

## A Comparative Study of Women's Presence in the Poetry of Jalál al-Din Rûmi and Robert Browning

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the presence of women in connection to men in the poetry of two great poets: one from the medieval times of the East and the other from the Victorian period of England. Rumi, the greatest Persian mystical poet, and Browning a preacher in the guise of a poet who used poetry to dispel the doubts and fears of his age. Mysticism laid stress on love for God along with piety and purity seeking to gain oneness with Him. The running message in what Browning wrote was the fact that human life was but a battleground for the progress or development of the soul to attain to God. Both of these poets are the product of their social crises. Rumi lives in the time of the invasions of the Mongols, while Browning lives in a time when the convictions are attacked from every corner. For Browning love is the ultimate experience in life as a vehicle for transcendence, while for Rumi, from love bitterness becomes sweet, from love copper becomes gold. Love is crystallized in the existence of women. For Rumi, woman is the matrix of creation; she is not just the earthly beloved, she is creative not created. Yet, in his "the King and the Handmaid", the female character is objectified and possessed, representing the carnal self. Browning in his "Porphyria's Lover" similarly objectifies and possesses his beloved by strangling her with her own yellow hair and thus transmutes divine love into capricious love, hate, and injustice. These poets praise women highly but they both stereotype woman as an object worthy of possession.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The underlying purpose of this paper to examine the presence of women in connection to men in the poetry of two great poets from the East and the West: one belongs to the medieval times of the East and the other one belongs to the Victorian Period of England. I shall also show how the masculine voice of the authors frequently dominates their poems and thus distances the reader from the women. Jaláluddín Moláná Rumi (1207- 1273), the greatest Persian mystical poet and a major exponent of Sufism, bridges the gap between the Islamic world of the east and the west. What prompts the present writer to put these two great poets from far corners of the world with dramatic differences in culture is the fact that both devote their life to love through which to pave a short path to the union with God. One fails to understand their poems if he or she fails to capture the real meaning of love. Both are first philosophers and then poets.

It is worth mentioning that after eight hundred years, people from throughout the world still read Rumi, and the year 2007, the eight hundredth anniversary of his

birthday was declared "Rumi Year" by the UNESCO (Çitlak & Bingül, 2007) to signify the importance of his call to all humans for unity. Although women have played an important role in the development of Sufism starting from the beginning of the rise of Islam, Rumi establishes his male presence in his poems as a narrator to objectify his female characters, making them a means of spiritual progress or development by reducing their position to a carnal self.

Robert Browning (1812-89) as a Victorian sage was a preacher in the guise of a poet. He used poetry to dispel the doubts and fears of his age. The running message in what he wrote was the fact that human life in this world was but a training ground for the progress or development of the soul to attain to God; this is what ties him to Rumi. For Browning, religion, love and art are potentially transcendent, allowing the individual to rise above physical circumstances. The escape is momentary, however, and most of his poems end in a sense of failure and it is this failure of the vision that leads man to Browning's personal God (Thorne, 2006). As he writes in *Fifine at the Fair*, according to

Thorne, it is through escape that man is urged on to reach at length 'God, man, or both together mixed.' J. Hillis Miller rightly described Browning as a "huge sea-massive, limitless, profound, but at the same time, shapeless, fluid and capricious" and then continues "Browning's body is the whole mass of the ocean, and his mind is dispersed everywhere throughout that ocean, to its farthest depths" (Zare-Behtash, 1994). It is not easy to understand such an ocean. Unlike Tennyson who tried to satisfy the Victorian taste, Browning never swerved from his conviction of the need to express himself in a dramatic form. Man's mind had much greater interest for Browning than did the external life. His art from the beginning to end reflected the variety of human nature. He chose bad characters in order to draw a moral from their bad actions. In this way his art interprets life. He makes his characters speak themselves to show their nature. In this manner he stressed upon showing the development of their souls. As Hughes (2010) puts it, Browning depicts a mind unhinged by too much certainty and a doctrine that transmutes divine love into capricious love, hate, and injustice. Browning similarly objectifies the female characters in his poems.

In the following sections, I shall study the life and literary career of these two great poets before reading two of their great and highly achieved poems: "The King and the Handmaid" by Rumi and "Porphyria's Lover" by Browning.

