker tells of how they fail to communicate their wrath to their foe and how this continues to grow until it develops into poisonous hatred.

The speaker describes how when they were angry with a friend, they talked to their friend about the issue which helped them to overcome their anger. However, the speaker was unable to do the same with an enemy and this leads to developing

resentment and an even stronger degree of hatred. An extended metaphor of a tree growing in the speaker's garden demonstrates how the anger continues to grow. In the lines 'And I water'd it in fears' and 'And I sunned it with smiles' the speaker actively cultivates the tree/anger.

Eventually the anger blossoms into a poisoned fruit, the enemy eats the fruit and dies and the speaker seems to be glad of this. However, there is also a sense that they see the destructiveness of what has occurred. As the first lines acknowledge, we can easily overcome our anger if we communicate it properly.

PROSE

10. Of Love

Francis Bacon

THE stage is more beholding to love, than the life of man. For as to the stage, love is ever matter of comedies, and now and then of tragedies; but in life it doth much mischief; sometimes like a siren, sometimes like a fury. You may observe, that amongst all the great and worthy persons (whereof the memory remaineth, either ancient or recent) there is not one, that hath been transported to the mad degree of love: which shows that great spirits, and great business, do keep out this weak passion. You must except, nevertheless, Marcus Antonius, the half partner of the empire of Rome, and Appius Claudius, the decemvir and lawgiver; whereof the former was indeed a voluptuous man, and inordinate; but the latter was an austere and wise man: and therefore it seems (though rarely) that love can find entrance, not only into an open heart, but also into a heart well fortified, if watch be not well kept. It is a poor saying of Epicurus, Satis magnum alter alteri theatrum sumus; as if man, made for the contemplation of heaven, and all noble objects, should do nothing but kneel before a little idol, and make himself a subject, though not of the mouth (as beasts are), yet of the eye; which was given him for higher purposes. It is a strange thing, to note the excess of this passion, and how it braves the nature, and value of things, by this; that the speaking in a perpetual hyperbole, is comely in nothing but in love. Neither is it merely in the phrase; for whereas it hath been well said, that the arch-flatterer, with whom all the petty flatterers have intelligence, is a man's self; certainly the lover is more. For there was never proud man thought so absurdly well of himself, as the lover doth of the person loved; and therefore it was well said, That it is impossible to love, and to be wise. Neither doth this weakness appear to others only, and not to the party loved; but to the loved most of all, except the love be reciproque. For it is a true rule, that love is ever rewarded, either with the reciproque, or with an inward and secret contempt. By how much the more, men ought to beware of this passion, which loseth not only other things, but itself! As for the other losses, the poet's relation doth well figure them: that he that preferred Helena, quitted the gifts of Juno and Pallas. For whosoever esteemeth too much of amorous affection, quitteth both riches and wisdom. This passion hath his floods, in very times of weakness; which are great prosperity, and great adversity; though this latter hath been less observed: both which times kindle love, and make it more fervent, and therefore show it to be the child of folly. They do best, who if they cannot but admit love, yet make it keep quarters; and sever it wholly from their serious affairs, and actions, of life; for if it check once with business, it troubleth men's fortunes, and maketh men, that they can no ways be true to their own ends. I know not how, but martial men are given to love: I think, it is but

as they are given to wine; for perils commonly ask to be paid in pleasures. There is in man's nature, a secret inclination and motion, towards love of others, which if it be not spent upon some one or a few, doth naturally spread itself towards many, and maketh men become humane and charitable; as it is seen sometime in friars. Nuptial love maketh mankind; friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth, and embaseth it.

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Note: Francis Bacon's essay, ***of Love*** is about the evils of depraving and unchecked love, the goodness of marital loove and the purity of universal love and the consequences of the three.

Reality of love

Bacon starts the essay by describing the form of love portrayed on the stage and in stories and plays. It is unrealistic as it is often filled with ecstasy and triumph. It is shown to be noble and in a lot of ways easy to understand.

But in real life, love is far more mischievous and difficult to understand. It demands sacrifices, compromises and offers a lot more sorrow and torment than shown on the stage. Life of love can have a catastrophic end.

