

V

ASRA POEMS

Asra Poems

PREFACE

THESE FOURTEEN LOVE POEMS were all inspired by Coleridge's long affair with Sara Hutchinson between 1799 and 1810. The story of this passionate, but probably unconsummated, relationship has only been fully revealed through the recent publication of Coleridge's later Notebooks. It is perhaps still not wholly understood, and various mysteries remain, to which the poems may provide clues. The wider literary significance of the Asra Poems has barely been recognized. They alter our sense of Coleridge's emotional range as a poet, and provide a largely new context for his great poem "Dejection: An Ode" (No. 50).

Sara Hutchinson (1775-1835) was the younger sister of Wordsworth's wife, Mary Hutchinson. She came from a large, hospitable, hard-working family of Yorkshire farmers, and had grown up in the countryside. The family were prosperous - Sara's brothers became successful "gentlemen" farmers - and she was a well-educated, animated young woman with an independence and originality of mind all her own. She had been partly brought up in Cumberland in the house of a strange, kindly, autodidact relative known as James Patrick of Kendal, "the Intellectual Pedlar", whom Wordsworth would use as a model for the figure of the Wanderer in "The Excursion". She was a great walker, and loved watercolour painting and poetry (see also "The Picture", No. 44). But she was not a conventionally romantic, dreamy Muse. She was cheerful and outgoing, a small energetic figure with a mass of auburn hair, quick and neat in the house, and daring and eager on country walks (see "The Keepsake", No. 45). Many of Coleridge's tenderest memories of her are in a snug, firelit farmhouse kitchen (see "A Day-Dream: My Eyes Make Pictures", No. 47).

Coleridge first met Sara Hutchinson at her brother Tom's manor house farm near Sockburn-on-Tees in the winter of 1799, during

his first momentous visit to the north of England and the Lake District with Wordsworth (see "The Keepsake", No. 45 and note). Coleridge was then twenty-seven, and had been married for four years; Sara was twenty-four with no attachments, nor did she ever subsequently marry. Coleridge felt he had fallen in love at first sight (see "The Language of Birds", No. 46), but also feared it was a catastrophe (see also the ballad "Love", No. 35). In his Notebooks he transposed the letters of Sara's name to form "Asra", his muse-figure or "moorish maid".

For the next four years they lived in close proximity, visiting each other in Cumberland and Yorkshire, while Coleridge continued his increasingly difficult family life at Keswick. These periods of rapturous meetings, followed by stricken separations, are reflected in the "Day-Dream" poems (Nos. 47 and 48). The unbearable unhappiness of this situation, coupled with Coleridge's illness and opium addiction, finally produced in April 1802 his great outburst of love and despair, "A Letter to Sara Hutchinson" (No. 49). With extraordinary skill, Coleridge shaped and edited this verse letter into one of his most famous poems, "Dejection: An Ode" (No. 50), which he felt he could publish and show to friends. But many of the other Asra poems had to be disguised, or kept in manuscript.

In an attempt to sort out his professional life and break off with Asra, Coleridge disappeared to the Mediterranean between 1804 and 1806 (see "Separation", No. 51, and "Phantom", No. 52). But when he returned, he separated from his wife and lived with Asra and the Wordsworths, first in Leicestershire and then back in Cumberland, for various periods between 1806 and 1810. Sara acted successfully as his amanuensis, during the writing of his periodical *The Friend*, but this was a time of great tension and jealousy (see "Ad Vilmum Axiolorum", No. 54, a Latin poem which reveals a great deal about the emotional complexities of the household; see also "The Tropic Tree", No. 80). The moments of lyrical happiness had become rare (see "Recollections of Love", No. 57).

