

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S PERCEPTION, FEELING AND THOUGHT OF LOVE, AND EARLY MARRIED LIFE IN *SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE*

Ainul karomah

INTISARI

*Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui persepsi, perasaan, dan pemikiran Elizabeth Barrett Browning terhadap cinta dan untuk mengamati kehidupan pernikahan penulis dan suaminya yang tergambar dalam soneta, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Teori ekspresif digunakan untuk menemukan persepsi, perasaan, dan pemikiran penulis terhadap cinta yang tergambar di dalam karyanya. Data utama atau obyek utama penelitian yang digunakan adalah karya sastra itu sendiri.*

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa persepsi terhadap cinta merupakan hasil dari tindakan ekspresif Elizabeth dalam memahami cinta itu sendiri dengan pemahaman yang mendalam yang melibatkan kesadaran terhadap posisi dan kehormatan kekasihnya dan dirinya sendiri. Namun, ide-ide tentang cinta dipatahkan oleh emosi cintanya. Selain itu, ia didukung oleh kekuatan cinta untuk membuat pertimbangan dalam hidupnya untuk menentukan jalan hidupnya sendiri bahwa ia menyerahkan hidupnya kepada Robert Browning dengan menyetujui untuk menikah dengannya yang menunjukkan tindakan ekspresif cinta terbesarnya. Dengan demikian, cinta telah memberinya kesempatan untuk mendapatkan kebahagiaan dalam masa hidupnya.

Kata kunci: persepsi, perasaan, dan pemikiran terhadap cinta, kehidupan pernikahan

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research are to discover Elizabeth Barrett Browning's perception, feelings, and thoughts of love and to observe her early married life with her husband as depicted in her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. The expressive theory is used to find the perception, feeling, and thought of the author depicted in it. The primary data or the main object of the research is the literary work itself.

The results of this research show that the perceptions of love are the products of Elizabeth's expressive act in conceiving the love itself with deep understanding which involves the realization of position and respect of her lover and herself. However, her ideas of love are defeated by her emotion of love. Moreover, she is encouraged by the power of love to make consideration in her life to choose her own course of life that she surrenders her life to her lover by agreeing to marry Robert Browning which shows her greatest expressive act of love. Thus, love has given her the opportunity to gain happiness in her life time.

Keywords: perception, feeling, and thought of love, early marriage life

INTRODUCTION

Sonnets from the Portuguese was written by Elizabeth Barrett Browning between 1845 and 1846 and was published in 1850. This work became the well-known work of Elizabeth Barrett Browning until these days. It is a collection of forty-four love sonnets dedicated to Robert Browning after she met and developed an intimate relationship with him. Through these poems, she expresses her love for him. The development of the content and tone of the sonnets are influenced by the progress of their relationship. In the earlier sonnets she expresses her doubt and fear about beginning a relationship with Robert Browning. However, after the relationship progressed well Elizabeth Barrett Browning was able to overcome her anxieties so it influenced her to write with a more passionate tone. She showed her sonnets to her husband, but she did not have a plan to publish her work because they contained her personal feeling. However, Robert Browning changed her mind. He suggested that her work would be the best work of English-written sonnets since Shakespeare's time. In order to maintain the privacy of life story of the author itself, the sonnets was entitled *Sonnets from the Portuguese* in hope people would believe they were translations from foreign sonnets. The "Portuguese" was Elizabeth Barrett Browning's nickname that was given by Robert Browning. It was taken from her poem entitled *Catarina to Camoens* – the love story of Camoens, the poet, and his tragic love for a Portuguese maiden. This title was suggested by Robert Browning himself according to his wife's proposal (Kenyon 133).

This research discusses Elizabeth Barret Browning's *Sonnet from the Portuguese* because it is the best work of the author that portrays its author's personal feeling and partly her life story.

There are only 18 sonnets out of 44 sonnets which are analyzed. Moreover, the content development of the sonnets which is influenced by the relationship progress between the author and her husband and also other issues in her daily life become concern and determination in the writing of this research. For these reasons, Elizabeth Barret Browning's *Sonnet from the Portuguese* is selected to be investigated in this research.

