

U3A Poetry Appreciation Group February meeting Report by Robert Alabaster

Love was in the air when the poetry group met in Annie's house on Valentine's Day. Group members had chosen a wide range of poems which explored the contrasting moods and emotions associated with 'Love'...

Does Love entail the subjugation of the ego? or is it selfish, urgent and all-consuming? William Blake ponders this question using, as metaphors, a soft, malleable clod of earth and a hard, unyielding pebble.

The extremes of love are illustrated - passionate wooing by a shepherd is described by Christopher Marlowe. Caroline Elizabeth Sara Norton protests that she is not in love, even though her friends can see otherwise! Delicate, gentle love between parent and child is imagined to be as light as a feather by Maura Doole. R S Thomas gives thanks for five decades of forbearance, service and affection which he experienced in a passionless but quietly loving marriage.

In contrast to the spare prose of Thomas, Elizabeth Barrett Browning describes in full-on Victorian hyperbole how she loves supremely and eternally...whilst Christina Rossetti relates that her lover comes to her and surpasses her wildest birthday wishes. John Cooper Clarke describes clearly and unambiguously in "*I wanna be yours*" how he wants to be...hers!

Prompted by Wendy Cope's poem (below) we debated the meaning of Valentine's Day. Is it just exploitative, vacuous, commercialism, or is there something more to it?

Another Valentine by Wendy Cope

Today we are obliged to be romantic
and think of yet another Valentine.
We know the rules and we are both pedantic,
today's the day we have to be romantic.
Our love is old and sure, not new and frantic.
You know I'm yours and I know you are mine
and saying that has made me feel romantic,
my dearest love, my darling Valentine.