When Coleridge quarrelled with Wordsworth in 1810, he left the Lake District and was never again intimate with Sara Hutchinson. She moved in permanently with Wordsworth's household, and settled herself as her sister's and brother-in-law's companion. Coleridge's subsequent reflections on what the disastrous love affair had really signified, "Constancy to an Ideal Object" (No. 58), forms the last poem of the Asra group, though disguised references to her appear in several of the Confessional Poems. In old age, Coleridge

renewed a cheerful correspondence with her from Highgate, and met her on occasions in London and Ramsgate. When he died, she was one of the very few people to whom he left a small gold "mourning ring", as was the custom between intimate friends.

The suggestion that the *Asra* Poems form a distinctive group was first made by the Coleridge scholar George Whalley in 1955. His selection was rather wider and more speculative than this one, and includes for example "Love" (No. 35), "The Picture" (No. 44) and "To Two Sisters" (No. 61). Coleridge himself never collected the poems separately, but tried to disguise them or hide them from his friends. Surprisingly, it was Sara who put many of them together in a manuscript scrapbook entitled "Sara's Poets", though these also included poems by Wordsworth. (The possibility that she was half in love with both men may also be considered; but her real feelings remain a mystery to this day, as most of her early letters were destroyed.)

But the fourteen poems printed here – together of course with the heart-breaking sonnet "To *Asra*" (No. 14), written just before Coleridge's departure for Malta – do form a powerfully unified if fragmented sequence. They are held together by certain patterns of imagery and obsessive feeling, rather than by any particular poetic form. The story they tell is, perhaps, a tragedy of longing and self-deception (the terrible possibility finally faced in No. 58), rather than a conventional love affair. Certainly Sara Hutchinson seems to have suffered as much as Coleridge. Yet strangely "*Asra*" herself emerges as one of Coleridge's most haunting creations, like *Christabel* or the mysterious Abyssinian maid.

The Keepsake

The teded hay, the first fruits of the soil,
 The teded hay and corn-sheaves in one field,
 Show summer gone, ere come. The foxglove tall
 Sheds its loose purple bells, or in the gust,
 Or when it bends beneath the up-springing lark, 5
 Or mountain-finch alighting. And the rose
 (In vain the darling of successful love)
 Stands, like some boasted beauty of past years,
 The thorns remaining, and the flowers all gone.
 Nor can I find, amid my lonely walk 10
 By rivulet, or spring, or wet roadside,
 That blue and bright-eyed floweret of the brook,
 Hope's gentle gem, the sweet Forget-me-not!
 So will not fade the flowers which Emmeline
 With delicate fingers on the snow-white silk 15
 Has worked (the flowers which most she knew I loved),
 And, more beloved than they, her auburn hair.

In the cool morning twilight, early waked
 By her full bosom's joyous restlessness,
 Softly she rose, and lightly stole along, 20
 Down the slope coppice to the woodbine bower,
 Whose rich flowers, swinging in the morning breeze,
 Over their dim fast-moving shadows hung,
 Making a quiet image of disquiet
 In the smooth, scarcely moving river-pool. 25
 There, in that bower where first she owned her love,
 And let me kiss my own warm tear of joy
 From off her glowing cheek, she sate and stretched
 The silk upon the frame, and worked her name
 Between the Moss-Rose and Forget-me-not – 30
 Her own dear name, with her own auburn hair!
 That forced to wander till sweet spring return,
 I yet might ne'er forget her smile, her look,

Her voice, (that even in her mirthful mood
Has made me wish to steal away and weep,)
Nor yet the entrancement of that maiden kiss
With which she promised, that when spring returned,
She would resign one half of that dear name,
And own thenceforth no other name but mine!

