

MUSINGS

An Anthology of English Poems

**Edited by
Pulak Bhattacharyya**

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MUSINGS

I

[AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH POEMS]

Edited by:

PULAK BHATTACHARYYA

Book Land

Panbazar, Guwahati-1



MUSINGS -I : AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH POEMS

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TO
RIMPY AND EDDIE
-THE MISCHIEVIOUS DUO-
WHO ARE ADEPT IN BREAKING MUCH MORE
THAN JUST MY CONCENTRATION!

PREFACE

This anthology contains some of the best poems in English literature covering a huge span of nearly four centuries, from Shakespeare to contemporary poets like Seamus Heaney. Though the last few centuries have brought about unprecedented changes in the world as well as in life and living, a careful reading of these poems shall reveal that the preoccupation of men with life, love, hope and despair have remained more or less the same. One may find striking similarities in the concepts of love professed by Shakespeare in the 16th century and that by Browning almost three centuries later.

There is a saying that it is easier to read poetry than to enjoy it. This adage becomes more meaningful when we consider appreciating poetry written in a foreign language like English. To make the task less imposing, fairly exhaustive notes and annotations have been provided to all the poems in this anthology. The short analyses of the poems are intended to inculcate interest among the readers. Brief sketches on each poet have been included to signify the contributions of the individual poets to the assorted vista of English poetry. However, it should be borne in mind that true enjoyment of poetry comes when the readers apply a critical approach that stimulates fresh thinking rather than calmly accepting what is generally accepted to be factual.

Onward then to the first poem. Be prepared for a highly illuminating journey *on the viewless wings of poesy!*

Date: 05/10/2003

P.Bhattacharyya

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SONNET 116

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

About the Poet : William Shakespeare (1564-1616), English playwright and poet, is believed to have composed 154 sonnets. The majority of these sonnets, written in all probability between 1595 and 1599, are of the English (or Shakespearean) form, which consists of three quatrains and a couplet, with the rhyme scheme *abab cdcd efef gg*. Shakespeare's sonnets are considered one of the superlative achievements in this form in all of English literature.

Shakespeare's sonnets describe the devotion of a person, often identified as Shakespeare himself, to a young man (*who is referred to as W.H. in the first anthology compiled in 1609, by the printer Thomas Thorpe*) and to a mysterious and a faithless *Dark Lady* with whom the poet is infatuated. In several sonnets the poet accuses his patron of deserting him for a rival poet or charges him with stealing the poet's mistress, the *Dark Lady*. The ensuing triangular situation, resulting from the attraction of the poet's friend to the *Dark Lady*, is treated with passionate intensity and psychological insight. Although attempts have been made to identify *W. H* and the *Dark Lady*, the findings have been inconclusive. At best it is assumed that *W.H.* was probably William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke or Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton.

The sonnets can be grouped in a rough pattern, loosely linked by subject matter, stylistic device, or theme. The first 126 sonnets are addressed to the young friend. Shakespeare, in the first 17 sonnets, repeatedly urges the young man to marry and beget children, because youth does not last forever. Sonnets 127 to 152 are miscellaneous but are mostly addressed

to the Dark Lady, who has already appeared in some of the earlier sonnets. In the words of G. Wilson Knight, "They (Shakespeare's sonnets) record considerable suffering, sometimes caused by the friend's apparent unkindness, and sometimes, towards the end, by the passing of the youth's adolescent charm. Part of the trouble comes through the interruption of a lady for whom the poet was simultaneously experiencing a powerful passion and with whom the young man also was involved, so arousing in the poet a kind of dual jealousy besides the torment of seeing his ideal desecrated by a woman of loose behaviour".

Sonnet : A sonnet is a poem of 14 lines with a definite rhyming scheme. The English or Shakespearean sonnet contains three quatrains (a quatrain contains 4 lines) followed by a couplet (two lines). The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet contains an octave (8 lines) and a sestet (6 lines).

About the Poem Sonnet 116 is about love in its most ideal form. The sonnet glorifies act of lovers who come to each other freely, and enter into a relationship based on trust and understanding. The first four lines reveal the poet's pleasure in love that is constant and strong, and will not "alter when it alteration finds". True love is an *ever-fix'd mark* that survives any crisis. Love's actual worth cannot be known — it remains a mystery. True love survives the destructive attacks of time and remains till the *edge of doom*, or death. In the final couplet, the poet declares that, if he is mistaken about the constant, unmovable nature of perfect love, then he must take back all his writings on love, truth, and faith. Moreover, if he has judged love inappropriately, no man has ever really loved, in the ideal sense that the poet professes.

SONNET 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove: 4
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken. 8
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom: 12
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Notes :

- Line 2 **impediments:** obstacles. T.G. Tucker explains that the first two lines are manifest allusion to the words of the Marriage Service: 'If any of you know cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony...'.
Line 4 **bends with the remover to remove:** true love does not change with the uncertainty and vacillation of the lovers' minds.
Line 5 **ever-fixed mark:** (true love is an) everlasting beacon that guides us through the adversities of life. **mark** = a beacon to warn mariners of dangerous rocks.
Line 6 **tempests:** storms; (here) tribulations of life.
Line 7 **star to every wandering bark :** True love is like the Pole Star that guides ships adrift in the sea. Like the Pole Star again, true love guides a lover out of life's adversities.

- Line 8 **Whose worth's unknown:** The real worth of a star is beyond the knowledge of humans. In the same way, the value of true love is immeasurable.
- Line 9 **Love's not Time's fool:** Time mocks all living things for their impermanence. But True Love can not be mocked because it is not under the purview of Time. True love is eternal.
- Line 10 **bending sickle's compass come:** Time's sickle reaps all forms of life at the destined hour. Nothing in this world (except true love) is permanent.
- Line 13 **If this be error and upon me proved:** If the poet's view about the permanence of true love should ever be proved wrong. [The poet seems to be confident that he can never be wrong in this aspect]

Text Questions :

1. Elaborate Shakespeare's view on the permanence of true love.
2. Discuss Shakespeare as a sonneteer with special reference to *Sonnet 116*.
3. What, according to Shakespeare, are the essential characteristics of true love? Explain with reference to Shakespeare's *Sonnet 116*.
4. How does Shakespeare characterise true love in *Sonnet 116*? Discuss the images used in the poem for that purpose.

Explain with reference to the context :

1. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove
2. Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come
3. If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

ODE ON SOLITUDE

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

About the Poet : Alexander Pope was born on the 21st of May 1688, in London. His father was a cloth merchant living in the City (a part of London). Both his parents were Catholic. Pope's early education was affected by his Catholicism. Initially Pope began his education at Twyford, but he was rusticated after he wrote "*a satire on some faults of his master*". Later, he went to study with Thomas Deane, a devout Catholic.

Pope suffered from a disease— apparently tuberculosis of the bone-- that became evident when he was about twelve. This caused a permanent deformity in him. Sir Joshua Reynolds described him as "*about four feet six high; very humpbacked and deformed*". A more recent biographer, Maynard Mack, has written that Pope was "*afflicted with constant headaches, sometimes so severe that he could barely see the paper he wrote upon, frequent violent pain at bone and muscle joints...shortness of breath, increasing inability to ride horseback or even walk for exercise....*"

Pope's literary career began in 1704, when the playwright William Wycherley, pleased by Pope's verse, introduced him into the circle of fashionable London wits and writers, who welcomed him as a prodigy. Public attention came with the publication of *Pastorals* in 1709. *The Rape of the Lock* helped secure Pope's reputation as a leading poet of the age.

Pope is a master satirist. He used the heroic couplet with exceptional brilliance, giving it a witty, occasionally biting quality. Each of his couplets had sting and venom in it. His success made it the dominant poetic form of his century, and his poetry was translated into many languages.

About the Poem Pope is believed to have composed this poem when he was barely twelve years old. This poem is very much different from the mock-epics and satires that formed the bulk of Pope's poetic creations.

Ode on Solitude is an intensely reflective poem. Here Pope speaks about true happiness that comes to a person leading a self-sufficient, peaceful, and contented life in idyllic settings. Such a person residing in a secluded place, far removed from the hustles of city life, can taste real happiness in reading, meditating and indulging in guiltless recreations. With no high ambitions and consequently no risks of failures, life turns out to be easy and pleasant and even death is a soft passage to oblivion.

This poem is a sharp contrast to the other 18th century poetic compositions that mainly centred on city life and coffee houses.

