

Love is best, robert
browning



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The theme of love is a one that comes up very often in all of Browning's poems, not just in Love Among the Ruins. We see it in Porphyria's Lover, Andrea Del Sarto, My Last Duchess, A Lover's Quarrel and many more. Browning himself was a devoted husband and father who was a follower in the idea of 'capturing the moment' which can easily be related to the emotion of love as well. This idea was one that he found especially interesting and is probably why he wrote so many poems on the subject because he thought that in writing down what he felt, he could always have the memories of these great feelings that only happen a few times in your life.

The emotion of love is not one that everyone can relate to when reading about it and therefore it's quite a risky business. However, the fact that Browning manages to pull it off in so many of his poems is a testament to the man. The question is though 'does he pull it off in Love Among the Ruins?' The way in which Browning structures the poem endears it to not just me, but to a very wide audience. Indeed, the way you read the poem due to the form and structure is very important and can change your opinion on a stanza if you do not follow just one of the commas, or pieces of punctuation. In this way, Love Among the Ruins is extremely thought provoking to read and it is an area (among other's) in which I will be following in more detail in this essay (using My Last Duchess and 'Porphyria's Lover').

During the poem of 'Love Among the Ruins', we see a lot of very mellow writing from Browning, which gives the poem an extremely calm nature. Browning actually structures the poem in such a way that it flows almost

without you thinking about it. This helps the reader to identify with the theme of love and happiness in the poem. During the 14 stanzas, Browning seems to alternate between the two settings of country and city, which also helps to create a contrast between how love is so beautiful (country and freedom) and then on the other side with the city being quite ugly and caged.

We see this to be true in the first two stanzas of the poem especially. Browning opens the poem with an autumnal theme that helps to show the country scenery. ' Where the quiet coloured end of evening smiles, Miles and miles'. These two lines are seen in stark contrast with the second stanza, which talks of ' peace or war', which are definitely not images that one can relate to love. In bringing in the idea of Rome's demise from greatness (city and country stanzas), Browning can show and try to persuade the reader that ' love is best' which, I think that he does.

After all, many times I have seen pieces of poetry that are related to love to be hard to read because of the simple fact that they are related to a feeling that is very individual. In this poem though, Browning brings in lines like ' domed and daring place shot it's spires up like fires. ' Which bring in a kind of gothic edge that people prefer to read about and makes the poem more enthralling. The love that comes in to the poem mostly towards the last three stanzas, can almost go by unnoticed due to the fact that I have already mentioned.

When writing about love, you cannot afford to be soppy about it. Browning made that mistake with ' A lover's Quarrel' and never made it again. The

poems I have chosen to help me come to my conclusion on whether 'love is best' are 'Porphyria's Lover' and 'My Last Duchess'. The two poems here both have a strong element of love in them and have certain things in common with 'Love Among the Ruins'. For example, in 'Porphyria's Love' Browning introduces the idea of preserving the moment by killing Porphyria so her lover can always have her in his arms.

In the poem, the setting is very gloomy and disturbed, "The rain set early in tonight, the sullen wind was soon awake." This shows how the Lover is feeling at that moment. This sets the scene and contrasts the events where Porphyria enters the room. She "glided in", which gives her a graceful image, which suggests the relationship has been formed on how she looks on the outside.

She "shut out the cold", both metaphorically speaking and literally. It shows that when she enters the room, it makes him feel better and gets rid of all the cold and emptiness inside. As 'Porphyria's Lover' continues, we notice that the lover seems to be completely oblivious to how she is acting towards him, "murmuring how she loved me-" with a pause for the reader to think. The effect of this is to allow the reader time to notice that she definitely loves him, and has travelled through the harsh weather to meet him; it shows that Browning has ideas that love and relationships can be very long, and that love will prevail if it is strong enough. Browning married a woman that he loved and tragically lost, which is shown in these two poems as both female characters are killed. Both of the poems are dramatic monologues, spoken from the male that causes the death of their wife or lover.

The poems show us that the two men who narrate (husbands) are a bit insane. In both poems we realise that it is actually love and not the fact that they are a bit insane that drives them to kill their wives. Although this does not sound like 'love is best' in this case, we see how powerful the emotion is and why Browning wrote about it and believed in it so much. In "My Last Duchess", we are introduced to the dramatic monologue.

In a dramatic monologue, the speaker unknowingly reveals his personality through his speech. In this poem, the audience listens to a conversation between the Duke and a nameless envoy that are making the final arrangements for the Duke's second wedding. Strangely, the Duke brings out a portrait of his former wife whom he rambles incessantly about. Through the Duke's ramblings, we learn that he is a self-centered, arrogant, and completely chauvinistic man, asserting emotions of both power and weakness.

The Duke is a materialistic, proud man. He has a high rank in nobility and a well-respected name. Thus, he tries to portray himself as powerful and sophisticated. But his underlying motives shine through and we see the Duke as jealous and possessive. The Duke was formerly married and this marriage ended tragically.

His last Duchess had a wandering eye and a smile for everyone. This infuriated the Duke - "She smiled, no doubt, whene'er I passed her; but who passed without much the same smile? The Duke cannot bear to watch his wife look at other men and to make sure that she never does it again, he has her killed. In conclusion, these two additional poems help to justify

Browning's claim that love is best in that love takes over everybody to whom it is introduced. The power of love is one that is on a level much higher than any other emotion and therefore it is hardest to control.

In the three poems I have analysed, we see this fact come into full effect and we realise how damaging love can be but also how brilliant it is as well.