

Difference and similarities in Browning's poetry

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In these poems Browning gives us an insight into minds corrupted by jealousy. Discuss how Browning makes effective use of the dramatic monologue to reveal the characters of the narrators, and shock the readers. Which did you find most shocking and why?

A dramatic monologue is a type of poem. It is like a speech which reveals a character's thought and feelings. The poet takes on the role of this character and speaks as them. All dramatic monologues are written in the first person. The effect of this is to make the poem more personal.

Robert Browning wrote his monologues in the 19th Century. "My Last Duchess" was set in 14th Century in Italy in a patriarchal society. "Porphyria's Lover" was set in 19th Century in England and lastly "The Laboratory" was set in 18th Century in France. Robert Browning's poems were popular because in the Victorian times it was a patriarchal society and the people who lived in the Victorian times were very strict and also had a restricted life. Therefore reading this in those times would have been especially strange and unusual to read about psychotic people killing their loved ones.

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The similarities between the characteristics of the narrators in the three poems. The first similarity is that the three poems have disturbed narrators who treat their lovers as a possession. In "Porphyria's Lover" we know this when he tells us:

"Give herself to me"

this tells us that he only wants her to himself and no one else whereas in "My Last Duchess" we know this when he tells us:

" since none puts by the curtain I have drawn for you but I"

this tells us that he is possessive even after her death but in "The Laboratory" the narrator tells us that she wants to poison two females but also wants the king to suffer by saying:

" He is sure to remember her dying face"

this tells us that even though she doesn't want him dead she wants him to suffer as much as the two female who will be poisoned.

In addition another similarity is that all three poems the three narrators don't have any sense of guilt for what they have done. They also think they have gotten away with the murder and that they didn't do anything wrong or need to regret for anything. In "Porphyria's Lover" he tells us:

" and yet God has not said a word."

This tells us that he thinks that he hasn't done anything wrong because he has not been punished by God yet. In "My Last Duchess" he tells us:

" Will't please you rise? We'll meet the company below."

This shows us that he's got no emotions, he's controlling and has a normal tone and relaxed about what he has done. In "The Laboratory" she doesn't feel any guilt for what she is doing and for what she is just about to do, we know this by:

" And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!"

this shows us that this is the way she wants her death to look like; she says this in a childish way and also like a child getting really excited.

Another similarity is that the narrator in " My Last Duchess" and " Porphyria's Lover" don't have any sense of guilt for what they have done. They also think they have gotten away with the murder and that they didn't do anything wrong or need to regret for anything. In " Porphyria's Lover" he tells us:

" and yet God has not said a word."

This tells us that he thinks that he hasn't done anything wrong because he has not been punished by God yet. In " My Last Duchess" he tells us:

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Lastly, another similarity is that all narrators choose not to communicate with their lovers and they never let them know what is wrong. In " My Last Duchess" the Duke tells us:

" I choose never to stoop"

this tells us that he will never get down and communicate with the Duchess.

In " Porphyria's Lover" the lover tells us:

" When no voice replied"

this tells us that he has the power and that he didn't want to answer her, this also tells us that he wants to have the power so that she has to please him.

There are also differences between the characteristics of the narrators in the three poems. The first difference is that the victims were all murdered in different ways. In "My Last Duchess" the duke does not commit the crime himself but give a small command and the murder is committed, we can see this when the duke says:

"I gave commands"

this tells us that he gave the command and the order was carried out without discussing about it. In "Porphyria's Lover" the killer murders the lover using the victim own hair and tells us that the victim was in no pain, we can see this when he tell us:

"And strangled her. No pain felt she. I am quite sure she felt no pain"

this tells us that he strangled her and that she felt no pain, he also reassures the readers that the victim felt no pain. In "The Laboratory" the victims are killed using the poison that was made in front of her at the apothecary, we can see this when she says:

"Sure to taste sweet, is that poison too?"

this tells us that she thinks that revenge tastes sweet.