Ode : An Ode is a serious and dignified composition, lyrical in nature, and often in the form of an address, exalted in subject matter and elevated in tone and style. The poet is serious both *in the choice of his subject and the manner of its presentation.*

ODE ON SOLITUDE

Happy the man whose wish and care
 A few paternal acres bound,
 Content to breathe his native air,
 In his own ground. 4
 Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
 Whose flocks supply him with attire,
 Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
 In winter fire. 8
 Blest, who can unconcern'dly find
 Hours, days and years slide soft away,
 In health of body, peace of mind,
 Quiet by day, 12
 Sound sleep by night; study and ease,
 Together mixt; sweet recreation;

ODE ON SOLITUDE

And innocence, which most does please
 With meditation. 16
 Thus let me live, unseen, unknown,
 Thus unlamented let me die,
 Steal from the world, and not a stone
 Tell where I lie. 20

Notes :

- Line 2 **paternal acres**: land inherited from father; paternal property.
 Line 6 **flocks attire**: sheep to provide wool for garments.
 Line 10 **Hours.....slide soft away**: Time passes smoothly and peacefully.
 Line 14 **mixt**: mixed; combined.
 Line 19 **Steal from the world**: leave this world silently; die in peace.
 Line 19-20 **not a stone lie**: The speaker desires to be buried in an unmarked grave.

Text Questions :

1. Discuss the type of life professed by Pope in *Ode on Solitude*.
2. "Thus let me live, unseen, unknown,
 Thus unlamented let me die"
 a). Where does these lines occur?
 b). What sort of a death does the speaker hope for and why?
3. Examine *Ode on Solitude* as an appreciation of detachment from the 18th century craze for city life and coffee houses.

Explain with reference to the context :

1. Blest, who can unconcern'dly find
 Hours, days and years slide soft away,
 In health of body, peace of mind,
 Quiet by day,
 Sound sleep by night.
2. Thus let me live, unseen, unknown,
 Thus unlamented let me die,
 Steal from the world, and not a stone
 Tell where I lie.

THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

About Poet : William Wordsworth, English poet and the initiator of the Romantic Movement in English literature, was born on April 7, 1770, at Cockermouth, in the heart of the Lake District – a place that was later immortalized in his poetry. His first formal education was at Penrith, where one of his classmates was his future wife Mary Hutchinson. Wordsworth's childhood was pretty comfortable and pleasant, but he wrote very little poetry about his early childhood.

Wordsworth's greatest work, *Lyrical Ballads*, written in collaboration with Coleridge, was published on October 4, 1798. This work is believed to have launched the Romantic Movement in English poetry. Wordsworth wrote almost all the poems in the volume, including the memorable *Tintern Abbey*, while Coleridge contributed the famous *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. *Lyrical Ballads* tended to revolutionize English poetry by breaking the pattern of artificial situations of eighteenth-century poetry, which had been written primarily for the upper classes.

Like many other Romantic writers, Wordsworth saw in Nature an emblem of God or the Divine and his poetry often celebrates the beauty and spiritual values of the natural world. Rejecting the contemporary emphasis on form and an intellectual approach that drained poetic writing of strong emotion, Wordsworth drew on the scenes and events of everyday life and the speech of ordinary people as raw material of his poetry. Other English Romantic poets would follow Wordsworth's lead in taking apparently insignificant moments and, by observation and contemplation, raising them to illuminations of experience. Wordsworth defined poetry as the "*spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings*," and intense "*emotion recollected in tranquility*."

About the Poem : The World Is Too Much with Us, composed in the year 1807, is a sonnet in the Petrarchan style. Here, Wordsworth contrasts the overwhelming peace and sanctity of Nature with the world of materialism where people survive for selfish gains and lead monotonous lives, detached from the benevolent influence of Mother Nature. In this way, human beings are probably forfeiting the real pleasures and bliss of life by remaining insensitive to the richness of Nature. In a sense, we are more ignorant than the pagans of ancient times, who at least had created a colorful mythology out of their awe of Nature.

Sonnet : A sonnet is a poem of 14 lines with a definite rhyming scheme. The English or Shakespearean sonnet contains three quatrains (a quatrain contains 4 lines) followed by a couplet (two lines). The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet contains an octave (8 lines) and a sestet (6 lines). This particular sonnet follows the Italian pattern.

THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon! 4
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune; 8
It moves us not. —Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn; 12
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Notes :

- Line 2 **we layour powers:** We (the human beings), busy in the pursuit of materialistic prosperity, have lost the spiritual powers gifted to us by Nature.
- Line 4 **We have hearts away:** Human beings, by living in a materialistic world away from Nature's Blessings, have become very rational and insensitive to emotions.
- Line 4 **a sordid boon:** what seems like a boon is actually a curse.
- Line 10 **A Pagan....creed outworn:** Brought up in an outdated religion.
- Line 11 **lea:** meadow.
- Line 13 **Proteus:** Greek Sea-God capable of taking many shapes.
- Line 14 **Triton:** Another Sea-God, often depicted as trumpeting on a shell.

Questions:

1. Discuss Wordsworth as a poet of Nature with reference to his sonnet *The World is too Much with Us*.
2. Elaborate Wordsworth's criticism of life alienated from the benevolent influence of nature.
3. Would you consider Wordsworth's sonnet as a protest against the increasing materialism of life in the post industrial revolution era? Discuss.
4. "*The World is Too Much With Us* is a protest against the gross materialism of human society as seen by Wordsworth the poet of Nature." Discuss.

Explain with reference to the context:

1. I'd rather be A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn.
2. Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
3. The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune

STARS

EMILY BRONTË (1818-1848)

About the Poet : Emily (Jane) Brontë (1818-1848), considered by many as the greatest writer of the three Brontë sisters, was born in Thornton, Yorkshire, in the north of England. Emily attended the school at Cowan Bridge with Charlotte, and then was largely educated at home.

The Brontë sisters spent their childhood at Haworth, a poverty-stricken little town at the edge of a large tract of moorland, where their father served as a rector and chairman of the parish committee. The lonely purple moors became one of the most important shaping forces in the life of the Brontë sisters. After the death of their mother in 1821, the children spent most of their time in reading and composition. To escape their unhappy childhood, Anne, Emily, Charlotte Brontë and their brother Branwell created fictitious worlds - perhaps inspired by Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).

Unlike her sister Charlotte Brontë, Emily had no close friends. She spent most of her free time in reading and composition. She wrote a few letters and was interested in mysticism. Emily's transcendent masterpiece was her first novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847), a story of passionate love, in which irreconcilable principles of energy and calm are ultimately harmonized. Emily Brontë was a mystic, as her poetry shows, and *Wuthering Heights* dramatizes her intuitive apprehension of the nature of life. However, this novel did not gain immediate success as Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*. It was much later that it earned great recognition as one of the most intense novels written in the English language. In contrast to Charlotte and Anne, whose novels take the form of autobiographies written by authoritative and reliable narrators, Emily introduced in her writing, an unreliable narrator who frequently misinterprets the reactions and interactions

of the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights. Her poetry too reveals a conscious paganism and the revenge of pantheistic intuitions against the combined tyranny of society. Emily Brontë died prematurely of tuberculosis in the year 1848. *Only in the sad and rough, but pure and beautiful realms of nature, did she find true consolation* (Cazamian).

About the Poem : The poem *Stars* brilliantly portrays Emily Brontë's preoccupation with loneliness and darkness. Her introvert nature makes Emily despise *the hostile light* of the sun *that does not warm, but burn*. The poetess is frustrated by the undesired dawn of a new day when the bright rays of the sun force the beautiful stars of the night – which were *life* to her – to vanish. She feels happy and comfortable in the company of the stars and hopes to sleep through the *blinding reign* of the day and wake up only when the stars reappear in the night sky. The poem was probably prompted by the fact that Emily's bedroom faced east and would have greeted the morning sun.

