



Sonnets from the Portuguese and Other Poems

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

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Famed series of 44 love poems written to the poet's husband, Robert Browning, plus a selection of poems dealing with religion, art, social problems, and political events. Alphabetical lists of titles and first lines.

Sonnets from the Portuguese and Other Poems Details

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From Reader Review Sonnets from the Portuguese and Other Poems for online ebook

Hadrian says

I love 43 too, but everybody quotes Sonnet 43. Here's 21:

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem 'a cuckoo song,' as thou dost treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain,
Cry, 'Speak once more—thou lovest!' Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

James says

The book and the sonnets both begin slowly. Frankly, I was bored through much of the book. But as the book and sonnets build they become much more intriguing, the language richer or truer--less of what now seems archaic to us--and more passionate. Personally, I believe I should rate this at 2 stars but I do hover between 2 and 3 and I dislike discouraging a reader with potential interest in this work.

Anna Holden says

I simply cannot say enough great things about Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Jacklynn says

3.5 stars

Rae Diaz says

To some degree this book redefined the way in which I address the passion in my heart through the english language. There's passages with jovial phrases that are addictively repeatable through the power of meter and

content. for example phrases like,

"Roses gathered for a vase."

"When I sue god for myself, he hears that name of thine, and sees within my ears the tears of two."

"fling thy purple round me, till my heart will grow too close against that heart henceforth to know how it shook when alone."

and my personal favorite from this volume, "That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried, to conquer grief, tries more, as all things prove; for grief is love and grief beside. Alas, i have grieved so i am hard to love."

every secondary line is worthy of a double take because the care that is required to invent lines like these is entirely beyond me. And so Elizabeth's lead me to a state of endearment. Because how could anyone possibly read this compilation of love poems (etc.) and be left feeling bitter or unsatisfied? these sonnets make the idea of love feel like the end of every road in which love essentially encompasses all actions, all pain, and all purpose. This was a fucking delight.

William says

Not bad. I especially liked the "other poems". Sonnets were cool, but they weren't quite as Portuguese as I'd hoped. In saying Portuguese, I mean that I wanted to be transported back to Lisboa in a very deep personal way. I probably should have saved the 75 cents and not bought the second hand copy. All the same, the poems were nice to read at the beach. I liked walking through the water with my friends a distance off not paying any attention. I liked it.

Venus Blanca says

But before maybe the social attraction of Lang Leav and Michael Faudet, we had long surviving extraordinary love of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning. Sonnets from the Portuguese and Other Poems is an anthology of all Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poems, the poems of her little depressed life and great love to Robert Browning that only *to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach*. This work I believe is entirely out of love, and I only imagine what there in the world if love reigns.

My heart swells over how moving and loving Elizabeth's words and if only I could write and speak them for myself....(sighs) This proves that poetry is as always as beautiful as complicated to understand just like **LOVE**.

I know everyone who reads Elizabeth, know pretty well the Sonnet 43, *The How I Love Thee, Let me Count the Ways*. But here is the Sonnet 21 that is worth the mainstream of love.

Sonnet 21

Say over again, and yet once again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem' a cuckoo-song,' as thou dost treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
Belove, I, amid the darkness greeted

By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry, Speak once more---thou lovest! Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
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Silvia Cachia says

I did like the Sonnets from the Portuguese, some revealed more to me than others. And this was just a first scratching of the surface. Reading them all in a short time, helped me immerse myself in her rhythm and style. Poetry may be hard for some of us, I believe, because we are in constant demand of meaning and logic. I find myself a faulty modern reader, not used to a poetic and more humble approach to reading. Taught in public schools, I got, for the most part, the utilitarian, scientific, and analytical approach to the humanities. And, while everything has its due place, all these practices became burdens when offered at the detriment of the love of language, or the ability to listen to books (specially poetry), read aloud. Poetry places itself at a deeper layer, or a different frequency, one that is not self explanatory, nor completely objective, thus inviting us into the mystery and the unknown, and not everyone is brave or young enough to let a poet blindfold us, and take us to a trip to places we may or may not have been before.

