

"my last duchess",  
"the laboratory" and  
"porphyria's lover" by  
robert browning es...

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## **“ My Last Duchess”, “ The Laboratory” and “ Porphyria’s Lover” by Robert Browning Essay Sample**

Robert Browning was a poet who was famous for writing dramatic monologues such as “ My Last Duchess”, “ The Laboratory” and “ Porphyria’s Lover”. A dramatic monologue is a type of poem, which was written by many poets during the Victorian period. It is when a character in fiction or in history presents a speech expressing his or her feelings, actions, or motives. The monologue is frequently aimed towards a silent audience, with the speaker’s words influenced by a critical state. Dramatic monologues help us feel sympathy for the psychotic narrators in the three Robert Browning poems listed above as everything they’re doing or done are all due to jealousy. This helps us experience and understand their thoughts and feelings better through words as they speak out all their emotions, thoughts and feelings. This helps us understand the narrator’s inner-self and what they really like inside.

Browning wrote his poems during the Victorian period. During this time, the Victorians were quite repressed, especially women as they were inferior than men and treated less important. All these poems gave a shocking outcome as they were all about murder and envy. All three of them, the narrator did not feel any guilt after what they’ve done. As the Victorians were quite introverted, during the period, dramatic monologues were popular. They were popular as they revealed the narrators feelings and expressed it through words and it helped the Victorians feel better and comfortable by reading dramatic monologues. These poems were like a fantasy and it could

never happen in the Victorian times so it made people look into a new world and be more open about things.

All poems were written in the Victorian Period, but they were all set in different places. In "My Last Duchess," the poem is set in the late Italian Renaissance period in the 16th century. "The Laboratory" is set in France during "Ancien Regime"; it was the time before the French revolution. The last poem we learnt about is "Porphyria's Lover". This poem was set in romantic era. During all these times all three poems were set in, it was a patriarchal society. Patriarchal society was a time where men were inferior and more important for being responsible for the welfare and authority over their family meaning women were less important and more closed-in and had to obey what their husbands or fathers said to them. It was a patriarchal society in the Victorian times as well as when the poems were set in.

The narrator in "My Last Duchess" was presumably the Duke of Ferrara, who is talking to the Count's servant about his last duchess. He reveals the portrait of her and talks about her. This poem shows it is a patriarchal society as the Duke was powerful and controlling:

"I gave commands; then all smiles stopped together."

This suggests that he is the person everyone should obey to as he is superior and demanding. It shows it's a patriarchal society as it's a duke giving commands, is also shows that he is quite callous and serious. It also shows that he is very serious and arrogant. This affects us the way we feel towards

the narrator because it's a man talking in a patriarchal society people are obviously going to obey him as he's really powerful.

The narrator in "The Laboratory" is a woman speaking in a remarkably enthusiastic tone to the apothecary who is in the process of making a poison for her to murder the woman her husband's been having an affair with. We can tell that during this time, it was a patriarchal society and we can tell this when she says:

"He is with her; and they know that I know"

This reveals that men were the ones who could have affairs when they were married and the wives couldn't do much about it but be secretive about it. But in this poem, it shocks us because she's doing something about it and women in patriarchal society don't normally get the chance to get revenge as men were in control. In the poem, the victim is the woman her husband's having an affair with, not her husband.

"He is sure to remember her dying face!"

This suggests that she wants him to remember her face, her "dying face" and to remember that he caused this to happen for having an affair. The narrator doesn't want to poison the husband because she loves him too much and without him, she wouldn't cope and probably have to be married off to another man. This shows that women wouldn't be able to cope without their husbands and men had to take control.

In " Porphyria's Lover", the narrator is a man talking about his lover and how much he loves her. In this poem, it shows that he is inferior as he has no power in his relationship which is abnormal in a patriarchal society as he has no control over this relationship. We can see this when he says:

" She put my arm about her waist"

From this we can infer that Porphyria is doing all the actions and the narrator does nothing. This displays that he barely has any authority. On the other hand, although he doesn't have much supremacy, he does have still a bit of control. We can see this when he says:

" Porphyria worshipped me; surprise"

This implies that, even though he is powerless in this poem, Porphyria looked as him as a king or maybe a God. The word ' worshipped' makes it more religious and makes us consider that he is like God, superior and powerful. This shows that in this poem, it does reveal that it was a patriarchal society.

In these 3 poems, it delivers a sense of madness and psychotic in these narrators. We can tell this by the way they all speak. All 3 poems use repetition which illustrates that the narrators are all obsessive as they repeat what they said and make it clear to the reader that it's theirs. It also shows that they are very possessive and desperate to gain what they want.

In " My Last Duchess", the narrator is pompous and superior. He is very determined and authoritative. This is shown when he says:

" I gave commands; then all smiles stopped together"

I have used this quote again as it has more to it. This quote also shows euphemism as it's hiding the true meaning so the reader can try to decipher it. The real meaning is that the duke gave orders to have the duchess killed. He also uses symbols to hide other meanings:

" The bough of cherries some officious fool"

This quote possibly represents her virginity. He gives out a hint that she may be promiscuous and this shows that he is jealous.