STARS

Ah! Why, because the dazzling sun
 Restored our Earth to joy,
 Have you departed, every one,
 And left a desert sky? 4
 All through the night, your glorious eyes
 Were gazing down in mine,
 And with a full heart's thankful sighs,
 I blessed that watch divine. 8
 I was at peace, and drank your beams
 As they were life to me;
 And revelled in my changeful dreams,
 Like petrel on the sea. 12
 Thought followed thought, star followed star,
 Through boundless regions, on;
 While one sweet influence, near and far,

Thrilled through, and proved us one! 16
 Why did the morning dawn to break
 So great, so pure, a spell;
 And scorch with fire, the tranquil cheek,
 Where your cool radiance fell? 20
 Blood-red, he rose, and, arrow-straight,
 His fierce beams struck my brow;
 The soul of nature, sprang, elate,
 But mine sank sad and low! 24
 My lids closed down, yet through their veil,
 I saw him, blazing, still,
 And steep in gold the misty dale,
 And flash upon the hill. 28
 I turned me to the pillow, then,
 To call back night, and see
 Your worlds of solemn light, again,
 Throb with my heart, and me! 32
 It would not do – the pillow glowed,
 And glowed both roof and floor;
 And birds sang loudly in the wood,
 And fresh winds shook the door; 36
 The curtains waved, the wakened flies
 Were murmuring round my room,
 Imprisoned there, till I should rise,
 And give them leave to roam. 40
 Oh, stars, and dreams, and gentle night;
 Oh, night and stars return!
 And hide me from the hostile light,
 That does not warm, but burn; 44
 That drains the blood of suffering men;
 Drinks tears, instead of dew;
 Let me sleep through his blinding reign,
 And only wake with you! 48

Notes :

- Line 2 **Restored ...to joy:** The poetess admits that it is daylight that brings joy to the world. She however prefers the night with the stars *gazing* down upon her. Reveals the poet's introvert nature and her preoccupation with loneliness.
- Line 5 **glorious eyes:** the stars stare at the poetess with attractive eyes.
Note how the stars are personified.
- Line 12 **petrel:** a small sea bird.
- Line 16 **proved us one:** the poetess identifies the stars as a part of herself, probably as her friends or lovers.
- Line 21 **he rose:** the sun rose. The sun is personified.
- Line 27 **And steep in gold...misty dale:** The sun is personified as a cruel king, who, in all his splendour moves across the hills and valleys, to spread suffering among humanity.
- Line 29 **I turned of solemn light:** The poetess was dejected by the dawn of a new day and she yearned for darkness and the stars to return.
- Line 43 **hide mebut burn:** The poetess seeks refuge from the blinding light of day that causes discomfort to her. Her introvert nature makes her feel more comfortable in the *solemn light* of the stars at night.

Text Questions :

1. Discuss Stars as a faithful representation of Emily Brontë's introvert nature.
2. '...And hide me from the hostile light,
That does not warm, but burn'
What is the hostile light referred to here? Why does the speaker like the hostile light? Elaborate the id

embodied in these lines.

3. Discuss Emily Brontë's use of symbolism and imagery in Stars.
4. "The images in the poem Stars reflect the loneliness of a grief-stricken soul." Elucidate.

Explain with reference to the context :

1. All through the night, your glorious eyes
Were gazing down in mine,
And with a full heart's thankful sighs,
I blessed that watch divine.
2. Blood-red, he rose, and, arrow-straight,
His fierce beams struck my brow;
The soul of nature, sprang, elate,
But mine sank sad and low!
3. the wakened flies
Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise,
And give them leave to roam.

ODE TO PSYCHE

JOHN KEATS (1795-1821)

About the Poet : John Keats, English lyric poet and the archetypal Romantic poet, made his mark on English literature despite his early death from tuberculosis at the age of 25. While still in good health, Keats was intent upon doing the world some good, instead of focusing on his own sensitive soul. For Keats the real meaning of life lay in the apprehension of material beauty, and this is one of the most recurrent theme in his poetry, although his mature poems reveal his fascination with a world of death and decay as well.

Born in London as the son of a successful livery-stable manager, Keats was educated at the progressive Clarke's School in Enfield, where he began a translation of the *Aeneid*. In 1811 Keats was apprenticed to a surgeon-apothecary. While studying for the license, he completed his translation of *Aeneid*. Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* impressed him deeply and his first poem, written in 1814, was *Lines in Imitation of Spenser*. In London he met Leigh Hunt, the editor of *The Examiner*, who not only published in his magazine Keats' sonnet *O Solitude*, but also introduced him to other young Romantics, including Shelley.

Keats's first book, *Poems*, was published in 1817. Keats then started to use his letters as the vehicle of his thoughts. These letters, described by T.S. Eliot as "certainly the most notable and most important ever written by any English poet", contained personal comments as well accounts of events of Keats' life. *Endymion*, Keats's first long poem appeared, when he was 21. His greatest works, including *Lamia*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the great odes and two versions of *Hyperion*, were written in the late 1810s. In 1820 appeared the second volume of Keats' poems. It

earned great critical success. However, Keats at that time was suffering from tuberculosis.

In September 1820, Keats sailed to Italy to escape the harsh cold of the English winter. The last months of his life there were haunted by the prospect of death and the memory of Fanny Brawne, his sweetheart of long standing, whom he could not marry probably because of his poverty and his illness.

About the Poem : *Ode to Psyche* reveals Keats' longing for the natural piety of antiquity. Psyche, here, is the human soul personified and in Keats' vision, Psyche belongs to the pantheon of the Greek Gods and Goddesses. However, this ode is not intended to be the mere glorification of a myth, but a recognition of the poet's own *psyche* (soul). This Ode has also been regarded by some critics as Keats' humble offering of devotion to 'the soul of his soul', his beloved Fanny Brawne, who at best could be housed in a temple 'in some untrodden region' of the poet's mind.

Ode: An Ode is a serious and dignified composition, lyrical in nature, and often in the form of an address, exalted in subject matter and elevated in tone and style. The poet is serious both in the choice of his subject and the manner of its presentation.

ODE TO PSYCHE

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
Even into thine own soft-conched ear: 4
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise, 8
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side

MUSINGS

In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
 Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
 A brooklet, scarce espied: 12
 Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
 Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
 They lay calm-breathing, on the bedded grass;
 Their arms embraced, and their pinions too; 16
 Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
 As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
 And ready still past kisses to outnumber
 At tender eye-dawn of aureorean love: 20
 The winged boy I knew;
 But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
 His Psyche true!
 O latest born and loveliest vision far 24
 Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
 Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
 Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
 Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none, 28
 Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
 Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
 Upon the midnight hours;
 No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet 32
 From chain-swung censer teeming;
 No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
 Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.
 O brightest! though too late for antique vows, 36
 Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
 When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
 Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
 Yet even in these days so far retir'd 40
 From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
 Fluttering among the faint Olympians,

ODE TO PSYCHE

I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd.
 So let me be thy choir, and make a moan 44
 Upon the midnight hours;
 Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
 From swung censer teeming;
 Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat 48
 Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.
 Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane 50
 In some untrodden region of my mind,
 Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant
 pain,
 Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
 Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
 Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
 And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees, 56
 The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;
 And in the midst of this wide quietness
 A rosy sanctuary will I dress
 With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain, 60
 With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
 With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
 Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
 And there shall be for thee all soft delight 64
 That shadowy thought can win,
 A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
 To let the warm Love in!

Notes :

- Line 1 **Goddess:** Keats considers Psyche (Soul, human soul personified) as a Goddess although she was not one in Greek mythology.
 Line 2 **sweet enforcement:** pleasant compulsion.

- Line 9 **thy secrets:** Psyche's secrets. Here Keats refers to the allegorical episode of Cupid's love affairs with Psyche narrated in the *Golden Ass of Puleius*. Cupid, the God of love, falls in love with Psyche and visits her every night, but for bids her to attempt to see him. Unable to hold contain her curiosity, Psyche breaks the promise and Cupid leaves her forever.
- Line 16 **two fair creatures:** Psyche and Cupid (both are beautiful).
- Line 20 **aurorean love:** young love. Aurora is the Greek Goddess of the dawn.
- Line 21 **winged boy:** Cupid (the god of love).
- Line 25 **Olympus' faded hierarchy :** the Gods and the oddesses of Greek mythology who are now largely forgotten. It was believed that the Greek God and Goddesses resided atop the Mount Olympus.
- Line 26 **Phoebe:** the moon.
- Line 26 **sapphire-region'd star:** the star that shines in the blue sky. The morning star.
- Line 27 **Vesper:** Venus, the evening star.
- Line 30 **delicious moan:** sweet songs or prayers.
- Line 36 **antique vows:** ancient beliefs in Gods and Goddess
- Line 37 **fond believing lyre:** faith and affection for Apollo the God of the golden lyre.
- Line 41 **thy lucent fans:** your unblemished admirers.
- Line 50 **fane:** temple.
- Line 52 **Where pleasant pain:** new ideas produced by sweet and sad thoughts.
- Line 56 **zephyrs:** west winds.
- Line 57 **Dryads:** wood nymphs (fairies).
- Line 60 **With.....a working brain:** the imaginative mind of the poet shall create a strong frame work to support the sanctuary of Psyche.