Kathleen says

Except for “How do I love thee ...” (which I never particularly liked), I didn’t know much about Elizabeth Barrett Browning until I recently read Virginia Woolf’s little novel/biography *Flush* about EBB’s cocker spaniel. It softened my heart toward her, and made me want to give these a try.

Maybe it is common to have extreme reactions when reading poetry. I certainly did with these. Each poem either did nothing for me or took my breath away—nothing in between. Below are some of the breathtaking bits. In poor health from an early age, she understood sorrow, and I think that might be why I preferred the sad lines.

From my favorite of the Sonnet’s, Number V
*... And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me ...*

“A Denial”

Stanza I

*We have met late—it is too late to meet,
O friend, not more than friend!
Death’s forecome shroud is tangled round my feet,
And if I step or stir, I touch the end.*

“Proof and Disproof”

Stanza V

*I have known how sickness bends,
I have known how sorrow breaks,--*

*How quick hopes have sudden ends,
How the heart thinks till it aches
Of the smile of buried friends.*

I've heard that Emily Dickinson was influenced by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and I'm looking forward to reading Emily's poetry soon.

Erik Kalm says

What can I add to:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints!--I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!--and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Feeling captured in words. Astonishing.

Ana Rînceanu says

I liked reading this out loud a lot, but nothing beats this recording of Sonnet 43 by Dame Judy Dench:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZ78X...>

Sara says

I love poetry, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Sonnet XLIII is a favorite:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

Think about these lines

*I love thee freely, as men strive for right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.*

This sonnet alone makes the volume worthwhile, but there is more, of course.

Much of her writing is in bewilderment at having found love at all, of having been rescued from what she viewed as certain death, and at having that death turned into a life worth the living. All of it is in praise and wonderment of her husband, and a bit of it is in sorrow at the loss of her father. He objected to her marriage and refused ever to speak to her again. If you listen closely, you can hear her threads of regret sprinkled into her elation and thankfulness.

*Thou'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,
"Of all I have known or can know,
I wish I had only that heart
I trod upon ages ago!"*

It seems to me that she wishes to know that there is regret in her father's heart as well. Some missing of her; some loving of her residual in his soul that he cannot shed.

There was a huge burden put upon the love between Robert Browning and his wife.

*If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors, another home than this?*

By all accounts he did not disappoint her in his love and care. They remained married until her death in 1861 at the age of 55. He encouraged her in her writing and in claiming her authorship, and one need only look at her portrait to know that he loved her for her soul and her intelligence as much as for any outward beauty.

Poetry is difficult to critique in the best situations, in this case, when it is so fraught with personal love, it is impossible. I will simply say that to write such poetry, Elizabeth Barrett Browning must surely have felt her love "*to the depth and breadth and height My soul can reach.*"

Erin says

I found this book on the streets of San Francisco, Fishermans Warf in September of 2006. Funny enough, I've never sat to read it. Now I will. Oh my, beautiful, simply that, beautiful. Some struck me so deeply that I read them over and over, gleaning new emotions each and every time. Her life was bleak before love, it became bright and everlasting in love. Even as I write this I'm smiling, a playful, saucy smile that I can't seem to whipe from my lips. A beautiful collection of poems that we all should read.

Julie Ehlers says

Some works of literature are so vital, so beautiful, that they scarcely seem dated no matter how many years have gone by. Unfortunately, that was not the case with *Sonnets from the Portuguese and Other Poems*, at least not for me. The language, and, frankly, some of the sentiments felt so antiquated that it was impossible

for me to get much from them. Eventually the sonnets did begin to flow a little better and a few of them impressed and even moved me, but it wasn't quite enough to redeem my reading experience.

Lizbeth Marie says

While I adore "Sonnets from the Portuguese", the "other poems" in this collection did not leave much of an impression on me.