In analyzing *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, the expressive theory is used to find the perception, feeling, and thought of the author depicted in it. M.H. Abrams summarizes the expressive theory in this way: "A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings" (22). This research uses analytical method. "The researcher has to use facts or information already available, and analyze these to make a critical evaluation of the material" (Kothari 3). The *Sonnets from the Portuguese* is analyzed and interpreted in order to obtain information about the perception, feeling, and thought of love and early marriage life of its author conveyed in it and the connection between the work and its author's personal life.

1.1. Elizabeth's Perception of Love

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote *Sonnet from the Portuguese* as the overflow of her expression of love toward a man named Robert Browning. In this poem, she portrays her idea, belief or image of love. Her acts of expressing her love are the results of how she sees or understands what love is through her condition and position. The awareness of reality makes her early relationship with Robert Browning face the obstacle. However, she never said that she does not love him, but her love is hindered by her

sad experience and bad health. Therefore, she convinces him about her feeling, but she will not let him experience her misery by having a romantic relationship. Robert Browning, who loves her truly and willingly wants to make her happy, has to assure her in order to make her believe that his love is sincere. His struggle of changing her doubt is impeded by her perception of love which she believes preventing unexpected things to happen. In this process, she also tries to convince herself about her feeling which is uncertain about her response toward his love because of her perception about love which is influenced by her unfortunate life.

Elizabeth conceives that love cannot ignore the true condition of someone he loves. Loving someone should know this in order to prevent themselves from painful love experience. Firstly, she tries to tell Robert Browning that she has sad experiences which extremely grieve her. The death of her beloved brother, Edward Barrett, saddens her life very deeply. On July 11, 1838, her brother and two friends went sailing in a small boat, but they never returned and were lost in Babbicombe Bay. Three days later, their bodies were found and she was assured that her brother had died. The loss of her brother, who was drowned in Torquay, where he accompanied her for three years for the purpose of recovering her health, becomes her misery which remains even for a long time in her life (Kenyon 39). She expresses this terrible sorrow in her sonnet V:

I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I over-
turn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in
me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly
burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy
foot in scorn –

In this sonnet, she pictures herself as Electra, a protagonist character in plays written by Greek authors, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. She is the daughter of King Agamemnon and Clymenestra. After returning from the Trojan War, her father is murdered by her mother, supported by her mother's lover, Aegisthus, in revenge on the sacrifice of their daughter, Iphigenia. By the death of her father, Electra is saddened and suffered a deep sorrow. This means that she is shaken by three levels of sadness which she never expected in her life. Her father's death has become a great shock for her, but then the fact that the murderer is her own mother, a person whom she never expects to kill her father. Moreover, another fact is that her action is supported by her mother's lover, makes her despair deepen. Her mother does not only murder her father, she has also betrayed her husband and family by having another man as her lover. Therefore, she wants to take revenge on her mother and her mother's lover. She is longing for her brother, Orestes, returning to her to help her plan (www.sparksnote.com).

However, Orestes, who also wants to do the same thing, has another plan assisted by his keeper, the Old Man. He disguises his true identity as Phocian in order to execute his revenge. Then, The Old Man delivers false news about her brother's death to the kingdom. This sad news adds Electra's sorrow after those three sad events which have broken her heart. As a consequence, Electra's despair and sadness were heightened because of the four sad events. She takes the urn containing of false brother's ashes which is brought by Phocian and lamented over it at length. She even states that her brother's death is equated with her own death to express her desperation (www.sparksnote.com).

Elizabeth describes her sadness and sorrow similar to Electra's over her

beloved's death. She is still mourning her brother's death which leads to her suffering in her life. The ashes as mentioned in the sonnet represent her sadness of her brother's death, which is shown to Robert Browning in order to make him recognize the sorrow hidden within her and how she still cannot forget and is influenced by it. She reveals this carefully to him without expectation to be pitied by him.