- Line 61 **stars without a name:** the unidentified, nameless stars in the sky.
- Line 66 **torch:** brilliant light, fire.
- Line 67 **warm love:** passionate love.

Text Questions :

1. 'Keats was essentially a Greek among the English poets'. Discuss with reference to Keats' *Ode on Psyche*.
2. Write a note on the blending of the classical and the romantic in the poetry of John Keats.
3. Discuss the dominant theme of Keats' *Ode to Psyche*.

Explain with reference to the context :

1. I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass.
2. Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours.
3. Yet even in these days so far retir'd
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd.
4. Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with
pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind

A YEAR'S SPINNING

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING (1806-1861)

About the Poet : Elizabeth Barrett, an English poet, and the wife Robert Browning, was the most respected and successful woman poet of the Victorian period. Her best works are characterized by a romantic temperament, coupled with great feeling and vision. She was considered seriously for the laureateship in 1850 that eventually went to Tennyson.

Born in 1806 at Coxhoe Hall, Durham, and privately educated, Elizabeth Barrett's early poems revealed her fondness of all the savours of the didactic; and showed signs of a kind of belated pseudo-classicism, in which are mingled the influences of Pope and Byron. A spinal injury suffered in childhood and a serious lung ailment left her incapacitated for nearly a decade after 1838.

By the time Robert Browning started communicating with her in 1845, Elizabeth Barrett had evolved as a poet in her own rights. Soon a romance between them developed and this was immortalized in a play named *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, by Rudolf Besier. In spite of great parental opposition, Elizabeth married Robert and shifted to Florence, Italy.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's greatest work was her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850). These were a sequence of love sonnets addressed to her husband, which Elizabeth had composed in secret before her marriage. In her late years she developed an interest in spiritualism and in the Italian independence movement. She also

opposed slavery in her books *The Runway Slave at Pilgrim's Point* (1849) and in the political *Poems before Congress* (1860). Her most ambitious work, however, was *Aurora Leigh* (1857) - a novel in blank verse about a woman writer, her childhood and pursuit of a literary career. There is in it a feeling of the inner tragedies of the soul, rich and deep enough to give rise to genuine moral pathos and moving sublimity.

Elizabeth Browning died, romantically, in her husband's arms on June 29, 1861 in Florence. *Last Poems* (1862), published posthumously, contained some of her best-known lyrics. In the words of Cazamian, Barrett's poetry '*finds its purest effusion in those moments of surrender to emotion or unrestrained passion, when feeling at its strongest exclusively directs and creates the song of the soul*'.

About the poem : *A Year's Spinning* can be considered as an account of an era in the narrator's life who had given up duty for love only to have it come to an heartbreaking end. The spinning of the poem may be interpreted as the spinning of love's threads, or of the different aspects of one's life. The narrator, in all probability a woman on her deathbed, recounts her pathetic life as she was betrayed by her lover. This tragedy followed by the tragic death of her child, had driven the lady to utmost desperation and she might have committed suicide or simply died of grief - either way, her life ended with the child's death, for that is when the wheel stopped spinning. There is a whole life story here revolving around a spinning wheel, and masterfully told in this beautiful verse.

A YEAR'S SPINNING

He listened at the porch that day,
 To hear the wheel go on, and on;
 And then it stopped, ran back away,
 While through the door he brought the sun:
 But now my spinning is all done.
 He sat beside me, with an oath
 That love ne'er ended, once begun;
 I smiled—believing for us both,
 What was the truth for only one:
 And now my spinning is all done.
 My mother cursed me that I heard
 A young man's wooing as I spun:
 Thanks, cruel mother, for that word—
 For I have, since, a harder known!
 And now my spinning is all done.
 I thought—O God!—my first-born's cry
 Both voices to mine ear would drown:
 I listened in mine agony—
 It was the silence made me groan!
 And now my spinning is all done.
 Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
 (Who cursed me on her death-bed lone)
 And my dead baby's (God it save!)
 Who, not to bless me, would not moan.
 And now my spinning is all done.
 A stone upon my heart and head,
 But no name written on the stone!
 Sweet neighbours, whisper low instead,
 "This sinner was a loving one—
 And now her spinning is all done."
 And let the door ajar remain,

24

5

10

15

20

25

30

25

A YEAR'S SPINNING

In case he should pass by anon;
 And leave the wheel out very plain, —
 That HE, when passing in the sun,
 May see the spinning is all done.

35

Notes :

- Line 2 **the wheel go on, and on:** the spinning wheel was always on the move. Metaphorically, the spinning of the wheel suggests the passage of time.
- Line 5 **But now my spinning is all done:** The lady in the poem realises that life for her is over. She is on her deathbed. The rotation of the *Wheel of time* has come to an end.
- Line 8-9 **I smiledtruth for only one:** The lady had once believed in the words of her lover who had promised to be forever faithful in love. Unfortunately, it was only she who had remained faithful and steadfast in her love whereas her lover had betrayed her.
- Line 19 **It was the silence made me groan:** The lady's baby had died and its silence had shocked her to despair.
- Line 21 **'twixt:** between.
- Line 26-27 **A stone.... on the stone:** The lady wants to be laid in an unmarked, obscure grave without any inscription on her tombstone.

Text Questions :

1. Discuss Elizabeth Barrett Browning's use of metaphor in the poem *A Year's Spinning*.
2. Bring out the feminist element in Browning's *A Year's Spinning*.
3. Do you agree with the view that *A Year's Spinning* is a portrayal of the drudgery of life suffered by every woman in a society dominated by males? Give reasons for your answer.

MUSINGS

Explain with reference to the context :

1. He sat beside me, with an oath
That love ne'er ended, once begun;
I smiled—believing for us both,
What was the truth for only one.
2. Thanks, cruel mother, for that word—
For I have, since, a harder known!
3. O God!—my first-born's cry
Both voices to mine ear would drown:
I listened in mine agony—
It was the silence made me groan!
4. And leave the wheel out very plain, —
That HE, when passing in the sun,
May see the spinning is all done.
5. A Stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone!
Sweet neighbours, whisper low instead,
"This sinner was a loving one"

HARLEM

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)

About the Poet : Langston Hughes (1892-1967) was an African-American poet, novelist, and playwright, who became one of the foremost interpreters of racial relationships in the United States. Hughes depicted realistically the ordinary lives of black people. Many of his poems, written in rhythmical language, have been set to music. Hughes's poems were meant *'to be read aloud, crooned, shouted and sung'*.

Although Hughes wrote in many genres, he is best remembered for poetry, in which he disregarded classical forms and incorporated jazz and black folk rhythms. He was a prominent figure during the Harlem Renaissance and was referred to as the Poet Laureate of Harlem. Hughes' innovations in form and voice influenced many black writers. Beginning in the 1930s, Hughes was active in social and political causes, using his poetry as a vehicle for social protest. Hughes's inaccurate reputation for being a Communist arises from his poems composed during this period. However, more than communism, it was humanism that stands permeated his poetry. He portrayed people, whose lives were destroyed by racism and sexual conflicts. Hughes faithfully wrote about southern violence, Harlem street life, poverty, prejudice, hunger, and the hopelessness suffered by the blacks in a society that considered them mere outcasts. However, more than anything, he was a conscientious artist, who maintained a neutral stance recording the black American experience- contrasting the beauty of the soul with the oppressive circumstance. Hughes' poetry drew from traditional sources and individual voices; his experiments

in form reflect an attempt to capture the myriad colors known collectively as "black." His opus speaks not for Hughes the man, but for the race as a whole.

Hughes' creative outpouring was considerable. He wrote more than 50 books which included the poetry volumes *Weary Blues* (1926), *The Dream Keeper* (1932), *Shakespeare in Harlem* (1942), and *Fields of Wonder* (1947); the short-story collections *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), *Simple Speaks His Mind* (1950), *Simple Takes a Wife* (1953), and *Best of Simple* (1961); and the novels *Not Without Laughter* (1930) and *Tambourines to Glory* (1958). In addition, he also wrote books for children like *Black Misery* (1969) and *The Sweet and Sour Animal Book* (written 1936, published 1994) and the autobiographical books *The Big Sea* (1940) and *I Wonder as I Wander* (1957). In 1994, *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* was published.

Harlem Renaissance: In the nineteen twenties, the decade immediately following World War I, a Negro population newly transplanted from the pastoral and bloody South sank its roots into the promises offered by Northern Industrial cities. Harlem became the greatest Negro city in the world. Here "The New Negro" bore fruit in a "bumper crop of artists." This generation, known as "The Harlem Renaissance," was enlightened by education and nourished by folk sources such as black music and the black church. James Weldon Johnson was both the elder statesman and the Renaissance Man of the Harlem Renaissance.

