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BROWNING'S AND SEREMBE'S LOVE POEMS

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ABSTRACT

Browning's and Serembe's love poems will be analyzed in this research paper in order to illustrate how they reflected their efforts to present the idea of love in their poetry. In the 'By the Fire-Side', one of the major poems of Robert Browning during the thesaurus of the British Victorian period and Zef Serembe's 'Song for Longing', considered by many to rank among the best love poems of Rilindja (Renaissance) poets in the nineteenth century Albania. The two poets, do not consider the idea of love in the abstract term. They include love by referring to the specific details, Browning, to his love relationship with a famous poetess Elizabeth Barrett, their elopement and union in Italy, and Serembe to his love for a girl from his native village, who immigrated to Brazil and subsequently died. In these poems, both poets explore the intimate atmosphere they tried to establish for their beloved women, by describing the places that witnessed the birth and growth of their love. 'By the Fire-Side' and 'Song for Longing' comprise a common element; they are personal love poems that describe their ideal love, personal feelings, and passion of their love. While Robert Browning in his poem writes about a peaceful and satisfied married life, full of sweet memories and images of his wife, Zef Serembe's poem is a picture of his sentiment, primarily of solitude and disillusionment. The

comparative and descriptive research methods have been helpful while conducting this research paper.

Key words: ‘By the Fireside’ and ‘Song for Longing’, true lovers, personal feelings, love, and passion.

INTRODUCTION

Victorian literature was produced during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) or the Victorian dominion. It introduces a link and transition between the writers of the Romantic period to the very different literature of the twentieth century. The nineteenth-century is often regarded as a high point of British literature for its poetry, its prose, and its novels. Victorian poetry developed into the context of the novel. As the novel emerged as the dominant form of literature in the early Victorian period, poets sought new ways of telling stories in verses. Except for novels, Victorian poetry also developed in the shadow of Romanticism. All Victorian poets show the strong influence of Romantics in their poetry, including the major characteristics displayed as the major features of this genre: landscape, nature, sky, rocks, hills, fields. (Christ T.C, 2002).

However, another interesting point to be marked is that during the Victorian period, a common point of interest among many, no matter whether they were young or old, male or female, was the talk of love. It was also a time of creativity, imagination, and innovation. However, in the context of science, art, and love none stood out more to society than love. This was then promoted and emphasized through Victorian love letters and Victorian love poems. Robert Browning was a major figure in Victorian love poems. His ardent romanticism also found expression in his love letters in the affair with Elizabeth Barrett (Christ T.C, 2002). He did not write only ‘By the Fire-Side’, a poem that could be called one of the greatest love poems in English literature. He gained a special reputation for his masterpiece ‘By the Fire-Side’ and his other works have been highly evaluated. ‘By the Fire-Side’ puts together the more fruitful reaction to the subjectivity of Romantic poetry. Characteristics that enhance married love are part of Victorian literature and they mirrored the life of nineteenth-century life. The love for a woman is also portrayed without describing her physical charm; the poet concentrates on his real and pure love towards his beloved wife.

The nineteenth century is often regarded as a high point not only in British literature but in other countries of Western Europe as well, such as Italy where Zef Serembe, an Italian-Albanian poet, started to develop his poetry in the shadow of Romanticism. His literary works

can be said to have marked the transition to modern Albanian literature in Italy (Elsie R, 2004). In his poem 'Song for Longing', he is different from his contemporaries because he merges the spirit of poetry of Western Romanticism. Love, broken heart, sorrow, loneliness, and boredom that he applies in his poem, are the same themes that we can read in Western poetry (Qosja, R., 1986).

Both poets wrote about love. But what is love? In their poems, we saw that love is just a four-letter word with so many meanings behind it. It is a very strong and beautiful feeling about a person. Nevertheless, love is much more than that. Love is when two people believe in everything they can do as one. Love goes beyond age. You can love and be loved at any age. It is a passionate affection and desire felt for a person. Love can be so powerful that people cry, suffer, feel pain, or even risk their lives to save it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the authors, who wrote and analyzed love in Robert Browning's poetry, is Jessi G. Garson. In Browning's philosophy of love in 'Men and Women', Garson realized that the poet showed great progress in his poetical and intellectual powers. In Browning's poetry, he saw that many of his poems deal with love, and the poet preferred to consider himself a lover in the first place.

In his early poems he used words, which from their context, can be addressed to nobody but his wife, he says. It is a method earned not by poetic achievement, nor by intellectual progress, but by the mere fact of love. It is love, which kindles the divine spark – the soul – in men. Therefore, that soul is immortal; the purpose of its immortality must be for a higher and ever higher height of love. All other powers are to be subordinated to this one great ambition. (Garson, G. J, 1920).