The present age is full of examples of great men meeting tragic circumstances in their pursuit of love. History and the past are full of stories of men of great substance and stature being swept to their utter ruins by the storm of love.

They have been entranced by the madness of romance. On the flipside, there have been wise people who have refused to be conquered by the allurements of love and used their intellect and wits to remain to the snares and tricks of flirtation and temptation.

Let History be the Guide

Bacon gives some historical examples to stat his notion. He reminds us of Marcus Antonius who was a forthright and ambitious man and was given the reigns of a powerful empire like Rome.

Another man of the fabled triumvirate was Claudius who was also given the reign of one-third of Rome. While Antonius was impulsive and easily swayed by the desires of the heart, Claudius was wise, content and showed restraint.

Consequently, Antonius chased temptation and strayed into disrepute, Claudius gained praise for his unerring resolution, sagacity and influence.
Bacon then introduces the lessons of Greek philosopher Epicurus who was a proponent of exercising restraint and self-control. In his works, he extolled and encouraged a life of austerity and the dangers of pleasure seeking.

For him, great warriors enslaved to the wiles of their paramour and object of desires are an abomination. The sight of a strong man dancing to the whims of his beloved woman is an unfortunate reality.

In a sense, it is disregard and derogation of the great gifts and talents that those men would have otherwise used for great feats and achievements.

In Bacon's opinion, untrammelled and unrestrained love only brings discomfiture to men. Such impassioned desires for someone can only lead to emotional and reckless judgments and causes men to err terribly.

It devalues their standing and importance. People who are love-struck eulogize in exaggeration about the beauty and qualities of their beloved and such heady praise only cloud their sanity and rationality.

It reduces their ability to think clearly and often leads to the destruction of the inner balance or fortitude of men. Such undeserved and unwarranted praise is unbecoming of a man of substance and value and such man compromise their wisdom to earn the approval of their women.

Such hyperbole is an insult to their intelligence.

Courting Womanly Affections
Such men suffer from a weakness of character; such weak characters are easily discernible in society. Such contests of love and dotage only ever have two outcomes.

Firstly, in case the woman does not reciprocate the feelings, she labels the man as pathetic and spineless being and treats him with sheer contempt. Another outcome is that she reciprocates it and he becomes imprisoned by her beauty and affection.

Bacon warns the men who have such romantic ambitions to be aware of such consequences of amorous pursuits. It can lead to complete devastation and ruin.

He reminds them of the fateful demise of a man infatuated by a woman named Helena. In his mad pursuit for her affections, he sacrificed and lost the love of two other beautiful women, Juno and Pallas.

He goes on to admonish men who are chasing wild pleasures of the senses and womanly courtship. In their craving for carnal gratification, they end up sacrificing their wealth, health and sanity.

In moments of vulnerability when men pull their guards down, they are inundated by such passions and desires and it leads to further misery. In moments of adversity and drudgery, such desires are rare and infrequent.

In times of comfort and abundance and in times of sadness and distress, those men yearn for carnal and sensual pleasures. Both circumstances heighten the man's desire for amorous engagements.

It is compared to childish folly. Such follies if unchecked can turn into capitulation of health, riches, professional accomplishments etc. It can distract men from going after the truly great and noble endeavours in life.

Now, Bacon compares the weakness of men for women to that of wine. Be it brave warriors or might statesmen, all men are susceptible to the allure of a fine wine and beautiful woman.

To them, the perils and horrors of war and politics are offset through the pleasures in the company of attractive women.

Conclusion

According to Bacon, men are innately designed to satiate the need to love. They are born with the instincts to seek and spread the love. But if this love is extrapolated and spread universally instead of being reserved for one person (or a small group), it can be truly noble.

It can become a force for good. Such unfettered love for the whole humanity can lead to philanthropy and charitable endeavours. Love in marriages is the force for the creation of life, love in the form of friendships honours such life.