## 2. Robert Browning

Browning's poetry presents a wide variety of voices and tones, filled with unusual words and compressed phrasing. His psychological subtlety and reach of intellect dramatized the conflicts of his period through a diverse range of characters. As Armstrong (1996) maintains, "Browning's poems are really incomplete until they have been created, synthesised and interpreted in a reader's mind." Browning has always been regarded as one of the most difficult or obscure of English poets. This obscurity may be partly accounted for by the circumstances of Browning education, but it also reflects his anxious desire to avoid exposing himself too explicitly before his readers (Greenblatt, 2006).

The only son of a bookish clerk in the Bank of England, Robert Browning (1812-1889) received a rich education by reading avidly in his father's well-stocked library and started writing plays and poetry in his youth. His famous love affair with Miss Elizabeth Barrette, already a poet, led to their elopement in 1846, followed by a fifteen-year residence in Italy. For Browning, Florence in particular became a source of subjects, ancient and modern; but his Italy in the works was essentially that of the Renaissance. After the death of his wife in 1861, Browning returned to

England and gained reputation as one of the most important poets of the age by publishing *The Ring and the Book* in 1868. Browning's first major success was with the publication of *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), along with *Dramatic Romances* (1845) and *Men and Women* (1855) which established him as the unrivalled master of dramatic monologue, a form in which a given speaker addresses a listener both implied by the poem and who is, by extension, the reader. Unlike a soliloquy, the speaker is not alone or is not expected to tell the truth. Browning's dramatic monologues enabled him to explore extremely morbid states of mind, though his use of different characters and range of different voices does not allow the reader to identify the speaker with Browning, the poet (Hughes, 2010). His dramatic monologues acted as a kind of mask, anticipating the monologues of twentieth-century poets as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." The 'mask' allows the poet to explore the human soul without being too directly personal.

To Browning love is the ultimate experience in life as a vehicle for transcendence. Its highest manifestation is marriage, in which a man and woman find the true meaning of existence. In this context, Browning shares with John Donne (1572-1631), a metaphysical poet, the sense of love and his treatment with women, (Zare-Behtash, 2012). Browning's love for Elizabeth Barrett was the central experience of his life. Browning felt fortunate that his marriage seemed as close to the ideal as it was possible to obtain. His love poems were written between 1845, when he first met Elizabeth, and 1861, when she died. The love Browning wrote of was the love between men and women which was not merely an aid in finding universal harmony, but rather a power and a source of strength which makes harmony out of disorder. It enables the beholder to see the smallest flaw in the object of love, and makes the flaws themselves a source of new affection (Zare-Behtash, 1994). For Browning, love in the human heart was the best evidence of God's providential love. This notion of love links Browning to Rumi (1207-73), the great Persian mystic poet of the middle ages. Rumi's name is always associated with love because his poetry is a product of love: "Save love, save love, we have no other work / Save affection; save love we plant no other seeds" (Schimmel, 1980). The happiness of secular loves of any kind sooner or later disappears, but true love aimed at the maker of love, God, is permanent. Thus, terrestrial love comes to be a preparation for and introduction to true love. Love in Rumi's view, is the physician of all illnesses:

From love bitterness becomes sweet, from love copper

becomes gold;

From love the dregs become pure, from  
love the pains

become medicine;

From love the dead become alive, from  
love the king

is made a salve. (Schimmel, 1980)

### 3. Jalál al-Din Rûmi

Jalál al-Din Rûmi, known in the East as Mowláná or Molavi (meaning our Master) and in the West as Rûmi, was born in Balkh of Persian Empire (present-day Afghanistan) in September 1207. His father Bahá al-Din Walad was a well-known theologian, preacher and jurist as well as a great spiritual master. Rumi attended his father's lectures as a child and later progressed in serious fashions under the tutelage of one of his father's disciples. Around 1219, the family left Balkh due to the threat of invasion by the Mongols and wandering restlessly through Baghdad, Mecca, Damascus, the family eventually settled in Konya in Anatolia (Turkey) which was the capital of the Seljuk Empire, (hence the name Rumi refers to a person belonging to this area). Rumi's father was warmly received by the ruling Sultan of the time, Seljuk, and resumed his career as a teacher and spiritual guide. His son, Jalal al-Din became well-versed in the Islamic religious sciences and philosophical theology (Schimmel, 1993). After his father's death, Rûmi occupied his father's post and became the greatest Persian mystical poet, the major exponent of Sufi teachings as well as a profound philosopher. His father's wandering through country after country during his youth seems to have influenced Rumi's feeling that life is a never-ending journey, a quest for the Divine presence of which he was constantly aware.