In his statement Sheokand et.al. states that, there is no doubt about Browning being a poet of love. In his poem he explores the intimate atmosphere Browning tries to establish for his wife by describing the places that witnessed the birth of their love and its growth in Italy. (Sheokand J.& Saxena S., 2011). They explore that many of his poems deal with love in various aspects. Certainly, some of his poems convey the passionate aspect of love – what has been termed as a raw passion in its crude elemental form. The intensity of feeling, which to Browning was essential to life, naturally finds expression in poems dealing with so basic a human emotion as love. In his poems, there is the reflection of that infinite passion and the pain of the finite heart

that yearns. While he firmly believed love to be the guiding principle of the universe, Browning is more concerned in his poems with love between men and women. When we talk of Browning as a love poet, we have in mind the poems, which deal with the isolating passion of one sex for the other chiefly in youth whether moral or immoral. (Sheokand J.& Saxena S., 2011).

Robert Elsie in his book, *Albanian Literature a Short History*, describes that Serembe's verses, despondent and of melancholic character, and yet often patriotic and idealistic in inspiration, are considered by many to rank among the best lyric poetry ever produced in Albanian, at least before modern times. His themes range from melodious lyrics and love to eulogies on his native land (be it Italy, the land of his birth or Albania, the land of his dreams), elegant poems on friendship and the beauty of nature, and verses of religious inspiration. Among his romantic poems of nostalgic nationalism, which cement the literary link with the rising generation of Rilindja (Renaissance) poets in nineteenth-century Albania, there is one lyric dedicated to his lost homeland. He was a poet of sentiment, primarily of solitude and disillusionment. His love lyrics, some about the childhood sweetheart he had lost so early in life, constitute a veritable diary of the heart for example 'Kërthime tharosi' also known as 'Kënkë malli' ('Song of Longing'). (Elsie R., 2005).

Nasho Jorgaqi in his book *Udhëve të mërgimit*, states that from Serembe's verses we can see that he loved all his life. This love is seen in his poem 'Kangjella e mallit të parë', also known as 'Kënga e mallit të parë', which he had written when he was a young boy of just fourteen. Later, Serembe became a poet who suffered for love, and thanks to his pure feelings, we have today those remarkable and unmatched lyrics. Love made the poet suffer but also develop the aspect of true and holy love. However, unfaithful and unrealized love caused him psychic disorders and chronic depression, which rendered him solitary and made him insecure all his life. (Jorgaqi, 1994).

BROWNING'S AND SEREMBE'S LOVE POEMS

'By the fireside' is a poem that could be called one of the greatest love poems in English literature. It is an autumn-themed poem and the poet describes how the leaves are changing, and the cooler nights are coming. The poem begins with a scene in which the husband sitting by the fireside meditates on the occasions that led to his marriage. Life with his beloved wife is like being in paradise and it is a real joy to sit together with his darling close to each other enjoying long dark November evenings. While he is thinking 'By the Fireside' nice thoughts,

all heartache, and sadness long gone, his wife Leonor sits quietly reading by his side, which is a clear picture of his wife Elisabeth Barrett Browning. (Loucks F J.& Stauffer, A , 1979).

From the first stanzas, we understand that finding a person who understands you, loves you, and is always there for you like no other, is a wonderful feeling. He also describes the pleasure of a strong connection, which develops more and more over time. The poet describes how he is experiencing a love so deep, so strong, and complex that he began to doubt that such a love is very hard to be found in verse or prose.

His verses show us, that the ones who are meant to be together, are rare, but in the end, they succeed. Through his poem, he describes their elopement to Italy where they lived happily for fifteen years and enjoyed the pleasure of true love.

Robert Browning belongs to a solid and educated middle class, which is interested in letters, but not in ambitions, the class to which poetry is a luxury, but not a necessity. His father passed on the love of art and literature to young Robert. Browning spent much time reading in his father's library. His father's love of the Greek tragedies gave him a grounding in Greek and Latin. His influence from Greek and Latin is portrayed in many verses of the poem 'By the fireside'.

While he dedicates his wife the most beautiful words of love, in his verses he also brings parts of the different sites that he had visited during his journeys.

