

ALEXANDER POPE

From an Essay on Criticism (extract)

*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 labours of the lengthened way,
The increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!*

GEORGE CRABBE

Late Wisdom

*We've trod the maze of error round,
Long wandering in the winding glade;
And now the torch of truth is found,
It only shows us where we strayed:
By long experience taught, we know?
Can rightly judge of friends and foes;
Can all the worth of these allow,
And all the faults discern in those.
Now, 'tis our boast that we can quell
The wildest passions in their rage,
Can their destructive force repel,
And their impetuous wrath assuage.?
Ah, Virtue ! dost thou arm when now
This bold rebellious race are fled?
When all these tyrants rest, and thou
Art warring with the mighty dead?*

BERTOLT BRECHT
(translated by H.R. Hays)

The Book Burnings

*When the Regime ordered that books with dangerous teachings
Should be publicly burnt and everywhere
Oxen were forced to draw carts full of books
To the funeral pyre, an exiled poet,
One of the best, discovered with fury, when he studied the list
Of the burned, that his books
Had been forgotten. He rushed to his writing table
On wings of anger and wrote a letter to those in power,
Burn me, he wrote with hurrying pen, burn me!
Do not treat me in this fashion. Don't leave me out. Have I not
Always spoken the truth in my books? And now
You treat me like a liar! I order you:
Burn me!*

ALICE WALKER

Women

They were women then
My mama's generation
Husky of voice—stout of
Step
With fists as well as
Hands
How they battered down
Doors
And ironed
Starched white
Shirts
How they led
Armies
Headragged generals
Across mined
Fields
Booby-trapped
Ditches
To discover books
Desks
A place for us
How they knew what
we
Must know
Without knowing a page
Of it
Themselves.