

A VERY SMALL ANTHOLOGY

Throughout the first part of the course we will make repeated reference to the following poems, taken from a range of periods and genres. Get to know them well!

Of every kinnë tre

Of every kinnë tre,
Of every kinnë tre,
The hawthorn blowëth swetest,
Of every kinnë tre. 4

My lemman she shal be,
My lemman she shal be,
The fairest of every kinnë,
My lemman she shal be. 8

Translation:

*Of every kind of tree,
Of every kind of tree,
The hawthorn blows sweetest
Of every kind of tree.*

*My lover she shall be,
My lover she shall be,
The fairest of every kind
My lover she shall be.*

from *The Rawlinson Lyrics*, c.1340

The Flea

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
Thou know'st that this cannot be said 5
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare, 10
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, w' are met,
And cloistered in these living walls of jet. 15
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that, self-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence? 20
Wherein could this flea guilty be,
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;
'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be: 25
Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

John Donne, c.1600 [1633]

~ from **An Essay on Criticism**

True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance,
'Tis not enough no Harshness gives Offence,
The *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*: 4
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* shou'd like the *Torrent* roar. 8
When *Ajax* strives, some Rock's vast *Weight* to throw,
The Line too *labours*, and the Words move *slow*;
Not so, when swift *Camilla* scours the Plain,
Flies o'er th'*unbending Corn*, and skims along the *Main*. 12
Hear how *Timotheus'* vary'd Lays surprize,
And bid Alternate Passions fall and rise!

Alexander Pope (1717)

591 (465)

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air -
Between the Heaves of Storm -

The Eyes around - had wrung them dry - 5
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset - when the King
Be witnessed - in the Room -

I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away
What portion of me be 10
Assignable - and then it was
There interposed a Fly -

With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -
Between the light - and me -
And then the Windows failed - and then 15
I could not see to see -

Emily Dickinson, 1862 [1896]

This Is a Photograph of Me

It was taken some time ago.

At first it seems to be

a smeared

print: blurred lines and gray flecks

blended with the paper;

5

then, as you scan

it, you see in the left-hand corner

a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree

(balsam or spruce) emerging

and, to the right; halfway up

what ought to be a gentle

slope, a small frame house.

10

In the background there is a lake,

and beyond that, some low hills.

(The photograph was taken

the day after I drowned.

15

I am in the lake, in the center

of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where

precisely, or to say

how large or small I am:

20

the effect of water

on light is a distortion

but if you look long enough,

eventually

you will be able to see me.)

25

Margaret Atwood, 1966

This Be The Verse

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra, just for you. 4

But they were fucked up in their turn
By fools in old-style hats and coats,
Who half the time were sippy-stern
And half at one another's throats. 8

Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as early as you can,
And don't have any kids yourself. 12

Philip Larkin, 1971