As Star (2008) maintains, Rumi is well known as a Sufi-saint poet, and some call him a prophet-poet following the path toward God primarily by means of love. This is what connects Robert Browning of the nineteenth century of the west to the sage of the thirteenth century of the east. Both believe in the presence of love in every aspect of life as the manifestation of God in this world. The essence of Sufism as an inward dimension of Islam is love. The word sufism derives (Baalbaki, 1995) most probably from the Arabic word for 'wool' (sûf), since the early ascetics of Islam (Sufis) are said to have worn coarse woollen garments to symbolize their rejection of the world. Hafiz, a great lyricist poet of Persian literature, in his sonnet number 390 addressing the Beloved, in Peter Avery's translation, says:

When in your gold-spangled robe you  
tipsily pass by,

Spare the wool-clad Hafiz one devotional

kiss. (CCCXC, 2007)

The Sufi is a traveller on the path of love, a journey back to God through the mysteries of the heart. Within heart, the secret chamber, this journey takes place where lover and the beloved share the ecstasy of union. Within heart we experience the depth and intimacy of this relationship; hence, heart becomes the meeting place of lovers. The initial love within heart starts with the love of men and women. This was true with both Browning and Rumi. It is worth mentioning that Browning's best poems belong to his shared life with his wife Elizabeth Barrette Browning before her death. For Sufi mystics, like Rumi, this love starts with marriage.

One of the first great female Sufis is Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah (717- 801) who focused on asceticism not as an end in itself, but rather on its ability to help foster a loving relationship with God. For the first time she expressed the relationship with the Divine by referring to God as the Beloved (Helminski, 2003). The starting point of Rabi'ah was neither for fear of Hell nor a desire for Paradise, but only love. This love is just for His union; otherwise, it will divert one's attention from the Beloved. In Rumi's case this love happens when he is already a great theologian. The critical moment in Rumi's spiritual progress happened when he met Shams-al-Din of Tabriz in 1244. All scholars agree upon the fact that without Shams there would have been no Rumi, the poet and lyricist. As Professor Nasr holds, Shams exteriorized Rumi's inner contemplative states in the form of poetry and set the ocean of his being into motion which resulted in vast waves that transformed the history of Persian literature (Chittick, 1984). This passionate acquaintance changed the theologian and preacher of Islamic teachings to a great poet of devotion. In Schimmel's translation, Rumi says:

My hand always held a Quran, but now it  
holds love's flagon;

My mouth was filled with glorification,

but now it recites only poetry and song;

Passion for that beloved took me away  
from erudition

and reciting the Quran,

Until I became an insane and obsessed as I  
am;

Love came into mosque and said, "Oh  
great teacher!

Rend the shackles of existence, why tied to  
prayer mat?" (Zare-Behtash, 2017)

Thus, love becomes a fire killing those in its domain. Under the name or pretext of Shams, Rumi got “burnt and burnt and burnt” and managed to reveal the mysteries of his union with God.

Rûmi’s collected lyrics under the name of Divan-i Shams with some 40,000 verses are the “spontaneous overflow of emotions” raised from his acquaintance with and separation from Shams, his spiritual teacher who had the power of a ‘Divine epiphany’. Rumi chanted all these lyrics and his disciples wrote them down. He never proofread them. His other work, the Mathnavi (with 25000 couplets translated into The Spiritual Verses) comprises six books with their separate prefaces for each book containing short stories in a didactic style with metaphoric language. Rumi presents Sufi teachings in the form of anecdotes in these short parables. Love is a key word in the understanding of Rûmi. Love dominates and determinates the Sufi’s inward and psychological states. Since love is an experiential dimension of Sufism, it should be experienced to be understood. Love even in its secular form, finally leads the lover to the ultimate Beloved, who is God. Love, according to Rûmi, is the ultimate transcendence of human consciousness, analytical and rational, intuitive and holistic, but above all, devotional and passionate (Chittick, 1984). The starting point for this love can be woman. As Vaughan- Lee maintains she is the ‘matrix of creation’. Out of her very substance life comes forth, she conceives and gives birth and thus participates in the greatest mystery of bringing a soul into life.