The second thing about her true condition, which should be realized by Robert Browning, is her illness. She suffers serious illness as the result of falling from her pony, damaging her spine when she was fifteen years old. Her health never recovers that makes her cannot leave her room. Feeling trapped in her sick-bed, thus she is also mentally suffered. This condition is a grief expressed in the line, "What a great heap of grief lay hid in me," in the sonnet V, which is hidden in her deeply. In this part of the sonnets, she tries to convey that she has grief and sorrow because of her sick condition that Robert Browning should know before he loves her seriously. This idea and different way of conceiving herself as a weak individual supports her determination to refuse his feeling of love for her.

Elizabeth's expression in her sonnet V is similar to what is expressed in her letter to Robert Browning which was sent on March 27, 1846;

..... As for *men*, you are not to take me to be quite ignorant of what they are worth in the gross. The most blindfolded women may see a little under the folds . . and I have seen quite enough to be glad to shut my eyes. Did I not tell you that I never thought that any man whom I could love, would stoop to love *me*, even if I attained so far as the sight of such. Which I *never attained* . . until . . until ! Then, that *you* should care for me. ! ! Oh I hold to my rights,

though you overcome me in most other things. And it is my right to love you better than I could do if I were more worthy to be loved by you (Browning, *The Letters* 9).

Besides she cannot accept their ignorance in loving each other, she also has a mental image that love is not selfish and unjust. Her refusal for Robert Browning is caused by her care and love for him. Knowing her weakness and hopeless life makes her think that it is unfair on him to love a woman who is dying in her sickbed. She cannot let herself become selfish by preceding her feeling over the respect of a man she loves. She respects his value and position that he is known as a great man."He was one of a generation of great men, of great men who had certain peculiar type, certain peculiar merits, and defects." He is known as a man whose the elemental honesty and reality of his character are deep. He has extreme care and great effort in deciding great matters. He has not fear of other influences which he receives with the most affection. Moreover, he is deeply worthy to be loved because of his simple, heartfelt, and unlimited admiration for other people (Chesterton 41). Also, he respects her that is indicated by his acceptance of all her weaknesses and bad condition because he loves her.

With her incomparable conditions to Robert Browning, she considers herself not able to repay what Robert Browning has given to her. This perception is expressed in sonnet VIII;

What can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought
the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained,
untold,
And laid them on the outside of the
wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,

Ungrateful, that for these most
manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at
all?

She wonders what she can give to Robert Browning who has brought her such honest feeling and hope which become light in her life. In this sonnet, she describes him as someone who is "liberal and princely giver," indicating that she has received something luxurious or valuable from him. It is something which she describes as "the gold", symbolizing great value such as power, strength, and perfection (Chevalier). She symbolizes his love with those three things. According to her, he has power to love her with all her weakness and family displeasure toward him. Therefore, this power heightens her confidence to defeat those obstacles. Furthermore, by the presence and love of him, gradually she gains her strength and her health improves. Because he loves her without considering her weakness and he regards her as a normal woman therefore it makes her feel perfect in his point of view. Also, it is a majestic heart of him which has raised her personal worth to be loved by him.

Furthermore, Elizabeth explains her reasons why love should be just in her sonnet IX:

Can it be right to give what I can
give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of
tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing
years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles
which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are
not peers
So to be lovers; and I own, and
grieve,
That givers of such gifts as mine are,
must

Be counted with the ungenerous.
Out, alas!

I will not soil thy purple with my
dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy
Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love—which were
unjust.

Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

She believes that if she imposes to have romantic relationship with Robert Browning, thus it is unfair for him because she is still burdened by her miserable condition. By allowing him to feel her misery makes her afraid that it is an improper thing to do. Moreover, his ability to give her happiness and respects for her as a normal woman become her consideration to refuse him. For this reasons, she states that she will not disgrace his pride by letting him bearing her unfortunate life. Also, she will not ruin his intellectuality in literature. This statement is depicted in line, "Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass," – it is known that Robert Browning loves Italy, where he can produce his best work of art. "It is well known that Robert Browning loved Italy; that it was his adopted country; that he said in one of the finest of his lyrics that the name of it would be found written on his heart." (Chesterton 59) In her ill condition she cannot accompany Robert to travel to Italy, while his working condition will flourish when he works in Italy. She does not want to be an obstacle for his dream and talent by burdening him. She is afraid that because of her condition, he will not leave England for Italy. Therefore when Robert Browning proposes her to marry him, she refuses him with the reason which is associated with her inferiority compared to him. She refuses him through her letter written on June 4, 1846:

Do I not always tell you that you are
too good for me? Yet the last of my
intentions was, this time, to doubt of
your attachment for me. Believe that.

I will write to-night more fully but never can be more than at this moment. Your Ba. (Browning, *The Letters* 203).

Although by loving him she also feels the happiness and hopes to live still in love, but she does not have confidence to be able to make him happy. To put it another way, her love is merely “love”, which has been explained by her according to her perception. She thinks that in loving each other there should be the balance between what is given and received. For instance, the man has given the woman, whom he loves, such happiness and respect, therefore the woman should give the same things as what she is received. Elizabeth thinks that she is not capable to give what Robert has given to her, therefore she feels unworthy. As a consequence, she is willing to let her love to be unrequited. Thus, she considers giving up to have the romantic relationship and to agree for marriage.

1.2. Elizabeth’s Feeling and Thought of Love

1.2.1. Feeling of Love

Despite of her doubt and strong refusal of Robert Browning’s love, truly Elizabeth loves him. When she tries to push him away from her life, actually deep inside her heart she feels the emotion of affection for him. As a human being, especially as a woman, she cannot avoid the natural emotion of love when it enters her heart. Her sense of her circumstances and reality cannot control the feeling of love because it is an emotion rather than thoughts or ideas. Therefore, the power of her love and Robert’s persistency to love her though she refuses him makes her finally willing to unite their love. She admits that their friendship has grown into love and then love grows into courtship. In this phase, Elizabeth expresses her feeling of love through actions such as giving him a lock of her hair as expressed in the

sonnet XVIII and sending love letters to Robert Browning as discovered in the sonnet XXVIII. Also, in her sonnets she always glorifies him by mentioning his kindness and merit.

One of Elizabeth’s expressions of how she feels her love for Robert is demonstrated in the sonnet XVIII. In this sonnet, she conveys that she gives “a lock of her hair” to Robert as a sign of her affection toward him.

I never gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to
thee,
Which now upon my fingers
thoughtfully
I ring out to the full brown lenth
and say
“Take it.” My day of youth went
yesterday;

She confesses that she never gave a lock of her hair to another man, except to Robert Browning. He is the first man who receives it thus it means that she considers him as a special man and her first true love. she gives a lock of her hair to him as a sign of her approval of their intimate relationship. In Victorian Era, giving a lock of hair of a woman to a man symbolizes that the woman has surrendered herself to him and a sign of affection (Simonsen, 38-38).

“Take it.” My day of youth went
yesterday;
My hair no longer bounds to my
foot’s glee,
Nor plant I it from rose- or myrtle-
tree,
As girls do, any more: it only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks the
mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that
hangs aside
Through sorrow’s trick. I thought
the funeral-shears
Would take this first, but Love is
justified—

Take it thou—finding pure, from all
those years,
The kiss my mother left here when
she died.

If Robert receives the important part of her which is her hair, it means that he also have to receive her circumstances. She states that the hair which she gives to him describes that her youth has gone long time ago. The hair which is given to him has been collected since she was young until now when her hair is showing that she is growing older. Moreover, it also represents her grief and sadness that she is sick and overshadowed by death. Before she met him, she thought that the hair would be gone with her death. Therefore, she feels that he is the special person who can own her life and she also feels that "Love is justified" to determine him as the person who can bring back the happiness which she describes as "The kiss my mother left here when she died." She expresses this statement to show the importance of the hair to Robert Browning that the hair is still attached to the love and affection of her mother who died when she was young. She is shaken by the death of her mother which leaves deep sorrow and sadness. Therefore, the hair reminds her of the happy memories of her mother when she kissed her head fondly when she was still alive.