The Language of Birds

Do you ask what the birds say? The Sparrow, the Dove,
The Linnet and Thrush say, "I love and I love!"
In the winter they're silent – the wind is so strong;
What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather, 5
And singing, and loving – all come back together.
But the Lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings he –
"I love my Love, and my Love loves me!" 10

A Day-Dream: My Eyes Make Pictures

- My eyes make pictures, when they are shut:
 I see a fountain, large and fair,
 A willow and a ruined hut,
 And thee, and me and Mary there.
 O Mary! make thy gentle lap our pillow! 5
 Bend o'er us, like a bower, my beautiful green willow!
- A wild-rose roofs the ruined shed,
 And that and summer well agree:
 And lo! where Mary leans her head,
 Two dear names carved upon the tree! 10
 And Mary's tears, they are not tears of sorrow:
 Our sister and our friend will both be here to-morrow.
- 'Twas day! but now few, large, and bright,
 The stars are round the crescent moon!
 And now it is a dark warm night, 15
 The balmiest of the month of June!
 A glow-worm fall'n, and on the marge remounting
 Shines, and its shadow shines, fit stars for our sweet fountain.
- O ever – ever be thou blest!
 For dearly, Asra! love I thee! 20
 This brooding warmth across my breast,
 This depth of tranquil bliss – ah, me!
 Fount, tree and shed are gone, I know not whither,
 But in one quiet room we three are still together.
- The shadows dance upon the wall, 25
 By the still dancing fire-flames made;
 And now they slumber, moveless all!
 And now they melt to one deep shade!
 But not from me shall this mild darkness steal thee:
 I dream thee with mine eyes, and at my heart I feel thee! 30

Thine eyelash on my cheek doth play—
'Tis Mary's hand upon my brow!
But let me check this tender lay
Which none may hear but she and thou!
Like the still hive at quiet midnight humming,
Murmur it to yourselves, ye two beloved women!

35

The Day-Dream: If Thou Wert Here

If thou wert here, these tears were tears of light!

 But from as sweet a vision did I start
As ever made these eyes grow idly bright!

 And though I weep, yet still around my heart
A sweet and playful tenderness doth linger, 5
Touching my heart as with an infant's finger.

My mouth half open, like a witless man,

 I saw our couch, I saw our quiet room,
 Its shadows heaving by the fire-light gloom;
And o'er my lips a subtle feeling ran, 10
All o'er my lips a soft and breeze-like feeling –
I know not what – but had the same been stealing

Upon a sleeping mother's lips, I guess

 It would have made the loving mother dream
That she was softly bending down to kiss 15

 Her babe, that something more than babe did seem,
A floating presence of its darling father,
And yet its own dear baby self far rather!

Across my chest there lay a weight, so warm!

 As if some bird had taken shelter there; 20
And lo! I seemed to see a woman's form –
 Thine, Sara, thine? O joy, if thine it were!
I gazed with stifled breath, and feared to stir it,
 No deeper trance e'er wrapt a yearning spirit!

And now, when I seemed sure thy face to see, 25

 Thy own dear self in our own quiet home;
There came an elfish laugh, and wakened me:
 'Twas Frederic, who behind my chair had clomb,
And with his bright eyes at my face was peeping.
I blessed him, tried to laugh, and fell a-weeping! 30

A Letter to Sara Hutchinson

I

Well! if the Bard was weather-wise who made
 The dear old Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
 This Night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
 Unrous'd by Winds, that ply a busier trade
 Than that, which moulds yon clouds in lazy flakes, 5
 Or the dull sobbing Draft, that drones and rakes
 Upon the strings of this Eolian Lute,
 Which better far were mute.
 For lo! the New-Moon, winter-bright!
 And all suffus'd with phantom Light 10
 (With swimming phantom Light o'erspread,
 But rimm'd and circled with a silver Thread)
 I see the Old Moon in her Lap foretelling
 The coming-on of Rain and squally Blast. —
 Ah Sara! That the gust ev'n now were swelling 15
 And the slant Night-shower driving loud and fast.