Langston Hughes, often recognized as the unofficial Poet Laureate of the race, accepted as his vocation "to explain and illuminate the Negro condition in America." The Harlem Renaissance, like the Jazz Age — its close cousin on the far side of the racial divide — was eventually destroyed by the bitter realities of the Depression. Other major poets of the Harlem Renaissance include Sterling Brown, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Jean (Eugene) Toomer, Sterling Brown and Robert Hayden.

About the Poem : The poem *Harlem* (later titled *Dream Deferred*) considers the possible outcome of forceful constraints on the natural instincts and urges. The poem questions whether the forces of oppression can actually kill and destroy the hopes and dreams of the subjugated or does it merely ensure a stage of dormancy before the restrained forces ultimately burst out much to the chagrin of the oppressors? The poem speculates about the consequences of white society's withholding of equal opportunity, and concludes by suggesting that a *dream deferred* may explode.

Harlem

[Renamed as *Dream Deferred*]

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore— 4
and then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet? 8
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load
Or does it just explode?

Notes :

- Line 1 **dream deferred:** a dream postponed or de layed in its fulfillment. The dream here may be understood as the hope for freedom from the oppression of the whites in a society where the blacks are subjugated.
- Line 4 **fester:** aggravate; suppurate.
- Line 5 **run:** (here) discharge of pus.

- Line 7 **crust and sugar over:** to form crust like dried sweet syrup.
- Line 9 **sags:** sink or subside gradually under pressure.
- Line 10 **heavy load:** burden (apparently) the burden of oppression.

Text Questions :

1. Discuss Langston Hughes as a poet of the Harlem Renaissance with reference to *Harlem*.
2. Discuss the significance of Langston Hughes' imagery in the poem *Harlem*.
3. How does Langston Hughes, through *Harlem* represent the vision of a free society and a 'dream deferred'? Illustrate from the poem. 3

Explain with reference to the context :

1. Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
and then run?
2. Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?
3. Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load
Or does it just explode?

PUNISHMENT

SEAMUS HEANEY (1939-)

About the Poet : An Irish poet and the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995, Seamus (Justin) Heaney (1939-) wanted poetry to balance the "scales of reality towards some transcendent equilibrium." Heaney's poems reveal a unique amalgamation of personal memories with images of Irish heritage and the landscape of Northern Ireland. One also finds in his poetry significant references to English-Irish and Catholic-Protestant conflict. However, Heaney's view is much more visionary and allegorical than to be restricted to contemporary issues. In his Nobel lecture in 1995 Heaney defended poetry "as the ship and the anchor" of our spirit within an ocean of violent, divisive world politics.

Born near Castledawson, County Derry. Seamus Heaney was the eldest in a Catholic family of nine children. After graduating from Queen's University, Belfast, Heaney worked as a secondary school teacher for a year before returning to St. Josephs, where he was appointed a lecturer. In 1966 he became a lecturer at Queen University.

In 1972 Heaney resigned from his job at Queen's. He moved to County Wicklow, where he was a freelance writer for three years. He then taught at Carysfort College of Education until 1981. He served as a guest professor at various American universities before being appointed a visiting professor at Harvard. Between the years 1989 and 1994 he held Professorship of Poetry at Oxford. In 1997 he was appointed Ralph Waldo Emerson Poet in Residence at Harvard.

Heaney's first book, *Eleven Poems* was first published

in 1965. *Death of a Naturalist* earned him the coveted Eric Gregory Award. He was barely twenty-seven at that time. This brought Heaney international reputation as a poet. In 1969, Heaney was in Belfast at the outbreak of what has become known as 'The Troubles'. In 1968-69 arouse serious disturbances from Protestant political dominance and discrimination against the Roman Catholic minority in employment and housing. Catholic students arranged civil rights marches that were often violent. British troops were sent to restore peace. Heaney left Belfast at the peak of this conflict, but his works reflect his experiences of that time.

Heaney addressed the ongoing civil strife in Northern Ireland in his anthology *North* (1975). With this, he earned recognition as the finest Irish poet since W.B. Yeats. Heaney's works are rooted in Northern Irish rural life, and draw on myth and unique aspects of the Irish experience especially on the darker aspects of the social and political problems in Northern Ireland. The *Government of the Tongue* (1988) questions the role of poetry in modern society. The dominant symbol in Heaney's work is the bog, the wide unfenced county that reaches back millions of years. The bog is the starting point for the exploration of the past, and in several works Heaney has returned to the "bog people", bodies preserved in the soil of Denmark and Ireland.

Other major works of Heaney include *Station Island* (1984), *The Haw Lantern* (1987), and *Seeing Things* (1991). *The Haw Lantern* contains poems in memory of Heaney's mother, who died in 1984. *Electric Light* (2001) contains Heaney's childhood memories coupled with an overwhelming awareness of fleeting time and death. Heaney's work as translator includes *Sweeney Astray* (1983) and *The Cure at Troy* (1991). Heaney's modern English translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic

poem Beowulf reached best seller lists in the United States and the United Kingdom in the spring of 2000.

About the Poem : *Punishment* depicts a violent picture of a tribal revenge of adultery. It depicts a brutal scene where an adulteress is viciously punished for her crime by a tribal court. The poem has strong themes of sex, betrayal, nature and judicial violence running throughout. Heaney adopts a helpless, sympathetic stance from the outset: *I can feel the tug...at the nape of her neck*. Heaney forces us to ask what kind of people could strip a beautiful flaxen-haired girl, shave half her head, blindfold her, put a noose around her neck and drown her by tying rocks to her and throwing her into a bog for committing adultery?

The poet's powerlessness in the face of ancient, violent forces is palpable throughout the poem and though the poet would never have done these things himself, he probably would not have voiced his disagreement, for he, like all artists, is merely an "artful voyeur," and, as such, would have been a fellow conspirator in her death.

Punishment

I can feel the tug
of the halter at the nape
of her neck, the wind
on her naked front.
It blows her nipples
to amber beads,
it shakes the frail rigging
of her ribs.
I can see her drowned
body in the bog,
the weighing stone,
the floating rods and boughs.

4

8

12

Under which at first
 she was a barked sapling
 that is dug up 16
 oak-bone, brain-firkin:
 her shaved head
 like a stubble of black corn,
 her blindfold a soiled bandage, 20
 her noose a ring
 to store
 the memories of love.
 Little adulteress, 24
 before they punished you
 you were flaxen-haired,
 undernourished, and your
 tar-black face was beautiful. 28
 My poor scapegoat,
 I almost love you
 but would have cast, I know,
 the stones of silence. 32
 I am the artful voyeur
 of your brain's exposed
 and darkening combs,
 your muscles' webbing
 and all your numbered bones: 36
 I who have stood dumb
 when your betraying sisters,
 cauled in tar, 40
 wept by the railings,
 who would connive
 in civilised outrage
 yet understand the exact
 and tribal, intimate revenge. 44

Notes :

- Line 1-3 **I can feel...her neck:** Although the poet is simply an onlooker, he experiences oneness with the lady who has been punished for adultery. (*halter*: a rope with a noose, of the type used for hanging criminals)
- Line 6 **amber beads:** This implies a precious quality of the girl. Also amber has been known to preserve things within it, and this implies preservation and to an extent re-birth. Further, the punishment of the girl is not necessarily the end of adultery in the community.
- Line 10 **bog:** wet, spongy ground; marshy land. The *bog* is the dominant symbol in Heaney's work. The *bog* is the starting point for the exploration of the past, and in several works of Heaney we find reference to the *bog people*- bodies preserved in the soil of Denmark and Ireland.
- Line 16 **firkin** : a small cask / container for liquids.
- Line 28 **scapegoat** : In the biblical ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), a goat chosen by lot to be sent into the wilderness, after the chief priest had symbolically laid the sins of the people on it. The lady to face the punishment had actually paid for the sins committed by other members of her tribe as well.
- Line 32 **artful voyeur** : The poet at best could view the incident wistfully. At the same time there is an undercurrent of meaning that the poet was gaining some sexual stimulation at the sight of the girl's naked body. [Voyeur = a person who observes a particular situation without participation. A person who obtains sexual stimulation from the observation of the Sexual organs].

Text Questions :

1. Who is the "her" in the poem? How does Heaney depict her?
2. Why does Heaney call this poem "Punishment"? How does the idea of punishment inform the poem?
3. Examine Heaney's choice of diction. How and what does it contribute to the poem?