11. The Man in Black

Oliver Goldsmith

THOUGH fond of many acquaintances, I desire an intimacy only with a few. The man in black, whom I have often mentioned, is one whose friendship I could wish to acquire, because he possesses my esteem. His manners it is true, are tinctured with some strange inconsistencies, and he may be justly termed a humorist in a nation of humorists. Though he is generous even to profusion, he affects to be thought a prodigy of parsimony and prudence; though his conversation be replete with the most sordid and selfish maxims, his heart is dilated with the most unbounded love. I have known him profess himself a man-hater, while his cheek was glowing with compassion; and, while his looks were softened into pity, I have heard him use the language of the most unbounded ill-nature. Some affect humanity and tenderness, others boast of having such dispositions from nature; but he is the only man I ever knew who seemed ashamed of his natural benevolence. He takes as much pains to hide his feelings as any hypocrite would to conceal his indifference; but on every unguarded moment the mask drops off, and reveals him to the most superficial observer. 1

In one of our late excursions into the country, happening to discourse upon the provision that was made for the poor in England, he seemed amazed how any of his countrymen could be so foolishly weak as to relieve occasional objects of charity, when the laws had made such ample provision for their support. “In every parish-house,” says he, “the poor are supplied with food, clothes, fire, and a bed to lie on; they want no more, I desire no more myself; yet still they seem discontented. I am surprised at the inactivity of our magistrates in not taking up such vagrants, who are only a weight upon the industrious; I am surprised that the people are found to relieve them, when they must be at the same time sensible that it, in some measure, encourages idleness, extravagance, and imposture. Were I to advise any man for whom I had the least regard, I would caution him by all means not to be imposed upon by their false pretences; let me assure you, sir, they are impostors every one of them, and rather merit a prison than relief.” 2

He was proceeding in this strain, earnestly to dissuade me from an imprudence of which I am seldom guilty, when an old man, who still had about him the remnants of tattered finery, implored our compassion. He assured us that he was no common beggar, but forced into the shameful profession, to support a dying wife, and five hungry children. Being prepossessed against such falsehoods, his story had not the least influence upon me; but it was quite otherwise with the man in black; I could see

it visibly operate upon his countenance, and effectually interrupt his harangue. I could easily perceive that his heart burned to relieve the five starving children, but he seemed ashamed to discover his weakness to me. While he thus hesitated between compassion and pride, I pretended to look another way, and he seized this opportunity of giving the poor petitioner a piece of silver, bidding him at the same time, in order that I should hear, go work for his bread, and not tease passengers with such impertinent falsehoods for the future. 3

As he had fancied himself quite unperceived, he continued, as we proceeded, to rail against beggars with as much animosity as before; he threw in some episodes on his own amazing prudence and economy, with his profound skill in discovering impostors; he explained the manner in which he would deal with beggars were he a magistrate, hinted at enlarging some of the prisons for their reception, and told two stories of ladies that were robbed by beggar men. He was beginning a third to the same purpose when a sailor with a wooden leg once more crossed our walks, desiring our pity, and blessing our limbs. I was for going on without taking any notice, but my friend looking wishfully upon the poor petitioner, bid me stop, and he would shew me with how much ease he could at any time detect an impostor. He now therefore assumed a look of importance, and in an angry tone began to examine the sailor, demanding in what engagement he was thus disabled and rendered unfit for service. The sailor replied, in a tone as angrily as he, that he had been an officer on board a private ship of war, and that he had lost his leg abroad, in defence of those who did nothing at home. At this reply, all my friend's importance vanished in a moment; he had not a single question more to ask; he now only studied what method he should take to relieve him unobserved. He had, however, no easy part to act, as he was obliged to preserve the appearance of ill-nature before me, and yet relieve himself by relieving the sailor. Casting, therefore, a furious look upon some bundles of chips which the fellow carried in a string at his back, my friend demanded how he sold his matches; but, not waiting for a reply, desired in a surly tone to have a shilling's worth. The sailor seemed at first surprised at his demand, but soon recollected himself, and presenting his whole bundle, "Here, master," says he, "take all my cargo, and a blessing into the bargain." 4