2

A Grief without a Pang, void, dark, and drear,
 A stifling, drowsy, unimpassioned Grief,
 That finds no natural Outlet, no Relief
 In word or sigh, or tear — 20
 This, Sara! well thou know'st,
 Is that sore Evil which I dread the most
 And oft'nest suffer. In this heartless Mood,
 To other Thoughts by yonder Throstle woo'd,
 That pipes within the Larch-tree not unseen 25
 (The Larch which pushes out in Tassels green
 It's bundled Leafits) woo'd to mild Delights
 By all the tender Sounds and gentle Sights
 Of this sweet Primrose-month — and *vainly* woo'd!
 O dearest Sara! in this heartless mood 30

All this long Eve so balmy and serene
 Have I been gazing on the Western Sky
 And it's peculiar Tint of yellow Green:
 And still I gaze – and with how blank an eye!
 And those thin Clouds above, in flakes and bars, 35
 That give away their motion to the Stars;
 Those Stars, that glide behind them and between,
 Now sparkling, now bedimm'd, but always seen;
 Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
 In it's own cloudless, starless Lake of Blue, 40
 A Boat becalm'd! dear William's Sky-Canoe!
 I see them all, so excellently fair,
 I *see*, not *feel*, how beautiful they are!

My genial Spirits fail –
 And what can these avail 45
 To lift the smoth'ring weight from off my breast?
 It were a vain Endeavour,
 Tho' I should gaze for ever
 On that green Light, that lingers in the West –
 I may not hope from outward Forms to win 50
 The Passion and the Life, whose Fountains are within!
 Those lifeless Shapes, around, below, above,
 O dearest Sara! what can they impart?
 Even when the gentle Thought, that thou, my Love,
 Art gazing now, like me 55
 And see'st the Heaven, I see,
 Sweet Thought it is – yet feebly stirs my Heart.

Feebly, O! feebly! – Yet
 (I well remember it)
 In my first dawn of Youth, that Fancy stole, 60
 With many gentle Yearnings, on my Soul!
 At eve, Sky-gazing in "ecstatic fit"
 (Alas! far-cloister'd in a city school

The Sky was all I knew of Beautiful)
 At the barr'd window often did I sit, 65
 And often on the leaded School-roof lay
 And to myself would say –
 There does not live the Man so stripp'd of good Affections
 As not to love to see a Maiden's quiet Eyes
 Upris'd and linking on sweet dreams by dim Connexions 70
 To Moon, or Evening Star, or glorious Western Skies!
 While yet a Boy, this thought would so pursue me,
 That often it became a kind of Vision to me!

6

Sweet Thought! and dear of old
 To Hearts of finer Mould! 75
 Ten thousand times by Friends and Lovers blest!
 I spake with rash Despair
 And 'ere I was aware,
 The weight was somewhat lifted from my Breast.
 Dear Sara! in the weather-fended wood, 80
 Thy lov'd Haunt, where the stock-doves coo at Noon,
 I guess that thou hast stood
 And watch'd yon Crescent and that ghost-like Moon!
 And yet far rather, in my present mood,
 I would that thou'dst been sitting all this while 85
 Upon the sod-built seat of Camomile –
 And tho' thy Robin may have ceas'd to sing,
 Yet needs for *my* sake must thou love to hear
 – The Bee-hive murmuring near,
 That ever-busy and most quiet Thing 90
 Which I have heard at Midnight murmuring!

7

I feel my Spirit moved –
 And, wheresoe'er thou be,
 O Sister! O beloved!
 Thy dear mild Eyes, that see 95
 The very Heaven, *I* see,
 There is a Prayer in them! It is for *me*!
 And I dear Sara! *I* am blessing thee!

It was as calm as this, – the happy Night
 When Mary, Thou and I, together were, 100
 The low-decaying Fire our only Light,
 And listen'd to the stillness of the Air!
 O that affectionate and blameless Maid,
 Dear, Mary! – on her Lap my Head she lay'd –
 Her hand was on my Brow, 105
 Even as my own is now;
 And on my Cheek I felt thy Eye-lash play –
 Such joy I had that I may truly say,
 My Spirit was awe-stricken with the Excess
 And trance-like depth of its brief Happiness. 110

Ah fair Remembrances, that so revive
 My Heart, and fill it with a living power,
 Where were they Sara? – or did I not strive
 To win them to me? – on the fretting Hour,
 Then when I wrote thee that complaining Scroll 115
 Which even to bodily sickness bruis'd thy Soul!
 And yet thou blam'st thyself alone! and yet
 Forbidd'st me all Regret!