Explain with reference to the context :

1. It blows her nipples
to amber beads,
it shakes the frail rigging
of her ribs.
2. I can see her drowned
body in the bog,
the weighing stone,
the floating rods and boughs.
3. My poor scapegoat,
I almost love you
but would have cast, I know,
the stones of silence.
4. I am the artful voyeur
of your brain's exposed
and darkening combs,
your muscles' webbing
and all your numbered bones ,

PIANO**D.H. LAWRENCE (1885-1930)**

About the Poet : English novelist, storywriter, critic, poet and painter, D.H. Lawrence was one of the greatest figures in 20th-century English literature. His frank treatment of sex arose obscenity trials, which are still part of the relationship between literature and society. He saw sex and intuition as a key to undistorted perception of reality. In 1912 he wrote: "*What the blood feels, and believes, and says, is always true.*"

David Herbert Lawrence was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, in the family of a coalminer. Lawrence's childhood was dominated by poverty and friction between her parents. In a letter from 1910 to the poet Rachel Annand Taylor he later wrote: "*Their marriage life has been one carnal, bloody fight. I was born hating my father: as early as ever I can remember, I shivered with horror when he touched me. He was very bad before I was born.*" Encouraged by his mother, with whom he had a deep emotional bond and who figures as Mrs. Morel in his first masterpiece, Lawrence became interested in arts. Lawrence matriculated at 22 and briefly pursued a teaching career at Davidson Road School in Croydon in South London (1908-1911). His mother died in 1910 - he helped her die by giving her an overdose of sleeping medicine. This scene was re-created in his novel *Sons and Lovers*.

Although Lawrence is renowned as a novelist more than as a poet, it was as a poet that he first appeared in print in 1910 with contributions to magazines, and poetry continued to flow freely from his pen throughout his literary career. There is a strong autobiographical element in the intensely personal poems of his early collections. His passionate beliefs in the primitive and elemental impulses are the recurrent themes of his major poems.

His poetry collections include *Love Poems* (1913), *Amores* (1916), *Look! We Have Come Through!* (1917), *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), *Pansies* (1929) and *Complete Poems* (3 vols, 1957).

About the Poem :

While listening to the singing of a lady in the dusk with a piano accompaniment, the poet is reminded of his childhood when he used to sit with his mother at a piano, singing hymns at the cosy parlour of home in the wintry Sunday evenings. Although the poet has, with time, acquired an ear for crafty music, the sweet remembrances of the happy days of childhood spent in the loving company of his mother, moves him to tears as he desperately yearns for the days gone by.

Piano

SOFTLY, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
 Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
 A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the
 tingling strings
 And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother
 who smiles as she sings. 4
 In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
 Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
 To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
 And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our
 guide. 8
 So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
 With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
 Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
 Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for
 the past. 12

Notes :

- Line 2 **vista of years:** the avenue of years; the long passage of years.
- Line 4 **Pressingsmiles as she sings:** The poet, as a child, used to stand near his mother and listen to her singing and playing the piano. Not tall enough to reach the piano, he used to stand under it to touch her feet and see her smiling at him in adoration.
- Line 5 **insidious:** crafty, deceitful.
- Line 8 **the tinkling piano our guide:** They used to sing to the accompaniment of the piano.
- Line 9 **burst into clamour:** to sing loudly. To reach the climax of (the lady singer's) presentation.
- Line 10 **appassionato:** a sonata (piece of music) composed by the famous German composer, Ludwig Van Beethoven. The Piano Sonata in F minor op. 57, called Appassionato, was completed in 1805. The composition employs bold contrasts in harmony and meditative slow movements flow directly into the final movements.
- Line 11 **my manhood is cast :** the poet experiences the sudden loss of his maturity while listening to the lady on the piano. He nostalgically remembers his childhood, and moreover he cries like a child without any inhibition.

Text Questions :

1. Describe Lawrence's nostalgic longing for his childhood. Would you consider his condition a universal human experience? Discuss.
2. Describe the scene conjured up in the poet's mind by the woman's singing. What are the feelings associated with that scene?
3. "In Piano, Lawrence depicts the nostalgic yearning for a lost state or emotion." Amplify.

MUSINGS

Explain with reference to the context :

1. Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the
tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who
smiles as she sings.
2. In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to
belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home.
3. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a
child for the past.

JOURNEY OF THE MAG

THOMAS STEARN ELIOT (1888-1965)

About the Poet : Thomas Stearn Eliot (1888-1965) was an American-English poet, playwright, and literary critic, and a leader of the modernist movement in literature, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948. His most famous work is *The Wasteland* describes cultural and spiritual crisis, reflected in its use of fragmentation and discontinuity.

T. S. Eliot was born on September 26, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, as the seventh and youngest child of a distinguished family of New England origin. He suffered from a congenital hernia, which kept him out of school until he was seven or eight years old. Eliot was educated at Smith Academy in St. Louis, Milton Academy in Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard, where he contributed poetry to *Harvard Advocate*. He spent a year in France, attending lectures at the Sorbonne. After Eliot returned to Harvard, he completed a dissertation on the English idealist philosopher F.H. Bradley, and studied Sanskrit and Buddhism.

In 1914 Eliot moved to England and started on the rather challenging task of reforming poetic diction with Ezra Pound. It was Pound who got Eliot's early poems into print – the most notable among those being *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Pound also introduced Eliot to Harriet Weaver, who published Eliot's first volume of verse, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917). In 1919 appeared Eliot's second book, *Ara Vos Prec* (published in the U.S. as *Poems*).

Eliot's contribution to literary criticism is also immense. In an early essay, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919),

Eliot propounded the doctrine that poetry should be impersonal and free itself from Romantic practices. According to him, it is in this depersonalization that the art approaches science. With his collection of essays, *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), and *The Classics and the Man of Letters* (1942), Eliot established his reputation as a critic. His writings had an enormous impact on contemporary literary taste. In 1922 Eliot founded the *Criterion*, a quarterly review that he edited until he halted its publication at the commencement of World War II. Between the years 1917 and 1919 Eliot was an assistant editor of the journal the *Egoist* and from 1919 onward he was a regular contributor to the *Time Literary Supplement*.

In 1927 Eliot became a British citizen and member of the Church of England. His pilgrimage towards his own particular brand of High Anglicanism may be found in his poetry, starting from *The Hollow Men* (1925) to visions in the *Four Quartets* (1935-42). Eliot's other works include poetic dramas, in which his dramatic verse became gradually indistinguishable from prose. *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) treated the martyrdom of St. Thomas Beckett. Other works include *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *Notes Toward a Definition of Culture* (1948) and *The Cocktail Party* (1950). Eliot died in London on January 4, 1965.

About the Poem : T. S. Eliot's *Journey of the Magi*, the first in a series of poems later grouped together as the *Ariel Poems*, was first published in 1927, the same year that Eliot was received by baptism into the Anglican Church. It is believed that the *Journey of the Magi* recounts Eliot's personal and spiritual conversion experience. According to Caroline Behr, this poem reflects Eliot's state of mind in transition between his old and

new faiths. The Magi's journey may be compared to Eliot's own journey in search of "satisfaction" in Christianity.

The poem, based on a Biblical story (Matthew 2:1-12), recounts the hardships faced by the three Wise Men of the East – commonly identified as Balthazar (King of Chaldaea), Gaspar (the Ethiopian King of Tarshish) and Melchior (King of Nubia) – in their journey to honour the new born Christ. The poem is not merely a description of the physical journey, but also symbolic of the toils and troubles of the human spirit in its spiritual quest.

The Magi: (plural of *magus* which means *wise man; spiritual leader*). The Magi were the three wise men who came from the East to honour the newborn Jesus.

Journey of The Magi

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.' 5
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet. 10
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices: 15
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,

Sleeping in snatches,
 With the voices singing in our ears, saying
 That this was all folly. 20
 Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
 Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
 With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
 And three trees on the low sky,
 And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow. 25
 Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
 Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
 And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
 But there was no information, and so we continued
 And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon 30
 Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.
 All this was a long time ago, I remember,
 And I would do it again, but set down
 This set down
 This: were we led all that way for
 Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
 We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
 But had thought they were different; this Birth was
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
 We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
 But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
 With an alien people clutching their gods.
 I should be glad of another death.

Notes :

Line1-5 The first five lines were "lifted from Lancelo Andrewes's Nativity Sermon of 1622, and modified" The journey undertaken by the Magi was in extreme inhospitable conditions.