Another difference is that the woman in "Porphyria's Lover" is more sexually active and makes the first move, we can see this when the narrator tells us:

" She put my arm around her waist, And made her smooth white shoulder bare"

this tells us that she appears seductive and she's aware of her power. Where as in " My Last Duchess" the Duchess was much more modest and faithful, we can see this when the Duke tells us:

" She had a heart-how shall I say?"

this tells us that the Duchess was loyal to the Duke and did not always appear sexually active towards him or others.

Another difference is that in all two of the poems " Porphyria's Lover" and " The Laboratory" they both have a reason for jealousy were as in " My Last Duchess" he does not have a reason to be jealous. In " Porphyria's Lover" the lover had a reason to be jealous because she had another man, we know this by:

" one so pale for love of her"

this tells us that she had another lover whilst she was with this lover and also in " The Laboratory" the narrator tells us that the king has another lover, we know this when she says:

" He is with her"

this tells us that the king was with another lover at the same time as he was with the narrator whereas in " My Last Duchess" there is no reason for the Duke to murder his wife as she is not being unfaithful to him but just being

friendly and also appreciate for the presents she gets from others, we know this by:

" The bough of cherries some officious fool broke in the orchard for her Or blush at least"

this tells us that she would blush from a present given to her from anyone; she did so because she wanted to be kind and friendly.

In this poem there are different motives for each of the psychotic killers to murder. In the first poem the motive for murdering his wife in " My Last Duchess" is that the Duke only kills his wife because she gives innocent smiles when she's being offered a present but this is only because she has good manners and wanted to be kind and friendly, we can see this by:

" The bough of cherries some officious fool broke in the orchard for her Or blush at least"

this tells us that the Duchess got murdered because of a harmless smile given to the person offering her a small gift of cherries whereas in " Porphyria's Lover" the narrator has a motive because his lover has another man, we can see this when he tells us:

" one so pale for love of her"

this tells us that the lover even though she has the killer as a lover she still had another lover but we do not know if she loved the lover as much as she loved the killer. In " The Laboratory" the narrator also has a motive which is

that the king had another lover whilst he had the narrator, we can see this by:

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

this tells us that the king has another lover and they both know that the killer knows but aren't really being bothered about her knowing.

In all three poems the narrators don't feel guilty about the crimes they committed. We can see this in the poem " Porphyria's Lover" he tells us:

" and yet God has not said a word."

This tells us that he thinks that he hasn't done anything wrong because he has not been punished by God yet. In " My Last Duchess" he tells us:

" Will't please you rise? We'll meet the company below."

This shows us that he's got no emotions, he's controlling and has a normal tone and relaxed about what he has done. In " The Laboratory" she doesn't feel any guilt for what she is doing and for what she is just about to do, we know this by:

" And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!"

this shows us that this is the way she wants her death to look like; she says this in a childish way and also like a child getting really excited.

The speaker which is most shocking is " Porphyria's Lover" because in this poem he describes the way he murder the victims. The way the victims'

murder is described as horrifying as he describes it in a harsh way. We can see this by:

" In one long yellow string I wound three times her little throat around, and strangled her"

this is a very harsh way to describe the death as the reader can picture the death in their minds.

I feel that each of the narrators in the three poems is psychotic as their motives for killing the lovers is very poor. In " Porphyria's Lover" I feel that the narrator is very psychotic as he only wanted the lover for himself and killed her just so she can belong to him only and cannot find someone else, we can see this when he says:

" In one long yellow string I wound three times her little throat around, and strangled her".

In " My Last Duchess" I feel that the narrator is also psychotic as he killed his wife because of an innocent smile this is very disturbing we can see this when he says:

" I gave commands and all smiles stopped together".

Lastly, in " The Laboratory" I feel that the narrator is psychotic because of the way the death of the two women are described and how she wants their death to be, we can see this when she says:

" And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!"

In conclusion I think that Browning used dramatic monologues to explore these three characters because this is the poem in which the poet takes on the role of the narrator and speaks of them. I don't think that the poem would have been powerful in third person because using first person makes the poem more personal and it makes the reader think that the poem is talking to the reader himself. I think that the most shocking poem would have been "Porphyria's Lover" because in this poem the narrator describes harshly about the death of the lover and how he killed the lover with her hair and used this as a weapon and also I feel it is quite shocking when he tries to reassure the reader that the victim did not feel any pain.