And must I not *regret*, that I distrest
 Thee, Best-loved! who lovest me the Best! 120
 My better mind had fled, I know not whither –
 For O! was this an absent Friend's Employ
 To send from far both Pain and Sorrow thither,
 Where still his Blessings should have call'd down Joy?
 I read thy guileless Letter o'er again –
 I hear thee of thy blameless Self complain – 125
 And only this I learn – and this, alas! I know,
 That thou art weak and pale with Sicknes, Grief, and Pain,
 And I – I made thee so!

O *for my own sake*, I regret, *perforce*, 130
 Whatever turns *thee*, Sara! from the course
 Of calm well-being and a heart at rest.
 When thou, and with thee those, whom thou lov'd best
 Shall dwell together in one quiet Home,
 One Home the sure *Abiding* Home of All! 135
 I too will crown me with a Coronal,
 Nor shall this Heart in idle wishes roam,
 Morbidity soft!
 No! let me trust, that I shall wear away
 In no inglorious Toils the manly Day; 140
 And only now and then, and not too oft,
 Some dear and memorable Eve shall bless,
 Dreaming of all your Love and Happiness.

Be happy, and I need thee not in sight!
 Peace in thy Heart and Quiet in thy dwelling, 145
 Health in thy Limbs, and in thy Eyes the Light
 Of Love, and Hope, and honourable Feeling,
 Where'er I am, I needs must be content!
 Not near thee, haply shall be more content!
 To all things I prefer the Permanent; 150
 And better seems it for a Heart like mine,
 Always to *know* than sometimes to *behold*,
 Their Happiness and thine:
 For change doth trouble me with Pangs untold!
 To see thee, hear thee, feel thee, then to part – 155
 O! it weighs down the Heart!
 To *visit* those, I love, as I love *thee*,
 Mary, William and dear Dorothy,
 It is but a temptation to repine!
 The Transientness is Poison in the Wine, 160
 Eats out the Pith of Joy, makes all Joy hollow!
 All Pleasure a dim dream of Pain to follow!
 My own peculiar Lot, my household Life
 It is, and will remain Indifference or Strife –
 While ye are well and happy, 'twould but wrong you, 165

If I should fondly yearn to be among you –
Wherefore, O! wherefore, should I wish to be
A wither'd Branch upon a blossoming Tree?

13

But, – (let me say it – for I vainly strive
To beat away the Thought) *but* if thou pin'd, 170
Whate'er the cause, in body or in mind,
I were the miserablest Man alive
To know it, and be absent! Thy Delights
Far off, or near, alike shall I partake –
But O! to mourn for thee, and to forsake
All power, all hope of giving comfort to thee!
To know that thou are weak and worn with pain,
And not to hear thee, Sara! not to view thee –
 Not sit beside thy Bed,
 Not press thy aching Head – 180
 Not bring thee Health again –
(At least to hope, to try,)
By this Voice, which thou lov'st, and by this *earnest* Eye –

14

Nay wherefore did I let it haunt my Mind,
 This dark distressful Dream! 185
I turn from it, and listen to the Wind,
Which long has howl'd unnoticed! What a Scream
Of Agony by Torture lengthen'd out
That Lute sent forth! O thou wild storm without!
Or Crag, or Tairn, or lightning-blasted Tree, 190
Or Pinegrove, whither Woodman never clomb,
Or lonely House long held the Witches' Home,
Methinks were fitter Instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! That in this Month of Showers,
Or dark-brown Gardens, and of peeping Flowers 195
Mak'st Devil's Yule, with worse than wintry song
The Blooms and Buds and timorous Leaves among!
Thou Actor perfect in all Tragic Sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold!
 What tell'st thou now about? 200

Tis of a rushing of an Host in rout,
And many Groans from Men with smarting wounds
That groan at once from Smart, and shudder with the cold!
But hush: there is a break of deepest silence –
Again! – but that dread sound as of a rushing Crowd, 205
With Groans and tremulous Shuddering, all are over –
And it has other Sounds, and all less deep, less loud!