Furthermore, Elizabeth expresses her feeling of love through love letters which she had been exchanging with Robert Browning. Their relationships are started by the first letter of Robert Browning which he sent to her as the appreciation and admiration of her works and it contains his confession of love to Elizabeth. On January 10, 1845 he wrote to her:

I love your verses with all my heart,
dear Miss Barrett, and this is no
off-hand complimentary letter that I
shall write,—whatever else, no
prompt matter-of-course

recognition of your genius, and
there a graceful and natural end of
the thing. . . . I do, as I say, love
these books with all my heart—and
I love you too. Do you know I was
once not very far from seeing—
really seeing you? . . . (Browning,
The Letters 1-2).

Therefore, they began to write each other then for the development of their relationship, the letters become love letters. In those letters, she addresses Robert Browning with "Dear," "Dearest," and "My Beloved" which indicates the expression of her feeling of love. This is also found in her sonnets that she uses intimate address to him.

As lovers, Elizabeth and Robert convey their love to each other through the letters. In the sonnet XXVIII, she expresses her joy and gratefulness because of receiving the love letters from him.

My letters! all dead paper, mute
and white!
And yet they seem alive and
quivering
Against my tremulous hands which
loose the string
And let them drop down on my
knee to-night.

She sees the letters only "dead paper, mute and white," however according to her feeling, those letters "seem alive" because of the words which are written by her lover. The words make her flutter when she reads the letters.

This said—he wished to have me in
his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day
in spring
To come and touch my hand ... a
simple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this ... the
paper's light ...
Said, Dear I love thee; and I sank
and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my
past.

In the letters, her lover said that he wants to meet her in person as a friend at first in the spring. The spring represents the renewal of days after winter which means that his presence into her life become a new life for her after she suffers the sadness and grief. Moreover, although he comes and only touches her hand, she is very happy. Furthermore, in the letter, he said “Dear I love thee” which is important confession that overwhelms her. The avowal of her lover makes her “sink” and “quailed” which shows her surprise that someone like her can receive the avowal of love from him. Moreover, all of a sudden she realizes that what happens now that she is finally willing to accept Robert’s love, actually can happen long time ago when she is still full of doubt of his love. She acknowledges that whether she receives his love or not, her condition is still the same and does not change the situation. Either in the past or in the present time, in reality she can be happy to be a lover of Robert Browning if only she did not worry about her circumstances. This is expressed in the line;” As if God’s future thundered on my past” that God gives her a picture of her future which is like a mirror that reflects the situation to her past time.

Furthermore, Elizabeth pays Robert Browning sincere compliment from her heart to show him her way of letting him know how much she loves and admires him. Particularly she praises him for his personality, actions and status. The compliment that she gives him is intended to make him happy and worthy. For instance, as discovered in the line of sonnet III which she says that “Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!” which expresses her compliment for his personality which is kind and noble. Her glorification for him is somehow exaggerated by equating his character as high as noble person who she means a prince or an aristocrat.

1.2.2. Thought of Love

Elizabeth makes some careful considerations as the result of the process of thinking about her love to Robert Browning. She makes those considerations when she is in the stage of realization of Robert’s sincerity to love her. The relationship of Elizabeth and Robert Browning finally can be categorized as intimate relationship. She thinks that how she could let Robert, who loves her, constantly waiting to be accepted even though she has already felt positive effects of what he gives her. Therefore, she is in her opinion that love is hope, her worth, endurance, and trust.

There are processes of thinking which Elizabeth does before she considers receiving Robert’s intention to be on her side. All the things such as love, care, saving her life, and attention which are given by him make her think that she should accept him because in reality he can make her happy. In the sonnet XXVII she describes what makes her think that she can have confidence to hope for her life again. She explains his merit for her in the following lines:

My own Belovèd, who hast lifted
me
From this drear flat of earth where I
was thrown,
And, in betwixt the languid
ringlets, blown
A life-breath, till the forehead
hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels
see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own,
my own,

In these lines, she recalls how Robert saves her life by coming into her life and giving her sincere love. She thinks that he helps her to escape from her dreary life when she was depressed and overshadowed by death. This statement becomes the reason why she can have expectation to live and hope to gain happiness. He has changed her grief into

happiness so that she dares to have hope for a longer life in order to share the happiness with him.