He traveled to Italy many times. He visited Northern Italy and explored Italian sites. In a word, he saw the glories of Renaissance Italy. During his visit to Italy he had set out to gather material, and his impressions from his journey were depicted in his poem and made him the most international of the English poets during the Victorian era (Kenedy, S. R & Hair.S. D., 2007). According to Browning, love is a gift from God but you must know how to retain it. In his verses, he is so careful with his phrases and his dedication to love. While reading his poem, we are witnesses that his words that he dedicates to his beloved woman are very powerful and convey the deepest feelings of his heart.

All of us are aware that there is not a perfect person in this world, but from Browning's 'By the fire-side', the line 'My perfect wife Leonor', we understand that a perfect wife exists and she is his beloved wife.

Many times in his poem, he says that he still remembers the day when he met her for the first time, and at that moment, he knew that she was his true love, and he felt something in his chest telling him that they were going to be together for the rest of their lives. Their great love is

never going to end. Even when they get older, their age is not going to threaten their endless love.

The courtship and marriage between Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett were carried out secretly. Barrett's strict father disliked Browning, whom he viewed as an unreliable fortune hunter. While her family was away, Elizabeth sneaked out of the house and met Browning at St. Marylebone Parish Church, where they were married. She returned home for a week, keeping the marriage a secret, then fled with Browning to Italy (History.com Editors, 2009). After their marriage, Elizabeth returned home for a week. This was the hardest week in Browning's life. From the poem, we can see that he was afraid that he is going to lose his true love. In his verse, he explores his feelings about how much he misses her. While he goes for long walks, the silence becomes his companion. During the night, it grew to such a degree that he could not wait for her anymore. He longed for the voice and the beauty of his beloved Leonor. Instead of being together, walking side by side, arm in arm and cheek to cheek, they have to suffer in loneliness and to save their love and their wedding vows behind the altar not to be stolen.

The final moment had come. Elizabeth fled with Browning to Italy, only two of them, 'never a third'. They are together, but not like two friends but as husband and wife, and in a stanza, the poet describes how they are allowed to touch each other like husband and wife. He confesses that he is the happiest man on the Earth because he gained such pure love, he has found his soul mate, his empty heart is filled, and his companion's silence disappeared. Now they are one body, two spirits but, on the other hand, he is afraid of losing his friendship with his beloved wife, a friendship that led to their marriage.

In 'By the Fire-Side', Browning explores the intimate atmosphere that he tries to establish for his wife by describing the places in Italy that witnessed the birth of their love and its growth. Furthermore, the poem focuses on a significant moment of the union during which the two lovers remember their past, contemplate their present, and hope the best for the future of their married life. It is a major love poem. The poem begins (stanza II) and ends (stanza LII), with a scene in which the husband sitting by the fireside, meditates on the occasions that led to his marriage, while his wife Leonor sits quietly reading by his side, a clear picture of his wife Elisabeth Barrett Browning. (Loucks F J.& Stauffer, A , 1979).

*I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows*

*And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!* (stanza II)

*And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!* (stanza LII)

Furthermore, the poet in the 'By the Fire-Side' focuses on a significant moment of union during which the two lovers remember their past, present, and hope the best for the future of their marriage. At the time of their union, two loving souls are mixed at last and how they are sucked in each other.

*A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.* (stanza XLVII)

*My own, confirm me! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems a waste instead?* (stanza XXV)

From these stanzas, we can see what exactly the lovers long for. They long for the most important moment in their life, the moment of union, which is the highest emotional fulfillment in love. 'By the Fire-Side' is an autobiographical poem and shows Browning's love for his beloved wife Elizabeth Barrett. It is one of those rare poems in which he speaks in his own person and he expresses the most intimate feelings of his heart. In his monologue, the poet is the speaker, and his lovely Elisabeth the interlocutor. The poem begins and ends with a couple sitting 'By the fire side' enjoying a peaceful and satisfied married life full of sweet memories and images of their great love.

While Browning in his poetry presents a remarkable picture of peaceful and satisfied married life, full of sweet memories and images about his perfect wife, Serembe in his poem 'Song for longing', longs for his girl who is far away from him and has sung in his verses that she sleeps 'somewhere' but he doesn't know where. (Serembe, Z., 1985). Serembe's 'Song for Longing' is an elegy composed of nine stanzas. The poem opens with the lines when the main character asks his beloved woman 'why she left him', and if she knew 'what she had done to him' after she left. 'Song for Longing' is an elegy lamenting the premature death of his beloved woman.

In this poem, the speaker grieves about what she had done to him after her emigration to Brazil, where she subsequently died there. In the following verses, the poet longs for his sweetheart, trying to describe to the reader the places that witnessed the birth and the growth of their love in his native village.