A Tale of less Affright.

And tempered with delight,
As William's self had made the tender lay! 210

Tis of a little Child

Upon a heathy wild
Not far from home; but it has lost its way!
And now moans low in utter grief and fear,
And now screams loud and hopes to make its Mother hear!

15

Tis midnight! and small thought have I of sleep!
Full seldom may my Friend such Vigils keep!
O breathe she softly in her gentle Sleep!
Cover her, gentle Sleep! with wings of Healing,
And be this Tempest but a mountain Birrh! 220
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling
Silent as tho' they watch'd the sleeping Earth,
Like elder Sisters, with love-twinkling Eyes!
Healthful, and light my Darling! may'st thou rise,
And of the same good Tidings to me send! 225
For O! beloved Friend!

I am not the buoyant Thing, I was of yore,
When like an own Child, I to Joy belong'd,
For others mourning oft, myself oft sorely wrong'd,
Yet bearing all things then, as if I nothing bore. 230

16

E'er I was wedded, tho' my path was rough,
The joy within me dallied with distress.
And all misfortunes were but as the Stuff
Whence Fancy made me Dreams of Happiness:
For Hope grew round me, like the climbing Vine, 235

And from the Soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent Voice of it's own Birth, 305
 Of all sweet sounds the Life and Element.
 O pure of Heart! thou need'st not ask of me,
 What this strange music in the Soul may be,
 What and wherein it doth exist,
 This Light, this Glory, this fair luminous Mist, 310
 This beautiful and beauty-making Power!
 Joy, innocent Sara! Joy, that ne'er was given
 Save to the pure and in their purest Hour,
 JOY, Sara! is the Spirit and the Power
 That wedding Nature to us gives in dower, 315
 A new Earth and new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the Sensual and the Proud!
 JOY is that sweet Voice, JOY that luminous cloud!
 We, we ourselves rejoice –
 And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight, 320
 All Melodies the Echoes of that Voice,
 All Colors a *Suffusion* from that Light.
 Sister and Friend of my devoutest Choice!
 Thou being innocent and full of Love,
 And nested with the Darlings of thy Love, 325
 And feeling in thy Soul, Heart, Lips, and Arms
 Even what the conjugal and Mother Dove
 That borrows genial warmth from these, she warms,
 Feels in her thrill'd wings, blessedly outspread!
 Thou, free'd awhile from Cares and human Dread 330
 By the immenseness of the Good and Fair,
 Which thou see'st every where –
 Thus, thus would'st thou rejoice!
 To thee would all things *live* from pole to pole,
 Their Life the Eddying of thy living Soul. 335
 O dear! O Innocent! O full of Love!
 Sara! thou Friend of my devoutest Choice!
 As dear as Light and Impulse from above!
 So may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice!

Dejection: An Ode

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
 With the old Moon in her arms;
 And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
 We shall have a deadly storm.

Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence.

I

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
 The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
 This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
 Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
 Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes, 5
 Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
 Upon the strings of this Æolian lute,
 Which better far were mute.
 For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
 And overspread with phantom light, 10
 (With swimming phantom light o'erspread
 But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
 I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
 The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
 And oh! that even now the gust were swelling, 15
 And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
 Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
 And sent my soul abroad,
 Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
 Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live! 20

II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
 A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
 Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
 In word, or sigh, or tear —

O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood, 25
 To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
 All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
 Have I been gazing on the western sky,
 And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
 And still I gaze – and with how blank an eye! 30
 And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
 That give away their motion to the stars;
 Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
 Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
 Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew 35
 In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
 I see them all so excellently fair,
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