Sufi poetry is filled with metaphors; the most striking ones are “wine”, “tavern”, “love”, “woman”, and “drunkenness”. Love signifies the strong attraction that draws all creatures back to reunion with the Creator:

Hail to thee, then, O love, sweet madness;

Thou who healest all our infirmities!

Thou who art the physician of our pride  
and self-conceit. (Schimmel, 1993)

In this symbolic language love represents the divine love that intoxicates the soul. Thus, “getting drunk” comes to mean “losing oneself in that love. The “cup” refers to one’s body and mind and the Sáqi or “cupbearer” a maid pouring the wine is the grace-bestowing aspect of God that fills the soul’s empty cup with the wine of love. Rumi’s tavern has attracted so many intoxicated lovers, committed to going to the source, as fearlessly as the moth flying straight to the source of fire in his passion for union with the beloved, not just Muslims, but also the followers of other faiths.

This woman, who is your beloved, is in fact a ray of His light,

She is not a mere creature; she is like a creator.  
(Schimmel, 1993)

#### 4. Women in Rumi’s poetry

Woman is a ray of His light. She is not just the earthly beloved; she is creative, not created. It is due to this creativity and capacity for love and relationship that suits women. God’s mercy and benevolence is always emphasized as being greater than his wrath. Women also have great capacity for patience, for nurturing, for love. Yet, the creature in which Satan managed to deceive Adam was Eve, a woman. Women thus become source of deceiving men and leading them astray too. As Schimmel writes the ruse of women is great and they cause the spirit to descend into the realm of corporal existence by seducing man into sexual intercourse. Since physical appealing in women is stronger, they easily bring things into the material, both animal and worldly. It is commonly agreed that the first blood on earth was that of Abel shed for the sake of women. Thus, woman is a trial for man. Some scholars argue that this is the reason why Rumi did not choose a woman to be his guide; instead, he chose Shams, a man, to be the guide (Satari, 2017).

Sufi figures had strong influences on women making them familiar with Sufism to the point that their behaviour affected their family members. Some women turned to Sufism and some of them respected them offering some gifts to them. Rumi always respected women in his life and even in his personal life he paid tribute to them. In his poetry, women sometimes function as a bridge between the physical and the spiritual world; their position in this world provides a means to the spiritual love and union with God. Yet, in his stories, as we will see, he treated them symbolically and represented them as the carnal self and source of attraction to prepare his readers for purgation.

One the most popular and interesting stories related to the presence of women in Rumi’s Masnavi (The Spiritual Verses) is the allegorical story of “The King and the Handmaid.” The story, in Arbery’s translation, commences with the introduction that once there lived a King to whom ‘belonged the power of temporal and also the power of spiritual.’ One day the King rode with his courtiers to a chase. On his way, the King espied a Handmaiden, a female servant, who enthralled the soul of the King. As the King’s soul was fluttering in its cage, he gave money and bought her. After he had bought her and won his desire, she became ill. The King gathered all highly-skilled physicians ‘from the left and right’ and said to them:

The life of us both is in your hands.

My life is of no account, but she is the life  
of my life.

I am in pain and wounded: she is my  
remedy.

Whoever heals her that is my life,  
Will bear away with him my treasures and  
pearls,  
large and small. (Lines 6-8)

The physicians declared that every one of them is the 'Messiah of a multitude' and started their job. But out of their pride, they forgot to trust in God and say "if God wishes" before any taking action. The more they applied 'cures and remedies', the more did the illness increased. Their expectations did not fulfil. The sick maid became 'thin as a hair'; while the eyes of the King flowed with tears of blood like a river.

When the King noticed the inability of the physicians, he ran bare-footed to the mosque. He entered the mosque and rushed to the altar to pray. The prayer carpet was 'bathed in the King's tears.' From the depth of his heart, he raised 'a cry of supplication' asking the Almighty to cure his beloved. In the midst of weeping, slumber overtook him: an old man appeared to him and said:

O King! Thy prayers are granted. If to-morrow

A stranger comes to thee, he is from me.

He is the skilled physician: deem him  
veracious,

For he is trusty and true.