- Line 14 **cities hostile:** According to Dean, these are "all places which remind the travellers, by their iolent contrast, of the place of contentment they have deserted" Traveling through these sinister places, the Magi hasten to end an unpleasant perilous journey.
- Line21 **temperate valley:** The Magi's dawn arrival is "symbolic of the new life attained from their penance"(Wohlpart).
- Line23 **beating the darkness:** This probably refers to the triumph and victory of Christ, a conquering that could occur in the events of Christ's earthly life.
- Line24 **three trees:** a reference to the crosses of Calvary where Christ was eventually crucified along with two other 'male factors'.
- Line25 **white horse:** In the Bible, Christ the conqueror, rides on a white horse.
- 35 Line27 **dicing for pieces of silver:** An allusion to the Biblical account of Judas betraying Christ for thirty pieces of silver.
- Line31 **it was... satisfactory:** an understatement. The speaker is modest about the success of the journey.
- 40 Line41 **old dispensation:** the old religious order. The new religion is Christianity. Barbour writes "The Birth he [the magus] saw began the death of his old world, old life, but did not, with the same certainty, give him anything new".

Text Questions :

1. Discuss Eliot's use of symbols and imagery in Journey of the Magi.
2. "...it was (you may say) satisfactory."
Who is the speaker here? What is the 'satisfaction' that

MUSINGS

he refers to here?

Discuss the hardships leading to this 'satisfaction'.

3. "...this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our eath"
What is the Birth referred to here? How was this Birth
like a Death?

Explain with reference to the context :

1. There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
2. A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.
3. Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the
lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
4. All this was a long time ago,
I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This : were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a birth certainly.
5. We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

ROBERT BROWNING (1812-1889)

About the Poet :

Robert Browning (1812-1889), great English poet of the Victorian Age, was born in Camberwell (now part of London). Browning is noted especially for perfecting the dramatic monologue (literary composition in which the speaker reveals his or her character) in English poetry.

Browning had almost no formal education after the age of 14 and was largely self-taught. In his teens, Browning discovered Shelley, adopting the author's confessionalism in poetry. Browning's early poems reveal the influence of Shelley, from whom he also adopted atheist principles at least for a certain period in life.

Browning's first major work was *Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession*, which was published anonymously in 1833. It however failed to attract much notice. *Paracelsus* (1835), which dealt with the life of the Swiss alchemist, was a critical success, as a result of which Browning formed several important friendships, notably with J. Forster and Macready. *Sordello* (1840), set against the milieu of agitated southern Europe of the 13th century, influenced Ezra Pound in his conception of the *Cantos*. From 1837 to 1846 Browning concentrated on writing verse drama for the stage. During these years he met Carlyle, Dickens, and Tennyson who had long lasting influences on him. Between 1841 and 1846 appeared some of Browning's best-known lyrics in *Bells and Pomegranates*. *Pippa Passes* (1841) was a dramatic poem depicting a silk winder and his wandering in Italy.

Browning married Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861), a poet

in her own rights, in 1846 and eloped with her to Florence, Italy. The next fifteen years of his life were not very productive in terms of literary output. *Men and Women* appeared in 1855. When Elizabeth Browning died in 1861, Browning returned to London. In 1869 he produced, based on the proceedings in a murder trial in Rome in 1698, *The Ring and the Book* — a poem in blank verse totaling over 21000 lines. This work, divided into twelve books, is considered by most as his greatest work. With this, and with *Dramatis Personae* (1864), Browning came to be recognized as a poet of great repute. In the 1870s Browning published several works, including *The Inn Album* (1875), and a translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. The Browning Society, founded in 1881, revealed Browning's great following and established him as a celebrity.

In the last days of his life Browning wrote the prose narrative *Dramatic Idylls* (1879 and 1880) and *Asolando*, which appeared on December 12, 1889, the day he died in Venice. Today he is acknowledged as one of the greatest poets of the Victorian age who enriched English poetry with his psychological insight and his forceful, colloquial poetic style.

About the Poeme : *Two in the Campagna*, first published in the anthology *Men and Women* (1855), deals with the subject of the finite and the infinite with regard to human existence. The poem, in the words of Stopford Brooke, reveals the poet's 'hunger for eternity in the midst of mortality, in which all the hunger for earthly love is burnt to dust'. The poem presents two lovers straying on the Roman Campagna on a fine morning. The man contemplates on the idea of the finite and the infinite only to arrive at the conclusion that whereas humans are finite, passion is infinite and that it is this chasm between yearning and fulfillment that leads to suffering in life. [Campagna: The low level plain area that surrounds Rome.]

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May? 5

II

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go. 10

III

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft, 15

IV

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal: and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast! 20

V

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease. 25

MUSINGS

VI

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers! 30

VII

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love? 35

VIII

I would **that** you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does **the fault lie**? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be? 40

IX

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill. 45

X

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes. 50

50

51

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

XI

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star? 55

XII

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn. 60

Notes :

- Line 6 **touched a thought**: remembered something.
Line 7 **tantalized**: disturbed; bothered; troubled.
Line 12 **fennel**: a plant that produces yellow flowers.
Line 13 **brickwork's cleft**: a crack in the brick wall [of an old tomb]
Line 15 **weft**: thread [probably the thread of a spider's web]
Line 21 **champaign**: low level countryside. [here] the low level plain surrounding Rome.
Line 25 **Rome's....decease**: the speaker is aware that even the glorious Roman civilization has, with time, been reduced to dust.
Line 34-40 **I would....good and ill**: The speaker is very much aware that such a desire can never be fulfilled in reality.
Line 50 **the good minute goes**: pleasures are momentary and do not last long.
Line 59-60 **infinite....that yearn**: The real tragedy in life arises from the fact that whereas passions are infinite, hearts are finite and mortal.

Text Questions :

1. Discuss the essential qualities of Browning as a love poet with reference to *Two in the Campagna*.
2. Write an illustrative note on the conflict between the finite and the infinite exemplified in Browning's poem *Two in the Campagna*.
3. Write a note on Browning's handling of the dramatic monologue.

Explain with reference to the context :

1. Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.
2. Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?
3. I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs
4. I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.
5. The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.
6. How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

THE LOTOS EATERS

ALFRED TENNYSON (1809-1892)

About the Poet : Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892), English author is often regarded as the most celebrated representative poet of the Victorian age. Tennyson's works are melancholic, and provide a broad panorama of the moral and intellectual values of his time. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1850. T.S. Eliot has called him the great master of metric as well as of melancholia who possessed the finest ear of any English poet since Milton.

Born in the year 1809 to the family of a clergyman and rector of Somersby, Lincolnshire, Alfred began to write poetry at an early age. He was initially very much influenced by the works of Lord Byron and openly imitated him. By the time he was 15, Tennyson had produced several blank-verse plays and an epic. After spending a few miserable years in school, Tennyson chose to be tutored at home. Later, he studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he joined the literary club *The Apostles* and met Arthur Hallam, who became his closest friend. During his stay at the College, he composed a spirited blank-verse poem, *Timbuctoo* (1829), which brought him great recognition. Tennyson then published his first book *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830), which included the popular *Mariana*.

However, Tennyson's next publication *Poems* (1833) was met with unfavorable reviews, and as a result of this he published no further poems for the next decade. To add to Tennyson's woes, his close friend Hallam expired suddenly, leaving him depressed and lonely. The thoughts evoked by the death of Hallam went into the making of *In Memoriam*—an ambitious work that took seventeen years to complete. This work, along with a revised volume of *Poems* (1842) that included *The Lotos-Eaters*, *Morte d'Arthur* and *Ulysses*, established Tennyson's reputation as a writer.

Tennyson's later poems include *Enoch Arden* (1864), and the *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885). His belief in God and his faith in the redemption offered by love are palpable in *The Ancient Sage* (1885) and *Akbar's Dream* (1892). In the 1870s Tennyson wrote several plays including poetic dramas like *Queen Mary* (1875) and *Harold* (1876). In 1884 he was created a Baron. Tennyson died at Aldworth on October 6, 1892 and was buried in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. In the words of a critic, *few poets have produced acknowledged masterpieces in so many different poetic genres as Tennyson; he furnished perhaps the most notable example in English letters of the eclectic style. His consummately crafted verse expresses in readily comprehensible terms the Victorian feeling for order and harmony.*

About the Poem: *The Lotos Eaters*, based on an episode narrated in Homer's *Odyssey*, describes how the mariners of Ulysses, returning home to Ithaca by sea after the Trojan War, reach the little known island of the Lotos plant. The ship had been set adrift by the malice of the Gods and hence Ulysses and his mariners sailed for a long time without being able to sight land. It was therefore a great relief to arrive at the island of the Lotos eaters where they were offered the lotos plant to eat. However, on consuming this plant the mariners were drugged into inaction. They then break into a chorus in which they glorify a life of inactivity, spent in a mood of magic languor. However, what the mariners fail to realize is that the ease and luxury of the body means the death of the soul. There is an under current of meaning that a life of idleness may provide momentary pleasures but real happiness comes from a life spent in activity- the kind of life advocated by Tennyson in poems like *Ulysses*. The poem thus presents a universal conflict in the human mind - the lure of an easygoing life as opposed to the necessity of leading an severe life of activity.