III

My genial spirits fail;
 And what can these avail 40
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
 It were a vain endeavour,
 Though I should gaze for ever
 On that green light that lingers in the west:
 I may not hope from outward forms to win 45
 The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

IV

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
 And in our life alone does Nature live:
 Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
 And would we aught behold, of higher worth, 50
 Than that inanimate cold world allowed
 To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
 Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
 Enveloping the Earth – 55
 And from the soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
 What this strong music in the soul may be! 60
 What, and wherein it doth exist,
 This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
 This beautiful and beauty-making power.
 Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
 Save to the pure, and in their purest hour, 65
 Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
 Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
 Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
 A new Earth and new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud — 70
 Joys is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud —
 We in ourselves rejoice!
 And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
 All melodies the echoes of that voice,
 All colours a suffusion from that light. 75

vi

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
 This joy within me dallied with distress,
 And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
 Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
 For hope grew round me, like the twining vine, 80
 And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
 But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
 Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
 But oh! each visitation
 Suspends what nature gave me at my birth, 85
 My shaping spirit of Imagination.
 For not to think of what I needs must feel,
 But to be still and patient, all I can;
 And haply by abstruse research to steal
 From my own nature all the natural man — 90
 This was my sole resource, my only plan:
 Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
 And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
 Reality's dark dream! 95

I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
 Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
 Of agony by torture lengthened out
 That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
 Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree, 100
 Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
 Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
 Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
 Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
 Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers, 105
 Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
 The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
 Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
 Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
 What tell'st thou now about? 110
 'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
 With groans, of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
 At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
 But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
 And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd, 115
 With groans, and tremulous shuddering — all is over—
 It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
 A tale of less affright,
 And tempered with delight,
 As Otway's self had framed the tender lay, — 120
 'Tis of a little child
 Upon a lonesome wild,
 Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
 And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
 And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
 Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
 Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
 And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,

May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling, 130
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole, 135
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

Separation

A sworded man whose trade is blood,
 In grief, in anger, and in fear,
 Thro' jungle, swamp, and torrent flood,
 I seek the wealth you hold so dear!

The dazzling charm of outward form, 5
 The power of gold, the pride of birth,
 Have taken Woman's heart by storm—
 Usurp'd the place of inward worth.

Is not true Love of higher price 10
 Than outward Form, though fair to see,
 Wealth's glittering fairy-dome of ice,
 Or echo of proud ancestry?—

O! Asra, Asra! couldst thou see 15
 Into the bottom of my heart,
 There's such a mine of Love for thee,
 As almost might supply desert!

(This separation is, alas!
 Too great a punishment to bear;
 O! take my life, or let me pass 20
 That life, that happy life, with her!)

The perils, erst with steadfast eye
 Encounter'd, now I shrink to see—
 Oh! I have heart enough to die—
 Not half enough to part from Thee!

Phantom

All look and likeness caught from earth,
All accident of kin and birth,
Had pass'd away. There was no trace
Of aught on that illumined face,
Upris'd beneath the rifted stone
But of one spirit all her own;—
She, she herself, and only she,
Shone through her body visibly.

5

O Sara! Never Rashly Let Me Go

O Sara! never rashly let me go
Beyond the precincts of this holy Place,
Where streams as pure as in Elysium flow
And flowrets view reflected Grace:
What though in vain the melted Metals glow,
We die, and dying own a more than mortal Love. 5