In his remedy behold absolute magic,

In his nature behold the might of God.  
(Lines 19-21)

Tomorrow morning, the King was waiting for the physician promised in his dream. He was coming from afar in the form of phantasy. He himself went forward to welcome his guest dispatched from the Invisible. The King kissed his hand and confessed that he was his true 'beloved' not the maid. The King led the Physician to the bedside of the sick girl to see her condition. The Physician observed the colour of her face and felt her pulse and said how the false physicians had helped her health to deteriorate. The Physician demanded the King to leave him alone with the Handmaid in order to discover her malady. He asked questions from the girl related to her whereabouts and the persons she had met. She disclosed to the Physician many things concerning her home and former masters and fellow-townsmen and the places she had visited. While listening to her story, the Physician observed her pulse and its beating. He then asked about the sweet town of Samarkand; her pulse suddenly quickened and her face went red and pale. The girl mentioned a certain goldsmith for whom she worked for a couple of years. The Physician

discovered her illness and promised her nobody would share the secret even the King. He asked the King to send some messengers to Samarkand to fetch the Goldsmith as a craftsman. The King sent robes of honour with gold and silver to persuade the man to come to the palace. Tempted by these gifts, the man left his family and home immediately and came to the palace. The King wedded the twain who craved their company and they started their happy life. The Physician also ordered a potion for him to drink every morning. The girl fully recovered but the Goldsmith started to dwindle away losing gradually his beauty and appeal.

Since he appeared ugly and ill-favoured  
and sallow-checked,

Little by little he became unpleasant to her  
heart.

Blood ran from his eye like a river:

His handsome face had become an enemy  
to his life.

The peacock's plumage is its enemy. (Lines  
86-90)

Confessing how his handsomeness caused his destruction, the Goldsmith finally gave up the ghost and the Handmaid was purged of love and pain.

The moral of the story lies in the fact that those loves which are for the sake of a colour are not love: in the end they turn to be a disgrace. Rumi concludes the poem with these points:

Because love of the dead is not enduring,  
for

The dead are never coming back to us;

While the love of the living is always  
fresher

Than a bud in the spirit and in the light.

Choose the love of that Living One, who is  
everlasting

And gives thee to drink of the wine that  
increases life.

Choose the love of Him from whose love

All the Prophets gained power and glory.  
(Lines, 99-102)

In this story, the King stands for Spirit who has separated from its Source or origin due to the lack of guidance or master and has mistakenly taken the maid of the carnal self or soul in place of the true love; while the carnal soul is

itself in love with the worldly goldsmith. The Handmaid stands for both the 'body' and carnal soul who imprisons the spirit. In addition, the Goldsmith stands for worldly attachments while the Royal physicians or the pretender doctors stand for the Intellect who try to cure the pain of the maid, but fail because of their pride and forgetting to trusting in God for their action. Finally, the Divine Physician stands for Sufi master and guide who is coming from the invisible to cure those lost and bewildered.

The interesting point in the story lies in the fact that Rumi objectifies his female character in this poem. From the very beginning the theme of man trying to possess woman is there, as though these women are objects without personalities of their own. Although her profession is in the title of the poem, without any objection from her end, the Maid is purchased. She says nothing, except when she is asked to answer the Physician's questions. This also happens with the Goldsmith. The readers do not hear them talk and they are detached from us. We hear the Goldsmith at the end of the story when he discovers the reason for his death. The voice of the narrator or the author is more perceptible than that of participants who are central in the poem. We can trace this objectification and possession in the poetry of Browning too, but with a different purpose of exhibiting a bizarre behaviour of a person who is madly in love with the source of affection.

### 5. Women in Browning's poems

Robert Browning in the same manner objectifies his female character in "Porphyria's Lover". The poem is one of Browning's dramatic monologues published originally in 1836 under the title of "Porphyria" and it was not until 1863 that the poem came out with the title we now use (Richards, 1999). The dramatic monologue from the start, in such foundational works as Browning's "my Last duchess" and "Porphyria's Lover" concerned itself with female subjectivity (Pearsall, 2005). "Porphyria's Lover" expresses the typically Victorian attitude that the woman is the man's to save or to spill: in both she surrenders to him completely.