The Lotos-Eaters

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,
 "This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
 In the afternoon they came unto a land
 In which it seemed always afternoon.
 All round the coast the languid air did swoon, 5
 Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
 Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
 And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
 Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.
 A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke, 10
 Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
 And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
 Rolling a slumberous sheet of foam below.
 They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
 From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops, 15
 Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
 Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
 Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.
 The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
 In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale 20
 Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
 Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
 And meadow, set with slender galingale;
 A land where all things always seem'd the same!
 And round about the keel with faces pale, 25
 Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
 The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.
 Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
 Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
 To each, but whoso did receive of them, 30
 And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
 Far far away did seem to mourn and rave

56

35

I

50

55

II

60

57

65

III

70

IV

85

MUSINGS

All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change:
For surely now our household hearths are cold,
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings

THE LOTOS EATERS

Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?

Let what is broken so remain.

125

The Gods are hard to reconcile:

'Tis hard to settle order once again.

There is confusion worse than death,

Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,

Long labour unto aged breath,

130

Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars

And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,

How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)

With half-dropt eyelid still,

135

Beneath a heaven dark and holy,

To watch the long bright river drawing slowly

His waters from the purple hill—

To hear the dewy echoes calling

From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine— 140

To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling

Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!

Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,

Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:

145

The Lotos blows by every winding creek:

All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:

Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone

Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust
is blown.

We have had enough of action, and of motion we, 150

Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge

Where the wallowing monster **was seething free,**
spouted his foam-fountains
in the sea.

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind. 155
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly
curl'd

Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming
world:

Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps
and fiery sands,

Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships,
and praying hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful
song

Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—
down in hell

Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel. 170
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and
oar;

O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

Line 1

Line 4

Line 18

Line 23

Line 31-35

Line 56

Line 68

Line 84-87

Line 103

Line 112-13

Line 126

Line 170

he said: Ulysses said to his
In which...afternoon: time seemed to
On Lotos island.
Up-clomb...copse: growth in the world of nature
had also come to a stage of stagnation. The pine
trees were growing in thickets.

galingale! sweet smelling plant that grows in
marshy land.

the gushing...yet all awake: On eating the Lotos
plant, the mariners felt as if they were in a trance.
craggy: steep and rugged.

There is....but calm: The mariners felt that real
happiness lay only in inactivity, in calmness, in a
life of idleness.

Hateful is....labour be: A hazardous life spent in
the turbulent seas is rejected by the mariners. Ac-
cording to them a life of hard labour is useless
because the ultimate end of life is death.

myrrh: A bitter aromatic resinous exudate from the
stem of various Arabian and African trees formerly
important in perfumery and as an ingredient of
incense.

Heap'd over... in an urn of brass: The old friends
of the mariners back home must have died during
their absence and reduced to ashes in urns.

The Gods are hard to reconcile: Ulysses and his
fellow mariners had been subjected to a lot of
hardships in the course of the voyage by wrathful
Gods who were difficult to pacify.

asphodel: Any plant of the genera *Asphodelus* and
Asphodeline, of the lily family, native to the Mediterra-
nean region; an immortal flower, said to cover the Elysian
fields.

Text Questions :

1. Critically examine Tennyson's philosophy of life from your reading of *The Lotos Eaters*.
2. Write a note on the pictorial imagery in Tennyson's *The Lotos Eaters*.
'Lotos land offers not abundant life but spiritual death'. Discuss the significance of this remark with reference to *The Lotos Eaters*.
Write a note on the chorus in Tennyson's *The Lotos*

reference to the context :

seaward flow
ee mountain-tops,
ave;

we will return no more";

- And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."
4. All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan.
5. Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change.
6. Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down
from the blissful skies.

RECOLLECTIONS OF LOVE

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)

About the Poet : Samuel Taylor Coleridge was an English poet, critic, and philosopher, and a pioneer of the Romantic Movement in English poetry. Born to a family of a clergyman, Coleridge was the youngest of the ten children of John Coleridge and Ann Bowden Coleridge. From 1791 to 1794 he attended Jesus College, University of Cambridge, except for a brief period when he was deeply in debt and entered the army.

Coleridge's first major work, *Poems*, published in 1797, was well received and it looked like he was on the fast track to fame. In 1798, he completed the famous *Lyrical Ballads*, composed in collaboration with William Wordsworth, and this magnificent work pretty much initiated the Romantic Movement in English poetry. This work became a landmark in English poetry; it contained the first great works of the romantic school, such as the famous *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Compared to Wordsworth's, Coleridge's poetic achievement was relatively small in quantity, but his metaphysical anxiety, anticipating modern existentialism, earned him reputation as an authentic visionary.

After a string of illnesses brought on by the damp climate of the Lake Country, Coleridge turned to newspaper work in 1801. Most of his later works were non-fiction, except for a play or two and such works as *Biographia Literaria* (1817), a series of autobiographical notes and dissertations on many subjects, including some brilliantly perceptive literary criticism. Other important poems of Coleridge include *Kubla Khan*, *Christabel*, *Frost at Midnight*, and *The Nightingale*. Though Coleridge is really only known today for his poetry, his

ions to the field of criticism and the English language
derable. For instance, he introduced words like
'aesthetic' to the English language. Charles Lamb
favorite descriptions of Coleridge in 1817: "His
when he repeats his verses, hath its ancient
a little damaged."

es of Wordsworth's Lines written a
ey, recounts the poet's foun re-
nt in the pleasant company of
as compelled to separate
poem, apparently
beloved.

Float hear and there, like things astray,
And high o'er head the skylark shrills.
No voice as yet had made the air
Be music with your name; yet why
That asking look? that yearning sigh?
That sense of promise everywhere?
Belovéd! flew your spirit by?
As when a mother doth explore

10

15

The rose-mark on her long-lost child,
I met, I loved you, maiden mild!
As whom I long had loved before—
So deeply had I been beguiled.
You stood before me like a thought,
A dream remembered in a dream.
But when those meek eyes first did seem
To tell me, Love within you wrought—
O Greta, dear domestic stream!

20

25

Has not, since then, Love's prompture deep,
Has not Love's whisper evermore
Been ceaseless, as thy gentle roar?
Sole voice, when other voices sleep,
Dear under-song in clamor's hour.

30

Notes :

- Line 1 **woodland wild Recess:** leisure in the midst of the woods [heart of Nature]
Line 6 **Eight springs have flown :** [extended to mean] eight years have passed. Can be compared to the following lines in Wordsworth's Lines written by a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey - "Five years have past; five summers, with the length of five long winters!"
Line 7 **Quantock:** area of England between Bristol and Nether Stoway, where Coleridge lived [for a few years between 1796-1800]
Line 7 **healthy:** covered by health [a dwarf shrub].
Line 8 **rill:** A small stream; a rivulet.
Line 16-17 As whenlong-lost child: like a mother finding her child who had been lost for ages, the poet was ecstatic on meeting his beloved after a

Line 20 **beguiled:** captivated[by the love of his beloved]
 Line 25 **Greta:** River adjoining Coleridge's house in
 Keswick, the Lake Country.
 Line 25 dear domestic stream: a fam stram; time has not
 earsed the stream [Greta] from the poet's memory
 Line 26 Love's prompture deep : love is ready for action.

1. Coleridge is often described as a "poet of the imagination." What does this appellation mean? Explain with reference to *Recollections of Love*.
2. Discuss Coleridge as a representative poet of the Romantic age.
3. Attempt a critical appreciation of Coleridge's *Recollections of Love*.

1. yet why
That asking look? that yearning sigh?
That sense of promise everywhere?
2. As when a mother doth explore
The rose-mark on her long-lost child,
I met, I loved you, maiden mild!
3. You stood before me like a thought,
A dream remembered in a dream.

[illegible]

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