Through the lines of the poem, we see an ideal lover who is true and loyal to their paragon that directly expresses their love, while describing his great passion and real feelings. In Serembe's poem, we understand that falling in love has painful, emotional, physical, and mental consequences. The poem expresses a deep feeling of the speaker toward his beloved woman. To express the depth of his feelings, the poet frequently employs hyperbolic terms to describe the objects of his affection. He describes or transforms the girl in his poem into the most glorious creature to walk the earth. In the 'Song for Longing,' we may say that Serembe developed the aspect of the 'true' and even the 'holy love'. Except for his grief, he remembers the happy moments he shared with the person he loved the most. At the same time, he gets hurt from it because it is now just a memory. Those memories that once made him smile are now the reason for his heartaches because his heart broke and slowly died when she left. 'How could you even dare and try to leave me?', is his question while he blames himself for not doing anything to stop her emigration and even her death. What remained from this 'true love' are the happiest days of his life that he spent with his beloved woman, never believing that the loneliness of his lost love will cause him such torture and suffering.

His loneliness and torture are seen in the first verses of the poem. The lines describe specific details of his love with his girl from his native village, her emigration, and the questions that came from a broken heart such as 'Why she left him' and if she knew 'What she had done to him', describe the torture and his suffering.

In his poem 'Song for Longing', Serembe, rarely expresses his happiness; he describes the death of his sweetheart and tries to explore the intimate atmosphere and places that witnessed their love.

*Oh, sa të mjera shkuan ditët kur fare
Nuk i pash' bebzat të qeshnin në ata sy
Që zemrën time e bënin aq krenare,
E gjirin ma mbushnin plot me dashuri. (stanza II)*

In the 'Song for longing', Serembe is inspired by his love affair. A great love from which he selects certain expressions as well as feelings in order to show them in his poem, which depicts the poet's life that causes him a mental disorder and a chronic depression which rendered him

solitary and insecure in his later life. While reading about his true love in stanza IV, we are witnesses that falling in love has painful, emotional, physical, and mental consequences.

*Gjin' ma mbushi malli e zemrën me zjarr,
E trutë seq mu harbuan në mendime,
Pushim dot nuk gjej e paqe më nuk kam
Ti, vashë ma dërmovë jetën time.* (stanza IV)

The poet chooses the best words to describe the girl in his verses, and he compares her beauty with the beautiful nature of his village. To him, the girl is more than love; it is a woman that makes a man to be loved, happy and suffer pain. Moreover, the woman to whom he sang in his verses in the poem 'Song for Longing' makes him suffer and feel happy at the same time. In his poem, Serembe perfectly describes that love is stronger than death even though it cannot stop death from happening, but no matter how hard death tries, it cannot stop people to love. It cannot take away the sweet memories that Serembe had with the only girl he ever loved and the only one that made him suffer such pain.

CONCLUSION

The two writers are considered the greatest poets of the nineteenth century, Browning in the English literature during the Victorian Age and Serembe in the nineteenth-century Albanian literature.

Robert Browning and Zef Serembe started writing love poems early in their carrier, but their best love poems were written not until they had attained emotional maturity. Browning may be considered a love poet when he started to write his best poems dedicated to his wife, during their elopement in Italy. While Browning in his love poems had written about a peaceful and satisfied married life full of sweet memories and images, Serembe in his love poems longs for the young girl that had left him and later subsequently died. In both poems, the reader can see what exactly the lovers long for. They long for the most important moment in their life, a moment of union, which is the highest emotional fulfillment of love; however, not always lovers can reach this moment, which is the most important key of happiness. The poem 'By the Fire-Side' is comprised of fifty-three stanzas. It is one of the finest poems of married love in the English language. The poem begins and ends with the main character sitting silently with his wife by the fireside. The poet muses on their married life and the blessing, which her love has bestowed upon him. It is a remarkable picture of a peaceful and satisfied married life full

of sweet memories and images of his beloved wife. On the other hand, 'Song for Longing' is composed of nine stanzas.

At the beginning of the poem, the main character wonders why she left him and reveals the grief he feels about what she had done to him after her emigration to Brazil, and subsequently her death there. In the following verses, the poet longs for his sweetheart trying to describe to the reader the places that witnessed the birth and the growth of their love in his native village. Generally saying, both poems show two ideal lovers who are true and loyal to their ideal that directly expresses their love, which is a good example or quality of their characters describing their real passion and real feelings. Another interesting point to be marked is the importance of love as the most important key factor towards happiness. Both love poems are the kind of poems that support and encourage the relationship between a man and a woman to be full of love and passion as the example of Robert Browning and Zef Serembe's love in their poetry.

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