It is impossible to describe with what an air of triumph my friend marched off with his new purchase; he assured me that he was firmly of opinion that those fellows must have stolen their goods who could thus afford to sell them for half value. He informed me of several different uses to which those chips might be applied; he expatiated largely upon the savings that would result from lighting candles with a match instead of thrusting them into the fire. He averred that he would as soon have parted with a tooth as his money to those vagabonds, unless for some valuable consideration. I

cannot tell how long this panegyric upon frugality and matches might have continued, had not his attention been called off by another object more distressful than either of the former. A woman in rags, with one child in her arms, and another on her back, was attempting to sing ballads, but with such a mournful voice, that it was difficult to determine whether she was singing or crying. A wretch, who in the deepest distress still aimed at good humour was an object my friend was by no means capable of withstanding: his vivacity and his discourse were instantly interrupted; upon this occasion, his very dissimulation had forsaken him. Even in my presence he immediately applied his hands to his pockets, in order to relieve her; but guess his confusion when he found he had already given away all the money he carried about him to former objects. The misery painted in the woman's visage was not half so strongly expressed as the agony in his. He continued to search for some time, but to no purpose, till at length recollecting himself, with a face of ineffable good nature, as he had no money, he put into her hands his shilling's worth of matches.

(From The Citizen of the World)

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Note: In the essay, The Man in Black, the writer presents a true picture of the society of his age. His society was the victim of many shortcomings. It was broken economically and morally. Due to the worst economic state, the common people were reduced to the state of beggary. The writer believed in indirect reform, so he, in the essay, introduces the character of the man in black. He presents him as his best friend.

Summary of the Essay:

Although the writer was great fond of making friends and developing intimacy, yet he had intimacy with a few persons. He was extremely happy to be the friend of the Man in Black. The man in black always found a special place in the heart of the writer. The nature of the man in black was abnormal. He had some strange qualities. He was a humorist. In spite of being a generous and kind - hearted, he tried his best to conceal his noble qualities. He felt ashamed in revealing his noble qualities. Outwardly he looked stern and a wonderful example of stinginess and wisdom, but within his heart, a stream of humanity flowed. His heart was filled with boundless love but his conversation expressed mean merciless thoughts. Some pretend to show that they are great embodiment of humanity and they also present themselves as the great well - wishers of human beings. They show their false generosity. There are also many others who boast of their noble virtues and whenever they get opportunity, they expose themselves publicly. But the man in black was the only man that felt great

ashamed to have natural benevolence. He took as much pains to hide his feelings as any hypocrite would do to conceal his callousness. But his feelings of kindness and generosity were so dominant and expressive that they could not be easily concealed. Whenever he was not on guard, his real feelings were exposed and even an ordinary observer could notice his real feelings. During this visit, the writer and the man in black began to talk about the provision that was made for the poor in England. The man in black seemed surprised how people had become so foolish as to help the beggars, while the p government had made sufficient arrangements for the poor. He told the writer that in every parish house, the poor were supplied bed, fire, clothes and food free of cost. In the opinion of the man in black, it was sufficient to fulfil their needs. If he were at their place, he would desire no more. He was greatly surprised at their discontentment. He condemned the judicial system which was extently responsible in increasing the number of the vagrants and these vagrants were the burden upon the hard working people. He also condemned those who were encouraging idleness, extravagance and imposture. They deserved a prison in place of help.

When the man in black was discouraging the writer from helping the beggars, just then an old man who was wearing rags of fine clothes, appeared before them and requested to have pity on him. He convinced them that he was not an ordinary beggar, but he was forced into beggary because of his dying wife and five hungry children. His story could not make any influence upon the heart of the writer, but the man in black was moved with pity. The false story of that old man created a sort of commotion in the heart of the man in black. The expression of mercy was clearly visible at his face. He wanted to relieve his five starving children, but he did not want to do so in the presence of his friend. Just for a moment, the narrator pretended to look another way, the man in black gave a silver coin into the beggar's hand secretly and warned him to work hard for his family in place of making trouble for passengers. The man in black was under this impression that nobody had seen him helping the old man. They moved forward and the man in black continued to utter reproaches against the beggars and vagabonds. He told the writer that he had great practical wisdom and he was able to find out if the beggar was real or cheating. He told about women robbed by beggars. He had hardly finished his speech against the cheating beggars when a sailor with a wooden leg appeared before them. He also desired for their pity. The writer, without taking any notice at him advanced. But the man in black stopped there. He called the writer and told him that he would show him (the writer) how he could detect an impostor at any time.