Furthermore, besides to make Elizabeth has hope and believe of happiness again, Robert also manages to convince her that he can help her to gain happiness again if she lets him to be on her side. Thus, this changes her thinking that his love has made her to be a worthy person. This statement is expressed in the sonnet XVI:

And as a vanquished soldier yields
his sword
To one who lifts him from the
bloody earth,
Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If thou invite
me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my
worth!

In this sonnet, she admits that her insistence saying that she is unworthy to be on his side has been conquered by his kindness and sincerity to love her. She portrays herself as “a vanquished soldier,” who gives “his sword” that represents her resistance to love to someone who saves her life. Finally, she thinks that it is time to end her “strife” between her feeling and her perceptions of love toward him. She realizes that the power of love wins over her negative perceptions. Therefore, she considers accepting him and asks him to love her more because it makes her more worthy.

Apart from this, when love makes Elizabeth changes her mind that she can have hope and deserve to be on his side, she also realizes that her love can make her able to endure the disease which she suffers. Being disappointed by her father's indifference of her health, finally she gives Robert Browning the conditional promise that if she could survive in that winter, she will accept his marriage proposal proceeded by engagement. She makes her

promise last autumn. Encouraged by her own promise, she decides to endure her sickness during that winter. She expresses how she bears this in the sonnet XX:

Belovèd, my Belovèd, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year
ago,
What time I sat alone here in the
snow
And saw no footprint, heard the
silence sink
No moment at thy voice, but, link
by link,
Went counting all my chains as if
that so
They never could fall off at any
blow
Struck by thy possible hand—why,
thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder!
Wonderful

This sonnet tells the times when she is trying to survive during that winter. She describes how her condition at that time that she feels lonely because she cannot meet Robert. Besides that, she also feels worries that what if she cannot survive in the extreme English winter. However, she tries to endure her sickness for about nine month since she makes her promise last autumn. Moreover, she is also encouraged by Robert's statement that even if she does not recover which means she cancels her promise, he will still love her till the end of life as described in a letter of Elizabeth to Mrs. Martin:

In the meanwhile, at my side was
another; I was driven and I was
drawn. Then at last I said, 'If you
like to let this winter decide it, you
may. I will allow of no promises
nor engagement. I cannot go to
Italy, and I know, as nearly as a
human creature can know any fact,
that I shall be ill again through the
influence of this English winter. If I
am, you will see plainer the
foolishness of this persistence; if I

am not, I will do what you please.'
 And his answer was, 'If you are ill
 and keep your resolution of not
 marrying me under those
 circumstances, I will keep mine and
 love you till God shall take us both'
 (Kenyon 123).

Thus, she thinks that the power of love
 between Robert and her makes her stronger
 to endure her circumstances. Fortunately,
 there is a miracle that the winter is not as
 extreme as usual so Elizabeth's health
 begins to improve. Thus, when the spring
 arrives, her promise is claimed. Now she
 realizes that her endurance has been paid
 off with the fact that she and Robert finally
 get engaged secretly.

Elizabeth has given her answer of
 her promise to Robert Browning which
 means she agrees to have commitment to
 marry him. When she marries him, it
 means she should leave England for Italy
 to live with him. She thinks it is not an
 easy task considering her health which is
 not completely recovered. Moreover, she
 also should face the reality that her father
 does not support her marriage plan.
 However, although it is very difficult for
 her, she still trusts her fiancé to take care
 of her. She decides to strive against her
 father opposition and marry her fiancé.
 This is expressed in the sonnet XXXIV:

Through my obedience. When I
 answer now,
 I drop a grave thought, break from
 solitude;
 Yet still my heart goes to thee—
 ponder how—
 Not as to a single good, but all my
 good!
 Lay thy hand on it, best one, and
 allow
 That no child's foot could run fast
 as this blood.