" The white mule"

This quote symbolizes her purity and virginity.

In this poem it also includes enjambment, which shows that he is excited about revealing his painting.

In " The Laboratory", it shows that the narrator is vengeful and impatient. We can tell when she says:

" Quick-is it finished? The colours too grim!"

From this we can infer that the narrator is excited and a bit fussy. She uses numerous question marks and exclamation marks. The use of question marks implies that she is very inquisitive. The use of exclamation marks shows that she is thrilled about this poison being made which also shows

that she is psychotic, because this poison is being made to kill someone and she's in high spirits.

Using exclamation marks also shows the way she's talking, the use of it reveals that she is speaking to the apothecary enthusiastically and telling him what's going to happen and her motives for doing this.

" Pound at thy powder, I am not in haste!"

This quote, not only does it have an exclamation mark but alliteration with the plosive sounds. This shows that she is irritated about her husband for having this affair.

In " Porphyria's Lover", the use of repetition shows that the narrator is possessive. We can tell when he says:

" That moment she was mine, mine, fair"

He repeats '...mine, mine...' this reveals that he is obsessive and adores her a lot. It also shows that he wants everyone to know that she is his, and only his. In the first few lines, there is pathetic fallacy:

" The rain set early in to-night,

The sullen wind was soon awake"

From this we can deduce that something bad is approaching, it delivers a sense of foreboding, and a sense that things aren't going to stay the same as it was before. In this quote, it also has uses sibilance, which is the

describing a consonant that is produced by a sudden release of breath. The use of sibilance, " The rain set early in to-night, The sullen wind was soon awake" also forms a sense of foreboding.

This poem also uses symbols, just like " The Last Duchess"

"...made the cheerless grate blaze up...cottage warm"

This suggests that Porphyria made the cottage blaze up. This represents fires which represents the narrator's love. So, as Porphyria made the grate blaze up, it made his love stronger.

All three poems have motives for committing these crimes but the main one is jealousy. In " The Last Duchess", the duke ordered the duchess to be killed because he was jealous. She treated every man the way she treated him and he thinks that she was having affairs and he was envious of them. After giving orders, he doesn't feel repentant and doesn't give it a thought about what he's doing. This also links back to patriarchal society; it shows that women couldn't back themselves or give any excuses to save themselves. After her death, he's already found another woman to marry, this shows that it's not enough for him and wants to control something. : " Though his fair daughter's self...at, starting, is my object" In " The Laboratory", the woman is also not feeling remorseful, in fact, she is excited and raring to go use this poison quick. This makes her look very psychotic, as she is extremely content that she is murdering someone, which is very mad. This shows that she is jealous because her husband is with another woman and wants to get rid of her. In " Porphyria's Lover", he killed Porphyria so that he could be with



her forever and ever because he loves her so much. This is very psychotic because he killed her just so that he can be with her and he was jealous because he doesn't want her to be anyone else's but his and if she couldn't be with him, then he would be angry and very jealous. He believes that he is justified in killing her because hasn't said anything. : " And yet God has not said a word!"

All three narrators do not feel guilty which makes me very shocked. They all don't stop for a minute and think about what they are doing which also makes me feel sorry for them. In " My Last Duchess" and " Porphyria's Lover", the narrators are calm and patient about the killing, whereas in " The Laboratory", the narrator is impatient and excited about the killing. In the " My Last Duchess" and " Porphyria's Lover", the narrators are very secretive about the killing but in " The Laboratory", its more open and honest, she tells us all the details and gives out the truth.

The poems make me incredibly shocked. All the poems except for " The Laboratory" start off with a tranquil and cool atmosphere but as we come near the end, it abruptly changes into a horrible and depressing atmosphere. It makes the reader feel sick and left inquisitive. Whereas in " The Laboratory", it starts off straight away with an eager and excited atmosphere and stays like that throughout the poem, delivering the fact that she is impatient and also angry at the same time.

In conclusion, all 3 poems are all to do with jealousy and envy. They all commit a crime and have no regrets. Browning used dramatic monologues to

explore these three characters because it was talking from a killer's perspective and it helps us understand better as it was in the first person. It was very powerful, especially the way when there was a sudden change in the atmosphere, which was very dramatic. It doesn't make us like them but it makes us feel sorry for them since they are all jealous. We all feel that all the time and we want to do something about it, but the way these narrators solve was just psychotic. All 3 narrators are jealous of love, jealous of their lovers being with another person and it makes us feel sorry for them because they are isolated or doesn't want to be isolated. I quite like "The Laboratory", because it's coming from a women's point of view and this women is determined to get revenge and do something about it. It makes me more confident and should do something about something that I am angry about.