The man in black assumed a serious look and in a stern voice he asked the sailor how he became disabled for the service. The sailor replied in the same tone that he was an officer on a private ship of war. He had lost his leg in defending those who did nothing at home. He was full of bitterness because he received no pension or compensation for the loss of his limb. He was left to his fate to die or live on beggary. On hearing the pathetic story of the sailor, the importance of the man in black at once disappeared. Now, he had nothing to ask him more. He wanted to relieve him in any way and he began to think the method of helping him so that he might be unobserved. He threw his furious glance on the match boxes which the sailor carried in a string at his back. The man in black asked him the price and condition of selling the matches, but he did not wait sailor's reply and settled the bargain himself. The man in black offered the sailor only one shilling. The sailor accepted one shilling gladly and he was also happy with this deal because the man in black had purchased a cheap thing at higher cost. To prove the utility of his purchased matches, the man in black gave many arguments that the matches were very cheap. He gave a detailed account upon the savings from lighting the candles with a match instead of throwing them into fire. The man in black continued his speech on thrift and matches until his attention was attracted by a beggar woman whose condition was more pathetic than the former beggars. The woman in rags had a child in her lap and another on her back. Even in such a miserable condition, she was trying to entertain others by singing songs. Her voice was mournful, so it was difficult to determine whether she was singing or crying. Her appeal was so pathetic that the man in black was unable to resist her under any circumstance. His conversation was constantly interrupted by the frequent appeals of the woman for help with the result that his mask of stiffness dropped off and he was once again in his real self. Without caring the presence of the writer, he immediately applied his hands to his pockets in order to relieve her, but he had spent his whole money on the former two beggars. After being failure to find any shilling in his pockets, the man in black became more miserable than the woman herself. His pain and tension were clearly visible over his face. Seeing no way to help her, he gave those bundles of matches which he had bought from the sailor with a wooden leg.

Simplified Note:

The Man in Black

-Oliver Goldsmith

Introduction

Goldsmith was a famous English writer. He wrote a famous novel “The Vicar of Wakefield”, a drama “She Stoops to Conquer” and a prose collection of essays, “The Citizen of the World”. The present prose “The Man in Black” is taken from “The Citizen of the World”. This prose is full of humour and humanism, which is very fundamental for human life.

Man in Black

Goldsmith under the guise of Altangi, a Chinese philosopher, gives an interesting

description of an English man who is probably the man in black. It is an immortal creation of Goldsmith himself. He registers the need of humour and humanism in human life. The man in black has contrary qualities. He is a humanist in a nation of humorists. He always pretends to be a miser.

Through, he is extremely generous; he looks like a misanthrope. He tries to hide his good qualities but at all times his good qualities are revealed.

One day, Altangi and the man in black go for a walk. The Man in Black talks about the need to help the poor. Even the government gives enough support to the poor people, he wishes food, dress and shelter, to be given to them. At that time, an old beggar appears in front of them. He says his pathetic situation of begging for his dying wife and five hungry children. Altangi knows and pities on him but the man in black is moved. He wants to help him but he does not know how to help him in front of Altangi. On understanding him, Altangi pretends by looking another side. The man in black uses this opportunity and gives a silver coin to the old beggar secretly. However, he scolds him for telling false stories.

The man in Black thinks that Altangi did not notice his charity and starts to attack the beggars by his words. He also adds beggars should be put in prison. Then, he tells two stories of ladies robbed by beggars. When he starts the third story, a sailor with a wooden leg asks for help, the man in black asks him angrily that how he had lost his leg. The sailor replies that he lost his leg in defence. On hearing this, the man in black is really touched. He wants to help him. Instantly, he asks the matchbox of the sailor. The sailor asks him a Shilling for it. The man in black without hesitation gives it to him.

Then, he happens to see an old woman in rags. She has one child in her arm and another on her back. In the way, he sings a sad song. It seems very difficult to identify whether she is singing or crying. The man in black is moved by the poor state of the woman. At that incident, he puts his hands into his pocket to give money but finds it empty. He feels the great pain for not solving woman's problem.

Conclusion

Thus, the Man in Black seems black outside but white and noble inside. He is really a

generous man and extraordinary character.