She expresses how she makes her anxiety
 vanished and she is brave to oppose her
 father's prohibition. She does this because
 she trusts in Robert Browning since she

loves him and he also loves her. Her
 thought of love makes her confident in her
 choice to believe in him rather than her
 father.

1.3. Early Marriage life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning

1.3.1. The Secret Marriage

Finally, Robert Browning offers
 marriage proposal to Elizabeth, however
 she refuses because of her illness and her
 father prohibition to his children to marry.
 He refuses to give blessing to Elizabeth
 marrying Robert Browning because of his
 unexplained reason and pride that he is
 fond of his family. The loss of his beloved
 family members form his idea that there is
 no one in his family can ever leave the
 household. At this point, she cannot
 oppose her father intention at once since
 she respects him. However, until the
 moment when he also refuses to agree with
 a physician named Dr. Chambers, who
 gives an advice that she should get warmer
 air that winter in Pisa because English
 winter would make her health worse, she is
 very disappointed toward him and it
 wounded her heart (Kenyon 123).

Wounded by the disappointment,
 she decides to determine her own course of
 life, which she wants to get the happiness
 and escape from her miserable life.
 Therefore, she decides to give Robert
 Browning her promise of marriage
 arrangement if she could survive that
 winter. Fortunately, she gains strength and
 her health is improved, thus on the last
 autumn they are engaged. She gains her
 courage to oppose her father and choose to
 marry Robert Browning. She expresses this
 in her sonnet XXIV:

Let the world's sharpness like a
 clasp knife
 Shut in upon itself and do no harm
 In this close hand of Love, now soft
 and warm,
 And let us hear no sound of human
 strife

After the click of the shutting. Life
to life—
I lean upon thee, Dear, without
alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a
charm
Against the stab of worldlings, who
if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely
still

In this sonnet she depicts her world which is created by her father as “sharp” as a “knife” that makes her life unsafe. She determines that her father intention has endangered her happiness by ignoring her health and opposing her marriage plan. Therefore, she chooses to leave this reality and marry Robert Browning to have safe life. She determines that as someone who is gentle and full of affection, Robert can ensure her safety. She leans her life to him to get protection because she is a weak person. Thus, on September 12, 1846, she secretly married him before two witnesses in Marylebone Church, and then returned to her father house as if there was nothing happened. In other words, Elizabeth and Robert Browning married secretly without the blessing from her family.

1.3.2. Early Marriage Life in Italy

Elizabeth wrote the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* during the course of their courtship and early marriage. She gave the sonnets to her husband early in 1847 during staying in Pisa about four months after their marriage. Therefore, there is no account of the marriage after those four months in the sonnets. Thus, this part of the paper discusses her expression which is found in the sonnets that depicts the beginning of the course of events of her marriage.

A week after their marriage, they run away to Italy and never return to England. Elizabeth, who now becomes Mrs. Browning, leaves her family and friends whom she loves to take risk eloping with her husband. However, she has a

happy marriage that her health is improved in Pisa weather which is warmer than in England and the fact that finally she can live with someone she loves. She considers that her marriage is the future which is the opposite of her past which is full of sorrow and grief. This is expressed in her sonnet XLII, “My future will not copy fair my past.” She has escaped from her painful past while living with her husband. Although they live in a simple way at the first starting their new life, they also can afford good financial so they can pay their household needs as she wrote in her letter to Mrs. Martin on November 5, 1846:

...As to our domestic affairs, it is not to my honour and glory that the 'bills' are made up every week and paid more regularly 'than hard beseems,' while dear Mrs. Jameson laughs outright at our miraculous prudence and economy, and declares that it is past belief and precedent that we should not burn the candles at both ends,... (Kenyon 127).