Ad Vilmum Axiologum

Me n' Asræ perferre jubes oblivia? et Asræ
 Me aversos oculos posse videre meæ?
 Scire et eam falsam, crudelem, quæ mihi semper
 Cara fuit, semper cara futura mihi?
 Meque pati lucem, cui vanam perditæ amanti, 5
 Quicquid Naturæ est, omne tremit, titubat?
 Cur non ut patiarque fodi mea viscera ferro,
 Dissimulato etiam, Vilme, dolore jubes?
 Quin Cor, quin Oculosque meos, quin erue vel quod
 Carius est, si quid carius esse potest! 10
 Deficientem animam, quod vis, tolerare jubebo,
 Asræ dum superet, me moriente, fides.
 At Fidis Inferias vidi! et morior! – Ratione
 Victum iri facili, me *Ratione*, putas?
 Ah pereat, qui, in Amore potest rationibus uti! 15
 Ah pereat, qui, ni perditæ, amare potest!
 Quid deceat, quid non, videant quibus integra mens est!
 Vixi! vivit adhuc IMMÉMOR ASRÆ MEI.

[Translation: TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Do you command me to endure Asra's neglect? and to be able to see the eyes of my Asra averted? And to know her as false and cruel who always was, always will be dear to me? And me to suffer the daylight when, since I desperately love one who is false, the whole of Nature trembles and shudders? Why do you not also command me, William, to suffer my bowels to be pierced with a sword and then to pretend that it does not hurt? Nay, why not pluck out my heart and eyes or whatever is dearer, if anything can be dearer? I shall command my failing spirit to tolerate anything as long as Asra's faith remains, even if I die. But I have seen the last rites of her faithfulness! and I die! Do you think that I am to be overcome by mere Reason? by *Reason*? Ah, perish the man who can make use of reasons in matters of love – perish he who can love except desperately! What may be fitting, what not, let them consider who are whole of mind! My life is done! Yet Asra still lives, unmindful of me.]

You Mould My Hopes

You mould my Hopes you fashion me within:
And to the leading love-throb in the heart,
Through all my being, through my pulses beat;
You lie in all my many thoughts like Light,
Like the fair light of Dawn, or summer Eve,
On rippling stream, or cloud-reflecting lake;
And looking to the Heaven that bends above you,
How oft! I bless the lot that made me love you.

5

An Angel Visitant

Within these circling hollies woodbine-clad—
Beneath this small blue roof of vernal sky—
How warm, how still! Tho' tears should dim mine eye,
Yet will my heart for days continue glad,
For here, my love, thou art, and here am I!

5

Recollections of Love

I

How warm this woodland wild Recess!
 Love surely hath been breathing here;
 And this sweet bed of heath, my dear!
 Swells up, then sinks with faint caress,
 As if to have you yet more near.

5

II

Eight springs have flown, since last I lay
 On sea-ward Quantock's heathy hills,
 Where quiet sounds from hidden rills
 Float here and there, like things astray,
 And high o'er head the sky-lark shrills.

10

III

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 every where?
 Belovéd! flew your spirit by?

15

IV

As when a mother doth explore
 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.

20

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! 25

VI

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

Constancy to an Ideal Object

Since all that beat about in Nature's range,
 Or veer or vanish; why should'st thou remain
 The only constant in a world of change,
 O yearning Thought! that liv'st but in the brain?
 Call to the Hours, that in the distance play, 5
 The faery people of the future day—
 Fond Thought! not one of all that shining swarm
 Will breathe on thee with life-enkindling breath,
 Till when, like strangers shelt'ring from a storm,
 Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death! 10
 Yet still thou haunt'st me; and though well I see,
 She is not thou, and only thou art she,
 Still, still as though some dear embodied Good,
 Some living Love before my eyes there stood
 With answering look a ready ear to lend, 15
 I mourn to thee and say — "Ah! loveliest friend!
 That this the meed of all my toils might be,
 To have a home, an English home, and thee!"
 Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one.
 The peacefull'st cot, the moon shall shine upon, 20
 Lulled by the thrush and wakened by the lark,
 Without thee were but a becalméd bark,
 Whose Helmsman on an ocean waste and wide
 Sits mute and pale his mouldering helm beside.

And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when 25
 The woodman winding westward up the glen
 At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's maze
 The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist'ning haze,
 Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
 An image with a glory round its head; 30
 The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
 Nor knows he makes the shadow, he pursues!