The speaker of the poem is at home alone on a stormy night. His beloved, Porphyria, 'glides' in without any explanation and, as a source of affection and warmth, starts a fire in the fireplace to make 'all the cottage warm'. After that, she takes off her 'cloak' and 'gloves' and then she 'untied her hat and let the damp hair fall'. After all these done, she sits down beside the speaker. We do not hear her. She starts to talk to the speaker but 'no voice replied'. Porphyria takes the speaker's hand and pulls it around her waist and uncovering her shoulder 'made my cheek lie there, / and spread, over all, her yellow hair'. The speaker seems to be unimpressed when the lady tells him how much she loved him. He just looks up at her and decides

A thing to do, and her hair

In one long yellow string I wound

Three times her little throat around,

And strangled her. No pain felt she.  
(Lines 38-41)

Here the 'lover' strangles his beloved in order to preserve her innocence and does not allow her to share her love with others. We have no idea how the speaker is certain that she felt no pain. He opens her eyelids and finds out they are looking 'happy and proud'. Now the speaker opens her hair from round her neck:

And I untightened next the tress  
About her neck; her cheek once more  
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss.

Now the speaker puts Porphyria's head on his shoulder 'which droops upon it still'. It is worth reminding that uses of impersonal pronouns reduce Porphyria to a mere object:

The smiling rosy little head,  
So glad it has its utmost will,  
That all it scorned at once is fled,  
And I, its love, am gained instead! (Lines  
52-55)

Now the speaker has an exclusive possession of the lady, like the possession of a toy. The lover then starts playing with her corpse without any indication of remorse over his grave sin of murder; and above all, he feels satisfied with his action that 'God has not said a word!' In Hawlin's phrase, the speaker is a 'tender murderer.' Browning's idealization of the death-in-bliss may serve as a definite indication of the lover's true obsessiveness over his love for Porphyria. His action is a good examination of the speaker's psychopathology. The same analysis can be traced back to Browning's highly-achieved and discussed poem of "My Last Duchess".

In "My Last Duchess" there is an imagined persona, the Duke, who addresses the representative of the girl he intends to marry. He advertently reveals himself as a tyrant and despotic, wishing to limit the freedom of another person. He could not tolerate his first wife's independence: she was too easily made happy, too spontaneous or flirtatious in the way she responded to court life and above all, she lacked aristocratic blood. By the end of the poem it becomes clear that it is the Duke's obsessive jealousy that has destroyed the Duchess. Here the speaker explicitly reveals the male patriarchy. The Duchess and Porphyria might seem to be happy to escape from this dominance through their being murdered. Hovering somewhere between confession and stream-of-consciousness, both poems take the reader into the disturbed world of the mind, different from the domestic and comfortable concerns that often Victorian literature was desired.

Browning is the product of a world marked by almost unprecedented changes, a world being transformed by scientific discoveries and new technology along with undermining of all absolute values in spiritual and moral as well as in social matters. The Victorians were completely conscious of the fact that they are living in a state of transition. Browning stands out in a sharp contrast to his great contemporary poets, like Tennyson and Matthew Arnold for his enthusiastic acceptance of life as it is. By his art, Browning makes a unique contribution to the study of mind which will be the subject-matter of late nineteenth-century psychology.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The paper tried to examine the presence of women in connection to men in the poetry of two Rumi and Browning, two great poets of world literature. Rumi belonged to a Sufi tradition which rejects worship motivated by the desire for heavenly reward or the fear of punishment; on the contrary it persisted in the love of God. Browning considered human life in this world a training ground for the progress or development of the soul to attain to God. For Browning love is the ultimate experience in life as a vehicle for transcendence, while for Rumi, from love the dead become alive. Love is crystallized in the existence of women. Yet, in the story of "the King and the Handmaid" by Rumi, the female character is objectified and possessed representing the carnal self. Browning in his "Porphyria's Lover" similarly objectified and possesses his beloved by strangling her with her own yellow hair and thus transmuted divine love into capricious love, hate, and injustice.

Rumi always respected women in his life and even in his personal life he paid tribute to them. In his poetry, women sometimes function as a bridge between the physical and the spiritual world; their position in this world provides a means to the spiritual love and union with God. Yet, in his stories he treated symbolically with them and represented them as source of attraction to prepare his readers for purification. We can trace this objectification and possession in the poetry of Browning too, but with a different purpose of exhibiting a bizarre behaviour of a person who is madly in love with the source of affection.

Female characters in Browning's poems might seem to be happy to escape from the male patriarchy through their being murdered. Thus, in both sides of the world, women are treated as objects and possession, in one as a means of progress and development toward sublimity, and in the other as an escape from physical circumstances.

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