As the newlywed, they get good fortune that their household is doing fine as it is not easy for them to start a new live just by themselves. Thus, they are advised that they should not exhaust themselves by trying to do too many things to afford the comfort for their living. On the other hand, Elizabeth considers that she has enough comfort in her early marriage life. She expresses this happiness and comfort in her sonnet XLII:

...Then I, long tried
By natural ills, received the
comfort fast,
While budding, at thy sight, my
pilgrim's staff
Gave out green leaves with
morning dews impearled.

She describes how her husband attempts to build their early marriage by giving comfort to her to overcome her sad past. She conveys that she receives her comfort

fast while she tries to develop her career as a poet in the foreign country. The phrases “green leaves” and “morning dews” represent new matters that she tries to accomplish in her new life with her husband. One of those matters is writing new works of art that in October 1846 her poems such as *A woman’s Shortcomings*, *A man’s Requirements*, *Maude’s Spinning*, *A Dead Rose*, *Change on Change*, *A Reed*, and *Hector in the Garden* were published in *Blackwood’s Magazine* (Kenyon 128). Writing new works of art is her effort to support her husband who is attempting comfort in their household.

She hopes that her husband can contribute new experiences in their new life and in the future which are expected to be completely different with her experiences in the past time particularly for first half of her life. That is the time after her mother and her brother died and her father’s way of thinking changes because of these incidents then he forbids his children to marry and leave the house. This time is the sad period which she does not want to happen again in the future.

Conclusion

This chapter discusses the results of the research of perception, feeling and thought of love and marriage life found in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Based on the previous analysis it can be concluded that Elizabeth expresses her ideas and feeling in the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* to the deepest understanding which involves the realization of position and respect of her lover and herself. The perception of love is the product of her expressive act in conceiving the love itself. She defines love in the principle of equality by mean of distinguishing the identity of her lover and herself. Her perceptions of love become excuses to reject further intimate relationship with her lover. On the other hands, in the process of perceiving the idea of love, there is a conflict between her

belief and emotion that create the optimistic and pessimistic feelings. In the first stage of relationship, the pessimistic feeling wins because she is too overwhelmed by her miserable condition. She does not allow herself to be blinded by the emotion of love. She insists her consciousness of the reality, thus she repeats over and over again her misfortune and unworthiness in her sonnets to emphasize those weakness. This is also her struggle to convince her lover and herself about their love to each other.

However, the feeling of love changes her perception toward love. She portrays herself as a woman who for the first time in her life receives such immense strength and hope from her lover’s love. Because of this reason, finally she is willing to accept Robert Browning. Her sense of nature of love is also opened by the heartbreaking incident involving her father’s ignorance toward her health. Thus, she expresses that her ideas of love are defeated by her emotion of love. Her delightful expression is too hyperbolized by glorifying her lover merit.

The power of love has encouraged her to make brave consideration in her life to choose her own course of life. She surrenders her life to her lover by agreeing to marry him. This stage is her greatest expressive act of love that she gives up her beloved family for the sake of a better future with her husband. She expresses that her marriage life is a new episode in her life as if she was born again. Therefore, love has saved her from her miserable life and given her opportunity to feel the glorious happiness in her life time.

Bibliography

- Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and The Lamp: Romantic Theory and The Critical Tradition*. United State of America: Oxford University Press, 1953. Print.
- Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008. Print.
- Browning, Robert. *The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning 1845-1864*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1898. 2 vols. Print.
- Chesterton, G.K. *Robert Browning*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University, 2005. Print.
- Chevalier, J. & Gheerbrant, A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*. New York: Penguin, 1996. Print.
- “Electra.” *Sparknotes.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 December. 2013.
- Kenyon, Frederic G, ed. *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Edited With Biographical Additions*. 3rd ed. rev. 2 vols. London: Smith, Elder. Vol. 1, 1897. Print.
- Kothari, C.R. *Research Methodology- Methods and Techniques*. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Limited, 1985. Print.
- Simonsen, Pauline Margaret. “Victorian Interrogations: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from The Portuguese* and Aurora Leigh.” PhD thesis. Massey University, 1993. Print.