

A Lover-Poet's Voice: The Subjective Mode in Robert Browning's Love Poetry

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze Browning's love poems "One Word More" and "By the Fireside" from his volume *Men and Women* (1855) for the purpose of illustrating how they reflect Browning's attempt to present the idea of love in a subjective mode in his poetry. In his poetry, Browning does not reckon with the idea of love in abstract terms; rather, he embodies it by referring to the specific details of his love relationship with his wife. In this sense, Browning challenges the reserved, Victorian attitude toward the expression of love in poetry. Such a reserved outlook made it difficult for Browning's contemporaries to externalize their personal feelings of love or to dedicate love poems to loved ones. "One Word More" and "By the Fireside" are the most representative of Browning's subjective love poetry. In "One Word More" Browning addresses his wife in the first person, offering her the whole volume of *Men and Women* as a token of his love. "By the Fireside" reinforces the personal expression of love manifested in "One Word More." The poem 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. Through his use of the first person in the two poems, Browning makes it clear that part of his poetic experience, especially at moments of exalted emotions, has to be expressed in a subjective mode.

Keywords: Browning's love poetry, Browning's subjectivity, "By the Fireside", "One Word More", subjective poetry