

✓) 17.2.24

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English B. Ed. Part II (Hon)
Paper II

Q. Consider the justice of Dr. Johnson's criticism of Lycidas - 'Passions run not after remote allusions and obscure opinions'.

Ans Continued from earlier writing
date ~~20 Aug 2020~~ "

Nevertheless, it is true, in a limited sense, to say with Dr. Johnson that, 'where there is leisure for fiction, there is little passion'. But as it had been already pointed out, feeling in an elegy need not be one of the intense sorrow or agony or expression of personal grief. It ought to be enough if the elegy breathes the atmosphere or mood of melancholic reflectiveness or is full of recollection of

unforgettable past associations.

Besides as a work of art, the elegy has to be a work of imagination. Milton was almost bound by the conventions of pastoral poetry, fixed by some of its greatest practitioners, viz, Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus. But it is not Milton's adherence to that accounts for Dr. Johnson's charge of insincerity of feeling against the poets; it is the poets' introduction of classical imagery, St. Paul's denunciation of the laudian clergy; the digression on profusion of poetry, etc. In fulmination against the clergy may be allowed to have some distant connection.

with Edward King, the classical imagery is allowed not to intensify grief but to soften it. It is true to say with Dr. Jackson that when we gave vent to our grief through the medium of classical imagery, we do not feel the great intensity of our grief.

We may sum up the whole position in the words of Cottonill thus:

The ~~poor~~ pastoral elegy except in its most primitive form, contains elements of a incongruity and artificiality, and when used, as it is used by Milton in his Lycidas, the melody of oaten pipe and loud swept-string, of Olympian diet and Christian apostle, of mitre and sheep—

(4)

classmate

Date _____

Page _____

hook of eagle and dolphin, and so forth, is apt at times to verge towards that point where the Sublime is said to meet the ridiculous.

Even the wondrous
wonderous music of
Milton's language and
the rhythmic procession
of his thought, by which
the ear and the mind
are held in spell, do not
prevent me from feeling
that Lycidas is lacking
in that which makes a
person as it were a
living reality.

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