

Alfred Tennyson

1809-1892

- 1850: Poet Laureate – The Poet of the Queen
- Simplistic view: Tennyson as interpreter of the age
- Wavering between opposite positions
 - Faith: from loss to recovery
 - Joy and despair (“The Two Voices”)
 - Progress: pro and against

- Post-Romantic poet
 - Faith in human feeling and appeal to the heart: “I have felt” (*In Memoriam*); “Rejoice” (“The Two Voices”)
 - Melancholy
 - Influence of isolated upbringing, his father’s epilepsy, his brother’s madness (poetic theme)

- Sense of the Past – Loss – Death
- “All truth is change” – idea of *pantha rei* as dolorous
- Morbid desire to fade, longing for oblivion, (“The Lotus Eaters”)
- Suicide motif (“The Two Voices”) – then dominated
- Love theme – means of salvation
- Poet-Hero (influence of Carlyle)

Lyricism vs Engagement

- Poetic isolation vs summons of reality
- Aesthetic detachment and escapism vs social responsibility
- “The Lotus Eaters” and “The Lady of Shalott” vs *The Idylls of the King* (rise and fall of civilization; role of women; value of heroism)